

unfortunate trade-off for these high standards is the length of time taken to produce the book: two of the contributors (Dáithí Ó hÓgáin and Damien Ó Muiri) sadly passed away between writing their contributions and the book coming to press. For an Australasian audience, apart from the considerable intrinsic interest of its subject matter, this book offers a rare opportunity of reading at length in the Irish language: it would be very valuable to advanced learners, and a luxury for native speakers who find themselves in our part of the world. At the time of writing, it is available from the publisher (www.cic.ie) for a mere €20, and I highly recommend it.

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PÁDRAIG LENIHAN, *The Last Cavalier: Richard Talbot (1631–91)*, Dublin: University of Dublin Press, 2014. 267 pp. RRP €40. ISBN 9781906359836.

Lenihan has written a fast paced and authoritative biography of Richard Talbot, Earl and Duke of Tyrconnell, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, whose death in besieged Limerick preceded its fall by days in 1691. Lenihan puts forward a good case for why we need this biography—Talbot was the most significant Irish Catholic political figure in the latter half of the seventeenth century and he has been neglected in both popular imagination and academic histories. Perhaps this is because he cannot be portrayed as a dashing, romantic warrior like his younger contemporary Patrick Sarsfield. Known in his own lifetime as ‘Fighting Dick’, ‘Mad Dick’, ‘Lying Dick’, Talbot was a consummate survivor, playing the necessary complex political games astutely, if more often in the language of the barracks than the stateroom. The great nineteenth-century English historian Macaulay wrote him off as a ‘foul-mouthed thug’ and ‘cold-hearted...scheming sycophant’ (p. 2). Lenihan does not whitewash Talbot, the man who emerges from this book is wildly ambitious, volatile and violent, not often likeable. By this portrait the book succeeds in capturing the complexity and ambiguity of individuals and elite politics in seventeenth-century Ireland.

Lenihan has unearthed some previously unexamined archival sources that means he can offer some new perspectives. This in itself is significant and he weaves these together with known accounts of the various events and actors in Talbot’s life seamlessly. The book is structured with chapters focused on the significant patrons to whom Talbot attached himself in his rise from younger son of a Catholic Anglo–Irish family to Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, friend and advisor of King James II.

The first chapter ‘Peter’s brother, 1646–56’ details Richard’s childhood as the second youngest of sixteen children of an influential and successful Catholic Old English lawyer. His childhood coincided with the tumultuous and violent 1640s and he first went into battle as a fourteen year old fighting in the cavalry troop for the Confederate Catholics in 1646. He survived the disaster of Cromwell’s siege of Drogheda in 1649 and left for

the continent in the aftermath of the defeat of Irish forces in 1653, joining with his older brother, Peter, a prominent Jesuit, who was attached to the court of Queen Henrietta Maria. Here young Richard was exposed to the political rather than military side of power, with its swirling intricacies of influence and intrigue. Lenihan navigates the complexities of these political negotiations with ease and explains the political maneuverings confidently. By the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1661, Richard was in the household of his most significant patron, Charles II's younger brother James, Duke of York. Chapter two concentrates on the initial period of this patronage between 1657–62. It is in this period that 'Fighting Dick' gained a reputation for dueling, drinking and intrigue. In Chapter 3, covering the period from 1662–7, Talbot became agent and lobbyist for Irish Catholics dispossessed of their estates in the Cromwellian land confiscations. After the Restoration they tried desperately to salvage something of their land in the face of political indifference and hostile machinations both in Dublin and in England. Here he had some successes and emerged rich, and both well connected and with powerful enemies, one of whom was the Duke of Ormond. Enmity in such powerful circles carried great risk, with Talbot spending some periods out of favour, in exile, and short periods in the Tower.

Through all this Talbot survived and thrived, continuing to gain political influence. He was rewarded by his powerful patron, James II, after the death of Charles II, with elevation to the peerage as Viscount Baltinglass and Earl of Tyrconnell in May 1685, appointed to the colonelcy of a cavalry regiment and given informal oversight of the army in Ireland, soon followed by formal appointment as Lieutenant General of the army. He had his eye on the prize of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland however, and over the next months travelled assiduously between Dublin and London (p. 102) shoring up his support in both places, getting permission for enacting his plans from James, then heading back to Dublin to carry them out. Lenihan's detailing of these journeys underscores the physical and practical difficulties facing men attempting to secure power in Ireland when the source of that power was in personal relationships at court.

It was Tyrconnell, as he now is called, who implemented an all too brief Catholic renaissance, raising Catholics into positions of command in the army, appointing Catholic sheriffs and remodeling urban corporations so Catholics could be admitted. While this re-organisation was welcomed by the Catholic elite in Ireland, it was feared by Protestants who together with their co-religionists in England sought alternatives to the Catholic King James in his Protestant son-in-law, William of Orange. Tyrconnell's ability to manage competing political demands, not always scrupulously, as well as his strategic advice to his king, were essential for the few Jacobite successes during the war between James and William during 1689–91. Although Tyrconnell's health was failing and his nerve badly shattered after the losses of the Boyne, he rallied his forces to some successes before his untimely death following the disaster of Aughrim. Lenihan allows himself

some counterfactuals in his conclusion where he speculates on whether the result of the war would have been any different if Tyrconnell had lived. He concludes that it would not have been, however he does suggest that the humiliating terms of surrender may have been less onerous, which as he says ‘could hardly have done worse’ (p. 189).

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NICHOLAS WOLF, *An Irish-Speaking Island. State, Religion, Community and the Linguistic Landscape in Ireland, 1770–1870*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014. xi + 448 pp. RRP US\$34.95. ISBN 9780299302740.

Ten years ago, in a survey of the scholarship on language in nineteenth-century Ireland, I sketched out what seemed to me the way forward in the area. One necessity was an ‘ethnography of speaking’ of a profoundly, if only briefly, bilingual society, that is, an account of language use in practice that would separate the issue of language from that of language shift. Because the shift in language was so rapid and total, this had overshadowed and stifled any account of the Irish-speaking communities and their cultures, which were seen as fossilised, irremediably pre-modern and doomed to extinction. Irish adapted, however, and I suggested that a study of its use in official and institutional situations, in the churches, in law courts, in the print sphere and elsewhere, would demonstrate that it had the potential to be open to modernity.

I didn’t expect that this particular agenda would be carried out as quickly, as comprehensively and as effectively as it has been in Nicholas Wolf’s new book. It is by far the most complete and best-documented survey of Irish-speaking communities in the nineteenth century. In tune with the agenda set out above, it contains chapters on the use of Irish in law courts and elections, in education, in Catholic religious practice and by the Catholic clergy. Three other chapters explore the attitudes of Irish speakers themselves to their language, to monolingualism and to bilingualism. A very wide range of material is explored here, and many readers will find fresh perspectives, such as Wolf’s demonstration that many monolingual Irish speakers voted in parliamentary elections and his acute analysis of a corpus of bilingual jokes. We see court cases being taken through interpreters and shopkeepers advertising for assistants who could speak Irish.

Wolf concludes that both the extent of Irish speaking and its cultural dynamism have been underestimated: