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**The Liturgy of Revolution:**

Political Theology of Patrick Pearse between Catholicism and Modernism

**Liturgie revoluce:**

Politická teologie Patricka Pearse mezi katolicismem a modernismem

**TÉZE DISERTAČNÍ PRÁCE**

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## The Myth of Patrick Pearse: Its Genealogy and Deconstruction

The Dublin Easter Rising of 1916 is widely recognized as a key event of modern Irish history. As Roisín Higgins sums up, the Rising plays a “pivotal role in the nationalist story” of the nation and has been turned into “the touchstone and lightning rod in the Irish popular imagination”.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as Richard English observes, it represents an ideal example of “intertwining of religion and politics”<sup>2</sup> due to the use of the Christian symbolism of redemption via sacrifice both in the self-stylization of the insurrectionists and due to the *a posteriori* mythologization of the event in the nationalist discourse. It might be claimed that in the narrative of Irish history, the Rising occupies a place analogical to the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ in the Christian history of salvation: it symbolizes the culmination of past struggles for national independence and the source from which the nation’s future is born.

The central position in the myth of the Rising has belonged to its leader and main ideologue, Patrick Pearse. His writings provided the most influential conceptualization of the event as an act of redemptive sacrifice and his biography was subsequently modelled on hagiographical literature. The religious aura surrounding Pearse has been both a source of his posthumous “triumph”, as the Irish independence shaped to a large extent by his legacy, and of his “black legend” which deems him the spiritual father of the sectarian violence in the twentieth-century Irish politics. In spite of these widespread, contradictory views of Pearse, the religious dimension of his thinking has rarely been subject to rigorous scholarly analysis. Due to the highly politicised character of the the debate about Pearse’s role in Irish history, his intellectual legacy has never been treated *sine ira et studio*, as the scholars were hampered either by pious reverence towards the national saint or by moral indignation towards the “evil ghost” of modern Irish history.

Even though Pearse’s works have been generally considered the most powerful and lasting conceptualization of Irish nationalism, their idiosyncratic theological conundrums were first tacitly omitted from the mainstream discussion both in the Free State and in de Valera’s Ireland with its ruling alliance of “priests and patriots”,<sup>3</sup> only to be anathemised by the following wave of historical revisionism connected with the outbreak of the Troubles. Moreover, even now, when both the cultural dominance of Catholicism and the immediacy of the conflict in the North are gradually receding, recent critical engagements with Pearse’s writings rarely attempt to

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<sup>1</sup> Roisín Higgins, *Transforming 1916. Meaning, Memory and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2012) 5.

<sup>2</sup> Richard English, *Irish Freedom The History of Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Macmillan, 2006) 274.

<sup>3</sup> Phrase coined by Tom Garvin in: *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858 – 1928*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2005. First published 1987) 57.

tackle the theme in any depth. Most scholars would probably agree with Declan Kiberd's *factual* assertion that in Pearse's case – as opposed to the other European revolutionaries – “the religious rhetoric was never occluded or buried, but remained visible and audible on the textual surface”.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, a majority of Pearse scholars would probably agree on the *functional* significance of that rhetoric as a catalyst to the fusion of the radical nationalist discourse with the sentiments of the Catholic society.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, due to the fact that the subject still remains a potentially explosive and divisive issue in the public debate, the scholarly analyses are not completely free from the pressure of normative judgments and scholars differ significantly as to the supposed *intentions* of Pearse's rhetoric. Was he a pragmatic revolutionary, who, as Kiberd suggests, used religious language as an “old costume” for new ideas? Questioning the myth of Pearse as a “backward-looking Catholic militant”, Kiberd and other scholars downplay the formative role of religion in Pearse's thinking and supplant it with a new image of the prophet of anti-colonial enfranchisement of the subalterns.<sup>6</sup> Or could the religious rhetoric be a definite proof of Pearse's adherence to the exclusivist vision of a Catholic Irish republic as it was perceived by a still vital discourse of the revisionist historiography? And what about the affinity of Pearse's rhetoric with the reactionary currents of European thought that shortly afterwards gave birth to fascism, as for example W.J. Mc Cormack points out?<sup>7</sup> The image of Pearse arising from the contemporary critical literature appears somewhat schizophrenic: his modernist stance in the debates on the Irish language, the future of Irish culture or education is generally acknowledged, yet at the same time his politics are often dismissed on historico-moral grounds. This critical hesitancy in the face of the conundrum of Pearse's legacy may be fittingly exemplified by John Wilson Foster's comment: “Save on the subject of blood sacrifice for Ireland, Pearse was a reasonable, progressive [...] thinker.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Aim of the Dissertation and Basic Preliminaries**

