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**Mary Ann Lyons**, *Franco-Irish Relations, 1500-1610: Politics, Migration and Trade*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Royal Historical Society and The Boydell Press, 2003. ix + 242 pp. Notes, bibliography, glossary, and index. £40.00; \$70.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-861-93266-8.

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Despite the subtitle, *Franco-Irish Relations, 1500-1610: Politics, Migration and Trade* focuses on the political relationship between Irish dissidents seeking to weaken or overthrow English rule of their island and the French crown and court which, until the 1570s, were the main targets of Irish appeals for foreign aid and military intervention. Mary Ann Lyons does devote some space to trade and one of the book's seven chapters to migration, although her discussion of migration is mostly in terms of the fallout from the Nine Years War. The bulk of archival research for the doctoral dissertation that became this book relies on diplomatic correspondence in the British Library and the Public Records Office in London, as well as on similar documents in the Archives Nationales, Bibliothèque Nationale, and archives of the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères in Paris. This is not a criticism of the book, but its sources clearly indicate the type of study that resulted: primarily diplomatic history. More focus on material in provincial archives would likely have offered a rather different perspective on Franco-Irish relations in the early modern era--one with a stronger emphasis on migration and trade--than does this study.

*Franco-Irish Relations*, therefore, examines the trajectory of negotiations between those Irish elites in active or latent rebellion against the English crown (and certain families such as the O'Neills, Fitzgeralds, Fitzmaurices and O'Connors seemed to be in one or other state almost constantly in the sixteenth century) and either the French crown or powerful French aristocrats (especially the Guise family) who were sympathetic to their cause. These overt or clandestine contacts were more or less continuous, although the diplomacy peaked during especially intense periods, notably 1523-1539 (during the "Geraldine" intrigue), 1543-1546 (the period of an Anglo-French war), 1549-1551 (during the reign of Henri II, the French ruler most interested in the Irish cause), 1565-1567, 1569-1579 and 1582-1584. All of these negotiations bore little practical fruit; except for those during the reign of Henri II, French monarchs had little real interest in invading Ireland at the behest of the Irish and, for most of the sixteenth century, were too compromised diplomatically, too penurious, or too deeply mired in religious civil wars to lend significant sums of money or military resources to the Irish. The primary interest of the French in these discussions with the Irish--more dalliances than serious engagements most of the time--was to use the threat of French intervention in Ireland and/or Scotland as leverage against the English. The goal of the French when they were at peace with England was to remind the latter of their tenuous control of Scotland and Ireland beyond the pale, and thus to oblige them to be more tractable in their negotiations with the French. When at war with England the French hoped that, by reviving the "Auld Alliance" with Scotland and threatening to invade Ireland or support rebellions there, they could persuade the English to divert precious resources from the war effort to the defense of Ireland and Scotland. The French achieved, at best, mixed results from this strategy, as the English obtained quite good intelligence from their spies and diplomats in France and tended to be judicious as to how seriously they ought to take the threat of French intervention in Ireland.

There were grandees in France who nurtured a more serious interest in Irish affairs, foremost among them the Guise family, whose attention was drawn there both by family ties (Marie de Guise ruled Scotland as widow of James V, and her daughter was Mary, Queen of Scots) and by their role as champions of the Catholic Reformation in Europe. The power of the Guise family under Henri II especially helps to explain that king's serious interest in aiding Irish dissident Gerald Fitzgerald, although the latter's eventual capitulation to the English crown in return for a pardon and partial return of his confiscated family estates removed that pretext for French intervention. Anthoine de Noailles, the French ambassador to the English court during Henri's reign, was another prominent supporter of the Irish cause. The signing of the treaty of Câteau-Cambrésis in 1559 and the deaths of both Henri II and François de Guise soon after, the death of Marie de Guise in 1560, and the outbreak of the French Wars of Religion in 1562, greatly reduced the ability of the Guise to marshal support for French intervention in Ireland or Scotland. The untimely death in 1560 of the young French king, François II, brought Catherine de Medici to power as regent. Her

focus on maintaining an internal balance between the Guise and Montmorency/Bourbon factions in her government as well as a diplomatic equilibrium between France, England, and the Hapsburgs meant that she would have little interest in Irish affairs.

As Lyons points out, however, the French were not solely to blame for the failure of Franco-Irish negotiations to bear tangible fruit in the sixteenth century. The Irish who arrived at the French court, or contacted French diplomats and nobles seeking assistance, had very little to offer the French in the way of incentives except the opportunity to harass the English. The great weakness of the Irish, and the most significant obstacle to their finding allies, was their disunity. Not even the most powerful, popular and well-respected Irish lords like Gerald Fitzgerald or Shane O'Neill could claim to speak for the other Irish lords or even a majority of them. Not surprisingly, the goal of many Irish lords was to cut the best deal they could with the English, especially as many of the most powerful among them were of Scottish or English rather than Gaelic lineage and thus were not necessarily enthusiastic proponents of Irish liberation from English rule. Moreover, while renowned as fighters, the military forces in Ireland still operated in a feudal manner, loyal mostly to the many diverse lords, no more able to unite into an efficient fighting force than were their commanders. Finally, it should be added that Ireland was not a rich country from which the French could hope to extract economic wealth or even enough supplies on the ground to support a large army. Thus, from the point of view of the French, the Irish were not the most dependable allies, and the odds of a successful uprising against the English in Ireland were long even with French support.

Still, Lyons argues that both the French and the Irish benefited from the protracted negotiations and intrigues between them, even though the net result was that the Irish, by the seventeenth century, had largely given up on the French and turned to the Spanish Hapsburgs as the most likely source of support for their cause. The French were able to glean a great deal of useful information about Ireland, Scotland, and the nature of English rule in those places, although French attitudes regarding the Irish migrants who took refuge in France after the Nine Years War demonstrates that the French did not change their views of the Irish very much as a result of their greater contacts with them. By the same token, the manifest poverty of these refugees no doubt also reinforced their sense that meddling in Ireland was a losing proposition. The Irish gained rather more, Lyons believes, because they obtained knowledge and diplomatic skills that later served them well in their negotiations with the Spanish, although she does not really tell us how successful those latter discussions were from the standpoint of the Irish.

*Franco-Irish Relations, 1500-1610* should be especially useful to diplomatic historians of France and Ireland. It will be much less so to historians of migration, although it would serve as a good starting-point for future research. Its usefulness to French historians is lessened somewhat by the lack of background on the situation in Ireland at the outset of the sixteenth century. Ireland tends to be more or less *terra incognita* to most continental historians--much more than it is for scholars of English history--and more discussion of the complex political situation there would elucidate better why Ireland produced so many discontented grandees searching abroad for support in the resistance to English rule. This book is a strong contribution to the growing corpus of works on Irish and Scottish relations with the European continent in the early modern period.

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