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REVIEW ARTICLES

THE VARIETIES OF POLITICS IN EARLY MODERN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The drama of coronation: medieval ceremony in early modern England. By Alice Hunt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. x + 242. ISBN 978-0-521-88539-3. £49.00.

The politics and culture of honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541–1641. By Brendan Kane. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xvi + 302. ISBN 978-0-521-89864-5. £55.00.

Hunting and the politics of violence before the English Civil War. By Daniel C. Beaver. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xii + 173. ISBN 978-0-521-87853-1. £48.00.

Roger Morrice and the puritan Whigs: the entring book of Roger Morrice, 1677–1691, I. Edited by Mark Goldie. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007. Pp. lviii + 662. ISBN 978-1-84383-245-4.

The orders of knighthood and the formation of the British honours system, 1660–1760. By Antti Matikkala. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008. Pp. xvi + 470. ISBN 978-1-84383-423-6. £90.00.

The political history of early modern Britain and Ireland continues to expand and develop in exciting and creative ways. It seems that most historical subjects have their political aspects, and we have certainly moved a long way from the days when political, social, cultural, and religious histories inhabited different worlds with relatively little overlap between them. Instead, the climate at present is inclusive enough to discern politics in the most varied and diverse phenomena. Two of the five books under review make this explicit in their very titles when they speak of the 'politics of violence' (Beaver) and the 'politics … of honour' (Kane). We are currently living in a historiographical world where a recent essay on 'culinary politics' is accepted as mainstream where once it might have seemed esoteric.[1] Taken together, these five books offer a fascinating cross-section of the diversity of attitudes, forms, and activities from the early sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries that can usefully be termed political and the ways in which they might be explored.

[1] Paul Hartle, ' "Take a long spoon": culinary politics in the English Civil War', in Timothy J. Tomasik and Juliann M. Vitullo, eds., *At the table: metaphorical and material cultures of food in medieval and early modern Europe* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 29–47.

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I

The book which covers the earliest period is Alice Hunt's *The drama of coronation*, and this offers a study in what might be termed the 'politics of ceremony'. Hunt analyses how the coronation service was adapted to suit changing political and religious circumstances during the period from 1509 to 1559. She focuses in particular on five coronations: those of Henry VIII (June 1509), Anne Boleyn (June 1533), Edward VI (February 1547), Mary I (October 1553), and Elizabeth I (January 1559). Throughout the book, Hunt brings the sensitive reading skills of a literary scholar to bear on a range of sources that enable her to draw out the complex relationship between ceremonial and its political, religious, and literary contexts.

Hunt convincingly challenges the simplistic assumption that the Reformation brought a secularization of the coronation ceremony. Instead, she argues that 'we need to read coronations in multi-faceted ways – as religious rituals, as power-brokers, as constitutional keys, as legal contracts, as private rites, as civic traditions and as social events – and as both susceptible and resistant to historical change' (p. 9). The coronation was a ceremony that, although grounded in tradition and precedent, could be interpreted and reinterpreted as circumstances changed. Hunt usefully combines close analysis of the coronation ceremony itself with discussion of the monarch's pre-coronation procession through London and various associated literary texts, especially coronation plays. She shows in detail how ceremonies borrowed from drama as well as the reverse in what was a dynamic, two-way relationship. As she puts it, 'ceremony behaves like drama, and drama behaves ceremonially' (p. 110). This argument in turn leads her to develop a perceptive and original model of coronations and their accompanying processions and pageants as collaborations between the court and the city rather than as constructs imposed by successive regimes. The simplistic portrayal of ceremony as royal propaganda rapidly comes to seem crude and inadequate in the face of this much more subtle and sophisticated approach.[2]

