

The "Order Assassin" and the "Order Grump"

What Every Person Newly Interested in Chivalry Should Know About the Pseudo-Historians of Chivalry

Introduction

Persons new to the study of Chivalry are often very surprised (and distressed) to discover that, instead of the expected knightly courtesy and honesty, sometimes only rivalry, nastiness, and bitterness are displayed by certain persons in the field of modern chivalry. This conflict is nothing new. The discord between the medieval Knights Templar and Knights Hospitaller is well-known, and the rivalry was made even worse when the Teutonic Knights entered the scene. Even today, bitter rivalry exists among the members of certain branches of the Knights of St. John, and such rivalry can become quite contentious, degenerating into name-calling ("I'm legitimate, you're bogus!"), slander, libel, and even lawsuits and threats of litigation.

Therefore, the newcomer (and sometimes even the experienced) student of Chivalry must be wary of sources when gathering information about Chivalric Orders and Noble and Royal Houses because this unfortunate "rivalry" has given rise to the capricious oddities known as the *Order Assassin* and the *Order Grump* who, in their self-appointed roles as "guardians of chivalry," are only too glad to provide their personal and agenda-laden versions of information on chivalry, nobility, and royalty.

About this Article

The usual practice of Orders of Chivalry and Noble and Royal Houses is to ignore attacks by the Assassins and Grumps, since even the mildest efforts at response merely stir them up into a high-pitched frenzy -- but to ignore these persons is not always satisfactory, for *slander unanswered is often slander believed*. **The purpose of this article, the only one of its kind, is to identify and detail the activities of Order Assassins and Order Grumps so that students and practitioners of chivalry can be better informed about these Pecksniffing Old Ladies of Chivalry.** Since the first publication on this web site, this original article has become a standard reference regarding the attacks of Assassins and Grumps. The author hopes that this revised and updated version will continue to be useful to those studying the field of modern chivalry.

The Order Assassin, the Scholar, and Objectivity

The *Order Assassin* is an individual whose pleasure and pasttime consist of attacking Orders of Chivalry (especially autonomous --non-governmental-- Orders) and Noble and Royal Houses which are not Anglo-Gotha-Franco-Latin (that is, European/German which the Assassin believes is the only possible measure of validity). Not only is this belief incorrect (many legitimate Orders do not follow that structure, especially Orders which have arisen in or from the Byzantine East and from Christian Orthodoxy), but the Order Assassin himself--because his only agenda is destruction--suffers from a severe shortcoming in objectivity. The Order Assassin, a tut-tutting Old Lady of Chivalry, specializes in gossip, tabloid information, and hearsay, and is, therefore, not in the habit of providing accurate information. Seldom does he have genuine scholarly credentials of any kind whatever, always does he attack first, seeking information later, and where information exists, it is ignored, misstated, or misinterpreted, so that the Assassin's "information," having passed through his hands, is totally or partially unreliable, outdated--or just made up. Where an Order has a solid foundation in history, activity, or in *fons*, the Order Assassin simply ignores the information and attacks anyway--because what the Assassin

seeks is destruction, *not* truth. See the sections below on **Methods** and **A Case Study** to learn about the techniques employed by Order Assassins and Grumps.

The "Order Assassin" is an unwelcome intruder into the field of Chivalry, because...

- of the enormous amounts of ill will which the Order Assassin generates;
- of the error and confusion which the Assassin indiscriminately spreads to new inquirers; and...
- the Assassin is a kind of unstable verbal terrorist; no one can predict which Knightly Order the Assassin will attack next.

While the "Assassin" generally is dazzled and mesmerized by Orders that are *Gotha* or Pontifical, even the most ancient and established Order is not really immune to the Assassin's attacks (see examples of such attacks below).

To recognize the Order Assassin, look for arrogance, sneering, and similar emotional outbursts; especially look for the Assassin's use of his favorite terms "bogus," "charlatan," and "self-styled." Lately, the work "crook" has crept into their vocabulary. No reputable historian of Orders uses these words (or any like them) because they are not facts, but simply one-word opinions driven by passion, not data.

The Order Assassin in Britain

A good example of the Order Assassin is a private British subject who can be found frequenting the public (unmoderated) on-line chivalry discussion groups (see below for information about these groups) and pontificating on things heraldic and chivalric. Dazzled by governmental Orders of his own country and very proud of his own membership in a Victorian British Order (which fulfills the same function as the American Red Cross), this particular Order Assassin delights in attacking in the most unpleasant and virulent language not only those Orders which he doesn't like, but also individual Knights who belong to those Orders. To preserve himself against legal action, this Assassin's personal vendettas and attacks are always against Knights and Orders residing in countries other than Great Britain. Lately, this Assassin has taken to claiming in

the public on-line chivalry discussion groups that he is "a lawyer." He presents no evidence to support his claim. More recently, he has become the target of complaints regarding his "spamming" the on-line chivalry discussion groups with information regarding a book he has to sell, and the spamming continued despite the vigorous protests of many of the discussion group members. The attacks from this private British subject are well-known, especially since he schemes to involve the news media in his personal crusade against the overlong list of Orders and Knights and Nobility he doesn't like.

