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The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts

Edited by
Karl A.E. Enenkel and Paul J. Smith

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RENAISSANCE MENAGERIES.
EXOTIC ANIMALS AND PETS AT THE HABSBURG COURTS IN IBERIA AND CENTRAL EUROPE

Almudena Pérez de Tudela
Annemarie Jordan Gschwend

All these beasts Arcimboldo has painted from life [...] Imagine his cleverness; there is something stupifying about it (Gregorio Comanini, Il Figur, omero del fine della eterna (Mantua: 1591) 4).1

Introduction

This essay represents the third in a series of studies undertaken by the authors on the artistic and cultural exchanges between the courts of Iberia (Madrid and Lisbon) and those of Central Europe (Vienna, Prague, Graz, Innsbruck and Munich) in the sixteenth century. The first, published in 2001, constituted a systematic approach to a series of unpublished documents, letters, accounts and inventories dispersed in archives in Spain, France, Portugal, Belgium and Austria. The second essay appeared in an exhibition catalogue of a show held in the Palacio Real in Madrid in 2003, dedicated to the Oriental and exotic objects in Spanish royal collections from the sixteenth to the eighteenth

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1 This article is dedicated to Pedro Fuerte, Master of the Horse of the Imperial Ambassador in Spain, Hans Khevenhüller, and others like him, who traversed Europe many times with wild, exotic animals, large and small, in order to please emperors and kings. The authors are grateful for Paul Smith’s critical editing of this text and for his insightful comments.

centuries. Both studies made advances into the history of Habsburg collecting at the courts in Spain, Portugal, Austria and the Netherlands, presenting new insights on how collectors in the Renaissance acquired their objects, from where, and how these reached their final destinations. As the century progressed, the exotic component of these Habsburg collections took precedence, assuming the most important area of collecting. After 1550, Habsburg collectors concentrated on, and spent a great deal of time, energy and money, in the acquisition of luxury wares from distant points of the world.

Curiosity collections, or Kostümkammern, reflected the peculiarities and tastes of their princely owners. The discovery of direct sea routes to Africa, Asia, the Far East and the Americas in the sixteenth century opened up a global market and a traffic for goods, which afforded discriminating collectors a unique opportunity to buy, commission and collect an assortment of commodities (spices, medicinal drugs, plants, seeds, herbs), luxury goods, furniture, textiles, all forms of exotic wares, and above all, animals and birds, never seen in Europe before. Owning and collecting exotic and domestic pets became part of the tradition of Habsburg collecting in the Renaissance. Menageries of live specimens, some exotic pets reserved for amusement, entertainments and hunting, became extensions of the Kostümkammern outdoors. Menageries with European, New World and Asian animals mirrored in microcosmic fashion the collections of rarities indoors, displayed in magnificent gardens, themselves planted with exotic trees, shrubs and ornamental flowers. Novel fauna and flora reflected a ruler's mastery and dominion over territorial space. By the late sixteenth century, princes cultivated a garden culture, some patrons more scientific and systematic than others, whereby animals and plants were assembled and planted to dazzle and amaze, as symbols of an owner's power and prestige. As Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has recently observed, gardens and menageries served a political function for monarchs, glorifying them as learned kings deeply concerned with the secrets of nature.

The objective of this present contribution is to introduce a series of unpublished documents regarding exotic and domestic animals at Habsburg courts, the purposes of such collections, the role these creatures played in court life, and their imaging at court in various media. The best artists were recruited to execute portraits, drawings, watercolors, engravings, medals and Flemish tapestries, some of which are illustrated here, as visual records not only of favorite pets, but also as visual records of the patronage of menageries, aviaries and gardens the Habsburgs promoted in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Royal Menageries in Portugal

No other Renaissance court was so altered by the Age of Discoveries than Portugal. The overseas explorations and the establishment of trade routes via Africa to India, Southeast Asia and the Far East—after Vasco da Gama's historical journey around the Cape of Good Hope in 1498—forever changed the manner in which daily life in Lisbon was led. After 1500 no other contemporary European court could even dream of competing with the opulence of this court. The strange, the fantastic, the marvelous and the exotic became not only commonplace, but also part and parcel of everyday life in Portugal. Asian animals were the first rarities brought to Portugal by the fleets returning from India.

As ruler of a newly discovered Eastern empire, Manuel I set the trend in Renaissance Europe, by imitating Indian potentates and collecting elephants of state. A rhinoceros from Cambay (the first seen in Europe since antiquity), sent to Lisbon by the sultan of Gujarat, reconfirmed Manuel as dominus mundi, ruler of the world. On ceremonial occasions, Manuel paraded from the royal palace (the Paço da Ribeira) to the cathedral with no fewer than five pachyderms, led

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4 Cañizares-Esguerra, “Iberian Science” 96.

