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Michael Davitt's Pacific World

Malcolm Campbell

In the last decade historians have sought increasingly to recast Ireland's history away from the narrow confines of the island nation into new and more expansive currents. This tendency in Irish historical writing substantially mirrors a recalibration that is occurring in many other national historiographies, a move towards greater recognition of and engagement with transnational approaches to the study of history. For Ireland, this emerging trend has meant, among other things, renewed consideration of its relationship with the British Empire. Paul Townend was correct when he recently wrote that, for a generation or more, Irish history 'has had little engagement with imperial history, particularly for the modern period'.[1] However, due in part to the proliferation of new transnational histories, and also to heightened interest in the so-called 'British world', that detachment has become increasingly unsustainable. Issues of empire and colonisation have struck back with a vigour unimaginable a decade or two ago. The remarkable number of recent studies addressing aspects of the relationship between Ireland and India bears testimony to this development.[2] For Townend, however, the rebirth of interest in the relationship of Ireland and empire is less a surprise than a recognition of the fundamental truth that, 'by the nineteenth century, it was abundantly clear to Irish men and women that their realities were fundamentally bound up with English power and proximity. In that sense the Irish had long been a self-consciously and thoroughly imperial people'.[3]

One implication of this reorientation from an *island* history to a transnational Irish history is that its telling destabilises existing narratives and their geographical boundaries. It brings into play, in new and unexpected ways, places, people and events that were previously considered peripheral to the telling of

[1] Paul A. Townend, 'Between two worlds: Irish nationalists and imperial crisis 1878–1880', *Past and Present* 194 (2007), 140.

[2] Recent review articles include Stephen Howe, 'Minding the Gaps: New Directions in the Study of Ireland and Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37 (2009), 135–49; Mary Conley, 'Ireland. India and the British Empire: Intraimperial Affinities and Contested Frameworks', *Radical History Review* 104 (2009), 159–72

[3] Townend, 140.

Irish history. Many filaments draw together developments within the wider British Empire, and across the globe more generally, with the political, social and economic history of Ireland and its peoples. Simultaneously, Ireland's history, including its experience of dispossession and subordination, may be seen to have had significant effects far beyond both Ireland's shores and those of the New World destinations to which the Irish emigrated in greatest numbers.

This is certainly true in the case of Ireland's contact with the Pacific World, defined here as the vast territory bounded by the Western Americas and the East Coast of Australia and including the islands in between. Significant British involvement in the Pacific dates from the 1760s when, in competition with France, the Royal Navy commenced to navigate in, chart, and initiate settlement in the South Pacific. In the next century-and-a-half, the presence of Europeans increased markedly across the region, profoundly disrupting existing cultures and initiating new political, economic and social structures. The Irish were from the very beginning participants in all these processes, arriving as crewmen on the first British ships to land in Polynesia and coming in greater numbers as the intensity of European trade and colonisation increased. The Irish who came – convicts, colonial governors, and men and women from all social grades in between – whether life-time settlers or short-term sojourners, were as remarkable for their diversity as for their geographic spread. Most came as contributors and collaborators in the exertion of a broadly-British influence across the Pacific World; more rarely, they acted in resistance to the intrusion of colonial power.

However, the Pacific World also exerted its own influence on Ireland. In addition to its power to capture European imaginations, the Pacific became a new site for Irish migration and settlement. By 1870–1, when adequate census data exists for most of the region, somewhere in the order of 300,000 Irish-born resided within the area bounded by the Western Americas and South Australia, a number roughly equivalent to one-fifteenth of Ireland's population at that time. Most were on the periphery of the Pacific Ocean, participants in a process of rapid westward expansion after 1850 that the urban historian Lionel Frost termed the creation of the 'new urban frontier'. Smaller numbers dispersed elsewhere, to the West Coast of South America and the islands scattered across the ocean.[4]

[4] Comprised of Australian colonies approximately 200,000; New Zealand 30,000; California 55,000; Oregon, Washington Territory and British Columbia, approx 4000. On the urban frontier see Lionel Frost, *The New Urban Frontier: Urbanisation and city-building in Australasia and the American West* (Sydney, 1991).

