

WRITING EARLY MODERN HISTORY: IRELAND, BRITAIN, AND THE WIDER WORLD*

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ABSTRACT. *The professionalization of history in Ireland resulted from the 1930s effort of T. W. Moody and R. Dudley Edwards to fuse writing on Irish history with a received version of the history of early modern England. This enterprise enhanced the academic standing of work on early modern Ireland, but it also insulated professional history in Ireland from the debates that enlivened historical discourse in England and continental Europe. Those who broke from this restriction, notably D. B. Quinn, Hugh Kearney, and Aidan Clarke, made significant contributions to the conceptualization of the histories of colonial British America, early modern England, and Scotland. These achievements were challenged by the New British History turn which, for the early modern period, has transpired to be no more than traditional English political history in mufti. None the less, writing on the histories of Ireland, Scotland, and colonial British America has endured and even flourished. Such endeavour has succeeded where the focus has been on people rather than places, where authors have been alert to cross-cultural encounters, where they have identified their subject as part of European or global history, and where they have rejected the compartmentalization of political from social and economic history. The success of such authors should encourage practitioners of both English history and the New British History to follow their examples for the benefit of endeavours which will always be complementary.*

Any article devoted to a consideration of historical writing on early modern Ireland, and its relationship with history writing on Britain and further afield, must assess the contribution to that subject made respectively by Robin Dudley Edwards and T. W. Moody who are regularly portrayed, by admirers and detractors, as the progenitors of modern Irish historiography. Both Edwards and Moody earned their PhD degrees in history at the University of London and transformed their theses into books on important subjects concerning the history of early modern Ireland. When assessing the elevation of that subject to an academic plane, account must also be taken of the achievements of two further scholars from Ireland who studied at London during the 1930s: D. B. Quinn, who completed a PhD in London on the administration of Ireland during the early Tudor era, and G. A. Hayes-McCoy, who spent from 1934 to 1936 as a student of the Institute

* The first version of this review was delivered as the Commonwealth Fund lecture for 2002 at University College, London. It has been much improved thanks to the critical comments made first by the respondents David Armitage, Stephen Conway, and Alan Karras, and then by Paul Bew and Lynn Hollen Lees who were commentators at the conclusion of the associated conference. More recently, the review has benefited from a critical appraisal by my colleague William O'Reilly and by two anonymous readers for the *Journal*.

of Historical Research, London, where he transformed his Edinburgh PhD thesis into a book.¹

Edwards and Moody were the more influential pair, at least in the short term, not least because these two larger-than-life figures dominated the historical profession in Ireland for forty years, with Moody being appointed in 1939, at the age of thirty-two, to the chair of modern history at Trinity College, Dublin, and Edwards being appointed in 1944, at the age of thirty-five, as professor of Irish history at University College, Dublin. Each was obviously imbued with a strong sense of self-belief and a conviction that the study of history would advance reconciliation in a divided Ireland. This explains their persistent efforts to consolidate the position of history as a discipline within Irish universities, north and south, and to release academic history from the sectarian polemic that had motivated much historical writing on Ireland since the seventeenth century.

In pursuing these ambitions Edwards and Moody submerged their own political, ideological, and temperamental differences to establish the journal *Irish Historical Studies*, first issued in 1938, that they were to edit jointly until 1958 when they separated acrimoniously. This journal laid down editorial procedures for the presentation of historical scholarship in Ireland that, with but minor modifications, prevail to the present day. It also brought together the Irish Historical Society – based in Dublin – and the Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies – based in Belfast – in a common enterprise. Then – after the fashion of the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* on which it was principally modelled – *Irish Historical Studies* became a journal of record for historical research in Ireland.² The concern of the editors with footnoted references, and their hostility to unsubstantiated opinion, especially that deriving from entrenched denominational or political positions, meant that academic history writing on Ireland, including that on the early modern period, was being set on a non-contentious course. This, paradoxically, was happening at the very time when academic history writing in England of the early modern period, that Edwards and Moody had held up as exemplary, was becoming embroiled in debate that derived principally from the political commitment of its practitioners to left or right.

The general opposition of Edwards and Moody to rancour in history writing won them both admirers and detractors: the first credited them with being objective, impartial, and balanced while the latter accused them of seeking to impose a suffocating orthodoxy on Irish history by making the subject ‘value-free’.³ Those who have adopted these positions

¹ R. Dudley Edwards, ‘History of penal laws against Catholics in Ireland from 1534 to 1691’ (PhD thesis, London, 1933); T. W. Moody, ‘The Londonderry plantation, with special reference to the resulting relations between the crown and the city, 1609–1641’ (PhD thesis, London, 1934); D. B. Quinn, ‘Tudor rule in Ireland in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, with special reference to the Anglo-Irish financial administration’ (PhD thesis, London, 1934); G. A. Hayes-McCoy, ‘Scots mercenary forces in Ireland, 1565–1603’ (PhD thesis, Edinburgh, 1934).

² Ciaran Brady suggests that *History* also served as a model for *Irish Historical Studies*, in Ciaran Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish history: the debate on historical revisionism* (Dublin, 1994), p. 19.

³ For admiring comments, especially on Moody, and even more so on F. S. L. Lyons who was one of Moody’s star pupils, see R. F. Foster, *The Irish story: telling tales and making it up in Ireland* (London, 2001), pp. 26–7, 37–57; for a critical appraisal see Brendan Bradshaw, ‘Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland’, originally published in *Irish Historical Studies*, 26 (1988–9), pp. 329–51, reprinted in Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish history*, pp. 191–216, at pp. 197–9; see also Ciaran Brady, ‘“Constructive and instrumental”’: the dilemma of Ireland’s first “new historians”’, in Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish history*, pp. 3–31, which treats of the prescriptions that Edwards and Moody, together and separately, laid down for history-writing in Ireland at various moments in their careers; Brady, however, devotes scant attention to the historical works they wrote.

cannot have taken time to appraise the early publications of either scholar against which to measure the intellectual distance that each had travelled to reach their consensus, nor have they identified the destination that Edwards and Moody hoped to reach.

Edwards's first book, based upon the earlier section of his London PhD thesis, was entitled *Church and state in Tudor Ireland: a history of penal laws against Irish Catholics, 1534–1603*. In this he rehearsed Irish Catholic-nationalist grievance over successive conquests of Ireland by forces from England, culminating with that of Tudor times, and he declared the people of Catholic Ireland to have been the ultimate victors since they had remained 'still strong in their faith, passionately determined to continue in it, and immune for ever from all the evangelising efforts of Protestantism'. The book, therefore, broke new ground only in being professionally referenced and in having its argument linked to what was then the most up-to-date scholarship on England's progress towards becoming a Protestant society.⁴

In sharp contrast, Moody's first book, *The Londonderry plantation, 1609–1641: the city of London and the plantation in Ulster*, was conceived in the tradition of Protestant-Unionist writing which had credited plantation, especially in its Ulster dimension, with having substituted civilization for barbarism in Ireland. It was innovative only in having a full academic apparatus, in accepting that civilization, albeit of an outmoded kind, had flourished in Ulster until the planters arrived, and in devoting attention to the fate of the native population within the plantation, even if this latter led to the conclusion that they 'strained every nerve to gratify the undertakers in the hope of remaining in the places of their birth, and ultimately of cutting their landlords' throats'.⁵

These brief appraisals should make it clear that, on the basis of their early published work, neither Edwards nor Moody can be said to have been 'value-free'; rather they were writers with firm opinions that derived as much from their respective politico/religious backgrounds as from the evidence they had consulted. It is therefore all the more remarkable that they were able to agree on a common agenda leading to the professionalization of historical work in Ireland. Equally significant is the fact that the values and allegiances evident in the early publication of both scholars underwent change as they proceeded with this common enterprise. Thus, the Catholic-nationalist Edwards mellowed to become an admirer of constitutional, as opposed to physical-force, nationalism, while Moody, once he had moved from Belfast to Dublin, gradually abandoned his moderate unionist position to become, like Edwards, an admirer of Irish constitutional nationalism, albeit that practised by Davis, Parnell, and Davitt rather than the stridently Catholic O'Connell.

The launch of the careers of both Moody and Edwards brought an initial boost to the writing of the history of early modern Ireland that was to be reflected in the pages of *Irish Historical Studies* which carried more than one early modern article in all but one of its first twelve volumes from 1938 to 1960. Some of these, such as the sequence of studies on the meaning and operation of Poyning's law, seem to have been commissioned to satisfy the known interest of historians throughout the English-speaking world in the implication of that enactment for parliamentary procedure not only in Ireland but in England's overseas colonies. Other articles, notably a sequence by J. G. Simms on various aspects of the Jacobite/Williamite struggle, interrogated evidence on contentious events from Ireland's

⁴ R. Dudley Edwards, *Church and state in Tudor Ireland: a history of penal laws against Irish Catholics, 1534–1603* (Dublin, 1935), at p. 202.

⁵ T. W. Moody, *The Londonderry plantation, 1609–1641: the city of London and the plantation in Ulster* (Belfast, 1939), pp. 23, 45, 47, 48, 39.

past not least in the hope of promoting reconciliation between living Catholics and Protestants. All the early modern pieces published in *Irish Historical Studies* during those years were clearly concerned to achieve balance and accuracy, which made them seem tame beside the heady contentions that then dominated writing on early modern England. Therefore, the subject commanded but limited interest from scholars from without Ireland, and the few who remained dedicated to the history of early modern Ireland had little reason to believe that they had lived through an historiographical revolution. Indeed, their icons were not Edwards and Moody but the nineteenth-century figures Lecky and Froude, Hill and Prendergast, O'Donovan and O'Curry, Robert Dunlop and Sir John Gilbert, who had both published worthy history and had salvaged and edited documentary compilations that enabled future research.