In chapters 2 and 3, which examine the coronations of Anne Boleyn and Edward VI respectively, Hunt likewise challenges any simple notion of the impact of the break with Rome and the development of evangelical Protestantism on coronation ceremonial. For example, 'what emerges in 1547 is a reformed version of coronation that is both subject to and beyond Protestant and Catholic classification: to read Edward's ceremony in terms of its reflection of religious reformation proves too limiting' (p. 79). What we can see, perhaps, is a breach of the customary link between anointing and the king's authority: the rites of coronation declared and confirmed Edward's power rather than actually creating and conferring it. The ceremony thus acquired more of 'a dramatic, symbolic role' (p. 89)

[2] Two other recent works that also offer convincing and stimulating discussions of this subject are J. P. D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor state: political culture in the Westcountry* (Oxford, 2003); and Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor monarchy: authority and image in sixteenth-century England* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2009).

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than its predecessors, for neither Edward's title nor his imperial crown was 'contingent upon the act of coronation' (p. 90).

Mary I found that she had to work within this paradigm while seeking to subvert it. Her coronation was designed to assert the legitimacy of her title to the throne, her status as queen regnant, and her Catholic religion. Although she had to collaborate with parliament to secure the repeal of the royal supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs, she nevertheless successfully resisted her council's proposal that her coronation be delayed until she had met with her first parliament. She thereby asserted the independence of the ceremony from both council and parliament. The legitimizing power of the ceremony remained true of Elizabeth I's coronation, although this occasion contained a central ambiguity over whether or not Elizabeth actually participated in the mass. Indeed, amidst the complex confessional politics of 1558–9, it is quite possible that this ambiguity may have been intentional. Interestingly, however much the ceremony was associated with a Protestant queen, and acknowledged her position as a parliamentary monarch, the importance attached to the coronation had not disappeared: 'if Elizabeth's coronation contains elements that pull the ceremony towards the establishment of Protestantism, the sacredness of the ceremony – even some sacramental properties – is not compromised' (p. 157).

Two things above all make Hunt's book significant and rewarding. First, she successfully challenges the idea, which appears in much of the older literature, that the Protestant Reformation in England led to a radical downplaying of the role of coronation ceremonial: 'uncritical post-Foxeian histories have ensured that Elizabeth's coronation has often featured in history as a symbolic moment signifying the break with the foreign and bloody Marian past and the happy beginning of England's Protestant future' (p. 161). As Hunt points out, however, the sacral attributes of monarchy remained prominent, as Elizabeth's continued touching for scrofula demonstrates. The book thus avoids the dangers of teleology and anachronism and instead offers what Clifford Geertz called a 'thick description'[3] of the ceremonies within the circumstances of their time.

The book achieves this above all by means of its second notable feature, which is its holistic treatment of the actual coronations alongside their accompanying pageants and processions. Literary sources are especially valuable here, such as John Bale's *King Johan* (1547) and Richard Mulcaster's *The Quenes majesties passage* (1559). The discussion offers a model of how much can be gained through a sensitive reading of sources that previous historians have often either overlooked or regarded as of purely antiquarian value. The nature of ceremony as a living, dynamic phenomenon that interacted powerfully with its political context is an approach that can fruitfully be applied to royal coronations in other periods, and

[3] Clifford Geertz, 'Thick description: towards an interpretive theory of culture', in his *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays* (New York, NY, 1973), pp. 3–30.

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to many different kinds of ceremonies. This seems a highly promising avenue for future inquiry.[4]

II

The second work under review takes us from the politics of ceremonial to the politics of honour. The two subjects are of course related, and Brendan Kane's book reminds us of the close connection that existed between the honour of the crown and that of the political elite. He examines the politics of honour in Britain and Ireland during the hundred years from the establishment of the Irish kingdom under the English imperial crown in 1541 to the outbreak of the Irish rebellion in 1641. Like Hunt, Kane makes perceptive and resourceful use of literary sources to illuminate his theme. He draws out the extraordinarily important role that honour politics played in shaping the values and identity of the British and Irish elites during this period, and by recovering their obsession with honour he is able to construct a sophisticated cultural history of high politics. Just as Hunt reveals the profound importance that was attached to coronation ceremonies at the time, so Kane argues that 'it is worthwhile taking honour seriously precisely because contemporaries did' (p. 14).