This dissertation does not try to resolve the essentially politicized debate between nationalism and revisionism that heavily influenced critical reception of Pearse's works. It attempts to re-examine the theological background of Pearse's thought arguing that Catholicism provided Pearse with a symbolic framework for his construction of the discourse of Irish nationalism. At the same time, I do not intend to question the “modernist” dimension of Pearse's

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<sup>4</sup> Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996) 211.

<sup>5</sup> The functional role of Pearse's use of religion is mentioned by many authors, e.g. Mary Trotter speaks about his “ability to co-opt for his political ends the symbols of the pervasive Irish Catholic sensibility” (*Ireland's National Theatre. Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement* [New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001] 143).

<sup>6</sup> Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* 196-217.

<sup>7</sup> W.J. Mc Cormack, *Dublin 1916. The French Connection*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival. A Changeling Art* (Syracuse University Press, 1987) 303.

thought. Following Arthur Clery, who in 1917 defined the Rising as a “Catholic revolution”, that is “practically an oxymoron”<sup>9</sup>, the following argument accepts both the Catholic and the “modernist” elements as integral and mutually complementary parts of Pearse’s discourse. Actually, it is through the constant interplay of Catholic theology and symbolism on the one hand, and of the romantic and modernist influences on the other that Pearse’s vision of Irish nationalism crystallised.

This analysis is based mainly on close reading of Pearse’s writings and I do not discriminate between literary and political texts<sup>10</sup>, acknowledging Seamus Deane’s argument that Pearse works must always be read functionally, in relation to the aim he pursued outside the realm of writing, i.e. the re-formulation and assertion of Irishness.<sup>11</sup> Pearse’s texts are analysed in two main comparative contexts. Firstly, the “mainstream” discourse of Irish Catholic nationalism of Pearse’s times, reflected mainly in the nationalist press. From this perspective, Pearse’s writings provide a rather unique synthetizing attempt to unite various strains of Irish nationalism, from republican separatism through Gaelic revivalism to the orthodox Catholic nationalism. Secondly, Pearse’s thought is analysed in the context of the pan-European Romantic and modernist revolt against the utilitarian rationalism of bourgeois modernity. Two authors, Carl Schmitt and Adam Mickiewicz, are most consistently invoked as comparative points of reference throughout the dissertation. Both Schmitt’s concept of “political theology” and Mickiewicz’s Romantic “national messianism” share with Pearse’s nationalism a deep engagement with theology and politics, often combined in a highly heterodox fashion.

## **Nationalism and Catholicism**

Nationalism, a child of modernity, is generally viewed as a phenomenon that replaces religion as a dominant value-system of a secularizing society. Nevertheless, in the current scholarship the relation between nationalism and religion has been problematized. Scholars such as Anthony D. Smith or George L. Mosse from different perspectives arrive to similar

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<sup>9</sup> Arthur Clery, “Pearse, MacDonagh, and Plunkett: An Appreciation”, *Studies: an Irish quarterly review* 6.22 (June 1917): 212-221.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout the dissertation I was using mainly: Patrick Pearse *The Literary Writings of Patrick Pearse*, ed. Séamas Ó Buachalla (Cork: Mercier Press, 1979); Patrick Pearse, *Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse. Political Writings and Speeches* (Dublin: Maunsel & Roberts, 1922).