This choice of heroes was all the more rational because the institutionalization of the study of history in Ireland, which was the undoubted achievement of Edwards and Moody, was ultimately to impact negatively on the investigation of the early modern centuries for two reasons. First, as soon as Edwards and Moody had established their professional credentials with degrees and publications on the early modern period, they concluded that the years from the Great Famine to the 1890s held the key to understanding the Ireland of their own generation. Consequently, they transferred their research and teaching interests to the second half of the nineteenth century and directed the majority of their graduate students during the 1940s, the 1950s, and the 1960s to nineteenth-century topics. Second, once this privileged position was accorded to nineteenth-century Irish history, it was inferred that the function of those who persisted with research on the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries was to trace the origins of the problems that historians of the nineteenth century considered in need of resolution. These included the character of landlordism, the enforcement of legal disability against both Catholics and Protestant dissenters on grounds of religion, and constitutional nationalism. This latter was considered especially pertinent because it was thought to demonstrate the validity of the unproven assumption, which seems to have been shared by Edwards and Moody, that any political gains that had been achieved in modern Ireland by forceful means might have been better attained through negotiation.

Such developments in Irish historiography provided Irish history with a grand narrative which may be regarded both as a modification of that espoused by Catholic-nationalist writers of the nineteenth century and a Hibernian variant upon whig history. One consequence was that the study of modern history, as it came to be cultivated in the history departments of Irish universities, remained insular because primacy was given to a narrowly defined Irish history that maintained links with an equally narrow version of English history. The strait jacket proved especially constricting for work on early modern history because it was increasingly regarded as but a hand-maiden to the study of the nineteenth century with an obvious teleological bias to the questions considered worth posing to early modern evidence.⁶

⁶ Only medieval history resisted the rush to the nineteenth century, possibly because there were independent chairs of medieval history in some Irish universities. For the early modern period, James Hogan, who had been professor of history at University College, Cork, since 1922, remained largely immune to the developments being described here, and, in a projected multi-volume enterprise that did not go beyond the first volume, he strove to locate developments in early modern Ireland in a European context; see James Hogan, *Ireland in the European system, 1500–1557* (London, 1920).

To a considerable degree therefore the promoters of Irish academic history were steering the writing of early modern history into a *cul-de-sac*. Some publications, especially those from G. A. Hayes-McCoy and D. B. Quinn, provided the subject with an independent existence. Of the four Irish scholars who had attended the University of London during the 1930s only Hayes-McCoy then produced a book, *Scots mercenary forces in Ireland, 1565–1603*, that continues to be admired for its perspective, scholarship, and fidelity to sources. In this latter respect, the book anticipated by sixty years what was to be proclaimed as New British History, treating of the interconnections between events in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Despite the innovative character of his work, Hayes-McCoy had to wait until 1959 for an academic appointment in Ireland, when he succeeded to the chair of history at University College, Galway. In the meantime, he was posted in the National Museum of Ireland from where he promoted the study of the military history of Ireland in all centuries.⁷

If the intellectual, but not the chronological, interests of Hayes-McCoy shrank with the passage of time, those of Quinn moved forward from the investigation of Tudor administrative procedures in Ireland, that led to publications only in article form, to a range of early modern issues.⁸ Moreover he, more than the others, remained alert to historiographic trends and sought to link scholarly inquiry on early modern Ireland to that being pursued in British and North American universities, resulting in such prescient pieces as his ‘Agenda for Irish history: Ireland from 1461–1603’.⁹ Quinn could act as a conduit between academic pursuits in Britain, Ireland, and elsewhere because, apart from 1939 to 1944, when he filled the lectureship in Irish History at Queen’s University, Belfast, he made his career in Britain; at Southampton, Swansea, and then, from 1957 to 1976, as professor at Liverpool.

Time in Britain also meant that Quinn could pursue fresh interests relating to the history of England’s overseas expansion to which he had been introduced by A. P. Newton, his London mentor. This produced its first bloom with a magnificent edition for the Hakluyt society of the *Voyages and colonizing enterprises of Humphrey Gilbert*.¹⁰ However, as Quinn researched and wrote about Gilbert, and, subsequently, about Raleigh, Drake, Frobisher, Thomas Hariot, the Hakluyts, and legions of others associated with English overseas endeavours, he never lost sight of Ireland and strove to link his new interests with his old. He was, in a sense, following in the nineteenth-century tradition of Hill and Froude who had noted that many Englishmen who had pursued illustrious careers in the Atlantic had also been involved with Irish plantations. However – and here I speculate – Quinn, a committed Marxist destined to become a founder member of the Past and Present Society, may have seen merit in bringing Ireland into the bigger picture to expose the crass greed

⁷ G. A. Hayes-McCoy, *Scots mercenary forces in Ireland, 1565–1603* (Dublin, 1937); see also idem, ‘Strategy and tactics in Irish warfare, 1593–1601’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 2 (1940–1), pp. 255–79.

⁸ D. B. Quinn, ‘Anglo-Irish local government, 1485–1534’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 1 (1938–9), pp. 354–81; idem, ‘The early interpretation of Poyning’s law, 1494–1534’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 2 (1940–1), pp. 241–54; idem, ‘Parliaments and great councils in Ireland, 1461–1586’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 3 (1942–3), pp. 60–77.

⁹ D. B. Quinn, ‘Agenda for Irish history: Ireland from 1461–1603’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 4 (1944–5), pp. 258–69.

¹⁰ D. B. Quinn, ed., *The voyages and colonising enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert* (2 vols., Hakluyt society, London, 1940).

and blind prejudice that, up to that point, had been given scant attention in the usually jingoistic treatments of English overseas endeavour.¹¹

While his interest in the history of colonization, where he was to establish his international reputation, deflected Quinn from Irish history, his occasional returns to the subject brought with it fresh insights, original perspectives, and novel methods. Some of these derived from his interest in geography and anthropology that had been quickened by his early association with E. Estyn Evans, a Welsh social geographer who made his career at Queen's University, Belfast. These occasional publications by Quinn retained academic respectability for work on the history of early modern Ireland, at least in its sixteenth-century dimension, and also earned it readers outside Ireland.¹²

For the seventeenth century, rescue from Irish chauvinism came from outside, principally in the person of Hugh Kearney. Having been exposed, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, to the debates that had been enlivening the study of the English civil war, he was subsequently appointed to a lectureship at University College, Dublin. There, Kearney simultaneously undertook research for the PhD degree in history under the supervision of Dudley Edwards, choosing as his subject an investigation of the career of Strafford in Ireland. In the book that emanated, in 1959, from the thesis, Kearney considered many of the issues that had previously preoccupied historians of Ireland, including the role of wardship as an instrument for proselytism, and how Strafford's rule had affected Ireland's economic relationship with England. His answers to such questions exploded several myths, but the book also transformed our understanding of the relationship of politics in Ireland to politics in Britain and continental Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century. *Strafford in Ireland, 1633–1641: a study in absolutism*, and kindred studies by two other English researchers, Terence Ranger and J. P. Cooper, convinced the many scholars who then, as now, dedicated themselves to divining the nature both of the English civil war and of political dislocations in seventeenth-century Europe, that events in Ireland warranted attention. This recognition was symbolized by Dame Veronica Wedgwood revising her biography of Strafford, that had been the standard work on the subject, to take account of the re-interpreted Irish dimension to his career. Since then, few credible historians of civil conflict in seventeenth-century Britain have failed to consider the role of Ireland in the three-kingdom conflagration.¹³

It may have been the positive reception for Kearney's book that encouraged Aidan Clarke, a student of Moody, to devote himself to an early modern topic in preference to

¹¹ The substance of this is based on conversations with Quinn, and on K. R. A., N. P. C., P. E. H. H., 'Preface: David Beers Quinn', in K. R. Andrews, N. P. Canny, and P. E. H. Hair, eds., *The Westward enterprise: English activities in Ireland, the Atlantic and America, 1480–1650* (Liverpool, 1978).

¹² D. B. Quinn, 'Sir Thomas Smith (1513–1577) and the beginnings of English colonial theory', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 89 (1945), pp. 543–60; idem, *Raleigh and the British empire* (London, 1947); idem, 'Ireland and sixteenth-century European expansion', in T. D. Williams, ed., *Historical Studies*, 1 (London, 1958), pp. 20–32; idem, 'The Munster plantation: problems and opportunities', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 71 (1966), pp. 19–40; idem, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca, NY, 1966); on Evans, see 'Estyn: a biographical memory by Gwyneth Evans', in E. Estyn Evans, *Ireland and the Atlantic heritage* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 1–19.

¹³ Hugh F. Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland, 1633–1641: a study in absolutism* (Manchester, 1959; repr. Cambridge, 1989); Terence O. Ranger, 'Strafford in Ireland: a reevaluation', in Trevor Aston, ed., *Crisis in Europe, 1560–1660* (New York, 1967), pp. 271–93; J. P. Cooper, 'The fortune of Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford', *Economic History Review*, 2 (1958), pp. 227–48; C. V. Wedgwood, *Strafford* (London, 1935); idem, *Thomas Wentworth, first earl of Strafford, 1593–1641: a reevaluation* (London, 1964).

joining his mentor in the study of the nineteenth century. On first perusal *The Old English in Ireland, 1625–1642* – the book that Clarke fashioned in 1966 from his PhD thesis – seems a standard contribution to the grail-like quest for the constitutional roots of Irish nationalism that was still being enjoined upon aspirant historians in Ireland. However as Clarke analysed the protracted negotiations between the leaders of the Old English community and King Charles I, and their eventual resort to arms in December 1641, he broke fresh ground both in treating these events in Ireland and the lead up to civil conflict in England in 1642 as parts of a single process and by relating his subject to recent writing on the origins of the English civil war.¹⁴

Clarke's book proved of immediate interest to historians of England because it identified two political groups – the Old English and the New English – which competed with each other in Ireland for crown patronage. Each of these was demonstrably more coherent than the several gentry groupings in England whose rivalries supposedly provoked civil conflict there. Then, when he established that exclusion from privilege rendered the Old English obsequious to royal authority rather than rebellious, Clarke cast doubt on all models, whether based on English or continental experience, that purported to explain the causes and nature of revolt in early modern England and continental Europe. The usefulness of these various models of explication was further called into question by Clarke's demonstration that when circumstances eventually forced the Old English to have resort to war, they did so on the pretext that they were defending the king from his enemies in England and in Ireland.

