Lindie Naughton, *Markievicz: A Most Outrageous Rebel*. Dublin: Merrion Press, 2016. 330 pages. ISBN: 9781785370816, €19.99.

Reviewed by Sonja Tiernan

Countess Markievicz has many unique achievements securing her an honoured position in the records of Irish history. She was a female leader of the Easter Rising and the only woman to be sentenced to death for her part in the rebellion, although this like many other death sentences after Easter 1916 was commuted to life imprisonment. She was the first woman to be elected as an MP in the British House of Commons, winning her seat in the first general election in which women were allowed to stand for election or vote in. Seventeen women stood in that 1918 election, including the infamous suffragette leader, Christabel Pankhurst. Markievicz was the only woman to be elected but she refused to take her seat in line with Sinn Féin policy. Markievicz went on to become the first female cabinet minister in Dáil Éireann and was a vibrant and effective Minister for Labour.

Markievicz remained devoted to the causes of Irish independence, social reform and equality for women until the end of her life, dying amongst her own people, the Dublin poor, in a public ward of Sir Patrick Dunn’s hospital. For her efforts against British oppression, Markievicz was repeatedly incarcerated in prisons across Ireland and Britain. As a fervent opponent to the Anglo-Irish Treaty she spent much of the Civil War either on the run or in prison. Constance Markievicz was a flamboyant and compassionate revolutionary and politician. For these reasons she has achieved iconic status in Irish history, without doubt, one of the few Irish women to reach this standard. It is therefore not surprising that many articles and books have been written examining different aspects of Markievicz’s personal life, artistic endeavours and political career.

It is surprising that the first line of Lindie Naughton’s book claims that ‘for a woman of her stature, Countess Constance de Markievicz has received remarkably little attention from biographers’ (p. vi.) In an *Irish Times* review of three biographies of Markeivicz, Lauren Arrington plays on the title of Naughton’s book to describe this opening sentence as an ‘outrageous claim.’ (*Irish Times*, 12 November 2016.) Indeed, Arrington herself penned a thoroughly researched joint biography about Markievicz and her husband, Casimir; *Revolutionary Lives: Constance and Casimir Markievicz* in 2016. Naughton makes full use of such publications on Markievicz and the wealth of primary source material available including the Bureau of Military History Witness Statements and papers from the National Library of Ireland and the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland. Naughton duly credits the use of such sources in the back pages of her volume. However, the lack of footnotes or referencing throughout the book is frustrating for the academic historian and may be problematic for students to cite.

It must be acknowledged that Naughton is a journalist, not a historian and therefore writing from this perspective. She is clearly at ease writing on this topic, providing interesting vignettes which paint a personal picture of Markievicz. Such accounts make a valuable contribution to the body of work available. Her account of Markievicz’s court martial after the Easter Rising not only includes personal accounts such as the English officer who smoked a cigarette with her in her cell the night she awaited the verdict. Naughton’s account also discusses why prosecutor, William Wylie, maintained that Markievicz broke down in tears pleading for her life at the trial. Wylie’s account has caused controversy ever since and has been used more recently to discredit Markievicz by commentators such as Ruth Dudley Edwards. Naughton, and rightly so, does not give any credence to discuss such claims but concludes her analysis definitely by saying Wylie’s ‘account is at odds with all available evidence’ (p. 177.) Naughton makes an interesting connection here maintaining that British authorities were afraid to execute a woman due to the outrage that was caused the year before when German authorities executed the British nurse Edith Cavell.

However, there are some unfortunate inaccuracies and without footnotes it is impossible to clarify where Naughton sourced her information. One such example is the description of Markievicz’s first venture into political campaigning. Markievicz travelled to Manchester to help her sister, Eva Gore-Booth, campaign against the Liberal Party’s proposed Licensing Bill in 1908. Gore-Booth discovered that Clause 20 of the Bill would effectively ban women from working in public houses. Naughton apparently confuses the Barmaids campaign with an ongoing trade union action against curtailing the employment hours of women (p.66.) Markievicz was such an active and engaged political activist, it is an immense task to detail every aspect of her life and career. Naughton has produced a fine book which makes an interesting and engaging read while honouring Markievicz as a significant character in the foundation of a Free State Irish Republic.

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