

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

By Jessica Munns, Penny Richards



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Exploiting the turbulence and strife of sixteenth-century France, the House of Guise arose from a provincial power base to establish themselves as dominant political players in France and indeed Europe, marrying within royal and princely circles and occupying the most important ecclesiastical and military positions. Propelled by ambitions derived from their position as cadets of a minor sovereign house, they represent a cadre of early modern elites who are difficult to categorise neatly: neither fully sovereign princes nor fully subject nobility. They might have spent most of their time in one state, France, but their interests were always 'trans-national'; contested spaces far from the major centres of monarchical power - from the Ardennes to the Italian peninsula - were frequent theatres of activity for semi-sovereign border families such as the Lorraine-Guise. This nexus of activity, and the interplay between princely status and representation, is the subject of this book. The essays in this collection approach Guise aims, ambitions and self-fashioning using this 'trans-national' dimension as context: their desire for increased royal (rather than merely princely) power and prestige, and the use of representation (visual and literary) in order to achieve it. Guise claims to thrones and territories from Jerusalem to Naples are explored, alongside the Guise 'dream of Italy', with in-depth studies of Henry of Lorraine, fifth Duke of Guise, and his attempts in the mid-seventeenth century to gain a throne in Naples. The combination of the violence and drama of their lives at the centres of European power and their adroit use of publicity ensured that versions of their strongly delineated images were appropriated by chroniclers, playwrights and artists, in which they sometimes featured as they would have wished, as heroes and heroines, frequently as villains, and ultimately as characters in the narratives of national heritage.



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### Aspiration, Representation and Memory: The Guise in Europe, 1506–1688 By Jessica Munns, Penny Richards Bibliography

• Sales Rank: #6135486 in Books

Published on: 2015-04-08Original language: English

• Dimensions: 9.25" h x 6.25" w x .75" l, 1.30 pounds

• Binding: Hardcover

• 226 pages

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#### **Editorial Review**

About the Author

Jessica Munns is a Professor of Literature at the University of Denver and has published extensively on Restoration and eighteenth-century literature. She has written one monograph and edited three collections of essays, and with Gita Rajan compiled and edited a 'Cultural Studies Reader'. She edits the journal 'Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research'. Penny Richards recently retired as a Principal Lecturer in History from the University of Gloucestershire. She has published articles on Guise women as patrons and politicians; co-edited a book (with Jessica Munns), 'Gender, Power and Privilege in Early Modern Europe' (Pearson, 2003); and has contributed a biographical essay on Anne d'Este, Duchess of Guise and Nemours for the SIEFAR French elite women's studies website (2006). Jonathan Spangler is Senior Lecturer in History at Manchester Metropolitan University. He is a specialist in the high aristocracy of France and its borderlands, notably the Duchy of Lorraine, the court, dynasticism and noble identity. He has published a monograph and several articles on the Guise family, and coordinates an international research group on trans-regional elite families. Since 2010, Jonathan has been the co-editor of 'The Court Historian'.

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