Those historians whose assumptions and arguments were challenged by these findings tended to ignore them, but Clarke's work proved inspiring for some scholars of English history who were tiring of the seemingly interminable 'gentry debate'. Consequently, several historians of England (most emphatically Conrad Russell), who were to be labelled 'revisionists', took their cue from Clarke when they questioned the notion that long-term societal change had been the necessary precipitant of military conflict in England. Instead, the revisionists contended that most political actors in England, like the Old English in Ireland, looked with abhorrence on military conflict as a means of resolving political problems and that some combatants resorted to arms only after they had exhausted all possibility of securing their interests through negotiation, while many prominent people strove to remain neutral.¹⁵

The Old English in Ireland, together with Kearney's *Stafford in Ireland*, also persuaded most historians of seventeenth-century England that insurrection in Ireland, and the question of how the government should deal with it, was a more tangible trigger for the outbreak of conflict in England than any domestic realignment of socio-economic groups. This insight also persuaded historians of Scotland to investigate the role of that country in the outbreak and continuance of conflict in England. Thus, two books, initially conceived within an Irish historiographical paradigm, came to exert a substantial influence on writing on both England and Scotland, and it is significant that it was J. C. Beckett, the first holder of the chair in Irish history at Queen's University, Belfast, who proposed the War of the Three Kingdoms as a more apt description of the conflicts that beset King Charles I from 1637

¹⁴ Aidan Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland, 1625–1642* (London, 1966); idem, 'Ireland and the general crisis', *Past and Present*, 48 (1970), pp. 79–99.

¹⁵ See especially Conrad Russell, *The causes of the English civil war* (Oxford, 1990); idem, *The Fall of the British Monarchies, 1637–1642* (Oxford, 1991), at pp. 373–99; the neutrality aspect was best illustrated in John Morrill, *The revolt of the provinces: conservatives and revolutionaries in the English civil war* (Harlow, 1976).

until his eventual execution.¹⁶ Thus, ironically, the one early modern historiography in Europe innocent of pro- and anti-Marxist discourse was that which did most to discredit the socio-economic explanations for the outbreak of the English civil war that had dominated writing on the subject since 1912.¹⁷

While distinguished books by Kearney and Clarke enhanced the standing of Irish history writing for the early- and mid-seventeenth century, international scholars paid but polite attention to subsequent events in Ireland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries other than when these could be seen to have impinged directly upon happenings elsewhere. Thus, the excellent books by J. G. Simms on the Irish aspect of the Jacobite/Williamite struggle attracted some attention from specialists in Dutch and French, no less than in British and Irish, history because of its obvious pertinence to developments in these countries. Most scholars working on colonial British America also remained curious about the constitutional relationship between Ireland and Britain during the eighteenth century, and this extended to an interest in the economic and political disputes to which the uncertainty in that relationship gave rise. Otherwise, the scholarly world remained indifferent to publications concerning Ireland of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁸

Historians of Tudor England also retained but a faint interest in happenings in Ireland. On the other hand, probably because of the institutional links that had been established by the generation of the 1930s, most of those writing on sixteenth-century Ireland deferred to what was being written on England, even to the point of permitting historians of England to dictate their agenda. Thus, as was noted, Edwards and Moody, alone and together, promoted the study of parliament in early modern Ireland in parallel with what was then being written on the history of parliament in England. In similar fashion, Newport White, and subsequently both Brendan Bradshaw and Ciaran Brady, analysed the distribution of secularized monastic land in the areas controlled by crown government in Ireland, and speculated on the socio-political consequences of this reallocation of property, in the same way that historians of England had studied the significance of the confiscation of monastic land there.¹⁹ Then both Brendan Bradshaw and Steven Ellis investigated the influence exerted by Thomas Cromwell on Irish affairs in pursuance of the investigation by G. R. Elton of the role of Cromwell in England, and Bradshaw further proceeded to conjure up an Irish constitutional revolution of the sixteenth century to match Elton's Tudor revolution in government.²⁰ More recently, Ciaran Brady has attributed the

¹⁶ See especially David Stevenson, *Scottish covenanters and Irish confederates: Scottish-Irish relations in the mid-seventeenth-century* (Belfast, 1981); ch. 3, of J. C. Beckett, *The making of modern Ireland* (London, 1966), was entitled 'The war of the three kingdoms'.

¹⁷ 1912 was the publication date of R. H. Tawney, *The agrarian problem in the sixteenth century* (London, 1912), from which this debate emanated.

¹⁸ J. G. Simms, *The Williamite confiscation of Ireland, 1690-1703* (London, 1956); idem, *Jacobite Ireland, 1685-1691* (London, 1969); an exception to this generalization is Caroline Robbins, *The eighteenth-century commonwealth man* (Cambridge, MA, 1959), which gave much attention to Scottish and to Irish events and publications.

¹⁹ Newport B. White, *The extents of Irish monastic possessions, 1540-1541* (Dublin, 1943); Brendan Bradshaw, *The dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1974); Ciaran Brady, 'The government of Ireland, 1540-1583' (PhD thesis, University of Dublin, 1980); the earlier section of the Brady thesis, treating of the distribution of Irish monastic possessions, does not feature in the revised work published as Ciaran Brady, *The chief governors: the rise and fall of reform government in Tudor Ireland, 1536-1588* (Cambridge, 1994).

²⁰ Brendan Bradshaw, 'Cromwellian reform and the origins of the Kildare rebellion', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 27 (1977), pp. 69-93; S. G. Ellis, 'Thomas Cromwell and Ireland,

growing harshness of Elizabethan rule in Ireland to his reading of what historians of Tudor England have pronounced on the decline of humanist reform in England, and Colm Lennon's appraisal of developments in Tudor Ireland has followed that lead.²¹

The more historians of Ireland linked their inquiry to what was being undertaken on the history of England, the more their publications were cited in bibliographies on Tudor England, with a consequent increase in reference to events in Ireland in general accounts of Tudor England.²² To this extent, historians of Tudor England of the past half-century have endorsed the academic quality of the work being published on sixteenth-century Ireland, but few have found reason to modify their conclusions in the light of Irish realities as did Wedgwood in her re-appraisal of the move towards civil war in seventeenth-century England. Thus, the powerful article by D. B. Quinn, 'Henry VIII and Ireland, 1529–1534', that challenged some aspects of Elton's thesis on a Tudor revolution in government, was never responded to by Elton, and neither was it mentioned by those historians who later questioned the Elton thesis.²³

Such aloofness is hardly surprising since those who came to dominate the English historical profession during the 1950s and 1960s, and most especially those of them who were Tudor historians, were satisfied that they had little to learn from countries with advanced historiographies much less from a country where professional history was in its infancy. Furthermore, they were committed to the notion that a historical pedigree for English exceptionalism could be traced into the antique past, and could be witnessed in its most strident form after Henry VIII had severed the connection with Rome. While Sir John Neale reigned supreme, the interest of Tudor historians was focused on what was considered to be the precocious nature of the English parliament, and especially of the House of Commons, and he spared attention for events beyond England's shores only to marvel that Elizabethan England had remained free of the bitter politico-religious strife that had racked the societies of her immediate neighbours, especially France, Flanders, and Scotland.²⁴ Once professional dominance moved from Neale to Sir Geoffrey Elton and from London to Cambridge, the spotlight was shifted to the means by which the reformation was enforced, and to how the reformation progressed in particular areas; to the politics of the English court, and, by extension to the political function of the House of Lords; and, more generally, to the supposedly unique manner in which England was governed,

1532–1540', *Historical Journal*, 23 (1980), pp. 497–519; G. R. Elton, *The Tudor revolution in government* (Cambridge, 1953); Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish constitutional revolution of the sixteenth century* (Cambridge, 1979).

²¹ Ciaran Brady, 'Spenser's Irish crisis: humanism and experience in the 1590s', *Past and Present*, 111 (1986), pp. 17–49; Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-century Ireland: the incomplete conquest* (Dublin, 1994).

²² See, for example, the extensive treatment of events in Ireland in Susan Brigden, *New worlds, lost worlds: the rule of the Tudors, 1485–1603* (London, 2000).

²³ Elton, *Tudor revolution*; D. B. Quinn, 'Henry VIII and Ireland, 1529–34', *Irish Historical Studies*, 12 (1960–1), pp. 318–44; G. L. Harris and Penry Williams, 'A revolution in Tudor history?', *Past and Present*, 25 (1963), pp. 3–58; J. P. Cooper, 'A revolution in Tudor history?', *Past and Present*, 26 (1963), pp. 110–12; G. R. Elton, 'The Tudor revolution: a reply', *Past and Present*, 29 (1964), pp. 26–49; G. L. Harris and Penry Williams, 'A revolution in Tudor history?', *Past and Present*, 31 (1965), pp. 87–96; G. R. Elton, 'A revolution in Tudor history', *Past and Present*, no. 32 (1965), pp. 103–9; C. Coleman and D. Starkey, eds., *Revolution reassessed: revisions in the history of Tudor government and administration* (Oxford, 1986).

