

complex and tense Ireland. As Hall writes, “the fifty-five names on the memorial were submitted local families, and with that, it took on an intensely local significance being dedicated to those ... who died for Ireland in the Great European War... a stark and defiant challenge to those who would doubt their motives” (109).

The eclectic range of chapters in this book provides new insights on how war permeated, changed, and altered nearly every aspect of the life of landowning families, their employees, homes and estates in Ireland and Britain. In bringing together essays on the two countries experience of

war the reader is afforded an opportunity of not alone tracing both the common and shared experiences of war, but also the specific and unique impacts felt in each place. Each chapter also showcases the contrasting concerns and approaches taken by contemporary historical researchers in Brit-

ain and Ireland in bringing these details and narratives to the wider public again. This well-illustrated book published by Four Courts Press in Dublin will appeal to both specialist and general readership alike. •

—*Dublin City University*

Michael Davitt: Life After the Land League

BY CIARA BREATHNACH

AUTHORITATIVE AND SYMPATHETIC, Carla King skillfully recreates the last twenty-four years of Michael Davitt’s life. Born in Straide, County Mayo, on the eve of the Great Famine, Davitt was an Irish nationalist who was politically active from the 1860s until his death in 1906. The aim of this book is to provide deeper and new insights to our understanding of a man whose mature years have received relatively little attention from historians. The gap in studies of him can be attributed to T. W. Moody’s holding of the Michael Davitt papers while he completed a biography. Moody ended his study in 1882 which gave the impression that the Land League (founded in 1879 to bring about Irish tenant proprietorship) was his crowning glory. When the extensive archive was eventually turned over to the manuscripts department at Trinity College Dublin, it opened up the field to scholars like King and later, Laurence Marley, Fintan Lane, and Andrew Newby. In this volume, King builds on existing scholarship and argues that without paying closer attention to his later years “we fail to grasp the scale and range of his impact” (2). Although King needs no introduction as a Davitt expert, having published widely on various aspects of his activism on the part of the landless Irish poor, here we have a culmination of a lifetime’s research,

of eleven permitted time for reading and further education that was satiated at the Haslingden Mechanic’s Institute. Chartist discourses were still the *zeitgeist* in 1860s Haslingden and radicalized the young Davitt, who was “enrolled” in the Irish Republican Brotherhood (a secret society established in Dublin 1858 to bring about an



Independent Ireland) in 1865. These formative years set him on a crusade for the landless Irish poor and tenant rights, but equally as an international advocate for workers’ rights and women’s rights. His international interests spanned the British Empire, and he was fearless in denouncing antisemitism (495-507), barbaric acts in the name of Imperial advancement whether in India or Africa, and in opposing the Roman

from the National Skirmishing Fund (founded by the notorious Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, whom he frequently referred to as “O’Donovan Assa,” in 1876 to fund guerrilla attacks on the British government) to subvent an American lecture in Autumn 1879, which he later referred to as ‘that infernal transaction’ (42). To avert potential negative media attention he took it on as a personal loan lest it damage the Land League, and despite being penniless on its reparation his conscience was clear. At the risk of alienating the might of the Irish-American militants, he proceeded to publicize the transaction in an interview with the *New York Daily News* (41-42). His actions were prophetic and the spectre of that “loan” came to form part of the attorney general’s cross-examination of him in 1889 during the “The Times Special Commission on Parnellism and Crime” (established to investigate allegations made by *The Times* against Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891). Davitt’s relationship with O’Donovan Rossa deteriorated further as the latter’s behavior in exile became more erratic (364-65). Such associations meant that Davitt walked a fine line between freedom and incarceration and it was never far from his mind. Travels to the Antipodes included an extensive tour of prisons and institutions to develop his understanding of advances and best practice in the principles of reform. Davitt wrote

home rule. As King informs us, the vituperative and almost childish exchange that ensued between them was played out in the media. Both suffered health breakdowns. Davitt expressed “unmixed sorrow” on hearing of Parnell’s demise and argued that he should be remembered for his positive life’s work. The IPP split was inevitable. The aftermath positioned Davitt in a particular anti-Parnellite camp that, King states, isolated him from powerful Fenian and working-class Dublin allies. This stance was augmented by representations of him by the newly-formed Anglo-Irish Literary revivalist movement that “cast him and the Anti-Parnellites as very much in the wrong” (345).

Davitt’s commitment to the labor movement was life-long but, as MP, the ideological incompatibility of nationalism and socialism surfaced several times throughout the 1890s. Rooted in the Liberal Party’s failure to attract working-class candidates to stand in general elections, Keir Hardie formed the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1893. This presented Davitt with a conflict of interests, although committed to resolutions in the class struggle he recognized in the foundation of the ILP the potential for real harm to the achievement of Irish home rule. Indeed, he admitted that his links to the labor movement cost him the support of wealthy Irish Australians during his 1895 visit

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Carla King

MICHAEL DAVITT.

AFTER THE LAND LEAGUE, 1882-1906

DUBLIN: UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN PRESS,

2016. €50 Hbk.

