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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

DISERTAČNÍ PRÁCE

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Abstract

The Dublin Easter Rising of 1916 is widely recognized as an intersection between nationalism and religion, due to the prominent of Christian symbolism of redemption via sacrifice in the discourse of the insurrectionists. The religious aura surrounding its leader and main ideologue, Patrick Pearse, has served both as a source of Pearse's posthumous "triumph" – as the Irish independence was to a large extent shaped by his legacy – and of the "black legend" of Pearse as the spiritual father of sectarian violence in twentieth-century Irish politics. As the discussion of Pearse's role in Irish history was to a high degree politicized, his intellectual legacy has rarely been treated *sine ira et studio*.

After a delineation of Pearse's problematic legacy in the context of Irish studies and a general introduction to the relations between nationalism and religion, this dissertation proceeds to re-examine the place of religion in Pearse's thought. Pearse's conceptualization of Irish nationalism should be perceived as a synthesis emerging from the interplay between his deep indebtedness to the religious mind-set and the Romantic and modernist influences that shaped the atmosphere of pre-1914 Europe. His concept is based on a structural analogy between the Church and the nation. The analogy is created by means of a mechanism which transposes words, images and concepts from the realm of theology to the context of Irish politics. I call this mechanism *translatio sacrii*. The working of *translatio* is demonstrated by means of analysing both Pearse's political pamphlets and his literary texts. A special attention is paid to the last period of his public career, from (roughly) 1910 to 1916. The catalyst for this transposition was provided by impulses external to the realm of theology. Pearse's thought is therefore examined in the context of Romantic national messianism, represented by Adam Mickiewicz, and of the modernist revolt against modernity, exemplified mainly by Carl Schmitt. Pearse's writings, however, differ from both Mickiewicz and Schmitt in their consistent effort to combine sacralisation of the national cause and adherence to the general Christian narrative.

Key-words

Patrick Pearse, Nationalism, Catholicism, Romanticism, Modernism, Messianism, Political Theology

Abstrakt

Velikonoční povstání v Dublinu v roce 1916 je často popisováno s důrazem na prolínání nacionalismu a náboženské symboliky spásy skrze utrpení. Právě silná přítomnost náboženského diskurzu v odkazu vůdce a hlavního ideologa povstání Patricka Pearse zapříčinila jeho posmrtné „vítězství" – Velikonoční povstání se stalo základním stavebním kamenem identity nového Irska. Ze stejných důvodů byl však Pearse také odsuzován, a to sice jako duchovní otec militantního a sektářského křídla irského republikanismu ve 20. století. Tato politizace debaty o Pearsově odkazu způsobila, že jeho myšlení bylo dosud jen vzácně zkoumáno *sine ira et studio*.

Po obecném uvedení do problematiky recepce Pearsova myšlení a teoretickém a historickém vymezení vztahů mezi nacionalismem a náboženstvím v evropském a irském kontextu se tato dizertace zaměřuje na přehodnocení náboženských základů Pearsova myšlení o národu a nacionalismu. Pearsův nacionalismus je zde prezentován jako syntéza náboženských motivů a romantických a modernistických vlivů. Jeho základem je dynamický mechanismus transpozice symbolů a motivů ze sféry teologie do uvažování o národu, který nazývám *translatio sacrii*. Působení tohoto mechanismu je dokládáno analýzou řady Pearsových politických pamfletů a literárních děl, především z posledního období jeho tvorby. Pro tento proces transpozice je klíčový vliv romantických a modernistických revolučních impulzů, které jsou zasazeny do kontextu romantického národního mesianismu Adama Mickiewicze a modernistické vzpoury proti modernitě Carla Schmitta. Od Schmitta i Mickiewicze se však Pearse odlišuje konzistentní snahou o to, aby sakralizací národa nedošlo ke zpřetrhání vazeb mezi mikrokosmem národního příběhu a univerzálním křesťanským narativem.

Klíčová slova

Patrick Pearse, Nacionalismus, Katolicismus, Romantismus, Modernismus, Mesianismus, Politická teologie

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Individual chapters of this dissertation have already been published. The overall concept of *translatio sacrii* and the original version of Chapter Seven as "Liturgy and Revolution: Two Plays by Patrick Pearse and *Translatio Sacrii*" appeared in *The Politics of Irish Writing*, eds. K. Jenčová, M.

Marková, R. Markus, H. Pavelková (Prague: Centre for Irish Studies, Charles University, 2010), 78-89. Chapter Six was published as "Beyond the Boundaries of the Self: Padraic Pearse's *The Singer*" in *Boundary Crossings: New Scholarship in Irish Studies*, eds. K. Jenčová, M. Marková, R. Markus, H. Pavelková (Prague: Centre for Irish Studies, Charles University, 2012), 30-43. Considerable parts of Chapter One and Seven appeared as "Liturgy of Nation-Formation: Patrick Pearse and the Theological Background of the Easter Rising of 1916" in *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 13.3 (2013): 412-428. The connection between Pearse's writings and Adam Mickiewicz's national messianism was analysed in "Daringly, yet with Reverence. Pearse, Mickiewicz and the Theology of National Messianism", *Études Irlandaises* 39.1 9 (2014): 57-72. The original version of Chapter Three appeared under the title "The Necessary Synthesis: Dialectics of Tradition and Modernity in Patrick Pearse's Writings", *Tradition and Modernity. New Essays in Irish Studies*, eds. M. Marková, R. Markus, H. Pavelková, E. Adar (Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, 2014) 79-97.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife Kateřina and my son Andrzej who have endured the prolonged co-habitation with Patrick Pearse and all the accompanying ghosts with great patience…

Contents

Introduction

Quoting in 1966 the notorious ending of Patrick Pearse's play *The Singer*, the Irish literary critic Augustine Martin comments with apparent relief: "[F]ortunately, I am not required, in the context, to examine the theological implications of these strange lines".[1]

Those "strange lines" – stating that "one man can free a people as one Man redeemed the world"[2] – were widely understood as the most explicit articulation of the concept of messianic blood sacrifice, which in turn was considered a central ideological premise of the Dublin 1916 Easter Rising, generally recognized as the crucial turning point in modern Irish history. Taking those facts into consideration, Martin's deliberate critical abstinence may appear at least puzzling.

Nevertheless, Martin's comment, which comes from an article published in the special edition of Jesuit review *Studies* devoted entirely to the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, may also be taken as a fitting summary of the state of debate concerning the „theological background" of the writings of Patrick Pearse, the leader and main ideologist of the 1916 insurrection.

As J. J. Lee fittingly comments, the posthumous reception of Pearse had for a long time been swinging between "hagiography" and "demonology".[3] Both attitudes recognized the crucial significance of "Pearse's Rising" and Pearse's idea of Ireland, though they evaluated Pearse's legacy in a completely different manner. The Easter Rising was understood as the sacred source of legitimacy of the liberation movement and consequently of its outcome – the independent Irish state. At the same time it was perceived as the source of legitimacy of the violent, anti-systemic republicanism, which was to be blamed for the persistent presence of the "shadow of a gunman" in the Irish public life, climaxing in the Northern Troubles. Declan Kiberd describes the position of Pearse's legacy as being trapped between "mindless adulation and mindless denunciation". The oversimplified image of Pearse, constructed by the nationalist propaganda, was an easy target to the following generation of the revisionist historians. Nevertheless, as Kiberd suggests, they went on to replace one propagandist image with "an equally simple-minded caricature of their own".[4]

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[1] Augustine Martin, "To make a right rose tree. Reflections on the poetry of 1916," *Studies. An Irish Quarterly Review* LV.217 (Spring 1966): 38-50.

[2] Patrick Pearse, "The Singer", *The Literary Writings of Patrick Pearse*, ed. Séamas Ó Buachalla, (Cork: Mercier Press, 1979) 125. All further quotations from this edition are given in brackets, with the abbreviation *LWPP* and the respective page number.

[3] J.J. Lee, "In Search of Patrick Pearse", *Revising the Rising*, eds. Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha and Theo Dorgan (Derry: Field Day, 1991) 122.

[4] Declan Kiberd, "The Elephant of Revolutionary Forgetfulness", *Revising the Rising*, eds. Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha and Theo Dorgan (Derry: Field Day, 1991)14-15.

It is no accident that J.J. Lee's juxtaposition of Pearsean "hagiography" and "demonology" makes use of theological terminology. It was in the language of religion that Pearse was both praised and criticized. However, the religious aura surrounding Pearse's post-mortem image, quite certainly provoked to a large extent by Pearse's own rhetoric and self-stylization, does not mean that any deeper analyses of the religious dimension of his thinking has been undertaken. Even though Pearse's writings have been were generally considered to be the most powerful and lasting conceptualization of Irish nationalism, their idiosyncratic theological conundrums where first tacitly omitted from the mainstream discussion both in the Free State and de Valera's Ireland with its ruling alliance of "priests and patriots"[5], only to be anathemised by the following wave of historical revisionism as the major cause of sectarianism in the Irish politics. 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 tackle the theme in any depth.

This dissertation aims at filling this gap. It traces the theological background of Pearse's thought by analysing both his political and literary writings. Rather than attempting to solve the essentially politicized debate between nationalism and revisionism that heavily influenced critical reception of Pearse's works, it strives to display the interplay of Catholic theology and symbolism on the one hand, and of the romantic and modernist influences on the other, as the foundations of Pearse's conceptualization of Irish nationalism. Although the notion of "foundations" points to some stable, immovable framework, the foundations of Pearse's thought are defined here as a dynamic structuring mechanism of *translatio sacrii* – "transposition of the sacred". Within this mechanism, the Catholic symbolism in which Pearse was brought up is constantly modified and complemented by contemporary influences, generally associated with romantic and modernist revolt against modernity. Out of this dialectic the synthesis of Pearse's nationalism emerged, to assume the pivotal role in the mythology of Irish history.

All three elements of the dialectical relation outlined above – Catholicism, modernism and nationalism – entered in its various stages and forms into often conflicting interactions. In the first chapter of the dissertation, I outline briefly both Pearse's "life and works" and the controversies that accompanied the reception of his legacy in the following decades up to the present. A special attention is paid to the ways in which the religious and modernist dimensions of Pearse's legacy have been addressed. Following Arthur Clery's comment on the "oxymoronic

[5] Phrase coined by Tom Garvin in: *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858 – 1928*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2005, 1st ed. 1987) 57.

nature" of Pearse's "Catholic Revolution", I propose that the relation between those seemingly contradictory elements should be perceived as central to the analysis of Pearse's thought.

In Chapter Two, I provide the basic theoretical outline of the relations between nationalism and religion in general and specifically in the Irish context. Nationalism, a child of modernity, is generally viewed as a phenomenon that replaces religion as a dominant value-system of a secularizing society. Its precepts seem to be particularly opposed to the doctrine of Catholicism, both due to the Church's role of the protector of the older forms of political organisation and to its pronounced universalist character. Nevertheless, in some societies that resist secularisation, such as the Irish one, attempts were made to absorb Catholicism within the nationalist frame or even to accommodate the nationalist programme in order to comply with the prevailing sentiments of the people. The gradual approximation of the Catholic and nationalist positions throughout the nineteenth century was facilitated by the ideas of Romanticism and later of modernism, as 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 would transcend the rational mechanics of modernity. Nationalism's orientation towards cultural heritage, triggered by the reaction to the processes of modernity, resulted, in the context of the late-nineteenth-century Ireland, in the rise of the 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 revivals were preceded, accompanied and to a large extent enabled by the religious one, proving the exceptional character of Irish society in the beginnings of the twentieth century – that is in the period in which Pearse entered public life.

The Gaelic Revival, the cause to which Pearse devoted most of his public career, has been from the beginning shaped by an *aporia* at its core. Does its anti-modern programme presuppose a full restoration of tradition, or should tradition be considered a source of energy for the building of the new Ireland? Pearse's response to this dilemma, which I outline in Chapter Three, proves to be at once deeply concerned with the recovery of a continuous national narrative, and deeply 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 enables me to demonstrate Pearse's affinity with the modernist revolt against the constraints of bourgeoisie society and philosophical utilitarianism. Following Roger Griffin's "primordialist interpretation of modernism," [6] I would claim that a key to Pearse's "politics of time" (relations between the past,

[6] Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave 2007).

the present and the future of the nation) lies in a combination of syncretic re-synthesis of the elements of tradition, and of a future-oriented break-up with the decadent present.

As the vision of Pearse's cultural nationalism evolved towards the goal of radical political action, he had to (consciously or unconsciously) face the dilemma of directing the energies of the dominant Catholic discourse towards revolutionary activity. I call the solution he adopted in the last years of his career *translatio sacrii*, in analogy with the key term of medieval political theology. The transposition of religious symbolism from the universal community of the Church to the lower level of national community enabled sacralisation of the pursued cause without unsettling 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– is thus presented in Chapter Four as an underlying structural feature of Pearse's conceptualization of the Irish nationalism.

In the following four chapters of this dissertation, Pearse's writings are analysed from the perspective of the concept of *translatio sacrii*, which is understood as the key structuring instrument of Pearse's vision, and which discloses the theological roots of its central elements. Firstly, the ethical and epistemological premises of St. Paul's theology are presented as the source of Pearse's "ethics of foolishness" that provides a necessary first step in the development of an individual towards the embracement of revolutionary action. Secondly, the relation between the individual self and the collective entity of the nation is analysed – in accordance with the recent theory of the Polish scholar of nationalism Nikodem Tomaszewski – from the perspective of the concept of the community of the Church as *corpus mysticum*.[7] Thirdly, the very image of the Rising, as constructed by Pearse, is examined from the perspective of the Catholic liturgy. The final chapter confronts the question of the "theological implications" of Pearse's vision and attempts to locate his position vis-à-vis the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

There can be no doubt that from a theological perspective, Pearse's thinking constantly balances on the verge of heresy. In his use of religion, he goes much further than any other representative of Irish Catholic nationalism. To incite a revolution under the circumstances of relative prosperity and relative lack of direct persecution necessarily involves a rhetoric of political radicalization, which is by definition alien to the official doctrine of the Church. The theological roots of Pearse's thought are constantly modified by the spirit of the romantic and modernist revolt against the tyranny of philosophical, social and economic constraints of modernity. This dissertation follows in the steps of such scholars as Elaine Sisson, Declan Kiberd

[7] 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).

and Seán Farrell Moran who attempted to approach Pearse's thinking from a comparative perspective, and emphasized the importance of *Zeitgeist*, the overall intellectual and emotional orientation of the period, in the formation of Pearse's concepts.[8] In case of this dissertation, the most important comparative context is provided by the political philosophy of the period, with two authors, Carl Schmitt and Adam Mickiewicz, serving as most frequent points of reference due to their deep engagement with theology and politics, which they often combined in a highly heterodox fashion.

The German philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt, although he was ten years younger than Pearse and published his major works after the Great War (and Pearse's death), provides the most precise and consistent formulation of the political sentiments of the "generation of 1914" and "political modernism" in which Pearse's thought should be located. Moreover, a convincing proof of a connection between these two figures is provided by the fact that Schmitt, although looking at European history from the heights of a German imperialist perspective and rarely noticing the smaller nations of Europe, actually seems to take a deep interest in the events of the Easter Rising and mentions Pearse twice in his two seminal essays written shortly after the Great War – *Roman Catholicism and the Political Form* and *The Crisis of Parliamentarianism*. In the third essay from the 1922-3 period, *Political Theology*, Schmitt introduces the eponymous concept arguing that all the modern political terms are secularized versions of the Christian dogmas. The symbols by means of which the political order expresses itself are always dependent on the way in which each epoch understands the metaphysical order.[9]

Schmitt's understanding of "political theology" should be, however, complemented by another point of reference. A rhetoric of political radicalization clothed in Christian imagery and symbolism invites a comparison with various millenarian and messianistic tendencies that have been recurrent throughout the history of Christianity and consist in the re-writing of the spiritual and otherworldly call of the Gospel into a demand for a transformation of the material reality.[10]

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[8] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland. The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996); Seán Farrell Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption. The Mind of the Easter Rising, 1916*, (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994); Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots. St Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork: Cork University Press. 2004).

[9] The relation between Pearse and Schmitt is first briefly mentioned in W.J. Mc Cormack's *From Burke to Beckett. Ascendancy, Tradition and Betrayal in Literary History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994) 368; and later developed in his *Dublin 1916. The French Connection* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2012), especially in chapter 7. Mc Cormack ascribes Schmitt's interest in the Easter Rising mainly to the influence of his Irish-Australian lover, but also points out to the similarities in his and Pearse's understanding of sovereignty and claims that Schmitt appreciated Pearse's "power to decide and to intervene" (*From Burke to Beckett* 368).

[10] I use the term "millenarian" in the sense it is employed by such scholars as Norman Cohn and Jacob Talmon – that is describing any kind of movement or ideology striving to introduce some kind of "paradise on earth". As Cohn puts it: "the desire of the poor to improve the material conditions of their lives became repeatedly transfused with fantasies of a new Paradise on earth, a world purged of suffering and sin, a Kingdom of the Saints." Such

Although "messianism" remains a common catchword in Pearse studies, very little research has been done in terms of comparison of Pearse's allegedly messianistic rhetoric to the better-established European national messianisms. In this dissertation, I attempt to relate Pearse's thought to the similar developments in the homeland of Catholic national messianism – Poland.[11] Due to the central role of this theme in Polish intellectual history, Polish humanities managed to generate specific definitions and tools for analysing this notoriously elusive phenomenon. Most importantly, however, Polish national messianism provides a fertile comparative ground due to its deep engagement with Catholic theology and symbolism, and in many respects prefigures the controversies created by Pearse's heterodox employment of Christian sanctities to serve the national cause. Therefore, the writings of the central figure of Polish messianism, the poet Adam Mickiewicz, shall serve as another comparative ground throughout this dissertation. Just as in the case of Schmitt, there several indirect reasons for making such a connection. One source of knowledge about Polish history, and Mickiewicz particularly, seems to be Count Casimir Markievicz (Kazimierz Markiewicz). According to Patrick Quigley Markievicz often talked with his guests, including Pearse, Plunkett and MacDonagh, about the Polish romantic tradition.[12] The fate of Poland and Ireland was seen as parallel in the nationalist circles. As the Irish-Ireland journalist Aodh de Blacám wrote in 1915: "The two countries are alike in manners, in ideas, in faith, and in misfortune. The same methods of oppression have been used against each."[13] De Blacám even calls Poland the "Ireland of the East". More importantly, Mickiewicz received a considerable amount of attention in the Irish nationalist press in the years and months preceding the Easter Rising. From August 1914 until the insurrection, several articles on Mickiewicz appeared in *Irish Freedom* and in Arthur Giffith's paper *Nationality*. De Blacám himself translated short extracts from Mickiewicz's crucial articulation of the national messianism, *The Books of the Polish Pilgrim* (1833), into English, and his articles inspired Liam Ó Rinn to start translating *The Books* into Irish (in fact, both de Blacam's and Ó Rinn's translations were made from the French

movements always make use of "the language of theology". See: Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Messianism in medieval and Reformation Europe and its Bearing on Modern Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1961) XIII.

