
H-France Review Vol. 16 (July 2016), No. 126

Jessica Munns, Penny Richards, and Jonathan Spangler, eds., *Aspiration, Representation and Memory. The Guise in Europe, 1506-1688*. Farnham and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2015. xi + 201 pp. Genealogical table, plates, notes, and index. £70.00 (cl). ISBN 978-1-4724-1934-7.

Review by Mark Greengrass, Centre Roland Mousnier, Université de Paris IV.

“C’est dommage qu’il est fou.” There are no subjunctive nuances in Claude de Lorraine, duke of Chevreuse’s judgment of his nephew Henri II de Lorraine (1614-1664). Claude himself was not the sharpest blade in the French aristocratic mid-seventeenth-century knife-box; one might even say that it took one to know one. Henri II de Lorraine forms, however, the de facto focus of this volume about the Guise in Europe, constituting the principal subject of the majority of its essays. Why?

Tallemant des Réaux, the mid-century muckraker who reports Claude’s remark, is more indulgent towards the fifth duke of Guise: “Il sçait quelque chose, a de l’esprit, dit les choses agréablement, n’est pas meschant, a de la générosité, du cœur et est fort civil.”[1] We get the message, though, and it is broadly the same. The fifth duke of Guise was an asset at a dinner table, but an accident waiting to happen more or less anywhere else. He was a non-starter as a senior cleric, and evaded the role of archbishop in the family’s patrimonial see at Reims to which he was destined as a child by adolescent scandals which not even Guise spin could cover up. He was a ne’er-do-well malcontent aristocrat under the Cardinal Ministers Richelieu and Mazarin, once the deaths of his elder brothers made him the heir to the Guise dynasty in 1639, ending up in exile when his plotting got the better of him. He was a nonchalant husband, managing somehow to be married to two women--possibly three--more or less simultaneously. He was a knucklehead leader of the Revolt in Naples in 1648, and again in 1654, alienating the rulers of France and Spain at one and the same moment. Despite all, he ended up a genial Chamberlain at Louis XIV’s court, which just about suited his skills-set.

The essay by Michèle Benaiteau in this collection explores some of those roles, seeking to explain how Henri II, duke of Guise constructed a narrative of himself as (using Voltaire’s charitable description) the hero of history and fable. She nuances but does not overturn the often indulgent judgments that contemporaries formed of the Guise dynast. Jonathan Spangler demonstrates that Henri’s mother, Henriette-Catherine de Joyeuse, loyally picked up the pieces from his various disasters and saved the family fortune. That, however, was classic behavior in French aristocratic families, and her son was probably not too averse to having his inheritance placed as far away as the law would permit from the claims of creditors and the potential vagaries of political fortune. In general, this volume is not trying to rehabilitate Henri II de Lorraine but to explain the indulgence that contemporaries displayed towards him. It does so around the notion of a Guise myth, an inherited dynastic cultural capital which had been accumulated over a longer timeframe, and which held in various accounts, in France as well as offshore. This Guise mythology brings together the three themes highlighted in the title to the volume (“aspiration,” “representation,” and “memory”).

The fabulous Anthony Van Dyck portrait of Henri II de Lorraine as a young man (c.1634—he was about twenty years of age) furnishes the book’s dust jacket and the subject matter of one of its chapters (by David A.H.B. Taylor). The painting captures every ounce of the self-absorbed manifestation of its subject, as only Van Dyck was capable of (just imagine what Van Dyck’s portraits of the current American presidential hopefuls would look like...). Full-length, and sporting dramatic leather boots that are, in every way, aspirational, the portrait emphasises the genetic manifestation of that Guise myth: Guise males were tall, uncommonly tall. His hat—a huge affair, plumped out with the plumage of goodness knows how many rare birds—is doffed to reveal another genetic trait: the distinctive Teutonic fair hair that traditionally marked out the Guise from the rest of the French aristocracy. The landscape behind is Homeric—a conscious evocation, says Taylor, of Henri’s aspirations to be the courtly soldier, “apart from the machinations of court factions and any associated discord” (p. 98). In that sense, as in others, the portrait reveals how consciously—and how misleadingly—the Guise manipulated their image; deploying their cultural capital to their own ends.

“Dynastic capital” is, in part, an accumulation of individual aristocratic “identity capital.” The latter notion is helpfully deployed with respect to the Guise by Éric Durot in a recent volume which reconstructs in a masterly fashion the political and military career of François de Lorraine, duke of Guise (1520–1563). Durot does so in the context of François’ extraordinarily successful efforts to construct a coherent, heroic, military, political and religious narrative for himself and his clan in France.^[2] It is quite baffling that the editors of this collection, and the authors of its chapters, make no more than one (passing) reference to this work (n. 15, p. 172). It is the more incomprehensible since Durot’s work does so much of the central background work for them, background to which the introduction and chapters on the earlier parts of the Guise legend in this collection are somewhat peripheral. Durot explains (as they do not) how we must understand the way in which the Guise (as *princes étrangers*) posed a considerable problem to the relatively inchoate conventions regarding aristocratic princely precedence in sixteenth-century France. As foreign princes, they were naturally cadets of their dynastic line (in the case of the Guise, the dynasty in question being that of the dukes of Lorraine). The question was how to interpret the precedence at the French court between foreign princes who were cadets, and French princes of the blood royal who were cadets of cadets (Montpensier, Condé). It was a problem which continued to have its echoes in seventeenth-century France, as Saint-Simon would remind us. Durot also explains how the Guise dukedom was a precocious creation—it was awarded to Claude de Lorraine, the first duke of Guise, in 1528—and that served them in good stead in the seventeenth century since it gave them rights to precedence which were unchallengeable. It is Durot, and not Robert Sturges in his synthesis of “some scattered scholarly observations on the medievalism of the Guise family” (p. 25) in this volume, who tells us about the provenance and publishing history of Jean de Joinville’s *Vie de saint Loys* in the context of the fabrication of Guise identity capital.^[3] The more fundamental weakness of this collection is that it does not set the myth, or the Guise family, in the broader context of French aristocratic political culture, or in the context of the ducal Lorraine family to which the Guise were related.