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7 Ibidem.
by Asian trainers (mahouts). During the sixteenth century, at least thirteen young Asian elephants were imported to Portugal; some of which Manuel later sent as rare gifts to other rulers. The Portuguese demanded tribute from Asian vassals and the kingdom of Jaffna was expected to send ten elephants each year to Portugal. European rulers vied with one another with requests for Manuel to send them elephants and other rare specimens for their menageries. The most famous of Manuel’s elephants was Hanno, a white elephant, which Pope Leo X received as a gift for his coronation, along with panthers for his Vatican zoo, when a formal embassy led by Tristão de Cunha arrived in Rome in 1514. The Papal court and Rome’s citizens were overwhelmed by the pachyderm, its Hindu mahout, the lavish gifts of Asian beasts and luxury wares sent by the Lisbon court, beside the luxurious opulence and exoticism of the Portuguese entourage. Later Popes kept up this tradition of receiving elephants from the Lisbon court for the papal menagerie, as in 1561, when Pius IV requested Sebastian of Portugal (ruled 1557–1578) to send a pair.

Portuguese sailors brought home smaller animals (monkeys and parrots) as pets, or as supplemental income. Lucas Rem, a commercial agent for the Weber family of Augsburg, in Lisbon from 1503 to 1508, bought ‘strange new parrots and long-tailed monkeys’ from Africa available for sale in Lisbon. In 1500 Pedro Álvares Cabral discovered Brazil, a new land called ‘the land of the parrots’, from where feathers of red macaws and other parrots species were brought to Lisbon. Gray parrots, weaver birds and parakeets came from Africa, large macaws from Brazil, while small multicolored ones (Lories), came from Asia, as did the plumage of the bird of paradise from Indonesia. A profitable trade in parrots and exotic birds was established by the first quarter of the sixteenth century, as Diego Velho da Chancelloria commented in 1519: Lisbon was a place where ‘monsters, talking birds, diamonds

and porcelain’ had become quite common. Manuel I created an aviary within the compound of the Lisbon royal palace, stocked with parrots and hunting falcons imported from the Netherlands. In 1514 he offered Leo X numerous parrots from his personal collection. As ruler of a global empire, Manuel’s aviary symbolically embodied the distant reaches of the earth: the gray parrots from Africa representing the Old World and the large colorful macaws the New World.

Catherine of Austria, Queen of Portugal: Royal Link to Africa, Asia and Brazil

The tradition of collecting animals and expanding the royal menageries continued at the court of Manuel’s son, John III (reigned 1521–1557). John’s spouse, Catherine of Austria (1507–1578), the youngest sister of the Habsburg emperor, Charles V (1500–1558), assumed a leading role in the procurement of exotic and rare animals for herself and her extended Habsburg family in Spain, Central Europe and the Netherlands. Exotic animals, and slaves, from strategic, geographic points of the Portuguese empire, became an integral part of the spectacle and imagery at her court, as it would at the courts of her relatives. Members of her family vied with one another to obtain the best exotic (animals and luxury wares) available in Lisbon and Catherine proved to be an essential link in acquiring such goods. A great deal of time and expense was invested in the acquisition of curious and extraordinary species – a monopoly Catherine controlled with help of her global network and connections.

A system to obtain these rarities was organized from the onset of Catherine’s reign: factors, merchants, agents, Portuguese viceroys and household officials stationed in Goa, Cochín and Malacca were recruited

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12 The letter of the Portuguese ambassador to Sebastian in Sousa Viterbo E.M.O. “Orientalismo em Portugal no Século XVI”, Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa 12,7–8 (1892–1893) 318. The Portuguese king promised to find a pair as soon as possible, but no record exists of their arrival in Rome.
15 In 1520 Manuel purchased 20 falcons in Antwerp, which originated from Norway. Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo (IAN/TTT), Lisbon, Corpo Chronológico (CC) 1, maço 26, doc. 28 (June 13, 1520) and CC 1, maço 26, doc. 64 (September 10, 1520). Also Góis J.A., Étude sur les Colonies Marchandes Méridionales (Portugais, Espagnols, Italiens) à Amers de 1480 à 1597 (Louvain: 1925) 229. Cf. Paavolainen W., “Tier aus dem Norden”, Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters 59 (2003) 559–591, especially 566–72 for the discussion of Norwegian falcons at medieval courts.
to aid the queen in her search for exclusive items. As early as 1531, ships sailed in the Far East for three years on behalf of the queen, and, later in 1537, Catherine relocated a valet of her bedchamber, António Correia, to Goa, where he was paid a salary to serve the queen in India. As the queen's agent, Correia was to buy from direct sources in Asia, at cheaper prices, and keep her regularly informed of goods and animals for sale in these markets. Catherine evolved into a merchant queen with a great deal of business acumen, even undertaking overseas ventures to finance her shopping sprees. The assimilation of strange and wild animals at the Lisbon court became an essential part of her surroundings.

