Hunting with the Empress:
Hunting, Gender and Dynastic Ambition at the Court of Charles VI

and Maria Theresa

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Abstract

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Habsburg family faced a dynastic crisis. Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI had no sons to inherit his kingdom. Consequently, he presented his daughter, Maria Theresa, as his heir making her the first female Habsburg regent after centuries of patrilineal descent. Contemporary gender ideals and international and internal attempts to disrupt Habsburg hegemony obstructed Maria Theresa from a smooth dynastic transition. This thesis investigates strategies employed by Maria Theresa and her father that strengthened her claim and identity as a female regent. Some strategies blurred the gender divide embedded in contemporary thoughts on patriarchal society. Others highlighted Maria Theresa’s effeminate virtues. Court hunting provides the most informative example of imperial strategies legitimizing Maria Theresa’s inheritance. The hunting vulture espoused by the Habsburg court expressed the authority of its monarch. More specifically for Maria Theresa, hunting helped characterize her as a powerful female leader by highlighting female participation in hunting and female influence on hunting culture. I start by introducing the political background of Austria and Europe in the eighteenth century and Charles’ issuing of the Pragmatic Sanction. The next section describes Maria Theresa’s state building projects and the gender dynamic in her public identity. The third section transitions into hunting highlighting the social and political implications of the sport at Charles VI’s court. The last section delves into court hunting during Maria Theresa’s reign focusing on the relationship between hunting and gender. Through hunting and a variety of other court platforms, Maria Theresa directly challenged the assumed role of early modern women and created a public identity that embraced aspects of womanhood and combined them with masculine qualities expected of contemporary rulers. By utilizing such strategies, Maria Theresa facilitated her authority and legitimized her position as a female regent in a patriarchal society.
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Introduction

“After seven years of trying, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI and the Holy Roman Empress Elisabeth Christine were blessed with desired offspring at the birth of the perfect heir and prince, Leopold. The Austrian kingdom and lands are joyful that the urgent need for a male succession has been fulfilled. For this highest mercy, thanks is given to God.”¹

In 1716, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles VI, and his wife, Empress Elisabeth Christine, gave birth to a son. As expressed in this panegyric celebrating the occasion, the new son alleviated the realm’s anxiety over the future of the Habsburg dynasty and their control of the Holy Roman Empire. The panegyric displays Habsburg dynastic propaganda and news as it was manifested in a printed pamphlet that was mass produced and available throughout the empire. In the early modern period, a male heir was considered necessary for the continuation of noble and royal dynasties. With a male heir, Charles had secured his succession and staged an elaborate celebration, a hunting and shooting festival, to honor his new son and heir. The form of this celebration was not fortuitous but rather represented the Habsburgs’ favored form of courtly celebration: hunting and pageantry. Unfortunately, this was short-lived as Charles son, Leopold, died a few months later. Once again, the fate of the dynasty was uncertain and their hold on the Imperial throne was in jeopardy.

Charles VI ruled one of the most powerful European states in the early eighteenth century and he hoped to secure his descendants as the future leaders of this empire. Thus, producing an heir was paramount for the emperor. Following the death of their son, Charles and Elisabeth had two daughters, Maria Theresa and Maria Anna. In order to see his wish fulfilled, Charles had to

improvise. He broke the tradition of patrilineal descent, a consistent Habsburg practice for over five hundred years, and maneuvered to pass the realm to one of his daughters. A female head of state not only contradicted Habsburg succession tradition but also contemporary ideas about gender, family and a woman’s place in society. Through the language of court functions and power dynamics, this thesis analyzes strategies implemented by Charles VI, and subsequently Maria Theresa, addressing her gender and customary ideas about a female’s place in eighteenth-century court society. These strategies allowed Maria Theresa to redefine patriarchy and insert a woman’s body into it.

Since the groundbreaking work of 20th century sociologist Norbert Elias, historians have recognized princely courts as an important key to understanding the consolidation of power by European monarchs in the early modern period. Elias, in *The Civilizing Process*, and the *Court Society*, argued that through the centralized royal court, European regents diminished the independence of their unruly nobility and amassed absolute authority. The increased bureaucratization of European states presented the court as the locus of all governing activity and the prince as the undisputed leader of this context. Consequently, the nobility had to be present at the court and successfully follow the dictation of their regent and participate in the accompanying games of etiquette and ceremony in order to gain status and power within the state. Elias’s model achieved its apex at Versailles under Louis XIV. Its success at the French court led other rulers to imitate this complex mechanism and its accompanying ceremonial language. By adapting their implemented culture and language of power to eighteenth-century ideas on gender and family, the courts of Charles VI and Maria Theresea presents a

\[------ ------, *The Court Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).\]
manifestation of Elias’s theory on European society and political power that was refined by specific problems facing the Habsburg court.

Few female monarchs are as well known in history as Maria Theresa. With that being said, historians have overlooked her identity as female authority in a patriarchal world. Most historical interpretations have focused on her domesticity highlighting her large family and the relationship between the Empress and her many children. While scholars agree that Maria Theresa held the ultimate authority within her empire, none have produced a comprehensive study of the implications of Maria Theresa as an eighteenth-century female monarch and the innovative strategies put in place to legitimize her position.

By understanding the cultural projects and the manifestation of Charles VI’s and Maria Theresa’s court, historical scholarship can learn how the Habsburg dynasty legitimized a female head of state in a patriarchal world. While scholars of court studies have interpreted many of these court projects, such as regent-directed iconography and ruler-subject power relations, they have overlooked the place of courtly hunting as the key language through which the Habsburg family could express Maria Theresa’s authority. This language enabled the imperial court to represent and reinforce dynastic identity and continuity in a way that could transcend or redefine gender norms.

Besides a small number of recent studies, historians have dismissed courtly hunting as a trivial royal hobby that was self-indulgent and archaic. Instead, hunting encapsulated the major trends of court society engendered by historians in the recent past. Socially, hunting reinforced the power dynamic emanating from the regent to the rest of the court. Participating in a royal hunt or receiving an official position related to hunting granted courtiers social capital. To interpret this phenomenon, this thesis utilizes Pierre Bourdeau’s definition of social capital:
“Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.”

Hunting rifles and images supplied material for court patronage and the symbolic bestowing of gifts between elites in their endeavors to secure and display status and authority. Charles VI’s penchant for the sport intensified its importance within court society and caused hunting and its relating culture to permeate Habsburg court protocol. The manifestation of hunting at the Habsburg court in the eighteenth century argues that the sport provided important elaboration to the iconographic and performative language for asserting and maintaining dynastic authority. More specifically, hunting gave the Habsburgs a language that could be adapted for a woman to assert authority in a patriarchal world. With the basis of Elias’s theories on court society and a close communication with contemporary ideas concerning gender and the family, an analysis of court hunting and other practices of the Habsburg court reveals that Maria Theresa’s problematic identity as a female ruler was neutralized in the manifestation of court practice and culture.

This paper begins by describing the historical context for Maria Theresa’s succession focusing on the rivalry between European Superpowers, Charles VI’s reign and family, and the Emperor’s preparation for his daughter’s succession. Since the ascension of Louis XIV, Habsburg predominance in Europe was undermined and Charles VI and Maria Theresa sought to regain hegemony. Charles VI issued the Pragmatic Sanction permitting a female heir and garnered its acceptance by nearly all of the European states, but it was essentially meaningless.

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and the court had to pursue other strategies to prepare for the transition to a female ruler. The second section discusses Maria Theresa’s rule, paying close attention to gender influences, and interprets her imperial conduct responding to her desire to promote Habsburg influence and legitimize her position as female monarch due to the failure of the Pragmatic Sanction. By analyzing state-sanctioned cultural projects, this section establishes culture as an enterprise for consolidating rule and expressing prestige. The third section puts forth hunting as my argument’s central evidence, beginning with the customary aristocratic hunting culture, its relationship to power and authority, and eventually transitioning into hunting’s manifestation at Charles VI’s court and how it paved the way for Maria Theresa’s succession. The final section investigates the multidimensional functions of hunting at Maria Theresa’s court and how, in addition to continuing its implications discussed in the previous section, the sport transformed gender ideals through the traditionally masculine sport.

Maria Theresa’s succession and reign presents an unusual juncture of court practices, contemporary ideas about gender and authority, and state building protocol. Historians have noted the ineffectiveness of the Pragmatic Sanction and the bitter contestation over Maria Theresa’s right to rule. At the same time, they recognized that Maria Theresa had a long and successful reign. The disjunction between the two perspectives raises a vital question: If Maria Theresa’s patrimonial inheritance was not accepted in the international political sphere, how did she, and her father, legitimize her position and pave the way for her triumph? I argue that, through imperial cultural projects, especially court hunting and its accompanying culture, Maria Theresa and the Habsburg court successfully challenged conventions about gender and its relationship to power. By pursuing these strategies, Maria Theresa effectively made herself head
of a powerful state and simultaneously increased the prestige of her dynasty and the realm under her control.
Charles VI, Maria Theresa and the Pragmatic Sanction

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Austrian branch of the Habsburg dynasty controlled one of the largest and most powerful European empires. The Habsburgs had achieved predominance in Europe during the reign of Charles V (1515-1556) and ruled over a large portion of central Europe, the Low Countries, Italy and Spain composing a realm famously remembered as “the empire where the sun never sets”. Near the end of his life, Charles V divided his empire giving his son control of Spain while his brother received the Holy Roman Empire and the Austrian crownlands. Following the termination of the Spanish Habsburg branch in 1700, the Austrian branch attempted to regain command of the kingdom and prevent their rivals, the French Bourbons, from achieving hegemony in Europe by gaining the Spanish throne. Charles VI, the younger brother of the current Holy Roman Emperor, was invested as the Habsburg candidate in the War of the Spanish Succession. In 1711, Charles VI succeeded his brother as Holy Roman Emperor and returned to Vienna with his wife. The Habsburgs’ allies, fearing the reunification of the Holy Roman Empire with the Spanish Empire, began discussing peace terms with France. Unable to challenge the Bourbons on their own and suffering from a decade of war, the Austrian Habsburgs signed a peace treaty with France in 1714 ending the war and vanquishing any hope of regaining the Spanish throne.

