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Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac and David Murphy, eds., *Franco-Irish military connections, 1590–1945*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009, 304 pp. Figures, appendices, bibliography, and index. €49.50. (hb). ISBN 978-1-84682-198-1.

Review by Mary Ann Lyons, National University of Ireland.

As Pierre Joannon, President d'honneur of the Ireland Fund de France, acknowledges in his foreword to this volume of fifteen essays, for generations there has been a lively interest in both French and Irish scholarly circles in military connections between the two countries, with two journals, the *Irish Sword* and *Études Irlandaises*, leading the way in the rediscovery and reassessment of the role played by Irish soldiers serving in France and in French forces further afield. This publication had its genesis in a symposium on Franco-Irish military connections organized by the Société d'Etudes Militaires Franco-Irlandaises (SEMF) and hosted by the French Service Historique de la Défense at the Château de Vincennes, near Paris, in 2007. As such, it represents a very significant element in the SEMFI's programme of publications, lectures, and conferences aimed at bringing scholars together in order to share their findings and, in the process, deepen our knowledge and understanding of the changing nature of these military connections over the centuries. As a consequence, contributors to this volume include not only professional historians but also scholars from wider fields, some of whom have been engaged in purely private research.

As Drs. Genet-Rouffiac and Murphy emphasize in their introduction, the study of Franco-Irish military connections is important since for many Irish people, it was military service that first brought them to France and, from the late 1600s, "it was through military service that Irish soldiers and their families established themselves in France and this military service facilitated their activities and integration into French society" (p. 13). They also stress that "the history of the Franco-Irish connection was always the story of a *ménage à trois*, ... [in which] England was the cause of many hesitations in French policy through the centuries" (p. 13).

Broadly speaking, the essays address three major themes: firstly, the history of Irish soldiers' involvement in the French army since 1590; secondly, the interest shown by French governments in Irish affairs and how this reflected French strategic plans; and lastly, the creation of Irish identity through Irish men and women's war service abroad. The sequencing of the contributions on a chronological basis brings to light long-term patterns, developments and turning points in the connections between the two countries over this 350-year period. The first six essays focus on the history of the Wild Geese (those Irish officers and rank and file soldiers who, together with their families, left Ireland for France in the late 1600s), and their immediate descendants. In his survey of Irish soldiers and regiments in the French service before 1690, Éamon Ó Ciosáin presents a very useful review of traditional and recent scholarship in the field. Challenging the dominant scholarly focus on the Wild Geese, Ó Ciosáin clearly highlights and explains successive waves of military migration from Ireland to France throughout the seventeenth century. He argues very plausibly for the adoption of a long-ranging approach to the study of Irish military migration pre-1690, and stresses the need for historians to look beyond Irish units, to compare the Irish experience with that of other foreign troops, and to situate the study of Irish military men and their units within the wider context of

French military history in order to reach a fuller assessment of the nature and significance of the Irish contribution.

In an authoritative and solidly evidenced essay, Nathalie Genet–Rouffiac presents a well-structured, accessible and revealing examination of the unique position enjoyed by the Wild Geese in the French army and in wider French society. In the process, she explores the subtle balance and “game of influence” (p. 33) that this entailed for the court of Louis XIV at Versailles, the Stuarts at Saint–Germain–en–Laye, and the Irish émigrés themselves. Having conducted an exhaustive analysis of the registers of the Invalides in Paris, Eoghan Ó hAnnracháin presents a detailed profile of those Irish soldiers who applied for admission to that institution during the period 1674–1770. Perhaps surprisingly, Ó hAnnracháin found that, of the 250,000 Irishmen who served in the armies of France before the French Revolution, only approximately 1 percent of these appear in the registers of the Invalides. He explores several dimensions to the men’s careers, including their integration into French society, their involvement in dueling and also drunken and disorderly episodes, the injuries that they sustained, instances of desertion, their use of the Irish language, and their falsification of documents, as well as describing their daily routine in the Invalides. The essay is generously illustrated with cameo accounts of the careers and lives of many soldiers, thereby effectively conveying the challenging and, at times, controversial circumstances in which these men lived and fought.

Pierre–Louis Coudray’s study of Irish soldiers in Angers and the responses that their presence elicited during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is very welcome as it draws extensively on the city’s municipal archives, including civil records and hospital registers, to demonstrate in great detail precisely how local administrations in France dealt on a day–to–day basis with thousands of Irish who passed through or settled in their jurisdictions. Thomas Lally, traditionally portrayed as a “consummate tragic hero who suffered an unjust death at the hands of corrupt accusers and a weak king” (p. 109) is the subject of an essay by Lavinia Greacen, who presents a sympathetic pen–portrait of his career and demise, arguing that Lally was a complex personality, “a brilliant soldier of great contemporary talent” (p. 109). In the last of the essays on the Wild Geese, Patrick Clarke de Dromantin, who has published extensively on the Jacobites in France and their involvement in the American War of Independence, provides an overview of the role played by two Irish regiments of Walsh and Dillon in that war, arguing that “the fame of the Irish Jacobite officers was well–deserved and that the part they played ... should be remembered” (p. 135). Drawing upon archival collections in France and in the Library of Congress, Clark de Dromantin also brings to light the previously unknown and significant diplomatic activities of a Jacobite of English origin named Jean Holker.