²⁴ J. E. Neale, *The Elizabethan house of commons* (London, 1949); idem, *Elizabeth I and her parliaments* (London, 1953); idem, *The age of Catherine de Medici, and other Elizabethan essays* (London, 1965).

following upon Elton's very own Tudor revolution in government.²⁵ As his career advanced, Elton believed himself to be fostering different priorities from Neale (who, incidentally, taught Elton at London) in seeking to expunge teleology from writing on Tudor England. Therefore, Elton was especially energetic in chastising those (mostly of a Marxian hue) who persisted in seeking for the roots of the seventeenth-century English civil war in Tudor times. Moreover, in pursuing this vendetta, Elton came to doubt the merit of all social history, and was dubious of the influence of the *Annales* school, and its English-language admirers.

Both Neale and Elton took cognizance of developments in sixteenth-century Ireland, and both welcomed students and scholars who would delineate, to their satisfaction, the connection between events in England and Ireland during the reigns of successive Tudor monarchs. More significantly, Elton came to appreciate that Queen Elizabeth's military involvement with Ireland left her Stuart successors chronically short of money. For the seventeenth century, several English (and some Scottish) historians accorded the supreme accolade to Irish scholarship by themselves engaging in and directing their post-graduate students to research on Irish topics.²⁶ More generally, the academic link between historians in Ireland and those in England that resulted from the London association of the 1930s was subsequently reinforced by fresh Irish connections with the history school at Cambridge where some Irish history graduates, who would subsequently make their careers in Irish universities, enrolled for post-graduate studies. Moreover, some distinguished history graduates of Cambridge were appointed to junior positions in Irish universities. These various links proved beneficial for the study of early modern history in Ireland in many respects, besides those already mentioned, but a negative consequence for some historians of early modern Ireland was that their principal (and in many instances their sole) overseas contacts were with historians who were English nationalists, many of them suspicious of methodological innovation.

The narrowing of the focus of those historians who came to dominate the study of early modern England also served to cut adrift those engaged in what was variously called the history of colonial America or the history of English overseas expansion. The latter nomenclature was more favoured in English academic circles where, from the days of Froude and Seeley, each a regius professor of history in the later-nineteenth century, to those of A. L. Rowse in the mid-twentieth century, the derring-do of English sea-dogs was of prime interest to scholars who wished to trace the origins of Britain's subsequent imperial greatness to the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and Henry VIII. Historians in North American universities of the same era were more interested in the experience of European settlement in the Americas and treated the history of the colonial period as little more than an extension of English history, seeking for the English origins of American legal,

²⁵ G. R. Elton, *Policy and police: the enforcement of the reformation in the age of Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972); idem, *Reform and reformation: England, 1509–1558* (London, 1977); idem, *The Tudor constitution: documents and commentary* (Cambridge, 1960); E. W. Ives, *Faction in Tudor England* (London, 1986); David Starkey, et al., eds., *The English court from the wars of the roses to the civil war* (Harlow, 1987); note also the popularity among historians, at the time of its publication, of Alan Macfarlane, *The origins of English individualism: the family, property and social transition* (Oxford, 1978), a work of historical anthropology.

²⁶ Besides the work of Terence Ranger and J. P. Cooper already mentioned, see T. C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland: English government and reform in Ireland, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 1975); Stevenson, *Scottish covenanter and Irish confederates*.

representative, and political institutions, or linking puritanism in New England with that in England.²⁷ Both preoccupations obviously fell foul of Elton's condemnation of teleology, but the connection was also weakened because those political historians who, during the 1960s, came to dominate scholarly work on early modern England had scant interest in overseas enterprise.

To an extent the connection with the history of colonial America that was being severed by political historians of England was re-established by a group of scholars concerned with the social history of early modern England. Previous to the 1960s, most social historians of England, as was noted, had been preoccupied with discerning the socio-economic origins of the English civil war. As these latter became disenchanted by the doubts being cast by revisionists on the validity of this pursuit, their more venturesome members began to investigate the population history of England and Wales during the early modern centuries, and to consider how English society had functioned at the local level in pre-industrial times.²⁸ These projects were obviously inspired by French work on parish records, and this embrace of French methods may have further isolated English social historians professionally within their own country where political history reigned supreme. If it did so, it earned them new friends among a younger generation of historians of colonial America who realized that the rich documentary sources that had survived from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lent themselves to the re-constitution of the settler population of North America, especially in New England towns. Then, on the English side, it was quickly realized that such caches of documents might enable English social historians to surpass the French, because, as Peter Laslett crowed triumphantly, English society might now be studied 'not only *in situ*, but also as it became removed, it would seem almost for experimental purposes, 3,000 miles across the sea into the American wilderness'. And this mutual recognition and admiration generated an outpouring of community studies based principally on demographic sources for New England towns which, within the historical profession in the United States, earned a standing for the history of colonial America – increasingly referred to during the 1980s and 1990s as colonial British America – that it had never previously enjoyed.²⁹

No such life line was provided, during the 1960s, to those engaged upon the history of early modern Ireland, a subject that has been generally neglected by social and economic

²⁷ For the most influential work from the 'Imperial School' see Charles M. Andrews, *The colonial period of American history* (4 vols., New Haven, CT, 1934–8); for New England links with English puritanism see Perry Miller, *The New England mind: the seventeenth century* (New York, 1939); idem, *The New England mind: from colony to province* (New York, 1953).

²⁸ The culmination of the demographic effort was E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The population history of England and Wales, 1541–1871: a reconstruction* (London, 1981); and for the most influential study of the functioning of early modern society see Keith Wrightson, *English Society: 1580–1680* (London, 1982).

²⁹ Peter Laslett, *The world we have lost* (London, 1965), p. 253; the most frequently cited examples of New England community studies are John Demos, *A little commonwealth: family life in Plymouth colony* (Oxford, 1970); Philip J. Greven, *Four generations: population, land and family in colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, NY, 1970); Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England town: the first hundred years: Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636–1736* (New York, 1970); Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable kingdoms: New England towns in the eighteenth century* (New York, 1970); more generally on historiographical developments, with associated bibliographic citations, see Nicholas Canny, 'Writing Atlantic history, or reconfiguring the history of colonial British America', *Journal of American History*, 86 (1999), pp. 1093–114.

historians of England.³⁰ This is remarkable considering that altogether more people from Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales combined) migrated to Ireland than to North America from the late sixteenth to the close of the seventeenth century, and that more concerted efforts were made there, than in any American location, to re-constitute English society in a consciously experimental mode.³¹ Therefore, the only scholars whose work attracted a significant extra-Irish readership to the history of early modern Ireland were, for the sixteenth-century, D. B. Quinn who linked developments in Ireland both to those in England and to England's efforts overseas, and, for the seventeenth century, Hugh Kearney and Aidan Clarke who demonstrated the relationship between events in Ireland and those in England, Scotland, and continental Europe.³²

While it is possible, with the benefit of hindsight, to identify those who earned international standing for writing on the history of early modern Ireland, not least by linking it with broader issues, we must note that, in the case of Quinn, he was always operating from the margins and never won general recognition for his work until after his formal retirement in 1976. This can be attributed to many factors; his continued commitment to the politics of the left, his location at Liverpool rather than at London or Oxford or Cambridge, and, more particularly, to the fact that several of his major publications did not appear until he, with the assistance of research associates, brought them to perfection after he had retired from a heavy teaching and administrative schedule at Liverpool. It is also true that when Quinn transferred his primary interest from Irish history to the history of England's overseas expansion he was, by the standards of mainstream historiography in England, exchanging one marginal interest for another. Moreover, where most younger scholars of colonial America were concerned, Quinn's work ended where theirs began, and Quinn never engaged in exercises of demographic re-constitution that the young North American scholars of the 1970s championed. None the less, the work that Quinn pursued doggedly was encouraged by some of the more influential figures in American colonial history including Samuel Eliot Morison and Bernard Bailyn at Harvard, Carl Bridenbaugh at Brown, and Edmund Morgan at Yale.

Quinn more than justified the faith that was placed in him in several respects. First, his investigation of English, and more general European, ventures into the Atlantic from pre-Columban times provided those who might otherwise have begun their narratives with the Jamestown or Mayflower landings with a pre-history of European engagement with the

³⁰ See, for example, Peter Clark, *English provincial society from the reformation to the revolution: religion, politics and society in Kent, 1500–1640* (Hassocks, 1977); here, in what set out to be a comprehensive study of Kentish society at home and abroad, no reference was made to Richard Boyle, subsequent earl of Cork, who was not only the person who became the wealthiest Kentish person of his generation but was one who maintained regular correspondence with several of the Kentish characters who feature prominently in the book. For more recent silence on the Irish dimension see Keith Wrightson, *Earthly necessities: economic lives in early modern Britain* (New Haven, CT, 2000); this latter broke new ground in measuring English against Scottish conditions but it ignored Ireland despite the altogether closer integration of the Irish with the English economy, and despite the fact that Ireland was the most popular destination for British emigrants during the centuries that Wrightson studies. This oversight has been partly repaired by the essays, including one by Keith Wrightson, in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world, 1500–1800* (London, 2002), at pp. 133–53.

³¹ Nicholas Canny, ed., *Europeans on the move: studies on European migration, 1500–1800* (Oxford, 1994); idem, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1640* (Oxford, 2001).

³² Among those following in the tradition of Kearney and Clarke are Stevenson, *Scottish covenants and Irish confederates*; Michael Perceval Maxwell, *The outbreak of the Irish rebellion of 1641* (Dublin, 1994); Jane Ohlmeyer, ed., *Ireland: from independence to occupation, 1641–1660* (Cambridge, 1995).