[11] According to Andrzej Walicki, Poland claims this status just as "France is home of the Enlightenment" and "Germany of romantic conservatism". Andrzej Walicki, *Mesjanizm Adama Mickiewicza w perspektywie porównawczej* (Warszawa: IBL, 2006) 31.

[12] Patrick Quigley, *The Polish Irishman. The Life and Times of Count Casimir Markievicz*. Dublinn: Liffey Press 2012. Markievicz was also a frequent visitor to St. Enda and donated to the school one of his paintings, still preserved in the Hermitage (materials of Pearse Museum – "The Sgoil Éanna Art Gallery").

[13] Aodh de Blácam, "Poland's Resurrection and its Prophet", *Nationality,* July 24, 1915, 6-7.

translation, not from the Polish original). First fragments of his translation appeared in *Nationality* in January 1916.[14]

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This dissertation is by no means intended as a biography of Patrick Pearse (after all, this task was fulfilled already at least twice – by Ruth Dudley Edwards and Joost Augustejin[15]). It concentrates on his writings rather than on his public and personal life, although I am conscious that it is virtually impossible to disconnect Pearse into the writer, the politician, and the man, or to interpret his texts without references to his political activities culminating in the Easter Rising. After all, Pearse's writings developed alongside his political ideas, reflecting the gradual shift from the discourse of cultural nationalism to the primacy of the total (i.e. both cultural and political) sovereignty. Pearse's conceptualization of the Easter Rising belongs in this respect as much to the sphere of Irish historiography as to the history of Irish writing.

At the same time, Patrick Pearse left behind a considerable body of texts, from political and educational pamphlets and literary criticism to poetry, drama and short prose. In this dissertation, I do not attempt to provide an introduction to his *ouvre* in its totality. I concentrate mainly on the texts containing the most consistent insights into Pearse's concept of Irish nationalism and its relation to religion and to the politics of modernism. Attention is thus paid primarily to the texts from the second half of Pearse's literary career, marked by a gradual turn towards direct political engagement (roughly from 1910). Pearse's writings are treated here without a discrimination between literary and non-fictional genres. In the two chapters delineating the foundations of Pearse's thought, the focus is on his essays, especially on the final "tetralogy" from "Ghosts" to "The Sovereign People", in which he summarized his vision of the nation. The following three chapters rely mainly on the literary writings, primarily Pearse's plays from *An Pháis* through *An Rí* and *The Master* to his final dramatic work – *The Singer*. According to P.J. Matthews, in Ireland at the time of the Revival, it was drama that would "play a crucial role in imagining Ireland" and dominated "Irish cultural discourse".[16] For Pearse the stage provided an

[14]The story of Mickiewicz's reception in the nationalist press of the time is recounted in detail in the introduction to the unpublished doctoral thesis by Mark Ó Fionnain from the Catholic University of Lublin (*Translating in Times of Political Turmoil: Liam Ó Rinn"s Irish Language Translations of Adam Mickiewicz's* Księgi Narodu Polskiego i Pielgrzymstwa Polskiego [Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 2010]), which focuses primarily on the linguistic and comparative analysis of Ó Rinn's translation. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only work dealing with this subject to date. Pearse and Mickiewicz are also invoked as examples of the discourse of the "sacrificial nationalism" in: Alan Davies, *The Crucified Nation. A Motif in Modern Nationalism.* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2008).

[15] Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse. The Triumph of Failure* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006 – first published 1979); Joost Augusteijn, *Patrick Pearse. The Making of a Revolutionary*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[16] P.J. Matthews, *Revival. The Abbey Theatre Sinn Féin, The Gaelic League and the Cooperative Movement*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003) 22.

opportunity to articulate the foundations of his political thinking, unfettered by everyday political concerns. It enabled him to provide an embodiment for his vision of Ireland as well as to gain immediate impact on the public.

Such a non-discriminatory view, treating Pearse's *oeuvre* as a reservoir of ideas, may be justified by the fact that all of Pearse's works must be viewed, as Seamus Deane puts it, as examples "of literature in service up to the last moment and, of course, in service of to something more important than itself".[17] They were all produced with the aim of visualising Irish sovereignty and asserting its essence. This is however does not to imply that Pearse's writings should be perceived as "mere adjuncts to an ideological journey" and "propagandistic preparation for the 'real action' ahead". Roisín Ní Ghairbhí and Eugene McNulty are right to criticize such approaches to Pearse's writings as "damaging over-simplifications", and to point to his deep involvement with theatrical theory and practice.[18] A similar claim can be made concerning Pearse as a considerably innovative voice in the development of prose literature in the Irish language. Nonetheless, for Pearse his literary activity was primarily "a space in which to express ideas and ideals in a time when the very idea of what is it to be Irish was being explored and reinvented".[19] Acknowledging Deane's argument that Pearse texts must always be read functionally, in relation to the aims he pursued outside the realm of writing, I would nevertheless attempt to present them not as more or less accidental assemblage of propagandist tricks, but rather as documents of the formation of the most influential conceptualization of nationalism in Irish history.

[17] Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals. Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880 – 1980,* (Winston – Salem: Wake Forrest University Press, 1987) 74.
[18] Róisín Ní Ghairbhí and Eugene McNulty, "Patrick Pearse and the Theatre", *Collected Plays / Drámaí An Phiarsaigh*, eds. Róisín Ní Ghairbhí and Eugene McNulty (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2013) 3.
[19] Róisín Ní Ghairbhí, Eugene McNulty, "Patrick Pearse and the Theatre", *Collected Plays / Drámaí An Phiarsaigh* 5.

Chapter One

Pearse's Rising: A Catholic Revolution?

How often in those matters does the heresy of to-day become the dogma of to-morrow[1]

Cathaoir Ó Braonáin

1.1. The Myth of the Rising

On Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, a few hundreds of poorly armed members of two paramilitary organizations – the separatist Irish Volunteers and the socialist Irish Citizen Army – seized several buildings in the centre of Dublin and declared themselves the representatives of the newly-proclaimed Irish Republic. The rebellion was crushed after five days of fierce fighting, followed by the surrender of the insurrectionist forces and executions of their leaders. The first one to face the firing squad, on 3 May 1916, was the President of the Provisional Government and the Commander-in-Chief of the insurrection, Patrick Henry Pearse.[2]

From the perspective of the pan-European hecatomb of the Great War, the events in Dublin would seemingly deserve nothing more than a footnote. Although the Rising was the most serious armed attempt to end the British rule in Ireland since the 1798 rebellion, and the rebels gained respect due to their valiant performance in the face of the overwhelming superiority of the British forces, their poor organization and the lack of strategic initiative throughout the Easter week led many historians to conclude – in James Moran's words – that the insurrection proved to be "a military non-event".[3] Moreover, the Rising was prepared and conducted on the basis of the conspiratorial activities of a group marginal even in the context of the nationalist politics of the time. Unsurprisingly, it ran against the policy of the major political power in Ireland – the Irish Parliamentary Party – who supported Britain's war effort in the hope of gaining autonomy ("Home Rule") for Ireland after the war. The outbreak of the Rising came as a surprise also to the major figures of separatist politics, such as the Sinn Féin party leader Arthur Griffith, and was carried out against the will of both the leader of the Irish Volunteers organization, Eoin MacNéill, and even of several members of the military council of the Irish

[1] Cathaoir Ó Braonáin, "Poets of the Insurrection II: Patrick H. Pearse" *Studies. An Irish Quarterly Review* V.19 (September 1916): 339 – 350.

[2] In the previous decades, it was common to render Pearse's name as "Padraic Pearse", an Irish-English hybrid devised in order to stress Pearse's "Gaelicism". Pearse himself, on the contrary, consistently differentiated between both language versions of his name and surname, signing the texts written in English as "P.H. Pearse", whereas all his works written in Irish bear the name of "Padraig Mac Piaráis". I therefore decided to use "Patrick Pearse" throughout this dissertation.

[3] James Moran, *Staging the Easter Rebellion. 1916 as Theatre* (Cork: Cork University Press 2005) 1.

Republican Brotherhood (IRB), a secret organization dedicated – as the only force in Ireland at that time – to the ultimate goal of full separation from Britain. Nevertheless, the military failure of a marginal and seemingly irrelevant group, "minority of a minority", as Roy Foster has it[4], quickly turned into the decisive moment of the political development of the whole country. It heralded the withdrawal of the Irish Parliamentary Party and their politics of constitutional nationalism from their dominant position in Irish public life. Instead, for the first time, the sympathies of the majority, including those of the hierarchical Church, turned towards the rhetoric of separation from Britain. This change was confirmed by the smashing electoral triumph of Sinn Féin in 1918, followed by the guerrilla War of Independence of 1919–1921, and finally by the establishment of the Irish Free State on the basis of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922.

Although historical research in last few decades has problematized in many respects this linear interpretation of the historical process[5], there is no doubt that in the general opinion, the events of the Easter week and their aftermath – though at first greeted with at least confusion, if not rejected altogether by the majority– provided the most visible turning point in the development of the public opinion in Ireland.[6] Similarly, it cannot be questioned that the newly established separatist government of 1918, later to be transformed into the legally recognized government of the Irish Free State, derived its legitimacy from the Republic proclaimed on Easter Monday 1916 at the steps of the Dublin General Post Office. The radical wing of the republican movement derived its right to refuse to recognize the authority of the Free State and to continue a never-ending war for a "proper" implementation of Pearse's idea from the same source. Until the early seventies, i.e. until the resignations of Seán Lemass (1966) and Eamonn De Valera (1973), the veterans of 1916 played a key role in Irish politics.

The importance of the Easter Rising therefore does not lie in its immediate military or political impact, but rather in its subsequent mythologization. According to Roy Foster, "the

[4] Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland. 1600 – 1972*, (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 477.

[5] Charles Townshend in his authoritative *Easter 1916. The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin Books, 2006) suggests for example that the subsequent electoral victory of Sinn Féin owed much more to the threat of introducing conscription in Ireland in the last months of the Great War (342-3).

[6] Most historians pointed to the hostile attitude displayed towards the rebels by the citizens of Dublin as well as to the lack of support for the insurrection almost anywhere outside the capital.David Fitzpatrick speaks for example about "fury and disgust" with which the news was received. *Oxford History of Ireland*, ed. Roy Foster, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989] 198-9. This scholarly commonplace was contested by J. J. Lee in his *Ireland 1912 – 1985. Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) who argued for a more complex and finally unclear "map" of the immediate reactions to the Rising in the society (28-34). What remains indisputable is the influence of the Rising on the whole generation of the nationalist activists. Many of them described it as a key "conversion moment" which completely altered their attitudes and opinions. "Then came like a thunderclap the 1916 Rising" says Ernie O'Malley in his memoirs (Richard English, "Green on red. Two case studies in early twentieth-century Irish republican thought," *Political Thought in Ireland Since the Seventeenth Century*, eds. D. George Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan [London: Routledge, 1993] 161-189. For a general analysis of the significance of the Rising for the formation of the new republicanism see also Richard English, *Irish Freedom. The History of Nationalism in Ireland* [London: Macmillan, 2006] 277).

world of symbols and interpretations […] dominated politics after 1916" to such an extent that we tend to forget "the importance of the everyday events" in the years that followed.[7] Shortly after the events in Dublin, the conviction about the decisive significance of the rebellion seems to have been widespread. It inspired the famous refrain of Yeats's poem "Easter 1916" (published in 1919, yet written in September 1916): "all changed, changed utterly". The playwright Lennox Robinson remarked in 1918: "Everything in Ireland has either taken place before Easter Week or after Easter Week. Right down to the heart of Irish nationality it cut, and the generations to come will continue to feel the piercing terror of the sword thrust."[8] As Roisín Higgins sums up, the Rising plays a "pivotal role in the nationalist story" of the nation and was turned into "the touchstone and lightning rod in the Irish popular imagination."[9]

The nationalist interpretation of the Rising was to a great extent stimulated by the self-stylization of the insurrectionists. The question to what extent did the leaders of the conspiracy hope for any kind of military success remains one of the endless themes of debates about Irish history. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that on Easter Monday – after both the hope of German support and the country-wide mobilization of the Volunteers had failed – they must have been conscious of the fact that their actions were primarily "a bloody protest for a glorious cause" – as Pearse himself had put it (*LWPP* 27). Such an interpretation is moreover solidly grounded in their own pre-Rising rhetoric. The fact that the significance of the Rising is measured by its *ethos* and *mythos* rather than by its immediate military or political gains, seems to be inscribed in the rhetoric of several of its leaders who more or less explicitly acknowledged the inevitability of failure, arguing at the same time for the superiority of the dramatic gesture over the political calculations of gains and losses. As Richard Kearney sums up, they "realized from the outset that their heroic stand would constitute no more than a *symbolic* Rising with little or no hope of practical political success".[10] Undoubtedly, both the date of the rebellion (Easter), as well as its rhetoric – self-immolation of the few for the regeneration of the whole community – were consciously chosen elements of this symbolical struggle.

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[7] Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland. 1600 – 1972*, 487.

[8] Quoted in: Richard Kearney, "Myth and Martyrdom: Some Foundational Symbols in Irish Republicanism", *Transitions. Narratives in Modern Irish Culture*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) 216.

[9] Roisín Higgins, *Transforming 1916. Meaning, Memory and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2012) 5. Elsewhere Mary E. Daly calls the Rising a "key-site of memory", presented as a climax of Irish history by a generations of opinion-makers, a process that culminated in the massive celebrations of the 1966 anniversary (Mary E. Daly, "Less a commemoration of the actual achievements and more a commemoration of the hopes of the men of 1916," *1916 in 1966. Commemorating the Easter Rising*, eds. Mary E. Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2007) 2-3. For Jonathan Githens-Mazer, 1916 is a "cultural trigger point" in Irish history (*Myths and Memories of the Easter Rising. Cultural and Political Nationalism in Ireland* [Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008] 110).

[10] Kearney, 214

It is therefore not surprising that from the very beginning the mythologization of the Rising was heavily influenced by religious imagery. The stress on the Catholic dimension of the Rising – though to a large extent motivated by the alliance of "priests and patriots" that determined the ideological milieu of the Irish Free State and the first decades of the Republic[11] – is solidly grounded in the historical accounts of the event which abound in the descriptions of the firm faith of the Volunteers.[12] As D. G. Boyce concluded, the Rising was the first in the chain of modern Irish insurrections completely "led and planned" by Catholics.[13] More importantly, however, most historians point to the fact that the conceptualization of the Rising was built around a thoroughly Catholic sensibility and symbolism. According to Patrick O'Farrell, it was the first rebellion "to be related to Christian concepts and imagery by its leaders".[14] The reason why – as Richard English puts it – the Rising represents an ideal example of "intertwining of religion and politics"[15] both in its actual execution and in its mythical afterlife, is to be found not in the examples of personal devotion of the soldiers or their leaders, but in its rhetorical and ideological background.

The symbolism suggested by the timing of the rebellion played a crucial role, immediately pinpointed by James Stephens: "The day before the rising was Easter Sunday, and they were crying joyfully in the Churches 'Christ has risen'. On the following day they were saying in the streets 'Ireland has risen'."[16] Both due to its connection with the Easter imagery and due to its pivotal status in the subsequent nationalist narrative of Irish history, the Dublin 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 the subjectivity of the nation and the source from which the nation's future is born. To put it in scriptural terms: a *type* for which all preceding

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[11] Garvin *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* 57-77.

[12] In his account of the history of Marian devotion in Ireland, Peter O'Dwyer provides a series of anecdotes concerning the importance of the saying of the Rosary by groups of Volunteers. In one of the accounts, we read about a scene just before the capitulation: "They knelt, holding their rifles they were so soon to surrender in their left hands, their beads in their right. Tears ran down many a cheek and the responses were said chokingly (…) we then marched out (…) The GPO was still burning savagely" (*Mary. A History of Devotion in Ireland* [Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1988] 297-9). Other accounts stress the importance of the religious preparation of the rank-and-file Volunteers before the Rising: "[there] was hardly a man in the Volunteer ranks who did not prepare for death on Easter Saturday, and there were many who felt as they knelt at the altar rails on Easter Sunday morning that they were doing no more than fulfilling their Easter duty – that they were renouncing the world and all the world held for them and making themselves worthy to appear before the Judgment Seat of God." (quoted in: John Newsinger, "'I Bring Not Peace, But a Sword'. The Religious Motif in the Irish War of Independence", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13.3 (July 1978): 609-10.

[13] D. George Boyce, *Nationalism In Ireland*, London: Routledge, 1995 (3rd ed., originally 1981) 310-2. The following War of Independence acquired a similar, decisively "Catholic" character.

[14] Patrick O'Farrell, "Millenialism, Messianism and Utopianism in Irish History", *Anglo-Irish Studies*, vol. 2 (1976): 57

[15] English, *Irish Freedom* 274.

[16] Kearney, 216.

insurrections are *ante-types* and which pre-figures the future "heavenly bliss" of the sovereign Ireland.

The process of the "sacralization" of the Rising was from the very beginning developing in a constant interplay of two levels: the level of historical facts (deep personal devotion of the Volunteers) and the level of rhetorical colouring (religious symbolism of Easter and the discourse of self-sacrifice and martyrdom surrounding the political event). The hagiographical mode of narrating the lives of the Volunteers facilitated the communication of their ideology to the wider public and its acceptance by the majority. Such a mode of transmitting the message of the Rising bypassed both the official censorship tightened by the martial law and the potential theological controversies connected with the rhetoric of the insurrectionist leaders.