Kane's book is at one level a contribution to the 'new British history', in that he adopts an archipelagic perspective and shows how the different components of this multiple monarchy had an impact upon each other. This kind of integrated approach is very difficult to bring off, and it arguably works best when disciplined either chronologically or thematically, or both. Kane's approach of taking the specific theme of the culture and politics of honour, and tracing it over a particular period of one hundred years, therefore has much to commend it.[5]

Kane argues that honour 'should not be seen as a static thing tied inseparably to "national" cultures, but rather as comprising various discourses deployable before different audiences'; it 'provided the social glue for early modern English and Irish societies, as it did for all of Europe', and 'we should be more open to seeing' notions of honour 'in circulation across national borders' (pp. 10–11). The book's early chapters draw out the marked social and cultural similarities of the British and Irish elites: both attached immense importance to noble status and the honour that went with it. Kane analyses a range of annalistic and bardic sources to reconstruct conceptions of noble honour in sixteenth-century Ireland, and he finds in particular that ideas of good lordship, based on obligation,

[4] On this theme, see especially Dougal Shaw, 'Nothing but propaganda? Historians and the study of early modern ritual', *Cultural and Social History: The Journal of the Social History Society*, 1 (2004), 139–58.

[5] In exploring the culture and politics of honour, Kane acknowledges (pp. 4–6) his debt to Mervyn James's seminal article on 'English politics and the concept of honour, 1485–1642', reprinted in his *Society, politics and culture: studies in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 308–415. Another important work that analyses the politics of honour in early modern Ireland is Toby Barnard and Jane Fenlon, eds., *The dukes of Ormonde, 1610–1745* (Woodbridge, 2000).

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humanity and hospitality, became increasingly important relative to older values of militarism and martial valour. Ireland was thus 'a place where conquest brought power, but justice and good lordship brought legitimacy' (p. 84).

Kane argues that the strong interconnection between the British and Irish elites became particularly apparent during the Nine Years' War (1594–1603). This conflict helped to spark off a 'crisis of honour' in England, of which the earl of Essex was the first and most prominent victim. The politics of honour were conducted within a triangular relationship between the monarchy, the English nobility, and the Irish nobility. The last in particular developed a sense of themselves as part of a European cohort of nobility as a way of defending their own honour and protecting Ireland from English incursions. The language of Irish honour was 'constructed quite consciously within a European context' (p. 141). English cultural influences were nevertheless discernible in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Ireland, not least in the pursuit of genealogical research to establish noble pedigrees: there was 'a heraldic industriousness in late-Tudor, early-Stuart Ireland that echoed English practice' (p. 166). This was true equally of the Gaelic and Old English communities, and Kane stresses that these should not be seen as monolithic socio-cultural blocs. The concern with precedence and the passionate defence of honour were characteristic of both British and Irish politics under the early Stuarts, as Kane illustrates with telling case-studies of the Irish parliament of 1613–15 and the English parliaments of 1621 and 1628–9. These problems became all the more acute after 1603 because 'one of the problems facing a multiple monarchy like that ruled over by the Stuarts was the management of different national nobilities': indeed, as shrewd an observer as Sir Francis Bacon 'worried about potential contests over place and precedence between the English and Scottish nobility and, further, about their relationships to the Irish nobility' (p. 208).

