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978-0-521-87853-1 - Hunting and the Politics of Violence before the English Civil War

Daniel C. Beaver

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Hunting and the Politics of Violence before the English Civil War

A major contribution to debates about the origins of the Civil War, this study of English forests and hunting from the late sixteenth century to the early 1640s explores their significance in the symbolism and effective power of royalty and the nobility in early modern England. Blending social, cultural, and political history, Daniel Beaver examines the interrelationships among four local communities to explain the violent political conflicts in the forests in the years leading up to the Civil War. Adopting a micro-historical approach, the book explores how local politics became bound up with national political and ideological divisions. The author argues that, from the early seventeenth century, a politics of land use in forests and other hunting reserves involved its participants in a sophisticated political discourse, touching on the principles of law and justice, the authority of the crown, and the nature of a commonwealth.

DANIEL C. BEAVER is Associate Professor at the Department of History, Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of *Parish Communities and Religious Conflict in the Vale of Gloucester, 1590–1690* (1998).

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For Nina and Anna

At last my drim of love has came true.

George Herriman

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book began as a study of gifts and their meanings in early modern England. I had hoped to explore how changing understandings of community and of personal relationships were expressed through the objects people gave as gifts and the seasons of their giving. This is not that book. At the start, I found so much evidence related to the circulation of venison during the early seventeenth century, and to the keen pursuit of it, that I began to set aside the evidence for other forms of gift in order to make sense of this mania. I had little understanding of the statutes related to the hunt, much less the distinctive laws and offices of forests, in short the vast political economy and ritual that governed the killing of deer and the consumption of their flesh in early modern England. The various hunting reserves fostered an intense, but often elusive, poorly documented politics. The evidence of forest courts presents significant technical challenges. At times, this has felt more like drowning than being lost in the woods.

The result is a different book from the one I had intended to write. It is not a monograph. I have not tried to track down every early Stuart reference to the hunt or every scrap of surviving evidence for the local communities discussed in the book. But I have used some of the methods of micro-history, particularly its variety of scale, in what has become a brief account of hunting and popular politics, meaning generally the politics beyond court, council, and parliament, during the early seventeenth century. As the political economy of venison became its subject, the book's narratives increasingly converged on the crisis of late spring and summer 1642, and its familiar series of attacks on forests, chases, and parks across southern England. Unfortunately, many of the best accounts of the broad social experience of this political crisis lie in monographs that are difficult to adapt to the classroom. I have attempted to combine, in a short book, micro-history's focus on local communities and unfamiliar archives, its insistence that the superficially eccentric often conceals the deeper patterns of culture, with an account of early Stuart political culture that places

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forests and other hunting reserves in a larger context. If specialists are persuaded that forests were more than museums of law, if students are induced to explore further the wealth of recent historical work on political awareness in early modern England, this book will have served its purpose.

It is a pleasant task to record my debts to the staffs of archives and libraries where I have worked. Eric Novotny, the Head of History Collections at Pattee Library, Penn State University, has strengthened the library's now substantial resources in early modern history and deserves an honorary appointment in the History Department. I thank the staffs at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, the Gloucestershire Record Office, and the Public Record Office in London for answering endless queries. David Chinn of the Public Record Office, in particular, handled an unwieldy microfilm order with extraordinary patience and skill. I thank Roy Ritchie and the research division of the Huntington Library for a Mayers Fellowship in summer 1997, and the opportunity it afforded to work on the Stowe papers. I have also received generous support from the College of Liberal Arts at Penn State for the preparation of microfilm. The formation of a Committee for Early Modern Studies at Penn State, involving colleagues from departments across the arts and humanities, has made the university an exciting place to study the early modern English past. In fall 2005, a fellowship from the Penn State Institute for the Arts and Humanities allowed me to finish the chapter on Windsor. I have presented early drafts of chapters at Princeton University, the University of Sheffield, the Institute for Historical Research at the University of London, and the Renaissance seminar in the English Department at Penn State. I thank my hosts for their generosity and the participants in these sessions for their criticism and encouragement.

I have benefited immeasurably from the advice and criticism of friends and colleagues. Keith Wrightson once again read and commented on the entire manuscript. His broad conception of social history and personal generosity have been sources of inspiration. The anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press offered helpful suggestions and expressed strong support for the project. I thank my father, Dan Beaver, Michael Adas, Miriam Bodian, Mike Braddick, Justin Champion, David Cressy, Barbara Donagan, Phil Jenkins, Newton Key, Laura Knoppers, Peter Lake, John Morrill, Nina Safran, Ethan Shagan, Bill Speck, Garrett Sullivan, Jim Sweeney, and John Walter for their comments on individual chapters. Of course, the errors that remain are my own responsibility.

I cannot properly acknowledge the numerous references I have received. I thank Mike Braddick, John Broad, Laura Knoppers, Sears McGee,

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Garrett Sullivan, and John Walter for suggestions and texts that became part of the fabric of the book. Mike Braddick, Laura Knoppers, and Garrett Sullivan directed me to sources written in a poetic language that, needless to say, is not typical of forest court records. I thank Sabrina Alcorn-Baron, in particular, for her loan of a microfilm of the Sackville manuscripts. I have not consulted this collection at the Centre for Kentish Studies, although the bibliography and notes respectfully indicate this archive as the collection's home. I became aware of the importance of the Earl of Middlesex's correspondence for the history of Corse Lawn Chase while I was studying Gloucestershire parishes, and I used a handlist of the Gloucestershire documents in the Sackville collection prepared for the Gloucestershire Record Office to identify those relevant for a study of Corse Lawn. I was pleasantly surprised to find these letters included in the microfilm Sabrina had prepared for her research on the early Stuart Privy Council. Her generous, extended loan of this microfilm spared a good deal of time and resources for other parts of the book.

It is difficult to convey, much less properly acknowledge, the alchemy of influences among family, friends, colleagues, and ideas. Michael Adas has been a constant source of support and encouragement for many years. In the History Department at Penn State, Kumkum Chatterjee, Tony Kaye, Joan Landes, Oncho Ng, Bill Pencak, Matthew Restall, and Gregg Roeber have offered both friendship and critical perspectives from their own fields. As heads of department, Gregg Roeber and Sally McMurry have helped me through their office as well as their personal support. Greg Eghigian and I have been talking about violence for years. Most of our plans have come to nothing, but the graduate seminars we have taught together at Penn State on the history of violence in Europe have given me a chance to work through many of the ideas in this book. I have learned a great deal about early modern England, as well as the fortunes and misfortunes of Watford Football Club, from numerous conversations with Mike Braddick. Laura Knoppers and Garrett Sullivan have encouraged, and even promoted, my desecration of literary texts. I dedicate the book to my wife, Nina Safran, and my daughter, Anna, with thanks and love.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies
<i>CSPD</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series</i>
CSP, V	Calendar of State Papers, Venetian
GDR	Gloucester Diocesan Records
GRO	Gloucestershire Record Office
HL	Huntington Library
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HMSO	His/Her Majesty's Stationery Office
<i>LJ</i>	<i>(House of) Lords Journal</i>
PRO	Public Record Office
RO	Record Office
SCU	Seventeenth Century Undated
SP	State Papers
<i>SR</i>	<i>Statutes of the Realm</i>
STAC	Star Chamber
STLP	Stowe Temple Legal Papers
STMLP	Stowe Temple Miscellaneous Legal Papers
STMP	Stowe Temple Manorial Papers
STP	Stowe Temple Papers
<i>VCH</i>	<i>Victoria County History</i>

Dates are given in old style, with the year beginning on 1 January.