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Hubertus Büschel. *Untertanenliebe: Der Kult um deutsche Monarchen 1770-1830.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006. 488 S. EUR 69.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-525-35875-7.

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Why Love a King?

In 1818, Friedrich Wilhelm III arrived at Elbing on a journey through West Prussia. He was greeted outside of the town gates by a delegation of respectable burghers come to pull him ceremoniously into town–a venerable, ancient tradition in Elbing in which townsmen unhitched the royal horses and pulled the carriage themselves. The king, who disliked public demonstrations of loyalty, recalled an ordinance forbidding such ceremonial activities and ordered the Elbingers to step aside. Unperturbed, a group of forty of them tried to unhitch the horses by force, a maneuver only narrowly averted by the coachman's presence of mind as he sped the carriage around the citizens and out of town.

Hubertus BÃ¼schel uses bizarre encounters like this one to ask important questions about the relationship between public and monarchy in early-nineteenth-century Germany. Why would the monarchy reject displays of loyalty from its subjects? Why would subjects persist in demonstrating it anyway, even to the point of violence? Was public insistence on celebrating the monarchy an expression of affection for the king–what contemporaries called *Untertanenliebe*? And how does this fit within the existing historiography on German monarchies in the *Sattelzeit*? To answer these questions, BÃ¼schel examines four German states–Prussia, Bavaria, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, and Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha–from 1770-1830, a time of crisis for monarchies faced with rising public demands against the backdrop of the *AufklÃ¤rung* and French Revolution.

BÃ¼schel sets out a revisionist line, away from existing historiography on German monarchy. He divides that scholarship into two schools of thought on the role of ceremonial in the monarchy-public relationship. The first, drawing on Norbert Elias's work, posits that monarchs sought to impress the masses through spectacle–court etiquette, festivities, ceremonial entrances–and that the masses were duly seduced by lavish, royal self-representation. On this view, monarchs increased royal ceremonial in the revolutionary era as a conscious strategy to shore up their legitimacy through symbolic means. The second school argues the opposite: a marked decrease in royal ceremonial as monarchs sought to head off revolution by acquiescing to *bÃ¼rgerliche* demands for a more modest, rational-enlightened royal style. Fol-

lowing this second interpretation, monarchs were forced to respond to the *bÃ¼rgerliche* reform movement, which sought, as its ultimate goal, full political participation.

Despite their differences, both interpretations regard ceremonial as a battleground on which monarchy and bourgeois public struggled for as much outright political power as possible. BÃ¼schel argues that both interpretations are misguided. As the Elbing example suggests, kings were not necessarily self-conscious or masterful in utilizing ceremonial to cement their subjects' loyalty. The public was not critical of royal ceremonial, nor insistent upon new political rights as citizens–to the contrary, it was determined to keep its traditional prerogative to celebrate the king. Even so, the public was not easily manipulated by the monarchy, but was self-assertive in its pro-monarchic stance, even if that meant resisting the wishes of the actual, reigning king.

BÃ¼schel elaborates an alternate interpretation of these themes in three sections. The first examines the monarchy's motives for staging ceremonies. BÃ¼schel rejects the idea that royal ceremonial was used as a propaganda instrument, because court records show little evidence that monarchs were concerned about impressing a broader public. Court officials spoke little about the need to woo a popular audience; instead, they were concerned about maintaining historical precedent and ensuring that ceremonial ran smoothly. Thus, instead of seeking a broad audience, they often excluded the larger public from ceremonial venues, as common onlookers were likely to disturb the peace, make too much noise, or even steal the sacristy silver (as during Prince Louis Ferdinand's burial in 1811), rather than playing along by expressing worshipful awe. Equally, when court officials introduced cost-saving changes to traditional ceremonial, it was usually to economize in the face of financial crisis, not to cater to bourgeois, rational-enlightened expectations of modesty. BÃ¼schel thus concludes that royal ceremonial was directed at the court alone, with little thought given to its public pedagogical potential.

Sections 2 and 3 turn to the public's role in ceremonial, either as audience to royal spectacles or as actors in their own celebrations of monarchy. The second section offers an extensive critique of the assumption that royal ceremonial seduced its viewers. BÃ¼schel argues passionately that one must not extrapolate from the symbolic forms of ceremonial to perceptions of it. Here, he takes on everyone from Max Weber to Elias, Marc Bloch to Ernst Kantorowicz, Emile Durkheim to Aby Warburg–and many more–to show that these scholars' personal experiences, often with the mass appeal of fascist, aestheticized politics, made them prone to believe that people are easily seduced by mass spectacle. Newer studies that draw on these analytical forebears have, according to BÃ¼schel, inherited this faulty reasoning: by analyzing ceremonial forms in order to draw conclusions about their effect, they overlook contemporary perceptions and experiences and privilege intent over reception. While pleading the case for reception history, BÃ¼schel also points out that "ego-documents"–diaries, letters and memoirs–are not as straightforward as they appear. Texts by civil servants, especially those lower in the official hierarchy, were colored by expectations of praise and promotion. Diaries and letters were written according to accepted norms, which conditioned how their authors wrote about monarchy. Children were schooled in letter writing conventions–under the strict eyes of their guardians–and retained these habits into adulthood. Their typical enthusiasm for monarchy should therefore not be taken at face value.