Charles’ reign as Holy Roman Emperor lasted for nearly thirty years ending with his death in 1740. Throughout his long reign, a constant problem haunted him: he and his wife failed to produce a male heir. The anxiety surrounding the issue began early in their marriage; while still living in Spain, Elisabeth Christine’s mother pressured her about bearing a son and future
Charles had a close relationship with his wife and eventually formed a family after having two daughters. Nonetheless, the lack of a son threatened the continuation of the patrilineal dynasty.

In early modern statecraft, marriages represented business arrangements rather than loving unions. The choice of a future monarch’s spouse forged political or military alliances, bolstered a claim to an inheritance or title, or secured territory. Since the Middle Ages, the European nobility had used strategic marriages as a state building enterprise. The Habsburg family had relied on this tactic to increase their territory from a small duchy in Switzerland during the Medieval period into the largest continental empire in the sixteenth century. Unlike their competitors, the Habsburgs used marriage to expand their domain and influence more than military conquest. As these marriages were political unions, they rarely formed out of true affection between the betrothed. Sometimes, the arranged marriages did produce loving unions but usually the feelings between the two had little influence on the decision of marriage or came after they both understood their role for their respective dynasties and each other.

In Charles and Elisabeth Christine’s case, the marriage was happy and Charles did not resent his wife for not giving birth to more sons. The birth of two daughters in 1717 and 1718 provided the couple with a small family of their own. The family spent a great deal of time together and became very close, especially in terms of early modern matrimony. Wishing to keep control of the realm within his dynasty and making up for the lack of a son, Charles VI

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designated the couple’s older daughter, Maria Theresa, as the heir to the Habsburg realm.

Maria Theresa was born in May of 1717 at the Hofburg in Vienna, the Imperial residence within the capital city. She grew up as the most eligible bachelorette for the royal and noble houses of Europe. For Charles, a suitable husband had to meet certain criteria. The ideal candidate would come from a noble family but any family with too much influence risked foreign interference in the continuation of Habsburg rule through Charles’ bloodline. In order to find the perfect match, Charles looked to his loyal subordinates, eventually deciding on the son of Leopold the Duke of Lorraine. Leopold bore close familial ties to the Habsburgs as his mother was the daughter of Emperor Ferdinand III. At the bequest of his mother Leopold had grown up at the Habsburg court alongside his cousin the future Emperor Charles VI. When Leopold inherited Lorraine, he dutifully served his cousin and supported the Habsburg political agenda. Noticing Leopold’s service, Charles rewarded his cousin, making an example for his other subjects that their loyalty would grant them Habsburg remuneration.

In 1723, Leopold’s son, Francis Stephan, arrived at the Imperial court to receive his education under the direction of his cousin and Emperor. Maria Theresa, just a young adolescent, became increasingly infatuated with Francis Stephan. Charles VI also grew fond of the boy and spent significant time with him. While the two minors were happily set on marriage, others disagreed with the union. The French Bourbons were particularly wary as the marriage placed the duchy of Lorraine under the control of the Habsburgs. The substantially duchy lay directly across France’s eastern border. In 1732, the Bourbon rulers of Spain and France made a secret compact that they would seize the duchy if the marriage went through.6

Opposition to the marriage came from within Charles’ own party as well. After the

disastrous Treaty of Vienna ending the War of the Polish Succession, Charles’ nobility and ministers became wary of the Emperor’s impending death and had little faith in the universal acceptance of Maria Theresa as ruler. The famous war hero Eugene of Savoy, one of Charles’ most trusted advisors, foresaw the likely opposition from Elector Charles Albert. Eugene urged Charles to betroth Maria Theresa to Charles Albert’s son. The Emperor refused the plea on account of his dislike of Charles Albert. Charles also received envoys from Spain proposing a marriage between Maria Theresa and the Spanish heir, Charles III. Charles VI refused this proposition as well, much to his daughter’s relief.

Maria Theresa and Francis Stephan were married in 1736 forming the House of Habsburg-Lorraine. Charles now had a loyal, male heir to accompany his daughter. Francis Stephan became the necessary figurehead for Maria Theresa’s participation in the male-dominated world of European politics. Eighteenth-century conventions would have expected Maria Theresa to play a subsidiary role to her husband but she did not conform to this expectation. Maria Theresa had a male counterpart to fulfill the patriarchal requirements of her titles, but she kept a tight grip on political authority. Accordingly, Francis Stephan remained out of governing the state, besides managing the dynasty’s financial affairs.

A female monarch contradicted contemporary ideas about authority. The early modern understanding of sex and family focused on male superiority and had a patriarchal understanding of human relationships. Like most European houses, the Habsburg line of succession had passed only through the male line. Charles VI had to publicly and legally announce the changing of customary Habsburg succession practice through an imperial decree known as the Pragmatic Sanction. The decree, issued in 1713, allowed female descendants to inherit the Habsburg domain by stating “if there is no male posterity on his [Charles] part, they [the hereditary
provinces] would return in the same way to his daughters born of legitimate marriage, always according to the order and right of primogeniture.” Charles’ drastic revoking of patrilineal succession reflected his ambition to protect his dynasty as the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire and Austria. The Habsburg historian Charles Ingrao argues that the sanction also “placed his brother’s (Joseph) two daughters behind any two children he might have, regardless of their sex.” The provision also declared the indivisibility of Habsburg domains and deflected any possible insurrection from a different branch of the family. With the never ending threat of the Ottoman Empire to the east and the French Bourbons to the west, Charles made sure to keep the Empire united under one Habsburg by preemptively attempting to prevent a rival candidate backed by another European power.

While issuing the sanction was easy, Charles had to ensure that the controversial change in was recognized. In order to guarantee that one of his daughters could inherit the throne, Charles had to make sure that both his subjects and foreign powers accepted the controversial statement. As evinced earlier, the balance of power in Europe was precarious with the great powers constantly fearing foreign hegemony while trying to exploit other kingdoms for their own benefit. Thus, they used Charles’ breaking of normal inheritance law as a way to seize advantages from the Habsburg family for their own state building projects. The maritime powers, Great Britain and the Dutch Republic, used the Sanction to decrease Austrian competition in international trade. They would only accept it if Charles disbanded the Ostend Company which

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7 George Frederick von Schick, Councillor of his Majesty and Private Secretary of Lower Austria. Sanctio Pragmatica, Vienna: 1713. In the appendix of the Treaty of 1738 between France and Austria, 35 CTS 220-7
8 Ingrao, The Habsburg Monarchy, 129.
9 George Frederick von Schick, Sanctio Pragmatica.
rivalled the English and Dutch East India Companies.\textsuperscript{10} Charles conceded and suffered an economic blow and reduced global reach and trade networks.\textsuperscript{11} France required more convincing. During the War of the Polish Succession in the 1730s, Austria fought against France. The war ended in 1738 with the Treaty of Vienna. In this treaty, France agreed to recognize the sanction while the Habsburgs were forced to give up portions of their Italian provinces and the duchy of Lorraine. The latter caveat proved unfavorable for Charles’ son-in-law, Francis Stephan, who had governed the duchy.

Charles also sought acceptance within the Habsburg realm as well. The Kingdom of Hungary, part of the Habsburg crownlands since the Ottoman wars of the early 16th century, posed a particular danger to the continuation of the dynasty. The kingdom had a history of defiance to Habsburg control and voiced its displeasure through its legislative institution, the Diet of Hungary. Ingrao specifies that the Hungarian Diet still held “the right to elect its King in the event that the dynasty failed to provide a legitimate male heir.”\textsuperscript{12} Thus, Hungarian approval of the Pragmatic Sanction was essential to the Emperor. Whereas previously Charles had cooperated with the Hungarian Nobility’s Diet, he now had to tighten his grip. Fearing insurrection, Charles reduced the local governing capabilities of the individual kingdoms ruled by the Habsburgs, such as Hungary and Croatia, and in turn, increased the control of the Imperial government in Vienna over these states.

Administratively, the Holy Roman Empire differed from the traditional kingdoms of Europe. The Austrian Habsburgs, through their election as Holy Roman Emperor, ruled a huge

\textsuperscript{10} Chris Cook and Phillip Broadhead, \textit{The Routledge Companion to Early Modern Europe, 1453-1763} (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 85.
\textsuperscript{12} Ingrao, \textit{The Habsburg Monarchy}, 129.
part of Europe in addition to their hereditary crownlands. As Habsburg leadership in the Empire’s territories was nominal and limited by geographic distance, they faced a greater risk of insubordination from these states. To exert authority over the Empire’s provinces, the Habsburg monarchy had to allow for many of the regional nobles and rulers to govern their locals while simultaneously displaying their allegiance to the Emperor. Charles, in order to have the Pragmatic Sanction heeded, had to appease or control his subordinates within his domain.

