

*Parnell Reconsidered*, ed. Pauric Travers and Donal McCartney (Dublin: U.C. Dublin P., 2013; pp. 214. €28).

In the history of Anglo-Irish relations, only twice in the nineteenth century did Irish parliamentarians succeed in bringing questions of Irish interest centre-stage at Westminster. The leaders of these two phases of nationalist endeavour, Daniel O'Connell and Charles Stewart Parnell, remain the giants of constitutionalism in nineteenth-century Irish history. However, the task of building a robust literature in the case of the latter has been hampered significantly by the fact that no Parnell papers survive, and what scant correspondence does exist in the inboxes of other nineteenth-century figures reveals a leader who was enigmatic, partial to brevity, and an admirer of tactical flexibility over ideological consistency. In the modern era, four major biographies of Parnell have been written—by R.F. Foster (1976), F.S.L. Lyons (1977), Robert Kee (1993) and, most recently, Paul Bew (2011). Complementing these are older biographies stretching back to R. Barry O'Brien's 1898 two-volume study, alongside a much wider academic literature on the Home Rule movement. Despite this, scholarly engagement with Parnell remains small in comparison to the magnitude and complexity of the subject. Eclipsed by obsession and division over the role of the physical force tradition, there remains much space in the present day for Parnell to be reconsidered.

This well-crafted selection of essays, edited by Pauric Travers and Donal McCartney, should be seen as a very welcome addition to the bookshelf of Parnell studies. It caters for the general reader as much as the specialist and it could be seen as an ideal and up-to-date introduction to themes in the life and times of Charles Stewart Parnell. Although not explicitly stated, the volume can also be viewed as the second instalment in a series. In 2006, Travers and McCartney edited and jointly authored *The Ivy Leaf*, a set of commemorative essays remembering Parnell and his family. Then, as in this volume, the essays featured originated as papers delivered at meetings of the Parnell Society, now one of the premier academic summer schools in Ireland and in existence since 1986. One major difference between *The Ivy Leaf* and this present collection is that, in the latter, the editors have chosen to include a wider range of expert contributors—although Travers and McCartney still dominate, having contributed five of the eleven chapters between them. The advantage of this new approach is that it provides a more diverse set of perspectives on Parnell.

In general, the essays within this collection complement each other nicely. Two essays on Parnell and the press (one by Felix Larkin and one by Myles Dungan) provide excellent analysis of the ways in which newspapers were harnessed by Parnell and how he developed a thoroughly modern style of political engagement through the various titles under his control or influence. Larkin's essay provides a very welcome *longue durée* analysis of Home Rule journalism spanning from 1875 to 1924, and this essay should be seen as a useful introduction for the general reader to Larkin's other writings on this subject. Dungan's chapter, too, is a synopsis. For those seeking a fuller examination of Dungan's thesis, his monograph, *Mr Parnell's Rottweiler*, was published earlier this year.

One of the strongest points of this book is its investigation of Parnell's personal political outlook. Opening with McCartney's chapter on 'Parnell and the meaning of Home Rule' and concluding with a detailed analysis (also by McCartney) of the manifesto 'to the People of Ireland' issued by Parnell as he fought for his political life in the winter of 1890, the collection provides insightful case-studies into the thinking of a politician who wrote little and preserved even less. As McCartney notes (p. 198), Parnell's manifesto of 1890 was the longest surviving tract he ever penned.

Chapters which consider Parnell's attitudes on subjects such as the drink interest (Fionnuala Waldron) and religion (Pauric Travers) are interesting further studies into elements of Parnell's personal beliefs and outlooks. However, in the latter, Travers arguably tries too hard to locate instances and utterances of religious belief in Parnell when so many contemporary accounts and subsequent studies have concurred on Parnell's ambivalence towards dogmatic religious orthodoxy (Catholic or Protestant) and his preference for a less prescriptive spirituality. Nonetheless, in the spirit of Parnell 'reconsidered', this exploratory piece does provide some important contradictory evidence to previously held assertions on Parnell's religious views.

If one strong aspect of this collection is the insights it provides into Parnell's thinking, then the other is its investigation of Parnell's networks, both social and political. Pat Power's chapter on the Parnells in Paris provides fascinating context on how the Parnell children, through their American mother and her brother Charles Tudor, circulated among the nearly 6,000 American expatriates resident in the city prior to the fall of the second empire. Even more interestingly, Power asserts that, during the Franco-Prussian War, Fanny Parnell found in the American Red Cross a model for the Ladies' Land League.

Further exploring networks and relationships, D.G. Boyce's extensive study of Parnell's interactions with Gladstone, though covering well-worn ground, provides several interesting new perspectives. Chief among these is the revelation (p. 35) that Gladstone and Parnell discussed how the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* of 1867 could serve as a model for Ireland, nearly twenty years before Arthur Griffith proposed the same solution in his *Resurrection of Hungary*. Margaret Ward's essay on Anna Parnell provides historical rehabilitation for the contribution and the radicalism of the Ladies' Land League, charting the ways in which its legacy and memory were distorted by male figures within constitutional nationalism, not least among them Michael Davitt.

By providing fresh perspectives and challenging previously held orthodoxies, this book will be useful to specialists, while its style and engaging contributors make it very accessible to the interested general reader. For those seeking a comprehensive biography, Bew's *Enigma* beckons, but, for sparking ideas and taking new viewpoints, *Parnell Reconsidered* will be a collection with enduring relevance.

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