

OTHER REVIEWS

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New worlds, lost worlds: the rule of the Tudors, 1485–1603. By Susan Brigden. London: Allen Lane, 2000. Pp. xiv + 434. ISBN 0-713-99067-8. £20.00.

‘This is history with ‘politics’, for the author believes that to neglect the importance of kings and statesmen, especially during the Golden Age of the Tudors, is to distort historical perspective; but it is, too, history presented as a story.’ That was the publisher’s introduction to *Tudor England* by S. T. Bindoff, published in 1950, and the fifth volume in a series Penguin ‘planned to form an intelligent and consecutive guide to the development of English Society in all its aspects from the Roman invasion to the outbreak of the first world war’. Susan Brigden’s *New worlds, lost worlds: the rule of the Tudors, 1485–1603* is also, by accident or by design, the fifth volume of the new Penguin History of Britain, and it too tells a story: of England from Bosworth and the kingship of Henry VII to empire and colonization, the New World, and Elizabethan exploration.

Dr Brigden acknowledges the importance, and the challenge, of in effect re-writing *Tudor England*. Put the two books side by side, and it is clear that over the last half century Bindoff’s story has certainly got bigger. Bindoff and Brigden begin in 1485 and end in 1603, and both authors use as their organizing principle the political histories of the reigns of the two Henries, Edward VI and Mary, and Elizabeth. The Tudor historical world of 1950 was a simpler one. Historians of politics, religion, and society – but in the case of society, the ‘social history’ of the sixteenth century has to some degree become detached from the political – have over the last fifty years debated and reshaped the nature of the English Reformation, the realities of Tudor politics (and here in particular the importance of the royal court, political vocabularies and ideas, and the implications of royal minority and female monarchy), and the importance of the European and ‘British’ (shorthand for Scottish and Irish) settings of Tudor politics. *New worlds, lost worlds* is sensitive to what has been nothing short of an historiographical revolution, and shapes it to form a compelling narrative of the sixteenth century.

‘Britain’ is a complication here. *New worlds, lost worlds* is a history of England in the sixteenth century, but, inevitably, the Tudor kingdom of Ireland plays an important and necessary role in that history. Scotland is left out in the cold, perhaps for the good historical reason that it was at this time a separate realm. So what, then, do we mean by the ‘Tudor Britain’ of the book’s dustjacket? To have included Scotland might have challenged the neat precision of 1485 and 1603; and there is always the danger that, even in exploring the reigns of royal cousins south and north of the border, the Tudors will always grab the headlines. And yet Scotland was a kingdom experiencing many of the events and forces that shaped England and Ireland in this period: popular Reformation and a break from Rome, serious debates on the nature of kingship, humanism and classical thought and writing.

If Stanley Bindoff was a historian of the social and the economic, Susan Brigden is, first and foremost, a historian of English religion in the sixteenth century, and it is

religion which gives her the new worlds and the lost of worlds of her title. The new worlds are Renaissance and Reformation; the lost worlds are old certainties, shared beliefs, and traditional values. This is Susan Brigden's interpretive key to the period – not the only one, as she admits, but undoubtedly one that allows her to blend high politics, popular religion, the nature of society, and literature. *New worlds, lost worlds* is an elegant and stylish account of a century of continuity and profound change. It may perhaps be fairly easy to state in prologue or epilogue form how the England of 1485 was a different place in 1603; it is a rather more difficult task to understand and explain the forces and principles of change over nearly twelve decades. Susan Brigden does this in a book that is as challenging as it sophisticated.

KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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State formation in early modern England, c. 1550–1700. By Michael J. Braddick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. ix + 448. ISBN: 0-521-78346-1 (hb); 0-521-78955-9 (pb). £45 and £16.95.

The state is back and it is looking better than ever. A rather tired historiography has been revived lately by a handful of historians examining the state as a manifestation of social needs and cultural norms. Michael Braddick, in this ambitious historiographic essay, draws together the threads of old analyses and new ones while adding some of his own. In doing so, he considers the state not as an autonomous collection of central institutions created by self-conscious bureaucrats (such as Elton's Cromwell) but as a network of local officeholders who helped to create, and who sometimes ignored, the resources and demands of central agencies. Braddick examines four state forms: patriarchal, fiscal-military, confessional, and dynastic. Given this variety, no one theory, Weberian, Eltonian, or otherwise, could explain the state's development. By appreciating the complexity of state 'formation' rather than 'making', and by crossing the boundaries separating periods and those dividing different fields of historical analysis, Braddick has provided the best guide we have to the early modern state.

