Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

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S1 **01:00:07:23**

Oliver McDonough, responding to a festschrift a few years ago, disclaimed his right to any such thing, If I can quote him, he said. I had no teachers. I have no disciples. I founded no school. I possess no theory of history. I am master of no field. From time to time, I catch a horrid vision of myself as a sort of pinchbeck ultimate Roman forum, a last general practitioner among consultants, a chance survivor from a vanquished world. I think one should notice in that the ironic tone amid the genuinely modest disclaimers, because every single one of those statements is highly questionable and many of them completely wrong. McDonagh's work has started hares in all sorts of directions, from the debate on early Victorian government to the morass of Anglo-Irish relations in the present as well as in the past. The point being, I think that his genius is uniquely and urbane to provoke an impassioned discussion, often in a very laconic way, and then to move on to another part of the field altogether. The historian as icebreaker, as he has described it on one occasion, rather than ring fencing and defending one patch of territory all one's life and he's left his mark with, I think, a brio and a very notable style which is hardly equalled in his generation. So, Oliver McDonough, can I ask you, as a historian to whom places mean a lot as appears in your work, something about your own origins and influences you were born in and I think brought up in Carlo.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:01:59:03**

I was born in Carlo, not brought up there. I was brought up effectively as a boy in the west of Ireland in Roscommon, which is a tiny town, I think 1990 inhabitants, 1983 of whom were Roman Catholics. I can remember a great deal about its its landscape, which was of a gentle kind. But the things I think that affected me most, looking back on us, were the intensity that one learned from living in a the immediate aftermath of a civil war that though politics was a really serious and divisive business.

S1 **01:02:49:11**

You moved on to another intense location, which was Congo's the Great Jesuit School before you did Congo's under Jesuit training leave a mark on you?

S2 **01:03:01:02**

I think so, yes. A literary mark. Anyhow, the teachers I had for English were to two Jesuits who were remarkably, remarkably good. All my life. I'd had remarkably bad history teachers. And one of them, he was a very bad novelist himself, but he was a great patron of his charges. And he got me to encourage the little flame of talent I had as a writer. Got my poems published in the Irish Monthly, which I believe, if I may say so modestly, was very Yates's first indeed. Yes. But there the resemblance ends.

S1 **01:03:42:24**

Then UCD and the Debating Society and King's Inns and the bar. Was that because a legal career commended itself to you or because it was an intellectual training that you thought would help your historical bent?

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:03:58:18**

Well, these were in the desperate 1940s, and the idea was that one one got a profession or an occupation. I intended to to be a barrister if I could survive the 3 or 4 years of starvation without any legal connections. I did actually learn. I think at least there were lessons there which were very useful to me as a historian. I keeping remembering the emphasis in law on stating things precisely and getting the exact meaning and nothing else would do and were working and worrying for the exact meaning. And the other thing I got was, was from what I think which is useful for historians was an emphasis on on decisions. Ideally, at least in law, you always end up one way or other in the end. And I think an occupational danger for historians is to fudge when things become difficult. And and that law at least taught me to try to focus on making up one's own mind. And in the end, if the evidence was there, of course, I'm taking that for granted.

S1 **01:05:10:00**

I've always thought of you as rather an Occam's razor man, and I'd assumed that came from a a good and strict training in the great Catholic theologians as much as in the law. But you would put your decision to strip away the inessential and to arrive at a decision to a legal approach or legalistic approach rather than a new approach.

S2 **01:05:32:05**

Well, I suppose I had my share of hand-me-down apologetics and I surely I learnt something from that. But as far as I can recall, it was the legal training which impressed me most on that particular point.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:05:48:07**

That's interesting to continue with your your odyssey from UCD. You went as many others have done or as a few distinguished others have done on to Cambridge. Yes, in the late 1940s, a time when there were a number of very distinguished historians operating there. Could you say something about the historians there in your time who affected the way that you began to write history?