The intense concern with honour so evident among the nobility inevitably had political implications for the crown, for the monarch remained the 'fountain of honour' (pp. 216, 242). This was particularly true during the reign of Charles I, for that king was 'concerned about the erosion in England of true honour', and Ireland proved to be 'a necessary and very important theatre of Charles's defence of honour' (p. 222). All these themes come to a climax in Kane's final chapter, which examines the impact of Wentworth's lord deputyship during the 1630s. Kane analyses Wentworth's 'obsession with honour in politics', and shows how 'matters of honour soured Wentworth's relations with Irish elites before political competition did' (p. 223). Kane traces this obsession back to Wentworth's early life and career in England, where he finds him involved in various quarrels with individuals such as Sir David Foulis which provide an illuminating context for his later, more celebrated, conflicts in Ireland with such prominent figures as Richard Burke, earl of Clanricard and St Albans, and Adam Loftus, the lord chancellor of Ireland. In this excellent final chapter, Kane underscores the central role that honour played in the high politics of the period and stresses that the common culture of honour within the British and Irish elites remained

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politically unstable.[6] The more vigorously the king – and Wentworth on his behalf – sought to protect his honour, the more his elite subjects became determined to defend theirs, producing catastrophic results that became only too apparent with the outbreak of the Irish rebellion in 1641.

III

The defence of honour was of course associated with its own very specific and controlled forms of violence, most notably duelling, which persisted despite the efforts of James VI and I to curtail the practice. Daniel C. Beaver's book takes us into a wider realm of the politics of violence in early seventeenth-century England. In a fascinating study that engages with a number of the themes of the two books already discussed, Beaver argues that the royal forests, and by extension the deer parks constructed by members of the nobility and gentry, provided a setting for the pursuit of honour and the ritualized violence of hunting. Within this framework, 'the building of a deer park conventionally signified the honourable devolution of royal powers in the forest … to a favoured commoner'; 'a park expressed a distinctive relationship to royal power, asserted claims to privileges of the forest and hunt, and enhanced the builder's stock of honour and gentility relative to other local families' (pp. 36–7). Forests were particular communities, with their own laws, courts, and officers, and their own 'distinctive political culture' (p. 157), what Beaver terms 'forest politics' (this phrase appears frequently, e.g. at pp. 69, 72, 94).

The book rests on four detailed case-studies of this 'forest politics' in action: Stowe, Waltham Forest, Windsor Forest, and Corse Lawn Chase north-west of Gloucester. Beaver argues that the assertion of the royal prerogative to expand royal forests during the 1630s destabilized 'forest politics' and generated a powerful reaction that exploded in violence in the early 1640s. He places this reaction in the context of the remarkable growth of popular politics, of 'politics beyond Parliament' (p. 79), which developed in England from the opening decades of the seventeenth century onwards. The Caroline regime did not initiate conflict – that had existed as far back as the 1610s and 1620s – but the policies of the Personal Rule did prove contentious and divisive. Beaver advocates a broader conception of 'popular politics' than one that focuses on newsbooks or on 'the influence of conflicts over forests, ship money, and religious innovation during the 1630s on local interpretations of the political crisis of the early 1640s' (p. 66). Instead, he shows that 'because the nature of forest communities and forest law

[6] For other recent explorations of this theme, see especially John Adamson, *The noble revolt: the overthrow of Charles I* (London, 2007); Jane Ohlmeyer, 'The baronial context of the Irish Civil Wars', in John Adamson, ed., *The English Civil War: conflict and contexts, 1640–1649* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 106–24; and Richard Cust, 'William Dugdale and the honour politics of Stuart Warwickshire', in Christopher Dyer and Catherine Richardson, eds., *William Dugdale, historian, 1605–1686: his life, his writings and his country* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 89–108.

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was a matter of the royal prerogative, these debates and conflicts easily transcended narrowly local matters of political order' (p. 69).

As a result, within 'forest politics' the distinction between national and local issues soon became very blurred. A sophisticated conception of the commonwealth, mingled with resentment towards the royal prerogative and the nobility and gentry, readily developed during the opening decades of the seventeenth century in ways that proved responsive to the political crisis of the early 1640s. Terms current in national discourse were deployed in local disputes in each of the areas that Beaver examines, and 'the politics of religion in 1640 and the familiar indictment of popery in the Caroline church may have sharpened local perceptions of royal injustices in the forest' (p. 118). Beaver argues that only in this way can we fully understand the extraordinary acts of violence that took place immediately before and after the outbreak of the Civil War, such as the killing of over 600 of the earl of Middlesex's deer at Corse Lawn Chase in October 1642. Hostility to an absentee noble landlord merged with the 'struggle against popish despotism' to ensure that the deer 'became the object of violent activism' (p. 128). Similar points can be made about the killing of deer in Windsor Forest in February 1642, or in Waltham Forest the following April.