At the end of Charles’ reign, the rest of Europe had assured him that they would accept Maria Theresa as his heir. Unfortunately for the Habsburgs, some states quickly revoked their acceptance upon his death. The Duke of Bavaria, Charles Albert, laid claim to the throne on the basis of his marriage to Maria Amalia, the daughter of Charles’ brother Leopold, whom Charles had removed from Habsburg succession with the Pragmatic Sanction. France and Prussia supported Charles Albert against Maria Theresa and Francis Stephan and Europe was once again thrown into the War of the Austrian Succession (1743-1748). The war ended with the death of Charles Albert and his son’s decision to renounce his claim. Maria Theresa secured the throne, but had lost significant territory, such as the fertile province of Silesia. Throughout his reign, Charles VI had fervently pursued the acceptance of his groundbreaking Sanction, but his efforts proved to little avail. Ultimately, Charles and Maria Theresa turned to other strategies to legitimize her position within the Holy Roman Empire and the rest of Europe.
Politics, Culture, and Gender in Maria Theresa’s Reign

Understanding the setting for this problem, we now delve into the issues of gender in early modern monarchical politics and how this case challenged prevailing rules. Considering the historical background of the Habsburg’s dynastic crisis, this section introduces Maria Theresa’s methods of state building and how she addressed her gender and its contradiction of patriarchal sovereignty. As a ruler of diverse and distant territories, Maria Theresa faced a challenge in her ambitions to forge national unity under Habsburg authority. As mentioned in the previous section, she had to navigate major obstacles before she could pursue her agenda. First, the elected position of Holy Roman Emperor was reserved for men. In 1745, the electors chose Francis Stephan as the next Emperor while his wife, Maria Theresa, was crowned Empress. In this regard, his influence remained titular and he relinquished his governing duties to his wife, Empress Maria Theresa. Following Francis’s death, he and Maria Theresa’s son Joseph II became the elected Emperor. With her son as the elected Emperor, Maria Theresa maintained her authority over the Austrian government. Joseph however, was not as keen to remain a nominal head; he often fought with his mother especially over her religious intolerance. Still, Maria Theresa remained the source of authority within her family and their empire until her death in 1780. For a significant portion of the eighteenth century, a woman was in control of one of Europe’s powerful kingdoms.

Maria Theresa has interested historians continuously since the 19th century and there exists a greater and more encompassing body of scholarly literature than other Habsburg monarchs. Still, scholarly interpretation of Maria Theresa’s reign has followed other history
trends and remains categorized by limited themes.\textsuperscript{13} Most highlight her unique position as a female ruler. During the twentieth century and into the present, scholars attempted to locate Maria Theresa within their understanding of the European enlightenment. Early in the last century, historians characterized Maria Theresa as a conservative ruler who opposed the progressive ideas of the enlightenment.\textsuperscript{14} More recent scholarship challenges this view as a backwards conservative. Historian H.M. Scott, characterized her as an archetypal, enlightened despot noting her progressive social reforms, such as compulsory education for all children of the empire.\textsuperscript{15} Historical scholarship has also highlighted her impact on European culture, most often focusing on art, architecture and music. This section acknowledges the evidence of Maria Theresa’s progressiveness and especially her importance as a cultural patron and argues that these efforts made up her enterprise for Habsburg and Austrian distinction and influence. While historians have analyzed different aspects of Maria Theresa’s reign, none have synthesized these different aspects into an overarching vision of Maria Theresa’s attempt to consolidate her authority.\textsuperscript{16}

Like her father, Maria Theresa had aspirations for Habsburg grandeur and ambitiously pursued her goal. The Holy Roman Empire was on the defensive in the European game of

\textsuperscript{13} Themes include: her contribution to European art culture, her position in the European enlightenment, and her relationship with her many children. For example, Elisabeth Sturm-Bednarczyk and Elisabeth Sladek, Ceremonies, Feasts, Costumes: Viennese Porcelain Figures in the Age of Maria Theresa. (Vienna: C. Brandstätter, 2007)., Derek Beales. Joseph II. In the Shadow of Maria Theresa 1741-1780. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)., Marie Antoinette, Maria Theresia, and Olivier Bernier, Imperial Mother, Royal Daughter: The Correspondence of Marie Antoinette and Maria Theresa (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986).

\textsuperscript{14} Constance Lily Morris, Maria Theresa: The Last Conservative. (London: A.A. Knopf, 1938).


\textsuperscript{16} Michael Yonan, discussing the state-building effects of imperial art, provides a relevant analysis but one that only covers one aspect of her protocol. Michael Elia Yonan, Empress Maria Theresa and the Politics of Habsburg Imperial Art (State College: Penn State Press, 2011).
territorial expansion following Charles VI’s death. The growing power and expansionist tendencies of the militaristic Prussian kingdom led by Frederick the Great presented a new powerful rival in addition to the realm’s traditional Bourbon enemies. After Austrian defeats at the hands of the Prussians early in her reign, the Habsburg’s military never recovered their former military prestige. Wary of the growing Prussian influence over the Germanic principalities of the Holy Roman Empire, Maria Theresa recognized the need for a strong leader and enhanced union among the Empire’s many states. With her armies unlikely to provide a solution, the Empress turned to cultural politics.

In order to create a distinctive and unified style for the Holy Roman Empire, the Imperial court promoted native artists and styles. While other courts and cities of Europe embraced French art and fashion, the Habsburg court sought out indigenous artists and trends to foster national pride. This policy marked an explicit rejection of French styles and influence dominating European culture at the time, Specifically, Maria Theresa patronized Italian, Austrian, and German artists to craft her public image, and consequently, the empire’s public image. Maria Theresa’s remodeling of Schönbrunn palace into a modern palatial residence differed from the prevailing French palatial form contesting French supremacy of the arts, and discursively, French political supremacy on the European continent.17 Her prolific artistic project turned Vienna into a capital of European high culture rivalling Paris and brought a cosmopolitan air throughout eastern Habsburg lands contradicting their popular image as backwoods tainted by Ottoman and eastern European influence.

17 Michael Elia Yonan Empress Maria Theresa and the Politics of Habsburg Imperial Art. Yonan contrasts the renovations of Schonbrunn with the early modern archetype of a royal palace, Versailles, noting differences in the configurations of space and power in the two royal residences.
Maria Theresa’s renovation of her inherited palatial residence, Schönbrunn, provided a canvas for her nationalist cultural project. In the Court Society, Elias stressed the importance of the palace in representing the status of the owner. 18 The Habsburgs had owned the palace grounds since the sixteenth century and used them for hunting close to the Imperial court and residence in Vienna. During the reign of Maria Theresa’s uncle, Joseph I (1690-1711), the Habsburgs expanded the hunting lodge on the grounds starting its transition into a baroque palace. Renovations ceased upon the Emperor’s death, and his successor, Charles VI, continued utilizing the place as a hunting retreat. The location was eventually bequeathed to Maria Theresa who, after serious remodeling, made the palace her primary residence. Under the direction of the Austrian architect Nikolaus Pacassi, who in 1749 became the court architect, the palace offered a preeminent example of Rococo architecture in Europe. By having the imperial residence built in contemporary style by a native architect, the Habsburgs and Vienna challenged French predominance in palatial design.

The updated Schönbrunn expressed the greatness of the Habsburg family and their hereditary lands. The main gallery, a ballroom at the middle of the complex, served as the most public space of the building and often entertained the whole court with elaborate masquerades and parties. With the public importance of the space, Maria Theresa deliberately imparted the grandeur of her family and empire through art projects in the main gallery. A large fresco covering the ceiling dominates the epicenter of the public room. The fresco encapsulates the might of the empire through art. Maria Theresa and her husband majestically seated on a throne in the clouds command the fresco, emanating authority throughout the rest of the scene.

18 Elias, The Court Society. “The physical appearance of the house in space symbolizes for the grand seigneur and the whole of this society, the rank and importance of his ‘house’ in time, that is, the significance of his family over generations and therefore himself as its living representative.” 53.
Surrounding the imperial couple are symbolic personifications of monarchical qualities such as fortitude, prudence and justice. The proximity of this symbolism to the Emperor and Empress imbeds the qualities into the viewer’s perceptions of the Habsburg monarchy. The periphery of the fresco depicts the territories of the Empire. Each side presents an important crown land ruled by the Habsburgs and symbolizes the important role of the respective provinces in making up the totality of the empire. The artist, Gregorio Guglielmi, symbolized each province’s contribution to the empire’s prosperity by delineating the province’s most important output in artistic representation. The image represents the variety of the empire’s provinces and their contribution to forming a united kingdom. With the Imperial couple as the focal point, the fresco argues that these diverse lands and qualities are only unified by the presence of the Habsburg authority.
As the primary residence for Maria Theresa and her family and thus the Imperial court, the palace contained items and artistry displaying the wealth and authority of the Habsburgs throughout the rest of the rooms. Early modern regents relied on their consumption of luxury materials to express their status. One way to convey such cultural authority was through knowledge and collections of exotic art and materials. This proved especially important for the Austrian Habsburgs as they lacked the colonial bases that provided other European powers with exotic luxuries. Maria Theresa tastes for exotic cultures was primarily sinophilic. During the eighteenth century, an increasing desire for products from China motivated long distance trade. Still, the distance and difficulty of obtaining these objects in Europe made them expensive. To possess such material or art evoked a sense of global reach and cosmopolitan knowledge. Accordingly, Maria Theresa dedicated two rooms to the exotic culture and filled them with detailed and costly Chinese Lacquer paneling. In other areas of the palace, Maria Theresa spared no expense in obtaining and displaying Chinese porcelain and silk.

