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largely hidden from view. Visual evidence – not just the portrait of Lady Arabella but the drawing of Hackball, king of the beggars, by Hugh Douglas Hamilton – is not included, although they would have reinforced vividly this sober and often sombre text. On occasion it has been suggested that the initiatives in Ireland were precocious, notably the opening of hospitals and funding them in part through regular musical performances. Dr Sonnelitter, however, stresses the similarities between English and Irish activities, and indeed the indebtedness of the latter to the former. In the main, she follows predecessors in doubting whether the interventions did much to reduce mortality, poverty, and destitution, or to improve education and conduct. It is tantalizing to note the possible influences from continental Europe, but these are not pursued: Bishop Maule, the begetter of projects for English schooling, recorded his admiration for the German Pietists. Lady Arabella Denny made at least one lengthy continental tour, which included the Low Countries where practical philanthropy had long flourished. Physicians, heavily involved in several of the endeavours, had usually studied abroad. In several instances – the Incorporated Society and the Dublin Society – there were fierce disagreements over priorities and methods. If some arose from clashing personalities, others told of fundamental divergences as to how problems were best addressed. There is, then, room still to investigate further the sources of the thinking behind what was attempted in Ireland. Meanwhile, thanks to Dr Sonnelitter's careful account, it is possible to appreciate the range and the workings (typically disappointing) of these schemes.

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RADICALISM AND REPUTATION: THE CAREER OF BRONTERRE O'BRIEN. By Michael J. Turner. Pp x + 378. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press. 2017. $49.95.

For Karl Marx, one of the great anomalies of history was the dilatory development of socialism in the cradle of the Industrial Revolution. The oddity has made Chartism, England's only mass working class movement with claims to be revolutionary, all the more attractive to British historians. Chartism has never been neglected, and as Britain once led the world in labour studies, it has enjoyed the consideration of some illustrious scholars, such as the Thompsons, Briggs, and Saville. Turner traces the evolution of the historiography in an excellent introduction. Another peculiarity of this very English movement, is that its two best known leaders, Feargus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien, were Irish. Of the two, the 'great Feargus', colourful, demagogic, and immensely popular in the north of England, has received by far the most attention. The less eloquent and more intellectual O'Brien has survived in relative obscurity. While he is invariably discussed in interpretations of Chartism, biographies have been few, discouraged perhaps by the want of detail on his personal life. As the title indicates, Turner's biography focuses on O'Brien's ideas and the debates on their merit and impact. Two of his seven chapters are devoted to O'Brien's views on America and on what he calls 'The Irish dimension'.

James O'Brien was born in Granard, Co. Longford, in 1804 according to Turner, others say 1805, a Catholic (O'Connor was Protestant) and son of a failed wine and spirits merchant. With the help of a benefactor, he was educated in Edgeworthstown and read law in Trinity College, Dublin. Continuing his legal studies in London, he was drawn to the contemporary political ferment and the burning question of the day, the extension of the franchise and parliamentary reform. From 1831 he used the pen-name 'Bronterre'. Turner suggests he forged it out of the Irish 'brón tír', or possibly the Irish and French 'brón terre', to indicate his origins, his fascination with the French Revolution, and his affinity with 'the sorrow of the land'. O'Connor gave him the barbed soubriquet 'the schoolmaster' (p. 42).

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O'Brien's career can be divided into three phases. During the 1830s he consolidated his reputation as a writer and thinker. His abiding ambition was to develop a newspaper business, and he went through several titles, dogged by arrest and conviction for sedition in 1840, over-ambitious management, and quarrels with other Chartists. (They were a fractious lot, though it was their propensity to be viciously personal that is so disconcerting). In 1842 he broke with O'Connor over his willingness to threaten physical force, and advocated the use of petitions and contesting elections instead. His status within the movement never recovered. In the second phase of his career he joined the Complete Suffrage Union and built a support base from London. Finally, in 1849–50, he made his most important historical contribution to Chartism by clarifying its inchoate revolutionism through his programme for the National Reform League for the Peaceful Regeneration of Society. O'Brien envisaged the Charter as merely the start of a social and economic revolution, based on the public ownership of all land, and state control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. O'Brien remained committed to these ideas to the end, and spent his last years fine-tuning them. The irony was that he had formally left the Chartists in 1848, and had moved to a more thought-through socialism in the wake of the failed revolutions of 1848, a failure which entailed Chartism sinking into severe decline. He survived precariously, working from his Eclectic Institute in Soho as an adult education tutor, and tramping about south-east England as a public lecturer. Afflicted by bronchitis and increasing bouts of depression, he died in poverty in 1864.

Turner's two most original chapters concern O'Brien's views on America and Ireland. The former was widely admired by European radicals as the great exemplar of how democracy could lead to freedom and prosperity, and Chartists openly compared themselves to American revolutionaries. Though aware that in many respects the United States had failed to live up to its promise, most egregiously in the persistence of slavery, O'Brien had no wish to detract from its propaganda value. The point was that the American system had the potential, and to Europeans it seemed a land of limitless opportunity. O'Brien backed projects to establish Chartist colonies in Texas and Kansas.