S2 **01:06:16:06**

Well, the historians there are there were Galaxy. There were there were there were Butterfield Knowles, Postern Brogan, who was my supervisor, Graham Clark and Brian Wormald and Dennis Mack Smith among the Dons. This was all out of a fellowship of about 15, I think, and it was very exciting. The people who who influenced me most, I think were the person who influenced me most in a very indirect way was David Knowles. Simply because I found him so admirable, a historian, so, so humane and correct and exact and just and so on. Brogan was he was my supervisor. We we rarely met, but he was a delightful supervisor because he always arranged supervisions for the Reform Club. And so we lived on the same staircase for a time. He was away so much and he was he was a wonderful friend to have, but he was utterly uncritical when it came to research students. He would simply say put little thick like a primary school. Very good. After a whole chapter, just correct your spellings and give you a torrent of other reading to do. And that was all.

S1 **01:07:42:15**

But this gave you a free rein, presumably?

S2 **01:07:44:17**

Oh, yes, absolutely. Yes. Yes. I have had a chance life. And I'm not being, you know, relatively uninfluenced by other historians.

S1 **01:07:53:07**

This is what you mean about having bad teachers.

S2 **01:07:55:15**
Well, I was thinking of school in that case, but one way or another, I seem to have escaped much teaching.

S1 **01:08:01:21**
Was Kitson Clark influential in your decision to approach the early Victorian period the way you did?

S2 **01:08:09:01**
No, he wasn't. I was. I hope to have him as supervisor when I went to to Cambridge. But at that time I think he had a thing about Irish subjects. Anyhow, he shared orphaned Brogan, who was a sort of Statue of Liberty person. He took in everybody. So the curious result was that I didn't meet Kitson Clark until I had finished my PhD, and I was five years in Cambridge before I met him. But then of course we, he'd. He read something I had written and I was the pioneer speaker at his his famous seminar.

S1 **01:08:48:10**
And he encouraged you to write your in a sense. Well, the book, you say is for the Plain Reader on early Victorian government. I think in the preface you say.

S2 **01:08:57:00**
That, yes, yes. He kept saying, MacDonald, you must write this, you must write this.

S1 **01:09:03:06**
The idea being there that what you had done in your pattern of government growth book about the Passenger Act and also in your famous article on the 19th century Revolution in government, the idea being that this should be delivered to a general audience.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:09:18:07**

That's right. And put it in and put it in a broader perspective. Well, he though indeed, the he didn't mean the book to be, I'm sure, and that I mean it to be simply an elaboration of the of the pattern of government growth that was a know to dealt with various aspects of.

S1 **01:09:39:08**

Indeed it does it cast away and it also rather eschews discussion of the the controversies which emerged from your really quite subversive work on early Victorian government. Was this a deliberate decision on your part?

S2 **01:10:00:16**

Well, I'm not a very good deliberate decider. I sort of drift into things, but I suppose it was it was a and it was more or less a decision. I've always disliked controversy in, in his in history. Sometimes it's unavoidable and necessary, but I've a feeling that it rapidly becomes very wasteful, that people build themselves into positions and cease to hear and that it's taking the the economy of history writing as a whole. It tends to to waste time and to and to start creativity. I know it's necessary that people should be put through the the examination process and their work criticized. Nonetheless the the idea of spending your time writing counters and becoming narrower and narrower and blind or to any view except your own, which is probably would have happened to me didn't appeal to me seem to be a waste of time.

S1 **01:11:09:02**

Could it be said that you cultivate a rather urbane and lapidary style in order to avoid that kind of engagement?

S2 **01:11:18:13**

I suppose it could be said you've said it, but I hope. I hope it isn't true.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:11:22:03**

Well, it certainly yes. I think it's a very good way of provoking discussion and then moving gracefully on. Well, I mean.

S2 **01:11:28:18**

As a fellow Irishman, you'd know how this weakness we have for epic romanticism and and paradox and a lot of what you say may be a reflection of that epigrammatic ism.

S1 **01:11:42:10**

One of the things that I think annoyed people in that government work was your dismissal is too strong a word, but your skepticism about the notion of a zeitgeist, specifically a bentonite site. Geist Which flowed into the mind of the governing classes. Does this reflect in your approach, a general distrust of that kind of model for the way things happen?