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During the early modern period, aristocratic women gained cultural recognition and identity as patrons of the arts.²¹ Maria Theresa inherited her fondness for art collecting and patronage from the Habsburg court contextualizing her upbringing. During Charles VI’s reign, he had also promoted native artists and architects to craft the international image of Habsburg and Austrian culture. Notably, his patronage of Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, a Baroque architect from the Austrian city of Graz, for designing Imperial residences and state buildings presented an early push to turn Habsburg domains into stylish, but noticeably Germanic, centers. Moreover, noble families close to Charles VI, such as the House of Schwarzenberg and the House of Savoy, brought old masters’ paintings and promising contemporary artists from the Empire’s provinces in Italy to their individual courts and to the Imperial court. Combined the nobility’s patronage of Austrian and German artists, the amassing of famous works of art emitted a sense of heightened Baroque culture present within Vienna and the Empire.²² Maria Theresa not only continued these practices but also accelerated and updated them to reflect new trends in art and decor. By the second half of the eighteenth century, Vienna rivaled Paris as Europe’s leading cultural center. Consequently, the city attracted prominent European cultural icons such as Mozart and Beethoven.

Also in accord with her project of promoting Habsburg, and thus Austrian and Holy Roman culture, Maria Theresa made her royal art collection publicly accessible. The establishment of the Imperial Royal Picture Gallery allowed non-noble subjects of the Empire to view the magnificence of Habsburg collections. The new gallery also became a center for art

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²² Maria Theresa and the Arts. Ed. Stella Rollig, and Georg Lechner (Munich: Hirmer, 2017.) 13. George Lechner explains that the sculptor Xavier Messerschmidt, only became known to Maria Theresa through the patronage of the Liechtenstein family.
education for the general population. The Habsburg family collection contained many pieces from the Renaissance and the ancient world making up one of the largest and most valuable collections in the world. By providing a comprehensive representation of European art forms for the purpose of education, Maria Theresa paved the way for future generations of Austrian natives to excel in the practice as well as increasing the international reputation of Austrian culture.

To further modernize and elevate the position of the Empire, Maria Theresa undertook a series of reform projects. Some of these reforms reflect the growing trend of the enlightened, yet absolute monarch. For example, under Maria Theresa, the Codex Theresianus, was drafted. This document outlined a series of civil rights of citizens of the Empire and paved the way for the future General Civil Code implemented in 1812. Other examples include her reform of the Austrian education system and introduction of new ideas about health and medicine. While, considered conservative, especially in her ideas on religion, by her son and successor, the enlightened Joseph II, Maria Theresa’s reforms introduced progressive ideas to the realm.

Maria Theresa pursued unification of Habsburg crownlands by restructuring her government. In order to create a centralized government under the leadership of the imperial family, Maria Theresa drafted a new constitution compacting the administration of the Inner-Austrian provinces under ministers directly responsible to the Empress and her husband. In her political treatise delineating the new form of government, Maria Theresa stressed that she would direct the affairs of each province, stating, “I decided that I would myself, with H.M. the Emperor, attend the weekly sessions concerned with the establishment of the system, and thus


personally control and enact the orders to be sent out to the Provinces.” By establishing imperial agents without private interests in their controlled provinces and receiving direct orders from the Empress, Maria Theresa could exert influence over the provinces and maintain a sense of unification under Habsburg leadership. These efforts to rationalize administration of the empire complimented her efforts to cultivate a native style in the arts.

Through state-led reforms, as well as projects enhancing Imperial and noble material culture, the Holy Roman Empire emerged as a center of both cultural and absolutist authority in Europe. Her success at these projects and governing in general stabilized the Empire, especially in comparison to its precarious state at the start of her reign. Maria Theresa skillfully balanced this progress with her mission to create her identity as a woman fit to rule an empire.

As the first female Habsburg ruler, Maria Theresa’s gender took center stage in her state building protocol. Strategically, Maria Theresa’s representation celebrated positive aspects of femininity as well as traditional masculine attributes expected from a king. Court-commissioned art treated her as both a powerful ruler but also a modest woman. Some portraits appeal to the maternal sense of femininity portraying Maria Theresa surrounded by her husband and many children. Alternatively, other depictions show her as militant leader. By having an iconographic project that encompassed multiple identities, Maria Theresa and her court sought to legitimate her right to play a role that was traditionally reserved for men. Through these propaganda programs, Maria Theresa disarmed critics of contestation over her right to rule as woman and her complete authority.

In the eighteenth century, mainstream ideas about gender believed both male and female

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held specific and distinct qualities. Whereas earlier times saw gender as existing on a spectrum, by the eighteenth century, men and women were characterized as fundamentally different. Men were assigned traits such as greater intelligence and strength while women were believed to be prone to emotions and held greater modesty and piety. Expectations of gender’s role in society also diverged. Society expected men to provide for the family through work and service while women were confined to domestic and matronly duties. Men held the source of authority in the family and women were subject to their male heads and forced to play a subordinate role. Still, as the historian Thomas Lacquer argues, the establishment of these gender-specific characteristics opened up new expressions of power for women. By adopting positive features from both genders and also appealing to new ideas about the power behind femininity, such as domesticity and passivity, Maria Theresa challenged eighteenth-century gender norms asserting male predominance.

From 1737, the year of her marriage, until 1756, when Maria Theresa was thirty-nine, she had sixteen children, thirteen of whom survived to adulthood. As a female member of the Habsburg family, she had performed her primary duty to ensure the continuation of the family’s bloodline. Maria Theresa’s numerical success at producing children presented her as an effective maternal figure, especially in comparison to her mother. Maria Theresa’s many offspring also

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27 Lacquer, emphasizing the implications of the two-sex model on eighteenth-century power dynamics, states, “These confrontations occurred in the vast new spaces opened up by the intellectual, economic, and political revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were fought in terms of sex-determinant characteristics of male and females bodies because the truths of biology had replaced divinely ordained hierarchies or immemorial custom as the basis for the creation and distribution of power in relations between men and women. Thomas Lacquer. *Making Sex*, 193.
elevated her, in a dynastic sense, over her primary rival, Frederick the Great of Prussia, who remained childless his whole life.

The new authority emanating from maternity inspired various art projects throughout her adult life. In 1755, an Imperial court painter, Martin van Meytens, painted a portrait depicting the Imperial family for the recently renovated Schönbrunn palace. Maria Theresa and Francis Stephan sit in chairs opposite each other and are surrounded by eleven children, ranging from infants to teenagers. (See figure. 2) The two oldest daughters stand directly next to their father while the older sons hover near their mother. The sons gesture towards their mother and one reaches tenderly for her hand suggesting a warm and loving relationship between Maria Theresa and her sons. The physical proximity between mother and son and their symbolic gesture manifests the succession of the Empire and also their possession of the dynastic bloodline from the direct descent of their mother and her paternal family.
Figure 2. Martin van Meytens, *Maria Theresa surrounded by her family*, 1754-1755. Oil on canvas. Schönbrunn, Vienna. Photo from Habsburger.net.
A much later family portrait, also created by an Imperial artist native to the empire named Friedrich Fuger, depicts an older Maria Theresa wearing a black widow’s dress. (See figure 3) Here, she is surrounded by some of her adult children. On the Queen’s left, her oldest son and heir, Joseph, casually leans over the back of his mother’s chair gazing at the picture she holds at the center of the painting and carefully absorbing his mother’s lesson. Unlike the earlier family
portrait symmetrically balancing the Emperor and Empress on either side, this picture places Maria Theresa at the center making her the focal point for the viewer. With the death of Francis Stephan, there was no longer a need to place the husband and wife as joint-rulers. Her dress and facial expression emanate the sober authority of a widow and a mother. Her black dress and bonnet also distinguishes her from her sons’ decorated military uniforms and her daughters elaborate dresses. The close encirclement of the children around their seated mother emits a sense of devotion and care from the children for their elderly mother. At the same time, Maria Theresa’s distant gaze and presentation of a small picture and the close attention of her children exudes matriarchal wisdom and power that she has transmitted to her adult children.

The prevalence of family portraits produced during Maria Theresa’s reign not only created an iconographic project that glorified the Queen’s matriarchal qualities but also elevated the newest royal European family, the House of Habsburg-Lorraine. The inaugural house, started by Maria Theresa and Francis Stephan and the heirs to the ancient House of Habsburg, inherited the throne through their maternal bloodline. Maria Theresa and Francis Stephan’s large number of children provided inheritors of the Habsburg crownlands and presented suitable candidates for marriage into other important European dynasties. By portraying her children in regal portraits accompanied by their parents, Maria Theresa desired to present her children and heirs to the Empire as well as to the noble houses across Europe.