Beaver's book is notable for offering a much richer and more nuanced analysis of these violent episodes than any published hitherto. Whereas older accounts tended to emphasize socio-economic (class) hostilities, or religious grievances, this account roots the violence within the distinctive world of 'forest politics'. That politics already contained tensions and divisions and when these converged with a national crisis during the early 1640s the result was a highly combustible mixture that exploded in horrific acts of violence. Yet in a sense, as with other forms of early modern disorder, these acts were not random or arbitrary: rather, they were directed against specific targets that were the objects of longstanding grievances.[7] A particular consonance of local and national issues was thus necessary for them to take place.

Equally, there was no 'easy translation of forest ecology into the political terms of support for crown or parliament in the Civil War', and 'the idiom of forest politics could join other political discourses to support an array of responses to the crisis' (p. 158). Rather, episodes of forest violence were more akin to the controlled and directed protests associated with grain riots in early modern England, such as that at Maldon in 1629.[8] Beaver's account thus sits comfortably with what is now understood about other forms of disorder in early and mid-seventeenth-century England.[9] He develops a conception of popular politics broad enough to

[7] Cf. E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and hunters: the origin of the Black Act* (London, 1975); and John Walter, *Understanding popular violence in the English Revolution: the Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999).

[8] On this episode, see especially John Walter, 'Grain riots and popular attitudes to the law: Maldon and the crisis of 1629', reprinted in his *Crowds and popular politics in early modern England* (Manchester, 2006).

[9] See, for example, the essays in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson, eds., *Order and disorder in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 1985); Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, eds., *Negotiating power in early*

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integrate moments of local violence that would once have remained the preserve of the social historian or antiquarian. The result is a much more authentic and plausible reconstruction of what it meant to live through this troubled period and to engage with its politics. Many English people had to make desperately difficult political choices in 1642; but, as Beaver concludes, these 'were hardly the first political decisions of their lives' (p. 158).

IV

If the books by Kane and Beaver, in their very different ways, both chart the tensions that led the Stuart monarchies into the crisis of the 1640s, our last two books deal with the attempts to reconstruct the political order after 1660. Mark Goldie's is the introductory volume to the edition of the *Entring book of Roger Morrice* (7 volumes, Boydell Press, 2007–10), of which he was the chief editor. The *Entring book* covers the years 1677–91, and is a chronicle of political events rather than a diary. It is roughly three-quarters the length of Samuel Pepys's diary, and the publication of this multi-volume edition, from the original manuscript in Dr Williams's Library, London, has been an event of the greatest significance for our understanding of the politics of Restoration England. In this introductory volume, Goldie offers an important reassessment of the nature of politics, and in particular the relationship between politics and religion, in later seventeenth-century England. Thus, having considered the politics of ceremonial, the politics of honour, and the politics of violence, we now turn to the politics of religion.

Goldie's account contains a masterly analysis of the polarization that opened up during the 1680s between Whigs and Tories. Both these terms were the product of the Exclusion Crisis (1679–81): 'the term "Whig" began to appear, a derogatory application of an existing word used for Covenanter extremists in Scotland who had engaged in sporadic insurrection since 1660. Correspondingly, the term "Tory" emerged, likewise a pejorative borrowing, a word used of Irish papist rebels' (p. 6). There were strong elements of continuity between Whigs and Tories and the Royalists and Parliamentarians of the 1640s. Like those Civil-War groupings, both Whigs and Tories were identified with certain religious sympathies: the Tories generally supported the Church of England, and labelled their opponents 'fanatics', 'republicans', and 'commonwealthsmen', whereas the Whigs were much more sympathetic towards puritans and dissenters, and branded the Tories as the 'Church party', 'tantivies', 'high flyers' and even 'popishly affected'. Morrice was a puritan and a Whig, and his fear of 'popery and arbitrary government' pervades his *Entring book*. This outlook comes through strikingly in a number of his judgements, for example his view that the Cavalier Parliament

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modern society: order, hierarchy and subordination in Britain and Ireland (Cambridge, 2001); and the volume by John Walter cited in the previous note.

