

Irish foreign policy and history, the United Nations, and Africa. As I noted earlier they complement each other well and it may be useful to read them in conjunction with one another. They document an important period of Irish history as the country sought to consolidate its sovereignty, partly through its negation through subjection to the United Nations. Since accession to the European Union, it has perhaps increasingly served this function. There may be space in the market, building on these two books, for a study on Ireland's current relations with Africa and how these have evolved in the past forty to fifty years. The authors of both books are to be commended for shedding light on these issues through detailed and supported research which will be of great value to historians and social scientists involved in their future study.

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Pádraig Lenihan, *The Last Cavalier: Richard Talbot (1631–91)* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2014, 268 pp., €40 hardback)

As one of the commanding presences in the history of the second half of the seventeenth century, the lack of a modern biography of Richard Talbot is surprising, though he is by no means the only figure of consequence of whom this might be said. Moreover, he has not been completely overlooked. There are reliable biographical entries in both the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (2009), and in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), and a number of important biographical and interpretative essays among which those by James McGuire and John Miller stand out. However, since the most recent attempt to present a full life, Sir Charles Petrie's *The Great Tyrconnell: A Chapter in Anglo-Irish Relations* (1973), is more than forty years old, and its weaknesses well known – it 'leaves too many biographical gaps and neglects import sources' (p. 4) – the publication of a full, documented, modern reconstruction of the man is to be welcomed. Pádraig Lenihan has written a persuasive biography of a man whose colourful and eventful trajectory is evoked by the book's title. In truth, Talbot's dramatic life is hardly more accurately summarised under the legend 'the last cavalier' than as 'fighting Dick' (in deference to his propensity to appeal to his sword to defend his reputation against slight) in an earlier biographical depiction of him, but it does serve better to describe a life that can be defined by an 'intense, if idiosyncratic, loyalty to the Stuarts' (p. 184).

In order properly to understand the depth of Talbot's loyalty to the house of Stuart, it is necessary, Dr Lenihan suggests, to locate him in his familial, ethnic and religious context. Since his father, Sir William Talbot (d. 1634) died when Richard was but three years of age, he can hardly be said to have been guided in his example, but Richard possessed some of the same pugnacious resolve that resulted in Sir William's imprisonment in the Tower of London for refusing to reject the teaching of the Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) that it was lawful to kill or depose a heretical monarch. Richard Talbot had less oppor-

tunity, and less inclination, to engage with such abstract issues. He was also less narrowly bound by the commitment to the protection and advancement of the cause of the Old English, which was one of the casualties of the 1640s and 1650s. Significantly, Richard had barely entered into his teens when in 1645 he joined the Leinster army of the Confederate Catholics of Ireland. Indeed, he might not have survived the experience. Taken prisoner after the battle of Dungan's Hill in 1647, and left for dead during the infamous Cromwellian taking of Drogheda two years later, he subsequently (1655) participated in a failed plot to assassinate Oliver Cromwell that might, had the Cromwellians lived up to their ruthless reputation, have brought him to the gallows. Instead, he was able, such was his strength of character, force of personality and physical presence, to impress James, duke of York, and to forge a political and personal connection in exile that was central to his life thereafter. It would be misleading to imply that the bond that held the two men was grounded on more than their shared interest in advancing the Catholic cause, since they possessed quite different visions of what that meant in practice in Ireland at least. Nonetheless, it assured Talbot of access to the higher echelons of the Stuart court following the Restoration, which was crucial to his capacity to emerge, and to function effectively, as 'agent for the Catholics of Ireland' in the 1660s. Talbot was enabled thereby to ensure that the Catholic aspiration to undo the Cromwellian land confiscation trumped the desire of Irish Protestants and Charles II to draw a line in the sand and move on. It also permitted him to advance what Lenihan terms his 'little design' to reduce the barriers in the way of the Catholic gentry resuming the leadership role in law and politics, and their access to the professions they believed was their entitlement. Lenihan excavates the politics of the Restoration confidently, and if the absence of personal papers offers an explanation for those occasions when Talbot disappears from the narrative for longer than is optimal in a historical biography, it is partly compensated for by the perspective provided on his querulous and still more controversial older brother, Peter Talbot, archbishop of Dublin. Peter's death in detention during the Popish Plot also well attests to the contested and fragile nature of the gains made by Catholics during Charles II's twenty-five year reign, and explains why, when James II, who was openly Catholic, ascended the throne in 1685, Talbot was determined to make the most of the opportunity.

The history of what is conventionally denominated 'Jacobite Ireland' is largely familiar. There are few surprises in the account provided here of the manner in which Talbot not only neutralised the attempts to confine his ability to forward his design to promote Catholics to positions of power and influence, but also convinced the hesitant James II of the rectitude and appropriateness of the course upon which he was embarked. Indeed, in some aspects the combined narratives of J. G. Simms and John Miller are more lucid. However, Dr Lenihan has a palpable edge on all previous accounts in the way that he has forged an integrated political and military narrative. His account of the impact of the deposition of James II in 1688 and the ensuing military struggle, which consumed Talbot's final years, is full of insights and acute judgements, sometimes, but not

always, informed by the author's superior understanding of military logistics. It also brings balance to an episode that even at this remove is so often marred by partisan perspectives. As related here, Talbot's behaviour was not always heroic or even superior to others. Indeed, he succumbed on occasion to disappointment when matters did not go his way, and he was increasingly prone to the debilitating effects of osteomyelitis. He also did not always make the right decisions, but then nobody on the Jacobite side did. Lenihan does not shirk from identifying his mistakes, but even in decline his long fabled resilience, his capacity for organisation and his instincts to make the best of a bad situation remained strong. He was not a gifted military tactician, or even a good general as is made clear. Yet Dr Lenihan's analysis is all the more engaging as a consequence, and in a revealing pointer to Talbot's abilities, he suggests that the weaknesses of the Treaty of Limerick might have been fewer had he, Richard Talbot, and not Patrick Sarsfield, negotiated its terms. *The Last Cavalier* is a convincing and consequential account of a controversial, colourful and compelling man.

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Maria Luddy and James M. Smith (eds), *Children, Childhood and Irish Society 1500 to the Present* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014, 448 pp., €65.00 hardback)

Although it may be stating the obvious, childhood has not always had its historians, and children's histories have for the most part remained hidden. This is what made Philippe Ariès's (1914–84) work, *Centuries of Childhood*, published in 1960 so significant; it established the history of childhood as a valid area of historical study and prompted an interest in children's life stories that continues.

The experience of childhood not only shapes children's understanding of themselves as individuals and collectively, but it also establishes the bases of adult attitudes and behaviours towards children, which in turn help to shape public policy relative to children. For this reason, the study of childhood is important. John Locke (1632–1704) first articulated the importance of childhood experiences to the development of the individual and society in his publication *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) and his views still possess authority. They support arguments for a broadening of historical studies of childhood, and inform the elusive search for an agreed definition of a concept of childhood – a complex, dynamic and contradictory abstraction.

Studies in the history of children and childhood in Ireland have failed to keep pace with those of the United Kingdom, many continental countries and the Americas. The diversity of papers presented to the Society for the History of Children and Youth (SHCY) conference in Nottingham, England in 2013 was illustrative of the shortfalls in Irish childhood studies. The range of papers presented to the recent Dublin conference on the history of Irish childhood