While the Imperial art project depicted Maria Theresa’s femininity in a maternal and familial context, the portrayal of her capability and designation as ruler also emerged in masculine forms. One of the most telling of these examples portrays the young Queen performing her ceremonial ride during her coronation as the King of Hungary. The painting shows Maria Theresa astride a trotting steed in full Hungarian regalia and fiercely raising the
ceremonial sword of St. Stephen above her crowned head. (see figure 4) The horse and monarch stride directly towards the viewer and exude confidence, as if Maria Theresa dares anyone to dispute her claim. The regent literally breaks out of the frame and charges into the viewer’s space. The masculine and militant mood of the figure presents a different side of Maria Theresa. Whereas the paintings of the Queen and her family showed a matronly Maria Theresa, this image expressed her as a capable masculine monarch. The accompanying portrait of her husband depicts a passive husband in comparison to his charging wife. (see figure 5) Emperor Francis is presented in the traditional profile perspective shown moving across the pictorial plane as opposed to breaking through it.
Figure 4. Hirsch the Younger, *Coronation Ride of Maria Theresa in Pressburg (Bratislava)*, 1747. Oil on canvas. Bratislava City Gallery, Bratislava. Photo from wikimedia.org

Figure 5. Hirsch the Younger, *Equestrian Portrait of Francis Stephan*, 1747. Oil on canvas. Bratislava City Gallery, Bratislava. Photo from wikimedia.org
The Hungarian kingdom presented a significant problem to the Pragmatic Sanction as it retained the ability to pick its leader if Charles did not produce a male heir. To preempt opposition to her claim to the throne, Maria Theresa learned how to ride a horse in order to perform the riding portion of her coronation ceremony as the King of Hungary.\(^{29}\) Traditionally, the newly crowned monarch rode a charger horse to the top of a hill and swung the royal sword in all four cardinal directions symbolizing the monarch’s promise to protect Hungary on all fronts. This symbolic ritual was physically taxing but Maria Theresa’s efforts paid off and she performed successfully and impressed the local Hungarian population. Her triumphant presentation and diligent preparation shows the Queen’s ambition to rule as well as her adoption of a masculine identity to fit her role as a monarch. In fact, official nomenclature, when referring to Maria Theresa as regent of Hungary, used the title *King* instead of Queen. This switching of gender and her performance of the ceremonial coronation ride presented an answer to those who believed a female incapable of ruling Hungary. The attribution of masculine symbolism and title to a female individual achieved a newfound harmony of previously gender-specific features that reassured viewers of Maria Theresa’s capacity to rule. The combination and comparison of gender roles was a unifying theme in Maria Theresa’s efforts to legitimize her right to rule despite her sex.

Maria Theresa’s decorative remodeling of her father’s hunting lodge at Schönbrun contained both feminine and masculine imagery often juxtaposed together. Eighteenth-century art customs presented this imagery in the form of classical gods and heroes. The important female goddesses Minerva and Diana were represented as well as the faithful ancient widow,

Artemesia. This latter figure proved especially symbolic for Maria Theresa, as it had for an earlier widowed European ruler, Catherine Medici. Yonan argues, “Artemisia had long served as a prototype for female monarchs who needed to confirm their moral dimensions.” Maria Theresa’s appropriation of classical figures reflects the European trend of looking to ancient Rome and Greece for cultural inspiration. This neoclassical revival accelerated in the eighteenth century. Increasing archaeological work presented rediscovered forms of classical art that contemporary artists closely scrutinized and, in turn, utilized in their own works.

Schönbrunn also contained extensive gardens filled with classically inspired sculpture. One sculpture portrays a scene from the legend of Hercules. The legend describes an ancient myth involving a switch of gender roles; Hercules, as part of his labors, is forced to be the slave of Omphale, the Queen of Lydia, for a year due to a previous murder he committed. During his tenure, Hercules, the epitome of masculinity, is forced to perform traditionally-female duties, such as spinning wool and to wear women’s’ clothes while Omphale goes on adventures donning his lion skin cloak and wielding his club. In the depiction at Schönbrunn, the classical hero appears smitten by Omphale and holds a spindle while Omphale, dons his lionskin and rests his massive club at her side. He is not portrayed as the strong, masculine hero but rather effeminate in his infatuation for the beautiful Omphale. The presentation of the classical hero in a rare moment of femininity reveals the power of women to disarm and subjugate strong men. This ancient legend of gender reversal fit well into the context of Maria Theresa’s court and her representation of masculinity.

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Figure 6. Joseph Anton Weinmüller, *Omphale*, 1773-1780. Marble sculpture. Schönbrunn, Vienna. Picture from schoenbrunn.at

Figure 7. Ignaz Platzer, *Heracles*, 1773-1780. Marble sculpture. Schönbrunn, Vienna. Picture from schoenbrunn.at
Hunting in the Eighteenth Century and at Charles VI’s Court

During the early eighteenth century, hunting reached its apex as a leisure activity at the Habsburg court. Emperor Charles VI’s passion for the sport elevated its importance at the royal court and reinforced the symbolism associated with hunting. The material and sociopolitical facets of the blood sport contributed to the monarchy’s public identity. Period texts, including those written by the Emperor, and iconography, explain the variety and importance of hunting at the Austrian court. Such early descriptions describe an elite form of hunting that sized from small hunts including the Emperor, the royal hunting retainers, and perhaps a guest or two to multiple day affairs in which a large area was used to stage a massive hunt featuring scores of hunters and game as well as festivals and royal pageantry. Hunting became an important means for navigating the royal court and expressing its wealth and glory.31

During the early modern period, hunting was the most popular recreation for the European elite, landholding class. This pursuit had evolved from an activity providing the necessary protein for early humans into a structured and ritualistic performance. As Europeans had settled into an agricultural and commercial society, they no longer relied on game as the primary source of meat. Still, the relatively small human population in Europe during the Middle Ages remained largely in small communities surrounded by vast wilderness rife with game.32 Beginning in the Medieval period, the sport was reserved for large landholders and limited to the ruler of the demesne on which the hunt took place. Under the feudal system, the vast majority of the population, serfs and farmers, were prohibited from hunting on the lands of their seigneur. In the noble and royal courts, hunting was often a daily activity and served as an outdoor setting for

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the political and business discussions. Accordingly, participating in the hunt with the reigning host secured status and influence for the individual courtier. During the Middle Ages, the sport took many forms. To pursue smaller game, the courts used trained birds of prey, such as hawks, to seek out and retrieve the game. Packs of hounds also participated by tracking larger game, eventually cornering and debilitating prey in order to provide an easy kill for the pursuing hunters. Both dogs, and to a lesser degree, birds of prey, continued to participate in the royal hunts throughout the early modern period.33

Beginning in the sixteenth century, the setting for court hunting excursions experienced a change. Increased populations caused the transformation of forests and wilderness into tillable farmland. The need for fuel, especially for the industrial production of metals and other materials, diminished the woodlands that had previously covered Europe. Additionally, the founding of distant colonies and contact with previously unknown countries during the Age of Discovery fostered global trade. The long distance commerce required sturdy ships, which further depleted the native timber reserves on the European continent.34 During this time, royal and noble courts began to set aside tracts of land for hunting purposes. While hunts still took place across the general countryside, the demarcation of certain areas as hunting preserves responded to the pressures from the transformation of the landscape.

Simultaneously, the sport was subject to human interference and transformed into a complex system of control by the royal court. Royal foresters were employed to maintain the parks and protect them from poaching.35 In preparation for the hunt, large quantities of game

34 Sally Jeanrenaud, *Communities and Forest Management in Western Europe* (Gland: IUCN, 2001).
35 Additional Imperial hunting officials included the Imperial gun loaders.
were often brought in if the native population was deemed insufficient. Local residents were employed or required to serve as batters for the royal hunt. This dangerous, obligatory duty required peasants to drive the released game towards the awaiting hunters without compensation. Sometimes man-made structures were implemented to direct the animals towards the hunting party. Through human intervention and fabrication, the multitude of game included in the hunt seemed to the participant a wholly natural bounty. The hunts also grew larger during this time often resulting in the killing of hundreds or even thousands of animals and employing scores of individuals working behind the scenes to ensure that the event ran smoothly. The increased fabrication and size caused the royal hunts to become highly visible and facilitated the performance of royal power and authority for local and foreign audiences.

By the reign of Charles VI in the beginning of the eighteenth century, hunting symbolized the facets of a powerful regent. Most obviously, it represented man’s mental and physical dominance over the beasts in the dangerous forests. It also manifested the regent’s authority over their subjects. The exclusivity of the hunts as well as the reliance on local commoners to stage them reinforced the social hierarchy in direct accordance to the royal pursuit of leisure. Hunting in the countryside had mixed results on the local populations. On the one hand, it controlled the vermin population and protected local agriculture, on the other hand, the extravagant affairs had a detrimental effect. Unconcerned nobles often trampled over farm fields and pastures. Second, the peasants working behind the scenes were close to the targeted game and risked getting shot themselves. The public danger and wastefulness did not escape public critique. The satirical French writer, Ange Goudar, posing as a Chinese envoy visiting the courts

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of Europe, gives an anecdote on hunting in the year 1763 highlighting the number of workers’ injuries and mocks the courts’ belief that hunting was symbolic of war by describing in military terms the great battles and massacres waged upon the animals.37 During one excursion, the poor-sighted Charles VI accidentally shot and killed the Prince of Schwarzenberg. The dying prince purportedly stated, “It was ever my duty to give my life for my sovereign.”38 One can only imagine the number of non-noble retainers and workers who suffered in the line of duty as a result of the near-sighted King’s passion for hunting.

Hunting also provided physical training and a rite of passage for young male nobles and princes. By the 18th century, the Habsburgs and their royal courtiers did not participate firsthand in the dangers of warfare that plagued their nation, instead performing a ceremonial role as head of the military. As a substitution for participation in warfare, hunting displayed the ruler’s physical prowess and martial skill in a safer environment than the battlefield. Consequently, the monarch played the central role and all activities centered on him.

