agenda. *John Dooley's Civil War* is not only a fine war diary but will prove especially useful to those historians who seek to study Irish involvement with the Confederacy, as well as those who seek to better understand post-war southern society.

IAN KENNEALLY
Department of History, National University of Ireland, Galway

ENIGMA. A NEW LIFE OF CHARLES STEWART PARNELL. By Paul Bew. Pp xvi, 256. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan. 2011. €19.99.

In the original version of this updated biography, Paul Bew introduced insights that for the past three decades have informed the standard picture of Parnell and his era. This expanded revision is a welcome and readable commentary which surely is the best medium-length modern assessment of 'the Chief'. Like its predecessor, it bristles with intelligence and intriguing assertions. Although apparently aimed primarily at an Irish audience it is perhaps a shade too Irish-centric, under-playing Parnell's central place in British politics. Bew's speculations on various incidents sustain the narrative, for the book lacks a clearly articulated overarching theme; the title 'enigma' is curious, for Bew reveals Parnell as anything but a man of mystery though he remains even here partly opaque. A somewhat hidden subtext is that Parnell, throughout his career, took positions on public affairs that were more uncomfortable to the powerbrokers of rural Ireland than to the British political elite. He points out that Parnell's fabled quirky behaviour largely dates to post-1886 when he was ill and felt hounded by the press. Too little attention has been given to Parnell's poor health during his last five years. Increasingly, it can be seen that the relationship with Mrs O'Shea was just one among several things shaping his public profile during this stage of his life. The pages of *Hansard* and division lists demonstrate that Parnell remained active in the House of Commons, though even in this arena he had absences due to what, in the end, was a fatal condition. The tome is enriched by inclusion of Patrick Maume's essay, 'A counterfactual Chief? If Parnell had lived until 1918', as an appendix.

Bew's initial impact stemmed from the twist he gave to the centrality of Parnell's outlook on the land question – an approach, it was urged, shaped by his southern Protestant-landlord perspective. In Bew's estimation, this left him myopic about Ulster, its economic structure and Protestant distinctiveness. This interpretation has not been amended but is expressed with greater nuance. He assigns importance to Parnell's first visit to Mayo in late 1877 where he grasped the problem that many tenant farmers had too little land. Tenant-right legislation therefore could not solve the basic need for a substantial layer of western peasantry. From this experience he became a long-term advocate of reclamation of wastelands and also, for a time at least, of internal migration from poor overcrowded western hillsides to the fertile midlands and east of the country. This, though, brought him into conflict with key interests of large tenant farmers and their allies, the clergy and shopkeepers, many of the latter engaged on the side in cattle-rearing. Bew's contention that Parnell's vision had unsettling implications remains compelling and helps explain why during the party split his main bastion of support was not amongst the agrarian classes. His reprised insight could do with further amplification, notably taking account of Parnell's individualistic, if not idiosyncratic, grasp of political economy. Typical of nationalists he deplored Irish emigration but, unlike most, Parnell expressed concrete ideas about how to stem the haemorrhage of people. Overlooked in this account also is Parnell's unusual comprehension of the interconnection of the land issue to town and country, a point he made tellingly in Ulster.

Bew's analysis of the post-1886 years is in many respects masterly. He balances Parnell's peculiar responsibilities with his personal and public dilemma. The tensions

inherent in both areas meant the most successful Irish leader of the age had to appease an increasingly fractured movement at home as well as the all-essential British people, a task that was never going to be easy. This problem was rendered the more difficult by the second phase of the Land War, the 'Plan of Campaign', and an increasingly aggressive, self-confident and effective Conservative policy spearheaded by Arthur Balfour. But, as Bew convincingly observes, it was the divorce that broke Parnell's authority; without this catalyst, Parnell was unchallengeable. By making this case Bew puts to rest a recent historiographic tendency to see the collapse of Parnellism as almost inevitable.

In a stimulating conclusion, Bew shows where his interpretation sits within the expanded literature on Parnell. He notes that Parnell appreciated the problem of sectarian division and, belatedly, the significance of northern concerns but intervened only fitfully, thereby surrendering 'not the leadership, but much of the initiative, to other, inferior hands'. This is not so much unique as a forcefully-argued assessment. In a short and fast-paced account there are bound to be lacuna. The author does not deal with economic factors as adeptly as he does political considerations; as noted above, he is too Irish-centric; there is not always a strong sense of the impact of ideas and ideology; and Parnell's associates and rivals sometimes receive short-shrift.

ALAN O'DAY

CONSTRUCTING IRISH NATIONAL IDENTITY: DISCOURSE AND RITUAL DURING THE LAND WAR, 1879–1882. By Anne Kane. Pp 298. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2011. £65.

In recent scholarship on the Irish Land War (1879–82), there has been a notable focus on the largely neglected cultural dimensions of the conflict, specifically on the cultural significance of aspects such as evictions, boycotting, crowd rituals, newspapers and public reading, and the administration of justice through the Land League's subversive courts. Scholarly attention has come from several disciplines. This latest work by Kane, aspects of which have already been published in a number of academic journals and essay collections, approaches the subject from the perspective of cultural sociology.

Kane examines the interplay between discourses. Her study is concerned less with the outcome of the Land War than with the discursive processes which forged a unified nationalist identity and ideology at this pivotal point in the shaping of modern Ireland. Taking newspapers as her primary source-material, she examines reportage of land meetings, demonstrations, branch meetings, and responses to court proceedings, in order to find and designate 'crucial symbolic concepts, embedded narratives, and patterns of symbolic transformation' (p. 27). 'Rent', for example, is transformed during the conflict to mean oppression, domination and injustice, rather than merely a legalistic term in landlord–tenant transactions (p. 12). Through this form of text analysis, Kane argues, we are able to trace the discursive struggle of various groups during the Land War, and to better understand the dynamics of mass mobilisation.

Kane charts the shifting contours of the 'intertwined discursive structures' of agrarianism, Catholicism and nationalism at play during the Land War. In the early stages of the campaign, a 'retributive discourse' emerged in the west, at odds with the politics of conciliation, and signifying the demand for the restitution of historic land rights. In the later part of 1880, when the movement had spread beyond the west and had won the support of Catholic clergy and large farmers, this gave way to 'militant constitutionalism', a 'refurbished concept of constitutionalism' which stressed collective unity over individualism (p. 150). As an 'unforeseen, and ironic', consequence of the acceptance of this discourse, we ultimately see a 'rehabilitation' of the meaning of conciliation in the late stages of the Land War, which served to temporarily settle the conflict with the Land Act of 1881 (p. 219). Kane's argument is that nationalist identity-formation in these years was