The Pacific World also held a particular interest for nineteenth-century Irish nationalists engaged in campaigns for independence. A site of dispossession and colonisation, and of recent experiences of state creation and experiments in democracy, it offered fresh visions for a possible Irish future. John and William Redmond, John Dillon, and various other envoys from the Irish Parliamentary Party, toured the Australasian colonies in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, campaigning on Ireland's behalf, raising funds for the Party's campaigns, and observing with interest the achievements and challenges that confronted the self-governing settler colonies.[5] However, probably no leading Irish political figure had greater exposure to the Pacific World, or so broad an interest in social, political and economic trends there, as the renowned Irish nationalist Michael Davitt. In 1895 Davitt travelled extensively through the Pacific World. He visited the six Australian colonies, New Zealand, Samoa, Hawaii and the western United States before returning to Ireland. Davitt described many of his experiences in New Zealand and Australia in his book *Life and Progress in Australasia* (1898). In particular, he commented on political developments and legislative achievements in the antipodean colonial societies and discussed subjects of longstanding interest to him, most notably the rise of the labour movement and prisons and prison reform. However, *Life and Progress in Australasia* did not extend to details of his crossing of the Pacific or time spent in Polynesia. Davitt's observations on these parts of the tour were included only in his unpublished diaries. This article examines Michael Davitt's Pacific experiences and explores the ways in which Davitt's own outlook was affected and transformed by his exposure to Irish diasporic communities and the ideas he encountered the Pacific World. In doing so, it contributes to wider debates in Irish historiography about empire and colonisation.

Michael Davitt's 1895 tour to the Australian colonies, New Zealand and the Pacific occurred at a time of considerable personal and professional anguish. In September 1890 Davitt began publishing his own newspaper, the *Labour World*. However, it fared poorly and eight months later the newspaper closed due to failing circulation. At the same time, Davitt was increasingly occupied with anti-Parnellite politics after the acrimonious Irish Party split. He stood for election in Waterford in December 1891 but lost to another former visitor to the Australasian colonies, John Redmond, by 1775 votes to 1229, suffering a physical mauling from a mob in the process. Another distressing defeat followed in North Meath in July 1892, although that result

[5] See Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815– 1922* (Madison, Wisc., 2008), 140–8.

was subsequently overturned on petition because of what was deemed to be inappropriate clerical influence. Frustrated in politics and confronted following his newspaper's closure with unmanageable debts and no regular income, Michael Davitt declared bankruptcy. Francis Sheehy-Skeffington's biography of Davitt records of this time, that 'everything he had went in the smash – even the dwelling house which had been presented to his wife. And dark times followed, borne with his customary fortitude, till his never-resting pen once more placed him in a position of comparative security'.[6]

Despite his disappointments, parliamentary politics continued to beckon, and when Michael Davitt was elected MP for Northeast Cork the following year his opponents used his recent bankruptcy as grounds to have him disqualified from sitting in the House of Commons. Although the Court of Appeal subsequently affirmed Davitt's right to stand for election – initially in Britain, then in Ireland – the financial strain and legal anxieties of the turbulent early 1890s provide a critical backdrop to his decision to embark on the 1895 tour of the antipodes. So too did his attempts in 1893 and 1894 to mediate the anti-Parnellite party's relationship with Britain's emerging labour movement. Touring through northern British constituencies, Davitt found himself increasingly in sympathy with the policies espoused by labour or socialist parliamentary candidates while ostensibly campaigning for Liberal Party candidates, sympathetic to the anti-Parnell faction. His mounting interest in the potential of labour politics is strongly evident throughout the journal of his tour of the colonies and in his subsequent book.[7]

Michael Davitt's arrival had been long anticipated by the Irish in Australia. In 1883, shortly after the completion of John and William Redmond's well-known mission to the Australasian colonies, rumours swept through Ireland, the United States and Australia that Davitt had decided to walk away from the nationalist cause, retire immediately from public life, and relocate permanently to Australia. Much to the disappointment of the Australian Irish, however,

[6] Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, *Michael Davitt: Revolutionary Agitator and Labour Leader* (London, 1967), 155. See also T. W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846–82* (Oxford, 1982), 53–8.

