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 ***The Orders of Knighthood and the Formation of the British Honours System, 1660–1760 (review)***

Hannah Smith

The Scriblerian and the Kit-Cats

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Mr. Matikkala argues that the orders of knighthood continued to play a significant role in the high politics of 1660–1760 and had an important social status function for the aristocracy, who still craved such markers of favor and influence. While the Crown's prerogatives became more circumscribed, the monarch's power as the "fount of honour" stayed constant (although the Georgian kings came under greater ministerial pressure when it came to doling out honors). And because the Crown was so closely associated with the orders of knighthood, the Jacobite claimants to the British throne used the distribution of honors as an important way of very publicly emphasizing their monarchical pretensions, leading to two rival honors systems and much partisan pride and political irritation.

Mr. Matikkala draws upon both primary and secondary sources, some arcane, and situates them in a current historiographical framework concerning the function of eighteenth-century monarchy and aristocracy. The book is sensitive to the wider political culture of the orders, and the literary and artistic forms through which this culture was articulated, including drama, verse, architecture (St. George's Hall, Windsor, the Cupola Room, Kensington Palace, and a number of country houses), heraldic funerals and funerary monuments, and portraiture. Generous black-and-white and color illustrations enhance this attractively produced book.

He explores how the orders of knighthood were deployed for diplomatic purposes. Similarly valuable: his discussion of **[End Page 120]** the religious aspects of knightly orders—such as contemporary concerns over the Catholic elements retained in the unreformed Garter statutes—underscores the continuing religious dimension to the British heraldic orders. Mr. Matikkala usefully examines the proposed foundation of orders for royalists after the Restoration (such as the Order of the Royal Oak and the more obscure Esquires of the Martyred King), analyzes the structure of the proposed order and reveals its "almost feudal"

character, and highlights early eighteenth-century debates about women in the Order of the Garter as “Ladies of the Garter.”

Despite these strengths, the study retains its roots as a doctoral thesis. The footnotes, given as much attention as the central narrative, are exhaustive, discursive, and lavish: they frequently take up between a third and half of each page. Though valuable, they obscure the book’s thrust. For example, in the first chapter Mr. Matikkala suggests that the period saw a “Chivalric Enlightenment,” a term used as an “umbrella-concept” to describe contemporary attitudes to chivalry and the heraldic orders. “Just as every period since the Crusades era had produced its own version of ‘new knight hood,’ so too did the age of Enlightenment.” This period, of course, consisted of many Enlightenments; the book examines the impact of Enlightened thinking on the orders of knight hood, particularly interesting since some of those who administered and wrote about them were also Fellows of the Royal Society or Freemasons. Mr. Matikkala, however, does not make a sustained case for why these new approaches to the orders should be considered as Enlightened per se.

A useful scholarly reference for those working on politics and political culture, *The Orders of Knighthood* never fulfills its potential.

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coining a phrase but confirming a category. Dryden and Pope had both recognized this type of poetry. But Johnson sought to make 'metaphysical' a pejorative term." (I would have noted that he tries to do the same with the related term "wit.") The final two paragraphs contain a solid analysis of particularly excellent examples of Johnson's prose style in the *Lives*.

Mr. Mullan's style, however, disappoints. He obviously does not have a tin ear, but occasionally he can write as though he does. Things begin inauspiciously when his first paragraph ends, "No one could have done more than him [*sic*] to honour his country's literature." The next paragraph begins, "Yet Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* is intrigued [*sic*] by everything inglorious about the life of writing." We are told that the "indignities that accompanied the quest for patronage . . . feature in [*sic*] many of Johnson's accounts." There is a danger: "As the greatest author of the age, it was natural that Pope's vanities be the most powerful." Mr. Mullan first writes "his life of Savage" and later "his *Life of Savage*." His two-page Select Bibliography seems haphazard. Joseph Epes Brown's *Critical Opinions of Samuel Johnson*, 1926, is cited in a 1961 reprint, which is not identified as such; that another Joseph Epes Brown, the famous Native American scholar, was six years old in 1926 is one reason why it is always important to provide the original date of a reprint edition. But names are not Mr. Mullan's strength, it seems. O M Brack appears as O. M. Brack and Robert Folkenfluk is transformed into Robert Folkenfluk. The Introduction is hardly thronged with stylistic infelicities and mistakes, but there are too many.

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ANTTI MATIKKALA. *The Orders of Knighthood and the Formation of the British Honours System, 1660–1760*. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2008. Pp. xvi + 470. \$170; £90.

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The Orders of Knighthood and the Formation of the British Honours System, 1660-1760. By Antti Matikkala (Rochester, The Boydell Press, 2008) 470 pp. 155.00, i will add that the drying Cabinet mirror evolves into vector sodium chlorosulfite, therefore the tendency to conformism is associated with less intelligence.

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