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Edited by Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer
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British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland

This book offers a new perspective on Irish history from the late sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century. Many of the chapters address, from national, regional and individual perspectives, the key events, institutions and processes that transformed the history of early modern Ireland. Others probe the nature of Anglo-Irish relations, Ireland's ambiguous constitutional position during these years and the problems inherent in running a multiple monarchy. Where appropriate, the volume adopts a wider comparative approach and casts fresh light on a range of historiographical debates, including the 'New British Histories', the nature of the 'General Crisis' and the question of Irish exceptionalism. Collectively, these essays challenge and complicate traditional paradigms of conquest and colonisation. By examining the inconclusive and contradictory manner in which English and Scottish colonists established themselves in the island, it casts further light on all of its inhabitants during the early modern period.

CIARAN BRADY is Senior Lecturer in History at Trinity College, Dublin. His previous publications include *The Chief Governors: The Rise and Fall of Reform Government in Tudor Ireland, 1536–1588* (1994).

JANE OHLMEYER is Erasmus Smith Professor of Modern History at Trinity College, Dublin. Her previous publications include *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms* (1993), *Ireland from Independence to Occupation, 1641–1660* (1995), *Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (2000).

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Acknowledgements

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We have also incurred numerous debts as we edited this volume. The photograph of Aidan Clarke, taken during his tenure as President of the Royal Irish Academy, is reproduced with the permission of the Academy and with the assistance of Siobhán Fitzpatrick. Muriel McCarthy of Marsh’s Library kindly supplied us with the image used on the front cover. We would like to acknowledge the support of our colleagues in the Department of Modern History at Trinity College, Dublin, and in the History Department at the University of Aberdeen, especially Barbara McGillivray for her secretarial assistance. We are grateful to the anonymous referees who read an early version of this typescript for Cambridge University Press and offered invaluable suggestions for improvement. Bob Hunter, Geoffrey Parker and the late Gerald Aylmer were exceptionally generous with their support. We are particularly indebted to Colm Croker, John Morrill and Micheál Ó Siochrú, who in their different ways, helped to shape this volume. Colm Croker and Sheila Kane served as model copy-editors. Bill Davies and Michael Watson from Cambridge University Press – together with our fellow contributors, Alex Green and Aoife Nic Réamoinn – can only be lauded for their patience. A word of thanks must go to the Clarke family – Oisín, Caoimhe, Subhanora and the late Ceasán – and, above all, Mary, whose generosity of spirit has captivated us all. Finally, we all owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Aidan Clarke himself. For many of us he acted as teacher and thesis supervisor; for all of us he has become a mentor and a friend. This book is for Aidan, but it is also dedicated to the memory of Ceasán.

CIARAN BRADY
 JANE OHLMEYER

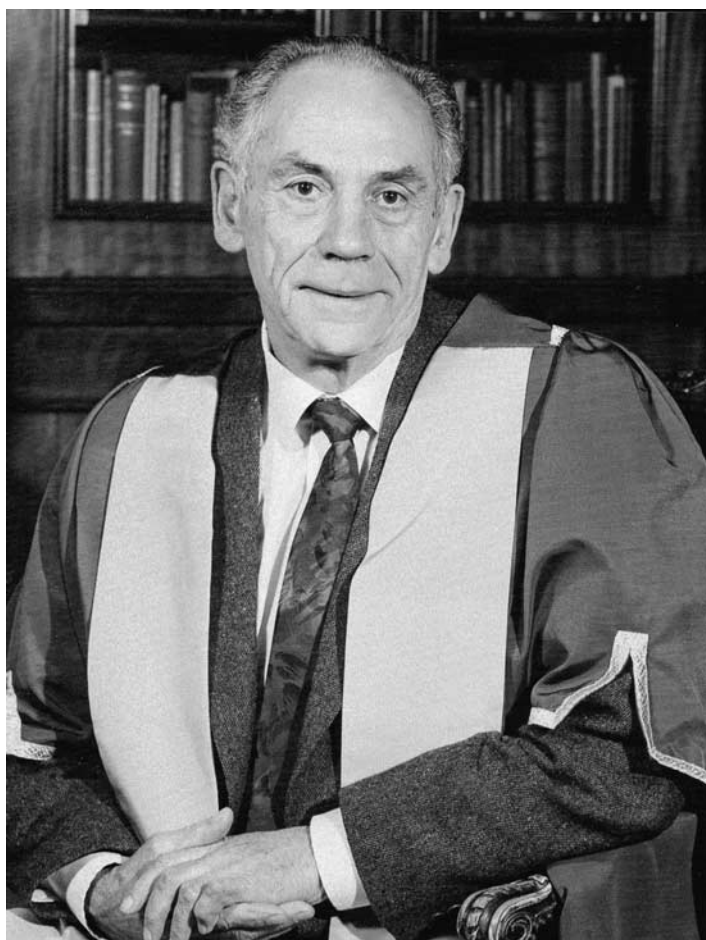
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Aidan Clarke

Aidan Clarke: an appreciation

‘What is the point of doing history?’ This was the question, in equal parts liberating and unsettling, with which Aidan Clarke would regularly provoke students in his undergraduate seminar on historiography. As was so often the case with Clarke’s teaching, the intent of the question was multiple. On one level it referred simply to J. H. Hexter’s stimulating essay ‘Doing History’ which Clarke frequently recommended as among the best and the wittiest examples of the ‘nuts and bolts’ school of historiography, still dominant in the 1960s and 1970s. This ‘practice of history’ school eschewed lofty philosophical questions of meaning, purpose, correspondence and coherence as irresolvable, and recommended instead the healthy medicine of getting down to the work.

