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Ciaran Brady. *The Chief Governors: The Rise and Fall of Reform Government in Tudor Ireland, 1536-1588.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. xviii + 322 pp. $59.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-46176-4.

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I come to this review of Ciaran Brady's *The Chief Governors* with a handicap: I cannot pretend great intimacy with sixteenth-century Irish history, but I am reasonably well acquainted with English administrative methods and mentalities in the same period. Brady's revisionist analysis will doubtless lead to intense scrutiny, review and rebuttal especially amongst Irish historians. Thus I limit my comments in the main to an assessment of the English government in Ireland (and in Westminster) and some of its ideological premises. This may, however, seem a bit tendentious in the light of Brady's observations about ideology.

Brady tells us that he began his research intending to examine the ideological influences that shaped Tudor policy in sixteenth-century Ireland. From the many possibilities already suggested by Irish historians--notably "the effects of Spanish-American colonial writing, late Renaissance ethnology, and an increasingly pessimistic Calvinism" (p. ix)--Brady set out to examine their transformation into Tudor administrative practice. He intended to accomplish his analysis the old-fashioned way. He would compile an extensive prosopographic inventory of middle- to high-ranking Tudor administrators, thus armed with detailed knowledge of their social, economic and intellectual backgrounds, he could identify and define their various constellations of interest and ideology, making evident their joint and several successes and failures. Alas, the project bore less fruit than Brady had expected. His note cards did not lead him to the connections he had hoped to establish; but the exercise was productive in a different way as two new approaches commended themselves to him.

In the first place, Brady became aware that, save for the 1530s and the 1590s, competing groups of officials simply were not significant in shaping and implementing policy. Instead, for most of the century, "the business of making and executing policy had been concentrated in the hands of one central figure, the Irish chief governor" (p. x). The viceroy was the dominant figure in Dublin; the power and influence of lesser officers depended unconditionally on the viceroy's confidence and faith. As a consequence, Brady determined that the appropriate organization of Tu-

dor Irish history was by chapters about the several viceroys along the lines of the nineteenth-century historian Richard Bagwell. Both Bagwell, a practitioner of Victorian "great-man" history, and Brady reckoned that the "high sixteenth century could justifiably be classified as the age of the viceroys" (p. xi).

Secondly, Brady recalls having been particularly disturbed to find that his initial commitment to ideological analysis was not going to work: "Neither the great viceroys nor their closest confidants were, it appeared, powerfully articulate ideologues, willing to provide detailed defenses of their actions in the light of clearly stated assumptions" (p. xi). They rarely expressed opinions about the nature or character of the native Irish and their customs. Instead, they wrote exhaustively to their English masters about technical, administrative issues, proposed reforms, and personnel matters. Their rare excursions into historical reflection were "merely to puzzle over the fate of all earlier attempts to establish English rule in Ireland" (p. xi). While these ruminations were not of the ideological ilk Brady had expected, they were nonetheless ideological, reflecting traditional English "common-law thought" (p. xi). Their steadfast application of English law, administrative practice and custom was as ideological as any manifesto, although it was displayed differently. Their assumption of the unquestioned superiority of English procedures was nearly credal; its consequences were unequivocally disastrous.

Radical measures held little attraction for the English governors; instead, they believed that the gradual but persistent application of English legal and administrative institutions and procedures would prove as stabilizing and as pacific in Ireland as they had proved in England. It followed that the Irish and their culture, once vanquished by the Anglo-Norman conquest, did not require the continued application of military might which could produce only limited results. The long term answers were, instead, to be found in law and administration. As in England, the failure of the conquerors' descendants to impose and maintain order reflected on their own inadequacies. It had been the Tudor's task to bring both the kingdom and the lordship into proper constitutional stability. Their task in England was well in hand; their task in Ireland lay before them.

Brady focused his attention on a peculiarity that he found common to all of the viceroys and this focus led him away from a fairly sterile critique of earlier works on Tudor Ireland. He found in the extensive writings of the viceroys, both public and private, "an overwhelming sense of [their] desperation and failure...almost all of those who held the chief governorship expressed deep disappointment with their tenure of office" (p. xii). None had escaped serious damage while serving as viceroy: they were seriously (even ruinously) in debt upon leaving office, they had provoked hostility, and most were in disgrace following their resignation. "In the sixteenth century, as in later times," Brady writes, "Ireland was indeed the graveyard of aspiring English statesmen" (p. xii). These results would have made more sense had they been heavy-handed and aggressive military types bent on quickly breaking the spirit of Irish resistance. As it was, however, they were conservative constitutional gradualists and Brady found the hostility they engendered difficult to explain.

