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

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Report on 2018 *Royal Studies Journal* and Canterbury Christ Church University Prizes

Lois L. Huneycutt and Zita Eva Rohr
PRIZE COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Article Prize

Last year, 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 interesting, the prize would not be awarded that time around. We came to this decision in collaboration with the Prize’s sponsor, Canterbury Christ Church University, whose aim in sponsoring the Prize was to encourage the exceptional in developing scholarship. It was the right call. Having decided to re-launch the campaign for this year’s prize and cast our net as widely as possible, we were rewarded by the enthusiastic response we received from our international contestants and their sponsors—ten submissions on diverse topics across diverse times and geographical spaces in the field of royal studies were received by the judging panel.

The articles received from ECRs and PGRs ranged widely in topics and time periods, and the field was exceptionally—and gratifyingly—strong. In the end, our distinguished external readers and the prize judges were as one in arguing that we must award two prizes respectively to the best unpublished article submitted by an ECR and the best published article by a PGR. The contest was exceedingly close and it would have been unfair to have chosen one submission over the other. So, here are the winners of this year’s *RSJ* and CCCU Prize for the best published or unpublished ECR or PGR Article.

The 2018 *RSJ*-CCCU Prize for the best unpublished article by an ECR goes to Dr Alison Creber (King’s College, London) for her article, “The Princely Woman and the Emperor: Imagery of Female Rule in Benzo of Alba’s *Ad Heinricum IV*.” Her distinguished external reader had this to say in her assessment of Alison’s work:

This is extremely well-researched and written article that explores the presentation of female rule in *Benzo of Alba’s Panegyric Ad Heinricum IV* by using the representation of Adelaide of Turin as a princely woman as a case study for understanding the emergence of quasi-regal ruling woman in the eleventh century. Informed by a meticulous reading of Benzo’s text, the author identifies the different dynamics at play when Benzo was writing directly to Adelaide where she is given, through the use of masculine titles and comparison to the Virgin Mary, the status of a princely woman and when writing about her either to Henry IV or others where despite recognition of her authority and rule, she is described in more ambivalent language and with more stereotypical imagery of subordination, even reference to Eve. There are some good comparisons with the depictions of other princely women such as Beatrice and Matilda of Tuscany. I was quite persuaded by the argument that Benzo criticized women for political

reasons rather than gendered ones, even if he resorted to gendered language and images. Fluidly written and argued, it was a pleasure to read and gave me much to think about.

Alison could not attend the Kings and Queens 7 Conference to receive the award in person but sent along this message to the attendees:

Good evening everyone. I'm really sorry that I can't be here in person, because I'm sure that I'm missing a great conference. I'd like to thank the *Royal Studies Journal*, Canterbury Christ Church University, and the prize committee for awarding my article a prize for best unpublished submission. I'm thrilled to have won, and really pleased that my article's going to be published in the *Royal Studies Journal* later this year. I actually presented a first version of the article at Winchester several years ago, so I'm doubly sorry that I can't be here to accept this award tonight. I'd also like to thank my thesis supervisors, Jinty Nelson and Serena Ferente, for their inspiration and encouragement throughout my studies, and my mum, Kay Creber, to whom I owe more than words can say. Many thanks once again.

Alison has submitted her article for publication to the *Royal Studies Journal* and it appears in this issue (volume 5, no. 2). Congratulations, Alison!

Moving on, the 2018 *RSJ*-CCCU Prize for the best published article by a PGR goes to my fellow antipodean, Jessica O'Leary, who is undertaking her doctoral research at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia under the supervision of Associate Professor Carolyn James. Her article, "Politics, Pedagogy, and Praise: Three Literary Texts Dedicated to Eleonora d'Aragona, Duchess of Ferrara," was published in 2016 in the distinguished scholarly journal, *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, volume 19, number 2 (2016).

Here is what her distinguished external reader observed in her review:

This essay is an elegantly written and fascinating study of three literary works that were written in different moments of the life of Eleonora d'Aragona, each of them celebrating her as a potential or real leader and public figure. The strongest elements of the essay are its skilled and astute analysis of the texts themselves—formal features, content—in relation to historical data; and the author's lucid explanation of the political strategies behind the writing of each of these texts. The essay maps these works onto significant moments in Eleonora d'Aragona's life, arguing persuasively why the texts were important at the time, and what they tell us about her changing roles in Ferrarese public life. In the process, the author offers sound interpretation of the historical significance of these writings, both for understanding early modern Ferrara and for the history of women. It's a wonderful and impressive piece of scholarship.