Interestingly, this person isn't in the least bothered by his own membership in "self-styled" Orders and in Orders which maintain false histories. He was, by public admission, a member of the *Niadh Nask* whose claims as a noble, chivalric, and ancient society vanished when the royal claims of its *fons* were found to be utterly fabricated (his defense of his membership, posted in the newsgroups, was that he didn't pay anything for admittance). He is a member of the Order of St. Lazarus, which should be no problem except that the Order of St. Lazarus is attacked by other Order Assassins as "self-styled" (see below); indeed, this Order Assassin has lamented in public postings that his St. Lazarus membership cost him a chance to enter the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (St. Lazarus appears on the SMOM's list of proscribed Orders). Apparently offering to quit St. Lazarus would be of no avail, since this person was informed that even past membership in the proscribed Order would "be held against" him. Further, he is very proud of his membership in the Venerable Order of St. John, an organization which began as a "self-styled" Order, then was legitimized by Queen Victoria in 1888, but which maintains a false history of itself, pretending to be a "continuation" of the original Order in England, which it is not (see below).

Past efforts by well-known and more informed members of the Chivalric community to calm down this particular Assassin have only resulted in their being attacked as well, so he is usually left alone--and he interprets the silence as agreement. Interestingly, this Assassin has himself grown silent over the past few years, especially after his membership in the now-defunct *Niadh Nask* became well known.

The Order Assassin in the United States

Another example of the Order Assassin is a British-born New York merchant (a "pal" of the private British subject discussed above) who is a *gourmand* of Orders and whose web site contains worshipful and fawning (and occasionally inaccurate) histories of famous Orders (especially Papal Orders). The "histories" are a compound of gossip and rehashes of information that can be had from more objective and more accurate encyclopedias and history books. This Order Assassin's web site expresses his opinion on almost everything chivalric, noble, and royal, apparently operating under the idea that "quantity = quality." This Order Assassin's bloated web site calls into question the actions of undisputed exiled monarchs such as King Umberto of Italy, indiscriminately attacks various legitimate royal houses, and even has a section on "Self-Styled" Orders (by which the *gourmand* means Orders that, in his narrow opinion, do not have a right to call themselves "chivalric").

This Order Assassin's rigidity (common among Assassins and Grumps) leads to some rather inconsistent conclusions. For example, among the Orders attacked by this Assassin is the Order of St. Lazarus, a well-known and respected Order of Chivalry which the Assassin unhappily admits has extensive charitable projects (running into considerable sums of money equitably distributed) and which the Grump also admits has as high Officers and Knights some of Europe's most distinguished Royals, Nobles, national presidents, and influential business people. This Order Assassin himself, in a public posting, noted that St. Lazarus Knights include persons such as the Duke of Westminster and many high-ranking Army Officers. In Canada, the Order Assassins unhappily admits, the members include at least one Governor General, several provincial Lieutenant-Governors, and a Chief Justice of the Canadian Supreme Court. However, despite this Order's illustrious membership and international recognition, this Assassin -- being true to his type -- insists that this particular Order is "self-styled," the Assassin's synonym for "bogus." To assure everyone, however, of his ongoing personal integrity, the New York merchant has bravely claimed in the public forum rec.heraldry (and without evidence, of course) that he has "declined offers of membership [in the Order of St. Lazarus] and shall continue to do so." Since he brags to all that he has received a plurality of "offers" and since he lets everyone know that he expects to

be asked again, we must conclude that this Order Assassin sees himself as a valuable and much-desired object for St. Lazarus membership, which he must, alas, most respectfully decline, not wishing to smirch himself with the self-tyled. Oh, if only the Duke of Westminster, British and Canadian Army Officers, certain Governors General of Canada, certain provincial Lieutenant-Governors of Canada, and a Chief Justice of the Canadian Supreme Court had such integrity.

While attacking St. Lazarus for a "false history," this person has no problem with his membership in the "Venerable Order of St. John" which has for years put forth an undisputably false history. The British Order began its life around 1831 as a "self-styled" ("bogus," using the Order Assassin's own definitions) Order. After gaining influential membership, Queen Victoria was persuaded to issue this "self-styled" Order a charter in 1888, meaning that it finally had a *fons* and was no longer "self-styled." With the 1888 charter, the "Venerable" Order became a new organization, an historical re-creation with no roots in the past. However, the Venerable Order made up --and maintains to this day-- a completely false history regarding its "continuation" of the "original Order" in Great Britain. None of this bothers the New York businessman, whose integrity is at least porous enough to let this whopper slip through. Anyway, an accurate history of the British Venerable Order can be read in Desmond Seward's book, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders* (pp. 336 - 353). None of this can detract from the outstanding medical work the Venerable Order of St. John does, which is much along the lines of the American Red Cross and hospital ambulance services.

A visitor who stumbles on this Order Assassin's site (easy enough, since the site appears hundreds of times under dozens of titles in all the internet search engines) should note that this Order Assassin spends considerable time genuflecting to Papal Orders -- possibly because he is "President of the Papal Knights Association," as he once wrote to this author. In sum, this particular Assassin refuses to acknowledge the value in other perfectly valid Orders which he denigrates and otherwise attacks.

This particular Order Assassin maintains a very high profile in the public

(unmoderated) on-line discussion groups. During one five-day week in 1999, this person wrote more than eighty responses to just one public discussion group! Many of the responses were more than 100 words in length.

Recently, using the methods and techniques established by the British tabloids, this American Order Assassin has taken to attacking Eastern Noble and Royal Houses, haughtily sniffing a dismissal with sometimes nary more than a line or two--and always without data or facts. Despite the New York merchant's efforts to present himself as an "authority" and a "scholar," the fact is that he is neither, nothing at his web site can be taken at face value, and every statement found at the web site must be compared with data obtained from reliable outside sources.