Atlantic. This showed that the seventeenth-century disembarkations were as experimental as any of the many previous abortive ventures, stretching from the Atlantic coast of Canada to the Amazon basin, that Quinn had brought to life.³³ Another fundamental insight was that despite the rivalry, and even conflict, which developed between English mariners and those of other European nationalities who were involved in similar enterprises in the Atlantic, each came to learn and depend on the other to the extent that we can speak of them as participants in a collective European enterprise of discovery in the Atlantic.³⁴ Quinn's writings also showed just how various these ventures were, ranging from fishing off the coast of Newfoundland to piracy in the Caribbean, and involving a corresponding number of cultural encounters with peoples with whom the English and other European adventurers had had little previous contact. This led to Quinn's analysis of such interactions which, as with the dealings of Thomas Hariot and John White with the native population who awaited them on Roanoke Island, Quinn was able to relate to the previous scientific knowledge and expectation of the European observers.³⁵ Quinn also in the course of public lecturing and publishing won a large popular audience for his subject on both sides of the Atlantic, including members of the Hakluyt society and educated lay people, resident in communities stretching from the far north of Canada to the coast of Florida, who were enlivened by what he explained of little known efforts at European settlement on their shores during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.³⁶

The scholarship of Quinn gave historians of European, and more specifically of English, settlement in the Americas one further reason to take account of the variety that continued to characterize all settler communities in North America long after the opening decades of the seventeenth century which was Quinn's terminal point. Thus as Edmund Morgan sought, in 1976, to re-constitute English settler society in colonial Virginia, after the manner of those working on English society in colonial New England towns, he anchored his story in what Quinn had uncovered of the earlier attempted settlement on Roanoke Island.³⁷ Those who extended their range of inquiry to take account of English, and general European, experiments at settlement on the lesser islands of the West Indies also had occasion to refer back to what Quinn, and his student K. R. Andrews, had divulged of previous European engagement with those islands.³⁸ And historians who treated of such mundane pursuits as fishing off the Newfoundland banks and the coast of New England, or trading in animal furs in the colder climes of North America, also had occasion to draw upon Quinn's painstaking description of the skills required for all who undertook such pursuits, as also the expertise required of ship-builders, map-makers, instrument-makers, and navigators during the Age of Exploration.³⁹ Those who wanted to broaden the scope

³³ D. B. Quinn, *England and the discovery of America* (London and New York, 1974).

³⁴ Note the attention to Spanish documentation in D. B. Quinn, with Alison Quinn and Susan Hilliard, eds., *New American world: a documentary history of north America to 1612* (5 vols., New York, 1979).

³⁵ Paul Hulton and D. B. Quinn, eds., *The American drawings of John White, 1577-1590* (London, 1964); D. B. Quinn, 'Set faire for Roanoke': *voyages and colonies, 1584-1606* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985).

³⁶ There is a comprehensive bibliography of the publications of David Quinn previous to 1976 and an appraisal of his career to that date in K. R. Andrews, N. P. Canny, and P. E. H. Hair, eds., *The westward enterprise: English activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650* (Liverpool, 1978).

³⁷ E. S. Morgan, *American slavery: American freedom: the ordeal of colonial Virginia* (New York, 1976).

³⁸ K. R. Andrews, *Elizabethan privateering: English privateering during the Spanish war, 1585-1603* (Cambridge, 1964); see also the subsequent volume by K. R. Andrews, *Trade, plunder, and settlement: maritime enterprise and the genesis of the British empire, 1480-1630* (Cambridge, 1984).

³⁹ D. B. Quinn, *North America: from earliest discovery to first settlement* (New York, 1975).

of their inquiry to treat of encounters in the Americas between Europeans and either American Indians or African slaves also looked to Quinn's investigation of the experience on Roanoke as a model of how to treat such highly charged subjects, and Joyce Chaplin's recent book on the interconnection between scientific knowledge and English colonization is clearly indebted to the pioneering work of Quinn.⁴⁰ Perhaps more important than all of these particular influences, Quinn's publications made the case that the communities that came into being in most of England's North American colonies during the colonial period were, essentially, amalgams of native Americans and newcomers (Africans as well as Europeans) rather than transplanted elements of Old World societies as was implied in the once-fashionable community studies.

Historians of early modern Ireland who gave thought to Quinn's publications, and especially to his insightful book *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, were similarly impressed that their subject concerned far more than accounts of the attempted settlement there of segments of England's and Scotland's populations. Rather, as he suggested, events in Ireland were modulated by war, expropriation, and the emergence of cultural polarities between the would-be settlers and those faced with dispossession.⁴¹

Implicit within the better academic scholarship on Ireland, and explicit in the work of another group of scholars who worked parallel to, and sometimes in tandem with, academic historians was the proposition that the English (or after 1603 the British) interest in Ireland was complicated by occasional interference and ideas from continental Europe. Most who followed this line of inquiry during the 1950s and 1960s, or even during the 1970s and 1980s, were Catholic priests who had spent time on the continent, and were following in a nineteenth-century tradition of recalling to memory the lives of those Irish seminarians who, having been trained in counter-reformation educational centres such as Douai, Salamanca, Bordeaux, and Louvain, put their lives at risk to engage in missionary work aimed at retaining the allegiance of the population to the Catholic faith against the express wishes of the Protestant authorities. Much of this scholarship was more devotional than critical, but even this resulted in important gleanings from continental archives.⁴² At the same time, the more accomplished of these scholars notably Donal Cregan and Patrick Corish – each of whom had studied with Dudley Edwards at University College, Dublin – made a unique contribution to the understanding of continental Catholic influence on events in early modern Ireland that is only now being appreciated by younger historians who do not necessarily share the spiritual purpose of its progenitors.⁴³

⁴⁰ In these respects see the publications of Karen O. Kupperman, a loyal devotee of Quinn, and, more recently, see Joyce E. Chaplin, *Subject matter: technology, the body, and science on the American frontier* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

⁴¹ Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*.

⁴² See the documentary compilation *Collectanea Hibernica: Sources for Irish History* (Dublin, 1958–); Brendan Jennings, ed., *Wild geese in Spanish Flanders, 1582–1700* (Dublin, 1964); Micheline Kerney Walsh, ed., *'Destruction by peace': Hugh O'Neill after Kinsale* (Armagh, 1986); James Hogan, mentioned in n. 6 above, was exceptional among those who cultivated the continental connection in not being a priest, and Micheline Kerney Walsh in being a woman, albeit one who spent some of her childhood in Franco's Spain to which her father was Irish ambassador.

⁴³ Donal Cregan, 'The social and cultural background of a counter-reformation episcopate, 1618–60', in Art Cosgrove and Donal McCartney, eds., *Studies in Irish history: presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin, 1979); P. J. Corish, 'The origins of Catholic nationalism', in P. J. Corish ed., *History of Irish Catholicism*, III (Dublin, 1968), pp. 1–64; J. J. Silke, 'Primate Peter Lombard and Hugh O'Neill', *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 26 (1959), pp. 15–30; Jerrold Casway, *Owen Roe O'Neill and the struggle for Catholic Ireland* (Philadelphia, 1984); Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic reformation in Ireland: the mission of Rinuccini*,

Recognition of the worth of this Catholic scholarship came belatedly because most of those scholars who persisted with the study of early modern Ireland continued, after the example of Moody and Edwards, either to trace connections between events in England and Ireland, or to continue with the quest for the roots of nineteenth-century Irish nationalism. The second of these tasks – including that of forging links between Irish nationalism of the nineteenth century and colonial nationalism of the eighteenth – has been under attack for the past two decades, from, among others, those who describe themselves as practitioners of New British History.⁴⁴

Most who identified with this self-proclaimed new subject were political historians who were party to the discrediting of the whig and Marxian grand narratives that had long given shape to the history of England. It is, therefore, unsurprising that they should have encouraged the discarding of what they identified as the Irish and Scottish equivalents of whig history. On the positive side, these took a special interest in those moments, such as the outbreak of the English civil war (known increasingly as the War, or Wars, of the Three Kingdoms), or the Jacobite–Williamite conflict, when the history of the several Stuart jurisdictions were obviously interlinked, and they set out to displace nationally focused histories of England, Scotland, and Ireland with a fresh narrative woven from developments within the three jurisdictions.⁴⁵

This historical fashion has been beneficial for political historians of England because it has obliged all of them (rather than just the dedicated few) to familiarize themselves with literature on the histories of Ireland and Scotland while remaining expert on the primary and secondary sources concerning the history of England. This additional expertise has unquestionably enriched the presentation of political developments in England, not least because it has encouraged comparative studies. The impact of New British History has proven less dramatic for writing on the histories of Scotland and Ireland because, at a professional level, historians of those countries had already been keeping abreast of, and relating their findings to, historical writing on England. However, historians of both Scotland and Ireland were encouraged by this new priority to become acquainted with historical writing on each other's country. This expansion of horizons was to prove beneficial for all concerned but the ultimate bonus of the New British History was that it brought greater attention to history writing on Scotland which had attained a high

1645–1649 (Oxford, 2002); Bernadette Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000); a related work is Breandan Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar: na Stiobhartaigh agus an t-aos léinn, 1603–1788* (Dublin, 1996).

⁴⁴ This approach has been attacked even more emphatically in S. J. Connolly, *Religion, law, and power: the making of Protestant Ireland, 1660–1760* (Oxford, 1992).