S2 **01:12:14:06**

Yes, I think it does. I think it just it was what annoyed people was, was was the fact that I, I chose and I chose this as an example. If my memory is right rather than as anything more than that Bentham ism itself. I mean, it's one of these concepts or bodies of ideas that people are very defensive about. Yes, perhaps offensive about as well. And I think that's that that's got under a lot. Some skins and and it was that rather than Zeit geist as such but I did from quite an early stage have an uneasiness about this attribution of trains of historical decisions and major trains being attributed in a simple way to a body of ideas in which they seem to deplore a doctrine. And that really was. And all my life I suppose I've had that. Yes, I think that's quite true.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:13:12:20**

If I could approach your early work from another angle, you use, I think, in states of mind with great pleasure. A quotation from Buckle who boasts, I write the history of England because it is normal. I laughed out loud when I read that. And would it be true to say that you approached the history of England through an Irish interest in that? What you tend to do in your early work is to show that administrative history. If that's what we call it, can throw a different light on Irish history, especially if you approach us from as wide a knowledge as you do of the English world, especially of the 1830s and 40s. Did Ireland bring you to writing English administrative history? That's what I'm asking.

S2 **01:14:01:03**

I don't think so. No. I think that except in one special sense in that I was always struck by what Wilburn called the use of Ireland as a as a social laboratory where experiments would take place that English would never dream of at the time. But the same is true of, as Eric Stokes pointed out, about India and from something for the same reasons. So in that special sense, certainly I had that that that in in I had that at the back of my mind. But my interest in English social policy and the development of welfare institutions in the 19th century was I think, an intrinsic interest, not really coming from Ireland.

S1 **01:14:44:23**

Didn't it begin with an interest in Irish emigration?

S2 **01:14:47:12**

That's that's what set me off on the immigration officers. Yes, they were they were around from the colonial office. They were all British half pay naval officers. They're mostly stationed in in British ports. Yes. So of course, their their father was mostly Irish immigrant immigrants. That's what that's how I got led into it. But but it it took me over.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:15:14:08**

The social laboratory idea, which, as you rightly say, was Byrne's, I think, formulation, but which you, I think added enormously to, can be approached in two ways, can't it? On the one hand, it can be seen as a sort of argument that British government in Ireland wasn't the neglectful and deliberately oppressive machine which nationalist historiography made it out to be. On the other hand, it can be approached to quote yourself as showing this or simply indicating that it was thought Ireland needed a more rational, elaborate and autocratic system of repression than happier lands. Do you see your work as taking part of both those angles of interpretation, or is coming down more towards the repressive than the benevolent angle?

S2 **01:16:07:07**

That's a story that calls for Occam's Razor. The I suppose if I had to choose, I come down for the more repressive version. But what I had in mind in well, I quoted Byrne, But I think it's a little misleading if it suggests, you know, the element of deliberateness and planning. I think I went on to say that expedience be rather a better word than experiment. The experiments from the social laboratory, I mean it was, it was the logic of the situations which arose from, from the position of political control and responsibility.

S1 **01:16:42:21**

This is your coral reef idea. Yes. Which is an image you used, I think, very powerfully for the way that administrative structures develop. Well, as a very crude transposition, let's move from coral reefs to Australia, because pursuing this rather Teju notion of influence, which I still think is very important. You began in 1963 what was to be a long association and a very fruitful one with Australian academe. I think you went temporarily first to for the day and you and then Flinders.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:17:16:21**

Yes, I went to a research fellowship at the And you not in the Department of history. They wouldn't have me the Department of Demography at that stage I was flying under the colours temporarily of an immigration and I did work and I published something on the Irish in, in Australia on the demographic essays because partly because of the there were so many Irish immigrants there. It's much the largest area per head of population of Irish settlement in the world. And secondly, Australian demographic and population records of all kinds are superb, perhaps the best in the 19th century. So it was this twin twin drew me there and then I was asked there was a new university being set up in Adelaide and I was asked if I'd be one of the founding fathers. And it all seemed such a wonderful change from Cambridge, especially. This came in February after a very bad winter.

S1 **01:18:21:17**

And a wonderful change from Ireland as well.

