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Glenn Richardson, ed., *The Contending Kingdoms: France and England 1420—1700*. Aldershot and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2008. xii +191 pp. Notes, appendices, and index. \$99.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-7546-5789-7.

Review by Thomas Worcester, College of the Holy Cross, Massachusetts.

The year 2004 was the centenary of the *Entente Cordiale* between Britain and France. This collection of essays takes its origins from a conference of the Society for Court Studies, held to mark that anniversary. In his introductory essay, Glenn Richardson explains that this book examines the period between the 1420 Treaty of Troyes, which provided for King Henry V of England also to succeed to the French throne, and 1700, when international negotiations regarding succession to the Spanish throne were about to give way to England vs. France in the War of the Spanish Succession. Arguing against historians and others who tend to see conflict between the French and the English as perennial, Richardson posits his thesis: there was at least as much *entente* as there was conflict or warfare between France and England from 1420 to 1700.

As the book's title suggests and as Richardson states in the introduction, the focus is on relations between two kingdoms and frequently on the relations between the French and English kings. Not surprisingly, political, dynastic, diplomatic, and military histories are indeed central themes in this volume. Yet Richardson also points to the role of culture in the Anglo-French dynamic. He argues that French and English cultures were in fact quite similar and that from the late fifteenth century trade and cultural relations deepened. It was France that mediated the continent to the English; the English elite traveled to the continent as part of their education, but above all to France. By shortly after 1700, it would be a matter of two-way admiration and influence, with the French Enlightenment looking approvingly to England.

Nine essays follow Richardson's introduction, organized more or less in chronological order, focusing on key issues between 1420 and 1700. Most of the authors are British or French, with a couple of exceptions for other Europeans. No scholars of British or French history who work in North America or anywhere else outside the European Union are included.

Anne Curry's essay on the Treaty of Troyes begins with the November 1429 coronation of Henry VI at Westminster, followed by his December 1431 coronation as king of France at Notre-Dame in Paris. Curry points out that the latter coronation was legitimate according to the 1420 Treaty but that Charles VII had been crowned king of France at Reims in July 1429. The Treaty had envisioned not the union of two kingdoms but rather two kingdoms under one king (as would be the case in 1603 when James VI of Scotland also became James I of England). A frequently changing military situation in the latter stages of what we now call the Hundred Years' War explains why Treaty provisions were and were not followed. Curry does a good job of highlighting the Treaty's vagueness on a point that could have been one of further dispute. Had a woman been next in hereditary line to the English throne, the obstacle of France's Salic law, restricting the throne to males, could have thwarted plans for a dual kingship. But there were plenty of male heirs at the time; the Treaty neither forbade nor authorized female succession. She concludes her essay by recalling that the Treaty was never formally rescinded,

though the English monarchy abandoned the title King of France as part of peace negotiations with Napoleon in 1801-02. Appended to Curry's essay is the text of the Treaty of Troyes in modern English.

The next essay, by Charles Giry-Deloison, moves ahead several decades. The author points out that, with a minor exception in 1492, England and France were at peace from the Truce of Picquigny (1475) to the start of Henry VIII's first military campaign in France (1513). Several treaties facilitated trade between the two kingdoms in this period, even though the economic benefit went mainly to France, as the English market for French goods such as wine was larger than the French market for English goods. On both sides of the Channel, books and other printed matter found an eager market, both for luxury editions as well as cheap pamphlets and the like. Henry VII was an avid book collector, and he bought many of his books in Paris; English churches looked to Rouen for missals and other liturgical books. France was well ahead of England in printing and paper industries; as presses developed in late fifteenth-century England, they still obtained their paper from France. At the same time, printed treatises for or against the English claim to the French crown did not lack for audiences, even in a period of peace between the two kingdoms.

Somewhat against the grain of most of the essays in this collection, Robert Knecht's contribution, a comparison of French and English nobilities in the sixteenth century, gives more emphasis to difference than to similarity between the two kingdoms. Knecht points out that one of the ways that Francis I and his successors in France filled the royal treasury was through sale of offices, and some of these conferred nobility upon the office holder. This practice was unknown in England, as was the exemption from direct taxation that French nobles enjoyed. French nobles could lose their noble status if they engaged in certain occupations, such as retail trade, for it was considered beneath their dignity; there was no such restriction in England. The English monarchy was more successful in "controlling" the nobles (p. 75), for it could quite easily bring them to justice before the law, but the French monarchy faced nobles who successfully asserted special rights and privileges. While traditional noble status in both England and France was closely tied to military valor or virtue, in the sixteenth century French nobles had more opportunities to demonstrate such virtue on the battlefield, from wars in Italy in the first half of the century to religious wars at home in the latter half. In matters of religion, the French nobles were deeply divided between Protestants and Catholics, while most English nobles accepted and followed the religious choices of their sovereigns.