During Charles VI’s reign, these symbolic aspects of the sport were reinforced by his court during hunting excursions. At Charles VI’s court the sport demonstrated additional importance. The emperor kept a diary for recording information on his hunting trips throughout the yearly hunting calendar and his diary also contains constant references to hunting.39

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The recording of hunting and hunting related events was not unique to Charles VI. Stefan Seitschek explains that the recording of hunting results was a tradition for the Habsburgs dating back to Maximilian I.
representation of hunting at Charles’ court reinforced Charles’ familial bond with his close family. Francis Stephan, the chosen husband of Maria Theresa and future Holy Roman Emperor, was Charles’ favorite hunting partner. According to the Emperor’s hunting diary for the year 1725, Francis Stephan was by far the most common guest of the Emperor during hunts in which the whole court did not participate.\textsuperscript{40} For the teenage prince participation not only symbolized his masculine training but also, as the number of hunts including only the King and his future son-in-law argues, preparation for his subsequent succession and direct education from the current ruler. The proximity between the two achieved a strong relationship that cemented Francis Stephan’s candidacy for marriage to Maria Theresa.

Other members of the royal family often accompanied the Emperor as well. Information revealed in his diary presents his sisters and wife as his most frequent companions following Francis Stephan. In his personal writings, Charles expresses pleasure at his family’s shared bonding over the sport by speaking in more emotional terms than the bland and descriptive tone that his diary usually takes. On November 12, 1725 the Emperor notes an enjoyable excursion with his adolescent daughter and her future husband the young Prince of Lorraine.\textsuperscript{41} Occurring ten years before their marriage, such events reveal the Emperor’s desire to have a close visible relationship with his future successors and ensure that their future union will be effective in ruling the Empire. The Emperor’s fondness for familial inclusion went beyond his close blood relatives. For example, when Elisabeth Christine’s parents came to visit their daughter and son-in-law, the Emperor entertained them with an intimate hunting excursion.

In addition to direct participation by members of the royal family, iconographic projects...


\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
used hunting to display the affective bond existing between Charles, his family, and his future son-in-law. To this day, at Schönbrunn hangs three hunting portraits depicting Charles, his wife Elisabeth Christine, and Francis Stephan. (See figures 8-10) The three portraits immortalize the family’s shared love of hunting. They hang in the designated hunting room, a space that pays homage to the palace’s original purpose as a hunting residence for the Habsburgs prior to Maria Theresa’s renovations. The portraits of the Emperor and the Empress were produced by an unknown artist as a pair and face each other. The couple calmly look out at the viewer, exuding a sense of dignified relaxation following or preceding a hunt. Both regents have nearby firearms revealing the equal participation of royal woman in hunts. Charles' outfit resembles that of a military officer and an unrecognizable medal and dirk further reinforce the military symbolism.
Figure 8. Unknown Artist, Charles VI in Hunting Dress. Oil on canvas. Schönbrunn, Vienna. Photo by author.

Figure 9. Unknown Artist, Elisabeth Christine in Hunting Dress. Oil on canvas. Schönbrunn, Vienna. Photo by author.

Figure 10. Unknown Artist, Francis at Age 15 in his Hunting Attire, 1723. Oil on canvas. Schönbrunn, Vienna. Photo by author.
In between the King and Queen, hangs a much larger portrait of a young Francis Stephan. Francis Stephan wears similarly extravagant clothing and holds a rifle. The young prince, depicted as an adolescent or young teenager, is accompanied by a hound who loyally gazes upwards towards his master. This symbolic fidelity presents the young prince as a natural leader and predicts the future loyalty of Habsburg subjects to Francis Stephan and also suggests the prince’s impending loyalty to his betrothed. The arrangement of the three paintings represents the closeness between the Emperor and Empress and their son-in-law. By having such a large portrait between the smaller portraits of the Emperor and Empress, the young prince takes center stage in the presentation of the royal family acting as the representative son of a couple who only produced daughters. The inclusion of the portraits in a highly visible space, both during Charles’ later reign and Francis Stephan and Maria Theresa’s subsequent reign, responded directly to the question of male leadership that plagued the Habsburg court.

The smaller scale hunts of the Emperor were the most exclusive. An early description of the smaller hunts by the prince bishop Harrach in 1718 reflects the exclusivity and status gained from being included. Upon arrival, the bishop received an Imperial escort and was offered an Imperial carriage. The bishop describes the honor of being served by the Imperial gun reloader as a royal favor of the Emperor. This honor was reserved for the Emperor, the Empress and the Archduchess; Harrach remarks that even the great ministers did not receive this favor. The diary mentions other examples of non-family courtiers accompanying the Emperor on his smaller hunts, for example the participation of the Prince of Modena in a bird hunt held at Schönbrunn and a hunt in Moravia with Joseph Wenzel, the Prince of Liechtenstein and future Imperial

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envoy to France, and the Emperor’s close friend Eugene of Savoy. The resulting social capital gained from participating in intimate hunts with the emperor gave the courtiers higher status and influence within the Habsburg court. The three nobles recorded as the Emperor’s hunting partners held important positions within the court hierarchy and the imperial government. The intimate hunts, as a social space, reinforced the interdependency between monarch and courtiers; With the regent as the source of privilege and rank, the nobility had to remain at the royal court and compete over their regent’s attention. This ensured that the monarch could keep a close eye on the nobility, and by having them play against each other instead of trying to subvert power from the king, the nobility’s rebellious tendencies were repressed.

For members of the court esteemed enough for the Emperor to invite on the hunts, the opportunity elevated their status within the courtier hierarchy and also gave them a personal audience with the Emperor while partaking in his favorite pastime. Hunting not only provided a setting for the court’s power system, but also official ranks within the hierarchical structure. A certain honor relating to the imperial hunting system was the bestowing of the title of First Master of the Hunt. Charles bestowed the honor upon Count Johan Julius von Hardegg. The position was an important one within the court hierarchy and required significant work besides its ceremonial protocol. For ceremonial purposes, the imperial symbol of the position was a velvet dog collar embroidered with gold. An example dating from the 19th century still exists and is part of the imperial treasury. Although hunting with birds of prey was not as popular as in earlier times, Charles and his court did occasionally take part in falconry and the position of Master of the Falcons was a coveted position among the nobility at the court.

Other times, foreign guests or courtiers were invited to participate in more intimate hunts

43 Seitschek, “Die Tagebucher Kaiser Charless VI. (1720-1725)”
so that the Imperial family could closely inspect them. The historian Stefan Seitschek also notes a hunt in which the archduchess invited a potential marriage candidate for her daughters.\textsuperscript{44} Through these intimate hunts, Charles and his Habsburg family could get to know guests and courtiers and evaluate their loyalty and worth. Hunting allowed the imperial family to test potential marriage candidate’s ability to join and blend with the Habsburgs and their dynastic goals.

Larger scale hunts on the other hand involved most of the court and required significant preparation. They often involved a symbolic performance or spectacle that focused on the Emperor or one of his family members. The grandiose affairs could go on for days. Charles VI’s diary describes a ceremonial hunting spectacle put on for the Turkish Grand ambassador in which the Empress and the Archduchess dressed as Amazons and paraded past the ambassadors’ quarters past rows of Janissaries and performing Turkish musicians. The diary also notes the serving of coffee and sweets.\textsuperscript{45} During another display of royal pageantry through hunting, celebrating the ascension of Charles' sister, Maria Elisabeth, as sovereign of the Habsburg Netherlands. The imperial celebration represented the unmarried Maria Elisabeth as the ancient Roman goddess of chastity and hunting, Diana, and extolled her skill at the sport.\textsuperscript{46} The extravagant affair took the form of a water hunt, in which a body of water was segmented and animals were forced to navigate their way through while the court or the Emperor shot at them.

\textsuperscript{44} Seitschek, “Die Tagebcher”, 281.
\textsuperscript{45} Seitschek, “Die Tagebcher”. 278.
from an elevated platform. The conditions made the animals easy targets for the hunters. Such human interference and creativity reflects the changing nature of hunting in order to satisfy the royal and noble courts thirst for blood in novel situations instead of more traditional forms of hunting. Charles’ diary also describes hunting excursions in which prepared barricades funneled game directly in front of the Emperor’s imperial platform. These types of hunts cost more and required extensive preparation but they made an impression on the court’s spectators and reflected Habsburg power and their domination over nature.

The Habsburg court subjected animals to other tortures for their own pleasure and as a performance of court spectacle. Charles records fox tossing as a blood sport performed during late March or early April in the yearly hunting calendar. This sadistic sport involved flinging a fox high into the sky from a sling held by two courtiers within a setup arena. The terrified fox was usually incapacitated on impact but still possessed some danger to the throwers if it latched onto them or survived and fought for its life. Other popular blood sports at the court included bear and badger baiting and one incident in which a lion gifted to the court was made to fight bears. The sadistic pleasure killing reflects eighteenth-century court culture’s feeling of dominance over wild and dangerous beasts in their reduction to mere expendable toys for the court’s enjoyment and displaying of court pageantry.

