

Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer, eds. *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xx + 210 pp. + 1 illus. \$80.00. Review by B. R. SIEGFRIED, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY.

The editors of *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland*, Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer, have collected sixteen essays in honor of Aidan Clarke whose scrupulous and energetic work as teacher and historian is acknowledged throughout the volume. Marshaling the whole in support of a vision of historiography that is more than mere taxonomy yet far from ideological cant, the book is dedicated to the proposition that ethical insight may be had from “a genuine encounter with the problems and possibilities of historical work” (xiv). The first essay, an overview by the editors which gives an excellent and authoritative account of the received state of early modern Irish history, sets out the modest ambitions of the volume: to promote new approaches that take seriously the confirmed patterns of conquest and plantation identified by previous scholars while moving toward more highly attenuated discussions of complications and contradictions within such paradigms. With respect to received perspectives on the Catholic-Protestant divide, for instance, Brady and Ohlmeyer write that “revealing similarities and associations across confessional divides, the new approach to the history of popular religion has wonderfully complicated and enriched our understanding of both the political and cultural history of the early modern period” (9). Understood to be set in tandem with established views on English interventions in early modern Ireland, the subsequent essays in the volume develop detailed documentation of unexpected reversals, compromise, and accommodation on the part of activist English bureaucrats, civic officials, and ecclesiastical leaders forced to confront an unexpectedly unruly reality.

The essays are chronologically arranged. The first five focus mostly on the last decades of the sixteenth century; the next seven develop discussions surrounding the early to mid-seventeenth century, while the last several take the later half of the century as their target. The fortuitous overlapping of issues and themes from one chapter to the next results in a book that is more than merely a series of mutually reinforcing readings. Indeed, the first essay, “The attainder of Shane O’Neill, Sir Henry Sidney and the problems of Tudor state-building in Ireland,” by Ciaran Brady, is something of an elastic band for several of the later essays. Brady’s basic premise, as it is taken up and ex-

panded upon by several of the contributors, usefully accommodates the distinctive characteristics of subsequent decades while simultaneously highlighting unexpected continuities throughout the century. Specifically, by sketching Henry Sidney's attempt to create a core of mythic tradition to which all the various inhabitants of Ireland might give allegiance—a synthetic right-to-rule that was advanced “on the basis of a great constitutional declaration”—Brady sets forth a theme to which many essays in the volume return: the restless search, evidenced by a wide swath of documents spanning the century, for a narrative that could convincingly establish, once and for all, legitimate grounds for English rule in Ireland.

Harold O'Sullivan's essay is the weft to Brady's warp, providing further support upon which the other essays in the volume more fully cohere to form a richly hued tapestry of seventeenth century Irish history. “Dynamics of regional development: processes of assimilation and division in the marchland of south-east Ulster in late medieval and early modern Ireland,” is a gem. A survey of south-east Ulster from the late fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, the essay is set forth as a challenge to historical accounts which have failed to be attentive to regional specificity. Though it occasionally runs close haul to the winds of broad generalization, the fine handling of detail prevents the discussion from ever luffing, and the result is a clear view of both unexpected change and curious continuity. O'Sullivan nicely illustrates the general thesis of the collection: specific local conditions often altered the trajectory of colonial development in ways not envisioned by English strategists.

The fortuitous integration of the essays is a strength paralleled by the book's overall writerly grace. Frankly, it is good to see several fine historians restore the narrative mode to its proper place, especially since so many of the contributors are writers who command a fluid and elegant prose, totally free of jargon and untroubled by current fashions proliferating among so many scholars. Jane Ohlmeyer's essay deserves special attention in this regard. Nowhere near enough work has been done on the role of the Irish parliament in the history of English expansionism, but Ohlmeyer's essay does much to set the terms in which further work ought to be developed. “The Irish peers, political power and parliament, 1640-41” firmly demonstrates just how significant a role the peers could play, while providing a practical resource and model for all scholars of the early modern period.