Braddick's most original insights arise from his attention to state formation as a social process. The state was a constantly changing sum of ever shifting needs as people made and used its resources to solve problems close to home. Nowhere was this more clear than in the patriarchal state, characterized by a concern for ameliorating the dearth and disorder besetting England in the generations before 1640. The historiography of this period, often focused on the causes of the Civil War, tends to emphasize the state's failures. Braddick emphasizes its successes. Like Steve Hindle (*The state and social change in early modern England, c. 1550–1640* (London, 2000)), Braddick contends that the state 'was useful to all sorts of people ... and far from having to penetrate the localities was frequently invited in' (p. 93). Discretion, not resistance, characterized the parochial experience of authority, as was so apparent in the creative deployment or neglect of the poor law or plague regulations.

Greater local discretion also brought more policing of this discretion by the courts. One of Braddick's most successful chapters explores the now rich scholarship concerning popular uses of the law and fluctuations in rates of litigation to show how people used

law to control the state's workings. Contrary to older arguments, 'law was not simply an instrument used to discipline and regulate social life from outside. Government provided a resource, and a tool that could be manipulated, even for those of fairly humble status' (p. 164). Conciliar courts and local ones offered relatively cheap process in civil disputes. And when a person felt wronged by the decisions of ever more numerous and powerful statutory commissioners or justices of the peace, King's Bench could provide relief using writs of *certiorari* and *mandamus*. The patriarchal state before 1640 not only arose to dampen the impact of social crisis in response to local needs; it also managed, through the courts, to do so in a way that gave government better legal definition and more regularity.

Braddick's patriarchal state was not the anthropomorphic state of an older historiography, a state that built itself and intended to do certain things. But this turns out to have been less true in the fiscal-military and confessional states. The confessional state was often out of step with provincial expectations as it attempted to impose varying ideas of spiritual propriety on a populace that often rejected overly precise definitions. Conflicts among the church hierarchy and royal officers about these definitions only made matters worse. Likewise, rather than providing resources, the fiscal-military state demanded them. The commands of muster masters and the exactions of purveyors met grumbling compliance. The pre-Civil War fiscal-military state showed its weakness as such demands, even when answered, failed to produce the effective fighting force it desired. Civil war brought a military revolution and thus more demands. After 1640, novel forms of state revenue, especially the excise, provoked resistance. Legitimizing such demands proved much more difficult than legitimating a patriarchal state that gave people tools to address the social problems they faced.

Thus the fiscal-military interests of the state, like its religious interests, point less to the kind of popular participatory model of the patriarchal state and more to an older model of an autonomous state at a 'centre' making objectionable demands on the 'localities'. But after 1689, resistance declined as the fiscal-military state developed new forms of debt to make its work possible and as the confessional state slowly retreated from efforts to impose its will. While Braddick's accounts of the fiscal-military and confessional states are not new, discussing them alongside the patriarchal state provides an important contrast, highlighting what early modern government could and could not do. Providing this contrast makes clear that the state's possibilities and limits were determined by the degree of popular initiative involved in these various aspects of governance. State 'formation' was not the 'making' of Leviathan.

More interesting, and perhaps more controversial, is Braddick's analysis of the dynastic state that ultimately absorbed Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and, finally, a North American empire. Braddick makes thorough use of recent developments in both 'three kingdoms' and transatlantic scholarship. Dynastic state growth resulted from shared norms among the elites of these different areas who wanted to promote civility: 'The expansion of the Tudor and Stuart states was partly a cultural project, and one that found local support among the inhabitants of the Scottish and Irish "pales"' (p. 346). Extending civility required institutions and regular processes – a state – to encourage local peace. As with the patriarchal state in England, Braddick suggests that a nascent British and imperial dynastic state was formed largely in response to provincial interests; unlike in England, these were the interests of socially and politically more prominent groups rather than those beneath them. While Braddick admits that this process entailed a good deal of violence, especially in Ireland, many scholars concerned

with the national histories of these places may well reject his vision of a unifying elite project that de-emphasizes the use of compulsion of various kinds.

Braddick has accomplished two crucial things. First, he has provided a useful survey of a vast and varied scholarly literature. Second, he has done so by tying together aspects of state formation that have been treated separately when they have been treated at all. Braddick's story of the fiscal-military state is familiar, but his accounts of the church, of Britain, and of empire as aspects of state development are less so. More novel is the argument concerning the social origins and responsiveness of the patriarchal state. If there is no one neat model to encompass all four state forms, that is the point. For instead of a unifying theory, Braddick has offered an exploration of the state's many manifestations which, owing to its attention to complexity, provides a firm foundation on which future work can build.