The answers to this conundrum began to emerge from Brady's research as he noticed that, from the middle of the century, there was an important distinction between the "overall aims of the governors and their immediate techniques which many adopted as means of obtaining them" (p. xii). Arriving in Ireland, each viceroy set about dealing with the issues he had identified for this particular attention. The viceroys were so wrapped up in the administration of their agendas that they effectively ignored "the needs and fears of those social and political interests" that constituted the reality of Irish political life in Dublin and beyond the Pale (p. xiii). The conse-

quences of their inattention was disastrous. The Sussex viceroyalty provides a case in point. He made it a point to leave abundant evidence of his activity. State papers alone were an insufficient hymnal to praise his active administration; he hired a personal herald who was commissioned to tell the story in graphic terms. Brady tells us that "These formal narratives which bore a resemblance to the res gestae of medieval knights...were intended "to broadcast the glory of the [lord] lieutenant's service, recounting his travails and eulogizing his successes in a tone wholly incongruous with their real significance" (p. 76). Sussex was his own agenda, yet he recognized the corrosive remains of the St. Leger's corruption that preceded him, and he mounted (a much heralded) crusade to sweeten the poisoned waters of English administration in Ireland. But this was not a sufficient answer to the questions Brady posed. He had also to determine why the governors undertook courses of action that, from year to year, were becoming incrementally more damaging, and why their managerial style provoked such disproportionate reactions.

As the century progressed, the viceroys were increasingly more pessimistic about the possibility of success in Ireland, a crucial point if we are to understand their overall failure. Sir Henry Sidney, for instance, had arrived in Ireland determined to clean house and prevail over local disorder. By the time he returned to England at the end of his first tour, he was ill and dispirited. Later, upon taking up a second term in Dublin, he arrived pessimistic and was defeated before he began. Ireland was bad enough, the failure of the queen and council to support him was intolerable. It is little wonder that by 1578 his initiatives had failed and he was deeply in debt. Such was the fate of even a fairly conscientious viceroy.

Thus, Brady shaped and formed his work. As he was determined to discover why governing styles were so provocative, he had first to examine the relatively successful early Tudor government in order to contrast it with the viceroyalty after 1556. The result of this form of enquiry was a two part analysis of policy, separated by an interstitial discussion of the organization of government in the middle four decades of the century. Following a prologue in which the consequences of the 1556 Kildare rebellion are discussed, Part One deals with the reform governments of Lord Grey, Sir Anthony St. Leger, the earl of Sussex and Sir Henry Sidney in the years 1536-1578. Somewhat disconcertingly, an interlude follows in which Irish government from 1536-1579 is analyzed. Part Two takes up the question of the results of reform government from 1556-1583, but now the focus shifts from viceroys to constituencies. Feudal magnates, the community of the Pale, and Gaelic Ireland are treated separately vis-a-vis their relationship to reform government. Finally, Brady closes with an epilogue in which he analyzes the viceroyalty of Sir John Perrot (1584-88) and the crisis of reform. This structure is intended to penetrate a persistent paradox: "Tudor attempts to reform Ireland seemed of themselves to have redefined the nature of the problem they aimed to resolve" (p. xiv).

Viceregal histories, the focus of Brady's study, are by nature colored both by a "great man" and by an Anglocentric bias, but there appears to be no satisfactory alternative in the light of the evidence. The list of manuscript sources in the bibliography indicates the richness of English muniments and the sad paucity of their Irish counterparts. Yet, one wonders whether there would have been a material difference in the evidence if the Four Courts still stood in Dublin. Decidedly uninquisitive English governors and their minions created the written remains of the Lordship/Kingdom whether they were preserved in London or Dublin. Their records encompassed the data they required for management purposes and little more. Only at the end of the sixteenth century did "extended commentaries on the nature of Gaelic culture, its social-political structures and its customs" begin to appear (p. 245). The reason for this

peculiar lack of curiosity was the self-conscious English policy of minimizing the distinctions between themselves and the Gael. By denying the Irish a separate identity, the government in Dublin sought to diminish their cultural distinctiveness, thus reducing them to just another management problem. In the sixteenth century, the consequences of this policy were not appreciated but, in retrospect, we can see where it led. The several uprisings, rebellions, and oppositional alliances that developed, especially outside the Pale, might have been minimized, and certainly better managed, had the Castle had any sense of what motivated its opponents. Instead, Dublin was blinded by its own unwillingness to see.

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