She adored parrots and since early childhood owned birds and small lap dogs, during the years she lived in Tordesillas (Spain). Manuel I's parrot culture was taken up by this queen, who obtained many. She turned to resources in West Africa, to buy monkeys, parakeets and civet cats, the latter bred there for her by Simão Roiz, the factor in São Jorge da Mina. In April 1557 he sent a cage with parakeets (passaros de rabo) and two civet cats. Another official Afonso Gonalves Botafogo, sent, with another fleet, six civet cats, two monkeys called bugios and one parrot. In a second shipment, Botafogo gave the queen two bearded monkeys. Parrots were especially prized by Catherine and her family for their ability to talk and amuse. She frequently sent them as gifts to Spain. In one diplomatic letter, she promised her grandson, Carlos (1545–1568), a parrot that could speak just as well as the one she had recently sent her niece, Juana of Austria. There was one problem: she had to comb the city of Lisbon to find a suitable parrot that met her expectations, could speak well, and was in a reasonable state of health to be transported to Spain. Beside exotic birds, the queen kept an aviary in the Lisbon palace complex stocked with pheasants, some destined for the royal table. There are indications she hunted, as her 1557 inventory records bells for hawks, and in 1550 she obtained twenty-two young falcons from the Netherlands.

Some animals acquired by Catherine during her reign, were stabilized in the queen's garden of the Lisbon palace; a menagerie which symbolically represented her majesty and rule over flora and fauna in Africa, Asia and Brazil. In the Renaissance, theorists believed wild animals tamed by monarchs revealed their royal power and magnificence. As a counterpoint to the menagerie, was the botanical garden of the palace, where exotic plants, seeds and bulbs, like tobacco and chili grew, which Carolus Clusius (1526–1609), Maximilian II's court botanist and gardener, visited in 1564–65, during an extended journey of Iberian gardens in the company of two Fugger brothers. Strange animals and plants became part of Catherine's self-imaging; the notion that as a powerful ruler she could domesticate the untamable forces of nature. As queen of a maritime empire, few could compete with Catherine's singular position and global network. For reasons of image, prestige and representation, the queen went to great trouble and expense to procure animals few rulers had access to.

She developed a passion for civet cats. This species secretes an oily, odorous musk (known then as algales), used for perfumes and medicines in the queen's kitchen and apothecary. Civet cats and their musk were extremely rare and costly in Renaissance Europe. An adult male can produce up to twenty grams a week. Between 1550 and 1554, Catherine owned ten stabled in separate quarters in Lisbon, under the charge of the Spaniard, Cristóvão Carmona, apparently a specialist in the care of such cats. They were housed in Carmona's house, who was paid 800 reis for the upkeep of each cat over a six month period. These animals were also acquired as an investment, since the queen sold nine, with immense profit, in 1552, for 100,000 reis.

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18 IAN/TT, Lisbon, Núcleo Antigo (NA) 792, fol. 109.
21 IAN/TT, Lisbon, CC I, maço 101, doc. 24 (April 18, 1557).
22 IAN/TT, Lisbon, CC I, maço 101, doc. 25 (April 18, 1557). In the latter, Botafogo refers to the queen's stimans as bugios com herba, which perhaps were apes or baboons often sold to the Portuguese at the mouth of the River Gambia. Cf. Barclay Lloyd, African Animals 27.
23 IAN/TT, Lisbon, Ms. de S. Vicente, vol. 10, fol. 327.
24 IAN/TT, Lisbon, CC I, maço 84, doc. 49, CC I, maço 93, doc. 109 and CC I, maço 98, doc. 30.
26 IAN/TT, Lisbon, CC I, maço 87, doc. 34.
29 Carolus Clusius, Rariorum algae ad plantias Hispaniae [...] (Antwerp: 1576) 299.
30 IAN/TT, Lisbon CC I, maço 84, doc. 76 (June 28, 1550); CC I, maço 88, doc. 71 (July 26, 1552); CC I, maço 87, doc. 107 (February 17, 1552). Cf. Jordan Gishwend – Pérez de Tudela, “Exotica Habsburgica” 37, n. 50.
Catherine emulated her father-in-law, Manuel I, giving away rare, expensive animals as diplomatic gifts to impress other courts and consolidate alliances. In order to cement relations with a North African potentate, a pair of civet cats was presented by the queen to the King of Belez, after his visit to Lisbon, whose representative, Ali Aṣlagih, took home in specially built cages paid for by the queen.31 She often surprised courtiers and members of her family with rare animals: one civet cat was presented to the Spanish aristocrat, the Duchess of Frías, in 1552. The queen’s sister-in-law, Empress Isabella of Portugal, received three civet cats in Spain.32 To distract Charles V, during his retirement at Yuste in 1557, Catherine made sure he was entertained with a very talkative parrot (un muy buen papagayo) and two Indian cats he kept amused with live mice. Her niece, Juana of Austria, was offered four lap dogs in 1566, which Catherine sent with a list of their names and explicit instructions on how to maintain and feed, revealing her knowledge of canines and their dietary needs.33 This portrait shows the princess with one of these dogs Catherine gave her, Asicómovís [Fig. 1], painted not long after it’s arrival at the Spanish court.

