

toward oral, written, and legal matters may well spark comparisons with other cultures, for Fishman has brilliantly shown that words can produce meaning through their epistemological categorization as oral or written, a categorization that itself remains undetermined by their actual mediatic support.

**Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak**  
New York University

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Kevin Costello, *The Court of Admiralty of Ireland, 1575–1893*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011. Pp. 322. \$70.00. ISBN (978-1-846-82243-8). doi:10.1017/S0738248012000065

This is an intriguing, sometimes frustrating, book. The intrigue comes from what is almost a handout for a family reunion. Aided by comprehensive footnotes, even the newest member of the family could quickly decide whether a true “character” is deserving of further inquiry. The problematic aspect arises for those readers who are not family members—a spouse for example. For those readers there is little to allow placing a person in the sweep of legal history captured by this book. Put another way, the book offers little to place its particular court in the broader three centuries mentioned in its title. That omission is disappointing, especially given the rich and troublesome history of the relationship between Ireland and England. However, there may be something more, even something quite valuable in this book: The story of a society changing itself from a government of “men” to a government of “laws.” The author makes no specific reference to such a theme; again, however, the footnotes offer evidence of movement from decisions of individuals to statutes representing the collective will of a people. (With no reference to the increased difficulties he faced, the author confines to a footnote [125, n. 94], reference to an explosion that destroyed most of the relevant records.)

The story begins in 1575, with the appointment of someone to oversee the admiralty and admiralty-like claims that arose in Ireland. The reasons for the appointment are not clear. Nevertheless, the author manages to describe this first appointee in familial terms—not quite the Biblical “begats,” but close (2). The emphasis on peoples is further emphasized by the headings for each section; making the book look more like an encyclopedia than a history. As the decades pass, the Court continued to seek additional jurisdiction, not for any thematic or jurisprudential reason. Instead, the rationale was much more mundane: the judges looked to fees for their support. The inadequacy of the fees as both a personal matter and an institutional one, provoked one of the judges to complain to Parliament that the fees had been inadequate to

cover even the cost of a room for the Court to sit (152). Equally personal were the methods used by the Court to obtain evidence. For example, near the end of the seventeenth century, a vessel arriving in Cork attracted considerable notice. The apparent irregularities led to the sending of a court official “to drink with the men” (91).

With the passing of the seventeenth century, the Court saw the death of a long-sitting judge, followed by the appointment of one of the true “characters” of the Court’s history, Hugh Baillie (148). Baillie’s eccentricities led to his dismissal. The appointment of his successor, Robert FitzGerald, itself wreaked of nepotism (151). The individual examples of misconduct led the Court to such disrepute that it was “regarded as so disreputable that its very existence was threatened” (203). An English statute declared that the Court could continue only until the death of the incumbent. His death in 1893 brought the Court to an end. Fittingly, even the statute dissolving the court accepted for one last time, the importance of individuals. Equally fittingly, this book takes its place as the twentieth volume in a series supported by the Irish Legal History Society (ii). Taken together, and with others sure to follow, there is emerging a collection that will support the writing of a broader history of *Irish law*.

**Walter F. Pratt, Jr.**

University of South Carolina School of Law

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Svetla Baloutzova, *Demography and Nation: Social Legislation and Population Policy in Bulgaria, 1918–1944*, (CEU Press Studies in the History of Medicine, vol. I), Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2011. Pp. 296. \$45.00 (ISBN 978-9-639-77666-1). doi:10.1017/S0738248012000077

This book is open to two readings. One would concentrate on the effects the so-called demographic threats of decreasing birth rates had on a society on the southeastern periphery of Europe, which experienced a deep crisis after its military defeat in the First World War and whose political elites became increasingly prone to intervene in the population’s demographic behavior. In this respect, small Bulgaria, which had come into being only in 1878, was duly among the forerunners in interwar Europe with respect to the application of demographic policies, whereby a certain mixture with eugenic approaches cannot be fully denied. These circumstances render Baloutzova’s monograph already a valuable contribution to a field of research that can be circumscribed