Those interested in the role of the Irish parliament in the mid-seventeenth century will want to give this book special consideration. Ohlmeyer's discussion is part of a constellation of essays which address parliamentary issues. Bríd McGrath, Robert Armstrong, and Micheál Siochrú variously address election strategies, the effects of religious confederacies, and debates over Poyning's law (which required the Irish executive to seek royal licence to hold a parliament), all of which adds up to what McGrath summarizes as "a picture of a heterogeneous community coming to terms with considerable social and political change and able . . . to show flexibility, imagination, cooperation, and sophisticated political thinking" (205). Although the profile of parliament that emerges from these essays is not positively new, the angle of perspective is useful, and the historical picture of seventeenth-century Ireland gains strikingly both in intensity and clarity. Indeed, the portrait is more fully realized when the character of education—whether broadly religious or specifically calculated to ensure the welfare of the state—is seriously highlighted. Helga Robinson-Hammerstein, Brian Jackson, R. J. Hunter, Alan Ford, and Richard Lawrence all contribute essays to this end. The failed attempt at applying conventional European models to Irish universities, the paradox of a common education being the basis for religious controversy, the endeavors of planters to wrestle social actuality into religious conformity, the interventions of powerful religious figures in the organization and reformation of educational institutions, and even one settler's rhetorical evolution from colonial justification to qualms about wealth and complacency, are all delineated in deft, sure strokes. Raymond Gillespie and Patrick Kelly close the book with essays that take us to the end of the century in a gyre that arcs, turns, and takes us back to Brady's introductory thesis. Ultimately, the volume seems to assert that every documented change paradoxically reveals a startling continuity: the on-going preoccupation to develop a narrative that could convincingly establish legitimate grounds for the English conquest of Ireland.

The book's failings are relatively minor and gratifyingly few. Geoffrey Parker's essay disrupts what would otherwise be a remarkable degree of consistently-sustained coherence from chapter to chapter. Though a strong discussion in its own right, Parker's comparison of the crises of the Stuart and Spanish monarchies of the seventeenth century has little to do with the titular focus of the book. Even so, Sarah Barber's chapter, "Settlement, transplantation and expulsion: a comparative study of the placement of peoples,"

does give Parker's chapter something of a toehold. Also, little by way of interdisciplinary work is proffered, a surprising lacuna given that it would no doubt have further underscored the concern with continuities so elaborately delineated in the introductory essay. Still, what the volume lacks in especially sophisticated or venturesome arguments it makes up for in being lucid and engaging, as well as wide-ranging and full of fresh new sources. Indeed, the steadiness of each contributor's archival work represents precisely the kind of scholarship that has seemed threatened by more tendentious and literary-oriented propositions. In short, the map of early modern Ireland this volume offers is richly textured, highly informative, and skillfully executed.

Ruth E. Mayers. *1659: The Crisis of the Commonwealth*. Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society/Boydell Press, 2004. xii + 306 pp. + 1 illus. \$75.00. Review by JASON PEACEY, HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT TRUST.

Despite perpetual scholarly interest in the English civil wars and interregnum, historians are still able to find periods and episodes where conventional wisdom requires thorough revision, not least because of the prevalence of easy assumptions and lazy statements. Like scholars who have challenged the inevitability of the regicide and of the downfall of Richard Cromwell, Ruth Mayers questions common perceptions regarding England's republican government during the second half of 1659, although in doing so her account bears more than a passing resemblance to revisionist histories of the drift towards civil war in 1642, both for good and bad.

Mayers is undoubtedly right to stress the importance of reconsidering the revived Rump Parliament, which met from May–October 1659, following the collapse of the protectorate. This period is often treated as little more than a Canute-like attempt to stem the inevitable tide of resurgent monarchism, which led to the Restoration of the Stuart dynasty in the spring of 1660. She is unquestionably right to argue that, for this period more than others, there is a danger of accepting the version of events pedalled by the “victors”—the royalists—and in seeking to re-examine the “crisis of the commonwealth” she is more than happy to challenge the work of scholars as eminent as Austin Woolrych, Ronald Hutton, and Steve Pincus.

Mayers' central contention is that, rather than being doomed to failure,