S2 **01:18:25:04**

Well, I sort of had made that change. Not deliberately, but that's the way things had fallen out. I didn't I didn't feel any more. Well, I didn't I didn't feel very much more separate.

S1 **01:18:39:03**

But it was also in your Australian years that you produced at least two books, The two I'm thinking of certainly, which looked at Ireland through the other end of the telescope instead of the highly specific administrative and governmental history. You produced two extremely wide ranging books one Ireland, the Union and its aftermath, as it was eventually called, and the other states of Mind. Yes, the survey really of Anglo-Irish misunderstandings over 200 years. Do you think you needed the distance in Australia to do that?

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:19:14:20**

Yes, I think I think well, I don't know if I needed it, but certainly it was very useful. The other thing was that in in Cambridge I was getting more and more involved. I'm happily involved in, in British history. And I think I was, for example, lecturing on labor politics and socialism and so on, as well as as the ordinary English constituted British constitution in the 19th century. And I think that this was a break in a wrench. And it suddenly my Irish interests work very fully there. And that explains it, I think. I think they they probably dominated my time. And yes, in in Australia, looking.

S1 **01:20:01:16**

At the IRB, that's what it certainly seems. Um, is there also something, do you think, in being in an environment where Ireland is not seen as in opposition to Britain as it may have been from the Cambridge angle, but as, as a Well, the Irish experience in Australia is a very enabling experience, isn't it? I mean.

S2 **01:20:24:04**

I think one thing that struck me early on was that it was, it was.

S3 **01:20:30:08**

Uh.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:20:31:22**

The Australian throughout the 19th century up to 1914, perhaps even up to 1939, the Australian population proportion was almost a mirror of that of the United Kingdom after 18 one and the Irish were in a very muted and pale form in varying from colony to colony in something of the same state of exclusion and and from to a degree and of competitiveness and of a group identity not not complete. All this was was in a very pale and minor form and a gross oversimplification to to say it was it was Ireland in 18 one writ small. But nonetheless there was that element which intrigued me. And the whole course of Australian development in the in the 19th century seemed to me to, to to throw interesting light on, on at least the home rule movement, perhaps the. The repeal movement as well. But in the 1880s and 1890s, I believe that Australia contributed as much to the Irish National Party, the land leagues and all the other organizations as came from the United States. That's that's in gross figures, considering the difference of population was about 17 to 1 in terms of Irish derivation. That shows how a relative significance of of Irish Australia and what Irish Australia was saying and what it built up contacts with the Nonconformist Liberals was that what Ireland should have is what we already have here in New South Wales or in Victoria, responsible self-government. And Parnell's appeal and, and especially after 1886, may have made a tremendous impact there. And it seemed to me that this was regarded as the, the apotheosis or for the time being the apotheosis of of Australian development. And it showed through a very interesting light for me on, on Ireland.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:22:48:16**

It's still a dimension, I think, which is under under-researched and under-recognized but imperial notion, pressing this idea of how your work on Ireland developed in Australia. Now you may well contradict me on this, but my impression from Ireland, the Union and more especially states of mind, is that in these books the gloves are coming off. In a sense, the language is more passionate, the style more audacious. If I could just give a quotation to give a flavour. When you write about late 19th century land legislation and union, you write, Most important of all, the conception of society as operating on an essentially individualist and contractual basis in which market forces were the proper determinant of social and economic good had been irremediably breached. The great example of Ireland passive under British rule became in the end paradigm of Ireland drastic. The man that once did sell the lion's skin while the beast lived was killed with hunting him. It's different from the urbanity or the surface urbanity of your of your earlier work. These are very passionate books, especially, I think, states of mind. Would you accept that or do you think I'm reading something into them that isn't there?

S2 **01:24:12:04**

Well, I, I, I you're an excellent judge. If you say it, I accept it. But, but on that particular issue, as far as I recall, what I was what I was suggesting was that that I've forgotten the context would probably was something to do with land legislation or something of that kind. Was that right? Well, what I what I what I meant was that by. The irony whereby the pursuit for reasons of control, of forced pursuit of certain policies in the long run, ended up with Britain applying them or suffering from it once thought like that. Yes, the. I don't know if that came across.

