

Cumins, John. *The Hound And The Hawk. The Art of Medieval Hunting*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. Pp.x. 249. Notes, illustrations, index, appendices, \$35.


At long last, there appears on the scene a definitive work on the sport of hunting during the *Moyen Age* that is a reference treasure-trove for medievalists and sport historians. *The Hound And The Hawk. The Art Of Medieval Hunting* by John Cummins has proved to be well worth the wait, for it is an in-depth, vividly detailed account of the milieu of the hunt with its accompanying skills and techniques, rules, and rituals. It is evident that Cummins has investigated this subject thoroughly, for the number of relevant primary sources presented in the notes and bibliography is impressive. Although the major sources of his data are the medieval European hunting treatises and manuals of instruction written between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, the author has also gleaned information from other sources including the literature, poems, ballads, and tapestries of the period. The appendices aptly complement the text, as they feature minute particulars on such sundry topics

as the costs of royal hunts, hunting ordinances and the rights of huntsmen.

Cummins' purpose for this work is appropriately stated through the words of the author of *Master Of Game*, found in the "Explicit" section of the book: ". . . to put in wryting this ryale. desportful and noble game of huntingyng so effectually . . ." (p. 249). The author proceeds in the book to put the noble art of hunting in "wryting" with an ambitious presentation and authoritative analysis. The well-written text does not get lost among the extraordinary amount of factual material provided, and the book remains very readable as it flows easily from content to commentary.

The book begins, as was the custom with most medieval hunting manuals, with a rationale for participation. As Cummins points out, such justification was hardly necessary, for the medieval authors knew that hunting, love, and warfare were the popular preoccupations of medieval gentrymen. Hunters generally believed that the values derived from this ennobling pastime were preparation for war, avoidance of sin, and pleasure and joy. A social occasion, the hunt provided the lordes and ladies of the court the opportunity for good foods and wines, jocularly, good fellowship and some amorous dalliance, if one so pleased. Cummins, in the following chapters, elucidates on the act and the accoutrements of venery and falconry with an insightful, meticulous narration presenting a broad spectrum of ". . . the craft, the termes ond the exercyse of this sayde game . . ." (p. 249). Although the hunt for the stag was acknowledged to be the noblest of hunting activities and Cummins gives much attention to the stages from unharboring to quarry, other methods of hunting such as bow and stable, and net and stalking, were also reviewed. His discourse on the types, care and feeding of the hounds, the other beasts hunted, and the training of the huntsmen gives careful heed to detail in a coherent fashion. His presentation of hunting with the hawk, though not as extensive as that dealing with the hounds, is, nevertheless, engrossing, particularly the descriptions of the foods and medications used to keep the birds calm and well. The "Flying the Hawk" chapter is a superb synthesis of the medieval accounts.

Especially noteworthy is the segment on hunting music, which is so well presented that it needs to be addressed. Cummins provides a fascinating perspective of this little-reported aspect of the sport. The hunt was accompanied by the harmony of sounds from the horn, hound, and huntsman. Human and animal alike were trained to recognize the calls of hunters and the notes of the horn for direction, encouragement, assistance and celebration. For the horn, the unit of time was the mote or moot, a single note that could be played short or long. Drawing on a number of medieval manuals, Cummins provides a number of hunting calls consisting of varied combinations of short and long notes and rests. Different formats used by the hunters are presented; for example, the call for the *prise*, "the beast is dead" shown in the linear form is — - - - - - - - (p. 163). Cummins records an interesting series of pictorial musical notations which he found in a fourteenth-century poem.

They consist of groups of black-and-white squares and rectangles, each representing a note. To call the hunters together is represented as:  (p. 169). The huntsmen's oral calls, such as the halloo and tally-ho, were used to direct, calm, rally, or urge the hounds to the pursuit. The hounds joined their voices to the hunt's musical trio. They gave forth with their varying vocal pitches when directed by the huntsmen. The baying of the hounds and the calls of the horn and human voices all raised together made a joyful sound to those in attendance: "... no man hearing them could seek any other paradise" (p. 163).

A particular emphasis in the book is the figurative treatment of hunting. The author contends that metaphors and allegories found in medieval literature, poetry and ballads frequently employ the imagery of hunting and hawking to depict the nobility, courtly love, and religious beliefs. Gyrfalcons personify dukes and earls while sparrowhawks were seen as knights. The search, chase and capitulation of an elusive woman is likened to the similar facets of the hunt. Symbols of Christ and the Passion are depicted as wounded harts. References to other images are found throughout the text.

One of the distinguishing features of the book is the inclusion of 54 illustrations that have been reproduced from diverse sources. The pictures complement the text, especially those scenes depicting the methods of bow, and stable, net and snare and the *par force de cheins*. The six scenes from the manual of Gaston Phoebus follows the route of the classic hunt from quest to quarry in realistic detail. The picture of the hounds is particularly beneficial to the viewer since some of these breeds no longer exist. Hawking was depicted in both the symbolic (knight man likened to a hawk of prey) and in the literal form (training techniques and the hunts). Medieval artists portrayed the female at the hunting scene as spectator seated behind the mounted hunter and as participant in spearing a deer at a deer park. Hawking was a special favorite of women: this is evident in the illustration of the Italian lady riding astride, hound by her side and falcon perched on her wrist while she focuses on the partridge with a truly determined air. Medieval humor is noted in the Flemish illustration that shows the hares stalking and killing the humans and carrying off their prey with feet tied to a pole. The pictures display the emotional quality attached to the hunt: the intensity of the chase, the satisfaction of the kill, and the sadness at the loss of a favorite hound. The author is commended for his selection of illustrations, for they not only illuminate the text but also make the art of hunting with hawk and hound very real to the viewer.

If it appears that I have waxed enthusiastic, I make no apologies, for the product deserves it. *The Hawk And The Hound. The Art Of Hunting* is a complete and masterful work that fills an important void in sports history.