

November 17, 2014

**Fund for Irish Studies presents “The Socialism of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*: Robert Noonan and the Modern Labour Party”**

***Lecture by Irish historian and broadcaster Tristram Hunt at Princeton University***



Photo caption: Historian and broadcaster Tristram Hunt

Photo credit:Yui Mok

Who: Irish historian and broadcaster Tristram Hunt

What: “The Socialism of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*: Robert Noonan and the Modern Labour Party,” a lecture presented by Princeton University’s Fund for Irish Studies

When: Friday, December 5 at 4:30 p.m.

Where: James M. Stewart ’32 Theater at Lewis Center for the Arts, 185 Nassau St., Princeton

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 (Princeton, NJ) Historian and broadcaster Tristram Hunt will present a lecture entitled, “The Socialism of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*: Robert Noonan and the Modern Labour Party,” on Friday, December 5 at 4:30 p.m. at the Lewis Center for the Arts’ James M. Stewart ’32 Theater, 185 Nassau Street. Part of the 2014-15 Fund for Irish Studies series at Princeton University, the event is free and open to the public.

**Tristram Hunt** is the author of *The English Civil War: At First Hand*; *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City*; and the award-winning biography, *The Frock-coated Communist: The Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels.* Between 2001 and 2010, Hunt combined his post as Senior Lecturer in British History at Queen Mary, University of London, with work as a history broadcaster, presenting over fifteen radio and television programs for the BBC and Channel 4 in England.  During this period he also served as a trustee of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the Centre for Cities think-tank. He has made regular contributions to *The Guardian* and *The Observer*.

Hunt received his bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Cambridge, before serving as an Exchange Fellow at the University of Chicago, and returning to Cambridge to complete his doctoral thesis on Victorian civic pride.  He is Shadow Secretary of State for Education and a member of Parliament for Stoke-on-Trent Central. He is a trustee of the History of Parliament Trust and fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Hunt will discuss Robert Noonan’s semi-autobiographical novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, written under the pseudonym Robert Tressell. A literary depiction of the indignities of poverty, the book tells a story of workers in a fictional English coastal town, among them the novel’s hero, Frank Owen. Through a series of lunchtime lectures, Owen provides the ideological backbone of the story, and, through him, Noonan pioneered a previously unrecorded sense of working-class humanity and illustrated the nature and promise of socialism, the novel’s ultimate ambition. Today, according to Hunt, this classic novel still resonates with socialist ideology, yet a more circumspect reading reveals a complicated portrayal of working-class solidarity. For Noonan the only real way to achieve political progress was for a properly educated, implicitly middle-class elite to drag the blighted working class towards the socialist future. The uncomfortable political reality behind the novel leads us to ask, according to Hunt, whether the novel simply fosters working-class consciousness or does it justify the leadership of a socialist elite?

An edition of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, with an introduction by Hunt, was published in 2004 by Penguin [Classics](http://www.theguardian.com/books/classics).

The Fund for Irish Studies, chaired by Princeton professor and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Paul Muldoon, affords all Princeton students, and the community at large, a wider and deeper sense of the languages, literatures, drama, visual arts, history, politics and economics not only of Ireland but of “Ireland in the world.”

Information on upcoming Fund for Irish Studies series events can be found at [fis.princeton.edu](http://fis.princeton.edu/) and includes:

* Fintan O’Toole delivering the Robert Fagles Memorial Lecture on “Unspeakable Horror: How Ireland Fought the Great War” on February 13
* Glenn Patterson, the Belfast novelist, reads from his work on March 27
* Regina Ui Chollatain on “A ‘New’ Gaelic League Idea: Douglas Hyde 100 Years On” on April 10
* Poulomi Saha on “Easter Risings: The Irish Insurrection in India” on April 17
* Feile Na Bealtaine: The Ghost Trio in a concert of Irish traditional songs, cosponsored with Princeton’s Department of Music, on May 1

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