The imperial court hunted an assortment of game besides deer and vermin. Charles’ diary refers a variety of species including many birds such as woodcocks, herons, and also wild boar, and fish. While some of these animals were eaten, the diversity of species hunted shows Charles' gluttonous appetite for chase and slaughter. The extravagance of these hunts, some of which killed thousands of prey in mere hours, followed the insatiable tastes of the eighteenth-century nobility helped present the court as wealthy and fashionable.
The manifestation of hunting at Charles VI’s court reflects the greater hunting culture of the time period. Its exclusivity and overindulgence speak to eighteenth-century elites’ feelings on their lavish lifestyles and the resulting ignorance to less ostentatious manners of living. Hunting provided a means for Charles to get to know members of his court while defining and upholding the court’s social hierarchy. The next section will discuss the unique role that hunting played in answering challenges to Charles' succession crisis.
Hunting and Maria Theresa’s Succession

Charles' manifestation of hunting at the Austrian Habsburg court, like many other court projects and activities, addressed the problematic succession of Maria Theresa and Francis Stephan. As mentioned in the previous section, the culture of hunting of elite Europeans contained a complex system of power dynamics and courtly spectacle that shaped the overall public identity of the Habsburg royal family. Through hunting, Charles sought to describe Maria Theresa’s ability to rule. Her own participation in the sport exemplified her adoption of masculine features associated with royal authority. Hunting enabled her to display her masculine capacity to rule in spite of her female body. The power dynamics within the sport allowed Charles to strengthen relationships with his noble subjects in order to ensure their loyalty to their future Empress.

This section first explores the practice of diplomatic gifts related to hunting as an absolutist monarch’s strategy of controlling their nobility and building relationships with rival nations. In Charles' case, this procedure related to his primary goal of leaving behind an empire that would be loyal to his successor, Maria Theresa. The publication and distribution of images or texts recounting such diplomatic gifting, as well as other court events relating to hunting, reveals a propaganda strategy designed to move beyond the Imperial court and into the Empire’s general public. Finally, this section discusses the gender roles present in hunting and how, at the Imperial Habsburg court, gender identities in hunting sought to normalize female hunters and elevate the prominence of women’s participation, sometimes even to the point of apotheosis. At the eighteenth-century Habsburg court, hunting drew men and women into a shared realm of martial leisure and gave women a context in which they could assert their authority.
During the early modern period, the bestowing and receiving of gifts was an important form of aristocratic and international diplomacy. The gifts served as a material message from the giver to the recipient that conveyed a political message as well as a cultural one. The gift also gave important meaning to the recipient, especially if they were of lower status within the European aristocracy than the giver. Receiving a gift from someone of a higher status reflects the recipient’s skill at navigating aristocratic circles. The object represented the owner’s translation of social power into a material item that served as record of a successful interpersonal interaction. Through the exchanges between the Austrian Habsburgs and their Empire’s aristocracy as well as with foreign courts established a material-based linkage between the giver and recipient forming a large network of relationships with trusted allies as well as potential rivals or usurpers.

The inanimate objects associated with the sport, usually rifles or other firearms, provided luxury material for the practice. The guns represented a connection between the original owner and their designated recipient. An example in the Habsburg armory, a highly decorated piece made in Spain by the gunsmith Diego Ventura for Charles VI after he accepted Bourbon ownership of the nation, expresses a portion of the Spanish population’s continued loyalty to the Habsburgs and its imagery, pays homage to “Austrian rule in the city” (see figure 11) Charles’ rifle collection contained many Spanish pieces. This rifle, and other Spanish rifles in Charles’ rifle collection symbolizes his dynastic ambition to unite the Kingdom of Austria and Spain. His ownership and patronization of Spanish rifles argues that, while Charles was unsuccessful in

conquering Spain with his military, his influence in the country and his connection with its population continued throughout the rest of his reign.

Figure 11. Diego Ventura. Flintlock for Charles VI, 1722. Hofjagd- and Rustkammer, Vienna. Photo from khm.at

The process of presenting the gift often took place during a ceremony or an important event. Charles received a hunting rifle from the Prince of Wolfenbuttel celebrating his marriage in 1708. The Duke gave Charles VI a luxury wheel lock decorated with medallions depicting the Duke’s daughter and Charles' new wife, Elisabeth Christine. The characters reflect the Empress’s famed beauty but also ensure the young Emperor that, as long as he maintains and respects his marriage, his noble in-laws will dutifully serve their emperor. Johann Sebastian Hauschka produced the decorated wheel lock. Hauschka was a prominent rifle maker connected to the Duke’s court and often contributed to the family’s diplomatic proceedings. Besides the piece for Charles VI, he produced diplomatic pieces for Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia and Louis XV of France as well as a rifle commissioned by the Holy Roman prince of Salm in order for its gifting
to his superior, Maria Theresa. Gifting hunting rifles to Charles VI was a conscious decision of the givers, as his passion for hunting was well known throughout the courts of Europe.

Hunting weapons provided a setting for not only rich ornamentation of jewels and artistic precision but also a platform for symbolic conveyance of the owner’s identity, such as the medallion depicting the Emperor’s wife. Other symbolic representations connote the owner’s status within the hierarchy of the Holy Roman Empire. A pair of pistols from the well-studied rifle collection of the Prince of Liechtenstein contains an artistic treatment of the family coat of arms that is surrounded by the collar of the noble order of the Golden Fleece. This prestigious order was under the command of the Holy Roman Emperor, thus the enshrouding of the family’s coat of arms in the imagery of the noble order conveys the continual belonging of the family within the order and also its ensuing loyalty to the order, and consequently, the Habsburgs and their Empire.

During Charles’ reign, the position of Oberstjagermeister (master of the hunt) gained social capital due to the importance of hunting at the court. Count Julius Hardegg, served as Oberstjagermeister for Charles VI. In 1726, Count Hardegg presented the Emperor with a two volume atlas of Imperial hunting grounds along the Danube made by Giovanni Giacomo Marinoni, a prominent cartographer employed by the Habsburg court.

The title page of the atlas portrays the presentation of the map from the Oberstjagermeister to the Emperor. The image depicts Charles astride his steed accepting the

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atlas handed to him by Count Hardegg during a hunting party. The difference stances symbolize the hierarchical relationship between king and courtier. Charles, in regal magnificence, towers over the Count who bows in deference to his monarch. The Latin inscription describing Hardegg’s offering at the top reinforces this power relationship by using such language as “humble and subservient”. In the background, a group of court ladies relax under the hunting canopy admiring their Emperor’s masculine glory. In front of the monarch lies an entangled pile of dead deer showing the Emperor’s hunting ability as well as symbolizing his dominance over his enemies during Austria’s wars. The event signifies the ceremonious aspect of gift giving and the social capital accrued in the process. Additionally, the reproduction of the event through a published image indicates the importance of publicizing ceremonial court functions and immortalizes the exchange between ruler and subject.
Figure 12. Christoph Ries, *Children’s rifle*, c. 1750. Hofjagd- and Rustkammer, Vienna. Photo from khm.at

Figure 13. Joseph Qualek, *Children’s rifle*, c. 1750. Hofjagd- and Rustkammer, Vienna. Photo from khm.at
Maria Theresa began hunting with her father at an early age. Charles’ hunting diary records her accompaniment on hunts when she was only eight years old. The Rifle collection at the Kunsthistorisches museum contains two children’s muskets dating from around 1725 that were owned by Maria Theresa. The future Empress’s early exposure to hunting, especially as a woman, trained her to fire a rifle and kill a beast. Maria Theresa’s experiences hunting as child left a strong impression into her adult life and she continued the tradition by having her own children practice the sport at a young age. Around 1750, she commissioned two series of ornate child-sized rifles for her own children, one made by the Viennese gunsmith Christoph Ries (figure 12.) and the other by Joseph Qualek, (figure 13.) the drawing master of the Vienna gunsmith guild and a favored artisan of Charles VI. These pieces reflect the high mark of Rococo rifle design as expressed by the master gunsmiths. By ordering deluxe rifles, Maria Theresa extends the promotion and display of Habsburg wealth and style through her children and also underlines the importance of training them in hunting. The shared family activity passed down from parents to children spanned generations and embedded the sport in the Habsburg dynasty. The exposure to hunting at a young age introduced the young princes and princesses to this exclusive and power-laden sport.

Female participation in rifle hunting was commonplace among European elites except in England. Nevertheless, there is something to be said about the allowance of women to participate in activity that was far outside the gender expectations of the era. Contemporary thoughts on gender defined women as possessing opposite characteristics of men. Women were described as

52 Josef Hamerl, *Flintlock Children’s Musket c. 1725*, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Hofjagd- und Rüstkammer (Court Hunt and Armory), D 491 and D 492, Vienna, Austria.
soft while men possessed strength. Women were vulnerable to uncontrollable emotions and required male supervision and control. Thus, women were subordinate to a related male, first their father and eventually their husband.  

This widespread assumption reinforced patriarchal control in society and government during the eighteenth century. Firearms contradicted the customary features of the women as they represented masculinity, aggression and authority.  

Women had fired guns at the Austrian court since the introduction of easy to use personal firearms in the sixteenth century. By the eighteenth century, the empress and other women participated in the Emperor’s hunts and shooting contests and certain events focused on and often only allowed female participants. While the rigid binary of Lacquer’s two-sex model became prevalent across Europe, female hunters at the imperial court perpetuated an older and more inclusive elite identity reflecting the navigable spectrum of the one-sex model. Their inclusion in gun shooting was noted by contemporaries. During her extensive travels with her husband, the English aristocrat Lady Montagu visited the Vienna court and, in one of her letters back home, described a female-only shooting competition:

All the men of quality at Vienna were spectators; but the ladies only had permission to shoot, and the arch-duchess Amelia carried off the first prize… This is the favorite pleasure of the Emperor, and there is rarely a week without some feast of this kind, which makes the young ladies skillful enough to defend a fort. They laughed very much to see me afraid to handle a gun.  

