

Aspiration, Representation and Memory: The Guise in Europe, 1506–1688.

Jessica Munns, Penny Richards, and Jonathan Spangler, eds.

Farnham: Ashgate, 2015. xvi + 202 pp. \$124.95.

Aspiration, Representation and Memory focuses on the regal aspirations of the Lorraine-Guise, bringing together scholars from a wide range of specialties: history, art history, and literary studies. The editors have divided their volume into three main themes: the Guise's transnational royal claims (chapters 1 and 2); a study of Henri de Lorraine, Fifth Duke of Guise (1614–64) (chapters 3 to 7); and, finally, the Guise legacy (chapters 8 and 9). Exactly why the editors have chosen to present their book in this way is not clear. Unfortunately, the otherwise very well-written introduction does not provide a satisfactory answer, nor does it present the reader with a clear overarching research question.

For the purposes of analysis and clarity, this reviewer has identified three main overarching topics prominent in most contributions: the importance of the communication of rank, the role of mediators, and that of women. In essence, this book shows how communication strategies involved a complex set of instruments, from the symbolic language of art (chapter 4), to the conspicuous consumption of Italian goods (chapter 2), or through texts of various forms (chapter 1, 5, and 9). Princely rank and sovereign status needed to be externalized to obtain value. Without princely theatricality, rank remained an empty concept. This is very well demonstrated by Robert S. Sturges in the first chapter ("The Guise and the Two Jerusalems"). Sturges convincingly argues the importance of the interplay between constructions of family myths, the translation of these myths in architectural programs, and the ancestral piety that even determined political action. At the forefront was the Guise's desire to communicate a regal past by claiming the crown of Jerusalem. Ultimately, as the earthly Jerusalem was beyond their

reach, Guise's attention was directed at the creation of a heavenly Jerusalem in the form of their dynastic stronghold, Paris.

The Fifth Duke of Guise seemed to have had mostly his own personal glory in mind. Yet Michèle Benaiteau ("Political Uses of Reputation and Celebrity") shows that despite his conduct he was a master communicator. Even though his quest for the Neapolitan crown seemed doomed from the start, his rebellion, treason, and bigamy did not challenge his status as model courtier later in life. He perfectly understood the princely language of the court, fabricating an image of the glorious prince, in word as in art (see also chapter 4 by David Taylor). Another striking theme in the volume is the importance of agents. Both in the quest for distinction (chapter 2) or for a crown (chapters 5 and 7), the Guise's reliance on local agents is more than the expression of a patron-client relation. Their mutual influence shaped the success of communication strategies, a topic hopefully to be explored in future research.

Jonathan Spangler aptly demonstrates in chapter 6 ("Mother Knows Best") the key concept of access. Access not only referred to direct contact with the sovereign; in this contribution, it points to the construction of communication routes, gaining access to information and princely favor, even when not present at court. This chapter identifies wives and widows as fabricators of family glory, a point not stressed enough in most studies on court life. The final two chapters ("Warriors of God" and "Channel Crossing: The Guise in British Drama") treat less the idea of representation than the concept of fabrication. Penny Richards describes how the Guise image was subject to the "political fashion" of the day, while Jessica Munns makes clear that the communication of a Guise image could be problematic, therefore prompting the fabrication of a newer image, as in the case of Mary, Queen of Scots, after the ascent of the Stuarts.

The wide range of methodologies in this volume is at once its greatest strength and its greatest weakness, making a reviewer's job quite difficult. There is a clear overemphasis on the life of Henri de Lorraine, even though Spangler states this is because this period in the Guise dynasty's history has not been highlighted enough. The volume is perhaps less suitable as a point of departure for the study of European nobilities, although the overall quality of the contributions is such that it deserves a prominent place in every specialist's library. It offers many new insights on how the dynastic identity of one of Europe's most prominent families has taken shape.

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