And, here are some thoughts from Jessica regarding her award:

Firstly, I can't express how grateful I am to the Royal Studies Network to have received the *Royal Studies Journal* / Canterbury Christ Church University Prize. To be considered for this award is a great honour and privilege, and many, many heartfelt thanks are due to Ellie Woodacre, Zita Rohr, and Núria Silleras-Fernandez for their efforts in not only making these awards available, but also for their tireless work in the founding and management of the Royal Studies Network, now celebrating its seventh Kings and Queens conference series here in

Winchester. What a marvellous achievement and testament to the hard work and tremendous collegiality of these three women and our colleagues here today. I am further grateful to the anonymous reviewer and the humbling comments in general my essay received. As a postgraduate and early career researcher, these kinds of awards serve not only as lines on a CV, but as reminders of being part of a wonderful community driven by academic generosity and curiosity. I'm not sure if it is particular to history or this field especially, but I have always felt a great degree of support among scholars of rulership and politics and am grateful to count myself among the many interested in the travails of kings and queens.

This essay and indeed my career as a historian would have never been possible without the unparalleled mentorship of Associate Professor Carolyn James. It is through her I was first introduced to Renaissance history, to the archives, and, indeed, to this original material on Eleonora d'Aragona which she very generously shared with me as an Honours student. Carolyn is not only a formidable scholar, but also a generous and patient supervisor and friend. It is an enormous privilege to be her student. I am also grateful to Dr Kathleen Neal who has always unwearingly answered my many questions about history and life in academia and was a source of much professional growth in her capacity as associate supervisor of my Masters thesis and this essay as well. I am also extremely grateful to Monash University, the Bill Kent Foundation, and the staff of students of SOPHIS and the CMRS where I continue to grow as a scholar. Finally, I would like to thank the archivists and librarians of the state archives of Modena, the British Library, and the Pierpont Morgan Library without whose expertise I would have been lost among the paper and parchment.

My doctoral work has moved into the next generation and is supervised by both Carolyn and Associate Professor Adam Clulow, being part of an ARC Project entitled "Gendering the Italian Wars 1494-1559" led by Professor Sue Broomhall, Carolyn, and Professor Lisa Mansfield. My PhD continues my interest in diplomacy through the lens of social and cultural history, having written my Masters on the diplomatic role of Eleonora d'Aragona and her sister, Beatrice, in the Aragonese dynastic network for which a monograph is forthcoming through ARC Humanities Press's series Gender and Power in the Premodern World. In the future, I am particularly interested in further pursuing research projects which analyse the spaces occupied by those immediately adjacent to power. Those who had to struggle for access, to assert autonomy quietly (or loudly), to assimilate or dissimulate acculturation while retaining individual imperatives. I hope this takes me into the fields of encounter, borderlands, and cultural exchange and opens up new ways of looking at rulership, relationships, and power.

One way or another, I hope my research will always have a place in the Royal Studies Network and I very much look forward to attending a future Kings and Queens Conference in the near future. Until then, I would like to take this final opportunity to thank all those involved for this award and to wish everyone an enriching few days here in Winchester.

While Jessica's prize-winning piece has already been published and thus cannot be republished in the *RSJ*, we would encourage you to read this excellent article, the abstract and publication information for which follows below:

**Politics, Pedagogy, and Praise: Three Literary Texts Dedicated to Eleonora d'Aragona,
Duchess of Ferrara**

Jessica O'Leary
MONASH UNIVERSITY

A small collection of literary treatises associated with Eleonora d'Aragona (1450-1493), daughter of the King of Naples and wife of duke Ercole I d'Este, established a distinct narrative concerning her role as duchess of Ferrara. Written by Diomedes Carafa, Antonio Cornazzano, and Bartolommeo Goggio, the texts reflect and justify Eleonora's efforts to reconcile conventional expectations of feminine behavior with the increasingly important political and diplomatic duties she fulfilled. Although no evidence exists that Eleonora directly commissioned any of these manuscripts, it is nonetheless apparent that the writers had a tacit understanding of the duchess's political needs. They framed their literary endeavors as collaborative exercises in order to promote acceptance of her administrative and diplomatic interventions and raise her prestige. Through a close reading of the texts, this essay develops a richer understanding of Eleonora d'Aragona, her relationship with power, and the idioms of pedagogy and praise humanists used to win her patronage.