The gradual convergence of nationalist and religious imagery occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Rising, to a great unease of the British administration alarmed by the reports of "little girls praying to 'St. Pearse'".[17] A nationalist poster featuring a dead Volunteer at the feet of the personified Ireland bore an unequivocal title "His Easter Offering". In the nationalist press, it was possible to encounter such advertisements as that by one J.J. Walsh's who offered to the public a selection of nationalist-religious commemorative items such as "tricolour rosaries".[18] Under the martial law introduced after the Rising, due to the ban on public meetings, the main outlet for nationalist emotions was provided by the Requiem masses held for the dead rebels. *The Catholic Bulletin*, a lay Catholic paper that was to play a crucial role in the creation of the myth of the Rising (see note 21), freely switching between the modes of religious and patriotic devotion in its description of the events:

> […] the founts of our nationality have been stirred to their depths [. . .] there has been a great searching of hearts and a great quickening of religious feeling. It looks as if with the Requiem Masses for the dead, there is united as if by common consent, a general union of prayer for Ireland amounting almost to exultation.[19]

Finally, one of the crucial elements in the process of re-evaluation of the Rising by the public was a series of quasi-obituaries published in the subsequent editions of *The Catholic Bulletin* under the title "Events of the Easter Week". Again, as in case of Masses substituting illegal political

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[17] Mary Kenny, *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997) 62.
[18] Ben Novick, *Conceiving Revolution. Irish Nationalist Propaganda during the First World War*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001) 203.
[19] Quoted in: John H. Whyte, "1916 – Revolution and Religion", *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising: Dublin 1916, ed. F.X. Martin*, (London: Methuen, 1967) 224.

gatherings, here the exaltation of the individual piety and religious activity of the individual insurrectionists substituted for a forbidden engagement with their political ideas. As the editorial note explains

> Under existing circumstances a magazine like this, in discussing the recent Insurrection, has little option but overlook the political and controversial features of the upheaval and confine comment almost entirely to the Catholic and social aspects of the lives and last moments of those who died either in action or as a result of trial by court-martial."[20]

What followed was a litany of names matched with detailed information about the membership in various sodalities, favourite devotional practices or enumeration of the priests and nuns in the family, climaxing – in the traditional fashion of hagiographic narratives – with a description of the last moments of life accompanied by the appropriate rites of the Church.

"Events of the Easter Week" were first published in the July 1916 issue of the *Bulletin*. Even more strikingly, in the previous edition, covering May and June, that is immediately after the Rising, due to the imposed martial law there is no single mention of insurrection. However, a prominent place is given to a sermon preached on St. Patrick's Day that year in the Irish College in Rome by "Rt. Rev. Mgr. O'Riordan" and concerning "the course of Irish history". The sermon – appearing without a single comment or introduction – is entitled "The Martyrdom of a Nation" and contains passages such as: "[…] that was the Passion of the Martyrdom. But Christian forgiveness accompanies the Passion; the martyrdom is followed by the Resurrection." This statement is followed by an observation that "at each stage of its way to justice, the Catholic conscience, roused by a sense of wrong, has had to express itself in popular movements for the vindication of its rights".[21] This convergence of the nationalist and the religious discourse quickly acquired "blessing" from the Irish Catholic hierarchy (though hesitant and by no means unconditional): the Fenian movement – remaining under the interdict since its beginnings in the 1850s – was for the first time recognized as a legitimate representative of the Irish people.[22] The cooperation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the nationalist movement was essential for the establishment of independent Ireland and its dominant ethos. In this new context, Easter

[20] "Events of the Easter Week", *The Catholic Bulletin*, VI.2 (July 1916): 393.
[21] Rev. P. O'Riordan, "The Martyrdom of a Nation", *The Catholic Bulletin*, VI.1 (May 1916): 266-8.
[22] The most thorough (even if not completely unbiased) account of this process of "baptizing the Fenians" in the aftermath of the Rising can be found in W.J. McCormack's *Dublin 1916. The French Connection* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2012). McCormack also points out the crucial role of *The Catholic Bulletin* which in the context of Irish Catholic press of the period managed to retain most freedom from direct ecclesiastical control and most populist in its address. As McCormack demonstrates, *Bulletin*'s "elitist" counterparts – *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* and *Studies* – remained much more cautious in their presentation of the theme. Nonetheless, even in their case a gradual acceptance of the identification of the nationalist cause with the Irish Catholic interest can be detected (47-73).

commemorations provided its visual confirmation. A commemoration of the "resurrection" of the Irish nation was celebrated not on the actual anniversary of the Rising in the "secular" calendar, but in accordance with the liturgical calendar, each Easter Monday, immediately following the Sunday rituals celebrating Christ's resurrection.[23] The process of sacralization of the Rising reached its peak in the 1966 commemorations, which – as Mary E. Daly rightly observes – are comparable only to two other public events in the history of independent Ireland, both moreover symbolically conflating the national and the religious narrative: the celebration of the centenary of the Catholic Emancipation in 1929 and the Eucharistic Congress of 1932.[24]

1.2. The Myth of Pearse

A central place in the nationalist myth of the Rising came to be occupied by the figure of its "spiritual leader". It was in the mythicized re-writing of Pearse's story where the convergence between the religious and the national discourse reached its peak. Just as in the case of the sacralization of the Rising as such, the hagiographical approach to Pearse from the very beginning tended to intertwine the personal devotion of the leader of the insurrection with the sanctity of the political cause he sacrificed himself for. A young man, compared by his contemporaries to a priest, probably both because of his prophetic zeal and of his stern, ascetic look, was a natural candidate for the iconic figure of the insurrection turned into a sacred event.

Significantly, when writing to Lloyd George about the necessity to soften British reprisals shortly after the Rising, an Irish MP from Liverpool, T. P. O'Connor, described Pearse primarily in terms of his religious life as an "extremely devout Catholic" and a "daily communicant".[25] David Cairns and Shaun Richards point out that shortly after the Rising, a poster depicting „Mother Ireland" holding in her arms the dead body of her „Son", Patrick Pearse, in *Pietá* position appeared on the streets of Dublin.[26] In a popular post-Rising ballad, Pearse's soul is conducted to heaven by angels,[27] and on a postcard (undated, probably around 1918) preserved in the Pearse Museum he is accompanied in his last moment by Virgin with the Child (see Appendix). His last moments, as related by the Capuchin friar Fr. Aloysius, confirmed his status of a pious knight-martyr:

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[23] Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries*, 57–77.
[24] Daly 22.
[25] David W. Miller, *Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898 – 1921*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 1973) 341.
[26] David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988, 109.
[27] "Kings with plumes may adorn their hearse … but angels meet the soul of Patrick Pearse" (quoted in Desmond Ryan, *The Man Called Pearse*, [Dublin: Maunsel, 1919] 1-2)

> I can never forget the devotion with which he received the Most Blessed Sacrament. I could not help picturing to myself a scene in the Catacombs in the days of the persecutions in Rome. The bare cell was lighted from a candle at a small opening in the cell wall […] But the face of the man, as he lifted it up to receive his God, seemed to beam with light.[28]

Pearse's (and Ireland's) cause is in this account implicitly equalled with the persecution of the early Church. One of the first biographers of Pearse, a Breton journalist Louis Le Roux, completed the process heralded by the popular representations of the insurrection leader, concluding in the introduction to his 1932 book:

> Pearse was more than a patriot; he was a virtuous man. He possessed all the qualities which go to the making of the saint to a degree that it is hardly within my province to analyse. Aodh de Blacám has said somewhere that it would not be astonishing if Pearse were canonized some day.[29]

It is crucial that from the very beginning, the allegedly exceptional piety of the leader of the Rising also coloured the reception of his writings. As soon as in July 1916, *Catholic Bulletin* characterized Pearse's texts as "permeated, for most part, with the Catholic idealism of Gaelic Ireland and trust in God and His Virgin Mother which is characteristic of the Irish-speaking peasantry".[30] In the first review of *Collected Works of Pádraic H. Pearse* published in 1917, Fr. Cathaoir Ó Braonáin stresses Pearse's allegiance to the simple folk-religion that discerns the revelations of God in ordinary things and accepts miracles as part of everyday reality. Summing up his review he claims:

> Everywhere in the book we see the intense Catholicism of Pearse – the perfect faith which had no questions, no doubts, no reserves; the deep religion from which no interest in his life was separate, but which informed everything in it (…) the warp and woof of all his weaving.[31]

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[28] Quoted in: Piaras F. Mac Lochlainn, *Last Words. Letters and Statements of the Leaders Executed after the Rising at Easter 1916*, (Dublin: OPW, 1990) 212. Father Aloysius O.F.M. Cap. was one of the Capuchin priests providing last rites and spiritual comfort for the imprisoned leaders of the Rising. His account, preserved among others in the Allen Library (under the title "Memories of Easter Week"), was partially reprinted in Le Roux biography of Pearse and later in the 1966 edition of *Capuchin Annual*.

[29] Louis Le Roux, *Patrick H. Pearse*, trans. Desmond Ryan (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1932) X.

[30] "Events of the Easter Week" 393.

[31] Cathaoir Ó Braonáin, "Review of *The Works of P.H. Pearse*", *Studies*, VI.23 [September 1917]: 510-12.

Such a hagiographical image of Pearse prevailed as long as until the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising.[32] Symptomatically, in one of the first critical historical analyses of 1916, a volume entitled *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising* which was commissioned for the 1966 commemorations, David Thornely felt obliged to comment that it seems "not merely difficult but almost blasphemous to discern a human being of flesh and blood" under "the Pearse of Legend"[33] and elsewhere he declared "a virtual impossibility of writing, even to-day, an objective study of a man whose death elevated him into the most sacred realms of national mythology".[34]

Thornely's hesitance – just as Augustine Martin's deliberate critical abstinence invoked at the beginning of this chapter – suggests that sentiments concerning Pearse in the nationalist discourse of De Valera's Ireland often transcended a Catholic chivalric exaltation of a pious warrior killed for a just cause. To uncover the roots of this process, we may return to Ó Braonáin's first review of Pearse's *Collected Works*. At the end of the article, the author, so far commenting mainly on Pearse's personal devotion and on his ability to convey the simple faith of the Connacht peasantry in his short stories, introduces a new powerful image: "It was this fidelity to the light that brought him each Sunday to the altar-rail, as it brought him at the end to the barricades."[35] In this statement, the religious and the political inspiration all of a sudden merge together, creating a single indivisible whole. The Divine sacrifice re-performed at the altar is linked in this sentence to the national sacrifice at the altar of the barricades.

A similar theologically disturbing turn of the Pearsean myth may be inferred from another quote of Le Roux's biography:

> […] the power and the nature of the spiritual forces which, accumulated for many generations in the heart of the people, suddenly become incarnate in one personality, speak in one voice and well up in one breast.[36]

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[32] The almost unequivocal eulogization of Pearse did not mean that his name and legacy remained uncontroversial during the first half of the century after the Rising. Pearse's legacy repeatedly proved to be a source of controversy between the conflicting parties in Irish politics, from the Treaty debate to the Fianna Fail versus Fine Gael rivalry over the memory of the insurrection. As Joost Augustejin (326-330) demonstrates, his name was much more often invoked by the opposition in the Dail ("it is not the Ireland Pearse died for" being a common exclamation at that time). These controversies however concerned the political legacy of the leader of the Rising and rarely affected his personal aura of sanctity. Countless examples of Pearse – the lover of animals and children, endowed with "gentleness of St. Francis" – may be found on the pages of journals such as *The Catholic Bulletin*, *Capuchin Annual* or even *Studies* (see for example: Kenneth Reddin, "A Man Called Pearse", *Studies* XXIV.134 [June 1945]: 241-251). In a sarcastic review of one of the "mainstream" pre-1966 biographies of Pearse, Fr. Francis Shaw writes about Pearse's early years being described as if he were "a composite of Cú Chulainn, Little Lord Fontleroy and Little Nellie of Holy God" (*Studies* LV.219 [Autumn 1966]: 324-325).

[33] David Thornley, "Patrick Pearse – The Evolution of a Republican", *Leaders and Men*…, 151.

[34] David Thornley, "Patrick Pearse", *Studies*, vol. LV.217 (Spring 1966): 10.

[35] Ó Braonáin, Review of *The Works of P.H. Pearse*" 510-12.

[36] Le Roux, 143.

Here Pearse acquires a role usually reserved for national "patron-saints", the founders of the nation, who to some extent – in the limited microcosms of particular communities – re-perform semi-Divine roles. In this passage, Le Roux nearly copies a famous study of the hero-cult by Polish scholar (and Durkheim's pupil) Stefan Czarnkowski who in 1915 described, on the example of St. Patrick, the national hero as the "incarnation" of the central values of the community and as the personality who "accumulates and awakes hidden energy" of the collective.[37] In connection with the redemptive imagery articulated both by Pearse and his successors in relation to the Easter Rising, the nationalist discourse approaches those shadowy regions Augustine Martin was so afraid to explore from the theological perspective. Martin's comment points to the general attitude of the Catholic intellectuals of De Valera's Ireland, who paid tribute to Pearse, yet remained uneasy about the implications of his writings and of his posthumous cult. Eamonn McCann's ironic account of his childhood memories from the Northern Irish nationalist community in the 1950s may provide an insight into the popular version of the Pearsean myth: "We come very early to our politics. One learned, quite literally at one's mother's knee, that Christ died for the human race and Patrick Pearse for the Irish section of it."[38]

1.3. The Genealogy of the Myth

The posthumous apotheosis of Pearse was by no means self-evident. I have already mentioned that the insurrectionists formed a minority within the nationalist movement, not to mention the fact that the majority of Pearse's generation was probably, in Sonia Paseta's word, content with the "respectable Victorian Ireland" and – for practical rather than emotional reasons – preferred Kipling's call (i.e. building an individual career in the service of the Empire) to that of Cathleen Ni Houlihan.[39] Moreover, as the repeated misspellings of his surname in the press and in the letters of his contemporaries testify,[40] Pearse was not – at any point in his life – the most recognizable representative of the separatist movement. Although his frequent appearances on the platforms of separatist meetings since 1913 were steadily gaining him more prominence among the nationalist public, nevertheless until the last moments before the Rising he remained a person from the second, rather than from the first line of Irish public life. When the Sinn Féin

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[37] Stefan Czarnkowski, *Kult bohaterów i jego społeczne podłoże. Święty Patryk jako bohater narodowy Irlandii*, (Warszawa: PWN 1956) 17, 23-4. Czarnkowski's book was published initially in French, so quite probable Le Roux was acquainted with it.

[38] Quoted in: Michael Boss, "Country of Light: The Personal Nation of Patrick Pearse", *Irish University Review*, Autumn/Winter 2000, 272.

[39] Foster, *Modern Ireland,* 432; Soňa Paseta, *Before the Revolution: Nationalism, Social Change and Ireland's Catholic Elite, 1879-1922*, (Cork University Press, 1999) 67, 150-1.

[40] For example, the February 1911 edition of the IRB journal *Irish Freedom* reports on the commemorative events dedicated to Robert Emmet and mentions a speech given by a "Mr. Pierce".

journal *The Spark* asked its readers to vote for "The Man for Dublin" in March 1915, the results showed a definite primacy of the leader of the Sinn Féin party Arthur Griffith, followed by the historian and the President of Irish Volunteers Eoin MacNéill and another Sinn Féiner, Alderman Thomas Kelly. Next places were occupied by two nationalist priests, "Fr. T. Fitzgerald OFM and Fr. Costello". "Mr. P.H. Pearse" is only mentioned as number six among the authorities chosen by the radical readership of *The Spark*.[41] During his lifetime he was perceived primarily as a member of a group, a representative of the cultural and political trends of his time and as a rather unlikely candidate for the national iconic figure.

From a wider sociological perspective, Pearse fulfils almost every characteristic of the average nationalist intellectual: he came from a mixed ethnic and cultural background (his father James was English and Unitarian by birth), was brought up in an aspiring lower middle-class artisan family (James Pearse was a stone-carver and a sculptor), and he worked for most of his adult life in the fields of "media communication" and education.[42] Moreover, during his relatively short lifetime, Pearse's career reflected the major trends of the developing nationalist debate in Ireland. Born in 1879, he entered the public life in the late 1890s, at the time of the relative depression of Irish nationalist politics, which was both leaderless and directionless after the fall of Parnell and after the second attempt to introduce the so-called Home Rule Bill that would grant Ireland autonomous status within the British Empire. In the stimulating atmosphere of the nationalist Dublin of that time, a "new" type of nationalism was slowly fermenting in reaction to the disillusionment with parliamentary politics and constitutional ways of attaining Irish national objectives. On the one hand, the highly publicized issue of the Boer War, coinciding with the centenary of 1798 Irish insurrection activated the radical elements and radical rhetoric within the nationalist movement.[43] On the other hand, the energies of the national movement seemed to be re-directed to a large extent towards cultural nationalism. The cultural turn manifested itself in two connected, though often competing, phenomena: one being the Anglo-Irish Literary Revival, epitomized by the writings of the W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory's circle as well as by the establishment of the Irish Theatre Society, the other one the Gaelic Revival, orchestrated by the Gaelic League, dedicated to the "de-Anglicization" of Ireland by means of return to the „native" Gaelic language and customs. Pearse devoted most of his career to, in John Hutchinson's term, "revivalist revolution". In his subsequent roles of the editor of the official press organ of the

[41] Ed Dalton, "The Man for Dublin", *The Spark* I.5 (7 March 1915)3.
[42] On the typical sociological profile of the majority of the revivalist activists (or indeed nationalist revolutionaries), see e.g. Benedict Anderson, *The Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1991 – revised edition) 74; James H. Billington: *Fire in the Minds of Men. Origins of the Revolutionary Faith*, (London: Temple Smith, 1980) 149; Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries* 13 – 56.
[43] Cf. Matthews 66-73.

Gaelic League, *An Claidheamh Soluis*[44] (1903 – 1908), and of the founder and headmaster of the first Irish-language school Sgoil Eanna (St. Enda's School, 1908 – 1916), he acted as a preacher of moral regeneration of the nation. This regeneration was to be conducted through education, including the re-introduction of the Irish language which would re-connect the national community with its past and thus also with its "inner essence". His activities were centred on the language issue and developed simultaneously in the spheres of education and literature. Characteristically, in both spheres he remained at the same time a theoretician and a practitioner. He was at once delineating the theory of bilingual education (developed as an instrument for re-introduction of Irish to the English-speaking part of Ireland) and introducing it in practice by launching the St. Enda's School. In the realm of literature he was both articulating the guidelines for the re-creation of literature in Irish and himself becoming one of the most prominent writers associated with the Gaelic Revival.