A number of chapters in this collection remind us of the perennities of Guise myth-manufacturing, and this both within the orbit of the dynasty itself as well as in the broader literary and dramatic constructs that had been thrown up by the politico-religious engagements of the Guise in the sixteenth century. Robert Sturges shows how their links to the Crusade played well on the streets of Paris during the League in the 1580s and 1590s. Penny Richards pursues the theme of the Guise as “Warriors of God” with some interesting things to say about the “heritage history” of the Guise château at Eu in Normandy. Jessica Munn proves that the Guise had a unique role on the English stage, especially during the Restoration, as avatars of the dangers of subversion of the state from a dynasty that fabricated a self-justifying and self-promoting myth. The contemporary parallels were never far away: “Our Play’s a Parallel” proclaimed Dryden and Lee in their *The Duke of Guise* (performed 1682): “The Holy League /Begot our Cov’nant: Guisards got the Whigg” (p. 191). As always, however, there was a

counter-myth: a Protestant image of the Guise, to which this was a foil, and ultimately a counter; but the chapters in this volume hardly reflect that fact.

Three chapters focus on what the introduction asserts as the House of Lorraine's role as a "dynastic bridge" (p. 9) between the dynastic power-blocs that we associate with Europe's political entities with a longer future before them. The Guise pursuit of its "trans-national" (p. 19) royal claim in Naples is presented in this collection as a counterfactual possibility; something which might have come about, and which if it had would have changed the political shape of Europe, but which in the end did not. There is a danger, however, that "trans-national" becomes a way of dressing up old-fashioned dynastic history, and especially when the counter-factual descends into a fairy-story. Marjorie Meiss-Even's chapter in this collection certainly avoids that danger, and her reconstruction of the Italian merchants and purveyors—from perfumes, through armaments, to olive oil—in the service of the sixteenth-century Guise is immaculately researched and a substantial research contribution to the subject. Silvana D'Alessio's investigation of Henri II de Lorraine's efforts to bolster his Neapolitan adventures in 1648 and 1654 with propaganda in support of his claim to the throne of Naples demonstrates a dynastic claim could only take you so far in the *Realpolitik* of mid-seventeenth-century Europe. Charles Gregory's analysis of his ambitious invasion in 1654 showed how rapidly the Neapolitans had seen through it all.

The collection of essays is accompanied by some fine illustrations. Three of the chapters have been specially translated for it. Some of the editing, however, leaves very rough edges. Pierre Matthieu's play is *La Guisade* (not *Le Guisade*, p. 177). Roger Chartier did not warn of "l'invention d'un passé imaginé au nom des urgencies" [leg : urgences] ["ou des exigencies [leg : exigences] du présent" (pp. 169-70), And it is "le patrimoine" (p. 169) and not "patrimoine" (p.181). All quibbles, of course. But it was Henri II de Lorraine who performed at the Grand Carousel in 1662 carrying as his device : "Altiora præsumo." It translates as "I hope for greater things."

LIST OF ESSAYS

Jonathan Spangler, Penny Richard and Jessica Munns, "Introduction: The Context of a Dream"

Robert S. Sturges, "The Guise and the Two Jerusalems: Joinville's *Vie de saint Louis* and an Early Modern Family's Medievalism"

Marjorie Meiss-Even, "The Guise 'Italianised'? The Role of Italian Merchants, Intermediaries and Experts in Ducal Consumption in the Sixteenth Century"

Michèle Benaiteau, "Political Uses of Reputation and Celebrity in the Seventeenth Century: The Case of Henri de Lorraine, Fifth Duke of Guise"

David A.H.B. Taylor, "'Magnificence Reigned': Anthony Van Dyck's Portrait of Henri II de Lorraine, Duke of Guise"

Silvana D'Alessio, "Dreaming of the Crown: Political Discourses and Other Sources relating to the Duke of Guise in Naples (1647-48 and 1654)"

Jonathan Spangler, "Mother Knows Best: The Dowager Duchess of Guise, a Son's Ambitions, and the Regencies of Marie de Meedici and Anne of Austria"

Charles Gregory, "Parthenope's Call: The Duke of Guise's Return to Naples in 1654"

Penny Richards, "Warriors of God: History, Heritage and the Reputation of the Guise"

Jessica Munns, "Channel Crossing: The Guise in British Drama"

NOTES

[1] Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*. Ed. L.-J.-N. Monmerqué. 6 vols. (Paris, 1834), iv, p. 204.

[2] Éric Durot, *François de Lorraine, duc de Guise entre Dieu et le Roi* (Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2012).

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

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ISSN 1553-9172