<sup>11</sup> Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals. Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880 – 1980*, (Winston – Salem: Wake Forrest University Press, 1987) 74.

conclusions about the persistent use of religious rhetoric and symbolism in the discourse of nationalism and deep structural affinity between both phenomena.<sup>12</sup>

The precepts of nationalism seem to be particularly opposed to the doctrine of Catholicism, both due to the Church's role as the protector of the older forms of political organisation and to its pronounced universalist character. In some societies that resisted secularisation, attempts were made to absorb Catholicism within the nationalist frame or to reconcile the nationalist programme with the Catholic doctrine in order to comply with the prevailing sentiments of the people. In the course of Irish history, religion came to play a crucial role in the formation of national identity as early as in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Religion occupied the position of a "marker of differentiation" and thus came to be perceived as inalienably bound to the Irish national identity. Such a development made it virtually impossible for the Irish to follow the common path of many European nationalisms which consisted in removing religion from the position of the highest individual goal and highest normative authority and in replacing it with the divinized nation.

Applying the current theory of nationalism to the Irish context it may be claimed that nationalist movements were not only reproducing the *structures* of religious thought in their discourse but were also forced to accept its *content*. Even though nationalism as a modern political phenomenon emerged in Ireland via the Protestant Anglo-Irish elite who absorbed the ideas of the Enlightenment, every nationalist leader had to find some way of accommodating his project within the religious sentiments of the majority and the political and social power of the Catholic hierarchy. Instead of exchanging the "kingdom of God" for the "kingdom of Ireland", Irish nationalists in most cases attempted to interrelate both discourses and to construct Irish history as "a fusion of denominational-religious and ethnic-communal suffering".<sup>13</sup> As a result, the discourse of Irish nationalism is characterized by concomitant processes of "tribalization of religion" and "sacralisation of ethnicity".<sup>14</sup>

The gradual approximation of the Catholic and nationalist positions throughout the nineteenth century was facilitated almost all over Europe by the ideas of Romanticism and later of modernism, for both movements emerged as a reaction to modernity and both mingled a nostalgia for the lost traditional modes of existence with a desire for the new beginning that

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses. Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich*, (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975).

<sup>13</sup> English, *Irish Freedom* 295.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Jenkins, *Irish Nationalism and the British State. From Repeal to Revolutionary Nationalism*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006) 55.

would transcend the rational mechanics of modernity. Nationalism's orientation towards cultural heritage, triggered by the sense of uprootedness and disorientation caused by modernity, resulted, in the context of the late-nineteenth-century Ireland, in the rise of revivalist movements. Both the Gaelic Revival and the Literary Revival shared with the Irish Catholicism of that time an element of thorough critique of modern materialism. The specificity of the Irish situation consisted in the fact that cultural revival was preceded, accompanied and to a large extent enabled by the religious one. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the process of binding together Catholicism and Irishness culminated in the rhetoric of Irish Ireland.

The discourse of Irish Ireland generally recognized the superiority of the religious element in relation to the nation. The cause of the nation was to be inscribed into the wider metaphysical context. Consequently, the Irish national endeavour was formulated as a struggle between "faith and infidelity", "tradition and modernity" or "spiritualism and materialism". Nevertheless, the articulation of Irish cultural sovereignty in metapolitical terms provides a potential for a political radicalization. The process of the evolution from cultural to revolutionary nationalism is connected to Pearse's public activity.