Pearse began his career as a man of letters at a very early age. He entered the Gaelic League at the age of sixteen and a year later, in 1898, he published a booklet entitled "Three Lectures on Gaelic Topics", suffused with the sense of exceptionality of the Gaelic tradition and with the call for the re-creation of the golden age of Ireland's spiritual empire by means of return to the nation's cultural roots. Irish culture is understood in a strictly exclusivist manner – in total opposition to the English influence as well as to the attempts for articulation of Irish identity via the medium of English. The language issue remained central to Pearse's later public battles as well, yet in the following years he abandoned the exclusivist tone of his juvenile texts and concentrates on practical matters connected with education, literature in Irish and with the protection of the heritage of the Western *Gaeltachtí*. It was during his editorship of *ACS* when he started to publish his literary works as well, beginning with a small collection of short stories in Irish (*Íosagán agus Sgéalta Eile*, published by the Gaelic League in 1907) which gained him the status of one of the most original new authors in the language, but at the same time he encountered violent opposition of the traditionalist wing of the movement who criticized his "modernist" poetics. The second volume of short stories was published in 1916 by Dundalgan Press (though it contained materials written since 1907), under the title *An Mháthir agus Sgéalta Eile*, confirming his position of the key figure in the development of new Irish prose. At that time he was also well known as the author of a handful of poems, which again wentagainst the antiquarian tendencies within the League, searching for new forms of poetic expression in Irish. Since the establishment of St. Enda's, Pearse engaged himself more and more in dramatic work, motivated by his position of the schoolmaster. He was using drama both for pedagogical

[44] Further in the text referred to by the abbreviation *ACS*.

purposes and for the promotion of the school. The turn towards drama reflected also Pearse's growing urge to address the Irish public actively. His first dramatic works again reflect the position of the cultural nationalist dedicated to the re-creation of native traditions. They are simple pageants based on narratives from Gaelic mythology.

If we were to search for a brief summary of Pearse's ideological background and personal attitude as a cultural nationalist, the best image can be found in his own writings. In 1905, he wrote a series of articles for *ACS* following his trip to Belgium. In one of them (dated 23. 9. 1905), he deals with Hendrik (Henri) Conscience – a key figure of the Flemish Revival, whose life bears some striking parallels to Pearse's own. Conscience had a French father and learnt Flemish only later in life, consciously choosing both his nationality and his role of a writer who is to re-build the community. Summarizing Conscience's role in the process of the Flemish national revival, Pearse seems to sum up the position he himself aspired to in the Irish context:

> Conscience is not, from the purely aesthetic point of view, one of the greatest figures in literary history. His pictures of Flemish home life are, indeed, exquisite, and his historical romances live and glow with something of the movement and colour of Scott. But his fame rests less on the intrinsic merits of his own work than on his influence on the intellectual and political future of his adopted people. He raised a decayed and despised speech to the dignity of a literary language; though not a Flemish speaker born, he laid deep and strong foundations of a modern Flemish literature; he inspired a movement of national revival […][45]

Around 1909, Pearse's attention became gradually more and more directed towards politics. Whereas earlier he considered – following the older revivalist intellectual leaders, from the fervently Gaelic and Catholic D.P. Moran to the Protestant Ascendency member W.B. Yeats – political autonomy as an issue of secondary importance in comparison to the cultural self-consciousness of Ireland, he then started to perceive the political solution of the Irish question as a necessary condition for a successful cultural regeneration. Róisín Ní Ghairbhí proved recently that the transformation of Pearse's views from cultural towards revolutionary nationalism should not be absolutized because his adherence to the language and the ethos of the insurrectionary tradition can be dated back to the experience of early childhood and his mother's family

[45] *An Piarsach Sa Bheilg / P.H. Pearse In Belgium / P.H. Pearse in Belgie*, ed. Séamas Ó Buachalla, (Baile Atha Cliath: An Guum, 1998) 129-132.

background.[46] Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in the period between 1909 and 1913, this tradition surfaces more and more visibly in Pearse's works, finally gaining a central position to which all other concerns were subordinated. His journalistic texts acquired a new, more explicitly political character, especially in the short-lived Irish-language weekly *An Barr Buadh* he founded and edited in 1912. In this transformative period, some of his best poems were created, including "Mise Éire" and "Fornocht do Chonac Thú" – two variations on motifs from bardic poetry, both more or less explicitly exalting loyalty to the cause. There is also a noticeable shift in his dramatic work – from simple pageants re-writing the material from Irish mythology, he moves towards different genres of the passion play (*An Pháis*, 1911) and mystery play (*An Rí*, 1912), both addressing the theme of sacrifice.

Both plays were invited to appear on the stage of the Abbey Theatre, which signalizes a significant change in Pearse's perspective – a more inclusive view of Irishness, no longer hostile to the ethos of the Anglo-Irish Revival of Yeats, Gregory and Synge (a mature counterpart to *Three Lectures on Gaelic Topics* can be found in "Some Aspects of Irish Literature" from 1912 written for *Irish Review* which contain a re-evaluation of Synge's legacy). At that period, Pearse also began to use English more often as his literary medium. Actually, most of his works from the final period (1915-1916) were written in English, from the political pamphlets to theatrical works and poetry. His literary works turn in this period from vehicles of resurrection of a shipwrecked Gaelic cultural tradition to the instruments of cultivating the tradition of national armed resistance against foreign rule. This transformation is articulated most vividly in "From the Hermitage" – a series of diary entries from 1913 and 1914 in which the revolutionary Fenian tradition is declared more important at this particular moment of history than the Gaelic League. His anthology of the early modern Gaelic poetry entitled "Songs of the Irish Rebels" (published as a serial in *Irish Review* in 1913-14) constructed a link between modern separatism and the earlier Gaelic culture. A series of essays, including "Ghosts", "The Separatist Idea", "The Spiritual Nation" and "The Sovereign Nation" (1915 – 6), provides a continuous narrative of the separatist tradition from 1798 to the present. Finally, his two poems "The Rebel" and "The Fool" as well as two plays *The Master* and *The Singer* (all written in English in 1915 and 1916),

[46] Pearse's unfinished and unpublished autobiography (actually covering only his childhood) ends with a passage about his aunt Margaret teaching him songs "of men dead and in exile for love of Ireland". Pearse calls the period of her stay at their household "the most important period in my life" ("Fragment of Autobiography by Patrick Pearse", A manuscript preserved in Pearse Museum, PMSTE.2003.0946). According to Ní Ghairbhí, there was evidence of a long tradition of support for insurrectionary tendencies, dating back to the 1867 and 1798 rebellions in Margaret Brady's family as well as traces of vocabulary from the seventeenth and eighteenth political poetry kde?. Róisín Ní Ghairbhí, "A People that did not Exist? Reflections on Some Sources and Contexts of Patrick Pearse's Militant Nationalism," *The Impact of the 1916 Rising. Among the Nations*, ed. Ruán O'Donnell, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008) 161-186.

develop the symbolism of his revolutionary nationalism and can be read as the most explicit articulation of the process of transformation of the revivalist energy from the realm of culture to the politics of revolutionary separatism.

Pearse's literary works reflect the evolution of his political stance and his active engagement in the separatist movement. "From the Hermitage" may be read as a document of his gradual abandonment of the League for the sake of Irish Volunteers – a paramilitary militia created on the eve of the Great War as a reaction to the similar developments among the Ulster Protestants. Shortly afterwards, Pearse became one of the most visible representatives of the radical wing of Irish nationalism. He confirmed his turn to separatism by being sworn into the IRB in December 1913 and by his active role in orchestrating the internal split in the Volunteers when its leadership decided to support the British war effort in 1914. At that stage, he was a member of the inner circle within the separatist movement, dedicated to the plan of an armed insurrection in Ireland before the end of the war. As such works as Townshend's *Easter 1916* demonstrate, Pearse – although being "a last minute Fenian" when compared to the veterans of the secret conspiracy such as Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott – was surprisingly influential within the revolutionary conspiracy, at least since the creation of the National Volunteers in 1914. He set and enforced more ambitious goals than his fellow-conspirators and devoted a considerable amount of time to the practical matters of the organization or the armament of the Volunteers.[47]

Nevertheless, the area where Pearse's influence was most significant was the realm of words, rhetoric and ideas. As the title of Seán Farrell Moran's 1997 book suggests, he was „the mind behind the Easter Rising",[48]not in the strategic but rather in the ideological and rhetorical sense. It was his vision of the event, conveyed in his political and literary statements, that was to influence the majority of his fellow revolutionaries and to provide a framework for the later articulation of the myth of the Rising. Firstly, in the strained months leading to Easter 1916, the sentiments of what would be later called "blood sacrifice" ethos surface in the writings of a considerable number of authors, from Terence Mac Swiney and Joseph Plunkett as far as to the Labour leader James Connolly. Their statements bear clear marks of Pearse's influence, as is most visible in Connolly's case, who, although he used to be critical of Pearse's notion of redemptive sacrifice, wrote shortly before the Rising that "without shedding of blood, there is no

[47] Townshend 91.
[48] Seán Farrell Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption. The Mind of the Easter Rising, 1916*, (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994).

Redemption."[49] Secondly, the essential point of convergence between the political and the theological which I described above as the core of the myth of the Rising, took shape in Pearse's writing. He was the one who in the first place "managed to present the cause of Ireland's freedom in religious imagery" (to quote Augustine Martin once again) and thus became – in John Hutchinson's terminology – the leader of "the political community of sacrifice".[50]

As demonstrated earlier both in the case of the myth of the Rising and of the myth of Pearse, the mythopoeic mechanism depended largely upon the process W. J. Mc Cormack calls "baptizing the Fenians". The personal example of pious lives of the insurrectionists was constantly related to the message the insurrection as such was meant to convey. Nevertheless, as regards Pearse's career, the central role of religious language and imagery in shaping his posthumous myth may at first sight appear quite problematic. From the biographical perspective, very little is known about Pearse's personal religiosity.[51] He was born to a family with mixed religious background. His mother seemed to be a "typical" practicing Irish Catholic. His father, James Pearse, although he converted to Catholicism before the marriage and was strongly related to the Catholic Church in terms of his work as a stone-carver, serving mainly ecclesiastical clients, seemed to remain throughout his life a free-thinker of strong agnostic leanings.[52] Significantly, most of the accounts of Pearse's personal devotion were provided ex-post by his sister Mary Brigid in her memoir *The Home Life of Patrick Pearse*.[53] Pearse's own unfinished autobiography contains almost no references to religion.[54] We may also add that in his public relations to the institutional Church and its hierarchy, he appeared quite exceptional, in the context of Ireland of his time, in his determination for independence. On the one hand, he always remained respectful towards the ecclesiastical authority, yet on the other hand he did not hesitate to criticize bishops whenever they failed to support his ideals of the national cause. He was careful enough to provide a clerical "imprimatur" for the St. Enda's project and to promote religious practises and instruction in the school, yet at the same he conceived the project as a lay one – contrary to the general tendencies of contemporary Ireland – and was equally careful to avoid direct clerical supervision.[55]

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[49] Quoted in F.X. Martin, "1916 – Myth, Fact and Mystery", *Studia Hibernica*, 7 (1967): 116-7).
[50] Augustine Martin, 39; John Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, (London: Sage Publications, 2005) 59.
[51] A thorough discussion of the lack of actual evidence of Pearse's legendary devotion can be found in S. F. Moran's *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption*, especially pp. 156-157.
[52] On James Pearse see for example Brian Crowley, "I am the son of a good father': James and Patrick Pearse", *The Life and After-Life of Patrick Pearse*, 19-32.
[53] Mary Brigid Pearse ed., *The Home-Life of Padraig Pearse*, (Cork: Mercier Press, 1934).
[54] "Fragment of Autobiography by Patrick Pearse". A manuscript preserved in Pearse Museum, PMSTE.2003.0946.
[55] Joost Augusteijn, *Patrick Pearse. The Making of a Revolutionary*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 161-4.

This is not to say of course that Pearse did not share the basic religious beliefs and practices of the majority (if it had not been so, it would have been noticed by his contemporaries). Yet his own silence about the topic is telling, especially if we come to examine the presence of religious themes in the writings he produced at different stages of his career as the Gaelic Leaguer, the headmaster of Sgoil Eanna and the political ideologue. As a Gaelic League activist, he may be compared with the historian Eoin MacNéill, probably the most revered lay-Catholic member of the League's leadership. Whereas for MacNéill the central formative myth of the nation should be sought in the early Christian period, Pearse's attention was centred on the pagan past, personified in the mythical figures of Cú Chulainn and the warriors of the Fianna. Similarly, Pearse seemed almost completely immune to another crucial motif of the Gaelic League rhetoric: the exaltation of the Irish language as a "protective wall" against moral corruption spreading from England.[56] Finally, whereas in the majority of contemporary works, modern Irish history was interpreted primarily as a narrative of religious persecution and emancipation, Pearse devoted the majority of his writings to the tradition of revolutionary separatism, with its heroes – Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet or Thomas Davis – coming from the Protestant background. When, in his famous graveside oration at the funeral of the old Fenian Jeremiah O'Donnovan Rossa (in August 1915), Pearse defined the fundamental premises of his political programme, he spoke about a struggle for Ireland "free and Gaelic", not Ireland "free and Catholic".

How to explain then the unflinching posthumous apotheosis of Pearse as a Catholic-nationalist martyr, typified here by Ó Braonáin's first review of Pearse's *Collected Works*? Firstly, from the merely functional perspective, Pearse was the only one among the three main leaders of the insurrection who could personify its myth when conceived in terms of "faith and fatherland". This role could hardly have been played by the Marxist James Connolly or by Tom Clarke, who was a representative of the old Fenian ethos with its inherent anticlericalism and the stigma of the ecclesiastical condemnation of the movement (see Chapter Two). Pearse, on the contrary, could be presented as an epitome of the re-union of the radical nationalism with the Church, facilitated by the Gaelic Revival.[57] Secondly, we may argue, the denominational element is inherently present in the term "Gaelic", without any need for further specifications. As Conor Cruise O'Brien has pointed out, the bilingual advertisement of St. Enda's, published in *The Leader* in 1908, described

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[56] Cf. Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881 – 1921* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994) 39-40.

[57] In Kevin Collins words: "It was Celtic revivalism which eventually became the common ground on which clergy and revolutionaries met, with the result that by the early twentieth century the revolutionary tradition in Ireland had become as solidly Catholic as it had become Celtic revivalist." (Collins, *Catholic Churchmen and the Celtic Revival in Ireland, 1848-1916*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002) 17.

it as "an Irish-Ireland school for Catholic boys" and "Sgoil Ghaedchealach le h-aghaigh Gaedheal Óg" – the Irish version containing no explicit mention of the religious affiliation, as if it were simply contained in the semantical scope of the term Gael.[58] Thirdly and most importantly, the centrality of the motif of sacrificial death, intended as atonement for the sins of the community, in Pearse's writings provided a major impulse for a "religious" interpretation of Pearse's thought. As we have seen in Ó Braonáin's review, the fusion oftheological and national imagery is illustrated by the allusion to the parallelism of Christian and national sacrifice. Although the heroes of Pearse's imagination, i.e. the pagan warrior Cú Chulainn and the failed Protestant rebel Robert Emmet, can be by no means regarded as Catholic heroes, in Pearse's writings they are incorporated into the sacrificial quasi-theological discourse. Both are presented as Christ-like figures sacrificing their lives in order to save the community that has become paralyzed by its own weaknesses and is unable to protect itself. Emmet, "faithful even unto the ignominy of the gallows, dying that his people might live" in a sacrifice "Christ-like in its perfection"; as well as Cú Chulainn whose last moments are rendered as a "re-telling" or a "fore-telling" of "the story of Calvary".[59]

It was this aspect of Pearse's thinking, referred to as the concept of blood sacrifice, that became central to the nationalist myth of the Rising as well as an essential point of reference for the majority of subsequent scholarly analyses of Pearse and – especially after the beginning of the Troubles in the Northern Ireland – a fundamental divisive factor in the evaluation of his legacy.

1.4. Deconstruction of the Myth.

In 2001 the Irish film director Steve Carson explained his decision to make a full-length documentary film about Patrick Pearse in the following words: "He hadn't been done for years. That hagiographic image didn't do him any service. He's almost disappeared from view. The Troubles obliterated him." As the journalist of *Sunday Times* comments, Pearse's popularity experienced a radical decline shortly after 1966 commemorations, due both to "the Republic's increasing prosperity" and the return of political violence in the North.[60] The growing disillusionment with the tradition of revolutionary republicanism compromised by the Troubles and a parallel weakening of the position of the Catholic Church in Irish society resulted in a total

[58] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Ancestral Voices. Religion and Nationalism in Ireland*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 98-9.

[59] On Emmet: "How Does She Stand", *Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse. Political Writings and Speeches* (Dublin: Maunsel & Roberts, 1922) 69. On Cú Chulainn: "Some Aspects of Irish Literature", *Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse. Songs of the Irish Rebels and Specimens from an Irish Antology. Some Aspects of Irish Literature, Three Lectures on Gaelic Topics*, (Dublin: Phoenix, 1917) 156.

[60] Mick Heaney, "Patrick Pearse was full of contradictions and a new documentary on his life has added to the confusion, says Mick Heaney", *Sunday Times* 8 April 2001: 10.

reversion of the public image of Pearse. In the popular version of revisionists discourse, he turned into a vicious ghost that had to be exorcised from the Irish historical narrative along with the legacy of violence and its pseudo-religious rhetoric. In the general view, Pearse was perceived as "the ideological linchpin of an exclusivist, parochial Catholic and narrowly nationalist republic"[61] – echoing *a rebours* the way he was presented in textbooks and in the media of de Valera's Ireland. Of course, the central point of this controversy was the ideology of self-sacrifice. Hundreds of letters to the editor have been published in the last decades denouncing the "murderous recklessness of 1916" and Pearse's malicious influence on the former generations of republicans: "I'm sure that Pearse would have hated the methods of today's terrorists, but he penned the rhetoric and set the example that sustains them."[62] In the words of one of the readers of *Irish Times*, "Pearse was a nationalist zealot, a psychopath uttering blood sacrifice rhetoric, comparable today to the leaders of Hamas and to al-Qaeda's Osama bin Laden."[63] Even in the mainstream moderate nationalism, represented by Fianna Fail, distinct reluctance emerged towards the religious symbolism and the sacrificial ideology of Pearse. This was exchanged for an image of the "liberal, tolerant and progressive" thinker inclined to "the rights of women" and "common Ireland" of "Catholics, Protestants and Dissenters" – as heralded by a speech delivered by Charles Haughey during the opening ceremony of the Pearse Museum in 1979.[64]

Moving from the sphere of public opinion to that of scholarship, it must be noticed that the myth of Pearse had never been properly examined up to the 1960s. According to D.G. Boyce, for the first fifty years historians left the theme of Easter 1916 "to those whose purpose was to eulogize the heroes of the Rising".[65] The examination of the intellectual legacy of the Rising thus turned into one of the central hotbeds of the "nationalists versus revisionists" controversies which dominated Irish historiography in the following decades.

