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**The Royal Studies Journal Prizes
(in association with Canterbury
Christ Church University)**

**Lois L. Huneycutt and Zita Rohr,
Prize Committee Chairs**

Report on 2017 *Royal Studies Journal* and Canterbury Christ Church University Prizes

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Book Prize

The Book Prize competition this year was very rigorous, so much so that we were forced to recruit additional readers to break a tie that persisted through several ballots, eventually deciding to name both a winner and a runner-up. The runner up award went to Dr Marguerite Keane of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, for her book *Material Culture and Queenship in 14th-Century France: The Testament of Blanche of Navarre (1331-1398)*, published by Brill in its “Art and Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe” series. Keane’s book is an exemplary study of Blanche of Navarre’s remarkably detailed testament that not only lists her possessions and how she wished them to be disposed of, but also provides us with capsule histories of the objects, often linking them to previous owners, describing to whom each object was bestowed, and often why. The testament allows Keane to explore issues ranging from Blanche’s agency in creating the document, to the role that gender plays in the historiography of such documents. The network of relationships Keane explores illuminates French court culture at a time when gift-giving was a mode of interaction that could affect control and courtly patronage, as well as reify individual roles in existing court hierarchies. As one of our external readers put it, “Keane’s well-written and tightly argued book is a wonderful example of how a good scholar can approach a document from a variety of methodologies and theoretical stances: historiography, biography, patronage, gender, and material culture, all knit together within a solid art-historical framework”. The *Royal Studies Journal* congratulates Dr Keane on this outstanding work, which, while we ultimately chose another winner, was highly regarded by everyone who read it.

Now, to the eventual winner of the Book Prize: The *Royal Studies Journal* and Canterbury Christ Church University are proud to announce that we have awarded the 2017 prize (including an award of £50) for best book published on the history of monarchy brought out in the preceding year to Dr Catriona Murray of the University of Edinburgh for her monograph, *Imaging Stuart Family Politics: Dynastic Crisis and Continuity*. Published as an Ashgate book by Routledge, this beautifully illustrated book examines depictions of Stuart royal heirs in art and material culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although she addresses the formal qualities and inspiration of the art under study, Murray’s focus is on the display and reception of the objects within the socio-political context of seventeenth-century Anglo-European society. Murray’s extensive research has led to the revelation of a rich array of largely forgotten visual materials, which were once easily understood by spectators. She shows that Stuart royal imagery does not focus solely on the monarch as had been traditional, but rather incorporates new domestic imagery of the family as a whole, including a fascinating discussion of the “afterlives” of Stuart heirs who died before reaching the throne, but who often appeared posthumously in dynastic portraits. She weaves together themes such as the tension between

private celebrations of royal births or observances of royal deaths, with the need to address political tension that centered on anxieties about the continuance of the royal line, or even the monarchy itself. The royal family's fecundity, or lack thereof, affected religious divisions troubling the realm, something she addresses adroitly and thoroughly. Finally, Murray argues convincingly that her approach to British royal portraiture remains relevant today, making reference to the role imagery has played in the restoration of confidence in the monarchy following the 1997 death of Diana, former wife of Charles, Prince of Wales. Dr Murray's book is an excellent contribution to the growing body of work re-examining European royal and dynastic portraiture in terms of its function, audience, and cultural context.

We would like to thank the readers and Book Prize committee members (who requested to remain anonymous), who together read a total of eight submitted works, and especially those experts whom we recruited for the final round of reading, and who worked graciously under the pressure of looming deadlines to allow us to award the prize at the *Kings and Queens 6* conference.

Postgraduate Student and Early Career Scholar Article Prize

This year, the Postgraduate Student and Early Career Scholar Article Prize committee received four very promising submissions on topics that ranged widely in both period and scope under the umbrella of royal studies. The research covered by the four submissions took their eight readers (two per submission in a double-blind peer review process) and their three jury members on a journey from the early medieval to the early modern periods, traversing varied geopolitical and geographical contexts, which touched upon different aspects of sovereignty, power, and influence.

Our eight external readers took considerable time and care over their reviews, and were at pains to list the strengths of each article as well as their weaknesses in detail. Any identified weaknesses were accompanied by detailed suggestions and ideas as to how the submissions might be improved and strengthened—and, without exception, all the external readers bore in mind that the submissions were the product of the research of ECRs or PGRs. It was quite clear to us that in their reports, the eight external readers (all either mid-career or distinguished scholars in the field of royal studies) were of a mind to assist our candidates not only with the articles in question, but also with their ongoing research practice.

At the end of the day, however, upon the unanimous advice of the external readers, the jury felt that as none had judged the submissions to be of *exceptional* merit (as the guidelines for the award stipulate), rather than the 'merely' very good or quite interesting, the prize would not be awarded this year. We came to this decision with the collaboration of the Prize's sponsor, Canterbury Christ Church University, whose aim in sponsoring the Prize was to encourage the exceptional in developing scholarship.

The eight external readers and the jury are as one in agreeing that all entries we received this year are suitable for publication with revision, and we encouraged this year's candidates to do so by submitting their revised articles to the *Royal Studies Journal* once they had received their anonymous readers' reports, should they have requested these from the jury. We are pleased to report that the authors of the three unpublished submissions grasped this opportunity with goodwill and alacrity, and we very much look forward to publishing their revised articles in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal*. If anything, what this year's process has

highlighted for us is the importance of putting our research out to objective (and sometimes unforgiving) peer review: constructive and objective peer review can really serve to point out what needs to be strengthened in all our work. The upside, of course, is that warm inner glow of the researcher when they receive confirmation that all the hard slog and heartache, in the sometimes very lonely scriptorium, has been worthwhile, significant, and recognized.

In closing, both Lois and I urge all of you to call upon your wider networks and to publicize both of these important prizes. The exceptional work of all our scholars—whether they be distinguished, mid-career, early career, or postgraduate researchers—needs our recognition, support, and encouragement: and we need their fresh insights and ideas if we are to continue our work in promoting the importance of royal studies, and the nurturing of significant and new talent in the field.

Lois L. Huneycutt
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Zita Eva Rohr
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