### **Nationalism and Modernism**

Patrick Pearse was one of the important figures in the development of the Irish cultural nationalism and he devoted most of his public career to the cause of the Gaelic League. The Gaelic Revival was from the beginning shaped by an *aporia* at its core. Does the anti-modern programme presuppose a full restoration of the old Gaelic order, or should tradition be rather considered a source of energy for the construction of the new Ireland? Pearse's response to this dilemma proves to be at once deeply concerned with the recovery of a continuous national narrative, and staunchly opposed to the traditionalist attempts to mould the future in the image of the past. The analysis of the dialectics of tradition and modernity in Pearse's writings reveals a deep affinity with the modernist revolt against the constraints of bourgeoisie society and philosophical utilitarianism. Following Roger Griffin's "primordialist interpretation of modernism,"<sup>15</sup> I describe Pearse's "politics of time" (relations between the past, the present and the future of the nation) as a combination of syncretic re-synthesis of the elements of tradition, and of a future-oriented break-up with the decadent present.

The analysis of Pearse's thought in relation to the dialectics of tradition and modernity enables to bridge the apparent gap between his early, "progressive" cultural nationalism and the "anachronistic ideology of blood sacrifice" of the final phases of his career to be largely illusory.

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<sup>15</sup> Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave 2007).

Pearse follows the spirit of the generational revolt of the modernist children against their modern (liberal and rationalist) fathers both as a cultural and revolutionary nationalist. This revolt, culminating in the war-enthusiasm of August 1914, was rooted in the Nietzschean notion of “creative destruction”. Both for Nietzsche and later for Carl Schmitt, the rejection of the bourgeois society was based on its inability to accept the necessity of ultimate sacrifice.<sup>16</sup> Pearse’s idea of the messianic blood sacrifice thus becomes a part of the same continuum as his “modernist” stance in the debates over education or literature. Instead of juxtaposing tradition and modernity and positing this juxtaposition as an “either/or” choice the nation has to face, Pearse undertakes the process of modernist “reconnection forwards,” mixing a highly creative and functional, though still reverent, attitude towards the past with a desire to design a future which would not be a mere copy but rather something “of our own making”. He merges a nostalgia for the lost heroic past, a contempt of the “mean and shameful” present and a focus on the dawning future. Significantly, this threefold structure can be related to the tradition of Christian radicalism, ranging from the medieval millenarian movements to the Romantic messianism of the nineteenth century which translated the theological narrative of the primordial bliss, fall and salvation into the discourse of revolutionary eschatology.<sup>17</sup>

### **Theory and Practise of *Translatio Sacrii***

As Pearse’s vision of cultural nationalism evolved towards the goal of radical political action, he had to, whether consciously or unconsciously, face the dilemma of directing the energies of the dominant Catholic discourse towards revolutionary activity. Significantly, Pearse rarely follows in his texts the most common discourses of the mainstream Irish Catholic nationalism which stressed the exceptional, innate piety of the nation, its resistance to persecution and finally posited the Anglo-Irish conflict in terms of the war between faith and infidelity. In Pearse’s writings the sanctity of the national cause is not derived from the people’s adherence to religion but seems to be sacralised in itself.

I call the solution he adopted in the final years of his career *translatio sacrii*, in analogy with the key term of medieval political theology – *translatio imperii*. The latter in the medieval sense denotes a process of transposition of the mystical source of world-power. *Translatio* is not a purely verbal, rhetorical operation but actual “migration” of the noumenal reality. The transposition of religious symbolism from the universal community of the Church to the lower level of the national community enabled Pearse to sacralise the pursued cause without unsettling

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<sup>16</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. G. Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) 48-9.

<sup>17</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism. The Case of Poland* (Notre Dame 1994) 250; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Messianism in Medieval and Reformation Europe* 4.

the sentiments of the majority. *Translatio sacrii* – a re-articulation of the nation and its narrative in analogy with the Church and the narrative of salvation – forms an underlying structural feature of Pearse’s conceptualization of the Irish nationalism. The basic mechanism of *translatio* is demonstrated on the introductory section of Pearse’s key-essay “Ghosts” in which he consistently uses the language of theology to describe the current political crisis of Irish nationalism and where he explicitly establishes a parallel between nation and Church, between “freedom” and the theological state of grace, and between the demand for independence and Church dogma.

