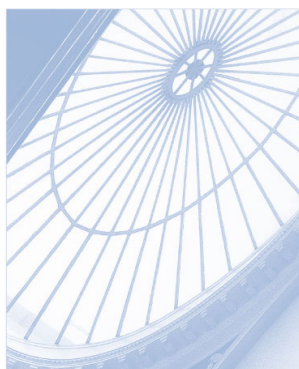


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HUBERTUS BÜSCHEL, *Untertanenliebe: Der Kult um deutsche Monarchen 1770–1830*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 220 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 419 pp. ISBN 978 3 525 35875 7. €71.00

Inside this portly volume there is a slender but interesting book trying to get out. Hubertus Büschel has visited the Prussian, Bavarian and Thuringian (Weimar, Coburg, Gotha) archives to test generalizations commonly made about the relationship between rulers and their subjects during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Unsurprisingly, he has found them wanting. Among the many previous historians criticized are Bernd von Münchow-Pohl, Johannes Paulmann, Ute Daniel, Andreas Gestrich, Monika Wienfort, and David Barclay. Against them, Büschel contends that there was no embourgeoisement of monarchical ceremonies; no traditions were invented; rulers did not change their attitudes or policies towards ceremonial; and the monarchical cult was not an expression of affection but either a means of 'self-presentation' (*Selbstdarstellung*), a response to social pressure, or an attempt to bring pressure to bear on the ruler to grant favours.

The book is divided into three parts: the ceremonies of the rulers; the attitudes of subjects to the ceremonies; and the cult of the monarchy. As it is subdivided into fifty sub-sections, many of them short, it is difficult to find a coherent line of argument. The most convincing passages deal with specific incidents. A good example is the episode at Elbing in West Prussia in 1818, when officials denied the local citizens' request to greet Frederick William III by taking the place of the horses and pulling the royal carriage into the town themselves. Far from being pleased by the gesture, the King ordered 'the most rigorous investigation' of those responsible. Büschel's speculation that this was an abortive attempt to win favours for the town on the basis of *do ut des* carries conviction. He also makes a good point about the processions staged in Prussia during the same period. If these were intended to impress the general public, he asks, why was the general public excluded? When the great formal religious services were held, for example, the church was cleared, as was the courtyard of the royal palace for major banquets.

There are plenty more nuggets to be found in this carefully researched and ambitious book, but extraction is not easy. It has been

swollen to Michelin-man proportions by recurring and lengthy historiographical digressions. Even by the standards of German doctoral dissertations, these are very prolix. It can be conjectured with confidence that not many of the scholars reading this book will need to be reminded over and over again of what, say, Clifford Geertz or Michel Foucault or Aby Warburg have written about ceremonial. There comes a point when the display of erudition impedes rather than promotes scholarship. The following sentence is not untypical:

Die von Karl Heinz Kohl und Tilmann Habermas (unwidersprochen) zitierten Autoren Friedrich Pfister und Otto Feinchel projizierten, vergleichbar mit James Frazer, Julius von Schlosser, Sigmund Freud, Marc Bloch und Ernst W. Kantorowicz, ihre – durchaus politisch ambitionierten – Deutungen der Gegenwart auf die Interpretation ihrer Untersuchungsgegenstände.

An unwelcome side effect of this sort of self-indulgence is a corresponding inflation of the academic apparatus – many of the 1,500-odd footnotes consume more space than the main text. In the same vein is the ten-page list of archives consulted, with each and every fascicle listed and described. One cannot help but conclude that the anonymous editor of the series should have told the author that his book would have had twice the impact if it had been half as long.

TIM BLANNING is Emeritus Professor of Modern European History at the University of Cambridge, a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, and a Fellow of the British Academy. His research interests focus on the history of Continental Europe in the period 1660 to 1914. Among his many publications are the prize-winning study *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789* (2002), his general history of Europe after the Peace of Westphalia *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648–1815* (2007), and *The Triumph of Music: Composers, Musicians and their Audiences, 1700 to the Present* (2008).