The presence of the male members of the court as spectators while the women shoot reversed traditional gender roles. The Emperor’s predilection for these events suggests evidence


of his preparation for his female successor. At the time of Lady Montagu’s visit, Charles VI and his court realized that the possibility of producing a male heir was unlikely. By having Habsburg women perform and succeed in this masculine sport and laughing at foreigners’ surprise and discomfort to their manner, he established a culture of female authority and prowess in masculine characteristics and duties, such as ruling an empire.

The shooting ceremonies dedicated to women did not completely transform eighteenth-century gender expectations but instead contained elements of traditional femininity. Lady Montagu’s description of the women’s shooting contest details the imagery of the ceremony as ladylike. For instance, she recounts the flowers that wreathed the trophy and the handkerchiefs, ribbons and laces that made up the other prizes. These rewards reflect the delicate nature of women. Other symbols representing the qualities of the female sex, such as Cupid and richly decorated furniture and jewelry, were also present as described by Lady Montagu. Thus, these competitions did not switch expected gender qualities and roles but rather subverted a strict binary and allowed room for blending between the two categories.

Female shooting culture in Austria, like nearly all aspects of eighteenth century culture, borrowed themes and tropes from the ancient Greco-Roman world. During the Renaissance and into the early modern period, Europeans rediscovered classical culture through archaeological finds and newfound interest in ancient philosophers and writers which provided direct inspiration for their own artwork and literature. After seeing linkage between classical mythology and Christianity, pagan deities and heroes became sources of allegorical meaning for early modern elites and their courts. Following this trend, court culture idealized royal and noble women as

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58 For more on the connection between classical mythology and early modern europe, see Wendy Doniger, and Yves Bonnefoy. *Roman and European Mythologies*. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992.) For relevant
classical goddesses in iconography and ceremony and highlighted their deific pageantry in hunting.

As mentioned in an earlier section, Charles VI held a grand water hunt to mark his sister’s ascension to the throne of the Austrian Netherlands. Consequently, the Emperor’s sister, Maria Elisabeth, took center stage during the celebration. Maria Elisabeth, an unmarried woman in her mid-forties, adopted the role of the Goddess Diana in symbolic apotheosis. The association clearly had an allegorical function as the classical goddess was a symbol of chastity and hunting. The ceremony, symbolized Maria Elisabeth’s preparation for governing the province by articulating her authority and portraying her as a deification of the ancient goddess. The celebration was an early example of the Habsburg’s efforts to present a woman as a legitimate source of authority paving the way for Maria Theresa.

The Habsburg court produced a pamphlet describing the events of the ceremonial hunt. The text includes references to Ovid and the ancient cult of Diana comparing her to the archduchess. The pamphlet recounts the event in detail and describes the setting for the spectacle. On the last page, an elaborate picture with each section of the festivity labeled creates a comprehensive birds-eye view of the celebration. The extensive record of the event, complete with a visual aid, makes the reader feel as if they were present at these grand celebrations.

Like the publication of Charles’ hunting successes in the Empire’s newspapers, the publication and distribution of the pamphlet describing a royal celebration formed part of the Habsburg propaganda project. By mass-producing such examples, the Emperor’s representation of female participation in hunting, and thus female authority and masculine ability, permeated information specifically on German peoples, see Eva Giloi, Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany 1750-1950. (London: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
the general populace of the empire beyond the exclusive court audience. Contemporary writings present other examples of Habsburg women embodying the symbolism of ancient hunters. As mentioned earlier, the Emperor recorded a symbolic fox tossing in which the Empress and the archduchesses dressed as Amazons, the mythical tribe of women warriors from Greek antiquity.\textsuperscript{59} The ancient women represented a gender construction that proved fruitful for Charles’ political motive: They were characterized as aggressive warriors who had no problem ruling themselves and disdained the notion of patriarchal control.

The material culture of hunting also made similar transitions during Charles and Maria Theresa’s era. In addition to rifles created specifically for children, gunsmiths began producing weapons with more effeminate styles to please their female customers. Maria Theresa followed this trend as evinced by an order for ten women’s muskets that still exist in the royal collection.\textsuperscript{60} These guns were lighter and more fluid and reduced in proportion and the end of their stocks are covered in velvet highlighting their increased curvature and providing a further delicacy and softness to the weapon.\textsuperscript{61} The commissioning of ten identical shotguns reveals a common practice among court hunting at the time: The empress would have one or multiple Imperial gun chargers able to supply her with a loaded weapon after each shot. The feminization of hunting rifles confronted male dominance of the sport and reinforced the blurring of a strict gender binary and its conventions within the court. At the same time, iconography increasingly depicted female hunters, revealing a further feminization of the culture. The women were depicted

\textsuperscript{59} Seitschek, “Die Tagebucher”, 281
\textsuperscript{60} De Sainte, Ten Women’s Flintlocks with Locks (and charging sticks), Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Hofjagd und Rüstkammer (Court Hunt and Armory), G 315. Later female monarchs, such as Catherine the Great of Russia, followed this trend. Schwoerer, Gun Culture in Early Modern England, 128.
\textsuperscript{61} De Sainte, Ten Women’s Flintlocks.
wearing hunting outfits that resembled those of their male counterparts but with added feminine touches.

Maria Theresa hunted throughout her childhood and her adult life. She continued to hunt in her old age and her death was attributed to a cold she caught while participating in the yearly
pheasant hunt. As evinced by her rifle collection, her children accompanied her on hunting excursion just as she had accompanied her father when she was a child. Hunting, traditionally viewed as training for war, provided Maria Theresa means to embrace a militaristic role associated with a strong leader. The combination of hunting’s traditional military symbolism with its use as a source of family bonding allowed Maria Theresa to embrace the role of a successful matron and a powerful monarch. Hunting materials supplied her with luxury items for the diplomatic transferal of goods as well as a means to feminize hunting culture. Ceremonial hunts provided the setting for Habsburg pageantry concentrating on female hunters. These displays of dynastic powers glorified female hunters elevating their role in Habsburg hunting culture. For Maria Theresa, hunting presented a multidimensional platform where she could use different strategies, sometimes simultaneously, to legitimize her rule and enhance her state’s power.

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62 Justin C. Vovk. In Destiny’s Hands: Five Tragic Rulers, Children of Maria Theresa. (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2010). 160. Charles VI’s death was also attributed to a respiratory infections that he incurred after a particularly cold hunt.
Conclusion

“She gained the hearts of her subjects in such a degree, that they never thought they could act or suffer too much for her service.”

Maria Theresa had a long reign before succumbing to death in 1780 at the age of 63. Inheriting the throne in 1740, she overcame foreign opposition to her claim and legitimized her status as a female monarch. A eulogy in an English periodical describes her initial obstacles following her father’s death, “Many of the first powers in Europe, excited by the weakness of her sex, and still more by that of a long ill-ordered government, in contempt of treaties and guaranties, rushed on at once to swallow up the whole of her domain.” This contemporary voice evinces the failure of the Pragmatic Sanction as well as setting up the necessary government reforms enacted by Maria Theresa. Even her archrival, Frederick the Great, upon her death, felt that she had honored her throne and her sex and that, while he had fought against her, he never considered her an enemy.

Maria Theresa was unsuccessful in Austria’s military endeavors but her efforts to build her own authority and the prestige of her empire through cultural projects and court activities achieved positive results. While the Pragmatic Sanction was unsuccessful, Charles’ other preparations, notably in the spheres of hunting and state building, created a nobility within Habsburg court that was loyal to Maria Theresa and consolidated Habsburg authority. Maria Theresa’s own efforts at similar projects furthered her sway within the Holy Roman Empire and Europe.

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63 On page 11 of the Annual Register, a eulogy for Maria Theresa praises her reign and life. *The annual register, or a view of the history, politics, and literature, for the year 1781. Printed for J. Dodsley.* (London, 1782 [1783]. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale.

64 The eulogy goes on to say that Maria’s triumph over these challenges “raised the house of Austria to a degree of real power, which it had not before known since the reign of Charles the fifth.” Ibid.

The Empress’s iconographic projects and her ceremonial protocol responded to her controversial position as a female ruler. By addressing positive features of conventional ideas about femininity and adopting male attributes associated with rule and power, Maria Theresa created an idealized identity of female, absolutist monarch in a patriarchal world. She combined attributes from both sides of the eighteenth-century gender binary to reconfigure popular conceptions on gender and society. Hunting provided the most effective setting for her to implement this nontraditional language of expressing power. By increasing the participation of women in a masculine activity and feminizing the activity, Maria Theresa and her father fostered a social environment that would accept a female authority.

As evinced in her legacy, Maria Theresa’s strategies worked. At the end of her lifetime, her empire was powerful and firmly under the control of her dynasty. She had produced ten children who survived to adulthood. Her daughters married into some of the most powerful European families and two of her sons became future rulers of Austria and the Holy Roman Empire.66 Hunting continued to be an integral part of Habsburg court life. The penultimate Habsburg ruler, Franz Joseph (1830-1916), equaled Charles VI’s passion for hunting and spent most of his leisure time hunting in the ancestral homeland of the Habsburg family in the Alps. Thus, hunting continued to play an important role in Habsburgs’ daily life until the end of their Empire.

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