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(1661–79) had 'violated the fundamental laws of the kingdom and advanced arbitrary power' (p. 136).

In Morrice's *Entring book*, 'the coverage of ecclesiastical politics is immense', and 'the record principally concerns the operations of religious groups as actors on the political stage' (p. 31). One of the most valuable contributions of Goldie's discussion is to draw out the significance of the 'puritan Whigs', committed to greater comprehension in the church, and limitations on the power of the Stuart monarchs. This strand of puritan politics marked a continuity from the puritan gentry of the 1630s and 1640s, and Goldie argues that 'there is good reason for seeing the Revolution [of 1688–9] as the fulfilment of the aim of those who had assembled in the Long Parliament in 1640' (p. 150). In an important corrective to some recent historiography, which has emphasized the vitality of republican ideas in Restoration England, Goldie underlines 'the devout monarchism of the Puritan mainstream' (p. 151). He argues that 'a crucial feature of the Presbyterians' position was that it was always monarchist, never republican', and that 'the monarchism of the Presbyterians is readily overlooked' (p. 155): 'the Presbyterians were … historically a party of zealous antipathy to the Stuart crown and yet also instinctively restorationist. They constituted a middle way between the parties of untrammelled monarchy and republicanism' (p. 161). Morrice distinguished sharply between the Long Parliament's legitimate aims of 1642 and the Regicide of 1649. His heroes were the leading figures of the Long Parliament, such as John Pym, Oliver St John and Denzil Holles (whom Morrice served as chaplain), and he greatly admired Philip Hunton's *A treatise of monarchy* (1643), republished in 1680 and 1689, which advanced the doctrine of the co-ordinate powers of crown, lords, and commons. For Morrice, 'to have been secluded in Pride's Purge was the acme of political virtue' (p. 163). To puritan Whigs such as Morrice, the 'Glorious' Revolution – a term that he may have coined – represented the achievement of those constitutional concessions that the Long Parliament demanded down to the Treaty of Newport in 1648, but which were then outflanked by the army's intervention and the trial and execution of Charles I. Puritan politics, 'ingrained in its hostility to the Stuarts and yet never republican, and retaining its godly cast of mind', thus 'had a continuous and coherent history from 1640 to 1689' (p. 193).

Goldie then argues that puritan Whig politics went into a rapid decline after the Revolution. This was to a large extent 'the result of generational change' (p. 194) as the generation of puritan gentry who remembered the Civil War passed on. In ecclesiastical politics, the decline of puritan Whiggism was 'marked by the fading of hopes for Comprehension' (p. 197). The 1690s saw a pronounced shift away from puritan Whigs and towards Country Whigs, who regarded with dismay William III's willingness to accommodate 'those Tories who were willing to be courtiers' and his 'failure to promote constitutional reforms specified in the Bill of Rights' (p. 203). The Whigs were very much associated with the cause of moral reform and with the Societies for the Reformation of Manners which sprang up in the 1690s. Yet the emergence of Country Whiggism marked a

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fundamental change from the world of puritan Whiggism with which Morrice was so closely identified. The 1689 Toleration Act dealt a blow to the puritan Whigs' cherished ideal of comprehension, for whereas the Presbyterians had sought toleration *inside* the church – inclusion rather than secession – the Toleration Act granted a limited measure of toleration *outside* the church. This involved the partial removal of legal penalties against nonconformists rather than the development of any recognizably modern concept of toleration. The Presbyterians had inherited from their predecessors in the 1640s, such as Thomas Edwards, a fear and dislike of radical sectarian groups and religious separation. Between 1667 and 1689, at least eight bills for comprehension were drawn up for consideration in parliament, but all of them failed. For comprehensionist dissenters, 'the Toleration Act was a failure not an achievement': 'it finally liberated the Dissenters from persecution but it spelt an end to their vision of a reformed national Church' (p. 245). Put in terms of the groupings of the later 1640s, 1689 marked the victory of the Independent vision of toleration outside the church over the Presbyterian vision of toleration within it.

