

deduction and consideration of the deep history of a *Life*: the commentary on Aubrey's Shakespeare, with its scrupulous reconstruction of a chronology and topography for Aubrey's gathering of the information which he used in his text, is exemplary, and in itself a most impressive feat of retrospective detection. This kind of hard-won depth of knowledge informs every aspect of Bennett's edition and commentary: it is an exceptional achievement and the resulting work will stand as the text of the *Brief Lives* for the foreseeable future. Perhaps a word of praise is also due to those universities which have supported Bennett's patient labours: to bring such an extraordinarily complex and lengthy project to such a triumphant conclusion in an era of short-termist 'research management' is no small honour, no trivial vindication.

Early in her introduction, Bennett alludes humorously to the fear which Aubrey expressed that if he did not himself publish his works, they would 'fall into the merciless hands of women'. She then goes on to express the modest hope that he is not turning in his grave. Considering her magnificent, definitive edition of the *Lives*, and the sterling work done by its women editors at Oxford University Press, one can only congratulate Aubrey on his prodigious posthumous good fortune.

2015 became something of a year of John Aubrey, in that as well as the publication of Bennett's monumental work, it also saw the publication of a contrafaction of an Aubreyan autobiography, told partly in his own words. Ruth Scurr's *John Aubrey: My Own Life* has set itself a formidable task. It is very hard indeed to make familiar words set down by a man of sixty read like the fresh experience of that same man as a student, especially where linking passages have to be composed in a convincing facsimile of seventeenth-century English. Dr Scurr is to be commended for her deep knowledge of Aubrey's sources in manuscript, and her introduction provides a generous, even passionate, argument for Aubrey's continuing importance.

The cover of this book has rediscovered one of Aubrey's most enchanting drawings. This hunting-party has a haunting self-portrait as a semi-transparent *rückenfigur* and a wealth of brilliantly observed dogs. These creatures, which would do credit to Edward Lear or even Edward Gorey, make us impatient to see more of Aubrey's drawings, to enter deeper yet into the world of this protean, vulnerable, ubiquitous messenger from the past.

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The Last Cavalier: Richard Talbot (1631–91), by Pádraig Lenihan (Dublin: U.C. Dublin P., 2014; pp. 268. €40).

As Pádraig Lenihan persuasively argues, there is a clear need for a contemporary scholarly biography of Richard Talbot, possibly the most important political figure to emerge from Catholic Ireland in the course of the seventeenth century. The current volume largely fills this lacuna, although at times, as in the imagined and somewhat romantic scene at the opening of Chapter One, the tone of the book can be a little colloquial. While the sources which allow for more personal insights into the lives of seventeenth-century Irish

Catholic figures are often distressingly scarce, the weight of scholarship which underpins this particular book hardly has any need for such interludes.

The book is at its most sure-footed in its Irish context. As the pre-eminent military historian of the period, Lenihan provides a crisp account of the latter part of the Confederate wars and the Cromwellian conquest. While full of revealing information, the later evocation of Talbot's role within the often conflicting and chaotic patronage networks of early Restoration England, however, sometimes struggles for clarity. The book painstakingly teases out Talbot's various factional alliances and opponents, but at times the detail threatens to overwhelm this section's coherence. Talbot's ability to portray himself as a man of influence who could provide Catholics with an entrée into the murky negotiations of the Restoration Land Settlement was evidently a key ingredient in allowing him to build up a personal estate of between 9,000 and 14,000 acres. In this regard, his association with the Duke of York and future King James II was of absolutely pivotal importance in his career. And Lenihan demonstrates the considerable element of luck which Talbot enjoyed in riding out the crisis of the Popish Plot overseas.

Yet, while Talbot's career provides yet another fascinating insight into the swirling world of microhistories which make up the tapestry of Restoration Ireland, he would remain a figure of secondary importance but for his role during the reign of James II. Talbot's first major impact following James's accession was as the Lieutenant General of the army who managed to effect a purge of the standing forces in Ireland, despite the obstacles placed in his path by Clarendon and the inability or unwillingness of the king to provide explicit instructions mandating his actions. The actions of Talbot, or Tyrconnel as he was by then, were of key importance in terms of eroding English trust in their Catholic monarch, but Lenihan makes the perceptive point that, without the purges, the Irish army could have emerged as a far more dangerous vehicle of opposition: the most effective leaders of the Protestant forces who supported the Williamite cause after the Glorious Revolution, such as Henry Boyle, Robert King, Chidley Coote and Thomas Lloyd, had all been cashiered by Tyrconnel and would have represented an even more formidable resistance if they had continued to discharge commands.