In functional terms, the mechanism of *translatio* may be characterized as an instrument by means of which the cultural struggle of Irish Irelandism was re-formulated in political terms. Such a perspective quite understandably led to a conclusion that Pearse used “the emotional power” of the language of religion, familiar to the majority of his countrymen, in order “to convey his own political message”.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, a deeper analysis of Pearse’s writings demonstrates that his engagement with the religious language and symbolism cannot be dismissed as mere “rhetorical power [...] to co-opt for his own political ends the symbols of the pervasive Irish Catholic sensibility”.<sup>19</sup> Relating the national cause within the metaphysical context and with the use of religious terminology was quite a commonplace in the nationalist discourse of Pearse’s times. Nevertheless, the Pearsean method resulted in an incomparably more consistent, far-reaching and totalizing analogy between the nation and the Church.

Various dimensions of the mechanism of *translatio* are demonstrated in this dissertation by means of analysing Pearse’s literary texts, with special attention paid to the last period of his public career, from (roughly) 1910 to 1916 in general, and to his final play “The Singer” in particular. Firstly, the ethical and epistemological premises of St. Paul’s theology are presented as the source of Pearse’s “ethics of foolishness”, which provides the necessary first step in the development of an individual towards the embracement of revolutionary action. The Pauline juxtaposition of the false wisdom of “this world” and the transcendent, “real wisdom” which to this world appears as “foolishness”, provides the source of Pearse’s non-conformist radicalism. Thanks to their innocence and naivety, “fools” possess an insight into the true reality which remains hidden from the sight of those immersed in the “things of this world”. Pauline epistemology is of course inextricably connected with Pauline ethics. To reject the mode in which reality is perceived by the majority means inevitably to tackle the established rules. The priority of the “world of the spirit” over materialism is a frequent motif in Pearse’s early texts where he

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<sup>18</sup> Maume, *The Long Gestation* 166-7.

<sup>19</sup> Trotter 143.



eulogises the spirituality of the peasant, Irish-speaking West. In the final period of his public activity, however, the theological concept of *translatio* is modified by the Romantic tendency to “immanentize” the message of Pauline ethics, turning the pursuit of the transcendent salvation into an earthly struggle for the realisation of the ideal within the particular socio-political reality. Pearse’s poem “The Fool” and his play *The Master* provide the clearest examples of this development and signalize the revolutionary turn in Pearse’s politics. The process reaches climax in Pearse’s final play *The Singer* where the protagonist, MacDara, unites the characteristics of the Christian “holy fool” with the features of the Weberian “charismatic leader”.

In the character of MacDara, Pearse demonstrates the process of national awakening (“nationalization”) as concomitant with the emancipation of the individual subject. Contrary to the widespread view of nationalism as a theory that seeks to annul individual subjectivity for the sake of the collective national entity, Pearse in *The Singer* describes a process of *parallel* nationalization and subjectivization. How can these two processes, both prominent in Pearse’s writings, be accommodated within a single concept? Again, the answer is to be sought in the realm of theology. According to the Polish scholar of nationalism Nikodem Tomaszewski, the nationalist practise derives from the Pauline conceptualization of the Church as *corpus mysticum*.<sup>20</sup> In Greek philosophy and Pauline theology, *corpus / soma* is a part of man that participates in the outer reality, but should be mistaken neither for “I” nor for “body” in the physical sense. It enables the individual to participate in a larger entity without resigning his or her personal autonomy. In St. Paul’s letters, the unity of the Church is further guaranteed by the participation of each individual in the mystical body of Christ. In the Middle Ages, this notion was transferred into the political sphere: the “mystical” body of king served as a similar mediator which enabled each citizen to partake in the unity of the state.<sup>21</sup> Nationalism “democratizes” this notion and allows everyone to participate in the mystical body of the nation to the same degree, constructing *patria* as an “external manifestation of the subject”.<sup>22</sup> It is for this reason that the nineteenth century might have been called simultaneously “the century of the self” and “the century of nationalism”. MacDara’s story exemplifies the process of the gradual emancipation of the self from all relationships that constrain its subjectivity, typical for the Romantic narratives of the self. Similarly to such an archetypal Romantic hero as the protagonist of Mickiewicz’s *Forefathers Eve*, after attaining absolute individual freedom, the newly established sovereign self faces the feeling of “cosmic loneliness” and re-embraces the national fellowship.