Such stimulating insights as these throw much light on the politics of religion in Restoration England. They also enable us to reappraise the relationship between the periods on either side of 1660, and to discern the continuities that bound the two parts of the seventeenth century together. The mindset of the puritan Whigs had strong affinities with that of the puritan-parliamentarian gentry who had sided against Charles I in the Civil War. 'Bred in the "Comprehensive" tradition, [Morrice] remained interested in defining the Puritan past as identifiable with, compatible with, the national Church' (p. 279). As he attempted, in his later years, to compile a vast 'History of the Puritans', he found himself far more in sympathy with the broad Jacobean church than with that of Charles I and Laud. For these puritan Whigs, 1689 was a success in constitutional terms, for it established those limitations on royal powers that they had sought since 1640; but in religious terms it was a failure, for it also saw a decisive shift towards toleration outside the church rather than their ideal of comprehension within it. This paradox helps to explain much of the distinctive character of Restoration England, and the eventual transition into a different political and religious world from the 1690s onwards. After 1689, the politics of religion could never be the same again.

V

Our final book, and the one that ends the latest chronologically, is Antti Matikkala's *The orders of knighthood and the formation of the British honours system, 1660–1760*. Whereas Kane analysed the politics of honour, Matikkala examines the politics of honours (plural), and like Kane's this book also covers a period of exactly 100 years, from the restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the accession of George III in 1760. This is an extraordinarily detailed and deeply researched account of a much neglected subject. Matikkala focuses in particular on the

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revival of the Order of the Garter in 1660, and the foundation of two new orders, the Thistle (1687) and the Bath (1725). He argues that these orders 'were not experiencing any particular decay' and indeed had 'a central role to play at the heart of high politics and especially in the life of the higher nobility' (p. 1). The politics of honours retained its vitality and significance, and the orders survived because they continued to perform a useful political function.

This book is in fact 'the first comprehensive study of the British orders as part of the honours system in any period' (p. 3). Such scholarly interest in the orders as there has been has generally focused on the later middle ages rather than on the early modern period, for example Hugh E. L. Collins's very useful study of the Garter as a political institution in the later medieval period.[10] Like Kane, Matikkala emphasizes the crucial importance of ideas of honour: 'honour was one of the most notable "frames of reference" in early-modern culture and society' (p. 35). Royal recognition of this by the public bestowal of honours provided a crucial way of rewarding loyalty and cultivating the political support of the nobility and gentry. Over the hundred years that Matikkala covers, the time when the honours system apparently received most criticism was during the ascendancy of Sir Robert Walpole, from 1721 to 1742, but it seems that such criticism was usually directed not against the system as such, 'but against its perceived abuse' (p. 38).

When Charles II was restored in 1660, he consciously emphasized tradition and continuity in the honours system, and he paid particular attention to re-establishing the time-honoured institutional and ceremonial framework of the Garter. He deliberately avoided creating orders that might risk being divisive by only rewarding Royalists, and he ensured instead that the Order of the Royal Oak became a symbol of reconciliation. Orders thus had a vital role to play in the fostering of political loyalty, and Matikkala argues convincingly that the creation of the Order of the Thistle in 1687 not only reflected James VII and II's desire to revive one of the traditions of a pre-Reformation, Catholic Scotland but also formed part of his attempts to build up support for the crown in his northern kingdom. The relationship between honours and political circumstances was likewise reflected in 'patterns of appointments – and disappointments' (p. 98). 'Appointments to the orders were made on different grounds and for various purposes, each in the unique political context of the time' and this could work negatively as well as positively: 'the usually involuntary exclusion could be politically just as important as the appointments actually made' (p. 98). The withholding of honours could thus 'very effectively serve as "negative marks"' (p. 138).