[7] See Laura McNeil, 'Land, Labor and Liberation: Michael Davitt and the Irish Question in the age of British Democratic Reform, 1878–1906' (PhD diss, Boston College, 2002), 307–61; Carla King, '"A New World Full of Youthful Hopes and Promise": Michael Davitt in Australia, 1895', in Lawrence M. Geary and Andrew J. McCarthy (eds), *Ireland, Australia and New Zealand: History, Politics and Culture* (Dublin, 2008), 185–6. I am grateful to Carla King for information on Davitt's collection of photographs.

Davitt did not follow in the footsteps of the Young Irelander Charles Gavan Duffy decades before and become one of them. A planned visit in 1885 also did not eventuate, Davitt making it only to the Holy Land before returning to Ireland. Carla King writes that 'other projected trips were also abandoned, so as not to conflict with lecture tours by other Irish nationalist leaders, or in 1893 because he devoted his efforts to supporting the second Home Rule Bill'.[8] Yet though still unknown in person, Davitt was familiar to Australian readers through his wonderful letters published in Joseph Winter's Melbourne newspaper, *The Advocate*, from 1887, correspondence that covered Irish politics as well as a wide sweep of world affairs, including the scramble for Africa and the Dreyfuss Affair in France.[9]

When Michael Davitt did finally arrive in the Australasian colonies his tour was, for the most part, enthusiastically received by Irish and non-Irish alike. The visits of previous Irish politicians had done much to erode colonial opposition there to the Home Rule cause and promote mainstream political support for a moderate constitutional settlement. By 1895, only the most vitriolic opponents of Ireland continued unflinchingly to reject the Parliamentary Party's Home Rule agenda. Indeed, leading Irish Australians believed Home Rule now to be virtually inevitable. E. W. O'Sullivan, a New South Wales politician, was of the opinion that 'the logic of their common enterprise in the Anglo-Celtic empire would lead the English and Irish of all parties to a compromise. The Irish could not in fact contract out of that compromise'.[10] Davitt's message for local Irish nationalists, which echoed closely those advanced during the earlier tours of the Redmond brothers and John Dillon, confirmed this opinion and continued to prove attractive to Australian and New Zealand ears: 'What was Home Rule? Home Rule was what New South Wales, Victoria and twenty-three other colonies today enjoyed'.[11] His paramount interest, however, was to observe developments in the New World rather than to agitate on Ireland's behalf.[12]

From the outset, Michael Davitt observed closely the operation of the colonial parliaments and the democratic tendencies of colonial politics. 'To

[8] King, 186.

[9] Michael Davitt, 'Advocate letters', Trinity College Dublin TCDMS 9623. On Davitt and Joseph Winter, see also Val Noone, 'Michael Davitt, Melbourne and the Labour Movement', *Australasian Journal of Irish Studies* 6 (2006/7), 31.

[10] Bruce Mansfield, *Australian Democrat: the Career of William Edward O'Sullivan 1846–1910* (Sydney, 1965), 283.

[11] *Irish Australian* [Sydney], 13 July 1895.

[12] Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia: 1788 to the Present*, (Sydney, 2000), 236. The outcome of Davitt's observations was *Life and Progress in Australasia* (London, 1898).

the student of popular principles of government and social and industrial legislation there are no more interesting countries in the world of practical politics than those of Australasia', he wrote.[13] In South Australia, his first port of call, Davitt noted in his journal 'One man one vote. Next G[eneral] E[lection] it will be adult suffrage as women have had the franchise extended to them….Present Govt. opportunistic. Leaning towards Labour and Democracy'.[14] South Australia had been at the forefront of labour politics in Australia when three Labour candidates won seats in the colonial parliament in May 1891. In contrast, he was unimpressed with the Crown's decision to grant representative government to Western Australia when Ireland remained unable to attain Home Rule. To concede Home Rule to an area the size of Europe less Russia and possessing a population of only 45,000 was, Davitt considered, 'as illogical, irrational and contradictory policy as could well emanate from a parliamentary debating society in Colney Hatch. But it is the Imperial statesmanship of England all the same'.[15]

Davitt's journal and correspondence confirm the extent to which he engaged with the leading figures in colonial politics across Australia. In Sydney, he was invited to dine with Edmund Barton, who would become in 1901 the Australian Commonwealth's first prime minister. But ironically, in a decade that saw the flowering of Australian nationalism, the Irish nationalist Davitt remained a sceptic of the self-governing colonies' movement towards Federation. Reflecting his intense interest in the possibilities of class-based politics, Davitt prioritised social reform over the achievement of a national parliament: '[i]t will add nothing to the present advantages they possess in colonies where the Labour parties hold the balance of parliamentary power'.[16]

