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**Thomas O'Connor, ed.** *The Irish in Europe 1580-1815*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001. 219 pp. \$50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-85182-579-0.



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The Irish—like the English, the Jews, and others—are a diasporic people. Their identity consists and exists very largely within their wider international influence and presence. Obviously this has been, in modern times, within the far-flung English-speaking colonial and neo-colonial world, particularly North America. But in the early modern era the Irish diaspora was European. The Irish have distinguished themselves, *inter alia*, as priests, scholars, and warriors. Ecclesiastical, academic, and military professional groups are, traditionally, truly functional international communities. It is therefore unsurprising to find the Irish abroad in any era. In early modern Europe confessional divisions created rival international worlds which were part of a continent at war. Hence there were pan-European, as well as British, incentives for emigration and exile. The established historiography of the early modern Irish abroad concentrates on clerical and military life.[1] This collection of essays seeks to explore new frontiers—socio-economic and cultural—in early modern Irish international history. The approach is interdisciplinary and the contributors come from a range of Irish, American, and continental European academic backgrounds. The general standard is high, and the book coheres in a way conference-germinated volumes do not always achieve. It succeeds in suggesting new approaches to the Irish in Europe, and in making a case for a biographical database project as a

vehicle through which to exploit them.

International history is a challenging, although potentially rewarding, approach to the past. It involves parallel and intersecting stories and requires respect for their complexity and many variables. The Irish experience in Europe, as an exercise in international history, needs sophistication, flexibility, openness, careful targeting, and teamwork. True transnational history is probably beyond the individual scholar and is predicated on the pooling of resources and expertise. The contributors to this book would seem to appreciate these needs. They have in part a negative spur: to escape the intellectual prism of nineteenth century nationalism and its teleological superimposition upon a largely pre-nationalistic world. In particular, an “obsession with England” (p. 18) can obstruct understanding of Irish history in its own terms. A renewed attempt to transcend Anglo-driven Irish history is also appropriate when some English historians are locating early modern English history within its wider international context.[2] The theme of the Irish in Europe is a useful dimension for Anglo-European historians to recognize, since early modern Ireland was a living British link to an alternative and Catholic Europe.

Together the twelve essays (one introductory and eleven topical) provide a balanced and integrated treatment. Their chronological sweep is logical, encompass-

ing the era from the Reformation to the French Revolution. Their geographical emphasis is on the Irish within the great Catholic societies of Spain and France. They generally afford a breadth of thematic treatment, ranging over ecclesiastical and academic, intellectual and literary, commercial and economic, royal and patronal, and (to a limited extent) political, naval-maritime, and military history. Intellectual and literary history, comparative literature, and socio-economic analysis are the dominant conceptual approaches. Traditional high politics and operational military history barely have walk-on roles. There is a handsome level of documentation from archival, printed, and secondary sources. The overriding theme is religion. Early modern Irish society was a casualty of a religiously divided Europe, and its exiled sons and daughters lived out their Roman Catholic identity in its various refractions. Religious life and doctrine, being forms of ideas, were essentially immune to political quarantine and together were one of the dominant internationalizing forces of the age.

The introductory chapter by Thomas O'Connor sets the historiographical and thematic scene. There is a valuable discussion of the nature and development of historical writing on the Irish abroad and its links to foreign historiography. O'Connor states the need to balance the modern (i.e., post-1800) history of Irish emigration with the early modern, and to go beyond the customary clerical and military themes. He argues that there were dual triggers to early modern Irish emigration: religious confessionalism and (British) state building. He sketches the multifactorial nature of changing migration patterns.

Two essays deal with the Irish in Spain. Ciaran O'Scea explores the devotional world of the Irish in seventeenth-century Galicia, where Spanish notarial records suggest racial and gender differences. Patricia O'Connell writes of the Irish college network in Iberia, seeing it *inter alia* as a cultural branch of Spanish foreign policy. She elucidates a theme which could serve as a motto for much of the book: the Irish experience of exile was partly the development of an alternative national vision independent of the forces for Anglicization at home.