⁴⁵ For some pertinent examples, or advocacy, of New British History see Roger A. Mason, ed., *Scotland and England, 1286–1815* (Edinburgh, 1987); John Morrill, ed., *The Scottish national covenant in its British context* (Edinburgh, 1990); Steven Ellis and Sarah Barber, eds., *Conquest and union: fashioning a British state, 1485–1725* (London, 1995); Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history* (London, 1995); Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill, eds., *The British problem, c. 1534–1707* (London, 1996); Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, eds., *British consciousness and identity: the making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge, 1998); most who invoke the subject refer back to J. G. A. Pocock, 'British history: a plea for a new subject', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 8 (1974), pp. 3–21; see also Hugh Kearney, *The British isles: a history of four nations* (Cambridge, 1989); in many respects the recent book that makes the most significant contribution to New British History is one that assumes no such pretensions, Michael J. Braddick, *State formation in early modern England, c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2000).

academic standard independently of the professionalization of the subject in England. More particularly, Scottish history writing had been largely maintained by Scottish publishing houses and by excellent documentary compilations that had been sustained by private as well as public funding since the nineteenth century.⁴⁶

On the negative side, the New British History proved constricting for the study of Irish and Scottish history because its sponsors, coming mostly from backgrounds in English political history, privileged political over social and economic history which had not been customary in the writing of Irish or Scottish history. This bias would explain why the proponents of New British History made scant reference to the comparison between the economic experiences of Ireland and Scotland through the early modern and modern centuries that had been promoted, principally by L. M. Cullen and T. C. Smout, in a sequence of published conference proceedings.⁴⁷ Another distortion that New British History visited upon history writing on Ireland and Scotland was that it encouraged scholars to look for similarities and downplay differences between the historical experience of their respective countries and that of England. This desire to assume, if not prove, similarity, at least for the early modern period, has brought its practitioners to attribute an integrity to Britain and Ireland as a historical and political unit that exceeded the reality. Moreover, by employing the solecism ‘the British Isles’ (a locution that had been studiously avoided by Irish historians of previous generations, including those who were Ulster Unionists) to lend credibility to this supposed integrity, they alienated that very Irish audience they should have been seeking to influence.⁴⁸ Then also, by accentuating the pan-insular dimension of their subject, the authors of New British History downplayed the fundamentally important contact with continental Europe that was maintained, and even expanded upon, by particular elements from within each of the three kingdoms during this historical era. The outcome, in the words of Allan Macinnes, has been ‘an overwhelmingly insular and introspective historiography’. Therefore, the New British History can be identified as a manifestation of the Euro-scepticism that was such a strident feature of British political life at the moment of its birth, and, like Euro-scepticism, it overlooks the linguistic skills necessary to study either what was happening within Britain and Ireland during the early modern period or the relationship with continental Europe fostered by some influential people from all of the jurisdictions of the British monarchy.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ A consideration of Scottish historiography is beyond the scope of this review, but early modern scholars had no excuse to remain ignorant of literature on Scotland after the publication of Jenny Wormald, *Court, kirk and community: Scotland, 1470–1625* (London, 1981).

⁴⁷ L. M. Cullen and T. C. Smout, eds., *Comparative aspects of Scottish and Irish economic and social history, 1600–1900* (Edinburgh, 1977); T. M. Devine and David Dickson, eds., *Ireland and Scotland, 1600–1850: parallels and contrasts in economic and social development, 1600–1850* (Edinburgh, 1983).

⁴⁸ Britain and Ireland is the correct usage when the two islands are being described as a single political unit as they were to become within the Union of Great Britain and Ireland from 1801 to 1922. There are various politically correct locutions in vogue, notably ‘these islands’ and the ‘Atlantic archipelago’, but, apart from their imprecision, these too infer a greater political and social cohesion than existed; unionist usage is now frequently less sensitive than previously, producing, especially in Northern Ireland, the ultimate oxymoron, the ‘British mainland’.

⁴⁹ The Macinnes quote comes from Allan I. Macinnes, ‘The multiple kingdoms of Britain and Ireland: the “British problem”’, in Barry Coward, ed., *A companion to Stuart Britain* (Malden, MA, and Oxford, 2003), pp. 3–25, at p. 3; for my earlier critique of New British History see Nicholas Canny, ‘Irish, Scottish and Welsh responses to centralization, c. 1530–c. 1640: a comparative perspective’, in Grant and Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom?*, pp. 147–69.

The one characteristic of the New British History that does not conform with Euro-scepticism in its political form is that its authors – unlike Euro-sceptics who exude nostalgia for lost empire and cherish Britain's 'special relationship' with the United States – devote as little attention to the extra-European endeavours of explorers and traders from Britain and Ireland, as did the authors of the English history whose work the New British historians wish to supersede. The narration of this overseas story, which, as was noted, was invoked by historians of a previous age to laud the beginnings of Britain's imperial greatness, had, for several decades, been the property of literary scholars until exponents of Atlantic History recovered it for their discipline. These latter have already proven themselves to be as methodologically and geographically outward-looking as exponents of New British History are insular, as they seek to establish whether the Atlantic Ocean, like the Mediterranean, as imagined by Fernand Braudel, or the Indian Ocean, as depicted by K. N. Chaudhuri and Satish Chandra, had served more to bring together people of vastly different cultures than to separate them.⁵⁰

It will be evident from this definition that Atlantic History is necessarily comparative history, with historians re-constituting the African slave trade as it was pursued on the Atlantic by adventurers of various European backgrounds, or seeking to envision the human environments and street-scapes that were constructed in different locations in the Atlantic by various European colonists. Comparing shipping routes, sailing techniques, the methods used for drying and curing fish and hides, the making of maps, and the means by which ships were constructed in different European countries, have all provided grist to the mill of Atlantic historians. These have also been concerned with the flow of free migrants and ideas from several parts of Europe to various destinations in the Americas, and most especially the investigation of the encounters between various European groups and both native Americans and African slaves in several situations in the Atlantic basin. In pursuing their task, historians of the Atlantic have been conscious that the several European participants in this great venture were frequently at war with each other, and that the final shape of the several overseas empires of European powers within the Atlantic basin were determined by peace treaties. For all that, it emerges from the better studies which have been published to date that all who ventured on the Atlantic shared (or quickly came into the possession of) a common fund of knowledge about resource distribution as well as wind and water systems, and that societal forms which emerged in the many conquest communities of the Atlantic were determined more by such variables as climate, resources, and the disease environment than by the nationality or religious persuasion of the conquerors.

Most publications on Atlantic History have focused on the endeavours of adventurers and traders from a particular European country, but many authors have proceeded comparatively and have alluded to happenings within Europe as well as on the high seas. Thus, for example, those who study English involvement with the Atlantic in the sixteenth century are conscious of the extent to which this was stimulated by the politico-religious struggles being fought in Europe. Similarly, those who study British efforts at establishing settlements throughout the Atlantic in the seventeenth century are aware that these endeavours always took second place to imposing a British imprint upon Ireland. For the eighteenth century, authors have linked British enterprise in the Americas both with the financial opportunities that were open to those who won contracts to supply war machines

⁵⁰ The development of this subject is discussed, and the associated bibliography is detailed, in Nicholas Canny, 'Atlantic history: what and why?', *European Review*, 9 (2001), pp. 399–411.

on the European continent and who engaged in slaving and trading on the African coast. As they unfold their findings, historians of the Atlantic make it clear that the participants in these great ventures of the early modern centuries had a mental conception of an Atlantic world even if this world was not defined precisely on the maps they used.⁵¹

The obvious shortcoming of Atlantic History is that it underestimates the extent to which trade and settlement in the Atlantic was linked to simultaneous ventures in Asia. Ultimately, as has been made clear by a succession of historians of the Indian ocean, European trade by an all-water route to Asia could not have been sustained without the lubrication provided by the silver mines of Potósi, or without the re-monetization of China that created a persistent demand for silver throughout Asia at a time when Europe could supply no other goods that were marketable there. European trade with Asia continued to expand partly because an extra market for Asian commodities became available in the American colonies while Atlantic commodities, such as African textiles and West Indian sugar, found a ready market in Asia. Most work on slaving within the Atlantic basin has been studied comparatively, but this Atlantic trade needs, in turn, to be contrasted with slave trading from Africa to Asia. Further work is also required on the deliberate inter-continental exchange of plants for commercial reasons: for example the introduction of the potato and tobacco to Europe and the several experiments at transplanting indigo from its native Gujarat to the British West Indies, and the extension of sugar production to all environments that seemed suited to cane cultivation.⁵²

These qualifications about Atlantic History reiterate the point that there was no geographic limit to human ambition once western people, including all subjects of the British monarchy, became aware of the true extent of the globe, and mastered the technologies that would bring them to the ends of the earth.⁵³ They also reveal that none of the models currently in vogue is entirely suited to the writing of the history of the populations of Britain and Ireland, whether treated in isolation or together. Those practitioners of Atlantic History who open their minds to contacts and influences beyond the Atlantic obviously enjoy an intellectual advantage over New British historians because they understand that historical inquiry cannot be confined within precise geographic boundaries. They also comprehend that a knowledge of a language, or languages, other than English is necessary to historical study on almost any subject. Atlantic historians also appreciate that those who wish to command an audience, whether among university students or a wider public, must address questions that are of interest to people of today's generation. Their subject flourishes, because they touch upon such current preoccupations as the development of international, and even global, trade, and its social and environmental consequences; the positive as well as the negative responses of western peoples to truly foreign environments; and the vexed issue of cross-cultural comprehension. On this last subject all in our profession are indebted to historians of the Atlantic, and of European overseas endeavour

⁵¹ Canny, 'Atlantic history'.

⁵² Horst Pietschmann, *Geschichte des atlantischen Systems, 1580–1830: Ein historischer Versuch zur Erklärung der 'Globalisierung' jenseits nationalgeschichtlicher Perspektiven* (Hamburg, 1998); Kenneth Pomeranz, *The great divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 269–74.