The Order Grump

The step-sibling to the "Order Assassin" is the "Order Grump." The "Grump" is an "Assassin" who has been taught some manners and whose attacks are somewhat more polite--that is, the Order Grump usually remembers to put a silencer on his gun. The Grump suffers from an exaggerated idea of his own knowledge in things Chivalric. Like the Assassin, the Grump also suffers from a heated, overwrought, and fawning admiration for pre-20th century establishment dates, especially when dealing with the Orders and Houses of Britain, the *Gotha*, and the Vatican. Like the "Assassin," the "Grump" cannot really be satisfied with Orders that are not *Gotha* or Pontifical.

The Order Grump in America

A well-known American Order Grump operates a heraldry web site, but he is best known for his discussion group activity, where he actively supports the private British subject and the New York merchant. Lately, this Grump has modestly taken to announcing in the chivalry discussion groups that he is "a low ranking judge" [*sic*], which he finally revealed to mean that he is a Justice of the Peace in a North American State.

The Order Grump in Britain

Order Grumps can be the most unexpected of persons and can be found in the most interesting of places. Who would suspect of being an Order

Grump the Registrar of the British **Order of St. Michael and St. George**, Sir Charles Johnston, GCMG, former High Commissioner in Australia? Yet, Sir Charles wrote, in 1983, in his diary that

... I despise this sort of thing, and think it's a lot of flummery. As a romantic Victorian reconstruction of medieval chivalry, the Order of St. M[ichael] and St. G[eorge] is only one degree less bogus than the [Venerable] Order of St. John of Jerusalem. . . .

(see p. 113 of Hugo Vickers' **Royal Orders: the Honours and the Honoured**).

Usually, one doesn't hear the term "bogus" in reference to Orders of Chivalry under the Crown of England, but, in general, the Grump and the Assassin really aren't interested in legitimacy or validity...they are only interested in expressing their personal displeasure.

Other Kinds of Attacks--the Order Critic

While Order criticism might be considered a form of "attack," it is not at all in the same league with the Order Assassin and Order Grump, for the Order Critic is (generally) civil and uses (or claims to use) actual data. Absolutely no Order is immune to criticism. Even the seemingly unassailable **S.M.O.M.** (the Papal "Sovereign Military Order of Malta") has a persistent, unrelenting critic--historian Dr. Stephen D.G. Giles Ash. Unlike other critics who attack the SMOM's past activities (such as their claims that the SMOM issued passports to Nazi war criminals in order to smuggle them into safe countries), Dr. Ash attacks the SMOM's claims to antiquity. The historian writes (in the March 30, 1988 Malta newspaper *The Times*) that "**The SMOM is a modern off-shoot recognized by the Holy See in 1834.**" When defenders of the SMOM responded to Dr. Ash's claims, he responded (again in *The Times* of July 21), 1988 that...

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta (S.M.O.M.) received Papal recognition only in 1834 as a NEW charitable Order under the protection and direction of the Holy See and the recently elected Fra Bertie is the SECOND Grand Master of the S.M.O.M.

Dr. Ash's belief is that the modern SMOM is not the original Order of the Knights created by the Blessed Gerard in the 11th century, but is actually a modern recreation of that Order. Thus, Dr. Ash claims, the SMOM has no right to use the historical name "The Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta" or the name "The Knights of Malta." According to an article in the Italian periodical *Il Mondo* (November 16, 1996), even the Government of Italy is denying that the SMOM actually has such privileges as issuing passports, coining money, and issuing postal stamps. In March 1995, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Government stated that the SMOM does not "possess juridical immunity." That is, the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry denied that the SMOM is a sovereign, governmental entity in its own right, but is strictly a Papal Order of Chivalry that is governed by Canon Law, not international law. Interestingly, Canada also does not recognize the SMOM.

If the SMOM (the world's most powerful and influential modern Order of Chivalry and a member nation of the United Nations) can be attacked, then other Orders of Chivalry should not be surprised (and are not surprised) when they are attacked. The original purpose of Chivalry and Orders of Chivalry was warfare, and the Assassin and Grump seem dedicated to that purpose, no matter how pointless. Only their weapons have changed.

The Tabloid Web Sites of the Assassin and the Grump

In former times, the Order Assassin and the Order Grump attacked via leaflets, letters, and booklets. Today, the Assassin and the Grump have tabloid-style web sites on the internet, and they like to "sound off" and "flame" in the unmoderated discussion groups (where bad behavior and worse manners are the standard). The discourtesy and nastiness have caused one well-known discussion group called "rec.heraldry" to be nicknamed "the cat pit" and "wreck.heraldry"! This discussion group has been taken over by those whose snickerings and prejudices are, thankfully, self-refuting. For example, one recent discussion group comment by an Assassin advised that its readers go to a certain chivalric

web page "for their amusement"--and if one went to the web page which the smirking Assassin found "amusing," one discovered that the site detailed the Christian religious ceremonies held by an Order of Chivalry. Exactly what in the religious ceremonies the Assassin found "amusing" he does not say.