In the same shipment to Spain, an assortment of exotic birds and animals, not all from Portuguese colonies, were included for her nephew, Philip II and her grandson, Carlos: 2 large birds, perhaps waterfowl (the queen called gínges, and which ate wheat and corn), a pair of civet cats (male and female), 2 macaus (macaws from Brazil), and a small songbird (pinzísiego) from Santo Domingo now Dominican Republic, whose feathers changed colors every time it moved.34 The fact Catherine went to such lengths and expense to obtain rarities for loved ones is telling in itself, even going so far as to buy a songbird from a Caribbean island under the dominion of her nephew, the king of Spain. The queen must have monitored the market on a daily basis, well-informed of shipments of foreign animals and birds to Lisbon.

31 JAN/TT, Lisbon, CC I, mayo 93, doc. 14 (July 18, 1554).
32 Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Casa y Sitios Reales (CSR), leg. 67.
33 Biblioteca Pública Municipal do Porto, Porto, Ms. 85, fol. 903r–903v. Cf. Bouza F., Palabra e Imagen en la Corte. Cultura oral y visual de la noblezas en el Siglo de Oro (Madrid: 2003) 23–24, who cites an incorrect folio number. The queen advised the princes to feed two of the dogs, which were pregnant, roasted chestnuts cooked with meat.
34 Biblioteca Pública Municipal do Porto, Porto, Ms. 85, fol. 903r–903v. The songbird must have not lived long, as its “portrait” was recorded in the inventory of the prince’s estate after his early death in 1568. Its uniqueness, probably a species unknown in Europe, must have prompted the prince to commission its portrayal. AGS, Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas (CMC), 1ª época, leg. 1051, fol. 26.
A portrait of Philip’s daughters, Isabella Clara Eugenia and Catalina Michaela, painted by Alonso Sánchez Coello between 1568–1569, depicts songbirds beloved by royal children [Fig. 2]. Unfortunately, some of the exotic birds Catherine sent in 1566 died en route, but were brought regardless to the Escorial palace, where Philip ordered drawings, watercolor studies and oil paintings made of them. The latter were framed and displayed in his private quarters, alongside others of overseas animals the king had commissioned, such as this study of a monkey, formerly in his collection [Fig. 3]. Few of these bird portraits have survived, however; a sketch of the wing of a green South American parrot (genus Amazona) by an anonymous artist, may be one of the birds Catherine sent from Lisbon [Fig. 4]. The artist, highly skilled and schooled in Flemish and German traditions, rendered a scientific image in the manner of Albrecht Dürer.

The Portuguese queen adored her grandson, Carlos, and could not resist surprising him with a zebra in 1555, the first African zebra imported to Europe since Antiquity. A year later she delighted him with a prize agor (gyrfalcon) for hunting. She continued over the years to regale the Spanish court with gifts of animals, as in 1571, when she again sent her niece Juana parrots, and in 1575, Philip, some small deer, perhaps African antelopes; the king delighted with their strangeness.

Catherine took pleasure in giving her relatives unique gifts, none more so than when she presented her nephew, Maximilian II and her niece, Maria of Austria, with a thirteen-year old Indian elephant named Suleyman. This pachyderm traveled from Lisbon to Valladolid, then to

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57 Gyrfalconus (Falco rusticolus), especially the white variants, are the most expensive hunting falcons. While goshawks, common birds of prey used for falconry, were used mostly by the lower aristocracy. We should like to thank Paul Smith for this information. Jordan Gschwend – Pérez de Tudela, “Exotica Habsburgica” 31, n. 45; IAN/TT; Lisboa, CC 1, maço 92, doc. 35 [March 14, 1554] for this bird brought to Spain by John III’s huntsman, Antonio Barroso.
58 Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisbon, Ms. 49-X-1, fol. 19.
59 AGS, Estado 392, fol. 204 (El Pardo, September 19, 1573), letter from Philip to Catherine. In Vienna in 1569, Maximilian II also acquired bizarre sheep, each with four horns, through Juana de Cardona. Haus, Hof, und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), Vienna, Spanien, Diplomatische Korrespondenz, Karton 8, konic 3, fol. 4.
60 Sauer K., Hinzew-Fischl E.M., “They Called Him Suleyman. The Adventurous Journey of an Elephant from the Forests of Kerala to the Capital of Vienna in
Fig. 3 [Col. pl. XXIII]. Anonymous (Flemish Painter?), Monkey. Oil on paper, 22 × 16 cm. Philip II’s Quarters, Palace of the Austrias, Real Monasterio, S. Lorenzo de El Escorial (Copyright Patrimonio Nacional).