S1 **01:25:04:16**

The message that I was reading is that in the end, exploitation and if you like oppression, received its own reward by a number of stunning historical ironies that the buying out of the land was being won.

S2 **01:25:18:02**
I'm afraid that's all true. Generally true.

S1 **01:25:20:11**
Yes, I think it probably is. But it's a tone that emerges in these later works more strongly, I think, than in the earlier ones. The other thing I'd like to put to you about states of mind particularly is that there's a chapter in it called Politics Bellicose, which I think is one of the most astringent reviews ever written of the tradition of violent rhetoric and violent deeds in Irish history. But that chapter ends by allowing what you call the emotional pull of violence for Irish people. I think Ockham's Razor and coming down to a decision. Isn't happening there. There's a deliberate ambiguity.

S2 **01:26:11:13**
Well, I was trying to to give thee to round out the picture by.

S3 **01:26:20:08**
Uh.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:26:21:08**

Pointing to the ambiguity of the dualism there is in most Irish nationalist breasts. I was at the time I was writing, which is a long time ago, and I think it's a commonplace that that people have these, these ambiguities, these these elemental tribal feelings. It depends on the amount of pressure and circumstances, the degree to which they expose them. And I thought a chapter on violence without making this clear would be. I think I end with the Boswell quotation about the 45 and that about about about, you know, those who look at these things are expected sober rationality and calculation to last all the time know very little about human nature. I meant it as a I suppose maybe I hope it wasn't too pompous a reflection on human nature in this situation of violence. But that is what I that's why I put it in what I believe. It wasn't it wasn't to make a decision myself. No. On violence. I was trying to describe the Irish nationalist reaction as I thought.

S1 **01:27:26:00**

You know, pompous is the last thing it is. It's pessimistic. Well, and you move from that chapter a politics, a politics, a bellicose straight into a chapter called Politics Clerical. And I wondered if you saw that particular theme in Irish politics as being the clerical theme, as being one way to rationalize and control these dangerous urges, which you have written about in the previous.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:27:59:11**

Well, I perhaps, yes, But I also I think you never really know what what what motives you have, I suppose, at the bottom. But I think I'm sure one of them was to have an ironic commentary on the preceding chapter, because one of the points I'm making in politics clerical is that the Catholic clergy are mass, especially the below Episcopal ranks, but not excluding Christ by any means were subject to the same pressures and feelings and pools as the the mass, or perhaps more so in their being articulate and educated, relatively speaking, more articulate. And yet there were their tight ecclesiastical discipline, the Roman influence, which was pretty consistently pro-British, the Canon law on conspiracy and abuse of arms, all these pulling. And I, I thought it a very sad, ironic situation. But that's that's what I and I went on to say that there are similar Ireland's if I had the knowledge and the time to do Ulster Ulster Unionists or British nationalists I think in that chapter I mentioned that but the one that I'm that I'm picking because it's relevant to my theme of politics, clerical and politics. Clerical seems seems to me to be a a tremendous I don't mean there's tremendous in its own quality but but in intention commentary on on on violence because the clergy seemed to me to express in a much more acute form and to be subject to these these dilemmas and problems.

S1 **01:29:38:15**

Yes. The relationship between those two themes is, to me, the core of that book, which is a book I've read and reread many times. It's also at the core of Daniel O'Connell's career, this tension between the use of an impulse that often declares itself in violent or or confrontational act and the firm commitment to clerical politics and working within the system by reining in these tensions where you're working on. O'Connell when you wrote State of Mind.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:30:16:01**

No, I've been thinking about O'Connell for a not directly for a long time, but I was afraid to like starting to put your foot at the bottom of Everest. Just seems so huge, so big. I've been collecting material for a long time, but no, I hadn't begun for what I wanted to write. What I set out to do was was a, I suppose, a grandiose idea. It seemed to be that there was no proper study of how a modern Irish Catholic nationalism had developed. And I of course it's very difficult to to sort of think of how you get a popular cast of mind or whatever. But I thought the way to do it was to study O'Connell both because he was a key figure in shaping it and expressing it, and because he seemed to be a fine exemplar of, of the of its progress in the first half of the 19th century. But I began with this in mind and. I began with with the sort of I always do with the easy parts first. The easiest part was was one about his secret marriage and and his hiding the marriage from the from the the the the car marginally uncle from great expectations. And this sort of human development just caught me and and I it became a biography I just couldn't help it and but I hope the underlying beat is there of these these large cultural cultural things. I didn't specify them, but I hope that that that it came through because that's really what I meant to write about.