⁵³ Scottish involvement with the Atlantic has now been treated in Alan J. Karras, *Sojourners in the sun: Scottish migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), and in David Armitage, *The ideological origins of the British empire* (Cambridge, 2000); the presence of Irish planters, both Protestant and Catholic, in the Americas, especially in the West Indies, awaits its historian, but see Joyce Lorimer, ed., *English and Irish settlement on the river Amazon, 1550–1646* (London, 1989); Thomas M. Truxes, *Irish American trade, 1660–1783* (Cambridge, 1988).

more generally, for the recovery to historical study of a subject that had become dominated by literary scholars; many of them more concerned to raise the political and social consciences of the present generation than to shed light on events in past centuries.

This appraisal infers that Atlantic History is on more firm ground than either current historical work on Ireland or Britain studied in isolation, or that devoted to the history of the two islands fused into the New British History hybrid. It also seems to enjoy a distinct advantage over these historiographies because most of its practitioners address fresh questions rather than seek further evidence to sustain postures in debates that have been long since resolved. Above all, the success that Atlantic History is currently enjoying should persuade more traditional historians of Britain and Ireland to focus on people rather than places as they construct the history of the people who were born in, and moved into, out of, between, and beyond those two islands during centuries of considerable turmoil. If they do so they will take more account, than is usual, of overseas trade and settlement that, more than any other factor, explains the increasing importance of Britain and Ireland, relative to other countries in Europe as the early modern centuries proceeded.⁵⁴

A focus on people and their movements would also bring all historians of places, whether of Britain and Ireland or of the Atlantic basin, to accept that their subject is inextricably linked with developments on continental Europe and further afield. This proposition is sustained by the fact that the historical writing on early modern Ireland and Britain which has contributed most to new knowledge in recent decades has been that linking developments in England, Scotland, and Ireland to events on continental Europe. Here the writings of Quentin Skinner, and of other historians of political thought, have been exemplary, while, in political history, the publications of Patrick Collinson, treating of the advance of Protestantism in England, have always been written with an eye to developments on the European continent. Similarly, the rift between puritans and Arminians that developed within the English church of the seventeenth century has been made more intelligible by scholars who have related it to theological contention in the Netherlands.⁵⁵ Tracing past links with the Netherlands has proven fruitful not only because Protestant divines in England and Scotland of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries kept abreast of Dutch theological debates, but also because individuals from Britain attended at Dutch synods where they would have heard heated deliberations, and witnessed not so much altars being stripped (to employ Eamon Duffy's metaphor) as altars being smashed to pieces. Visitors would also have seen churches being refurbished so that congregations would sit facing the pulpit, many with their backs to where the high altars had once stood. Those who took time from synod discussions to make the short journey from Dordrecht to Delft would have further witnessed an impressive marble tomb to the martyred William the Silent being erected on the foundations of the high altar.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Nicholas Canny, 'Asia, the Atlantic, and the subjects of the British monarchy', in Coward, ed., *A companion*, pp. 45–66.

⁵⁵ Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1978), and all his ensuing books; Patrick Collinson *The Elizabethan puritan movement* (London, 1967), and his long succession of books; Nicholas Tyack, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640* (Oxford, 1987); see also M. Van Gelderen, *The political thought of the Dutch revolt, 1555–1590* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁵⁶ The metaphor comes from Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven, CT, 1992); political historians have also derived benefit from consideration of Dutch influences as, for example, Jonathan Scott, *England's troubles: seventeenth-century English political instability in European context* (Cambridge, 2000); Stephen Pincus, *Protestantism and patriotism: ideologies and the making of English foreign policy* (Cambridge, 1996).

While such visual proof of what truly reformed religion might become inspired sincere Protestants from England and Scotland to promote further reform and resist backsliding, so also did the splendour of Catholic worship in those places where the counter-reformation had succeeded make it clear to monarchists in both England and Scotland that the spartan worship which obtained in their own jurisdictions was not compatible with kingly rule.⁵⁷ Recent research on all jurisdictions of the British monarch has shown that significant numbers from several social ranks in each of these multiple kingdoms had direct experience of life in several parts of the European continent, although we have yet to learn how precisely these experiences influenced their attitudes and behaviour towards their home societies. Historians of Scotland and Ireland, more than those of England, have addressed this question, both in its military and religious dimensions, and historians of continental Europe are now also beginning to devote some attention to the histories of Ireland and Scotland in their European dimensions.⁵⁸ But England also had more extensive and continuous contact with the European continent than that which occurred during the reign of Queen Mary I, which has been studied intensively, and that associated with grand tours, which have received regular attention. The wealth of knowledge that awaits investigation has been revealed for artistic life by the recent re-construction by Jonathan Brown and Sir John Elliott of the paintings that went ultimately to edify the court of King Charles I and the houses of some of his nobles. These were carefully chosen on the continent at three successive interludes by James first duke of Hamilton, by the courtiers who accompanied Prince Charles to Spain in 1623, and by Sir Arthur Hopton and his artistic adviser Giovanni Battista Crescenzi.⁵⁹

It has long been accepted that most English people, besides soldiers, who spent any considerable time on the continent, were those involved in overseas trade, which brought them in touch with a vast array of climates, political organizations, and religious preferences, stretching from Muscovy to Aleppo. Economic historians have always studied the commercial activities of these individuals, but we will never understand the true impact of continental contact on the attitudes of the women and men who spent time abroad until socio-economic historians pool their resources with those who write about religion, high politics, and art.⁶⁰ Increased attention to continental associations should logically be matched with closer study of foreign, or seemingly foreign, people who made their homes – permanently or temporarily – in England, Scotland, and Ireland. We already

⁵⁷ This point has been made in relation to civic architecture in Tim Wilks, 'Art, architecture and politics', in Coward, ed., *A companion*, pp. 187–213.

⁵⁸ For Ireland, see Enrique Garcia Hernan, *Irlanda y el Rey Prudente* (Madrid, 2000); Karin Schüller, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Spanien und Irland im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert: Diplomatie, Handel und die soziale Integration katholischer Exulanten* (Münster, 1999); Ute Lotz-Heumann, 'Social control and church discipline in Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in Heinz Schilling, ed., *Institutionen, Instrumente und Akteure sozialer Kontrolle und Disziplinierung im frühneuzeitlichen Europa* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), pp. 275–304; Bianca Ross, *Britannia et Hibernia: Nationale und Kulturelle Identitäten im Irland des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg, 1998); Geoffrey Parker, *The grand strategy of Philip II* (New Haven, CT, 1998); Paul C. Allen, *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica, 1598–1621: the failure of grand strategy* (New Haven, CT 2000).

⁵⁹ Jonathan Brown and John Elliott, eds., *La almoneda del siglo: relaciones artísticas entre España y Gran Bretaña, 1604–1655* (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, 2002); for a more general purview of continental influence on English art see Wilks, 'Art, architecture and politics'.

⁶⁰ The significant numbers who migrated from England to the continent is evident from Alison Games, *Migration and the origins of the English Atlantic world* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); idem, 'Migration', in Armitage and Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world*, pp. 31–50.

know something of Dutch and Flemish communities in East Anglia and Ireland and of Jews in London, but we know less of the Catholic foreign presence in England and its influence and associations.⁶¹ Clusters from France, Spain, and various Mediterranean locations were obviously present in all the major English ports at any given time, not to speak of Irish people from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds, who were undoubtedly the largest, continuing foreign element in London during the early modern period. The Irish also had some representation in almost every community, rural as well as urban, in the west of England and Scotland, and in parts of Wales.⁶²

When account is taken of such factors it will emerge that English society of the early modern period – at least in sizeable towns and in coastal counties – was more culturally heterogeneous than is suggested by the plethora of local studies published over the past half-century, most of which treat only of people born within particular communities. Scotland, apart from its Gallic-speaking population in the highlands and islands, and some Irish immigrants in the western lowlands, was certainly less diverse than England, and the essential divide there, besides the social one, is likely to have been that between Scots people who had remained at home and those who had returned after several years on the continent; usually in intensely Protestant societies. Ireland had a Catholic counterpart to such people, and some Protestants from Ireland also spent some time on the continent, but the principal factor contributing to its greater ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity was that as many as 200,000 people, drawn from both Gaelic Irish and Old English population stocks, lived out their lives on the continent, mostly associated with the Catholic armies of Europe, usually those of Spain and France. These were replaced by something like the same number of immigrants, mostly from England and Scotland but augmented by Dutch, Flemish, and French Protestants. The most conspicuous of these arrivals became owners and farmers of land, but they also included artisans and traders who, by the end of the seventeenth century, had come to dominate the political as well as the commercial life of towns. This persisted even though the vast majority of the population in Ireland were Catholics who sustained contact with their exiled kin on the continent and who, with them, hoped for circumstances under which they might restore Catholicism as the official religion of Ireland and recover some of what had been lost in the confiscations of the recent past.⁶³

If historians of the Atlantic can command the attention of readers in the twenty-first century when they treat of the interaction of people from Britain and Ireland with those in the wider world, it seems reasonable to expect that historians working on a smaller canvas will arouse a similar interest when they investigate the impact of the outside world upon happenings in Britain and Ireland. If such work were to be conducted on a three-kingdom basis it would become evident that the issues which led to conflict within, or between, the

⁶¹ See, for example, the interesting essays, albeit of variable quality, in Randolph Vigne and Charles Littleton, eds., *From strangers to citizens: the integration of immigrant communities in Britain, Ireland, and colonial America, 1550–1750* (Brighton, 2001); and, more particularly, Raingard Eßer, *Niederländische Exulanten im England des 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1996).

⁶² Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, pp. 143–61; the Irish presence in London from 1400 to 1650 is being investigated systematically by David Edwards through a close study of surnames, and he is approaching the conclusion that, until 1600, the Irish community that had established itself there was not only significant numerically but included people who had achieved material success and guild membership; I am grateful to Dr Edwards for this information on a phenomenon that is scarcely mentioned even by specialists on London; see, for example, Susan Brigden, *London and the reformation* (Oxford, 1991).