Fig. 4 [Col. pl. XXIV]. Anonymous (Flemish Painter?), Wing of a Green Amazon Parrot. Oil on paper, 18.6 × 15.7 cm. Philip II’s Quarters, Palace of the Austrias, Real Monasterio, S. Lorenzo de El Escorial (Copyright Patrimonio Nacional).
Barcelona with the imperial party, who sailed to Genoa and traversed the Alps by way of Tyrol (Brixen), triumphantly entering Vienna on May 7, 1552.\(^1\) It was the first elephant ever seen in Austria and shortly after was installed in Maximilian's recently established menagerie at Schloss Kaiser Ebersdorf, just outside of Vienna.\(^2\) Suleyman, died one year later in December 1553 and a commemorative medal by the court sculptor, Michael Fuchs, was commissioned by the emperor in 1554 [Fig. 5]. A part of his bones were fashioned into a stool bearing the imperial coat of arms of Maria and Maximilian.\(^3\) Although lost, a letter from the Portuguese monarchs was said to have accompanied this impressive gift, detailing why Suleyman had been named after the Turkish arch enemy of the Habsburgs.\(^4\) Thus, through family ties with Portugal, the Viennese court benefited from the prestige of an allied kingdom, whose power, rule and hegemony extended over half the world.\(^5\)

### Menageries in Renaissance Spain

During the second half of the sixteenth century, the Spanish royal family also benefited enormously from family ties with Portugal to acquire domestic and exotic animals. When Maximilian II (then king of Bohemia) and his wife, Maria, resided in Valladolid as regents of Spain, from 1548 to 1551, he partook in hunts, and appreciated the falcons sent from Portugal.\(^6\) When Philip II was traveling in the Netherlands in 1549, Maximilian took advantage of his stay there to request falcons from the North.\(^7\) He also hunted in other locations, such as El Bosque (near Segovia),\(^8\) sending the prize venison home to his wife, and he is documented chasing wolves.\(^9\) Bullfights were staged in Valladolid in these years, where a prize bull was sent as a gift.\(^10\) Other courts, even

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\(^1\) Lach, *Asia* 144–146.


\(^3\) Jordan Schwind, "Animals" 43, fig. 3.13.


\(^5\) In September 1563 another young Indian elephant (eight years of age) was sent to Maximilian II, transported by sea to Zeeland and driven to Antwerp, where he was displayed. Lach, *Asia* 150–151; Schiebel, *Cammerhundt* 150–152.

\(^6\) Minute of a letter from Maximilian to Lope Hurtado de Mendoza (Spanish ambassador in Portugal). AGS, Estado, libro 72, fol. 5v (Valladolid, March 12, 1549), in which he writes Pedro Sarmiento, a gentleman of his household, has brought a falcon from the king of Portugal. A second bird was on its way, and Maximilian requested John III be thanked on his behalf.

\(^7\) Minute of letter from Philip II to his ambassador in France. AGS, Estado 504, fol. 63 and fols. 64–65 (Brussels, January 1550) in which Philip sent Diego Pacheco to Spain with eight falcons (4 *jerfaldes* and 4 *nebels*, a white gyrfalcon).

\(^8\) AGS, Estado, libro 72, fol. 5v. In July 1549, Maximilian sent venison to Valladolid and fol. 2v for the bloodhound he received through Pedro Sarmiento, a gift from the Commander of Piedrabuena.

\(^9\) AGS, Estado 81, fol. 252 (Valladolid, May 12, 1550), letter from Antonio Sedini, huntsman (*nometron*), to Philip II about these wolf hunts and that Maximilian needed waxed cloths for hunting in the mountains, which Philip should buy either in Florence or France.

\(^10\) AGS, Estado, libro 72, fol. 2 (Valladolid, February 27, 1549), minute of a letter from Maximilian to the Commander of Piedrabuena and AGS, Estado 78, fol. 117
rival enemies, were aware what passionate hunters the Habsburgs (both male and female) were. In 1550, the king of Tunis traveled expressly to Genoa, with the intention of bringing Charles V horses, lions and falcons, in exchange for political favors. With the intention of strengthening family ties, Philip II sent his Portuguese cousin, Prince John, hunting birds, originating from Northern Europe.

Besides horses and dogs reserved for the hunt, the Habsburg courts in Spain and Central Europe also collected in quantity exotic hunting birds from overseas, which differentiated their courts from others. Collecting these New World birds became synonymous with a level of luxury and majesty not seen elsewhere. One monopoly reserved for Habsburg princes were Aplomado falcons found in Central and South America. The importation of these rare birds began in the 1570s and soon after portraits of Habsburg princes with their new pets were commissioned, as in the portrayal of Archduke Wenceslaus with his American bird by Alonso Sánchez Coello painted at the Spanish court.

