

In the final three chapters, Foks explores what he sees as the debt of community studies researchers who conducted fieldwork in 1940s and 1950s Britain to social anthropology. Yet Foks also concedes the acrimony between anthropology and sociology during these same decades and the vitriolic disavowal of anthropology by these same scholars. We benefit throughout from Foks's careful readings of canonical texts, such as Peter Willmott and Michael Young's *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957). More zooming out from these texts, however, would have been welcome. Foks notes that the anti-statist views of Willmott and Young were taken up by Conservatives, too, but it would have been helpful to hear about these divergent political agendas. It is not always easy to discern the stakes of different scholars' ties to social anthropology, though Foks's tracing of these ties is always painstakingly executed.

Foks ends by considering how anthropological expertise was eclipsed by economics. He offers intriguing, if not wholly convincing arguments that the last incarnation of anthropological expertise was in the domain of social history. Social anthropology, he proposes, "prompted historians to rethink modernization in the past, just as it began to be displaced as a way to think about development in the present" (173). Arguing that social anthropology "fertilized" debates in multiple domains, he suggests that the functionalist theory of social anthropology "allowed historians to connect changes in one domain of social life to another" (174). Here, the rubric of what counts as anthropological thinking occasionally becomes too capacious. Overall, though, this is a sophisticated and polished work, one that displays Foks' own deeply impressive expertise on the inner workings of texts, scholars, and institutions.

Jordanna Bailkin

University of Washington

bailkin@uw.edu

TOBIAS HARPER. *From Servants of the Empire to Everyday Heroes: The British Honours System in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 288. \$85.00 (cloth).
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This might seem an odd time for a book-length study of British honors, an elite system of awards that employs the power of the state to grant special privileges to some individuals over others in a process that is opaque and undemocratic and both reflects and reinforces gender and racial hierarchies in British society. But in Tobias Harper's capable hands, this is what makes *From Servants of the Empire to Everyday Heroes: The British Honours System in the Twentieth Century* so timely. While he examines the entire honors system, Harper's main focus is on the newest Order of Chivalry, the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, known widely as the OBE. This honor was intended to be more inclusive than traditional orders. It failed in that respect, but it did succeed in revitalizing the idea of honors in a modernizing Britain. Thus, the OBE provides an excellent perch from which to think about meaning making, historical change, and the persistence of hierarchies in a democratic society.

The Order of the British Empire was created in 1917 to honor ordinary people—including women—doing extraordinary things for the nation in a time of total war. However, most appointments went to those to whom honors had always flowed: elite, white men who held positions of power and influence in the military, civil service, and society as a reward for their loyalty to the state. The attempt to make this hierarchy more inclusive failed, Harper argues, because it was structurally tied to traditional orders whose meaning depended fundamentally on exclusivity and secrecy. Yet, while the new order was not as inclusive as originally intended, it became wildly popular, and continues to be taken very seriously. How could this

be? How could a new social hierarchy even survive let alone thrive amid the challenges posed by democracy, trade unionism, the women's rights movement, decolonization, and celebrity culture? This is the question at the heart of Harper's book.

Democratizing hierarchy, to use Harper's phrasing (4), is a contradiction in terms. But the aspiration to do so, to open the gates of an institution further, granting access to more and different kinds of people, but not so far that all distinction between insider and outsider is lost, is one of the great dilemmas all modern societies face. One of the most impressive aspects of this book is the way Harper attends to both the democratic impulse and the hierarchical structure at the heart of the system. The way the various gatekeepers of the new order made decisions about which distinctions to keep—that is to say, about which structures would be carried forward—reveal the difficulty of retaining cultural meaning while making significant institutional change.

And, as Harper notes, the perpetuation of those problematic structures relies on a very reasonable logic. Because appointments to traditional orders hewed closely to already existing social and political hierarchies, it was relatively easy to place new members in one of the three or four classes into which the older orders were divided. These classes, in turn, slotted naturally into the order of precedence, a hierarchy that ranks the offices of state, from the monarch down to the younger sons of knights. But anyone could be a hero in a time of total war. So, the first question for the new order was, whether it should have classes. Should a middle-class air raid warden be given the same honor as a fleet-commanding admiral, for example? Their heroism might be equivalent, but their social ranks were not. High-ranking people would refuse membership if there were no distinctions. The democratic hierarchy was thus divided into five tiers.

It is worth noting that people in the middle tiers were most vigilant in policing the distinctions between the ranks. Only the top two ranks came with post-nominals, but the chimney sweep who had been honored with a mere medal of the order in 1921, for example, did not know that he had no right to the OBE after his name that he painted on his cart. He soon learned his place as several concerned members informed the home office who promptly alerted the local police.