On Ireland, O'Brien was enigmatic. He identified with it, and worked on a lengthy history of Ireland in 1847–8, yet after 1830 he never got closer to home than the Isle of Man. He deplored British misrule, and favoured Repeal, but argued that Ireland's real problem lay with the landlords rather than Westminster. As he grew sceptical about religion, his secularist values came to be perceived as anti-Catholic. In any case, Daniel O'Connell was vehemently opposed to Irish contact with Chartism, and the perceived importance of 'the Liberator' was enough to ensure that Irish workers kept their distance from British radicals as long as O'Connell worked for Repeal. Turner is comprehensive on O'Brien's positions on Ireland, but he might have done more to explore the narrative of events. Patrick O'Higgins, leader of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association, the Irish Chartist organization that dared not speak its name, receives no more than two passing references, and the radical involvement with the Confederate rising of 1848 is dealt with summarily. The death of O'Connell, the growth of violent protest against the Great Famine, and the outbreak of revolutions across Europe from February 1848, transformed Irish politics. Building on the groundwork of Takashi Koseki and Christine Kinealy, there is a need for Ireland's 1848 to be interrogated as a radical revolt rather than another link in the chain of nationalist insurrections. The military fiasco that culminated in the widow McCormack's cabbage patch in Ballingarry has concealed extensive working class backing for the Confederates. Undaunted by the triumph of reaction in Ireland as elsewhere, O'Brien joined Bernard Fullam's Irish Democratic Association, arguably the first Irish organisation with a socialist programme, in 1850.

This is very much a biography of intellectual formation, mentality, and shifting outlook. We learn little of O'Brien's personal life. Neither does Turner deal substantially with politics. There remain controversies; if O'Brien was of undoubted intellectual significance, how important was he to Chartism in other respects; did he

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drift away from Chartism after his break with O'Connor; what effected the changes in his thinking; why was he not more successful, in politics and in business; given his emphasis on land reform, was he really a socialist or more a primitive anti-capitalist; did he influence Marx, Friedrich Engels, and the subsequent generation of British socialists? Turner does not answer these questions definitively – the sources make it an elusive quest – but he does offer well-founded and judicious interpretations. Tackling a cerebral topic, he has produced an informative and entertaining read which will stand as a superb addition to the literature on O'Brien and Chartism. It's unfortunate that the publishers have not thought it worth a few illustrations and something better than a skeletal index.

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MICHAEL DAVITT: AFTER THE LAND LEAGUE, 1882–1906. By Carla King. Pp 728. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2016. £50 hardback.

Michael Davitt remains a towering icon of Irish nationalism. Palatable to broader tastes than just followers of hard-line republicanism due to his wider socio-economic concerns, he has consequently retained a lasting appeal to socialists, moderate nationalists and social reformers. Even Protestant radicals, like his life-long friend, the businessman and newspaper owner, John Ferguson of Glasgow, closely associated with his Young Ireland-type nationalism. Indeed, Davitt ranged well beyond the specific confines of political nationalism. As an emigrant himself, he began his political education as a broad-ranging radical influenced by the afterglow of Chartism. He would later write against anti-Semitism, address social reform and trade union rights, and campaign for Keir Hardie in the days before the British Labour Party proper had emerged. He represented a strand of nationalism drawn from the ranks of the Irish in Britain that recognised that labourism and nationalism were not only compatible, but also necessary, for immigrants who had to negotiate their new communities while supporting Ireland's cause. Davitt, however, also could be an unrealistic sort of purist. Influenced on the subject of land, as King demonstrates here, by James Fintan Lalor and Henry George, he advocated the nationalisation of the estates of the Anglo-Irish landlord class. Of course, the Irish tenantry assuredly did not want such a policy. Land nationalisation, however, remained an article of faith that he retained until his death in 1906.

Davitt was born in 1846, in Straide, Co. Mayo, during the early years of the Famine. His family, which had been solid enough to own some livestock, slid into poverty and was evicted. They went to the Lancashire mill-town of Haslingden, where, as a boy, Davitt received little initial education. Sent out to work at a young age, he lost his arm to a factory machine. Philanthropy saw the maimed boy enjoy four years' education, and, inspired by this, his father's activism, and his mother's intelligence and strength, he became the most voracious sort of autodidact. Young Davitt encountered local, clandestine Irish associationalism, and then Fenianism. For the latter association, he spent seven years of the 1870s under very harsh prison conditions. In contrast to Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa (O'Donovan Assa, as he called him), whom he disliked, Davitt was never pushed to madness, alcoholism, or unending, incandescent hatred by the undoubtedly terrible treatment they both experienced in the British penal system. Characteristically, Davitt instead became a life-long supporter of prison reform. Indeed, he would spend another fifteen months incarcerated during the Land War period in the early 1880s.

Davitt was at the heart of Irish politics when he was released from prison in December 1877. He was soon catapulted into the London circles of the rising star among the Irish nationalist M.P.s, Charles Stewart Parnell. The Protestant landlord

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