The Order Assassin and Vanity Publication

The final bastion of the amateur is the self-printed and self-distributed book, a process known as "vanity publication." This method is resorted to because regular publishers continue to reject the amateur's efforts. A case in point is the private British subject, who, apparently not being satisfied with the well-known and respected *Debrett's Peerage*, and in a rather transparent effort to take charge of listing who is "legitimate" and who isn't, has written, printed, and is marketing his own peerage reference book. Well, why not? Vanity publication is common in the field of chivalry and demonstrates one's ability to spend money and sell books at a loss. Certainly, vanity publication keeps printers happy.

The Methods of the Assassin and the Grump

Anger

One of the first things to be noted in the Assassin's and Grump's web sites and conversation is the high level of self-righteous anger they display. This anger is the result of their belief that their duty is to "guard the gates" of Franco-Gotha-Latin chivalric legitimacy in the world of Chivalry, Nobility, and Royalty. If an even minor deviation from the Franco-Gotha-Latin model (which they believe is the only possible one) occurs, the Assassin/Grump must immediately leap up to pontificate, judge, and condemn. Since they often do not have access to facts and data (other than what they can find in public libraries or in gossip), the Assassin and Grump substitute for information their angry outbursts, sneering, and name-calling. Of course, *no one has asked them to take on this task*, so, like all self-appointed guardians, their shield is arrogance and their weapon is intemperance. That is, (to quote Martin E. Marty

from another context), Assassins and Grumps "have no credentials to malign, but malign anyhow" (*Christian Century*, December 24-31, 1997, p. 1247).

Secrecy

While the Order Assassin and Order Grump are willing to talk and write endlessly about others, seldom will they actually identify themselves. One particular Grump (not discussed in this essay) even completely conceals his/her identify by writing under a pseudonym. The Assassin's or Grump's method is to conceal his motivation, character, occupation, place and reputation in the local community, standing in the Chivalric Community, achievements, reliability, and anything else that is useful in establishing their value as a source of information. The Assassin and the Grump both know that if they reveal too much about themselves, then their background, personal lives, and secret agendas are easier to discover.

Pseudo-scholarship and the Manipulation of Data

A scholar is one who has been trained (generally at university) to conduct detailed and careful research and who adheres to the research method of objectivity and who, as a scholar, has access to the collections of great libraries and manuscript collections. The scholar's publications are detailed, are "juried" (judged by an objective panel of editors of an established public or university press), offer without distortion the data collected, and allow various interpretations of the data without regard to the writer's personal prejudices, i.e., the scholar has no personal or other agenda. This scholarly stance the Assassin and Grump attempt to imitate, but, not having the scholar's erudition and training, the Assassin and Grump both fall short.

Because the Assassin/Grump has spent five, ten, or twenty years picking up and spreading chivalric gossip and publishing books with a vanity press, he fancies himself a scholar and an authority in matters chivalric, but this view of themselves as scholars is exactly that--a self-styled illusion, even though they have persuaded a certain number of others of their self-styled "expertise." A favorite ploy of pseudo-scholarship in the self-published books and pamphlets of the Assassin and the Grump is to declare this or that Royal House a "fantasy" or "illegitimate" because it

is "not listed" in a particular book. Of course, the House (or Order) being attacked is given no opportunity whatever for a response, and, if a family *is* listed in one source, then *that* is the one source that will *not* be used. Generally, because *the Assassin and Grump are not scholars and have no skill in objective research and no access to libraries and manuscript holdings*, they usually don't waste their time with fact-finding and simply declare that this or that Noble or Royal House is a "fantasy" without regard to authentic investigative inquiry. Because they are not scholars, the Assassin and the Grump see nothing wrong with manipulating and slanting information to make their case--thus they are not provided information by the various Orders and Noble and Royal Houses that they like to gossip and tatter about. Therefore, the Assassin and the Grump must rely on alternate sources (such as gossip) for information which they then fit to their case. Indeed, often their own declarations are the "fantasies."

The favorite book of the Assassin and the Grump is *Debrett's Peerage* (except, of course, for the private British subject who now publishes his own Peerage). But, of course, not all Noble and Royal families are listed in *Debrett's Peerage* because, among other things, it is focused on British concerns. Rarely can the Assassin or Grump obtain any of the many 18th and 19th century editions of the *Almanach de Gotha* which list the Noble and Royal Families of Europe and elsewhere--but if they could, they would undoubtedly quote one of the annual editions in which a Royal or Noble family is not listed, thus "proving" that the royal or noble claim is a "fantasy."

Incidentally, another peerage publisher, *Burke's*, has entered into the business of selling titles, apparently mostly French, which it claims are legitimate. This title mongering cannot add to the reputation of *Burke's Peerage*.

At any rate, the famed *Almanach de Gotha* is not infallible because, in focusing on the Germanic (*Gotha*) Royals and Nobles, it generally failed to take into account the Eastern and oriental Royal and Noble Houses which pre-date its references by centuries. Historians acknowledge that the actual purpose of the famous *Almanach de Gotha* was a political and social one--to *exclude* as well as to include the nobility and royalty of

Europe. The rise and fall of the reputations and social standing of the nobles and royals of Europe can be followed in the editions of the *Almanach de Gotha*. One common target of the *Almanach de Gotha* was the "morganatic" marriage, i.e., marriage to someone below one's own position in the rank of aristocratic precedence. Such a marriage easily resulted in one's being relegated to a lower section of the publication--if not for the marrieds, then certainly for the children of such a marriage, which meant that the royal/noble house dropped lower and lower in the *Almanach de Gotha*...and might even eventually disappear from it altogether. The *Almanach de Gotha* had little toleration for the *parvenue* (new royals and nobility). When Napoleon found that he could not be listed in the *Almanach de Gotha*, the editors having refused to list the genealogy or family of the "Corsican Ogre," the *Almanach* came under official French government censorship and was radically changed so that only the marriages of princes and princesses were listed! Even the entire 1808 edition was seized and destroyed. Thus, today it would be possible to "prove," using almost any edition of the *Almanach de Gotha*, that today's Imperial Bonaparte House--or many Houses during the years of censorship between 1808 and 1814--is a "fantasy"! Knowing the background and purpose of any publication is essential, even one as honored and revered as the *Almanach de Gotha*.