In each colony, in addition to meeting colonial politicians, encouraging local Irish sympathisers, and conducting a hectic schedule of public lectures, Davitt researched and commented upon topics of personal interest: legislative reforms, land ownership, the quality of local journalism, labour relations (including the use of Pacific Island labour on the Queensland sugar plantations), and prisons. In South Australia, he visited the Murray River Labour Settlements, local attempts to establish a self-sufficient yeomanry. As Val Noone has pointed out, Davitt saw experiments in alternatives to private ownership such as the Murray settlements as 'of importance to the global

[13] Davitt, *Life and Progress*, viii.
[14] Michael Davitt, '1895 Tour Notes part 1', Trinity College Dublin TCDMS 9562, 43.
[15] Davitt, *Life and Progress*, 27.
[16] Ibid. 132.

labour movement'.[17] He also visited the farming and copper mining region of Kapunda where there were 'a good few Irish among the residents'.[18] In the colony he found the people generally healthy and contented, the children comfortably clad, 'strong of limb, bright and chatty', in stark contrast to the shoeless children of the West of Ireland.[19] Davitt's visit followed tumultuous industrial disputes in the eastern Australian colonies earlier in the decade and unsurprisingly labour topics loomed large in his public lectures. His recent exposure to the increasingly influential role of labour in British politics ensured the popularity of his meetings and drew large numbers of trade unionists to hear his addresses.

The treatment of indigenous Australians and Pacific Island labourers recruited for the Queensland sugar fields proved to be of special interest to Davitt. Though his lexicon is very much that of the late-nineteenth century, he commented firmly and critically on the adverse effects of colonisation on the Aborigines, believing it was 'to the credit of colonial Irishmen that they have produced, in more than one instance, courageous advocates of a humane treatment of the dying Aboriginal race of Australia'.[20] More pressing to contemporaries, however, was the immediate challenge posed to the cherished ideal of White Australia by the importation of so-called 'Kanaka labour'. Davitt travelled to Mackay in northern Queensland and researched at length the wages, rations and clothing available to the indentured workers recruited for the sugar industry. He spoke to local European farmers as well as the labourers themselves, taking care to do so in the absence of their masters. While Japanese inspectors attended the sugar districts to ensure fair treatment of their nationals, he judged that government inspections of the island workers were 'a nominal affair'. The Pacific labourers were confined to the least skilled work, while 'all technical work was done by white men'. 'They are not "driven" in their task, as slaves would be', Davitt observed, 'but they look when at labour more like prison gangs than free workers'. Their desultory condition and high mortality rates were particularly striking. Consequently, he concluded, the current system of indenture ought to be terminated and replaced by one that recognised the aspirations of the small holder. 'The best, if not the only way in which to rid Queensland of the reproach and dangers of the Kanaka Labour

[17] Noone, p.37; Davitt, *Life and Progress*, 73.
[18] Ibid., 9.
[19] Davitt, *Life and Progress*, 64–9.
[20] Ibid., 38.

System, is to encourage homestead sugar cultivation'.[21] Davitt's meticulous investigation of the racial issues confronting the Australian colonies on the eve of Federation is significant and warrants renewed attention from Australian historians. It speaks also to present debates among Irish historians over Irish attitudes to indigenous and colonised minoritities.

Inevitably, nationalist politics stood large alongside Davitt's other activities. Rallies and meetings took place in all the major cities. In Queensland he met and was photographed with Kevin Izod O'Doherty, the venerable Young Irelander, who had returned to Australia and entered colonial politics rather than tread in the footsteps of his comrades and return to settle permanently in Ireland or the United States. 'You are about to visit undoubtedly the most democratic portion of the "British Empire", O'Doherty had written to Davitt on 3 May 1895, shortly before his arrival in Australia, and in general there was little Davitt encountered to dispute this claim.[22] In Melbourne, Davitt was reunited with a former Fenian colleague, Hugh Brophy, who had been transported to Australia in 1867. He met, socialised, and was photographed with the leaders of Melbourne's Irish nationalist movement. Familiar with John Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, Davitt wrote when he arrived in Tasmania 'how often when young has this place with its convict history rung in my ears'. His itinerary was hectic, the pace gruelling, and the distances travelled vast. Significant sums of money were raised through his public lectures – Davitt remitted £900 to the Irish Party in July to meet expenses when an election was called – though this drained him of funds otherwise needed to support his family in Ireland.

