

having successfully demarcated the role of social reproduction in capitalism, stops short of making the explicit political re-connection to production, where women now play a key role and where also struggles have the power to win wider revolutionary change.

That said, this book provides a clear understanding of oppression in class terms and how it is sustained by the capitalist system. This makes it a valuable and important read as we continue with these struggles now.

1 Karl Marx, Economic Manuscripts: Value, Price and Profit <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/ch02.htm#c9>

2 Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*, Chicago, Haymarket Books, p.180.

3 Sylvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero, Housework Reproduction and feminist Struggle*, Oakland, CA, PM Press, 2012 page number for quote?

4 Tithi Bhattacharya, *Social Reproduction Theory*, p.20.

5 Bhattacharya, p.87

Socialism, Republicanism, and Anti-Imperialism

Conor McCarthy, Editor, *The Revolutionary and Anti-Imperialist Writings of James Connolly 1893-1916* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2016).

Priscilla Metscher, *Republicanism & Socialism in Ireland: From Wolfe Tone to James Connolly* (Connolly Books, Dublin, 2016).

Review by Paul O'Brien

The decade of remembrances has been a boon to publishers who have filled our shelves with books of every description. Most of them have added to our understanding of the revolutionary period commencing with the Lock-out in 1913 and ending with the tragic Civil War in 1922 that consolidated the rule of a conservative backward elite.

Two books that received relatively few reviews are worth the attention of readers of this journal. Firstly, *The Revolutionary and Anti-Imperialist Writings of James Connolly* edited and introduced by Conor McCarthy is published as part of the series Key Texts in Anti-Colonial Thought for the Open University. McCarthy's introduction and selection from Connolly's writing confirms his continuing relevance as an internationalist and anti-colonial thinker and activist whose writings anticipated those of Franz Fanon and C.L.R. James. McCarthy has selected a number of key texts from Connolly's work that illustrate the complex

relationship between socialism, republicanism, and nationalism. These illustrate the way Connolly's work is important for Subaltern studies in that they can illustrate or even anticipated the critique of a Eurocentric Marxism that has in the past ignored of down played aspects of the struggles in Africa, Asia, and the colonial world. McCarthy points to an interesting aspect of Connolly's work suggesting that his analysis of Ireland's uneven relationship with Britain and Western Europe – geographically adjacent to Britain, but functionally peripheral to British and Atlantic capitalism – is one of the most interesting and original aspects of his work.

The selection of texts ranges over the whole period of Connolly's life. The central text is Connolly's *Labour in Irish History* which, while familiar and accessible to Irish readers, has not received the attention of, or indeed been familiar or available to scholars in post-colonial studies who are the target audience of this book. According to McCarthy, Connolly's willingness to analyse the Irish political situation within a framework of British imperialism and global capitalism marks him out as an exception in Irish socialist and revolutionary history.

But McCarthy also highlights those areas of Connolly's thought that are problematic or unorthodox. Marx and Engels did not share Connolly's positive evaluation of 'primitive communism' in Ireland. Connolly presents a much more positive analysis of pre-capitalist Gaelic Irish society than the evidence warrants.



James Connolly addressing a mass meeting in Union Square Manhattan on May Day 1908. Photo: Library of Congress

Marx and Engels saw capitalist accumulation and methods of production as progressive in so far as they created the material conditions for a future socialist society. More contentiously McCarthy asserts that Connolly's assumption that class society and capitalism were alien to Ireland led him to a misunderstanding of the political strength of Irish capitalism and republicanism's revolutionary potential.

The Boer War protests in 1899 were welcomed by republicans and nationalists who supported any struggle or insurrection where the British army might be defeated and imperial expansion

repulsed. Connolly was supportive of the campaign, but was critical of the willingness of republicans to abandon any class dimension to the protests and agitation. Importantly, McCarthy also points out the failure of both Connolly and the campaign to recognise that the Boer Republic was based on the racist subjugation of the native people of southern Africa. This is a wide-ranging anthology which highlights Connolly career as an internationalist and anti-imperialist and illustrates how pertinent his writings are for Ireland today and for the post-colonial world.

From Wolfe Tone to James Connolly

Priscilla Metscher's *Republicanism & Socialism in Ireland* is a welcome reprint of a book first published in 1986. A substantial body of work in this area has been published since its first publication, and this does limit the scope of the book. However, this limitation is offset by the fact that Metscher has relied on primary texts throughout her book rather than secondary commentaries or analysis. This book is a study in the relationship between politics and ideology in Ireland from the formation of the United Irishmen at the end of the eighteenth century up to James Connolly and the Easter Rising in 1916. Metscher

has approached her subject on the basis that class is the primary motivating factor in Irish history. The book is divided into three sections. The first part examines the role of the United Irishmen in the 1780s and the Young Irelanders in the 1840s and the formation of republican ideology that has been such a dominant feature in Irish politics. The second part is concerned with Fenianism and the Land League as movements of the lower classes and the petit bourgeoisie. The most substantial section of the book is devoted to the development of working class movements and ideology at the beginning of the twentieth century. She traces the influence of republicanism on working class movements and how Connolly's life and work can be seen as the culmination of almost one hundred and fifty years in the history of radical ideas in Ireland. The most significant theoretical strand in the book is the way she traces the influences of class on the mass movements of the past. The rising of 1798 was mainly of the discontented peasantry and labouring classes. Many of whom were not aware of the liberal bourgeois political content of the movement, but were inspired to rally to the revolution out of a

concern for their immediate social conditions; above all, the abolition of rack-rents and tithes. Following the failed rebellion of 1848, which was denounced by the Times newspaper as a communist uprising, James Fintan Lalor, the most radical of the Young Irelanders set up the Felon Clubs who relied on the skilled working class as the basis of a movement for an attempt at a second rising in 1849. This was no more than a skirmish that resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of the leadership, including Lalor. In the great struggles for land reform by the Land League the compromises by Parnell and Davitt to the middle-class element in the movement, and the betrayal of the peasant cause with the Kilmainham Treaty, which effectively demobilised the movement, led a number of socialists to conclude that the Irish working class should depend on its own strength in the future. Foremost amongst these was James Connolly. However, the influence of syndicalism on Connolly's thought created a separation between industrial action and political organisation and was one of the factors that hampered Connolly's ability to build an effective movement that could have been challenged both British imperialism in Ireland and Irish capitalism.

This is an important and accessible book that explains the republican thread that runs through the developing working class and socialist movement in Ireland. Unfortunately, in the extensive section on Connolly, Metscher relies on C. Desmond Greaves' 'stages' theory of history. This was Greaves' explanation as to why, and on what basis, Connolly led his working class forces into the GPO in 1916. According to Greaves the first stage was the struggle for national liberation to end British Imperialism in Ireland and develop the country industrially. At some future stage the enlarged and politically conscious working class would then be in a position to institute a social revolution that would empower the working class and the peasantry. But, as a minority of socialists instinctively understood, if the revolution was posed in purely nationalist terms it would hold little appeal for the working class, and would inevitably lead to a conservative outcome. Though she refers to it in the footnotes, Metscher does not give any weight to Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution' as an alternative to the 'stages' theory that could have opened up the possibility of a more radical outcome to the Irish revolution.