



*Imaging Stuart Family Politics:
Dynastic Crisis and Continuity*

Catriona Murray

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Review by: Sarah Betts

Imaging Stuart Family Politics: Dynastic Crisis and Continuity. By Catriona Murray. London: Routledge, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-4724-2405-1. xi + 201 pp. £110.00.

This book is a very welcome addition to the field of royal representations, especially in England during the seventeenth century. It builds upon the still seminal work of Roy Strong, Oliver Millar, and Kevin Sharpe on royal portraiture and crafted image in early modern England, and upon Laura Lunger Knoppers's more recent work on the era of Charles I, *Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton's Eve* (Cambridge University Press, 2011). Murray's book is unique in following this politicized domestic image of the English Stuarts all the way from James I's accession to the reign of his great-granddaughter, Anne. It is also clearly a study—as it sets out to be—of the place of dynasty within images of monarchy, and discusses, in detail, not only the direct role and representation of each individual monarch, but also the immediate heirs to the throne and the “junior” and “rival” heirs as well.

The overall premise of the book—that “despite the uncertainties of early modern reproduction and family life, the Stuarts persistently promoted dynastic and domestic images to reinforce royal authority”—is well articulated and cleverly structured around the life cycles of the individuals involved as well as that of the ruling dynasty as whole (1). It is well supported by careful, illuminating analysis of a wide range of artworks, some very familiar to scholars of monarchy or art of the period, and some more obscure prints. Murray's greatest contribution to the field is undoubtedly her attention to, and detailed analysis of, significant dynastic figures often neglected in the scholarship. Perhaps most noticeable in this regard is her re-invigoration of the scant existing scholarship on Mary II, both in her years as heiress presumptive and queen regnant, in her position as British (and Stuart) princess (then Sovereign) in her own right, and as Princess of the Principality and House of Orange by marriage. Murray unpicks the future promise of the Stuart dynasty, the Protestant succession, and (eventually) constitutional monarchy in images of Mary. Her potential longevity and fecundity unfulfilled by her childless death at the age of thirty-two highlights the precariousness of the intimate relationship between familial and political stability promoted by the Stuarts: a common theme of the work.

Other key figures more closely discussed here than in previous scholarship are the two seemingly minor royal Dukes of Gloucester, Henry (1640-1660) and William (1689-1700). Henry was the third, and youngest, surviving prince born to Charles I and Henrietta Maria, but for

much of the Civil War he was the only son actually present in England, where he was held in Parliamentary custody for a decade. Murray demonstrates that during this time, his portrait was used to representationally emasculate and disempower his father as patriarch of both dynasty and kingdom. She also argues that Henry's prominent image had a significant and politicized afterlife beyond the prince's short, twenty-year mortal existence, as did that of Mary II's nephew, William of Gloucester, the loved, celebrated, and ultimately lost heir of Mary, her husband, William III (especially during his widowhood), and her sister, Anne. Murray argues convincingly in a case study of Gloucester, who died in 1700 at the age of eleven, that the young boy acted as foil to the controversial Prince of Wales in William's propaganda wars with his rival and father-in-law, James II. The Gloucester case-study highlights one of the central themes of the study, that the use of dynastic heirs in monarchical projections of power and stability sometimes left the Stuarts "victims of their own success," as "with the untimely death of a Prince, the vulnerability of the succession was highlighted and a series of hopes and promises instantly vanished" (2, 8).

The only weaker point of the book is its conclusion, which, though tantalising and interesting in terms of its discussion of the more modern "legacy" of the Stuarts' dynastic political portraiture, does seem somewhat detached from the cohesive body and arguments of the volume. It would perhaps have been better to highlight sooner how the nineteenth-century sentimentalised images of Charles I and his family related to the seventeenth-century representations discussed here. If the balance between the political and the domestic royal family in more modern times were to be discussed, it would have been useful to see more engagement with relevant scholarship. However, this section is clearly a prelude to a future and highly promising project for the author, and that feeling of departure from the core focus of this highly readable and fascinating volume does not distract or detract too much from the immense contribution it makes to the study of the Stuarts as a royal dynasty, and the interrelated political and cultural milieu of the (long) seventeenth century they lived (and died) through.

SARAH BETTS
University of York