Publication details: Jessica O'Leary, "Politics, Pedagogy, and Praise: Three Literary Texts Dedicated to Eleonora d'Aragona, Duchess of Ferrara," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 19, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 285-307, <https://doi.org/10.1086/688439>.

In closing, I would like to thank all the contributors, their sponsors, our generous and distinguished external reviewers for their interest, faith in, and hard work, in making this year's campaign so very successful and inspiring. I would also like to acknowledge and thank CCCU for its generous sponsorship and for its interest in promoting the emerging scholarship in royal studies of talented ECRs and PGRs, without whom the field would have a very arid future indeed. Finally, I would like to thank my fellow adjudicators, Ellie Woodacre and N ria Silleras-Fern ndez, for their generous and astute assistance in ensuring the success of the award this year—and for the future, which looks very bright indeed.

Zita Eva Rohr
Chair, *RSJ*/CCCU Article Prize Committee

Book Prize

This year's competition for the best book in royal studies published in the previous year again narrowed to two well-written and well-reviewed books, and again required enlisting an extra reader toward the end of the competition to decide between them. The judges and committee members would like first to commend the Penelope Nash, Honorary Associate at the Medieval and Early-Modern Centre, University of Sydney, author of our runner-up, *Empress Adelheid and Countess Matilda: Medieval Female Rulership and the Foundations of European Society* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). The committee applauded Nash's decision to compare the careers of an initially unlikely pair of female rulers who lived generations apart, and who came to power and exercised their authority under very different circumstances. Using a framework that examines each woman's exploitation and manipulation of their kinship networks, the use of their landed holdings, and finally their exercise of judicial power, the book succeeds in telling the stories of these two women, and drawing connections between their careers. One reader praised Nash's deft use of a staggering variety of source material, while another pointed to the use of visual material and the carefully done and painstakingly created genealogical charts, timelines, and maps, all of which add to the overall authority of Nash's analysis.

In the end, though, the committee members agreed that this year's prize should go to J. L. (Joanna) Laynesmith for her book *Cecily, Duchess of York* (Bloomsbury Academic 2017). As Laynesmith points out, Cecily, who lived to be eighty, was the only major figure in the Wars of the Roses to live through the entire span of the Wars. As the wife of Richard, Duke of York, a major contender for the English throne until his death in the Battle of Wakefield, and the mother of twelve children, including kings Edward IV and Richard III, Cecily was caught up in all the major historical drama of the fifteenth century. But more than that, she was a great patron of books, renowned for her piety, and a major landholder and head of a powerful household. Combing through an abundance of records including letter, charters, household expense books, patent rolls, episcopal registers, poems, genealogies, heraldry records, and many more categories of evidence allowed Laynesmith to present Cecily, if not fully fleshed out, as close as any of us can expect for a medieval person, much less a medieval woman. Laynesmith leads us through the many chapters of Cecily's life with a graceful, captivating style that nevertheless masterfully engages a variety of historiographical debates. The Royal Studies Network and Christ Church Canterbury are therefore pleased to award the 2018 prize to Dr Joanna Laynesmith, and congratulate her for her study of an "almost queen" who influenced the history of English monarchy for nearly the entire fifteenth century. We are especially pleased that Dr Laynesmith was able to attend this conference to accept her award, and gave her thanks to the prize sponsors personally.

On a personal note, I would like to thank this year's readers and committee members, including but not limited to Joel Rosenthal, Catherine Keene, and Valerie Eads. As I am stepping down after three years' service as chair of the book prize committee, I would like to

take this opportunity to thank not only all of the committee members and anonymous readers over the course of my tenure, but also the Royal Studies Network for providing me with the opportunity to read and evaluate so many excellent works of new scholarship. While it happened that the three books that won the award centred on the late medieval and early modern period in England and France, our submissions have ranged chronologically from the early medieval world of the Empress Adelaide to World War II royal security arrangements for George VI and his family, and geographically, from the western Mediterranean to the British Isles. The field of queenship studies is alive and well, and we have received far more nominations for books about queens and queenship than we have about other aspects of royal studies. I am also happy to report that our nominated authors represent many fields, including historians, art historians, literary scholars, and political scientists. I look forward to reading future award-winning books exploring royal studies from many angles, all eras, and all geographic area.

Lois L. Huneycutt
Chair, *RSJ*/CCCU Book Prize Committee