S1 **01:32:01:24**

The theme which you mentioned, the marriage, the uncle, the money could come straight out of a trollop novel.

S2 **01:32:06:21**

Oh, yes, yes.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:32:07:15**

And creative literature, especially in the 19th century, preoccupies you, I think. And we'll go back to that. But in a sense, when I look at your writing and at O'Connell, it is in some ways the inevitable subject for you. It's like a great 19th century novel. Even in its its scale. It has the themes of love and money and politics and. Would it be true to say that there's an appeal there for you to because the period which you've chosen to locate a lot of your work in is the period when romantic and utilitarian themes are, in a sense, in a creative tension with each other, and that this is true of O'Connell himself.

S2 **01:32:46:16**

Very true of him. Yes, I think that's absolutely true. That's absolutely true. I agree with you completely. I think that's I find as I went to my predecessor in in the research school in the Australian National University, John Le knows, he used to say nobody should write biography until they're over 50 and because they haven't lived enough. And I laughed very secretly at this when I heard it in the 30s. But when I came to write a column in my 50s, I could see the point because the structure of my life, the mechanics of my life, even to having seven children and all the business which running this complex enterprise involves. And of course I saw O'Connell as at the start of of, in Catholic terms, the second Counter-Reformation of the artist in the English speaking world. And I saw myself as a youth in the final stage of of the same historical phenomenon. And I saw the Ireland, which I grew up as the epitome apart from the violence which produced it, exactly what O'Connell would have dreamt of with, with a with Westminster and the law courts and, and, and Whitehall and everything transposed. But but power transferred. So it seemed to me that that I got all sorts of little things because I'd been through the same range of experience. So there was a there became I didn't intend it like that became that very personal, personal sort of. Yes. You have a sort of it's just you have the, the secret codes, the little information that alerts you to certain things.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:34:29:17**

That leads me to think of the kind of writers who attract you, creative writers, because you use creative literature not just as a jejune illustration of what's going on, but as a way into mentality. You've done this. I think you were doing this very early. I come across references throughout your work. You seem this you may completely contradict me on this, but it seems to me that the novelists you're drawn to, I think of Somerville and Ross, you've written about the real Charlotte Peacock. Most of all, Jane Austen are writers who notoriously dismiss what I think You've called in your essay on Sanditon The Claptrap of Modernity. They're merciless parodies of fashion. Again, your work on Sanditon, I think, shows that very clearly is this kind of rather astringent approach, particularly sympathetic to you among.

S2 **01:35:29:02**

Novelist's eye. It is sympathetic to me, but I think I've. I'm my tastes are more, more, more Catholic. My, my. The novelists I read most is Trollope, whom one could hardly categorise with the others in that regard. No. And George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte Bronte. These are the ones that I. Charlotte Bronte. Well, she's one. Especially except for Jane Eyre.

S1 **01:36:01:05**

There.

S2 **01:36:02:17**

You mustn't leave me to talking about novels.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:36:04:18**

I won't. But I wondered how this related to your early work, which is more politely sceptical about the notions of a of a bent mind. Right, guys? As I said earlier, you seem to like a way into the 19th century mentality that discounts such easy assumptions. There is another tension I've talked. I seem to keep coming back to tensions in your work, which is one of the reasons I think why why people read us with such profit. But there is a tension in your work from the historian's point of view between the acceptability of large patterns. Or not, In in the Austen book, you very tersely remark that historians must period rise or perish. This is, I think, claiming that the Regency can be seen must be seen as something of itself. Yet in states of mind you almost flamboyantly don't period eyes. These are very thematic essays taking almost an analyst approach towards abstract issues like time, place and so forth and swerving through 200 years on those themes. Do you think that is an implicit contradiction or not?