Pearse's actual role in the political and military processes leading up to the Dublin insurrection is largely beyond the scope of this dissertation, although it must be noted that even in the seemingly harmless sphere of archival analysis one repeatedly encounters the struggle between nationalist and revisionist visions of Irish. Our concern here is Pearse's legacy as a writer and intellectual. The period up to the 1966 commemorations may be summarized by two already mentioned exemplary statements: Father Ó Braonáin was one of the first writers to formulate an

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[61] Heaney 10.
[62] Ruth Dudley Edwards, "Paving the way to hell. Pearse's Patriots: *St Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* by Elaine Sisson", *Irish Times* 3 July 2004, 59.
[63] Robin Bury, "Pearse: 'realistic man of his time'- or nationalist zealot?" *Irish Times*, 27 April 2004, 17.
[64] Quoted in: D.G. Boyce: "1916, Interpreting the Rising", *The Making of Modern Irish History. Revisionism and the revisionist controversy*, ed. D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, (London: Routledge, 1996) 181.
[65] D.G. Boyce 163.

image of Pearse that indivisibly merges the national and the religious both on the level of hagiography (Pearse's life) and exegesis (Pearse's writings). Augustine Martin, quoted in the "Introduction", may provide a fitting example of the second position: one that perceives the problematic theological consequences of Pearse's thought, yet deliberately suppresses all doubts, respecting the status of the sacred symbol of national deliverance.

The new era in Pearsean scholarship may be summed up by article "The Canon of Irish History. A Challenge" by Fr. Francis Shaw SJ, initially planned for the 1966 commemorations but – quite tellingly – rejected and published only posthumously in 1972; that is after the beginning of the Troubles. Shaw's article gives voice to a devastating critique of Pearse's legacy in at least two respects. Firstly, the canonical discourse of the continuity of Irish separatism throughout "seven heroic centuries", from the Norman invasion to the Rising, is dismantled from the perspective of historical analysis. Shaw claims that "there was no time in which the conflict was a straightforward one between the Irish and the English..." adding that "neither in the beginning nor later had the Irish a comparable idea of resisting at national level".[66] Secondly, Pearse's sacralisation of the nationalist cause by means of conflation of political and religious imagery is attacked from an ethical and a theological position: "One has to say that objectively this equation of the patriot with Christ is in conflict with the whole Christian tradition and, indeed, with the explicit teaching of Christ."[67]

A similar combination of historical or literary deconstruction with moral condemnation characterizes several other texts appearing in the 1970s.[68] The Troubles, resulting in the definite discrediting of the tradition of militant republicanism, contributed greatly to the dismantling of the Persean myth. Scholarly analyses of Pearse's thought were often overshadowed by the context of the conflict in the North, and thus inevitably preoccupied with searching for the roots of the sectarian violence in Irish history. The view of Irish history as a bloody intersection between religion and nationalism, with Pearse playing a prominent role in the process, surfaces in the writings of Conor Cruise O'Brien (*States of Ireland* from 1972 and *Ancestral Voice* published in 1994). Another key text in this respect is Patrick O'Farrell *Ireland's English Question* (1971) which again ascribes the roots of the conflict to the all-defining religious division that forms the essence of Irish history – "its focal point, its identity and coherence".[69] Pearse's thinking and Pearse's

[66] Francis Shaw, "The Canon of Irish History. A Challenge", *Studies*, vol. LXI, Summer 1972, 138 – 142.
[67] Shaw, 122-3.
[68] On the moral dimension of Shaw's or C.C. O'Brien's critique of the nationalist canon se efor example: Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire. Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 85-8.
[69] Patrick O'Farrell, *Ireland's English Question. Anglo-Irish Relations 1534-1970* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1971) 10.

politics are thus located in the context of the Catholic revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The perspective of a literary critic has been added by William Thompson, whose seminal *Imagination of Insurrection* (1967) laid the foundations of another crucial image of Pearsean scholarship: one of *artiste manqué*. Together with the first scholarly biography of Pearse by Ruth Dudley Edwards (*The Triumph of Failure*, 1979), they constitute another dominant strain of critical analysis that ascribes the transformation of the cultural nationalist into the mystical revolutionary to Pearse's artistic (Thompson) or personal (Edwards) failure. Whether we talk about his inability to tackle the decline of St. Enda's project, his disappointment with the struggle for the preservation of the Irish language or his presumed suppression of a homosexual orientation – all contributed to the escapist urge to resolve all complicated problems of the real life by means of embracing sacrificial death.[70] This "psychological" strain in Pearsean criticism culminated later in the publication of Sean Farrell Moran's *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption* (1994) in which he subjected Pearse's mind to psychoanalysis, concluding that "his lack of a secure psychological identity had arrested his emotional development and rendered him unprepared for an autonomous adulthood" thus making "the prospect of dying on Easter Monday 1916 seem attractive, even compelling".[71] Both in Thompson's and in Moran's interpretation, Pearse's self-image, created as a reaction to his real-life failures, consisted in the absorption of the Christ model – one that "demanded the reality of crucifixion".[72]

The new image of Pearse emerging from the revisionist re-evaluation of the nationalist myth ascribed his sacrificial political theology to the peculiar mixture of a late-Romantic Yeatsian anti-rationalism and the exclusivist, nostalgic Catholic nationalism of Irish-Ireland, all coloured by the psychological idiosyncrasies of a deeply troubled individual. In the context of the Troubles, it inevitably contained an element of moral condemnation, which may be exemplified by O'Farrell's assertion that "the Christian references and symbols" appear in Pearse's writings to disguise his "death-wish and lust for violence", reversing "the Christian message" and exchanging it for "that doctrine of a holy violence, a sanctified hatred, a just vengeance that hung heavy in the very air of Ireland".[73] In the extreme versions of this discourse, Pearse's religious rhetoric provides just

[70] William Thompson, *The Imagination of Insurrection. Dublin, Easter 1916 – A Study of an Ideological Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse. The Triumph of Failure* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006 – first published 1979).
[71] Moran, *The Politics of Redemption* 197.
[72] Thompson, 118.
[73] O'Farrell, *Ireland's English Question*, 266.

another example of the dark atavistic element of the Irish subconscious, which may be derived,in a way reminiscent of Heaney's bog poems, from the tribal sacrificial rituals.[74]

The lack of critical attention to Pearse's thought in the 1980s and 1990s may be also taken as a sign of scholarly consensus in this respect. Nevertheless, new paths in Pearsean criticism have been gradually opened. One of the pioneering events was J. J. Lee's inclusion of Pearse as one of the key figures in his monograph *The Modernisation of Irish Society* (1973), where he shifts the attention from Pearse as the initiator of the armed rebellion to Pearse as one of the founders of the conceptualization of Irish modernity in which the ideology of de-anglicization is paired with emphasis on the individual freedom and popular sovereignty as the basis of the new order.[75] Lee's sociological perspective finds a counterpart in the field of literary history in the writings of Declan Kiberd, who, especially in *Inventing Ireland* written almost three decades later, positions Pearse for the first time in the milieu of Irish modernism and proposes a new interpretation of his thought in the context of postcolonial theory.[76] This new turn in the reflection of Pearse's thought, salvaging it at least partially from the insular dispute between nationalism and revisionism, may be ascribed to the widening of the critical discussion by means of including the Irish-language scholarship on the one hand, and the European intellectual context on the other.

To speak about the incorporation of Pearse's Irish-language heritage and writings to the general body of Pearsean studies may sound quite paradoxical, considering the fact that Pearse's writings in Irish quantitatively prevail over his English *oeuvre*. Irish language scholarship remained for a long time a world apart in which Pearse was perceived primarily as a key figure in the process of re-establishment of the Irish literary tradition. This different angle resulted also in a completely reversed evaluation of Pearse's legacy. Whereas to many English-language critics Pearse was a byword for an atavistic, past-oriented reactionary, in the Irish context he was perceived not only through his devotion to the cause of Gaelic Revival but primarily as a major "modernist" author and a crucial modernizing voice in the debate about the development of literature in Irish. Sean Ó Tuama characterizes him as "the only modern poet" of the first generation of the Revival[77] and in J. Caerwyn Williams' words Pearse attempted and managed "to drag the Irish poetry into the twentieth century".[78] In the last two decades, it was mainly thanks to bilingual critics such as Declan Kiberd and later Philip O'Leary, Maire Ni Fhlathúin and Róisín Ní Ghairbhí that Pearse's deep indebtedness to and relative proficiency in the Gaelic literary

[74] G.F. Dalton, "The Tradition of Blood Sacrifice to the Goddess Éire", *Studies* LXIII.252 (Winter 1974): 343-354.
[75] J.J. Lee, *The Modernization of Irish Society 1848 – 1918* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1973) 145 - 153.
[76] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland. The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996) 196-217.
[77] Seán Ó Tuama, *Repossessions: Selected Literary Essays on the Irish Literary Heritage* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995) 6.
[78] J.E. Caerwyn Williams and P.K. Ford, *Irish Literary Tradition*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992 – first published in Welsh in 1958) 279.

tradition was confirmed. Most importantly, however, these scholars demonstrated to what extent Pearse's writings prefigured some of the founding works of postcolonial theory, disclosing the process of subjugation of the self by the colonial system and searching for ways towards individual and collective emancipation. The Irish-language perspective, modified by contemporary literary theory, facilitated the accommodation of Pearse in the general context of Irish and European modernism. It also helped that such approaches presented Pearse's project as at once deeply rooted in the past of "Gaelic Ireland" yet at the same time thoroughly oriented towards the "free Ireland" of the future, thus deconstructing one of the basic paradoxes of Pearse studies – the juxtaposition of a nostalgic reactionary and a radical revolutionary. Finally (and quite surprisingly to many), it was in the context of the analysis of Pearse's struggle for the Irish language revival that the international dimension of his thought came to be appreciated: Pearse's fascination with and his thorough study of the Belgian method of bilingual teaching, his concern for the Pan-Celtic movement and for the fate of language revivals in Finland and Bohemia disclose a wide interest in contemporary European developments and openness to foreign influences.[79]

The focus on psychological perspective together with the parochial quality of the nationalism versus revisionism debate were responsible for the fact that Pearse's thinking had been for a long time interpreted as a mere personal peculiarity or as a national (Irish Catholic) idiosyncrasy. Only in the last two decades, several authors have emerged who were able to position Pearse's writings in the wider European context. It was again Declan Kiberd who declared Pearse a member of the pan-European "generation of 1914", who shared a disgust with petty-bourgeois rationalism and yearned for an overturning of the existing hierarchies – a political equivalent of Stephan Dedalus and Christy Mahon.[80] Sean Farrell Moran in the already quoted monograph provides the first thorough analysis of the parallels between Pearse and his more famous contemporaries, Rupert Brooke and especially Charles Peguy, who in a very similar way fused fervent nationalism with heterodox Catholic mysticism. Another parallel drawn by Farrell Moran – with Georges Sorel, a theoretician of collective, mythicized violence – was probably one of the first attempts to locate Pearse's texts within the context of European political philosophy of the period.[81] The same tendency to position Pearse in a wider picture can be traced in the excellent study of St. Enda's ideology by Elaine Sisson (*Pearse's Patriots. St Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood*, 2004). Sisson demonstrates Pearse's pedagogical attempt to foster a new model of Gaelic

[79] See for example: O'Leary, The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 52-90; *An Piarsach Sa Bheilg / P.H. Pearse In Belgium / P.H. Pearse in Belgie*.
[80] Declan Kiberd, "The Elephant of Revolutionary Forgetfulness", *Revising the Rising*, 12.
[81] Moran, *Politics of Redemption*, 174 – 202.

masculinity by a fusion of Christian spiritualism and pagan heroism, modified by the aesthetics of the late Romanticism of Wagner and Pater as well as by the Edwardian ethos of boyhood and manliness, symbolized by the seemingly antithetical figures of Peter Pan and Baden Powell's scout.[82] Finally, Farrell Moran's suggestions have been recently developed by W.J. Mc Cormack who meticulously gathered all the proofs of potential Continental influences on Pearse's thought, mainly coming from the realm of the French right-wing Catholic "integral nationalism". Mc Cormack has also been the first scholar to mention a peculiar connection between Pearse and Carl Schmitt.[83] All these re-writings of a straightforward narrative of a parochial Gaelic-Catholic exclusivist, which persisted both in Pearse's hagiography and demonology, have been an invaluable enrichment of Pearse studies. All these works, though from different angles, proved Pearse's deep engagement with contemporary European intellectual milieu of the late Romanticism / early modernism. Pearse's thought can thus be presented in its natural environment of the turbulent revolt against the nineteenth-century liberal rationalism in which a nostalgia for the lost past mingled with expectations of the new beginning.

1.5. Catholic Revolution?

One of the most recent monographs dedicated to Pearse, *The Life and After-Life of P.H.Pearse* (2009)[84] edited by Roisín Higgins and Regina Uí Chollatáin, confirms that at least on the level of scholarly analysis the binary opposition between nationalist hagiography and revisionist demonology has been definitely replaced by a more diversified and multi-dimensional perspective. Pearse emerges from this collection of essays almost as an enigma, as a hero of a thousand faces: Pearse as a rather stiff and prudish Victorian, his English heritage deeply ingrained both in his thinking and appearance, Pearse as an epitome of the anti-colonial activist inspiring further generations of freedom-fighters from Bengal to Nigeria, Pearse as the modernist sharing the momentum of the generational revolt with James Joyce, Pearse as the innovative pedagogue, Pearse as the skilful media-manipulator and dangerous ideologue responsible for the Partition and for the "shadow of gunman" in the Irish politics of the twentieth century etc. etc. Roisín Higgins summarized the general tone of the volume when she described Pearse as a multi-dimensional figure, "a complex mixture of Irish and English, modern and old-fashioned, assertive and self-conscious, public and private".[85]

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[82] Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots. St Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork: Cork University Press. 2004).
[83] W.J. Mc Cormack, *Dublin 1916. The French Connection.* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2012).
[84] *The Life and After-Life of P.H. Pearse*, eds. Roisín Higgins and Regina Uí Chollatáin (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009).
[85] Roisín Higgins, "Remembering and Forgetting P.H. Pearse," *The Life and After-Life of P.H. Pearse*, 138.

What remains conspicuously absent from this multi-faceted picture is a deeper analysis of the religious dimension of Pearse's thought. Also a new biography of Pearse, published by Joost Augustejn in 2010, brings almost nothing new in this respect. At the beginning of the 1970s one was confronted with a clear polarity between total affirmation of the union between Catholicism and the radical nationalism exemplified by Fr. Ó Braonáin, and its total condemnation articulated most persistently in Fr Shaw's challenge to the nationalist version of Irish history. In the following four decades, the picture has definitely become more complex. Most scholars would probably agree with Kiberd's *factual* assertion that in case of Pearse – contrary to the other European revolutionaries – "the religious rhetoric was never occluded or buried, but remained visible and audible on the textual surface".[86] Similarly, a majority of Pearse scholars would agree on the *functional* significance of that rhetoric as a crucial catalyst for the fusion of the radical nationalist discourse with the sentiments of the Catholic society.[87] 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 totally liberated from the pressure of normative judgments. 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 "Catholic militant" Kiberd, among others, downplays considerably the formative role of religion in Pearse's thinking, supplanting it with a new image of the prophet of anti-colonial enfranchisement of the subalterns.[88] Or was his rhetoric a definite proof of adherence to the exclusivist vision of the Catholic republic or to reactionary currents of European thought that shortly afterwards gave birth to fascism, as for example W.J. Mc Cormack claims?[89] This critical disagreement 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."[90]

I would like to suggest 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 thought. On the contrary, the following argument accepts both the Catholic and the "modernist" elements as integral and mutually

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[86] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* 211.

[87] 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). Patrick Maume claims that the rebels were not "primarily religious in inspiration but used the emotional power of this familiar language to convey their own political message" (*The Long Gestation. Irish Nationalist Life 1891 – 1918*, [Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999] 166-7).

[88] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* 196-217.

[89] W.J. Mc Cormack, *Dublin 1916. The French Connection.* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2012).

[90] John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival. A Changeling Art* (Syracuse University Press, 1987) 303.

complementary parts of Pearse's discourse. Actually, it is through their constant interplay that Pearse's vision crystallised.

There is nothing new in locating a paradox or a contradiction at the heart of Pearse's thinking. Arthur Clery, one of the most perceptive lay Catholic intellectuals of Pearse's generation, associated with D.P. Moran's *The Leader*, wrote as early as in 1917: "To speak of a Catholic Revolution is practically an oxymoron. Yet Pearse's movement inevitably claims the epithet." In Clery's view, the content of this oxymoron seems to be political in the first place, consisting in the fusion of the idea of revolution (perceived as essentially anti-Catholic since the time of the Bastille) with that of Catholicism (considered as essentially anti-revolutionary): "Since the days of the *Chouans* so many practising and believing Catholics, aided by so few who were not, never set out to combat an established government." At the same time, however, Clery seems to discern a deeper level of Pearsean oxymoron. He compares "the literary and cultural movement of which Pearse, Plunkett and MacDonagh were the centre" with the major figures of "modernist" Revolution – D'Annunzio, Maeterlinck and Nietzsche. He suggests that both "movements" share the same openness towards the "new", both are oriented towards the future yet differ completely in their relation to the heritage of Christianity.[91]

Clery does not develop his brief comment, satisfying himself with an easy juxtaposition of the piety of the Irish rebels and the godlessness of their Continental counterparts. Nonetheless, his insight provides a good starting point for the analysis of the inherent paradoxes of Pearse's thinking. Catholicism and Revolution, or Catholicism and Modernism, form, it seems, an antithetical pair. Yet I suggest that out of their dialectical relation, the synthesis of Pearse's conceptualization of Irish nationalism was formed. Discussing Pearse, it is easy to rely on the set of apparently contradictory characteristics: a Catholic and a revolutionary, a preacher of individual emancipation and an atavistic reactionary. Instead of playing those elements against each other or simply asserting a schizophrenic character of Pearse's thought (as it often happened in Pearsean scholarship), in the following argument I attempt to confront the Pearsean oxymoron in its entirety. Therefore, from the chronological and biographical perspective, I concentrate on the texts from the final years of his career, immediately preceding the Rising, when he fully devoted himself to the intellectual and practical preparations of the insurrection. My argument refuses to juxtapose Pearse the educator and cultural nationalist and Pearse the revolutionary. Instead, it treats his last "incarnation" as a completion of the previous stages of his public and intellectual activity.

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[91] Arthur Clery, "Pearse, MacDonagh, and Plunkett: An Appreciation", *Studies: an Irish quarterly review* 6.22 (June 1917): 212-221.