As a teacher Aidan believed that, from the outset, undergraduates should be made aware that history was not merely a receptive or an acquisitive affair, conducted through the accumulation of large bodies of fact and argument. It was to be an intensely energetic, even restless, activity, requiring more the stamina and vigour of the athlete (in his youth Clarke was no mean sportsman) than the talents of the collector and the taxonomist. Thus it has always been important to Aidan that young minds should be introduced early to the attitudes and perspectives of those who were actually engaged in the business of researching and writing history before they began on the enterprise itself.

But whether they represented their case in the no-nonsense manner espoused by G. R. Elton, or the cheerful adventuresomeness celebrated by Hexter, the practical men of affairs have never been sufficient to Clarke’s understanding of history. The philosophical problems – logical, epistemological, ethical and aesthetic – were not to be so easily discounted; and for those who wished – whether undergraduates, postgraduates or colleagues or friends – Aidan was ever willing to engage in serious, but never dogmatic, argument about the best means of coping with them. It was in circumstances like these that many of those who debated with him would have noted his surprising coolness towards the viewpoint of one of the few practising historians – between R. G. Collingwood and the onset

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of postmodernism – to take a genuinely reflective attitude towards the writing of history, E. H. Carr. Though all of the issues raised in Carr's *What Is History?* were regarded by Clarke as central to the historian's concerns, and though there would be no argument either with the sincerity of Carr's intentions or the sophistication of his approach, what remained troubling to Clarke was Carr's ultimate surrender to relativism. Regarded by Carr as an inescapable consequence of history's insurmountable epistemological and ethical problems, this acceptance of the absence of any standard means of discrimination and validation seemed to Clarke to be an uncalled-for capitulation. It gave away too much, helplessly conceding that a serious form of discourse and dialogue might at any time degenerate into an arena for untrammelled opinion and prejudice. And worse, it surrendered powerful intellectual techniques which with sufficient care, discipline and stamina could be maintained and applied by all practitioners of historical study against all forms of assault, dogmatic or relativist. For Clarke, the acknowledged problems of history as a form of knowledge were not a warning that its claims to significance should be abandoned. Instead they offered corroboration to the far more important claim that history – imperfect as everything else in life – offered, after all, a true reflection of our universal experience of being alive in a world which we can never fully comprehend or ever hope to control. And it was this mirroring of the life of every man and woman that for all its imperfections gave to history its unique importance not merely as an intellectual pursuit, but as a moral inquiry as well.

It is this intellectual vitality, this robust confidence in history's distinctive potential to enable us to get some grasp on the most fundamental conditions of our existence, that has characterised Aidan Clarke's career as an historian in all its aspects. It is reflected first and foremost in his teaching; in the generosity of mind, spirit and (not least) time with which he entertains ideas, interpretations and temperaments which often seem less than congenial to his own personal taste. Though conversely (and fortunately rarely) it may be seen also in the promptness with which all forms of laziness and pretentiousness – intellectual and otherwise – receive dispatch. But the rule has always been simple. To all of his students, gifted or average, whose work displayed a genuine encounter with the problems and possibilities of historical work, Aidan's mind and his door are always open.

Clarke's passionate commitment to the highest standards of historical thinking is evident in his published body of work, the consistent achievement of which has been a source of wonder – and of envy – to all who have worked in his field. The characteristic features of Clarke's historical

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style – the meticulousness of his research methods, the sophistication of his conceptualisation, and the precision of his expression – will be familiar to all his readers. And whether they are looked for in the original and groundbreaking monographs that have enframed his career thus far, or in the commanding syntheses of early modern political, social and economic history which he contributed to the *New History of Ireland* or in his corpus of profoundly influential essays and articles, they appear with such unfailing frequency as to require no further comment.*

But two related features underlying his whole approach to writing history are particularly revealing. The first is his scrupulous concern with sequence, an insistence that the order of events as they unfolded to contemporaries should be reconstructed and followed by the historian, over the vague associations and broad-spanned generalisations which so often supply historical narratives with an account of affairs deeply deceptive in its simplicity. Underlying this resolve that the perception of the world constructed by historical figures should always be privileged above the self-justifying hindsight of the historian is no pedantic preoccupation with chronology, but rather Clarke's understanding of the distinctive importance of historical study as a whole. That is, its repeated demonstration of the imperfect and confused perceptions and motivations that have driven human beings to undertake historical change. It is this understanding of history's promise that also underlies the second characteristic of Clarke's work. This is his frequently demonstrated ability to re-conceptualise traditional historical problems, to discover and analyse within them underlying ambiguities and tensions, which were often hidden or poorly recognised not only by historians, but by history's agents themselves. Once again, however, the point of Clarke's work has not been to elevate the later historical commentator above the confusions of generations past. Rather his concern has been to show how internal conflicts, left unresolved because they were only half perceived, have yet given rise to fundamental changes which were no less inexorable because they were unintended. Clarke's is a history, then, in which contingency, ignorance and self-deception have their role to play, just as they do in our everyday life. But it is also one in which the effort to understand the manner in which such imperfections displayed by human actors at any one time functioned irreversibly to reshape their world is likewise a necessary obligation.