S2 **01:37:19:15**

I think I think it's that's a fair carpet is a contradiction. I think I would I suppose it is. You're it's absolutely right. Like I can only plead Walt Whitman or something, But but I suppose that if if I had to say something in defense of of this argument against states of mind is that I was using the whole 200 years as as a period roaming up, up and down. I've never thought about it before, but if I had to mount a defense, I would think you could. You would. You could period eyes variously. You can speak of small epochs within larger ones, but this doesn't affect the generalization period as are perished. What I meant was that if you didn't that if you could you couldn't envisage history writing without periodization. That's what I meant. No.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:38:25:10**

We've talked about the we've talked about patterns in history and the way you conceive it and the reconciliation of different tensions. Reading the few apertures of intellectual autobiography, which you've let us have, and I think reading between the lines of, for instance, the conclusion to your Fitzpatrick book, I'd infer that a very strong, though subtle conditioning influence on you is Catholic philosophy of a traditional and rather stringent kind. You mentioned Duns Scotus from time to time as well as of course. Newman. Do you think that's accurate or not?

S2 **01:39:06:24**

Oh, I think that's accurate. I don't know. The the stringency suggests a greater degree of scholarship than I have in it. But but it is absolutely true. Yes, I have been colored by it and I suppose always will be. And yes, undoubtedly.

S1 **01:39:24:00**

But I wonder in in conclusion, really if. This predisposition of yours, this intellectual training or conditioning or whatever we're going to call it, goes with a certain pessimism about human ambitions, whether bentonite or other, as well as human frailty. Do you think you're essentially your cast a rather cold eye on attempts at Betterment, whether in patterns of government growth or political utopianism?

S2 **01:39:57:11**

I'm afraid I must plead guilty to the charge. I, I suppose I come down on that side not by choice. It's just my. My nature and reading.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S1 **01:40:11:20**

It seems to me something that comes through your work strongly and more strongly as the work progresses, though, it's tempered with your belief in what you've called humaneness and with a very strong, as I say, conditioning in in Catholic and specifically Catholic philosophy. But you've described just to go back completely full circle, I began this interview by saying you describe the historian's function as an icebreaker to plow up the surface and leave things churning around and then move on to a different part of the terrain. What waters would you most like to have left disturbed in your wake of the various areas that you've explored?

S2 **01:41:06:10**

I think I'd like to have. 18th century social reform. The sort of Fitzpatrick work. I'd like a great deal of effort in that field. I'm sure it's it's it's rewarding and I think it's largely hidden. I think as far as I know, there's been very little work in this field. And I'm sure there's this is something where new ploughing would what would yield a harvest fascinating one because of the one has there not only prevent the system if you like, but one has the evangelical movement, the 18th century Enlightenment rationalists, if you want to put it in intellectual influences. But the, the, the, the the, the tension, to use the word that you keep using between the 18th century political structures as they were evolving and the pressures to humane pressures or other pressures, statistical pressures to produce social change. Yes. Fascinating. 1780s, 1770s, 1790s.

S1 **01:42:18:21**

And this is the area you would like most to leave, as I say, churned up rather than the rethinking of Anglo-Irish relations or the notably perceptive new angle, I think, on the relations between creative literature and 19th century life and politics.

Clip: MCDONAGH OLIVER_OLIVER MCDONAGH WITH ROY

S2 **01:42:36:14**

Well, I thought you meant which area that I think would yield most fruit by being which area was that I touched on was, was, was, was most.

S1 **01:42:48:14**

Vainly I suppose I was looking for a more self-regarding response from you, which is, which area do you think you've done most to engage with that sort of or to leave behind that sort of churning up?

S2 **01:43:03:11**

I would like to think it would be Anglo-Irish relations. I don't know whether it is. I would like that. That's that's well, it's very natural. It's something that touches you personally much more deeply and acutely than the other areas.

S1 **01:43:23:03**

Well, I think you would be right. Thank you very much, Oliver McDonagh.