On 31 October Davitt sailed for New Zealand. Among his fellow passengers was Mark Twain, and Davitt recorded in his journal the famed American writer's opinions on Australia and its nascent literature.[23] In Dunedin, Davitt was met by future New Zealand Prime Minister Joseph Ward and gave a labour lecture to an audience of 600, though not without regret: 'Yes, but 1 hour and 50 mins and no compensation from these Irish who are not attracted by such a question'. His visit to Oamaru did little to improve his mood: 'Lecture a

[21] Ibid., 269–7; Michael Davitt, '1895 Tour Notes July-August', Trinity College Dublin TCDMS 9563, 7–27.

[22] Michael Davitt, 'Australia and New Zealand', Trinity College Dublin TCDMS 9477.

[23] Michael Davitt, '1895 Tour Notes Part 4', Trinity College Dublin TCDMS 9565, 92–93 (page numbers in this run lowest to highest). Twain's own account is Mark Twain [Samuel L. Clemens], *Mark Twain in Australia and New Zealand* (London, 1973), 287. Twain also took an interest in the issue of Pacific labour on sugar plantations (81).

failure. Mark Twain and other caterers for public patronage have been here lately and the people have become tired. Proceeds least of my lectures in tour except Ipswich Queensland'.[24]

As in Australia, Davitt met the big names of New Zealand politics and society during his time in the colony, including Seddon, Stout, and Pember Reeves, but flagging energy, and homesickness aggravated by the recent death of his seven-year-old daughter Kathleen, seem increasingly to affect the tone of his journal. Fifteen hundred attended his Auckland lecture that 'went off well'. 'But it was the last!! So farewell to this my second and as I most fervently pray my last lecture tour. May God grant I shall never again be compelled to resort to this hated work for the need of bread and butter. Amen!'[25]

Michael Davitt sailed from Auckland on the *Alameda* on Saturday 30 November, traversing the Pacific en route to the United States. His sense of relief was palpable: 'Oh, the blessed feeling, of heavenly rest one experiences, after such a tour to find oneself absolutely master of oneself and free of all worry and all thought of lectures, audiences, interviews etc etc=How weary and tired do I feel! I do not think I could have carried out *two more* engagements. My strength has lasted just up to the seventieth and final lecture. Thank heaven it is all over and has not been a failure'.[26] The trans-Pacific voyage promised an opportunity for relaxation and reflection.

Davitt arrived in Samoa on 4 December. His observations and experiences of Polynesia were, like his experiences of Australasia, to mark his political consciousness in subsequent years. They also constitute a rich commentary on the late-nineteenth-century Pacific World, and are supported by a substantial photographic archive of in excess of 150 prints. Carla King has previously written about Davitt's interest in photography. An avid collector of studio portraits and landscapes, Davitt's memoir of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific was supplemented by his own series of photographs taken on an early model Kodak camera that he had purchased in the United States. In 1884 the Kodak founder, George Eastman, had patented the use of coated paper to replace glass plates, enabling greater mobility and durability in camera use than had been previously possible. Though they initiated a democratisation of photography, the early Kodaks were rare and expensive: how Davitt, so recently bankrupt, possessed one, remains puzzling. Mobile personal photography was then in its infancy—and not without problems,

[24] Davitt, '1895 Tour Notes part 4', 94–88, 78, 74 (pages in reverse order).
[25] Ibid., 72–35.
[26] Michael Davitt, '1895 Tour Notes part 6', Trinity College Dublin TCDMS 9566, 4.

as Davitt's journal makes clear. He misplaced the camera once, and experienced technical difficulties in the humid climate. Travelling from Brisbane to Maryborough he had complained 'Kodak a failure up to Mackay. Bad film and worse working the explanation. Refilled at Brisbane'.[27] (Refilling was a specialist, dark room procedure).