Apparently, the Assassin and Grump also do not have access to any of the Noble *Golden Books*, but even if they did, their technique would remain the same: find an edition in which the targeted Noble or Royal House isn't listed, then proclaim loudly that it is a "fantasy" because it isn't listed (even though it might be listed in the edition prior to or following the one being used). Or, of course, another method would be simply to attack the particular *Golden Book* itself.

Denial and Misstatement of International Law and Practice

The Assassin and the Grump have a particular dislike for international law and practice because these usually contradict what the Assassin and Grump prefer...which is their personal opinions. Thus, the Assassin/Grump often will write long treatises (almost always based on the British system or on Franco-*Gotha*-Latin practice) pronouncing what royals (especially those who are heads of governments-in-exile) should and should not do or who is and is not royal or noble. (A

Grump/Assassin favorite canard: a royal who is not "regnant" cannot create nobility or begin a new Order of Chivalry...but non-regnant royals, ignoring the Assassins and Grumps, often feel perfectly free to do so--for their own reasons.)

The Assassin and Grump are always publicly outraged when the royal doesn't pay careful heed to them, but, instead, acts on his own royal authority. Many a royal has privately smiled at the rain of pejoratives ("bogus," "charlatan," "illegal," "self-styled") so liberally showered by the Assassin/Grump following a royal act they don't approve of. (But a royal might also be cowed by the fear of such attacks: one undisputed *Gotha* "non-regnant" royal established a new Order of Chivalry, but when it became known that the action might publicly "come under fire," the royal, instead of braving the storm and asserting his own authority, instead offered as his "defense" that this was not a "new" Order of Chivalry, but an older Order that he had given a new name, new insignia, and new regulations! The ruse worked, the royal was spared a public lashing, and the Assassins/Grumps were delighted with their power and influence.)

The Assassin/Grump often denies or misstates such well-established principles as:

- Genealogy, not "regnancy," determines the existence and validity of continuing royal status and prerogative;
- Royalty is held by and is inherent in the person and is not necessarily a gift of the state;
- Royal practice is determined by royals who are not necessarily bound by precedence;
- A "Pretender" is a juridical term derived from the word "pretendre," meaning to "reach out and take." The Pretender is the royal and rightful inheritor of a throne. The term has nothing to do with the modern meaning of "pretense." A Pretender retains full rights as a Royal;
- An exiled monarch or a monarch who has escaped invading forces or one who is a Pretender to the Throne becomes a free agent and is not necessarily bound by the former nation's constitution (if any);
- A government-in-exile or a Pretender does not lose juridical integrity

- and both hold the right to continue governmental practice and royal prerogative or to establish new practices and prerogatives;
- Whether or not a government-in-exile is "recognized" by other nations affects its diplomacy, but does not affect its legitimacy;
 - forced abdication (as, for example, under threat of death) is not valid;
 - abdication does not end a monarchy, but passes the title along to the next eligible person in the genealogical line;
 - Boundaries and integrity of a principality or kingdom remain intact "de jure" (unless freely surrendered) and the right of government remains vested in the monarch and his heirs unless the monarch renounces the right or cedes the right to another. This important principle allows governments-in-exile, as well as Pretenders, to regain their countries, as, for example, the regain of Kuwait in the recent Gulf War or in the 1946 reestablishment of Israel according to its ancient borders.

Real scholars know of many other principles in law that the Assassin and the Grump either don't know or prefer to ignore. As an example, scholars and international law attorneys have consistently recognized that the descendant of an unconquered former ruling house (i.e., which had not at any time given allegiance to the new political order of the State from which it has been excluded) completely preserves the sovereign prerogative of full right in *jus majestatis* so that the investiture is considered to have the nature of a sacrament, i.e., the sovereign prerogative is an indelible mark and is vested in the *person*. Thus, the sovereign prerogative is an indelible confirmation of the juridical figure of the royal who remains the source of all honors.

That is, the Royal and Sacramental dignity of the *fons honorum* is a legal concept that is well-established and considered in Nobility Law. This legal concept allows Princes and other Sovereign Nobles to appeal to and to use International Public Law to establish the superior claim which can place them on the throne of their ancestors, causing latent dynastic sentiments to revive. The principle of *jure sanguines* is transmitted until infinity, a principle so well known that it can be found in the British Public Law of *Rex Non Moritur*. It has been successfully argued that this is the secular version of religious Apostolic Succession.

