

commercial organization. Yes, the mart system eventually decayed, but the mart system was just another solution to the problems faced by any type of economic organization. As he argues, all companies have to resolve the balance of interests of their constituent members, and all companies accomplish this with networks of informal relations. In the end, Leng provides us with an incredibly detailed and fascinating account of exactly how these problems were worked out in the context of early modern England. The book is certainly a must read for historians of the company form, but I hope it will also interest those with broader interests in the problems of governance, coordination, and market development.

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*“A Marvel to Behold”: Gold and Silver at the Court of Henry VIII.*

Timothy Schroder.

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If we call to mind the royal Tudor interior, what do we see? Dark paneled rooms, ornate chairs, and sturdy chests; carpets, tapestries, and hangings. Yet the reader of Timothy Schroder’s new book soon discovers that an essential feature is missing from this picture: vast quantities of gold and silver. *“A Marvel to Behold”* recalibrates our view of Henry VIII’s court by restoring to it the gold- and silver-gilt objects—plate (that is, wrought vessels), images, jewels, and cloth of gold—that litter inventories and eyewitness accounts.

The book is organized into thematic chapters that proceed broadly chronologically. An early chapter explores Henry VIII’s inheritance from his father, Henry VII, and reconsiders the latter’s reputation for miserliness. Others discuss the use of gold in religious settings, at banquets, and at court festivities (including the infamous Field of the Cloth of Gold). Schroder examines the patronage of goldsmiths by Henry’s two great advisers, Thomas Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell, and Holbein’s antique designs for plate. He discusses the holdings of royal relatives, including gifts to queens and offspring, and, finally, assesses the collection at Henry VIII’s death in 1547, with a brief coda summarizing its fate over the next century.

Schroder mobilizes an impressive range of sources to reconstruct the appearance, use, and significance of these objects: analogous examples in collections within the UK and abroad; representations in portraits and other visual sources; books on ceremonies; and ambassadorial descriptions. His most important sources are the inventories of the jewel house, a subset of the royal household, based at the Tower of London, which looked after plate and jewels owned by the Crown. Much of these were effectively bullion—liquid assets that could be disposed of as gifts or sent to the royal mint to be melted down into currency. Others were in storage until required for banquets or

entertainments. As Schroder points out, although the inventories are rich starting points, they tell us more about the plate and jewels that Henry VIII did not particularly like than about the objects constantly in use at Whitehall or his other palaces.

For the objects Henry did like, Schroder turns to inventories from the end of his life, and it is here we find some of the book's most exciting propositions. Did the most prized objects, kept in "the secret jewelhouse" and other private rooms, constitute a proto-*Kunstammer*, a princely cabinet like those popular on the Continent from later in the sixteenth century? The inventories reveal quantities of both *naturalia* (nautilus shells, unicorn horns, rock crystal, and coral, often mounted in precious metal) and *artificialia* (man-made wonders such as clocks, scientific instruments, glass, and porcelain). As Schroder acknowledges, it is unclear whether the collection's arrangement highlighted these categories, and it may be that the recorded objects instead correspond to a more general sense of splendor pursued by monarchs throughout the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the possibility of excavating a prehistory of the *Wunderkammer* from among Henry VIII's collections is a tantalizing one.

Schroder's book also engages with gold's theoretical underpinnings, in particular its relationship to the Aristotelian concept of magnificence. In our own time, extreme displays of wealth tend to be associated with a particular concentration of power and greed. At a time when the king was the absolute ruler, however, Schroder argues that it was both appropriate and expected that he would appear wealthy and generous, his splendid surroundings contributing to a kind of Tudor soft power. As the reign wears on, however, Henry's acquisitiveness, in particular his punitive confiscation of gold from banished courtiers, suggests that the aging king's interests lay more in magnificence than generosity.

Of course, there were also dissenting voices. For the poet Thomas Wyatt, son of a master of the king's jewel house, gold had negative associations, connected in his writings with greed and despair. For Wyatt, it embodied everything he hated about the court, whose participants found "In prison joyes fettred with cheines of gold" (sonnet 259 ["In court to serue decked with freshe aray"], in *Collected Poems Of Sir Thomas Wyatt* [1969], 253). Whether positive or negative, gold could stand for the entire Tudor court, as "*A Marvel to Behold*" makes urgently and delightfully clear.

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*Royal Voices: Language and Power in Tudor England.* Mel Evans.  
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How did the abstract concept of power become infused into written and spoken communication, so that audiences in the Tudor period would bow to the royal message