Among the challenges which Tyrconnel had to surmount in claiming the Lord Deputyship of Ireland were not merely the reluctance of the king or Sunderland to appoint an Irishman as governor, or the opposition of the most notable English Catholic nobles, Powis, Arundel and Bellasis, to his appointment, but also his relatively low social status. However, his willingness to threaten Sunderland with the release of mutually damaging information ultimately paved the way to his securing the governorship—albeit initially as Lord Deputy rather than Lord Lieutenant. As it transpired, together with the dismissal of Rochester, this appointment proved a key step in accelerating Dutch plans for intervention in England. The book devotes roughly 70 of its 182 pages in two chapters to Tyrconnel's governorship, first as Lord Deputy and then as Lord Lieutenant. This was the period when he enjoyed genuine authority, rather than merely wielding and brokering influence. As governor, Tyrconnel certainly made use of his own kin and worked consciously to favour Catholics, but Lenihan argues that a real contrast nevertheless existed between his government, in which Protestants still occupied important positions, and the Ascendancy of the eighteenth century, which operated a far more rigid confessional barrier.

He also questions the common assumption that Tyrconnel consciously discriminated against the Gaelic Irish, pointing out that the preponderance of Old English officers whom he appointed could be attributed to the need for such appointments to have sufficient personal means. Contemporary Gaelic poetry also suggests little ethnic disgruntlement with his regime. Significant reservoirs of Old English influence, such as the Butler and Clanricard nexuses, seem also to have done less well during the Tyrconnel ascendancy because of the degree to which Talbot's own connections were heavily weighted towards North Leinster and the adjoining portion of Connacht.

Lenihan argues that Tyrconnel's attempts to reinforce James in England, with 40 per cent of the regular army diverted for that purpose, had serious implications for the security of his regime in Ireland. Lenihan's acuity as a military historian shines through in these two chapters, whether in crisp assessments of medical issues such as the osteomyelitis which afflicted Tyrconnel or the typhus that descended on Schomberg's army, or concerning the overall strategic conduct of the war. Consequently, his measured summation that Tyrconnel should take much of the credit for the fact that the war was not already lost in 1689 carries authority. The evaluation of the Battle of the Boyne in Chapter Six is excellent and provides a balanced analysis of Tyrconnel's personal successes and failures in the context of the overall distribution of strategic advantages and resources. Less space is devoted to the other military encounters of the Williamite war but, as might be expected, each section adds value to the existing historiography.

Overall, Tyrconnel emerges from this study as a flawed but important individual. Ormond's opponent for most of the Restoration, he undoubtedly suffered because of the greater resources at the Butler magnate's disposal. Catapulted into real authority with the accession of James, he operated primarily as a 'British' rather than an 'Irish' Jacobite. The hand he was forced to play was essentially a losing one. Lenihan concludes fairly that there were elements which he could have managed better, but also that much of the criticism directed against him, both by contemporaries and by subsequent historians, needs to be subjected to careful scrutiny. Many factors were beyond his control—not least the character of the king and the unwillingness of France to commit extensive resources to Ireland. In this context, could any other Irishman, for example, have convinced the French regime to invest so heavily in the final year of the war? And might Tyrconnel have made a better fist of the final negotiations if he had not died before the Treaty of Limerick? Lenihan's final conclusion in this regard is the interesting observation that he could hardly have been less successful than the Earl of Lucan, a figure who had traditionally attracted a far more sympathetic appraisal than Tyrconnel himself.

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The South Sea Bubble and Ireland: Money, Banking and Investment, 1690–1721,
by Patrick Walsh (Woodbridge: The Boydell P., 2014; pp. 204. £60).

The Glorious Revolution is credited with ushering in a greater role for parliament in approving and appropriating taxes, the establishment of the Bank of England as well as of private banks, and investment in paper