After outlining the weaknesses of symbolic and textual analysis, BÃ¼schel then provides an alternative, in the third section, by returning to the archival files. By examining correspondence on subject-initiated celebrations, BÃ¼schel teases out possible motives for subjects' tenacious insistence on their right to celebrate monarchs–beyond assumptions that they were bamboozled by spectacle or simply just "loved" their kings. Indeed, it seems that the motives were as numerous as the individuals involved, demonstrating that ceremonial was not dictated from above but elaborated by a multiplicity of actors. Provincial civil servants encouraged celebrations, even if they directly countermanded royal decrees, in the belief that they would both demonstrate how well they were governing their regions and encourage pro-monarchic sentiments, in turn making government policies easier to enforce. Towns used ceremonial to compete with other municipalities, and prominent citizens used them as a stage to enact their own local importance.

Local communities also used ceremonial to make demands on the monarchy. The citizens of Elbing were prepared to force their celebration on the king because they expected a reciprocal gesture–lower taxes–in return for their demonstration of loyalty. BÃ¼schel expertly excavates this common subtext to local celebrations of monarchy: communities' attempts to return to the seventeenth-century concept of "do ut des," which required a prince to act as *Landesvater* caring for his population. During the eighteenth century, monarchs dropped many of the paternalistic traditions connected with that role, as the

centralized state became bureaucratized and princes no longer felt personally responsible for extending succor or care to their subjects. As BÃ¼schel also takes pains to point out, however, subjects' attempts to elicit the king's personal involvement through expressions of loyalty–as in Elbing–were not demands for modern political rights, but for traditional rights to paternalistic protection.

In sum, what BÃ¼schel provides is a nuanced reception history of monarchy through an analysis of social practices. Here, he breaks new ground. In particular, he makes a welcome plea for using individual, private reactions to monarchical representation as a means to capture the voices of a public outside of the liberal *BildungsbÃ¼rgertum* and its texts. Nonetheless, some soft spots remain in his account. As BÃ¼schel acknowledges, his approach is prone to critiquing and dismantling existing historical meta-narratives, without providing a new narrative to replace them. As such, he recounts a variety of possible motives and reactions, but allows the bigger picture to devolve into myriad, individual case studies.

This approach is problematic on two counts. First, BÃ¼schel takes scholars of monarchy to task for analyzing the published texts of the liberal bourgeoisie, enlightened clergy, and radical intelligentsia rather than ego-documents like memoirs, diaries and letters. Such scholars unwittingly but inevitably privilege a literate, enlightened worldview and take it to stand for the *BÃ¼rgertum* as a whole. In the process, according to BÃ¼schel, they give a distorted view of *bÃ¼rgerliche* attitudes towards the monarchy, focusing exclusively on the political-emancipatory expectations of a particular, but isolated segment of the *BÃ¼rgertum.* The alternatives that BÃ¼schel presents, however, are too fragmentary to supplant that existing meta-narrative. In a thirty-one page section (pp. 197-228) in which he analyzes diaries, letters and autobiographies–in order to move beyond the usual publications of journalists and pastors–BÃ¼schel examines the writings of only a dozen individuals. Each might be counted as representative of a given social stratum: the Junker, the peasant, the courtier, the historian, the civil servant, the private tutor. But they are still lone representatives, and rather predictable, easily accessible ones at that: Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johanna von Schopenhauer, the Nicolai-Parthey clan, Friedrich August von der Marwitz, Friedrich von Raumer, Ernst Ludwig Heim. The section leaves one wishing that BÃ¼schel had introduced a greater variety–and a greater number–of voices. Of course, the bare-bones structure of this analysis of ego-documents provides a prime opportunity for anyone who wants to build on his work. BÃ¼schel has laid out the parameters of a new, original debate and filled in some of the outlines; now we need someone to do a more thorough shading.

In contrast to his employment of ego-documents, BÃ¼schel's analysis of the archival material feels more complete. But even here, a caveat applies: absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence, and hewing too closely and exclusively to the files of the Hofmarschallamt can also create a distorted picture. That the king and his officials did not verbalize a need to woo the public when they discussed royal protocol demonstrates that other factors–such as questions of precedence–were important, perhaps even foremost; but it does not prove that they were blind to the benefits of public propaganda. Indeed, enough other evidence indicates that monarchs were aware of their subjects' revolutionary potential and the advantages of pro-active propaganda: the draconian measures of the *Demagogenverfolgung*; more sanguine reform attempts under the heading of bureaucratic enlightenment; state-sponsored, pro-monarchic festivities such as those instituted after Berlin's Fireworks Riot in 1835. Moreover, even ceremonial held in semi-secret, exclusive court circles could be expected to impress upon the public that the monarchy was set apart and hence worthy of awed reverence. Integrating these developments and avoiding too heavy a reliance on any one set of sources–including archival material from the Hofmarschallamt–would have given BÃ¼schel's analysis a more well-rounded feel.

Such reservations aside, BÃ¼schel has provided an important, original, thought-provoking study that must be taken seriously in any account of German monarchy. One can only thank him for so resolutely championing the cause of the underrepresented subject through an appeal to reception history, for bringing nuance into a field that has tended to follow a standard line of argument, and for casting a direct light onto the value of social practices, and not just textual productions, in understanding the relationship between monarchy and public in the early nineteenth century.

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