Thus, (contrary to the opinion of the Assassin/Grump) even if a royal family does not for generations assert its royal status or royal headship, the royalty is not lost to the successive primogenitives (unless freely revoked or ceded) and may at a later date be reasserted and reclaimed--because historians recognize that the very survival of a royal house may depend, on occasion, on its ability to remain quiet and unassertive. This principle allowed the British Parliament to bring King George I to the throne of England instead of one of its own Royal Nobles (it was George's mother who had been asked to be Queen, but at her death before accession, the son assumed the throne). The Assassin and Grump prefer to ignore this established principle and become furious when a royal exercises any rights under it. . . and will voraciously attack when exercised.

The Rhetorical Question

This stunt is such an old and well-known trick that no one should be surprised that these amateur tabloidians even try it--but try it they do. The **Rhetorical Question** is a damning statement innocently disguised as a question. The most famous Rhetorical Question is: *Have you stopped beating your spouse?* The "question" hides a statement that means "you beat your spouse." Also note that the expected answer merely confirms the hidden statement. If you respond "No," the meaning is that you are continuing to beat your spouse. If you respond "Yes," then you acknowledge that you at one time were a spouse-abuser. If you respond "I do not beat my spouse," then you are put on the defense, the question is not actually answered, and your failure to answer the question will be used against you. The same thing happens if you simply ignore the question, for then your guilt will be assumed. When the Assassin/Grump asks a question, that "question" is generally a Rhetorical Question whose purpose is not to elicit truth, but to attack and condemn the person at whom the question is directed.

Attacks on an Order's *Fons* or on the Order's Grand Master

If an Order of Chivalry does not have a proper *fons honorum* ("source of honor"), then the Order is not valid. For example, until Queen Victoria issued in 1888 a charter to the Venerable Order of St. John in Britain, that reconstituted Order was not a valid Order (since it did not have a *fons* and did not--and does not--hold a continuous historical succession

from the original Order of St. John). Thus, an attack on the *fons honorum* is a favorite technique of the Assassin and the Grump who like to insist that the *fons honorum* does not really hold the authority to act as a *fons*. Yet, since the Assassin and the Grump are not researchers and because they have an "agenda," they are not truly capable of determining such a question. The Assassin and the Grump are particularly inept when it comes to determining the religious authority of religious Orders of Chivalry, especially when dealing with the Orthodox Church and its long history of involvement in and sponsorship of Orders of Chivalry.

A second method of attack is to smear the Grand Master of an Order, usually using character assassinations. Where the Grand Master is known or makes himself known, this amounts to mere name-calling. Thus, no matter how excellent his credentials, no matter how respectable or respected he may be, the hard-working Grand Master learns that he is a "charlatan," that his Order is "self-styled," that his titles are "bogus," and so on. The Assassin and the Grump feel safer when the person they are attacking lives in another country--they rarely attack persons in their own country where libel and slander laws can be applied. However, one Order Assassin has publicly called a particular Grand Master a "crook," so perhaps they are becoming bolder ... or less concerned about legal consequences.

Religious Bigotry

In reading the attacks of both the Assassin and the Grump, one will notice that the language and method are exactly the same as found in the writings of religious bigots who want to "prove" that this or that religion is "false," "dangerous," or "cultic." Both the Assassin and the Grump believe that their self-imposed protection of the field of Chivalry is a religious cause and a modern crusade. In some cases, religious prejudice plays a large role in the attack, especially where the Order being attacked is a religious Order of Chivalry or an Order of Chivalry sponsored by or chartered by a religious organization.

Thus, the Assassin and the Grump have the characteristics of chivalry bigots, and, like many bigots, they are an embarrassment and a hurt to the community in which they operate.

The Workings of Order Assassination

A Case Study

Having looked at the methods of the Order Assassin, let us now turn to an actual case study to see the Assassin "deconstruct" the granting of a Knighthood of which he does not approve.

Boris Yeltsin and Holy Sepulchre Knighthood

The basis of this case study is the January 6, 2000 event reported in *The New York Times* (and elsewhere).

In an Investiture ceremony held at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in the walled Old City of Jerusalem, **Boris Yeltsin** was created a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre by Greek Orthodox Patriarch **Diodoros I**. Knighthood of the Holy Sepulchre was also bestowed by His Holiness Patriarch **Diodoros I** on the leaders of state of

- the Ukraine
- Georgia
- Belarus
- Bulgaria
- Romania
- Moldova, and ...
- Greece.

Attending the Investiture to give their Apostolic Blessings were more than a dozen Orthodox hierarchs representing the various states whose leaders were being created Knight. Among the hierarchs giving his blessing and approval was the Russian Orthodox Patriarch, H.H. **Aleksy II**. The Russian Foreign Office also approved and recognized the receipt of the Knighthood, and former Russian President Yeltsin was accompanied -- before, during, and after the Investiture -- by **Igor S. Ivanov**, the Russian foreign minister. Afterwards, wearing the decoration of his Knighthood, Yeltsin was received officially by President Ezer Weizman of Israel. Later, the new Chevalier **Boris Yeltsin** attended a Christmas Eve service wearing the decoration of his

Knighthood; he later attended a Christmas service at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, again wearing his decoration. News stories and photographs of the honor flashed around the world.

The reaction of the denizens of the depths of "*wreck.heraldry*" came in three phases:

- Confusion
- Redefinition
- Denial.