The *Alameda*'s arrival in Samoa provided Davitt with the opportunity to play the tourist and pursue his hobby. Recent scholarship has shown just how extensively Samoa was photographed in the late-nineteenth century. Trans-Pacific travellers invariably stopped in Apia for a day or more as their ships provisioned, this steady stream of visitors breeding a thriving photographic industry. The first resident commercial photographer in Samoa, John Davis, was active from the 1870s until his death in 1893. A New Zealander, Alfred Tattersall, arrived as Davis's assistant in 1886 and continued the business after his mentor's death. These photographers produced landscapes for sale, sold pictures of tourist attractions such as Robert Louis Stephenson's grave, and marketed highly popular prints of photogenic Samoans for passing travellers and European audiences. Nudes and semi-nudes, particularly of young women, were a staple of the local studios. According to one account, 'John Davis … told a visitor that "hundreds of native girls and youths presented themselves at his studio in hopes that they would make photographs of commercial value for book illustrations and for selling to tourists".' He chose "only two, or three at the most, who possessed the thick lips and sensual features which coincided with the stock European idea of the South Sea type".'[28] Davitt's photo collection, comprising purchased studio prints and his own photographs, reflects all these trends and is an important but little known component of the visual record of Samoa's past.

Though Davitt's stay in Samoa was brief he was not an idle visitor, and he actively sought out people and the principal sights. Samoans, Davitt wrote, were 'the finest built men I have yet seen among "savage" people. Bodies giant like, and in fine proportion. Limbs all splendidly developed. Males nearly all tattooed on thighs down to the knee'. Girls 'mature at ten and are old at twenty-five'. People, he believed, were cheerful and happy, and unassuming. 'Kodaked several groups of men, women and children'. Like other visitors he sought out

[27] Michael Davitt, '1895 Tour Notes part 2', Trinity College Dublin TCDMS 9563, 57; Davitt, *Life and Progress*, 112.

[28] Alison Devine Nordström 'Photography of Samoa: Production, Dissemination and Use', in Peter Messenhöller and Alison Devine Nordström (eds), *Picturing Paradise: Colonial Photography of Samoa, 1875–1925* (Daytona Beach, 1995, 12–35; Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, 2nd edn (London, 2006), 231.

the prized semi-nude of young local women: 'Great fun while taking pictures of a few young girls who were induced to take off their make believe corsage. The old women urged them to put all their charms in the picture. Nothing in "civilised life" could compare with the modest demeanour of the young girls in question'. Food was plentiful, nutritious and cheap: 'one is tempted to wish that we had such food for the labouring poor at home as a substitute for the waterful potato and the everlasting tea'.

Davitt found the time to visit the local Marist school, Robert Louis Stevenson's house and grave, and the local newspaper office. He met local Irishmen, including Pat O'Ryan, the harbour pilot at Apia. 'He has been there for a long time. Had a roving career. Was a dozen years in China. Staunch Home Ruler'. There was also the young son of a Dublin university professor, 'on a voyage for his health among these islands'. 'Says he likes Samoa very much … Told me a chief had given him a daughter to marry a la Samoan, I suppose, and waxed eloquent over her charms'. [29]

Unsurprisingly, Davitt was keenly interested in Samoa's political position and the prospects for its future. He commented critically on the presence of three imperial powers, Britain, Germany and the United States, contesting control of Samoa, and firmly explained what he believed to be the deleterious effect of their competition on local government. 'This is a grotesquely absurd arrangement. Leads to three post offices, three authorities practically and all which this implies … No body satisfied is but a natural and common sense comment upon this stage of things. It would be much better if two of the three ruling powers would clear out and allow the third to establish a protectorate (fairly defined) over the island'. His observation that 'Most of the traders are German' perhaps indicated his preference for the custodial power'.[30] His concern with Samoan governance would continue long after he left its shores.

Davitt then sailed from Apia to Honolulu, 'most delightfully situated, and a charming place'. He visited Oahu prison, the Molokai Leper Station (previously staffed by Irish priests) and interviewed Queen Liluokalani. Ever the journalist, Davitt noted that Honolulu boasted 'no less than 15 newspapers … one morning daily (*The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*) and three evening papers. Six weekly (English), 4 Native Hawaiian Weekly, 2 Chinese Weeklies; 2 Japanese weeklies and 2 Portaguese [sic]'. He also followed up his concern, strongly evident in Australia, with plantations and the use of indentured

[29] Davitt, '1895 Tour Notes part 6', 1–6.