Six essays deal with the Irish in France. Eamon O Ciosain discusses seventeenth century Irish migration to France, providing a corrective to the view that the major exodus occurred at the beginning of the Williamite wars. The estimation that in mid-century there were approximately 40,000 Irish people in France suggests the importance of diasporic history. Mary Ann Lyons investigates the Irish community in St. Malo up to 1710.

The critical factor was the prominence of St. Malo as a port, political and religious migration following commercial links. David Bracken writes of the Irish Jacobites in France from 1691 to 1720. He illuminates the social depth of the exile experience in discussing the destitution which followed French military force reductions after 1697. Many Irishmen resorted to violent crime including piracy. Priscilla O'Connor studies the role of the Irish clergy in early eighteenth century Paris. In administering the affairs of Jacobites in Ireland and France the clergy played a role in maintaining kinship networks. Edward Corp tests the claim of the Irish at the Jacobite court in France to have been poorly treated, concluding that their grievances were mostly unfounded. Liam Swords writes of the Irish in Paris at the end of the ancien regime, showing how the coming of revolution meant both loss and gain for the exiles: some suffered execution or massacre; others prospered in the Napoleonic armies. The regime of the Committee of Public Safety saw the Irish (ironically in retrospect) as enemies of republicanism.

Three essays trace cultural themes. Tadhg O Dushlaine discusses the influence of Sir Thomas More on Irish literature in the form of Seathrun Ceitinn, suggesting the need for a European context in studying seventeenth-century Irish literature. Clare Carroll relates concepts of custom and law in Suarez to the views of some Irish intellectuals. Irish writers rationalized war against the Anglo-Irish regime, asserting cultural as well as political and property rights. There is an interesting comparison with Las Casas's defense of native Indian rights. Liam Chambers examines Irish Catholic thought in ancien regime France, suggesting the flourishing nature of Irish intellectual life in exile. Irish scholars modernized the Irish Catholic church and presented an Irish cultural identity to Europe.

Despite the admirable desire to explore new approaches, there is a missing chapter in this book. Irish soldiers and sailors abroad warrant an essay beyond their fragmentary appearances in other chapters. As an intrinsic, even critical dimension of the Irish exile experience, they can potentially be treated contextually in the spirit of the "new military history": as socio-political subjects in themselves and as human beings caught up in the drama of war. Maps are also a missing element in a book dealing with international affairs and movements. Maps would greatly facilitate discussion of religious confessionalism, political conflict, commercial linkages, and geographical factors. Finally, there is an area of potential discussion which is a partial opportunity missed, and

which might be addressed in the future. O'Connor calls for comparative study of different phases of Irish migration (p. 26), but there is here no sign of the interesting possible comparisons between different peoples' overseas experiences. English, Scottish, Dutch, French, and Spanish migrants, exiles, and travellers are immediately obvious possible comparisons with the Irish. Even tentative and speculative initiatives along these lines might throw Irish experience into sharper relief.

This book succeeds in its own terms as a learned sketch map and an academic agenda. Such exercises in transnational history are not tangential but essential, for the migration of people and ideas marked the countries of their origin and destination as well as the individuals involved. The history of exile is richly human, touching on faith, love and war, the making and breaking of personal bonds, the testing of loyalties, the intertwining of cultures, and the gaining and losing of livelihoods and fortunes. As this book occasionally suggests, there is much such history to be written, alongside and as part of social and intellectual analysis.

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#### Notes

[1]. See for example the synthetic essays by J.J. Silke, "The Irish Abroad 1534-1691," in *A New History of Ireland*, 3, *Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691*, ed. T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, and F.J. Byrne (Oxford, 1976); and H. Murtagh, "Irish Soldiers Abroad, 1600-1800," in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery (Cambridge, 1996).

[2]. See in particular J. Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000); the essays by S. Adams, "England and the World Under the Tudors, 1485-1603" and J. Reeve, "Britain and the World Under the Stuarts, 1603-1689," in J.S. Morrill, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart Britain* (Oxford, 1996); and J. Reeve, "Britain or Europe? The Context of Early Modern English History: Political and Cultural, Economic and Social, Naval and Military," in G. Burgess, ed., *The New British History: Founding a Modern State 1603-1715* (London, 1999).