



Duke Hamilton Is Dead!: A Story of Aristocratic Life and Death in Stuart Britain

Victor Stater

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Politics and society in an aristocratic world--as seen in the dramatic story of a notorious duel.

On the morning of November 15, 1712, two of Britain's most important peers, the fourth Baron Mohun and the fourth Duke of Hamilton, met in Hyde Park. In a flurry of brutal swordplay that lasted perhaps two minutes, both fell mortally wounded. For months afterward, the kingdom was in a uproar, for the duel had occurred at a moment of grave political crisis. Whigs and Tories, increasingly desperate over the future as Queen Anne neared death, hurled charges of political murder and treasonous plotting against one another. Charge and countercharge filled the press as the social and moral crises mounted.

Using the famous Mohun-Hamilton duel as a focal point, Victor Stater re-creates the desperate aristocratic world of late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century Britain. Mohun and Hamilton stood at opposite ends of a bitterly divided political spectrum, but politics was not the only cause of their quarrel. A decade-long battle over a disputed inheritance was a crucial element, and Stater shows how, amid the luxury and ostentation of the aristocratic lifestyle, something very like moral anarchy reigned. The result is a stunning narrative of life and death in a tumultuous time, an era in which incivility and moral turpitude ruled beneath a thin veneer of aristocratic manners.



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