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Review Essay: Holt, Mack P., ed. *Society and Institutions in Early Modern France*

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The nature of the emblem book is such that it tends to tell you what you know already, if you belong to the same tradition as the author, but to put it so succinctly that you get a fresh perspective on the whole tradition. Images and epigrams and mottos are inserted in the original emblem book of Alciat, in the root sense of *emballain*, as though the 'hieroglyphics' of Horapollo were interleaved with poems from *The Greek Anthology*, and Bible verses are inserted in the devotional books that developed on his model. Thomas Heffernan is concerned with the 'poetry of devotion' and uses the Jesuit emblem books of the early seventeenth century (along with the theology of de Sales) much as Louis Martz used the exercises of Loyola in *The Poetry of Meditation*. In addition to the well-known *Emblemes* of Frances Quarles (1635), he discusses the *Parthenia Sacra* of Henry Hawkins (1633), which treated two dozen emblems associated with the Virgin Mary. From there he moves the great poets of the English church, George Herbert and John Donne. *Art and Emblem* is modest in scope, compared with the influential studies of Mario Praz and Ruth Wallerstein, but his aim seems to be that of the emblem book authors, who give him his lead: to say much in little. Even his prose is epigrammatic. Explaining the Augustinian attitude toward pagan learning, he writes of Hawkins's poems: 'rhetorical "Varietie" is used in the interest of devotional "Pietie"' (p 38).

Heffernan's monograph is a pleasure to read and reread, full of fascinating quotations and keen insights. The central chapter on the devotional poets is framed by chapters on the *liber mundus* theme in Renaissance literature and the rhetorical figure as forming and unifying principle in the devotional poetry of the age. Traditionally, God and (hu)man principle were immersed in each other: God had made man *ad imaginem suam* (Genesis 1:27) and had written his law *in corde* (Jeremias 31:33), yet the Christian's life was *abscondita cum Christo in Deo* (1 Colossenses 3:3). The emblem books offered images and words to help one glimpse 'the divine image' in the little world of man and to explore 'the divine analogy' between God's will and his works in the great world of nature. (I should note that I have taken the phrases 'divine image' and 'divine analogy' from William Blake, whose meditative method has long ago been traced back to the English Renaissance.) Indeed, they converted the very notion of the image as surely as their author's hoped to convert readers, so that in the new mimesis of religious reformation the *imago agens* of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* became the *figura* of pious devotion, the still turning point where revelation could occur. The extent to which this devotional tradition ended with the Enlightenment, as Heffernan contends, is of course open to interpretation. Heffernan's book may be hard to find, but it pulls much together and should prove well worth the search.

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Holt, Mack P., ed. *Society and Institutions in Early Modern France*. University of Georgia Press, Athens 1991. 242 pp. \$35.00 / \$15.00.

Society and Institutions in Early Modern France, a welcome collection of essays by friends and former students of J. Russell Major, addresses the questions that were,

and continue to be, the focus of Major's long and productive career. Though the eleven articles cover a range of topics, most center on monarchical institutions and their development during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The emphasis is clearly upon political history, yet the discussion is always integrated into the larger cultural and social framework.

James Wood explores the failure of the royal army to achieve decisive victory over the Huguenots during the Wars of Religion. The reasons, he maintains, have to do with the structural weakness of the Renaissance monarchy, a concept that Major advanced early in his career. Sarah Hanley's contribution also relates closely to Major's interests. She concentrates on representative assemblies, with an eye to the emergence of political resistance theories. Donna Bohanan takes up yet another of Major's contentions, his skepticism toward the notion of conflict between an old and new aristocracy in early modern France. Her survey of Brittany and Provence concludes that the sword and robe nobility formed a cohesive elite. Gayle Bruenelle challenges another recurrent image of the aristocracy in her study of the Norman nobility's participation in commercial activities. Aristocrats, contrary to a tradition view, pursued mercantile careers with little fear of derogation.

The crown's role in municipal affairs has long been an occasion for debate among historians of *ancien régime* France. Annette Finley-Croswhite analyzes a riot that took place at Limoges in 1602, and Henry IV's subsequent attempt to curb the town's privileges. She elaborates upon Major's speculation that the king used the revolt as an excuse to extend royal control over municipal government and thereby promote the emerging absolutist monarchy. Mack Holt scrutinizes the mayoral elections at sixteenth-century Dijon, suggesting that, for the many winegrowers and artisans who participated, these elections were a civic ritual with obvious affinities to what Major characterizes as the 'popular and consultative' nature of the Renaissance monarchy. Two essays touch upon the place of judicial magistrates during the Fronde: Orest Ranum shows that the great princes depended upon support from the judges of the Parlement of Paris in their uprising. And William Beik argues that the *frondeurs* in the Parlement of Toulouse were actually ardent 'absolutists' bent on assuring their position within the hierarchy of royal authority.

No collection of this sort would be complete without specific discussion of absolutism, the subject of the three final contributions. Ellery Schalk finds in Molière's plays the expression of a traditional notion of absolutism, which emanated largely from fear of returning to the chaos of the sixteenth century. Donal Bailey reevaluates the career of Michel de Marillac, Louis XIII's *garde des sceaux*, giving substance to Major's suggestion that Marillac had more influence than previously recognized in shaping absolutist policies. Finally, Albert Hamscher examines the judicial system and the practical limits that the courts placed upon royal authority.

Altogether, these articles are a fitting tribute. They not only enhance our knowledge of early modern France but also make obvious our intellectual indebtedness to Russell Major.