[30] Ibid. 5

coloured labour, an issue addressed in detail in his published account of the tour of Australia and New Zealand.[31]

Davitt's Pacific crossing ended in San Francisco. From the West Coast he crossed the United States for a family reunion with his sisters in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and meetings to discuss with American supporters the desirability of an Irish Race Convention. At long last came his return home to Ireland. He disembarked at Queenstown on 10 January 1896, avoiding speeches and the ubiquitous banquet. 'Am beginning to think that I am commencing to be fortunate'. A visit to his daughter Kathleen's grave followed soon after. 'I almost wished to be with her and at peace. Possibly it may not be long before I am. God knows I have had little peace in my life so far'.[32]

Michael Davitt visited New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific only once, but his encounters with the Pacific World demonstrably influenced his outlook on a range of critical late-nineteenth century issues: empire and imperial governance, parliamentary government, labour migration, self-determination and labour politics. This was well demonstrated throughout the remainder of his political career. For example, he fought a vigorous campaign as a Member of Parliament during the 1899 crisis over the succession to the Samoan kingship. Writing to a German journalist, Davitt stated that he had visited Samoa and took a keen interest in Samoan affairs. 'The whole present trouble in the island is the work of a body named the London Missionary Society which seeks to make English power predominant in Samoa', he explained. He urged his colleague to impress upon German readers that fault for the crisis lay principally with Britain rather than the United States. 'All this is just like the policy and conduct of those who rule and ruin Ireland. They try to breed bad blood between all other nations so that they can profit by this jealousy'. However, Davitt's outspokenness raised the ire of opponents in London. 'It is a public scandal that the House of Commons should tolerate among its members a man who having taken the Oath of Allegiance to the Queen, publicly poses as one of the Queen's enemies', editorialised the *St James Gazette*. 'Personally, I say you ought to be removed on the old Land League Methods', wrote a correspondent to that publication, a member of the London Irish Rifle Volunteers. However Davitt was never one to be intimidated, and was not now deterred in his campaign to assist Samoa to overcome what he described as the

[31] Michael Davitt, 'Samoa and Honolulu etc'. Michael Davitt Papers Trinity College Dublin TCDMS 9544, 9–14.

[32] Michael Davitt, 'Tour Notes part 7', Trinity College Dublin TCDMS 9567, 10 January, 22 March 1896.

'drunkenness and diseases and other maladies' that had followed European colonisation of the Pacific.[33]

Theo Moody's biography of Davitt observes:

> The Irish nation of Davitt's ideal was to be a tolerant, pluralist (he did not, of course, use the word), outward-looking, democratic, community, in which the separate strands of the past would be united, and the old sectarian and cultural divisions healed, in cooperative effort for the common good. In achieving that cooperation, nationalisation of the land was more important than nationalisation of the government. It followed from this concept of the nation, and from his awareness and growing knowledge of the world outside Ireland, that his nationalism was complemented by internationalism.[34]

Though that ideal was to be long in coming to fruition, historians do well to remember the legacy of late-nineteenth-century-nationalists including Michael Davitt, whose keen awareness of and experiences in distant places far from Ireland's shores did so much to instil that sense of the international, the diverse, and the tolerant.

Historians have recently explored the contentious issue of Ireland's relationship to empire. As this article has shown, Davitt, like others of his ilk, was an active participant in wider debates about national rights and the tribulations of imperialism in the Pacific World. Though, as his photographs make clear, Davitt observed the Pacific very much through Western eyes, his abiding interest in the condition of indigenous populations, the use of coloured labour, and the deleterious effects of European rivalry on colonial territories, are indicative of the capacity of late-nineteenth century Irish nationalists to locate their own political situation in a broad global context and to offer support for those bearing the burdens of colonialism. Davitt's experience as a traveller in and around the Pacific speaks in important ways not only to historians of the places he visited but also to the place of Ireland and Irish politics in a transnational setting.

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[33] Michael Davitt, 'The Samoa Crisis', Michael Davitt Papers Trinity College Dublin TSCMS 9492.

[34] Moody, 556.