Phase One: Confusion

When Patriarch **Diodoros I** of Jerusalem granted Sepulchre Knighthood to Yeltsin and the other heads of state, in the presence of other Patriarchs, and with approval of various governments, Order Assassins and Order Grumps were caught utterly off guard. No one had forewarned them of the upcoming Investiture. No one had contacted them to determine whether or not the event could be done or could even take place. The Patriarchs and governments simply proceeded. Alas, the Order Assassins and Grumps didn't know what to think or what to do. The discussion group *wreck.heraldry* began to fill with anxious questions of "Who," "What," and so on. None of the "experts" in the discussion group knew anything about this, and what was especially interesting was their (incorrect) assumption that "an Order" was responsible for the conferrals. Which Order was doing this? Is it this Order? That one? Another one? Could it be over here? Over there? Where, oh, where? What's going on? Who knows anything? Finally, all the dwellers in Pandemonium grew quiet as their leader, the British-born New York merchant, stepped in to speak. And this is what he said....

Phase Two: Redefinition

The New York merchant explained to his worried lieutenants that this particular Holy Sepulchre Knighthood wasn't really a Knighthood at all. No, no -- it was merely a "church award," a sort of ecclesiastical pat on the head. This Chivalry Bigot should have been more cautious with the "church award" accusation,

for such a sword cuts two ways: in 1990, the British Foreign Office inquired of the British Roman Catholic Bishops whether the Order of St. Gregory the Great -- and other Papal Knighthoods -- were "church awards." The British Roman Catholic Bishops responded that, Yes, they were Church awards, meaning, of course, that these were Knighthoods awarded by the Roman Catholic Church -- whereupon the British government ceased giving permission for those Knightly decorations to be worn at official functions, seeing them as "church awards," not Orders of Chivalry! The Bishops, of course, understood that the Knighthoods came from the Pope as Patriarch, not as King of the Vatican (a common argument from the Chivalry Bigots), and what is also clear is that the Roman Catholic Church has the same viewpoint as the Orthodox Church, believing that historical Patriarchs have the right to grant Knighthoods.

Then, the Chivalry Bigot, in a burst of condescension, states that the award was "newly invented" by the Greek Patriarch who was simply imitating the "genuine" Order of the Holy Sepulchre which was under protection of "the Pope" (by which he meant the Pope of Rome, not the Pope of Alexandria [Coptic]). That statement regarding the "newness" of the Knighthood happens to be incorrect, but even had it been invented on the spot, newness does not an imitation make. Nevertheless, a great sigh of relief was exhaled by all the Assassins and Assassinets: A Church award! An imitation! Newly created! An ersatz Knighthood that aped the *real* thing! Yes, everyone could relax. The British-born New York merchant had spoken -- all was right with the chivalric world.

But, alas, all was *not* right with the chivalric world -- calm and quiet could not endure, for there was a problem.

Phase Three: Denial

The problem was -- and is -- that the Jerusalem Patriarch of Greek Orthodoxy, the Patriarch of Russian Orthodoxy, the Patriarchs and Beatitudes and Metropolitans of Orthodoxy who were present at the Investiture, the governments of Russia and

Israel, **Boris Yeltsin** and the other governmental leaders who received the award -- all understood the award to be exactly what was conferred -- a Knighthood, a genuine, authentic, honest-to-God Knighthood. *The New York Times* reported that **Boris Yeltsin** was "genuinely moved" at being made a Knight. Absolutely no one involved believed that the title "Knight" meant anything else other than *knight*. Clearly, everyone involved had every intention of granting a Knighthood, receiving a Knighthood, and receiving and wearing their knightly decorations to official events. Everyone -- including the several governments and their officials -- believed and agreed that the Patriarch was perfectly within his right to grant an authentic Knighthood. In the face of these beliefs held by rather important people who are very clear in their minds about who's who and what's what, and, since the Order Assassin's **Phase Two: Redefinition** really couldn't work, there was only one final, possible approach to take:

Denial!

But how to deny? Normally, such words as "charlatan," "bogus," "spurious," "self-styled," and the full panoply of Order Assassin's warehouse of vile epithets would be hurtling through cyberspace, flung in a wide arc of arrogant fury. However, calling the Jerusalem Patriarch of the world-wide Greek Orthodox Church a "charlatan" and branding his Sepulchre Knighthood as "bogus" and labeling **Boris Yeltsin** a "dupe" could have unforeseen and possibly unwanted, if not unpleasant, consequences. The Order Assassin would have to be satisfied with the word "imitation" -- and with denials offered solemnly. The following denials are some of those posted to *wreck.heraldry* after its primary spokesman grasped the total failure of his attempted redefinition of the Investing of Sepulchre Knighthood on **Boris Yeltsin**:

Denial #1: This award couldn't possibly be a Sepulchre Knighthood because the "genuine Order of that name" is headed

by its Roman Catholic Grand Master Cardinal Furno, not by His Holiness Greek Orthodox Patriarch Didoros I who, because he is not Grand Master of the "genuine Order," obviously can't grant a Knighthood. (*Comment*: If one follows this circular path, no comment can alleviate the dizziness.)

Denial #2: A Patriarch cannot be the fons of a Knighthood because an Order of Chivalry is a secular institution that, on occasion, may also have religious characteristics. (*Comment*: This fresh and remarkable view of an Order really derives from the view that the Pope is also King of the Vatican and that his Knighthoods are actually based on his kingship, rather than his Patriarchy. However, the scholar-historian finds that she or he cannot merely view the Roman Catholic Supreme Order of Christ, the Roman Catholic Order of St. Gregory, or even the Roman Catholic Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre as secular Orders with "religious characteristics." Certainly, the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church do not hold that view. As Alice might say, "Curiouser and Curiouser.")