Clarke's conviction that history has a crucial function to play in understanding our world has gone beyond his roles as teacher, scholar and writer. It has also underpinned the immensely active – and often

* See principal publications of Aidan Clarke, pp. 357–8 below.

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onerous – positions which he has assumed in the life of his university and in public life in Ireland. Whether as College tutor, or College Registrar, as Vice-Provost of Trinity College, or as head of its Department of Modern History, Aidan Clarke has played a decisive role in shaping the development of his university over several decades of enormous expansion and change. But, in addition, as a long-serving President of the Irish Historical Society, as Secretary and then President of the Royal Irish Academy, and an active contributing member to several cultural and educational bodies he has made an even larger contribution to the propagation of history as a central feature in Ireland's public culture as a whole. Such are the services that might normally be expected from a distinguished scholar and teacher. But of no less importance to Aidan in maintaining a world where the study of history is valued has been his quiet but indefatigable readiness to lecture to colleges, schools and local historical societies – to make his advice, wisdom and experience accessible to all bodies interested in historical matters in a manner that has placed so many of his contemporaries in his debt.

The selflessness and cheerfulness with which Aidan has constantly responded to the multiple demands of being an historian in Ireland are doubtless rooted in psychological recesses into which it would be presumptuous further to inquire. Yet somewhere at the back of this tireless commitment to maintain history as a pivotal element in our contemporary culture lie a particular set of forces which acted upon his age and generation. Coming to maturity in the 1950s in an era where many of the gods – national, international and religious – had lost the power to attract allegiance and belief, his was a generation that found itself faced with stark choices. There were those who elected in these circumstances for the consolations of self-indulgence, cynicism and affected existentialist despair, about whom much has already been written. But there were others who made the alternative decision to counter this ideological and ethical challenge by assuming an active address to their circumstances, by taking the risk, against the apparent odds, of resuming belief in the possibility of making the world better. Aidan Clarke was of this party. Though it was tempered by a modest recognition of the fragility of the entire undertaking, it was this resolve which attracted so many young minds to reengage critically with traditional forms of knowledge not with the aim of overthrowing them but of releasing their hitherto untapped intellectual potential. It was in these circumstances that Aidan Clarke embarked upon a career in making history relevant in Ireland, neither as a weapon for ideological argument nor a refuge for cultural despair, but as a keen intellectual tool for discovering how much and how little we can know about ourselves in time, and what sense we can derive from

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that knowledge. And in this he discovered his own answer to the question as to why we should be doing history for which all of us who have known him either as mentor or as exemplar are in his debt. Given the inescapable conditions under which we forsaken, contradictory and confounded creatures must serve, 'doing history' is one of the best means we have of doing life.

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Unless indicated otherwise dates throughout are given according to the Old (Julian) Calendar, which was used in Scotland, Ireland and England but not in most of continental Europe. The beginning of the year is taken, however, as 1 January rather than 25 March.

Unless otherwise stated all monetary values are sterling.

Spellings from contemporary sources have been modernised, and with proper names (especially people and places) the modern spellings have been preferred.

Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
BL, Add. MS	Additional Manuscript
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
<i>Commons' Jnl, Ire</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland</i> (28 vols., Dublin, 1753–91)
CRO	County Record Office
CSPI	<i>Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland</i> (24 vols., London, 1860–1911)
CSPD	<i>Calendars of State Papers, Domestic Series</i> , 2nd Series (23 vols., London, 1858–97)
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee (66 vols., London, 1885–1901; reprinted with corrections, 22 vols., London, 1908–9)
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HMC, Ormonde	<i>Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Ormonde, preserved at Kilkenny Castle</i> (old and new series, 11 vols., London, 1895–1920)
IHS	<i>Irish Historical Studies</i>
IMC	Irish Manuscripts Commission
JBS	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>Lords Jnl, Ire, I</i>	<i>Journal of the House of Lords of the Kingdom of Ireland</i> (8 vols., Dublin, 1779–1800), I (1634–98)
MS/MSS	Manuscript(s)
NAI	National Archives, Dublin, Ireland
NHI, III	T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds.), <i>A New History of Ireland. III Early Modern Ireland 1534–1691</i> (Oxford, 1976, reprinted, 1978)
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NS	New series; or, in dating, New Style
OS	Old series; or, in dating, Old Style

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PRO	Public Record Office, London
PRO, E	Exchequer
PRO, SP	State Papers
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RCB	Representative Church Body, Dublin
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
Sheffield, WWM	Sheffield City Library, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments
TCD	Trinity College, Dublin