All three elements of the dialectical relation outlined above – nationalism, modernism and Catholicism – are extremely difficult to pinpoint by means of a single definition. Even if the last phenomenon seems at first sight as a finite and clearly framed system, Catholicism lacks any stable social and political doctrine. How else could we explain why two clerical reviewers of Pearse's work – Ó Braonáin and Shaw – may come in their discussion of the religious dimension of Pearse's writings to completely opposite conclusions? In the following chapter, I attempt first to provide a theoretical and historical background to the processes that formed a specific set of relations between nationalism, modernism and Catholicism in Ireland at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Chapter Two

"Faith of our Fathers": Nationalism and Religion

> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
>
> 1 Peter 2.9

One of the most poignant formulations of the dialectic between nationalism and religion was articulated by the chronicler of the French Revolution, Jules Michelet. In his *Journal,* he exclaims emotively:

> It is from you that I shall ask for help, my noble country: you must take the place of the God who escapes us, you may fill within us the immensurable abyss which extinct Christianity has left there. You owe us the equivalent of the infinite.[1]

A few decades later, during Patrick Pearse's lifetime, one of the most popular hymns sang in many a Dublin church contained in its Irish version a stanza, that, contrary to Michelet, provides a vision of the nation living thanks to its faithfulness to Christianity and relating the achievement of fully independent nationhood to the continuation of this bond:

> Faith of Our Fathers, Mary's prayers
> Will keep our country true to thee.
> And through the truth that comes from God
> Ireland shall then indeed be free.[2]

Michelet's prayer to his "noble country" and the hymn "Faith of Our Fathers" provide two opposite poles of the analysis of the relationship between nationalism and religion to which this chapter is devoted. Firstly, the two concepts are to be examined on the basis of the contemporary theory of nationalism as two discourses providing a comprehensive framework for human existence. Secondly, the attitude of nationalist movements to the Catholic Church – this time understood mainly as an institution guarding a specific doctrine – is to be discussed. Reflections from this general analysis are then related to the evolution of Irish nationalism from its beginnings to the post-Parnellian and pre-1916 era. In this period, roughly coinciding with

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[1] Jules Michelet, *Journal*, vol. I, 83. English translation quoted in: Conor Cruise O'Brien, *God's Land. Reflections on Religion and Nationalism*, (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1988) 50.

[2] "Faith of Our Fathers", *Folk and Traditional Songs Lyrics*, http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/folk-song-lyrics/Faith_of_Our_Fathers.htm

Pearse's public career, Irish nationalism crystallized in a series of three (both conflicting and overlapping) strands of revivalist effort, which were united by an acutely perceived need to react to the processes of modernity.

I am concerned here neither with nationalism nor religion *per se*, but solely with the relation between the two phenomena in a specific historical moment: Ireland in the early twentieth century. Therefore the chapter does not aim at providing an exhaustive summary of the never-ending debates concerning the definition of each of those terms in their own right. The term "nationalism" here is used in its wider meaning, in accordance with the Anglophone scholarly tradition: it signifies any kind of ideology and/or any social / political movement pursuing the goals of attaining national autonomy and strengthening, reviewing or inventing "national identity". Secondly, as nationalism is initially a European phenomenon, defining itself against the background of Christian theology and Christian religious institutions, the term "religion" in this analysis applies first and foremost to Christianity in general and to Catholicism specifically in the Irish context.[3]

2.1. Opponents or allies?

The relation between nationalism and religion remained a marginal topic in the studies of nationalism for a considerable period of time. The basic assumption for this omission was formulated by Elie Kedourie's *Nationalism* (1960), where he claimed that the two systems were absolutely incompatible. For Kedourie, nationalism is a strictly "secular doctrine", formed in constant opposition to *ancien régime* and its stalwart ally – institutionalized religion. The incompatibility of the two systems can be, in Kedourie's approach, demonstrated on a set of binary oppositions defining each of them. The trans-ethnic and universalist character of religion is matched with the deliberately limited perspective of a particular human community. The spiritual and otherworldly goals are exchanged for a purely terrestrial vision of social perfection attained within the human time. The source of the ultimate authority shifts from the Deity to the sovereign people. Finally, the universal sacred language is abandoned for the sake of the vernacular.[4]

As John Hutchinson points out, *political nationalism*, as it developed from the Enlightenment philosophy, is a creed of radical modernization. Its prophets – such as Nehru,

[3] I do not intend to deny the considerable input of the Irish Protestants of different denominations to the shaping of Irish nationalism. Actually, as I relate later, it was through the Irish Protestants that modern notions of popular sovereignty and organic nationalism entered into the Irish debate. Nonetheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, the link between Catholicism and Irishness was firmly established and actually acknowledged by both sides. On the other hand, it must be admitted that very little scholarly attention has been dedicated to the examination of the influence of Protestant theology on the Irish way of thinking about community and state.

[4] John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, (London: Fontana Press, 1994) 42-3, 68.

Ataturk or indeed O'Connell – often began their career as "universalists, uprooted from their tradition" and dedicated to the task of building a new society and state on rational basis, even if it involved crushing native traditions, as long as they were considered an impediment to progress.[5] From this perspective, religion can be viewed as nothing else but a starting point of the evolution of nationalism, one of the central features of the "old world" that nationalism seeks to replace in the wider – and inevitable - process of the transfer from tradition to modernity.[6] As Roger Brubaker puts it, "(L)ong dominant modernizationist arguments, emphasizing socioeconomic modernity, political modernity, or cultural modernity, neglected religion or saw it as being replaced by nationalism".[7] Nationalism either emerged in the wake of the "decline of religion", or even as an antithesis to it.[8]

The idea of nationalism *replacing* Christianity in modern Europe remains the basic paradigm of the social sciences until this day. The prevailing scholarly orthodoxy views nationalism as an essentially modern phenomenon, acquiring its shape in the subsequent series of revolutions – in England, in the United States and, most importantly, France. Hans Kohn (1955) states that "nationalism as we understand it is not older than the second half of the eighteenth century" and Elie Kedourie classifies it as "an outgrowth of Enlightenment". Among the factors that enabled the development of nationalism, secularizing processes are highlighted as just as important as the socio-political ones (the idea of popular sovereignty and universal citizenship). As Kohn claims, "the aspect of the universe and of society had to be secularized" in order for nationalism to appear on the stage.[9]

Nevertheless, Michelet's image of the fatherland as having the capacity to sooth the sense of nothingness ("immensurable abyss") in the human soul resulting from the abandonment of the stable universe of Christianity, points to something quite different from the common discourses searching the foundation of nationalism solely in the Enlightenment rationalism and in the ideas of popular sovereignty and citizenship. It opens space for a re-examination of the complex dialectics connecting the two systems. Following Brubaker we may suggest that "secularist bias in the study of nationalism, like the secularist bias in many other domains of social science, long obscured interesting connections and affinities".[10]

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[5] Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, 44.
[6] Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 9.
[7] Roger Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism. Four Approaches", *Nations and Nationalisms* 18.1 (2012): 15.
[8] Brubaker, 8.
[9] Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism. A Study in Its Origins and Background*, (New York: Collier Books, 1944) 3; Smith, *Chosen People*, 9;
[10] Brubacker, 15.

Michelet's proclamation evokes the notion of teleological affinity between religion and nationalism: both answer to similar existential and spiritual needs of humanity. Emile Durkheim on the one hand acknowledges the importance of the popular emancipation to the birth of nationalism, yet on the other hand he was the first one to suggest, with a certain degree of irony, that the definition of nationalism should contain religious imagery – "nationalism is the people worshipping themselves".[11] Benedict Anderson in his classic *Imagined Communities* (1983) defines this need as the ability to transform "fatality into continuity". Contrary to the political ideologies such as liberalism or communism, both religion and nationalism are concerned with "death and immortality", forming a meaningful frame of existence, linking "the dead and the yet unborn" by means of "the language of continuity" and of "the mystery of regeneration".[12] In *Chosen People,* which remains the most comprehensive recent summary of the topic, Anthony D. Smith suggests that "markers" most commonly listed among the grounds of nationality, such as ethnicity or language, "cannot actually generate […] deep attachments and passions" associated with nationalism, fail to explain "the longevity of national identities" and their ability to "create, and recreate, that enthusiasm and unity of will" that a particular community requires for its survival through history. According to Smith, such a foundation was and still is provided "by the sense of the sacred and the binding commitments of religion".[13]

Nationalism thus cannot be classified merely as a replacement of Christianity but it should be rather understood as its *surrogate*, which, although secularized and primarily political, retains the fundamental features of an all-embracing belief system and answers to similar basic communal and spiritual needs. An extreme example of such a relation may be found in case of the Jacobin France with its attempts to eradicate Christianity that assumed a distinctly religious quality, "taking over some of the forms and functions of religion".[14] Smith sums up this view in the following way:

> Nationalism […] substituted the nation for the deity, the citizen body for the church and the political kingdom for the kingdom of God, but in every other respect replicated the forms and qualities of traditional religions.[15]

From the functional point of view, the nationalist movement thus "takes up the place of the church, and posterity becomes the new version of immortality in place of the after-life". We are

[11] Quoted in: Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* 1-2.
[12] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991) 11.
[13] Smith, *Chosen Peoples,* 5.
[14] Brubaker, 8.
[15] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism. A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, (London: Routledge, 1998) 98.

confronted with "a new religion of the people", which, just as the old religions, has at its heart "the cult and the faith".[16]

In Smith's argument, the relation of simple substitution, of nationalism dethroning religion, attains a much more complex character. Nationalism, understood as "the new religion of the people", at once copies and parallels the "old" belief systems, drawing much of its content from their key elements, even if reinterpreting them; and competes with traditional religion for the primacy in the heart of the people.[17] It simultaneously "grew out of, and often against" traditional religions, yet – most importantly – "never really supplanted them" totally.[18] David Martin, writing from a different perspective of religion studies, reaches the same conclusion, criticizing the oversimplified view that in the conditions of "industrial modernity", religion "morphed into nationalism without any remainder." [19] Instead of a simple transition, in the relation between nationalism and religion we are rather confronted with an immensely complex net of relations of inspiration, re-interpretation, intertwining and conflict which resists any universal definition.

2.2. Uses of religion

In recent scholarship, that has abandoned the oversimplifying secularizing narrative of Kedourie and Kohn, we may distinguish three roles that are ascribed to religion in the development of nationalism: 1) religion as a "crucial ingredient" of the development of nationalism, 2) religion as a marker of national identity and finally 3) religion as a reservoir of mythical structures and symbols employed in the service of the nation.

From what can be called a chronological perspective (1), religion is viewed as one of the crucial triggering factors in the growth of nationalism. Adrian Hastings argues for the key-role of religion in the process. More specifically, he claims that "the nation and nationalism are both […] characteristically Christian things".[20] He points to the significance of the Old Testament, with its image of the "chosen people", for the formation of the Protestant English and Dutch national consciousness that long predated the French Revolution. As Hastings sums up, the Bible

> […] provided for the Christian world at least, the original model of the nation. Without it and its Christian interpretation and implementation, it is arguable that nations and nationalisms as, we know them, could never have existed. […]

[16] Smith, *Chosen People*, 26, 42, 28.
[17] Smith, *Chosen People*, 42
[18] Smith, *Chosen People*, 5.
[19] David Martin, "Nationalism and Religion; Collective Identity and Choice", *Nations and Nationalisms* 20.1 (2014): 3.
[20] Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 86.

> Biblical Christianity both undergirds the cultural and political world out of which the phenomena of nationhood and nationalism as a whole developed and in a number of important cases provided a crucial ingredient for the particular history of both nations and nationalisms.“[21]

In the words of Rogers Brubaker, “nationalism centrally involves a distinctive organization of sameness and difference”.[22] In particular historical situations, religious creed may provide one of the marks of such a differentiation from others, thus persevering not only as a triggering factor in the growth of nationalism but also as a crucial element of national identity. Most obviously such a situation occurs in the rare cases of “the coincidence of religious and national boundaries” (Jewish, Armenian, Sikh nationalism). More often, however, religion that extends beyond the borders of a particular community becomes “the primary diacritical marker” on which a particular national identity and its sense of differentiation is based.[23] In the cases of the long-term conflicts between neighbouring communities of different creeds or of the struggles for national emancipation with religious undertones, the national and religious identity may become almost indivisible. Such a conceptualization of the conflict sharpens the division between “us” and “them” and widens the moral gap separating the two sides. Bearing in mind such examples as Ireland or Poland, Adrian Hastings argues:

> Whenever a people feels threatened in its distinct existence by the advance of the power committed to another religion, the political conflict is likely to have superimposed upon it a sense of religious conflict, almost crusade, so that national identity becomes fused with religious identity.[24]

According to David Martin, in those countries religion “acted as a benign midwife at the birth of the nation”.[25] Nevertheless, as Brubaker stresses, even if nationalism deploys religious symbolism, emphasizes religious traditions or even makes “religious affiliation a criterion of full membership in the nation”, it remains a dominant factor in this relation. Religion is not replaced by the “new

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[21] Hastings 4. Scholars such as Benedict Anderson or Liah Greenfeld also acknowledge the significance of religion for the emergence and initial growth of nationalism, most often in connection with the early modern changes brought about by the Reformation, such as the focus on the vernacular, spreading of print and literacy generated by the Protestant attitude to the Bible, and the general process of cultural homogenization of states triggered by *cuius regio eius religio* principle. At the same time, the vital link between the two is asserted only in relation to the earliest period of the evolution of nationalism. As Greenfeld writes about the Post-Revolutionary England, “the religious idiom in which initially the national ideals had been expressed was soon cast away”.. Religion served “as a lubricator” that prepared the “growth of the English national consciousness”, yet it was quickly “pushed aside when national identity became established and the need for justification diminished” (Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity* [New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1993] 77).

[22] Brubaker, 8.

[23] Brubaker, 9.

[24] Hastings, 190.

[25] Martin, 2.

religion" of nationalism in the inevitable dialectics of progress from tradition to modernity. On the contrary, the intensity of religious emotions remains on its highest and countries such as Ireland or Poland are from the sociological point of view taken as examples of states most resistant to secularization. On the other hand, religion is employed as a political and cultural marker of differentiation, but not because of its content. It is appropriated as an element of the discourse of the nationalist belief-system.[26] As David Stevens has it: nationalism "often interacts with traditional religion, but it is the nation which is transcendent" in this relation.[27]

Finally, the third perspective from which the relations between two phenomena are most commonly studied is the persistent use of religious rhetoric and symbolic structures in the discourse of nationalist movements. Anthony D. Smith lists four mythical narratives, the "sacred foundations" on which national identity is built and through which the relation between nationalism and religion is kept vital. These are (1) the myth of divine election for a particular "covenant or mission", (2) the concept of the nation as a "sacred communion" bound to a "sacred homeland", (3) the myth of paradise (the vision of history conceptualized as a struggle to re-establish the mythical "golden age" of the nation and thus to return to the sacred sources of its authentic being), and finally (4) the belief in the regenerative power of sacrifice which ensures the existence of the nation that is sustained through various commemorative practices and rites. Constant replication of those narratives provides means to maintain the bond of the community: "a process […] often derived from, if not consciously modelled on, the processes of sanctification which characterized earlier religious traditions."[28]

The structural borrowings that underline the nationalist belief-system have been of crucial importance throughout the modern history. The intertwining with religion is thus not only one of the factors generating the rise of nationalism or one of the means of differentiation of a particular nation from the other. It lies in the core of nationalism. Even in the modern times, as Smith observes, the "clear religious aura" is "rarely absent".[29] Its visibility may differ: from the radical versions of millenarian "political religion" as in case of Jacobin France, to the stable monarchical regimes of the nineteenth century which nonetheless employed rituals of commemoration and related narratives of sacrifice and salvation. As Smith points out, even the "republican nations", that derive their ethos from the French tradition, retain at their core "a secular doctrine with

[26] Brubaker, 12-13, 16-17.
[27] David Stevens, "Nationalism as Religion", *Studies,* vol. 86. 343 (Autumn 1997): 252.
[28] Smith, *Chosen People*, 255.
[29] Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations. Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (London: Blackwell, 2008) 39-40.

religious practice" and position the nation as object of worship and veneration, although they seemingly appeal to the traditions of rationalism and Enlightenment.[30]

The workings of this process of transposition of rhetoric and structure from one realm to another have been so far most thoroughly studied by George L. Mosse. Analysing the evolution of German nationalism and its process of gradual "nationalization of the masses", Mosse claims that "nationalism, which at its beginning coincided with romanticism, made symbols the essence of its style of politics". The keyword of the process was "sacred" and its driving force was "the urge […] to transform the political into the religious". "Nationalization" emerges not by means of abstract formulae such as "common citizenship" but rather through the creation of a new type of politics, based on "national mystique" – "rites and festivals, myths and symbols" which have been derived from and preserved their ties with Christianity. Religious symbolism underwent a radical secularization as well as intertwining with the elements of the "re-created" pagan tradition of Germanic tribes, yet retained its unquestionably Christian character until the arrival of National Socialism.[31]

Apart from the adoption of "formal" features of religious worship – modelling the religion of the people on the rites and rituals of liturgy, the appropriation of the "content" of the religious symbolism followed. A central role, just as in the Christian narrative, was given to the motif of sacrificial death. Discussing the dawn of nationalism in Europe, Anthony D. Smith mentions two late eighteenth-century paintings, David's *Marat assassiné* and Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe,* that can provide a symbolic visualization of this process. Both present the national hero in the moment of death and both do so alluding inconspicuously to the convention of *Pietà.* The crucial narrative of Christianity is thus transposed to the national and secular level, at the same time retaining the aura of sacredness associated with the original narrative of salvation-through-suffering.[32] In its extreme Romantic form, the exploration of the sacrificial myth of Christianity gave rise to the discourse of National Messianism, "borrowing" not only the very motif of the regenerative sacrifice but providing it with a new collective interpretation and an eschatological meaning. Mosse analyses the shaping of the cult of the Fallen Soldier during and after the Great War, suffused completely with the imagery of Christ's Passion and with the notion of the redemptive power of sacrifice.[33] Similarly, John Hutchinson claims that the "cult of sacrifice" plays a central role in the process of the national *bildung* – the immersion of an

[30] Smith, *Cultural Foundations*, 147.
[31] 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) 2-7, 50.
[32] Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, X-XI.
[33] George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 35.

individual into the new type of moral community.[34] The image of Passion thus hovers both over the beginnings of nationalism and its culmination in the time of the Great War.