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

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Making Ireland British, 1580–1650. By Nicholas Canny. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. xv + 633. ISBN 0-19-820091-9. £55.00.

It is a commonplace of modern history that civilizing missions are doomed to fail. As the pursuits of zealots rather than pragmatists whose contradictions and hypocrisy are easily exposed, such enterprises lend themselves to retelling as tragedy (as in Inga Clendinnen's *Ambivalent conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517–1570* (1987), for example), but less often as irony. Not the least of the achievements of Nicholas Canny's *Making Ireland British* is to have rendered one such mission comprehensible without making its consequences seem foreordained.

In eight chapters, of formidable empirical density and subtly combative argument, Canny depicts the unfolding English mission to 'make Ireland British' from Edmund Spenser to Oliver Cromwell. He argues that Spenser's glorification of salutary violence in *The faerie queene* and *The view of the present state of Ireland* set the agenda for the next seventy years of English policy. *Contra* Brendan Bradshaw, he stresses the unity of the English ruling elite in Ireland and attributes the common purpose of English churchmen, soldiers, and lay officials to their shared attachment to advanced Protestantism. When offered as a solution to the apparent retreat of English Protestant 'civility' in the face of Irish 'degeneracy', the potent combination of magistracy and ministry that characterized English Protestantism in the first Elizabethan generation became a ferocious weapon of acculturation in Ireland. The growing sense of crisis in the 1590s, and the increasing militarization of the English presence in Ireland, rendered plausible Spenser's call for civilization at the point of a sword. His vision stood ready to be reactivated whenever the promoters of English civility felt Irish savagery pressing upon them.

Spenser excluded the Scots from his civilizing mission but after the crisis of the 1590s, the accession of James VI to the English throne and the 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607, Scottish settlers became nominally equal partners in the effort to make Ireland 'British'. Canny calculates that before 1622 'the total annual human flow from Britain to Ireland falls within the range of that from Spain to the New World which averaged 2,583 a year

during its sixteenth-century phase' (p. 211). This made the Jacobean plantation comparable in size, if not in ethnic composition or religious motivation, to the 'Great Migration' from England to New England of the 1640s. English settlers preferred Munster and Leinster to war-torn Ulster, which became instead the chosen destination of proportionately larger numbers of less entrepreneurial Scots.

The enterprising English remained the leading edge of the British mission to settle, improve, and Protestantize Ireland. The governorship of Thomas Wentworth reaffirmed the Spenserian agenda to transform Ireland from a society with plantations to a plantation society under uniquely favourable conditions (of patronage and revenue) that rendered the English state in Ireland relatively autonomous and thereby reduced the necessity to co-opt local elites. Landownership among English civil and military officeholders became almost universal in the first half of the seventeenth century; in alliance with the Protestant clergy, these landed servitors comprised an identifiable establishment which looked set fair to become a Protestant ascendancy. The British presence in Wentworth's Ireland was far from uniform in its penetration, its stability, or its orientation towards England, as Canny shows in a detailed conspectus of settlement patterns on the eve of 1641. It was neither monolithic nor hegemonic, because it was enmeshed in 'the cultural conversations between natives and strangers' (p. 403) conducted in the languages of Britain, Ireland, the English Atlantic, and the continental Counter-Reformation.

The Irish insurrection of 1641 revealed how far the incipient ascendancy's resilience to attack, or susceptibility to collapse, depended on settlement patterns dating back to the 1580s; on the encroachments of commercialization; on the influence of the Counter-Reformation; and on relative local levels of both British immigration and Irish emigration. Canny's concluding portrait of 1641 as 'a popular peasant uprising which followed upon, or ran parallel to, an attempted *coup d'état* by a group of disgruntled Catholic landowners' (p. 502) studiously eschews teleology, not least by creatively mining the 3,140 Protestant depositions collected after the uprising for evidence of the process of plantation rather than as a record of a homogeneous Irish population's increasingly violent response to the English project of improvement. The Cromwellian settlement a decade later became 'the final chapter in the completion of the Spenserian agenda' (p. 572) which would show that 'the experiment of Making Ireland British had, in every respect, proven a costly failure' (p. 578).

Making Ireland British is a major work of revisionism within three historiographies, which Canny has done more than anyone to join in mutual reinforcement and critique: the history of early modern Ireland, the 'New British History', and the history of the Atlantic world. In its stress on local variation and its rejection of primordial nationalisms, it is firmly revisionist in the sense familiar to – though not universally accepted by – Irish historians. In its denial that there was a high road to revolt and its insistence that English policy be seen in its own terms it is revisionist in the sense recognized by historians of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, being both anti-teleological and strenuously non-anachronistic. Yet Canny's greatest achievement lies in placing the effort to make Ireland British within a comparative Atlantic context of state-formation, migration, and acculturation. The result is a magisterial account, almost unparalleled in the literature of European colonialism, of a civilizing mission's unintended ironies.