Shipping live animals from their indigenous habitats overseas to the Iberian peninsula was no easy undertaking. Even more difficult, and often riddled with logistical problems, was their transportation from Lisbon, Seville or Madrid to final destinations in Vienna or Prague.

(Piedrabuena, March 10, 1549) for Piedrabuena’s response. In this, the Commander writes of the bloodhound and bull he sent, and is to have accompanied the animals himself and served Maximilian as his huntsman (numeros).

53 Letter from Gómez Suárez de Figueroa to Maximilian II, AGS, Estado 1381, fol. 3 (Genoa, January 7, 1530). A second visit took place in 1534. AGS, Estado 1472, fol. 67 for the summary of letters from Juan de Vega to Philip II, especially those dated February 18 and the end of March 1554, which relate the visit of the ambassador of the king of Tunis, who brought Charles V 30 horses and some falcons.

54 Letter from Lope Hurtado de Mendocia to Philip, AGS, Estado 375, fol. 50 (Almería, September 23, 1551). The ambassador writes prince John about hunting falcons, and he suggests Philip send him a zueco de milanos. Also a letter from Mendocia to Philip regarding the latter in AGS, Estado 375, fol. 59 (November 4, 1551). Philip’s response to Mendocia from Madrid on fol. 61, states he will send this bird as soon as he receives one. Years later, in 1588 prince John’s son, Sebastian, would request from Philip II falcons from Spain (AGS, Estado 385, fol. 147).

55 For more on horses, consult AGS, Cámara de Castilla, Libro 121, fol. 22v (Augsburg, May 13, 1551), for 30 Spanish horses sent to Maximilian II’s stables, AGS, Estado 505, fol. 74, 1553, for horses sent to the king of England. AGS, Cámara de Castilla, Libro de Córdoba 124, fol. 46 (Madrid, May 27, 1558), for Spanish horses sent to the king of Portugal. For the quality and quantity of jennets (small Spanish saddled horses) in John III’s stables in Lisbon, see the comments Jorge Diaz made to Philip II ca. 1549-1550 in IAN/TT, Lisbon, Núcleo Antigo 871, doc. 105.


When the Spanish court could not, or was unable to, fulfill continual requests from the Austrian court, the imperial ambassador in Spain, Hans Khevenhüller, took over, helping his royal patrons in their endless search for foreign animals and Spanish horses. He scouted markets in Iberia and overseas, and before definitive purchases were made, sent couriers to Vienna with portraits and drawings of animals for sale.

Animals never ceased to play a role in the exotic imaging of princes and rulers at Habsburg courts, but problems often arose with their upkeep and maintenance. When Philip II, informed his Portuguese uncle, John III, of his desire to own an elephant, a pachyderm was duly dispatched to Spain in 1549, the year Philip took his extended trip through the Netherlands. During his absence, the beast was sent to live with his son, Carlos, residing in Aranda del Duero (Burgos).

The young prince delighted in his new pet, however, it soon became an inconvenience, and its upkeep, with that of his Indian mahout, a financial burden. The expense and cold weather, coupled with difficulties in finding proper food, made the elephant’s maintenance quite unbecoming. Luis Sarmiento de Mendoza wrote Philip, proposing to house the pachyderm at the hunting palaces of either El Pardo or Aranjuez, outside of Madrid, locations which had more moderate temperatures. Aranjuez would become, by the end of the sixteenth century, famous for its spectacular gardens and menagerie [Fig. 6]. The lion pen at the Alcázar palace in Madrid was just as renowned for the four lions Philip II received from Suleyman II, as was the Casa del jardín which housed an Indian goat (African antelope?), whose twisted horns were cherished and recorded years later in the king’s collection.

53 Maximilian II also acquired exotic animals through Marco Antonio Spinola in Genoa, receiving in Prague, in 1567, an ostrich, 3 lions and a tiger. HStA, Familienakten 88, fol. 88v.


55 Letter from Sarmiento de Mendoza to Charles V, AGS, Estado 78, fol. 171 (Aranza, November 6, 1549) and Estado 77, fol. 112. Letter from Juan Vázquez de Molina to Philip complaining of the elephant’s expense, AGS, Estado 85, fol. 218 (Valladolid, March 16, 1551).