Foregrounded by a discussion of his early life and influences, King locates her study in existing scholarship. This review would have liked to have seen a methodology section to understand the author’s structural rationale, but that becomes self evident given the thematic and chronological order that follows. Shaped in part by his own family’s history—eviction from a tenant farm in Straide, County Mayo, followed swiftly by emigration to Haslingden, Lancashire—Davitt harbored a lifelong hatred of landlordism. This, coupled with Chartist influences, girded Davitt’s commitment to land reform through nationalisation. Although a victim of prevailing social norms, which relied on child labor to support family income, he rarely made reference to the horrific accident that crushed his right arm. The inherent irony was that his being an amputee from the age

independent Ireland) in 1863. These formative years set him on a crusade for the landless Irish poor and tenant rights, but equally as an international advocate for workers’ rights and women’s rights. His international interests spanned the British Empire, and he was fearless in denouncing antisemitism (495-507), barbaric acts in the name of Imperial advancement whether in India or Africa, and in opposing the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland.

The carceral archipelago cast a long shadow over Davitt’s life (5), not least because his physical health was irreparably damaged (6) and the rest of his life was characterized by bronchial disease and sleep difficulties. His first sentence was 15 years penal servitude for treason felony in July 1870. Released as a ticket-of-leave man (on parole, in modern parlance) in 1878, the potential for re-imprisonment hung over him like the sword of Damocles. Over time, his frequent internments came not only to offer a reprieve from his hectic travel and lecture schedule, his fifteen-month stint from February 1881 was used fruitfully to write and reflect. By February 1883 his re-imprisonment prompted him to write to his confidant Richard McGhee that the state of his health “improved considerably since his release from the outside world” (67).

As a seasoned traveler and a journalist writing primarily for American newspapers, the subtleties of international politics and the potential for reputational damage by association were not lost on Davitt. Several examples of his international perspectives on nationalism, class struggles, and socialist thinking could be cited here to show how he truly transcended the often single-minded and parochial limitations of fellow land crusaders in Ireland. One *faux pas* stands out for the degree to which Davitt took moral and ethical responsibility for his actions. He lamented the folly of accepting a loan orchestrated through Patrick Ford

with O’Donovan Rossa deteriorated further as the latter’s behavior in exile became more erratic (364-65). Such associations meant that Davitt walked a fine line between freedom and incarceration and it was never far from his mind. Travels to the Antipodes included an extensive tour of prisons and institutions to develop his understanding of advances and best practice in the principles of reform. Davitt wrote extensively on the matter and in his capacity as an MP in the 1890s advocated a range of prison reforms (426-32).

Charles Stewart Parnell and Davitt’s relationship had always been marred by ideological and class differences, and it deteriorated further in the aftermath of the Kilmainham Treaty. His involvement in the Special Commission left him out of pocket and Parnell was slow to repay the costs incurred. Davitt suffered financial embarrassment on more than one occasion and had to issue reminders to Parnell. In fact, Davitt was dogged by financial troubles and was slow to accept help from the upper echelons even when bankruptcy loomed. Perhaps insecurity surrounding his own humble origins held him back, but his long association with Thomas Lipton yielded some possible gains in 1898 when he was presented with 1,000 shares.

When Parnell’s adultery and divorce case came to prominence in 1890, the tenacity with which he clung to political life coupled with what Davitt saw as years of ineffective leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party made any form of reconciliation impossible. From the outset, Davitt was aware of the damage the scandal posed to the Irish home rule campaign but others, including the Roman Catholic hierarchy, adopted a wait and see policy. Although Laurence Marley described Davitt’s attitude toward the case as “prudish,” few would dispute the fact that Parnell’s initially misleading account damaged support for

Hardie formed the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1893. This presented Davitt with a conflict of interests, although committed to resolutions in the class struggle he recognized in the foundation of the ILP the potential for real harm to the achievement of Irish home rule. Indeed, he admitted that his links to the labor movement cost him the support of wealthy Irish Australians during his 1895 visit (392). The following year his commitment to the Irish National Amnesty Association, which sought rights and recognition of Irish political prisoner status, was sacrificed lest he alienate Liberal Party colleagues and further damage good will towards home rule (412).

Carla King’s book shows very clearly that Davitt’s life and accomplishments after the Land League is worthy of further detailed study. This book is essential reading for scholars of Ireland, labor, travel, socio-economic and cultural history. UCD Press should be commended for this handsome production and its keen hardback pricing. However, I have to make an appeal for a paperback edition and a more affordable price point for the student market. A book running to over 700 pages is physically awkward, especially in the absence of a running header to remind the reader of the page range in question.

But these minor quibbles do not detract from King’s thoughtful reading of surviving ego-documents, images and all things Davitt, while also avoiding the pitfalls of archive replication. She expertly weaves scholarship on nationalism, socialism and nationhood throughout to produce a master class on how to do biography from a life cycle perspective. After reading this fascinating book, I can understand why Carla King has devoted so much of her *oeuvre* to him, I can think of no better travel companion.

—University of Limerick