

present this book as a work of history, but it is, in fact, a work of historiography. Coakley provides a reasonable delineation of the theory of uneven development and its applicability to Irish history since the medieval period, but this is the historiography of uneven development, not 'history', as the publishers claim. Overall, these issues of presentation and omitted works undermine the scholarly enterprise of Coakley's ambition.

However, Maurice Coakley has written a provocative book on the theoretical understanding of Irish history since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and this is to be welcomed. The application of different theoretical frameworks to Irish historical practice is a positive development, and such theoretical frameworks have developed significantly in Ireland in the past forty years (Jackson 2014; McAuliffe et al. 2009). However, Coakley's attempt to present an alternative history is not sustained by this book, and the intellectual apparatus is undermined by a polemical tone and sins of omission. The theses presented by Coakley, such as on literisation, remain unproven. Coakley has identified some correlations in the material and this book will act as encouragement to others interested in the enterprise. *Ireland in the World Order* is a worthwhile purchase for the specialist and interested reader, but issues of methodology and presentation mean it cannot be recommended for a general audience.

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## Author biography

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Peter Dwyer & Leo Zeilig

*African Struggles Today: Social Movements Since Independence*, Haymarket Books: Chicago, 2012; 260 pp: 9781608461202, \$17 (pbk)

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Peter Dwyer (Ruskin College) and Leo Zeilig (Institute of Commonwealth Studies) present a history and analysis of social movements in African history. They argue that most

survey texts in African studies neglect the role of grassroots social movements, tending instead to portray Africa from the perspective of political and economic elites, whether imperialist or anti-imperialist. The result is that politics is reduced to issues of 'governance', and social movements are conflated with 'civil society' (p. 4). Therefore, Dwyer and Zeilig contend that 'social movements – popular movements of the working class, the poor, and other oppressed and marginalised sections of African society – have played a central role in shaping Africa's contemporary history' (p. 1).

The authors define social movements as less institutional than 'civil society' or 'interest groups', which tend to address conflicts within existing political frameworks. They argue that social movements can take an institutionalised shape, but that they are often amorphous so to 'coalesce briefly around a particular issue or initiative before dissolving into wider society' (p. 23). Dwyer and Zeilig therefore make sharp distinctions between subaltern, 'grassroots' movements and predominately urban and donor-dependent NGOs. The latter are often entrenched in the political mainstream and therefore unable to enact meaningful social and economic change. This is not to say that Dwyer and Zeilig discount any usefulness of mainstream NGOs; they merely argue that 'independently minded civil society activists [must] break free of donor dependency and adopt a more critical attitude to the governments they had (in part) helped bring to power (p. 130). This means engagement with grassroots organisations and trade unions.

Based on this framework, they present a post-1940s history of Africa divided into three 'cycles of protest'. First, the post-Second World War movements for independence leading up to the mid-1960s, when most African states achieved political independence. Second, the responses to the first wave of structural adjustment programmes in the late 1970s. Third, the merging of economic grievances with demands for democratic reform in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Dwyer and Zeilig acknowledge some of the limitations of 1950s and 1960s African nationalism, noting the role of the educated elite in solidifying state control and 'suffocating' independent working-class politics (p. 59). The same applies, they argue, with those who adopted 'Stalinist' political and economic stances.

They also note that neoliberal reforms eventually accompanied the pro-democracy movements of the late 1980s and early 1990s. They elaborate: 'The paradox of multi-party democracy, then, was that in many countries there was now a wide choice of political parties, but no obvious formal political expression of alternative economic policies' (p. 90). They end with a hopeful conclusion that the development of the African Social Forum and the Southern African Social Forum can begin to present an 'alternative pole of political and economic analysis from what had been a hegemonic neoliberal discourse in the early-1990s' (p. 232). In addition, continental social forums may be able to address the marginalised position African issues hold at the World Social Forum.

Dwyer and Zeilig, by and large, present a solid narrative of African history and politics from the perspective of 'social movements' and the 'working class'. I cannot, however, review their book uncritically. They often use the terms 'working class' and 'social movements' in vague, sometimes problematic ways, reflecting what Michael Heinrich calls 'Worldview Marxism'. It may have to do with the book's presumed audience, but despite the emphasis on 'the relationship between classes and movements, and the tensions between leadership and organizations that shape social change' (p. 11), little discussion is given to modes of production or critical class analysis. There is merely 'a preference for

self-activity of the poor, workers, or the “grassroots” ... reflect[ing] our understanding of the likely agents of major social change – the working class and the poor on the continent’ (p. 252). Insufficient emphasis is placed on unpacking these terms.

My criticisms aside, I would still highly recommend Dwyer and Zeilig’s book for use in undergraduate courses, or just as an African history refresher, since it is very accessible and avoids most of the pitfalls of survey texts on African affairs.

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Michael Perelman

*The Invisible Handcuffs of Capitalism: How Market Tyranny Stifles the Economy by Stunting Workers*, Monthly Review Press: New York, 2011; 280pp: 9781583672297, £15 (pbk)

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The organisation of society according to market principles has a dramatic impact upon people’s everyday lives. In particular, alienation from the labour process itself results in workers being traumatised. Managers and corporate owners employ innovative techniques for maximising profit and competing with other corporations. They remain, however, reluctant to delegate control of the labour process or to implement reforms that might empower the workers. This is striking, since there is enough evidence to suggest that workers’ increased participation in decision-making processes provides strong leverage in terms of competitive gains. But it can also be considered conventional, since authorising workers to take decisions regarding their work might be considered tantamount to a confession by the managerial class and controlling elite of their incapacity to rule and to decide whatever is best for the corporation. Members of the working and middle classes seldom find happiness in their daily routines, since they are deprived of opportunities for designing, controlling and transforming what they are doing.

Michael Perelman’s *The Invisible Handcuffs of Capitalism* questions not only the disempowerment of workers, but also its reflections in the history of economic thought. It was only by the construction of a genuinely authoritarian vision degrading the workers that capitalists were able to undermine the collective capacity of the labouring masses. Thanks to mainstream economic thought’s identification of individuals first and foremost as consumers or utility seekers, and ignoring workplace conditions as objects of inquiry, the capitalist class had a useful tool named ‘economics’, while discipline attained the position of scientific inquiry of society in the aftermath of marginalist revolution. Perelman’s work, which is composed of ten main parts, each subdivided into short sections, provides an engaging review of the efforts to transform the vocabulary used in economic analysis, and the way scholars approach fundamental issues such as control of the money supply, inflation, and measuring the wealth of societies.

The work’s contribution resides in its success in relating theoretical debates in academic corridors or government branches to the pressing need for counter-leverage against