56 The exact date of arrival is unknown, but the lions came equipped with gold leashes and collars engraved with the Spanish king’s coat of arms. In 1562 one lion escaped and was hunted down by the queen Isabel of Valois and her court. Amezúa y Mayo, A.G. de, Isabel de Valois. Reina de España (1546–1568) (Madrid: 1949) 285-286;
The impact of the 1549 elephant upon the king’s sister, Juana of Austria, prompted her, shortly after her arrival in Portugal in 1552, to ask the Portuguese queen Catherine for a crystal elephant salt cellar from her collection, today in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.\textsuperscript{60} After her return to Spain in 1554, Juana inspired by the opulence of the Lisbon court, aimed to transform her quarters in the Descalzas Reales convent, she founded in Madrid, into an exotic kunstkammer replete with Indian textiles, Asian and Far Eastern luxury goods and exotic animals.\textsuperscript{61} Later documents make no further reference to the 1549 elephant and what became of its fate is unknown. Perhaps, Philip found the upkeep too costly, ceding him to Maximilian II, who took him to Vienna in 1551. Whether this 1549 pachyderm could be the elephant Suleyman is not yet clear.

The 1549 elephant was by no means the only one Carlos received from Lisbon. Later in Alcalá de Henares, where he was studying in 1561, his cousin, king Sebastian, sent him a small young elephant, which the prince kept in his room.\textsuperscript{62} If the 1549 elephant created a commotion at the Spanish court, so too did the arrival of a Central American jaguar brought to Seville, from Panama, in December 1550 by the Bishop of Palencia, Pedro de la Gasca (1485–1567), author of a botanical book of the plants of Peru.\textsuperscript{63}

Once Philip II became king, and definitively returned to Spain in 1559, he dedicated himself to renovating his palaces and gardens, modeling them after those seen in Flanders, stocking lakes with fish (carp from France) and swans.\textsuperscript{64} He acquired numerous pheasants, which were


\textsuperscript{62} Carlos had suffered a fall and operation, and was seen recuperating and playing with his new elephant in his quarters. The latter event related in a letter from the ambassador Paolo Tiepolo to the Venetian Senate on December 1, 1561, Gachard L. P., \textit{Don Carlos y Felipe II} (Real Sitio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial: 1994) 76; 86.


\textsuperscript{64} British Library (BL), Add. 28350.
sent by the regent of Milan, Giulio Claro, via Genoa, and Alicante. To stock his aviaries, Philip bought pheasant and other cage-birds from Bernardino de Mendoza, who owned a garden next to the Puerta de Balnadia in Madrid. In January 1574 animals and eight pheasants from Genoa were transported to Madrid and Aranjuez. Other European rulers regularly sent falcons to Spain as diplomatic gifts, as did the Duke of Brandenburg annually, and Catherine of Medici in 1560. When more were needed, the king gave orders for falcons to be found elsewhere in Crete and Flanders. Animals, in turn, were acquired by Philip as royal gifts for the imperial court, and animal handlers were sent along, to accompany them on their journeys from Madrid to Central Europe, making sure they acclimatized to their new environments.

This special care underscores how much these animals were valued and appreciated by the Habsburgs: just as the Portuguese monarchs guaranteed Indian mahouts came from Goa with their pachyderms, in order to train staff later responsible in Europe.

The most prestigious animals at the Viennese court were the Andalusian horses from Spain. Philip II owned stables in Córdoba and Naples, receiving innumerable requests for breeding and show horses. There are abundant documents concerning the sale and gifts of horses from Spain; some sent as far away as Poland and Japan as diplomatic presents. It was often for political necessity that Philip consented to frequent petitions from Prague for horses, as advised by the Spanish ambassador, Khevenhüller, in order to resolve conflicts with the imperial court. Horses were the only way Philip could attract Rudolf II’s attention to state matters.

Philip’s children lived in the Alcázar palace in Madrid surrounded by exotic animals as companions, such as parrots and monkeys, which they dressed in court clothes, and for which stands on wheels were supplied. His daughters were portrayed with pets, as in this 1573 portrait by Sofonisba Anguissola of Catalina Michaele, holding her Brazilian marmoset [Fig. 7]. Thrushes, starlings, finches and exotic birds were not only housed in palace aviaries, but also traveled in cages between residences, as did the tame squirrels, monkeys and parrots. Beloved
dogs were given special names and collars decorated with the arms of their royal owners. Many came from Europe, while others disembarked from more exotic destinations, like the hairless Chinese dog Rudolf II received from Lisbon in 1583. Painters, such as Anthonis Mor and Sánchez Coello, were commissioned to memorialize pets in paintings and drawings [cf. Fig. 8]. Giuseppe Arcimboldo incorporated exotic specimens, witnessed first-hand in the imperial menageries in Vienna and Prague, in his composite portrait heads, such as The Allegory of Earth. Juan of Austria, the victor of Lepanto, had himself portrayed with his lion, Austria, which he caught in Tunis and took with him to Naples [Fig 9]. This lion was so tame, it lived and slept in his master's quarters.