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<sup>20</sup> Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski, *Źródła narodowości. Powstanie i rozwój polskiej świadomości narodowej w II połowie XIX i na początku XX wieku* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. First published 1957)

<sup>22</sup> Tomaszewski 110, 126.

In contrast to the most common pattern of the Romantic nationalist biography, the character of MacDara does not merely represent a national version of “Everyman”. Pearse’s text unequivocally suggests that MacDara is the elected One, predestined to shape the destiny of the whole community. MacDara’s character seems to be modelled to a large extent on Christ and bears a striking resemblance to the national messianic figures of Mickiewicz’s poetic drama.<sup>23</sup> The act through which his unique status is confirmed is the sacrifice of his own life in order to obtain freedom for the community. The motif of sacrifice occupies a central place in Pearse’s writings, especially in his plays *An Pháis*, *An Rí* and *The Singer*. In all three plays, the sacrificial imagery is closely related to and derived from the symbolism of the Catholic Sacrament of the Eucharist. Therefore, it seems highly plausible that Catholic liturgy provided Pearse with a comprehensible frame for his overall conceptualization of the Irish nationalist eschatology. Pearse’s plays, just as medieval liturgical drama, point towards the act of miraculous transformation which transcends the sphere of mere writing / acting. The Easter Rising, as constructed by Pearse in his later texts, may thus be described using the theological theory of “liturgical sign”. Positing liturgy as a referential frame for Pearse’s conceptualization of the Rising allows us to explicate the frequently invoked “theatrical” aspect of the event. It is a symbolic gesture which asserts the existence of the Irish nation rather than an attempt to achieve a military or political victory.

### **A Little World in Itself**

The consistent parallelism between the national and the theological narrative in Pearse’s writings reached its peak when he constructed the act of insurrection itself in analogy to the Christian redemptive sacrifice and the figure of its leader in analogy to Christ, or at least Christ’s priest and martyr. As the previous argument in this dissertation concentrated mainly on the *mechanism* of *translatio sacrii*, it omitted the question of theological implications of Pearse’s thinking, which in the decades following the author’s death provoked either a sense of uneasiness or downright rejection among the commentators coming from the Catholic background. The argument posited in the final chapter of the dissertation may be summarised as follows: is the messianic sacrifice for Ireland, as described by Pearse in various texts, an act of “heretical” replacement of the Christian narrative of salvation, or a mere metaphor, acceptable from the theological perspective as an example of *imitatio Christi*?

Two comparative points of reference are employed in order to answer this question: Schmitt’s theory of representation and Mickiewicz’s national messianism. Firstly, Pearse’s perception of the

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<sup>23</sup> Adam Mickiewicz, “Forefathers Eve, Part III” *Poems by Adam Mickiewicz*. Ed. George Rapall Noyes (New York: Polish Institute of Art and Sciences in America, 1944).

national hero (be it MacDara or himself) bears a striking resemblance to Schmitt's definition of "Catholic theory of representation" which consists in making present some invisible yet substantial idea. To represent a nation does not mean gaining support of the highest percentage of its members but rather to incarnate the essence of the nation's being.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, Pearse's concept, in contrast to Mickiewicz's vision of Poland as "Christ of nations", is consciously and consistently limited to the microcosm of Ireland, without any attempts to universalize its message. The act of sacrifice is not conceived as redemptive in a metaphysical sense but it is merely supposed to replicate the Christian notion of martyrdom as testimony, as an example and source of inspiration for others.

