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

who rarely read a book stood in stark contrast to the voracious reader and evicted peasant's son. It was once suggested that Parnell's first act as a future prime minister of Ireland would have been to imprison Davitt. Davitt, we know from his convictions, would have nationalised Parnell's estate, Avondale. Their tense relationship was shaped by variant mentalities; their approaches also clashed. That aside, these two men transformed Irish politics through the tumult of the Land War.

A feature of this book I found especially fascinating was Davitt's endless travelling. No sooner was he out of prison than he was despatched to America to marshal the Fenian elements there. He had the credentials to do this, even though, mindful of the risk of re-arrest, he told the authorities he was no longer a Fenian. Davitt travelled across Britain and Ireland, to the United States many times, Europe, and elsewhere. He was to become a powerful agent with considerable pulling power within the Irish diaspora world-wide, not only because of his credentials and credibility, but because he travelled among these people. Equally, Davitt was a man of his time. He admired the land redistribution schemes at work in 1890s New Zealand, but as King says, he was silent on the fact that not all the land that was reapportioned came from breaking up big estates: some was grabbed from Maori farmers to give to white settlers.

To call Carla King's massive, 700-page book a biography is to do it an injustice. Based on the Davitt papers and a wide trawl of large numbers of other archives, this is actually a life presented in its wider social and political milieu. In some respects, it is a history of Ireland through the prism of Davitt. King's work picks up his life, in 1882 (though there are several pages on the earlier periods) because T. W. Moody, who held Davitt's papers privately for many years, only completed the first volume of his biography *Michael Davitt and the Irish revolution, 1846–1882* (Oxford, 1981). Eventually, the Davitt papers were donated to Trinity College, and these are the foundation of King's study. Additionally, King has already edited a massive collection of Davitt's writings, and she knows as much about the man as anyone living. Perhaps, though, the present book fits most interestingly alongside Laurence Marley's *Michael Davitt: freelance radical and frondeur* (Dublin, 2010). Marley tracks a course through the political life of a man who lent himself to many causes, but moved on from each. Portraying Davitt as a proponent of a range of ethical beliefs rather than a fixed cause, Marley drives an argument, which is framed more widely in King's work. King's book, twice as long as Marley's, is, moreover, the complete study. Her detail is compendious, the writing lucid and the arguments are clear. One minor caveat is that on occasion the life becomes a little lost in the sheer weight of the complex and fast-moving context.

Ultimately, *Michael Davitt* is a major study, which is much more than an assessment of one man's contribution. He was a major figure of his age, and not merely with respect to Irish matters. King weaves the man into a complex, packed milieu. She gives weight to the tensions, conflicts and difficulties in relations with Parnell, parliament, British labour, land issues, and a number of external social and political causes. This was a life packed with activism, writing and thought. Having been influenced by British radicalism, Young Ireland, and currents of internationalism, Davitt was, by the end of his life, a flickering ember of a dying form of nationalism, quite different from that offered by Arthur Griffith and his generation. Though his life was not long, his approach to nationalism had in many ways come and gone.

This book, and Davitt's life more generally, have been King's life's work. The result is a rich and rewarding work demonstrating massive scholarship and learning. It will be crucial reading not just for scholars and students of Home Rule and the Irish Revolution, but will also attract those whose historical interests lie in the socio-economic fields. There is much profit to be found here; for like its subject, the book bursts the seams of a single life.

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