Other animals in Philip's menageries included lions, bears, rhinoceros, elephants, and civet cats. These were housed in royal parks, in particular, the famed gardens of Aranjuez, praised by contemporaries as

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78 Ferrière H. de la (ed.), *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis* vol. IV 2 for six small dogs from Lyon sent by Catherine de Medici to her granddaughters in Spain in 1570. In 1561 she gave Philip II 10 hunting dogs from Brittany. Amezúa y Mayo, *Isabel 281*.
80 Amezúa y Mayo, *Isabel 284*.
81 AHN, Consejos, libro 2289, fol. 40 (December 22, 1583), letter from Philip to the Viceroy of Valencia, regarding a lion.
a terrestrial Paradise, and where the royal family often resided. Camels were kept and bred there,82 and Philip constructed a house for ostriches and other birds.83 Aranjuez was designated a botanical center, where specialists could study plants and animals. Certain species were placed there according to scientific criteria, and for this reason, Pedro de Venegas de Córdoba, was sent to Tanger to procure pregnant camels, ostriches and West African sheep.84 Jean Hermite mentions forty camels, 6 ostriches, 1,400 peacocks, an aviary and 222,695 distinct trees and plants is his account of this palace.85 The magnitude of Philip's menageries influenced artistic commissions, as in the conception of tapestry cartoons drawn by Michael Coxcie for the History of Noah [Fig. 10], in which animals in the main panels and borders resemble those housed in his royal parks. The king, as seen above, commissioned portraits of his favorite animals set into frames, which hung in his private quarters of the Escorial monastery.86 Many no longer survive, with the exception of Figs. 3 and 4, discussed above.

In the expectation of showcasing exotic animals in his capital, Philip bought houses near the Alcázar royal palace, in 1583, to stable an elephant sent to Portugal in 1582. When damages were incurred, the king had to cover these expenses.87 The crown jewel of his menagery, however, was the famous rhinoceros, the Marvel of Lisbon, he brought to Madrid,88 even though the beast was blind and hornless.

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82 British Library, Add. 28345, fols. 17–18 (February 2, 1584), letter from Luis Osorio to Mateo Vázquez about 2 camels recently born in Aranjuez. Also AGP Cédulas Reales, V, fol. 186, for food (pasión) for these same camels.

83 Instituto Valencia de D. Juan (IVD), Madrid, Ensayo 7 (II), fol. 373 (December 13, 1584), letter from Osorio to Vázquez detailing the construction of this aviary. Fol. 374v for Philip's decision to build it, and fol. 375v (December 20, 1584). An aviary was also built at the Pardo palace (AGP, Admin., El Pardo, caja 9381, 10, 1583).

84 AGP, Estado 426 (Lisbon, November 19, 1581), letter from Philip to his officials (corregidores) at Cádiz and Gibraltar about Venegas's purchases.


87 AGP, Admín, El Pardo, caja 9381, 9 (August 1, 1583): payment made to Catalina Santacara for damages done by the elephant to her house next to the Alcázar.

88 AGP, Admín, El Pardo, caja 9381, 10, 1583, for the house built to stable the rhinoceros and moneys paid to the locksmith, Benito Hernández.
Not long after its arrival at the Lisbon court in 1577, a diplomatic impasse ensued as Habsburg rulers vied to buy it. Hans Khevenhüller was desperate to send it to Prague, and, in late 1578, it was even promised to Pope Gregory XIII. The conquest of Portugal in 1580 and Philip’s incorporation of the Portuguese crown resolved the issue; both the rhinoceros and elephant were brought to Spain as trophies. As symbols of his new Asian empire, Philip had them put on public display for all to see.

Encounters with new worlds in Asia and in the Americas offered Habsburg courts in Portugal, Spain, Central Europe and the Netherlands unique opportunities to acquire new plants and strange animals. Commerce and trade brought these novelties to Europe, opening up global markets which royal collectors tapped into with the assistance of merchants, agents and diplomats. The Habsburgs relied upon family networks to procure exclusive pets, animals and birds. The more exotic the animal, the more highly it was prized. Menageries and aviaries became a fundamental part of the imaging of Renaissance courts; however, the empires under their rule gave Habsburg collectors a greater advantage in their acquisitions. Exotic pets colored daily life, fêtes and entertainments, playing a fundamental role in the creation of Habsburg collections and kunstkammers after the mid-sixteenth century.

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80 Morán M. – Checa F., El Coleccionismo 107, n. 1. AGS, Estado 396, fol. 61, Juan de Silva to Gabriel de Zayas, Lisbon, June 5, 1578.
81 AGS, Estado 402, fol. 14, Cristóbal de Moura to Gabriel de Zayas, Lisbon, October 18, 1578; Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Madrid, Ms. 80, fol. 121, letter from Zayas to Moura, Madrid, October 28, 1578; AGS, Estado 402, fol. 27 (Lisbon, November 10, 1578), Moura to Zayas.