Denial #3: Orthodox Orders of Chivalry did not exist until the late 19th century. (*Comment*: Maybe. But so what? The Venerable Order of St. John didn't exist until the 19th century, either. But it does now. Anyway, whether Orthodox Orders existed or not, Orthodox clergy have been creating Knights for centuries without regard to "Orders" of Chivalry. The charge that they did so in "imitation" of the Latin West doesn't mean a thing insofar as the legitimacy of their action is concerned.)

Denial #4: Other [Eastern Orthodox] religious institutions have in past centuries "falsely" claimed the right to confer Knighthood. (*Comment*: This denial denies Denial #3 and simply confirms the ancient Orthodox practice of making Knights. What this denial really means is ...

"Why, those cheeky schismatics, the Orthodox, have been creating Knights for centuries, right in our Latin faces -- AND THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE!"

... and so on, but enough.

Having "demolished" the claims of some of the oldest Sees in Christendom, and being in the attack mode anyway, the Old Man of the Mountain turns and attacks the very Order he's been defending by sniffing disapproval of the prenominals adopted by the American Roman Catholic Equestrian Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

But wait -- he's not quite finished ... a parting shot has to be made in a dazzling display of extraordinarily boorish manners and political miscalculation: **the Order Assassin asserts that the *real* reason why the Patriarch of the world-wide Greek Orthodox Church actually conferred this Sepulchre Knighthood was merely to trade on the success of the Roman Catholic Order so that he could "enjoy something of the same kind of income flow."** That is, His Holiness Patriarch **Diodoros I** did it all for money. The political miscalculation is, of course, the implication that the Papal Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre is, itself, enjoying "...the same kind of income flow." Oops.

The hallucinatory quality of the whole deconstruction leaves one breathless, but it does expose the practical application of the standard methods of the Order Assassin.

Postscript: The result of the New York merchant's (and others') comments about Orthodoxy was a furious sting of protests from Orthodox members of the various news groups where the messages were posted. The Order Assassins were accused of bigotry and prejudice. Finally, the New York merchant went online to assure everyone that he wasn't "bigoted" at all, but that he was simply "stating the facts." That the facts were all made up was beside the point. Case dismissed.

How the Chivalric Community Deals with the Order Assassin and the Order Grump

What becomes quite clear to the objective observer is that the Order Assassin and Order Grump can *never* be satisfied. Never. ***No amount of accurate and supported information, no amount of substantiated data, no amount of undisputed genealogical facts, no endorsements of any kind (no matter from whom), will satisfy the Assassin and the Grump once their bigotry is in gear.*** No one is exempt from Assassin/Grump criticism. If an exiled King does something chivalric that the Assassin/Grump doesn't like, then that Royal "has no authority" to do it. Even if the Queen of England makes a chivalric decision they don't like (such as establishing an American Priory of the Venerable Order of St. John), then she "has no right" to make that particular move (a claim actually made by Assassins when Queen Elizabeth authorized the American St. John Priory). Patriarchs whose authority to make Knights stretches back for centuries are summarily dismissed: Can't do it. Period.

The hypercritical are usually hypersensitive, as may be observed in the chivalry bigot. A response to an Order Assassin or Grump -- no matter how politely worded, no matter how weighted with evidence and data -- provokes waves of fury and indignation and threats of lawsuits: how dare the gods of Olympus be challenged? Thus, most Royals, Orders, and Knights in the Chivalric community react to the Assassin and the Grump in one way -- complete silence (and, perhaps, a rolling of eyes). Order Assassins and Grumps are simply ignored because any effort to answer their charges is pointless and unproductive. Indeed, over the past several years, this single article on the Grump and the Assassin has become the one response most referenced by Orders of Chivalry (and this article regularly causes frenzy and ferocity in their camp -- the writer of this article has been called every name to be found in the Order Assassin limited vocabulary) .

Meanwhile, the Assassin and the Grump think that, because they are being ignored, they cannot be "answered." Such is the delusion that overtakes those who cannot control their rage and their prejudice. They are doomed to always remain wailing, stomping, and hand-wringing on the fringe of the Chivalric community, crying out against the injustices of the chivalric world, paying to have their books printed, and rushing to and fro in the discussion groups, pouring forth gossip and tittle-tattle and divorce data, thinking the whole time what good boys they are.

Conclusion

It's not that the Assassin and the Grump don't have a point--one can, indeed, discover dishonest or deluded individuals claiming noble and royal status to which they are not entitled, and one can easily locate commercial enterprises masquerading as chivalric Orders that sell chivalric/knightly titles, stars, and medals to the unwary (and the wary) for set fees payable via cash and credit cards. **However, the Order Assassin and the Order Grump have shown time and again that they simply are not capable of making the distinction between the imitation and the genuine article. Information regarding chivalry, nobility, and royalty provided by Assassins and Grumps is always flabby because they cannot separate their personal prejudices from their data. That is, their bias ruins their objectivity.** Instead, all Orders and Houses find themselves equally slathered with the Assassin's and Grump's bad manners and bad judgment. The sneering and snobbery of the Assassin and the Grump are unbecoming, and their unchivalric and uncharming display of discourtesy should serve as a warning to those who wish to not only talk about Chivalry, but who wish to live it.

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