2.3. Catholicism and Nationalism

Formulating his theory of Polish Catholic Nationalism in the 1930s, Fr. Józef M. Bocheński[35] pointed out that at the first sight, Christianity and nationalism were in total opposition. The Christian doctrine is deeply individualistic, concerned with personal, rather than collective salvation, and at the same time essentially universalistic, transcending ethnic and linguistic, just as social and gender, boundaries: "here is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3, 28). Catholicism, moreover, preaches the superiority of the intrinsically cosmopolitan community of believers above all particular human communities, including nations, and in its rituals it prefers a universal "sacred language" over the vernacular.[36]

Accordingly, Christianity remained for the first 1,500 years of its existence a specifically anti-nationalist belief-system.[37] After the initial phase, marked by the rejection of the political sphere as such, it had been adapted by Eusebius to the ethos of the Roman Empire and later found its most consistent socio-political expression in the idea of the medieval *Christianitas*. The end of the concept of the universal Christian Empire and the rise of sovereign kingdoms in the late Middle Ages, followed by the Reformation, provided a background for the evolution of nation-states and concomitant national identities. As has already been mentioned, to a considerable number of scholars the emergence of the first, fully formed modern nations – England and the Netherlands – is linked with the end of the monolithically Catholic Europe.

If Reformation has been generally taken as a stimulus for a rise of the modern national identities, the relation between Roman Catholicism (in the sense of the institutionalized Church) and nationalism in the following centuries remained much more complex. Relying still on the universal language (Latin) and on the universal primacy of the Pope, Catholicism could be viewed as an obstacle to the formation of national consciousness, even if early modern Europe witnessed several examples of "Catholic national ideologies" – mixing religious zeal with a sense of special national election, such as Spain that thought itself endowed with the mission of

[34] John Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, (London: Sage Publications, 2005) 59.
[35] Józef Maria Bocheński (1902-1995) was a Polish Dominican, philosopher and logician. After 1945, he worked at the University of Freiburg. In the pre-war period he was known for his Thomistic apology of nationalism. Later he gained reputation as an analytical philosopher and critic of Marxism.
[36] Józef Bocheński, *Szkice o nacjonalizmie i katolicyzmie polskim*, (Warszawa: Antyk, 2006 – first published in 1938) 84-85.
[37] The theological grounds for Christian rejection of any kind of nationalism, based both on the New Testament and on the early Church Fathers, are most consistently formulated in Eric Peterson's essays such as "The Angles of Nations".

evangelization of the newly discovered continents, or the Polish *Res Publica* that perceived itself as *Antemurale Christianitatis* – the protective wall of Christiandom. The first fully fledged nationalist ideology – based on the sacralization of the sovereign people – appeared in the form of the fiercely anti-Catholic French Revolution, and as such encountered a strong opposition from the Catholic Church. Contesting the idea of popular sovereignty (as opposed to the authority derived from God) and of the revolutionary change in the name of national self-determination (as opposed to the notion of social and political stability), the Church became one of the main antagonists of nationalist movements.

The development of the relations of nationalism to Catholicism in the countries with a Catholic majority, from France, Italy and Spain to Ireland and Poland, can be divided into several phases.[38] The republican (French) variety of civic nationalism – rooted in the philosophy of the Enlightenment – attempted to supplement the "dark superstitions" of traditional religion with the new secular creed of Reason, positing itself as a direct opponent of the Church. In contrast, the next generation, arising from a Romantic background, draws a deep inspiration from the Catholic aesthetics and theology. Religion is employed as a reservoir of myths and symbols. The primacy of history over philosophy and the search for the authentic roots of the nation naturally presupposed an incorporation of the tradition intimately connected with the community's past. This issue gained particular significance in countries such as Poland where intellectuals attempted to reconcile a radical revolutionary project of national liberation with religious vocabulary and theological precepts. The upheaval of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars brought about a "general messianistic atmosphere across Europe", with "expectation of universal regeneration" articulated in the language borrowed from the Book of Revelation and loaded with theological images and motifs, the most prominent idea being that the redemptive power of sacrifice opens a way leading through sufferings to the new terrestrial paradise. At the same time, the universalist elements in the Romantic messianism were concomitant with exaltation of specific national communities conceived as bearers of the messianic mission, in analogy to the biblical motif of the "elected nation".[39] National messianisms that swept across Europe after 1815 were, nevertheless, swiftly condemned by the Church as new incarnations of the ancient millenarian heresy, with its belief in the "imminent, this-worldly and collective salvation".[40] In this generation, a common attitude consisted in the opposition to the institutionalized Church paired with exaltation of

[38] On the subject of periodization and typology of Catholicism-nationalism relations, I am indebted to an essay by Adam Wielomski, "Nacjonalizm i katolicyzm. Pozycje i pojęcia od Piusa VI do Jana Pawła II", *Konserwatyzm*, 12.09.2014.
[39] Jacob Talmon, *Political Messianism. The Romantic Phase*, (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1961) 15; Andrzej Walicki, *Filozofia a mesjanizm*, (Warszawa: PIW, 1970) 16.
[40] Walicki, *Filozofia a mesjanizm*, 10.

uncorrupted spirituality, of the faith of "poets and peasants". Finally, nationalists of the third generation, roughly in the second half of the 19th century, influenced by Spencer and Darwin, adopted a more functional attitude to Catholicism. Although often agnostic in personal beliefs, the leaders of national movements acknowledged the role of religion as a social pivot and guardian of national past and attempted to incorporate it into their ideology, so that it would not provide an obstacle to the goal of unification and modernization of the community, which would give the nation an advantage in the Darwinian struggle for survival.[41]

After outlining the apparent incompatibility of Catholicism and nationalism, Fr. Bocheński declares such a view completely misguided. According to him, for a member of a Catholic nation nationalism is not only a possible option but even a moral necessity.[42] What had changed between the mid-nineteenth century and the 1930s when Bocheński's treatise was written? A space for a potential alliance between nationalism and (doctrinal and cultural) Catholicism had been emerging only gradually. The grounds for mutual accommodation were prepared in the broader context of the Catholic devotional and socio-political renaissance of the last decades of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century. After a long period of defensive struggle and decline, the Church launched a *re-conquista*, characterized by the return of "self-confident optimism", "new assertiveness and energy" with which Catholics practiced their religion both in terms of devotional engagement and in the realm of social and political participation.[43] Instead of disappearing from the social map of modern nations as the first generations of nationalists had expected, Catholicism seemed to strengthen its grip over various strata of society and continued to be a stable and vital element of national life throughout Western Europe. On the intellectual level, the fusion was prepared by the new Catholic social teaching, formulated by subsequent popes from Leo XIII, attempting to find a "middle way" between the extremities of the liberal individualism and communist collectivism. Up to that point, modernity was viewed as decidedly anti-Catholic and Catholicism as decidedly anti-modern. The new generation of Catholic intellectuals, definitely abandoned the hope for a restoration of *ancien régime* and decided to enter into a debate with the dominant strands of modernity, this time not only in order to cast anathemas but rather to formulate an alternative.[44]

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[41] The chronology here may be of course slightly misleading: for example the French republican mode of relations between nationalism and Catholicism remained a standard feature in the Romance countries for the whole century (with Spanish and Italian nationalism following the French path of violent confrontation with the Church). The outlined types serve here as ideal models, both in the thematic and chronological sense.

[42] Bocheński, 87-90.

[43] Martin Conway, "Introduction", *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918 – 1965*, eds. Martin Conway and Tom Buchanan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 5-6.

[44] As Martin Conway puts it, "the vestiges of nineteenth century Catholic hostility towards the political process gave way to efforts to articulate a distinctly Catholic form of politics" (Conway, 2).

At the same time, the atmosphere prevailing within a great part of nationalist circles of the *fin de siècle* combined the rejection of the dominant form of mechanized and disenchanted modernity with nostalgia for the primeval, heroic past that resulted in a vehement search for "another modernity". Long rejected religion could in turn be viewed as a guardian of national tradition and as a repository of aesthetic and heroic models.

The transformation of nationalist attitudes towards religion can be demonstrated on the biographies of the founding fathers of the French and Polish nationalist mass movements of the early twentieth century, Charles Maurras and Roman Dmowski. Both entered the public life as "Spenserians" and agnostics. Although they both carefully avoided attacking the Catholic faith professed by the majority of their fellow-citizens, they at the same time struggled to divide national and religious loyalties in a clear manner. In Dmowski's early writings, we read that "the relations between individual and nation as well as between the nations lay outside the sphere of Christian ethics". At the end of his career, in the late 1920s, he acknowledged the new era of Catholic nationalism: "Catholicism is not an additional element of Polishness, its particular colouring, but partakes in its essence […] To attempt to tear apart Catholicism from Polishness, the nation from the Church and religion, is coeval with attempting to destroy the nation as such." In a similar vein, Maurras acknowledged that "Catholicism and patriotism, Catholicism and French civilization […] are naturally linked and gravitate toward each other."[45]

What remained an acknowledged necessity to the founding fathers, raised to the status of dogma for their younger followers and successors. The fusion between nationalism and Catholicism gained its definite form in the rise of the so-called "political Catholicism", one of the central, if often overlooked, political phenomena of interwar Europe, from Portugal and Spain to Ireland and Poland. In those individual countries, the discourse of nationalism had been gradually connected with the newly formulated social teaching of the Church. Nationalism not only reconciled itself with the Church but became the major ally of Catholicism in its struggle against liberal individualism and communist collectivism. As Jacek Bartyzel points out, whereas for most of the nineteenth century Catholicism found its political representation in the defensive ideology of Counter-Revolution, in the first half of the twentieth century it came to articulate itself through the "integral nationalism".[46]

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[45] Roman Bartyzel, *Umierać, ale powoli. O monarchistycznej i katolickiej kontrrewolucji w krajach romańskich 1815 – 2000*, (Kraków: Arcana, 2002) 647. It is interesting to look at key-dates of the integral nationalism and their coincidence with Pearse's life-span: Roman Dmowski published a pamphlet entitled *Our Nationalism* in 1893, Action Francaise was founded in 1899 and Enrico Corradini's Asociazione Nationalista Italiana emerged in 1910.
[46] Bartyzel, 14-15.

How was it possible, though, that those strictly opposed systems attained such a deep level of cooperation? The most general answer has been provided by Carl Schmitt in his seminal essay *Roman Catholicism and the Political Form*. Schmitt defines the essence of the theological, social and political existence of the Catholic Church as "*complexio oppositorum*" – an ability to incorporate seemingly antithetical elements. Significantly, it is in his explication of *complexio* that Schmitt invokes for the first time the name of Patrick Pearse. He pairs Pearse's egalitarian and revolutionary nationalism with ultra-conservative authoritarian thought of the Spanish prophet of counter-revolution, Donoso Cortes. According to Schmitt, due to the almost infinite flexibility of Catholicism, both attitudes are perfectly accommodative within the teaching of the Church.[47] Schmitt's slightly cynical assertion was followed by more theological responses. In his already quoted pamphlet "On Polish Nationalism", Bocheński defines the Catholic variety of the nationalist idea as rejecting biological, racial concepts of the nation and introducing in its stead an ethical, cultural and historical paradigm derived from Thomistic philosophy.[48] A nation is a set of unique memories and, most importantly, a set of values to be protected and fought for. In the period roughly coinciding with Pearse's public career and in the years that followed, religion was no longer viewed by nationalists as mere "historical colouring" but formed an essence of national identity.

2.4. The Irish Case

Writing about the relations between Catholicism and nationalism in Poland, Brian Porter-Szucs claims in his recent study that nowadays "on the certain level of abstraction every study of modern nationalism must take religion into account", whether in terms of a symbiosis between national movements and religious institutions or in terms of "the symbolic vocabulary appropriated by nationalist politicians". Nonetheless, he suggests that in the case of Poland this relation runs even deeper. In the Polish nationalist meta-narrative, summarized by Dmowski's statement quoted above, the Church acquires a "central role in the preservation of national identity and in the struggle for independence".[49]

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[47] Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and the Political Form*, transl. G.L. Ulmen, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996) 7.

[48] A similar description of a nation as born out of cultural and moral bonds surfaces prominently in the historical writings of Eoin MacNeill. *ACS* for example relates his speech from the Belfast Colaiste Chomhghill where he distinguished race and nationality as two distinct categories, the latter belonging "to rational and spiritual men, to the sphere of mind", expressing itself through "the chief embodiment of mind, namely, the spoken and written word" (*ACS*, 5 October 1909). For anti-racial nature of Catholic Irish nationalism see e.g. John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: the Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987) 124; Richard Vincent Comerford, Ireland. Inventing the Nation, (London: Arnold, 2003) 73-4.

[49] Brian Porter-Szucs, *Faith and Fatherland. Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 7.

Irish nationalism at the turn of the century viewed this relation in very similar terms. Five years after Dmowski's statement, in 1909, Fr. J.M. O'Reilly claimed that "other people may have a country without having a religion, or may have some little religion without having a country. But [the Irish] must have the two in one or […] will have neither of them".[50] As in other communities where Catholicism was one of the major markers of differentiation, the connection between ethnicity and religion was obvious to observers long before the emergence of the modern phenomenon of nationalism. According to Richard English, "politics and religion became decisively interwoven" as early as during the Tudor period.[51] The historical moment when this connection became visible for the first time coincides with the destruction of the traditional Gaelic social and political order in the seventeenth and in the eighteenth century and with the simultaneous transformation of the conflict between English and Gaelic lords into the religious conflict between Protestant English colonizers and Catholic natives. As Adrian Hastings points out, this re-drawing of the divisive lines led to the definite assimilation of Gaelic and Old English into a single nation, defined by its loyalty towards Rome and defiance of the religion brought about by the "New English".[52] Already this confederate "1640 proto-nation" was, as Richard English notices, "emphatically a Catholic one": "not ethnically homogenous" but "united in its Catholicism".[53] Similarly Owen Dudley Edwards points out that it was religion that provided the Irish resistance against foreign occupation with "a degree of unity hitherto absent from the political sphere".[54] Finally, Joep Leerssen's modern classic *Mere Irish or Fíor-Ghael* demonstrates, using rich textual material, the process of interweaving of the religious and ethnic identities in the period of the decline of the Gaelic order symbolized by such intellectuals as Geoffrey Keating – deeply rooted in both Gaelic and Counter-Reformation culture.[55] It must be added, following Kevin Collins, out of this alliance of "bards and priests", only the latter survived the apocalypse of the Gaelic world. It was their vision of Irishness that proved flexible enough to accommodate itself to the new, predominately peasant Irish society.[56]

Of course it is important not to equal this "Gaelic – Catholic" identity, linked politically to the cause of the dethroned Stuarts (Jacobitism), with the modern sense of nationhood.[57] Especially after the religious distinction had merged with a social one and the majority of

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[50] Quoted in: Collins, 27.
[51] English, *Irish Freedom*, 53.
[52] Hastings, 80.
[53] English, *Irish Freedom*, 62-4.
[54] Owen Dudley Edwards, Gwynfor Evans, Ioan Rhys, Hugh McDiarmuid, *Celtic Nationalism*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) 39.
[55] Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael. Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth Century*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996).
[56] Collins, 11-12, 14.
[57] Leerssen, *Mere Irish*…, 381.

Catholics became a segregated underclass, the myth of belonging was converted, in John Hutchinson words, into an "ethnic millenarian consciousness formed amongst peasantry, focused on the restoration of the Catholic Church and of the traditional landed order".[58] The fact that the main bearer of this ethos a pauperized peasant class resulted in its prevailingly local character and concentration on redressing practical grievances, but it at the same time guaranteed its survival long into the nineteenth century. It was this ethos that shaped the upheaval of 1798, despite the fact that the leadership of the rebellion consisted mainly of the French-styled republicans of Presbyterian origins. Similarly, the first modern mass political movement in Ireland formed by Daniel O'Connell was to a large extent drawing its energy from that millenarian consciousness,[59] despite the fact that its leader himself must be regarded as a typical example of a "political nationalist-modernizer" as defined by Hutchinson. Significantly, O'Connell managed to transpose this ethos from the local to the national level and to unite for the first time the majority of Irish society around the goal of Catholic emancipation. The residua of the Jacobite millenarian peasant ethos may be discerned in the mechanisms of the Land War and, as Róisín Ní Ghairbhí points out, they survived, especially among the Irish-speaking population, for long enough to provide one of the major influences on the formation of Patrick Pearse' mind-set.[60]

As has already been mentioned, the 1798 rebellion symbolizes the first meeting point between the old and the new discourse of Irish distinctiveness. Modern nationalism in its Irish variety emerges in the "Creole" environment of the Protestant (mainly Presbyterian, or more generally "Dissenter") "Anglo-Irish" elite, inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment. The members of Ascendency formulated for the first time the concepts of popular and national sovereignty in modern vocabulary. The introduction of the Romantic, Herderian strain of nationalist thought into the Irish context was to a great extent also the work of the cultural activists with an Ascendency background, mainly Thomas Davis. Irish history of the nineteenth century may be read as a story of many – mostly unsuccessful – attempts to create a fusion of those two traditions.

Irish nationalism is most commonly classified according to the means the particular groups were willing to use in order to achieve the goal of some degree of national autonomy. Wolfe Tone, the leader of the United Irishmen and of the 1798 rebellion, is generally considered the founder of the revolutionary tradition, pursuing the goal of full political independence, if

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[58] Hutchinson, "Irish Nationalism", *The Making of Modern Irish History*, 113; See also: Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981) where he argues for a simultaneously "apolitical", "local" and "millenarian" character of Irish popular secret societies (pp. 34-5, 46).
[59] cf. O'Farrell, "Millenialism, Messianism…", 57.
[60] Róisín Ní Ghairbhí, "A People that did not Exist?" 166-170.

necessary achieved by violent means. Daniel O'Connell may be taken as the first leader of constitutional nationalism, pursuing Irish autonomy within the legal framework of the British political system (although often on the very edge of it). Finally, Thomas Davis may be described as the founding father of the "Romantic" (A.J. Ward) or "cultural" (Hutchinson) nationalism that gives priority to the cultural and moral regeneration of the national community.[61] Significantly, all these three currents in the nineteenth-century Irish public discourse follow the same pattern as their attitude towards religion and relations with the ecclesiastical elites of the Catholic Church in Ireland were concerned. Even if founded by non-Catholics and sometimes professing a non-denominational or even an anti-clerical attitude, each of them, in order to attain a position on a national level, gradually had to consider how to accommodate the prevailing religious sentiments of the community and the institutionalized Catholic Church as such. It was Parnell's alliance with the clergy in the years of the Land War that enabled the Irish Parliamentary Party to rise to the position of the representative of the majority of the Irish public opinion.[62] Similarly, Irish cultural nationalism, as articulated in 1892 by the Protestant Douglas Hyde (and drawing its founding impulse from the writings of another member of the Ascendency, Standish O'Grady), was steadily evolving – despite Hyde's own moderate political views – towards the ideology of the so-called Irish-Irelandism, which defined Irishness in exclusively Gaelic and Catholic terms. Finally, according to most historians, the relative marginalization of the revolutionary tradition is to be ascribed to the sustained opposition of the Catholic hierarchy towards any kind of radical secret societies. In spite of repeated condemnations of the Irish Republican Brotherhood by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Fenian movement at some periods presented itself as vociferously *anticlerical*, yet never *anti-religious*, as was the case of other secret revolutionary movements throughout Europe. Fenians, on the contrary, refrained from contesting the essentially "confessional content of Irish nationalism."[63]

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[61] See for example: Alan J. Ward, *Easter Rising: Revolution and Irish Nationalism*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003). Those "currents" in Irish nationalism did not develop in a complete separation from each other. They should be understood rather as trends, not as distinct ideological systems. Authors associated with "cultural nationalism" commonly avoided direct political engagement and "cultural" movements such as the Gaelic League aggregated individuals with various personal and political reasons. The path taken by Michael Davitt – a Fenian revolutionary who turned into a leader of agrarian disturbances and then became parliamentary politician – is exemplary in terms of mutual interweaving of those three "ideal" types.

