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David Potter, Ed. *Foreign Intelligence and Information in Elizabethan England: Two English Treatises on the State of France, 1580-1584*. Camden Fifth Series, vol. 25. Cambridge and New York: University Press, 2004. ix + 261 pp. Appendices, notes, and index. \$75.00 U.S. (hb) ISBN 0-521-84724-9.

Review by Linda Frey, University of Montana.

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David Potter, a reader in French at the University of Kent, has printed and annotated two documents, written between 1579 and 1584: *Traité des Princes, Conseillers et Autres Ministres de l'Etat de France* and Richard Cook's *Description de Tous les Provinces de France*. He has also appended extensive additional materials. The first treatise was drafted by a number of individuals involved with the English embassy in France, including Robert Cecil, the son of Elizabeth's Lord Treasurer. The second was composed by the elusive, Richard Cook of Kent, a man beginning his career and like many, cultivating patrons. Both texts can be compared to the *relazioni*, the reports of the Venetian ambassadors on the political situation and background of their courts. A sophisticated introduction focuses basically on textual questions including the Protestant and or English biases of the authors. Although there is no bibliography, the annotation, which includes lettered footnotes to clarify the text and numbered footnotes to set the information in context, is extensive. Place names not easily recognizable are identified. Appendix 1 reprints some key documents pertaining to Text A, including the names of the king's chief councilors and secretaries and royal councilors of 1578. Appendix 2 reprints some documents compiled by Robert Cecil: the titled nobility and office-holders of France and "the Alliances of the French Nobility." Appendix 3 includes documents collected by Richard Cook, which have not been previously printed. An extensive index guides the reader.

Both treatises by English speakers underscore the important role of embassy officials in the gathering of information. They also reflect the authors' obsession with social power as manifested in marriage alliances and their inextricable connection with political power. The power networks of France are illuminated by biographical sketches of the leading ministers of France, a discussion of the origins of the wars of religion, and a survey of France province by province. These compilations include a number of statistics including tax assessments for the levy of 1577. The documents cast a light on English perception of France in the 1580s. These documents emphasize the importance as Ron Love has emphasized of "examining sufficiently the personal relationships that complicate" royal government and of studying the marital and economic foundations of noble power.[1]

This book is targeted narrowly to specialists in sixteenth century France. The editor only briefly sets the texts within the larger context of Elizabethan concerns or the French wars of religion. In an age of sectarian bickering, Elizabeth was determined to offset the image of weakness that had made England in the words of William Paget, appear "a bone between two dogs." [2] Elizabeth's unwarranted, but ever present fear, of what Nicholas Wotton, one of Elizabeth's commissioners at Cateau-Cambrésis, called "the aunyent immortal hatredde of the French for the English" does not surface. [3] Elizabethan support of Protestantism within France, the Netherlands, and Scotland, whether open or covert, is not discussed, nor are the tensions within France that fed an endemic civil-religious struggle. Nonetheless, the editor has performed an important service by making widely accessible materials hitherto only available in the British Library, the Public Record Office, and the Folger Shakespeare Library.

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## NOTES

[1] Ronald S. Love, *Blood and Religion: The Conscience of Henri IV, 1553-1593* (Montreal and Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p. 14.

[2] Robert B. Wernham, *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy, 1558-1603* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), p. 26.

[3] Charles Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), p. 16.

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