In the first of three essays dealing with the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, George Martinez examines the composition, activities and vicissitudes of those Irish regiments in France that represented the remnants of the celebrated Irish Brigade of the eighteenth–century royal army. Although the study relies heavily on secondary literature, it is revealing on the formation in 1794 of the “Irish Catholic Brigade”, also known as “Pitt’s Irish Brigade”. Hugh Gough presents a thoughtful, authoritative analysis of Revolutionary France and United Irish strategy, concluding that Irish and French republicanism were an imperfect match since the radicalism and secularism built into the French model had limited application in Ireland. Furthermore, he argues convincingly that the Revolution weakened Franco–Irish links, abolishing the Irish army regiments and closing the Irish College Paris, and that post–1815, opportunities for Irish republicanism to exploit Anglo–French conflict vanished. In this finely nuanced and well–contextualized interpretative analysis, the Act of Union (1801) and continental wars are shown to have rationalized the political map of Europe and shaped France’s relations with all countries, Ireland being an exception.

Sylvie Kleinman's very substantial and pioneering scholarly essay on Theobald Wolfe Tone's sojourn in France as French officer and Irish patriot adventurer (1796–8) provides a fascinating insight into this overlooked chapter in Tone's life and in Franco–Irish military connections. Kleinman's engaging and in-depth analysis draws extensively on a sizeable corpus of primary source material, is appropriately embedded in relevant secondary literature, and the overall treatment of the subject is significantly enriched by the author's adoption of a multidisciplinary approach. In another substantial essay on the Irish Legion of Napoleon (1803–15) that is grounded in a wealth of archival material, Nicholas Dunne–Lynch presents an impressive, comprehensive scholarly survey and analysis of, among other aspects, its composition, evolution, operations, officer corps, commanders, recruitment. Particularly engaging is his comparison of the Irish Legion and old Irish Brigade in which he explains that the Irish–born officers of the Legion were very different to the Wild Geese in that they were rebels, republicans, anti–monarchist, and later, Bonapartist and anti–Bourbon.

The last four essays focus on the post–1815 era. Janick Julienne's ground–breaking scholarly contribution examines the support of Irish nationalists for the French cause during the Franco–Prussian war, and assesses the effect of France's defeat on the Franco–Irish connection. Based upon extensive archival research, Julienne's study is cogently argued, coherent, and shows commendable sensitivity to the impact of shifts in continental politics in Ireland's relations with France. Drawing upon British and French archival sources, Jérôme Aan de Wiel presents an analysis of relations between the Deuxième Bureau, France's military intelligence service, and Irish republicans during the period 1900–04 that covers the second Anglo–Boer War in South Africa. Contacts between the Bureau and Irish republicans, and their plans for an invasion of Ireland are explored, together with the British secret service's reaction to that threat. The reasons for Germany assuming France's role in the plans of the Irish republicans are then outlined and the essay ends with (one suspects) a deliberately inconclusive consideration of the how serious these invasion plans really were. Siobhan Pierce explores Irishmen's motives for fighting alongside the French in World War One and focuses in particular on their recorded impressions of the French. Having consulted a variety of contemporary sources ranging from official battalion diaries, Irish soldiers' accounts (including memoirs and letters from the Front), newspaper reports, photographs, oral recollections, and the paintings of William Orpen, Irish–born official war artist, Pierce (to her surprise) found that remarks made about French soldiers and civilians, and about the trials of fighting in France were in fact rare, and that in so far as the French impacted the Irishmen's consciousness, it was as units rather than as individuals.

Finally, David Murphy presents a fascinating, original study of the clandestine and hitherto largely unknown experiences of over twenty Irish–born men and women involved in the French Resistance, the Free French Forces and the F section of the Special Operations Executive during the period 1940–45. Using a substantial body of fresh archival evidence, Murphy uncovers the secret activities of figures including the celebrated writer Samuel Beckett, Mary Giorgi (née Dewan) who was a courier in North Africa prior to the Allied landings in November 1942, and Katherine Anne McCarthy, a Franciscan nursing sister whose intelligence–gathering resulted in her arrest by the Gestapo and her subsequent deportation to the death camp at Ravensbruck from which she was evacuated by the Red Cross in 1944. The study is generously and appropriately illustrated with case studies of individual men and women, profiling the nature of their covert operations, and tracing their fortunes during and after the war. The exploration of the experiences and contributions of Irish women is an especially strong feature of this exploration of what is clearly a new and particularly promising field of research within the context of Franco–Irish military connections.

It is the expressed wish of the editors that this volume should stimulate further research in a field with so much potential for pioneering scholarship. As the majority of the essays in this collection clearly demonstrate, the rewards for researchers who engage in systematic and in-depth mining of the rich archival collections held in French repositories in particular are great in terms of the fresh insights into Franco-Irish connections that can be uncovered, thereby deepening our understanding of the evolving nature of those connections. For this, the contributors, editors and Four Courts Press who have produced this handsome and significant volume deserve to be congratulated.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Éamon Ó Ciosáin , “Irish soldiers and regiments in the French service before 1690”

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Siobhan Pierce, “Irish impressions of the French during World War One”

David Murphy, “‘I was terribly frightened at times’: Irish men and women in the French Resistance and F Section of SOE, 1940-5”

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