

political history of their own times” (167), Millstone bestows us with a modern equivalent that will prove useful to scholars with an interest in Stuart politics, regardless of their discipline.

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*John Aubrey: My Own Life.* Ruth Scurr.

New York: New York Review Books, 2015. xxiv + 520 pp. \$35.

The year 2015 proved to be a wonderful one for the study of John Aubrey. Kate Bennett’s magisterial edition of the *Brief Lives* for Oxford University Press is by far the most significant publication in the history of Aubrey scholarship. Making extensive use of Bennett’s researches, Ruth Scurr’s experimental biography of Aubrey is both delightful and instructive, even if at times it is also confusing.

In a preface, Scurr explains her decision to translate masses of manuscript and print evidence for Aubrey’s life into a fictional diary on the order of the real diaries kept by his contemporaries such as John Evelyn. Scurr’s concern is that the self-effacing Aubrey would get lost if cast in a straightforward narrative in which he interacted with so many vivid personalities and great minds over the course of his life—with Hobbes, Hooke, Harrington, and Harvey—as well as with more obscure but colorful men and women among Aubrey’s acquaintance. To lend her fictional approach credibility, Scurr draws extensively on material not just from Bennett’s edition, but also from the rich trove of Aubrey manuscripts. These latter fill the book with arresting insights and delightful cameo appearances: for instance, Aubrey’s late-in-life summation of his work as an antiquary (422); a beloved dog for whom there is no room in a coach (378); a list of Aubrey’s works (390–91); the outline of a utopian fiction attributed to Andrew Pascall (318) as well as Pascall’s assessment of the universal-language project that it might prove “to reduce schism and babel to nothing” (268). The wide range of even this highly selective list illustrates Aubrey’s capacious curiosity that (like so many of his virtuoso contemporaries) knew no disciplinary bounds. Scurr has so immersed herself in the Aubrey archive that her invented vocalizations of his habits, concerns, and worldview are on so many occasions compelling.

Scurr’s experiment in fictional biography comes with a price, however. Some of the most fascinating bits are assigned no source at all, making it unclear whether Scurr is offering her own interpretation of Aubrey’s mentality or simply has omitted the source from which she has taken her evidence. This state of affairs obtains in regard to, among many such cases, Aubrey’s declaration of his ignorance (323); his reading of French romances (316); and a crucial, vivid account of his method, with an emphasis on Aubrey’s haphazardness (296), which students of Bennett’s edition will recognize as controversial. One

would like a source for Aubrey's conclusion that "printed histories" present us with "uncertainty"—not because one doubts Scurr's understanding of Aubrey but just because the point is sufficiently revealing to prompt readers to seek more information.

A further problem arises when Scurr substantially alters her source. It is fascinating to learn that a lovelorn Aubrey quotes eight English lines translating Virgil's description of Dido; yet a check of Bennett's edition discloses that Aubrey retrospectively quoted two words in Latin that he ended up deleting. The deletion of Aubrey's identification with Dido is a more complex act than Scurr's version of that act would let on. More generally, because Scurr is pervasively modernizing and paraphrasing her sources, the reader is never sure how much she is capturing Aubrey's own voice: the lack of quotation marks makes it impossible to know unless the source is printed or the reader is at the Bodleian.

These remarks are neither merely quibbles nor are they finally complaints. Scurr has done her homework and offers students of Aubrey an enjoyable way to learn a great deal about him, his contemporaries, and their times (the book intersperses updates on historical events). The choice of a single word such as "Penury" as the heading for chronological sections of Aubrey's life can seem reductive or arbitrary. But Scurr's afterword tracing Aubrey's reception through the centuries is helpful for situating the book's approach, which comes closest to Anthony Powell's World War II-era study. As Bennett's edition explains, however, that earlier assessment of Aubrey needs revision and in some measure even reversal; scholarly readers of Scurr will want to balance her construction of Aubrey against that to be found in the introduction to Bennett's edition and in her soon-to-be forthcoming biography. The advantage of Scurr's fictional diary is that it is great fun to read; the liability is that it is sometimes hard to tell whether it is right.

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*The Scots in Early Stuart Ireland: Union and Separation in Two Kingdoms.*  
David Edwards, ed.

With Simon Egan. *Studies in Early Modern Irish History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. xii + 284 pp. £75.

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In his introduction, the editor claims that there must have been an unexpected degree of "diversity" (4) among Scottish settlers in Ulster because so many stood aside at the beginning of the 1641 rising. Not content to use this as a rhetorical hook to snag the reader's attention, Edwards then accuses other historians of ignoring "the sheer scale of Scottish collusion" with the Irish (3). But is it fair to blame those who write surveys of whole centuries for smoothing out the ephemeral, regional, and ultimately incon-