Cédric Michon considers similarities and differences between French and English "state prelates" in the reigns of Francis I and Henry VIII. Such prelates were bishops and cardinals who served the state in various ways as administrators, councilors, or diplomats. One major difference is the decline in state prelates in England, in the wake of Henry VIII's break with Rome. But the difference upon which Michon focuses is the contrasting social backgrounds of state prelates. The French prelates came from noble milieus; they were at home at court, and they often were used to a hedonistic lifestyle with mistresses, as well as hunting and feasting, taking up much of their time. French cardinals, especially, "belonged more to the world of the courtier than to the world of the master of the Sorbonne" (p. 86). English state prelates usually lacked such high social origins, but the "Cambridge Connection"—personal and professional links forged at Cambridge University—at times provided a critically important network of power and influence.

Glenn Richardson's own essay in this volume explores personal, diplomatic, and military relations between Henry VIII and Francis I in the late 1520s and early 1530s, the years that led up to Henry's rupture with Rome. In 1527, Cardinal Wolsey went to France to forge an Anglo-French alliance against the Holy Roman Empire. In 1528, the English and French monarchs jointly declared war on Emperor Charles V; the same year saw Henry first seek French help in obtaining annulment of his marriage. In 1532, as annulment negotiations dragged on, another Anglo-French alliance was forged. Francis promised defensive military intervention in England if there were imperial attacks on England. The following year saw Archbishop Cranmer declare Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled

under English law; by then Anne Boleyn was already pregnant with Henry's child. Friendly relations between Francis and Henry deteriorated rapidly, with Henry furious at Francis for lack of support, and Francis embarrassed, at best, by Henry's bigamy and repudiation of the papacy.

Women on the throne, or very nearly so, and other prominent women also find a major place in this book. In one essay Susan Doran examines the relationship between Elizabeth I and Catherine de' Medici and concludes that, despite differences in religion and in other areas, they created their own *entente cordiale*: "pragmatic considerations and diplomatic practices kept them on a peaceful track" (p. 132). Though Catherine officially served as Queen Regent of France from 1560 to 1563 and during a few months in 1574, her substantial influence on her sons, who ruled in succession until 1589, was taken very seriously by Elizabeth. Catherine pleased Elizabeth by distancing herself from Mary Queen of Scots and her politics, even though Mary represented the best chance for a Catholic to succeed to the English throne. Catherine, an Italian, did not share the pro-Scottish views that were traditional to the French monarchy. In another essay Sonja Kmec's contribution on female letter writing explores the international network maintained by aristocratic women even in time of war. Kmec focuses on Charlotte de La Trémoille, a Huguenot who moved to England to marry the earl of Derby.

The Stuart monarchs that succeeded to the English throne after Elizabeth's death in 1603 kept out of the Thirty Years War (1618-48), a war that eventually engulfed most of the continent's powers. Loïc Bienassis, in an essay on Richelieu, shows how the Cardinal Minister used diplomacy to help ensure that, at the very least the Stuarts did indeed remain neutral in that conflict. By 1640 England was on the verge of its civil war, and that prospect put to final rest French concerns about possible English military support for the Habsburgs.

But the final essay in this book deals with the failure of diplomacy to prevent another major conflict: the War of the Spanish Succession. When Charles II of Spain died, Louis XIV broke treaties agreed in 1698 and 1700 and supported his grandson, Philip, for the Spanish throne. In his essay, David Onnekink argues that the events that led to war were "erratic and unexpected" (p. 175) and that the war pitting France against England and much of Europe which did in fact follow was anything but inevitable. Thus, like several authors in this book, Onnekink suggests that armed conflict between England and France was episodic or exceptional rather than chronic or normative.

All historians work in the cultural and political context of their own time and place. Construction of the European Union, and the effort of some to promote a more enthusiastic membership of Great Britain in this Union, are not far in the background of the writing and editing of this book. It is an important volume, one that elicits thoughtful reconsideration of simplistic assumptions regarding a supposedly ancient and perhaps permanent animosity between two states and their peoples.

Because this is a short book on a large topic, lacunae are unavoidable. Filling some of these would likely strengthen the book's thesis, while filling others would likely weaken the thesis. For example, the relationship between Charles II of England and Louis XIV is mentioned only in passing, but their friendly rapport seems ideal to feature in a book that seeks to play up the history of good relations across the Channel. Two other relevant topics, less likely to feature *entente*, and largely ignored in Richardson's collection of essays, are Joan of Arc, and French and British overseas exploration and colonization. While diplomacy takes center stage in this book, cultural history is approached only sporadically despite Richardson's mention of this theme in his introduction. Further examination of cross-Channel trade of luxury goods and of books, and of ideas, might bolster an image of peoples who appreciated each other's culture.

## LIST OF ESSAYS

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Charles Giry-DeLoison, "France and England at Peace, 1475-1513"

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Sonja Kmec, "A Stranger Born': Female Usage of International Networks in Times of War"

David Onnekink, "Anglo-French Negotiations on the Spanish Partition Treaties (1698-1700): A Re-evaluation"

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