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Night of stone: death and memory in Russia. By Catherine Merridale. London: Granta Books, 2001. Pp. xii + 506. ISBN 1-86207-452-6. £15.00 (pbk).

This book, which now appears in paperback, has already garlanded much praise, and rightly so. Taking her title from Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem* (1939), Catherine Merridale has written a poignant and highly readable history of premature death by violence in modern Russia. She embarked on this project with the aim not only of collecting fresh archival data but also of gathering the views of Russian citizens for whom life has been painful and bitter. Merridale observes Russian society intelligently and sensitively, and her interlocutors have provided her with vivid anecdotes and forthright opinions. The subject is a powerful one. Those who come to the book expecting a graphic account of the impact of collectivization, the terror, and the Great Patriotic War will not be disappointed, for these dramatic episodes are accorded centre stage. Merridale has a fine eye for telling detail, such as the stories of Yakut herdsmen who acted as bounty hunters for the Gulag, and she is at pains to emphasize the individual grief that lies behind the mortality statistics. What is more, she intersperses her narrative with a thematic exploration of the Soviet search for a secular ritual to replace the Russian Orthodox tradition.

In large part, then, this is a history of modern Russia seen through the prism of violent death. And why not? Russia is a land that more than most has been ravaged by war, terror, and population displacement. Merridale's point is that the personal and psychological consequences of these catastrophes have for long been hidden from history. She subscribes to the catastrophist version of Russian history, in which the Russian people figure as the suffering (although not necessarily traumatized) victims of totalitarianism or post-totalitarian neglect. Merridale means us to take this suffering seriously. Her literary style – she is fond of staccato sentences, the present tense, and the personal pronoun – sustains the impression of an author who is striving for a calculated effect.

Yet one puts down this admirable and thoughtful book with a sense of frustration. Merridale implies that Russians died a double death – killed (by mass violence, by starvation, by epidemic disease) and then denied appropriate space in which to mourn. But the consequences of that denial remain elusive, perhaps because of reluctance on the part of her informants to reflect on them – certainly many of her informants wish to emphasize their capacity to survive misfortune rather than to focus on trauma. Merridale also has a tendency to depict the Russian *narod* as an undifferentiated population which suffered condemnation to silence and which, when permitted, gave vent to its grief in intermittent public outpourings of emotion. A more explicit treatment of gender distinctions might have been helpful here, in unpicking the different responses to premature loss. (Joy Damousi has attempted this in her recent account of wartime bereavement in Australia.) Somewhat casually, Merridale slips from an acknowledgement of the multiplicity of religious belief in pre-revolutionary Russia to an assumption that under Stalin everyone subscribed to the same doctrine of Party supremacy. That assumption needs to be probed more rigorously. And what of the encounter between Russian and non-Russian attitudes and practices? Throughout her book (with the partial exception of the chapter on the Great Patriotic War), Merridale presents her

material as if a 'Russian' way of death was emblematic of experience in the RSFSR (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic), even though it is obvious that many other ethnic groups inhabited 'Russian' space. How are we to understand their experiences? Finally, it seemed to me that Merridale's emphasis upon a distinctively Soviet pattern of evasion towards violent death could usefully have been compared with officially sponsored evasion in other societies, for instance in Latin America.

There are other surprising omissions. One wonders what attitudes to death might have been encountered amongst family members of the political elite: the life expectancy of leading Bolsheviks was, after all, notoriously short. Some subjects, such as suicide, are mentioned when they can be linked to collective psychosis (the 'epidemic' of suicides before 1914, suicides during the New Economic Policy and amongst victims of the terror), but are not dealt with as 'normal' phenomena. A more anthropologically informed account might have drawn attention to non-violent death, for example by probing the inequalities associated with the burial of ordinary citizens and members of the elite. Katherine Verdery's profound and intelligent work on the 'political lives of dead bodies' probably appeared too late to be taken into account, but it offers a nuanced discussion of the interaction of 'politics' and 'culture' in ways that develop some of Merridale's tentative findings.

All the same, Catherine Merridale has written a thought-provoking and at times very moving book. She is honest enough to acknowledge that the 'meaning' of death in modern Russia remains elusive, but this does not in any way detract from the value of her deeply personal and reflective study.

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PETER GATRELL