The politics of honours in turn sheds light on the changing nature of the monarchs and the monarchy during this period. All the monarchs used the orders for political purposes, as just a couple of examples will serve to illustrate. First, in

[10] Hugh E. L. Collins, *The Order of the Garter, 1348–1461: chivalry and politics in late medieval England* (Oxford, 2000).

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1672 Charles II's appointment to the Garter of the earl of Bedford, who had been a Parliamentarian during the Civil War, 'was probably to ensure Bedford's support in the context of the Third Anglo-Dutch War' (p. 142). Similarly, the fact that 'James II gave the Garter to the chameleon-like Sunderland was surprising, but the timing of the appointment was probably linked to his approval of the declaration of indulgence' (p. 126). Matikkala also shows how the orders played an important dynastic and diplomatic role and were thus an effective tool in foreign policy. It was therefore no accident, given the priority that William III accorded to building an international coalition against France, that 'three of seven Garters given during his and Mary II's joint reign went to European princes' (p. 196): 'in William III's policy the selective diplomatic use of the Garter was firmly connected to Continental high politics' (p. 200).

The orders thus bestowed a 'symbolic capital' that made them a central and vibrant part of the political culture of later Stuart and early Hanoverian Britain. When the new orders of the Thistle and the Bath were instituted, it was 'to serve the practical political needs of their founders' (p. 360). Until 1714, the independence of the monarchs in bestowing or withholding such honours was striking, and it appears that ministerial influence over such decisions only really developed after the Hanoverian succession. This probably helps to explain, for example, the contemporary criticism levelled against the perceived abuse of the honours system during Walpole's ascendancy. Nevertheless, the very fact that this was an area in which ministers sought to exert their influence was itself a testimony to the continuing importance of the politics of honours.

VI

Taken as a whole, these five books offer a good cross-section of the varieties of politics that existed in early modern Britain and Ireland. They underline the need for a broad, inclusive and flexible understanding of what politics meant to contemporaries. In their different ways, they allow us to get inside the mindset of those who lived at the time and to reconstruct their understanding of ceremonial, honour, violence, religion, and public honours. All these phenomena were inseparable from their political contexts, and all of them had profound political significance and implications. The books discussed here also demonstrate the importance of being sensitive to a range of primary sources, not only written documents. A huge amount of rewarding material can be found in literary sources (as the books by Hunt and Kane in particular show) as well as in visual evidence (Matikkala's book is particularly finely illustrated with thirty black-and-white pictures and twenty colour plates). Just as our understanding of politics has broadened in recent years, so too has the range of primary sources regarded as relevant to this subject.

Studies such as these involve investigating historical areas that previously have sometimes been dismissed as the moribund relics of a bygone era: the rituals, the ceremonies, the ideas of honour, and the orders of knighthood. Yet such things

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were integral to the values and beliefs of those who lived at the time, and an authentic reconstruction of their mental and political worlds requires that historians take them as seriously as contemporaries did. Much of the success of these five books lies in their ability to rescue their subject matter from what E. P. Thompson called the 'enormous condescension of posterity'.[11] The authors show great sensitivity not only to their evidence but also to change and continuity through the course of the period. The originality of their arguments often rests on their feel for what did, or did not, change over time, be it in coronations between 1509 and 1559, or in pre-Civil-War England, or during the lifetime of Roger Morrice, or over the hundred-year-long spans covered by Kane and Matikkala. There is much more that historians of early modern Britain and Ireland can attempt in this vein, as we struggle to recover the experiences of those who lived through that extraordinarily rich and troubled period. These books chart a compelling way forwards and give a vivid sense of the riches that lie in store.

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[11] E. P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London, 1963), p. 12.

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