Harper's focus on the way the new order dealt with women highlights the easy logic through which the patriarchy of the past became the patriarchy of the present. In older orders, women acquired precedence through their husband's honor; they were not eligible for honors in their own right. Their precedence naturally fell below that of their husbands. In the Order of the British Empire, by contrast, women could receive the very highest honors. But would the husband of a woman who became a Dame Grand Cross acquire precedence, and if so, would it be below his wife's? This question was avoided for a while in favor of awarding the highest ranks to women whose husbands already possessed higher honors. By the interwar years, the committee simply selected fewer women. Again, the logic was perfectly reasonable given that after the wars many women returned to private life, and the marriage bar kept those who stayed in the workplace from achieving a rank high enough to be considered for a damehood. Even in the twenty-first century, Harper shows, reforms designed to produce gender parity ended up including more women, but mostly in the lower ranks of medals that historically had not been considered part of the honors system at all.

While old social hierarchies were continually repackaged in the reforms made to the honors system over the century, Harper does not lose sight of the ways it also got democratized. Democratization happened in the kind of criticism honors elicited—and the target of that criticism. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics had focused on corruption within the system, like the Cash-for-Honours scandal David Lloyd George orchestrated in the 1920s. But throughout the twentieth century, critics focused on the corruption that the system itself represented, as elitist, sexist, and imperialist. In the empire, "honours had long been the elite carrot to the more widespread stick of police repression," and the first step of breaking

free from British rule, according to M. K. Gandhi, was rejecting these bribes (131, 86). But the ruthless instrumentality at the heart of the system—especially where racial others were concerned—continued. Public refusal of honors was rare, Harper tells us, but in 2003, the British poet and vocal critic of empire Benjamin Zephaniah publicly declined an OBE, stating that he was “unwilling to join the oppressor’s club” (166). The popular backlash that followed made it clear that while the empire was a thing of the past, the racial order that it had created was alive and well in the Order of Chivalry that continued to bear its name.

Marrying individual stories with a penetrating and sociologically informed analysis of the entire honors system, Harper helps account for the glacial pace of change in British society, and the ways in which structural inequalities are recreated generation after generation. *From Servants of the Empire to Everyday Heroes* is an important book and a great resource for social historians at all levels.

Penelope Ismay
Boston College
ismay@bc.edu

JEREMY HARTE. *Travellers through Time: A Gypsy History*. London: Reaktion Books, 2023.
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The amateur scholars and enthusiasts in Victorian and Edwardian England who collected stories and vocabulary from Romany travelers called themselves *gypsylogists*. Jeremy Harte, author of *Travellers through Time: A Gypsy History*, a compendium of narratives and vignettes, follows in their tradition. Gathering anecdotes and reminiscences from historical observers and more recent memoirists, Harte offers “a history *for* Gypsies . . . from the perspective of a Gypsy . . . through the voices of the people it happened to” (8). Though generally aware of scholarship on the history, politics, and ethnography of Romany Gypsies, Harte makes no engagement with it. Very few of his cited sources were published in the last twenty-five years. He draws upon my *Gypsies: An English History* (2018), but such crucial studies as Yaron Matras’s, *I Met Lucky People: The Story of the Romani Gypsies* (2014), David Mayall’s, *Gypsy Identities 1500–2000: From Egyptians and Moon-Men to the Ethnic Romany* (2004), and Becky Taylor’s, *Another Darkness, Another Dawn: A History of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers* (2014) are absent from the bibliography. Slender coverage of Gypsy history before the gypsylogist era is offset by generous citation from later conversations and interactions, including some privately printed or reported in obscure periodicals. Most of these relate to Gypsies and travelers in the county of Surrey.

Harte, the secretary of the Romany and Traveller Family History Society, has previously written on the folklore of fairies, holy wells, and the devil. Though not himself a Gypsy, he is energetically supportive of this much-vilified minority. He makes knowing use of Anglo-Romani words such as *dukkering* for fortune-telling, *rokkering* for talking, *gorjers* for non-Gypsies, *gavvers* for the police, and *drom* for the road. He enthuses about “the good old days” (18), “the people who traveled in the bright wagons” (11), and the “gay and colorful ensembles” (98) of Victorian Gypsy women. A glossary of 175 Romani words appears in an appendix.

Like the classic gypsylogists George Borrow (d. 1881) and Charles Leland (d. 1903), with whom he has much in common, Harte imagines an elemental division between “those who were of the Romany and those who were not” (10). He confidently discerns the “ethnic markers” of “a true Gypsy, a tatcho Romanichal” and celebrates “exemplary