⁶³ This is one of the themes of Canny, *Making Ireland British*, in which also see the bibliography.

several components of the British monarchy framed by the Union of the Crowns in 1603 were analogous to those provoking friction on continental Europe, with participants from opposing sides receiving sustenance from co-religionists on the continent. Those struggles that crossed jurisdictional boundaries were invariably aspects of wider European conflicts with similarly bloody outcomes. Thus the ferocity of the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland is readily comprehensible when it is identified as part of the Protestant/Catholic conflict that produced the depredations of Parma in the Spanish Netherlands and the atrocities of wars of religion in France, something that becomes all the more clear when we relate the crown intervention in Ireland to England's military intervention in the Netherlands (and more intermittently in France) during the 1580s and 1590s.⁶⁴ The Wars of the Three Kingdoms of the mid-seventeenth century were similarly an insular dimension of the Thirty Years War, and in those encounters where religious and cultural polarities between combatants were most extreme the percentage of the defeated forces left dead on the field of battle matched that of any military outcome on the continent. This was true in Scotland at the battles of Kilsyth (1645) and Philiphaugh (1645) and in Ireland at the battle of Dungan's Hill (1647). The better-known battles of Marston Moor (1644) and Naseby (1645) might have had more consequential consequences for the royalist cause but as military encounters they were gentlemanly affairs where the victors treated their opponents as cultural or social equals and were more concerned to take them prisoners than slaughter them.⁶⁵ The Glorious Revolution with its Jacobite/Williamite aftermath in Ireland was also obviously part of the wider European effort to place limits on the power of Louis XIV of France. However we can fully appreciate the intensity of the struggle and its international dimension by looking to the battle of Aughrim (1691) where the Irish Jacobite army was essentially annihilated in an encounter that had troops from diverse nations in both camps.⁶⁶

This effort to reclaim the histories of Britain and Ireland for European history will not surprise specialists of these individual struggles, but more general accounts of developments in early modern Ireland and Britain (alone or together) give insufficient attention to these wider contexts, and focus instead on what are frequently narrow and even arid historiographical debates. Those who wallow in the contentions of yesteryear place the survival of their subject in jeopardy, since historical endeavour, in this, as in all previous generations, will receive institutional support and attract students and readers, only so long as historians address questions from the past that are of interest to people in the present.

Other scholars have bewailed the decline of interest in early modern history as a subject of research and study in the English-speaking world, and some have prescribed remedies for its loss of status both within the academy or in the popular imagination. Attention has already been given to the endeavours of the practitioners of New British History to rescue the history of Britain and Ireland during the early modern decades by situating it in a pan-insular framework, and account has also been taken of the success of historians of the Atlantic in reviving interest in their subject. Mention has also been made of the

⁶⁴ This was evident to the poet Edmund Spenser on whose political perspective see Canny, *Making Ireland British*, pp. 1–58; on the 1590s see Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion: the outbreak of the nine years war in Tudor Ireland* (Woodbridge, 1993).

⁶⁵ Stevenson, *Scottish covenants and Irish confederates*, pp. 177–9; Pádraig Lenihan, *Confederate Catholics at war, 1641–1649* (Cork, 2001), pp. 197–220; John R. Young, ed., *Celtic dimensions of the British civil wars* (Edinburgh, 1997); Martyn Bennett, *The civil wars in Britain and Ireland, 1638–1651* (Oxford, 1997); Charles Carlton, *Going to the wars: the experience of the British civil wars, 1638–1651* (London, 1992).

⁶⁶ Simms, *Jacobite Ireland*, pp. 217–29.

commendable achievement of historians of political thought in enhancing the international standing of their specialism both by linking their methods to best practice in philosophy and by welding intellectual developments in Britain and Ireland to those in continental Europe. Their work is likely to attain wider recognition when more attention is given to texts by Catholic as well as by Protestant authors from Britain and Ireland, but even its most ardent supporters recognize that their audience is always likely to be an academic one. Yet another group has consciously striven to shore up early modern history by anchoring it to the study of the English renaissance literature, and these have made considerable progress in establishing better standards for the contextualization of texts. However, these implicitly concede that their variety of history holds interest only for academics, albeit those in more than one discipline.⁶⁷ Social historians, as was mentioned, did much to resolve the dilemma of the shrinking audience by establishing beneficial connections both with demographic historians of France and historians of community in colonial British America. These gains were followed up by significant breakthroughs in the reconstruction of mental worlds, most spectacularly in Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic*, a book that inspired similar investigations within the other historiographies discussed in this review.⁶⁸ These advances were followed up by a series of carefully documented micro-studies that, when precisely contextualized, provided unmatched insights into early modern society. Recent efforts to relate the study of English village life during the early modern centuries to that of contemporary peasant communities in countries far-distant from England seems less secure and may contribute more to peasant studies than to historical studies.⁶⁹ There have always been some historians of colonial British America who have followed the most recent fashions in the social history of England, but even their self-indulgences are graced by the fundamental lesson pressed home by D. B. Quinn that account must always be taken of cross-cultural contacts.⁷⁰ Efforts have also been made in recent years to popularize early modern history, most effectively through television presentation. However, if we are to judge from recent excursions by Simon Schama and David Starkey, the medium has mastered the message, since their various programmes have attracted and sustained large audiences only by simplifying their accounts to the point that they contain nothing that might not have been said half-a-century ago besides speculation concerning the private lives of kings and queens.

⁶⁷ See, for example, A. B. Worden, *The sound of virtue: Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan politics* (New Haven, CT, 1996); Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake, eds., *Culture and politics in early Stuart England* (London, 1994).

⁶⁸ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular belief in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (London, 1971); early leads for studies of mental worlds were provided by Alan Macfarlane, *The diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616–1683* (Oxford, 1976); and Paul Seaver, *Wallington's world: a puritan artisan in seventeenth-century London* (Stanford, CA, 1985); the closest analogy in history writing on colonial British America was John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: witchcraft and the culture of early New England* (New York, 1982); the sources for early modern Ireland did not readily lend themselves to such reconstructions but we have now had Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted people: belief and religion in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997); and Clodagh Tait, *Death, burial, and commemoration of the dead in Ireland, 1550–1650* (London, 2002).

⁶⁹ See, for example, Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, eds., *Negotiating power in early modern society: order, hierarchy and subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001).

⁷⁰ Thus the special issue of the *William and Mary Quarterly*, 60, no. 1 (2003), devoted to the theme 'Sexuality in early America', is, in my opinion, redeemed by the inclusion of Jennifer M. Spear, 'Colonial intimacies: legislating sex in French Louisiana', pp. 75–98.

In so far as this article is prescribing something new it is in suggesting that the focus of historians must always be on people rather than places, and that they must disregard both political boundaries and historiographical orthodoxies whenever these act as barriers to understanding how the subjects of their study lived their lives. By doing so historians will become more aware that people born in the various parts of Britain and Ireland were more geographically mobile and more intellectually venturesome than was previously thought, and that significant numbers of 'strangers', or people who had spent considerable time in foreign places, were present in all parts of the jurisdictions at any time during the early modern centuries. Following from this it would seem that an investigation into communal interactions between the various peoples in all three kingdoms, especially in moments of crisis, is one subject that is certain to appear relevant to readers and students of the twenty-first century. So also is the study of the connections established by those who lived out their lives in Ireland or Britain with factions or governments on the continent of Europe, including their kin in exile, especially at moments of crisis. Another issue that has always commanded popular interest is the contact established first by people from England, and later by some from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, with the world outside Europe. This, as was noted, was primarily an Atlantic phenomenon for the early modern centuries, but it is equally evident that ventures on the Atlantic were closely intertwined both with trade to continental Europe and with voyages to Asia. In this context it is significant that when the Scots recognized the economic benefit of such overseas contacts they aspired to establish their entrepôt at the straits of Darien with a view to controlling trade to Asia by the Pacific as well as trade on the Atlantic.⁷¹ Economic historians will immediately recognize the importance of such inquiry, because they have always cherished data concerning imports, exports, and re-exports. But the economic history of the future will, if it is to continue to command attention, also address questions concerning the consequences for the natural environment, no less than for indigenous people, of Europeans gaining access to parts of the world previously beyond their reach. These issues may seem novel, or even trivial, to some established historians but they can be assured that the sources and methods that will lead to their resolution have been identified, long since, by Joan Thirsk and her associates who have investigated the agrarian history of England and Wales during the early modern centuries.⁷²

Thus on the economic no less than the social and political fronts, no major methodological innovation in the writing of the histories of Ireland, Britain, and the wider world is called for. Rather, it is my view that the salvation and advancement of the historical strands that have been discussed in this review rely principally on the broadening of the focus of all historians of the early modern period, whether of Britain, Ireland, or the Atlantic, so that we can provide answers to questions about the past about which people who live in a global age are curious. If they are to satisfy this curiosity scholars and students will have to read and research more extensively than many have been accustomed to do, even if this is at the expense of the in-depth reading that has previously characterized much teaching and writing on the early modern period. Scholars must emphasize in their writing and in the design of their courses that the questions they raise are with the purpose of shedding light

⁷¹ Armitage, *Origins*.

⁷² An excellent example of this approach for a slightly later period is Richard Drayton, *Nature's government: science, imperial Britain and the 'improvement' of the world* (New Haven, CT, 2000); the essential lead for all such work comes from Joan Thirsk, ed., *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, IV: 1500–1640 (Cambridge, 1967).

on European (and for that matter on global) experiences, since these are the perspectives of students of the twenty-first century. In recommending this broadening of focus I believe that scholars and students will benefit from an exposure to a plurality of historiographies, methods, and perspectives so that we may look confidently to the histories of the peoples of Ireland and Britain, at home and overseas, during the early modern centuries, recovering the popularity they once enjoyed while retaining their academic credibility.