

of Scots and the defeat of the Spanish Armada because by this time “crucial questions had been settled, or shown themselves incapable of being settled” (xviii). By this point, the reader does share the sense that England must have been weary of religious controversy.

Although long, the book is highly readable. Marshall has a gift for illustrative examples and anecdotes; in his hands, history is good storytelling. Although readers know the general shape and outcome of sixteenth-century English history, this was far from self-evident to the characters involved in most of the book. Marshall is quite willing to use colloquial language to convey the vitality and dynamism of any given situation, as in “Henry was never one to buy his theological clothes off the peg” (233). Throughout the book, Marshall begins each section with a particular incident illustrating the more general point that is about to be made. Further examples show the range of the claim, providing local and color and highlighting regional and local variations and disagreements. An interpretive strength is Marshall’s regular acknowledgment of how things cut both ways; for example, the Carthusians of Syon could raise the public estimation of monasticism or highlight the laxity of other houses.

In his postscript, Marshall acknowledges that he has focused on conflict rather than continuity because he sees the struggle itself as significant. It was, “from first to last, a vocal, vibrant national conversation, about issues of uttermost importance, and one from which few voices were ever entirely excluded” (577–78). Although not all readers will have the tenacity to stick with the messiness of conflict to the end, this is an important book offering a creative synthesis of decades of fruitful scholarship in the field.

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DARREN McGETTIGAN. *Richard II and the Irish Kings*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016.
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Darren McGettigan’s *Richard II and the Irish Kings* provides a solid narrative of Richard II’s two Irish expeditions and the Irish kings he encountered. The Irish kings Art MacMurchadha Caomhánach (Leinster mountains) and Niall Mór and Niall Óg Ó Néill (Tyrone, high kings of Ulster) are the focus of the book; McGettigan provides plenty of background information on these kings in order to introduce them to a wider audience. The narrative is thus eminently suited for novices, but its lack of a strong argument might leave those more familiar with the era or major players desiring more sophisticated analysis and a stronger thesis.

In the introduction, McGettigan explains his primary sources, which include the chronicles of Froissart, the pilgrimage account of Ramon de Perellós, the metrical history of Jean Creton, letters to and from Richard II concerning his Irish expeditions, Irish annals, and bardic poems. In chapter 1, “Richard II and His Western Isle,” McGettigan gives a brief overview of Richard II’s life and of the state of English control in Ireland c. 1394. Although McGettigan discounts the Gaelic revival as the main reason for Richard’s expedition, the Irish kings had been making progress against the English throughout the 1300s. In chapter 2, “Fourteenth-Century Gaelic Ireland—a New Sparta,” he explains Irish warfare in the 1300s, emphasizing its Spartan nature with a special focus on how the Irish wore spurs barefoot. Although McGettigan titles chapter 3 “Richard’s First Expedition to Ireland, 1394–5,” he does not cover the entire expedition. He focuses on Richard’s dealings with Art MacMurchadha Caomhánach, who submitted to Richard early on and was consequently underestimated by the English king in 1399, and

the Dublin Parliament of December 1394. In chapter 4 “Richard and the Ó Néill Kings of Tyrone,” McGettigan begins with background on the Ó Néill family. In the middle section of the chapter he covers Richard’s interactions with both the elderly semiretired Niall Mór and his son Niall Óg Ó Néill; in the final section briefly he covers the aftermath of the expedition in both the Leinster mountains and Ulster. In the fifth chapter “Richard’s Second Expedition to Ireland, June–July 1399,” McGettigan provides a narrative of the second, short, ill-fated trip. Whereas Richard had previously had the best of Art MacMurchadha Caomhánach, the Irish king this time had the best of Richard. With the English running low on supplies, Art MacMurchadha Caomhánach offered a parley; his meeting with Thomas Despenser, earl of Gloucester, was recorded by Creton, who noted that Richard did not appreciate Art MacMurchadha’s request for a full pardon. Luckily for the Irish king, Richard received word in early July that Henry Bolingbroke had landed in England. Unfortunately, Richard waited too long in Ireland, stymied by a shortage of shipping, and lost his kingdom on his return. The final section of the chapter briefly covers the last years of Art MacMurchadha Caomhánach (d. 1417) and Niall Óg Ó Néill (d. 1403). The final chapter, “Now for Our Irish Wars,” provides a brief summary of the book, emphasizing the ability of the Irish kings (especially Art MacMurchadha Caomhánach).

McGettigan points out in multiple places how the gains of Richard’s first, more successful, expedition were falling apart even before the English king left Ireland. While Richard had more than eighty kings submit to him, they knew his time in Ireland was temporary and so did not uphold their end of the agreements. Richard’s second expedition started off much less successful than did his first (defeats in Leinster and supply problems) and was then cut short. Ultimately, Richard’s time in Ireland had little influence on Ireland, especially when compared to the outsized influence it had on Richard’s own life. Despite making a huge contribution to Richard’s undoing as king, his expeditions to Ireland had little lasting impact on Ireland. This is the closest McGettigan comes to presenting an argument, but it is not the main focus of the work. He is more concerned with covering who did what when.

This book is a great starting place for those wanting to know more about a few of the more notable fourteenth-century kings in Ireland. Although Richard II’s name comes first in the title, the stars of the work are the Irish kings, perhaps because their reigns were more successful than were the English king’s. McGettigan provides a good grounding in basic background and the story of Richard’s encounter with these kings, but he does not provide much sophisticated analysis or a particularly strong argument. He does, however, achieve his purpose of shedding light on forgotten kings. The book is also well footnoted for a book aimed at nonspecialists. In addition, the book includes twenty-six full-color plates, including images of Irish daggers and spurs, which also make the book more accessible to a nonspecialist audience. Overall, McGettigan has crafted an easy-to-read narrative, albeit one that could have benefited from a more prominent argument.

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The flaunting of royal authority that led English rebels in 1381 to liberate criminals from their prisons, burn judicial documents, loot the Savoy Palace, and behead the archbishop of