Consequently, two roles that summarize Pearse's vision of the national saviour are those of a *martyr-witness* to the existence of the nation and a *representative* who incarnates in his person the essence of nation's cause. In both cases, the role of the national hero is constructed in analogy with the narrative of *Ecclesia*, yet consciously limited to the national context. Pearse's nationalism, a totalizing system of the national faith built in analogy with the Church, does not attempt to break the ultimate connection with Catholicism and perceives the nation as a microcosm within the wider context of the Christian universe. The metaphor Pearse employs in order to visualize his "cosmology" may be found in his essay "Ghosts" where he speaks of Ireland as "a little world in itself" – a closed microcosm and a micro-Church which replicates all the characteristics of the Christian universe on a lower ontological level but does not substitute them. The perspective of "a little world in itself" on the one hand justifies the sacralisation of the cause Pearse is fighting for via the mechanism of *translatio*, but on the other hand, at least in his own view, enables him not to break the link between his concept of the nation and the values professed by the "living Irish nation" of his time.

## Conclusion

Catholic theology provides the deepest foundation of Pearse's thought. It is a source of symbolic systems he – whether intentionally or not – turned to in order to construct and communicate his own ideas. Nevertheless, in all examples discussed in the dissertation, the catalyst to the transposition of those symbols from the theological to the political context was provided by impulses external to the realm of theology. Pearse's thought was profoundly influenced by the Romantic legacy of Irish revivalism and by the overall *Zeitgeist* of the modernist revolt against modernity, shared by his generation throughout Europe. Pearse's works participate in these generational expectations of the messianic moment when a decisive break in the existing socio-

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<sup>24</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and the Political Form*, transl. G.L. Ulmen (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996).

political and intellectual order will occur and shift “the horizons of what is imaginable”.<sup>25</sup> This longing for a redemptive breakthrough resulted necessarily in radicalism and activism. The “cry for miracle”, uttered by the generation of 1914, was concomitant with “a belief that the world was not transformed only because others had not desired it enough to risk everything”.<sup>26</sup>

Two modes of conceptualising the interrelation between religion and politics, representative of Romantic and modernist tendencies respectively, are used consistently throughout this dissertation as comparative models for Pearse’s thought. Carl Schmitt’s “political theology”, one of the most elaborate products of the “primordial modernist” sensibility, acknowledges theology as the source of modern political concepts and outlines the relation between the two realms as essentially analogous. At the same time, however, Schmitt clearly differentiates between structural and normative relations and emphasizes that although they originate in the sphere of theology, the “modern political concepts” are thoroughly “secularized”.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, Mickiewicz’s national messianism is an essentially religious mode of thinking where human history is re-written as an eschatological narrative which repeats the pattern of the Christian story of salvation. Crucially, the Christian narrative serves here not only as a structural pattern but is included within the new eschatology. The message of Christianity is to be completed, fulfilled by a new dimension of collective salvation.<sup>28</sup>

Pearse’s *translatio sacrii* is situated somewhere in the middle between these extreme poles. It inscribes theological symbolism into the political context, yet without breaking the connection with the religious source. It attempts to sacralise the national cause, yet – as demonstrated on the metaphor of Ireland as “a little world in itself” – it does not aim to substitute the Christian narrative. The two levels function in a close relation rather than in opposition and the microcosm of Ireland replicates in miniature the structure of the Christian universe.

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<sup>25</sup> Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916. The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin Books, 2006) 355.

<sup>26</sup> Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation. Irish Nationalist Life 1891 – 1918* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999) 177.

<sup>27</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. G. Schwab (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1985)

<sup>28</sup> Adam Mickiewicz, „Księgi narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego”, *Dziela 2* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1983)