[62] Cf. Emmet Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism*, (New York: Arno Press, 1976), chapter "Church, State and Nation in Modern Ireland".

[63] Newsinger "I Bring Not Peace But a Sword" 610; John Newsinger, "Revolution and Catholicism in Ireland, 1848 – 1923", *European Studies Review* 9.4 (1979): 457-8. George Zimmermann confirms this Irish paradox also on the example of the Irish street ballads: "this almost total absence of anti-clerical feeling in Irish popular literature is in itself significant; it distinguishes Irish rebel ballads from the revolutionary songs of many European countries. In Ireland the Catholic Church was not identified with the enemies of the people. The general tendency was to hope that the local priest would accept a favoured role in the national movement […] When the Church opposed some of the nationalist tendencies, those who did not accept guidance in such matters would just pretend not to hear"

From the very beginning, Catholicism had been an inalienable element of Irish nationalism. Nevertheless, the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed several social and cultural processes that – in contrast to the European secularizing paradigm – actually strengthen the role of religion in the national life. Firstly, the central role of Catholicism for Irish identity acquired another cultural impulse due to the process of "the progressive decline of that other badge of distinctiveness, the Irish language".[64] In Emmett Larkin's classic account, the bond between the nation and religion was accentuated by the fact that the Irish became, due to the loss of the other markers of their separate identity, "cultural migrants" in their own country and embraced Catholicism as the single remnant of their distinctiveness. Religion "provided the Irish with a substitute symbolic language and offered them a new cultural heritage with which they could identify and be identified and through which they had identified with one another".[65] In Richard English's words, the Catholic religion provided a single shared "communicative medium" that could be used for any kind of social and political mobilization.[66]

Secondly, the strengthening of the bond between nation and religion coincided with and was actually to a great extent stimulated by the modernizing processes that were transforming Irish society in the second half of the nineteenth century. According to Kevin Collins, after the Famine "the Roman Catholic Church became in Ireland an advocate and initiator of modernization".[67] Just as all over Europe, modernization – was simultaneous with "nationalization", i.e. with a process of forming a unified "imagined community". Most historians in the past concentrated on the fact that the hierarchical Church strongly opposed all the radical political elements within the society and repeatedly opted for a compromise and accommodation with the British government, concerned solely with issues of its direct interest: freedom of religious practice and maximal level of control over education. In reality, it was paradoxically the ultramontane reform conducted under the leadership of the vociferously anti-republican Paul Cardinal Cullen (1849 – 1878) that prepared grounds for the establishment of Irish nationalism as a modern mass phenomenon. It is no accident that in his classic study of "the modernization of Irish society", J. J. Lee devotes a separate chapter to Cullen.[68] Before becoming nationalized, the

(Georges Denis Zimmermann, *Songs of Irish Rebellion. Irish Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs*, 1780-1900, [Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002] 64).

[64] Eion Cassidy, "Religion and culture: the Freedom to be an Individual", *Faith and Culture in Irish Context*, ed. Eion Cassidy, (Dublin: Veritas, 1996) 57.

[65] Larkin 649.

[66] English, *Irish Freedom*, 441-2.

[67] Collins 37-44.

[68] Lee, *The Modernization of Irish Society* 43-50.

Irish society had first to become "ultramontanized".[69] Cullen's reforms prepared grounds for a mass nationalist movement by unification and centralization of the Church structure, pastoral practice and new devotional models. All future nationalist initiatives have drawn from the benefits of the organized parish system and of the new, participatory and more egalitarian model of religious observance. Simultaneously, Cullen contributed significantly to the creation of Catholic educational structures, especially the Christian Brothers' schools that on the one hand provided the opportunity for better education (and thus social advance) for the Catholic lower-middle class and on the other hand nurtured, thanks to their religiously and patriotically centred curricula, a future generation of Irish Catholic nationalists.[70]

The process of institutional strengthening of the Church was concomitant with the introduction of new pastoral and devotional models which intensified the religious life of the community. In his study on nineteenth century Ireland, Sean Connolly shows that in the pre-Famine era, in most parts of the country less than half of the population was attending Sunday mass regularly, not to mention participation in the sacraments.[71] The pre-Famine "popular religion", with its decentralized character and heterodox mixture of folk "superstitions", was gradually supplanted by a "neo-Tridentine system" and "chapel-centred" model of systematized public and private devotion.[72] The pillars of this new model of a more conscious and participatory "pious individualism" (as Michael Drumm calls it[73]) was the sacrament-oriented worship and certain devotional practices, such as the Marian cult and the cult of the Sacred Heart. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, several events heralded this new era of Irish religiosity: the rising popularity of local (Knock) and international (Lourdes) places of Marian cult (the first organized pilgrimage from Ireland to Lourdes took place in 1893), the foundation of the Apostleship of Prayer in 1887, that opened the way to the quick conquest of the island by the cult of the Sacred Heart, and finally the new wave of the temperance movement, resulting in the 1901 proclamation of The Pioneer Total Abstinence Association. As F. S. L. Lyons notices, "it is not always realized how active and ubiquitous the Catholic Church was in the generation before the First World War".[74] Patrick O'Farrell was the first one to point out the

[69] The relationship between ultramontanism and the creation of national identity among rural masses is especially well documented in case of Poland in a ground-breaking study by Michał Łuczewski *Odwieczny narod* (Toruń: WNUMK, 2012). Łuczewski described how the intensified pastoral activity, also connected to such social initiatives as the temperance movement and the cooperative movement, provided a crucial impulse for the nationalization of the peasant class.

[70] Barry M. Coldrey: *Faith and Fatherland. The Christian Brothers and the Development of Irish Nationalism*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), especially pp. 124-132.

[71] Sean Connolly, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth Century Ireland*, (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1985) 48.

[72] Patrick J. Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience. A Historical Survey*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1985) 231-4.

[73] Michael Drumm, "Irish Catholics – A People Formed by Ritual", *Faith and Culture in Irish Context*, 86-7.

[74] F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890 – 1939*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979) 79.

connection between this "religious revival" and the gradual transformation of Irish politics. Ireland in this respect prefigured a pan-European trend of the Catholic renaissance, in which the "devotional revival", marked not only by an increase in individual piety but also by the boom of various religious organizations and religiously-based activity, was later to be directed towards a more conscious and assertive entrance of Catholicism into the other spheres of the public life.[75]

To sum up, it can be argued that Ireland provides a unique case in the history of the relations between religion and nationalism. Despite the presence of certain French-fashioned republican strains, the historical conditions rendered the application of the "substitutive" model (nationalism as a modern surrogate for religion) impossible from the very beginning. The inalienable role of Catholicism in the shaping of national identity as a marker of differentiation enforced the necessity to reconcile the political programme with the sentiments of the society and the demands of the institutionalized Church on every nationalist movement. In the continental Catholic countries, the Church re-claimed its position in the social and political sphere and opted for the alliance with nationalism only after a long period of deeply defensive stance towards the processes of modernity. In Ireland it retained its central position and participated in, rather than merely opposed, the process of socio-political modernization. The Church was a crucial modifier of this process rather than a mere obstacle.

2.5. The Revival(s): Genealogy of the Revolution

In the context of the late nineteenth-century Ireland, Roman Catholicism has to be viewed on the one hand as one of the key agents of social modernization, understood as a process of creating an increasingly unified and self-conscious collective entity. On the other hand, however, it played the role of a major opponent of "modernity", identified with the specific set of values of secular nineteenth century rationalism and progressive liberalism. The crucial factor in Irish politics of the period was that such a version of modernity came to be identified in the minds of Irish Catholics with England. In this discourse, the opposition between Ireland and England was transformed into an antithesis between Tradition and Modernity, or, to put it more aptly, between spirituality associated with the Gaelic heritage and materialism linked to the Empire ruled by commercial interests and immoral instincts.[76]

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[75] O'Farrell, *Ireland's English Question*, especially pp. 180 - 206; O'Farrell, "Millenialism, Messianism and Utopianism", 57. See also Margaret MacCurtain's comments on the new Catholic self-assertiveness of post-Femine era in: Margaret MacCurtain: "Fulless of Life: Defining Female Spirituality in Twentieth Century Ireland", *Women Surviving. Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th century*, eds. Maria Luddy, Cliona Murphy, (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1989) 233-263.
[76] See for example: Maurice Goldring, *Faith of Our Fathers. The Formation of Irish Nationalist Ideology 1890 – 1920* (Dublin: Repsol, 1982), chapter 3.

As the juxtaposition between tradition and modernity was transferred from the sphere of culture to that of politics, a meeting point was created for the various revivalist movements that were to shape the future contours of Ireland. Following John Hutchinson, I define revivalism as a movement campaigning for "the moral regeneration of the national community", motivated by the belief that "a once existing nation must be recreated".[77] The above-mentioned religious revival is often omitted in scholarly accounts of the period, as they tend to focus either on the Literary Revival or on the Gaelic Revival. These three strains of revivalist activity tried to achieve the same basic objective: to articulate (or re-articulate) Irishness as a self-conscious and self-confident identity. All three shared the conviction that Irishness, as a unique set of characteristics and memories, is endangered by the influence of modernity. The Gaelic revivalist catchword of "de-anglicisation" coincided in its political consequences with the slogan "keep Ireland clean" (of impure modern influences) of the Catholic vigilantes.[78] All three saw the source of Irish uniqueness not only in the heroic past, but also in the present remnants of the old Gaelic civilisation in the rural and Irish-speaking West. Last but not least, all three also shared the already mentioned identification of modernity with materialism coming from the commercial, bourgeois and imperial Britain, as opposed to the spiritual heritage of the Gael.

At the same time, the religious, the Literary and the Gaelic strain of the revivalists activity differ considerably as to where the essence of the nation is to be found and what should be the common "communicative medium" around which and through which Ireland should be renewed. In terms of their vision of history, the Catholic narrative emphasized the myth of the golden age of the early medieval "Island of Saints and Scholars", followed by centuries of persecution and loyalty to the true faith. In contrast, Yeats' vision of the "home of ancient idealism" stressed that heroic and spiritual virtues of the community are rooted in the pre-Christian period and nowadays survive in the pantheistic mysticism of folk imagination. The Gaelic League accommodated various interpretations of the past. Generally speaking, it attempted to construct an integral vision of Irishness, inclusive to both "Celtic" and "Catholic" heritage. In terms of the communicative medium, for the Anglo-Irish revivalists, frequently coming from a Protestant background, Ireland of the future was to be speaking the Hibernian version of English, reflecting the dual – Gaelic and Anglo-Irish – roots of its society; whereas the Gaelic Revival claimed an inalienable connection between the survival of Irish as a living language and the survival of the Irish as a separate nation. Finally, the Catholic discourse treated

[77] Hutchinson, *The Dynamics*…, 9-10.
[78] See for example Lawrence McCaffrey, "Components of Irish Nationalism", *Perspectives on Irish Nationalism*, eds. T.E. Hachey, L. McCaffrey (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1989) 15.

the question of the linguistic medium functionally, subordinating it to the higher goal of preserving Catholicism as the symbolic framework of Irish existence.

The contrast between spirituality and materialism, re-formulated as an antithesis between Ireland and England, provided the revivalist tendencies with a powerful political sub-text. It is usually claimed that the period from 1892 to 1916 was characterized by a dominance of the cultural revival over the political, nationalist movements. This dogma of Irish historiography, based on and to a large extent created by Yeats's famous autobiographical comment,[79] has been deconstructed e.g. by Roy Foster who pointed to the vigorous political life of the period and to the unquestionable position of the Irish Parliamentary Party within the Irish society.[80] Yeats' statement has also been contested from an alternative perspective that stresses the fact that despite their apolitical declarations, revivalists of all hues were participating in the essentially political project.[81] Despite the considerable differences between particular strains of the revivalist activity, their discourses constituted in reality a meta-political foundation for the re-assertion of Ireland's claim to subjectivity. The aura of Irish exceptionality, combined with the sense of imminent danger hovering over the community, found a logical conclusion in the radicalization of the Irish politics.[82]

In his essay "On the Necessity of the Deanglicization of Ireland", Douglas Hyde instead of addressing the political dimension of the Irish question (union versus Home Rule), turned the attention of the Irish intellectuals towards the juxtaposition of Irishness and Englishness as different "modes of existence". Hyde's juxtaposition was re-written in a more radical manner by a journalist D. P. Moran, the main ideologue of the Irish-Ireland movement, into "the battle of Two Civilizations".[83] The Irish nationality was identified in this discourse as "Gaelic, wholly Catholic and anti-English in sentiment".[84] Moran's ideology was basically meta-political: in his vociferous critique of both constitutional and revolutionary nationalism, he repeatedly challenged the view that "politics was the begin-all and end-all of Irish Nationality".[85] In his perspective, acts

[79] According to Yeats, "the modern Irish literature, and indeed all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war, began when Parnell fell from power in 1891. A disillusioned and embittered Ireland turned from parliamentary politics; an event was conceived; and the race began, as I think, to be troubled by that event's long gestation" (quoted in Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 431).
[80] Foster, *Modern Ireland* 431-2.
[81] Matthews, *Revival*
[82] As Margaret O'Callaghan sums up, "the shape and identity of the independent Irish state was determined by the cultural debates of the years after 1891." Contrary to O'Connell's and Parnell's programme, it was not a mere search for "self-government" but a quest (political, intellectual and spiritual) "for the grail of true Irishness" (O'Callaghan, "Denis Patrick Moran and 'the colonial condition'", *Political Thought in Ireland*…, 146-156)
[83] On the relation between Hyde and Moran see Patrick Maume's "Introduction" to: D.P. Moran, *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*, ed. Patrick Maume (Dublin: UCD Press, 2006. First published in 1905) XXIV-XXV.
[84] Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* 175.
[85] Moran "The Battle of Two Civilisations", *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland* 98.

of parliament as well as failed rebellions are of no importance when compared to the meta-political fact of the decline of the Irish national identity. He asserted that the Irish Party's struggle for the Home Rule in Ireland had been rendered pointless by their concomitant assimilationist tendencies, lethal to the nation's soul.[86] What is the point of political autonomy, Moran asks in his essay "Is the Irish Nation Dying", if in the meantime "all the national life is left to bleed out of us", in which case the Irish nationalists would be "making laws for the corpse".[87] He was, however, equally resentful to the idea that "a hundred thousand English corpses with Irish bullets or pike wounds" would guarantee the nation an illustrious future.[88] He located the site of the "battle" within Ireland itself and criticized the idea of nationalist politics as mere "booing England". Nevertheless, Moran's influence was crucial in the gradual radicalization of Irish politics. As Hutchinson points out, "more than any other figure, he was responsible for broadening the language campaign" of the Gaelic Revival "into a general Irish Ireland movement" and for confirming the alliance of the religious and Gaelic Revival, thus "paving the way for the creation of an explicitly Gaelic Catholic identity".[89]

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By introducing both Gaelic and Catholic strains of revivalist activity into politics, Moran (as well as Arthur Griffith, the leader of the emerging political representation of Irish radicalism) opened the space for a presentation of the conflict between Ireland and England in terms of the holy war between the civilization of the innately pious Gaels and the infidel Empire. The combination of Gaelic and Catholic revivalist impulses, that from a social perspective formed a major popular output of the revivals, must be thus viewed as a culmination of the process of the simultaneous "ethnicization of religion" and the "sanctification of ethnicity" (in Brian Jenkins' words[90]). In the Irish case, both processes had of course a long history, dating back to the times of the Counter-Reformation. However, this time, in the atmosphere of the parallel cultural and religious revival, they were adopted and fully integrated into the socio-political structure of a modern nation. The discourse of Irish exceptionalism, based on the supposed moral superiority over England and ascribing quasi-religious, sacred qualities to such seemingly neutral elements of nationality as language, was re-articulated and the national narrative acquired a clear structure of a sacred

[86] Moran repeatedly refers to the "half-National" politics of the Irish Party and characterizes its leaders as essentially "Palesmen by adoption" ("The Pale and The Gael", *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland* 32-51).
[87] Moran, "Is the Irish Nation Dying?" *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland* 3.
[88] Moran 109.
[89] Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* 173-4. Patrick Maume quotes an anonymous contemporary comment claiming that "*The Leader* made the fighting Gaelic League curate […] and the fighting curate made the Gaelic League up and down the country" (Maume's Introduction to *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*, xii).
[90] Brian Jenkins, *Irish Nationalism and the British State. From Repeal to Revolutionary Nationalism*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006) 55.

history, which moves from the primordial golden age through the present decline to the future hope of regeneration. Such a perspective, despite the fact that both Moran and Griffith were opponents of the armed rebellion, rendered any kind of radical political action potentially justifiable. A telling example of such a radicalization may be found in the works of the most popular writer of fiction of the period and a typical Catholic and Gaelic revivalist, Canon Sheehan. His novels juxtapose the piety and ethos of the rural world with the degeneracy of "modern Babylon" – identified on the general level with the city (understood as a vehicle of modernity), and more specifically with London. From this initial position, shared with the widespread movement of Catholic vigilantes, he moved in his last novel, *Graves of Kilmorna (*1915), to the glorification of the Fenian tradition and to the ideology of patriotic self-sacrifice – so far still officially condemned by the Church authorities.[91]

It can be claimed that in the Irish context, the gradual process of mutual accommodation of religion and nationalism reached its climax at the beginning of the twentieth century in the ideology of Irish-Ireland, which produced a consistent narrative of the indivisible Irish Catholic identity. The significance of Catholicism as a major "marker" of national identity strengthened the unique position of religion within the ideological system of the nationalist movement. Compared to other European countries, the Irish situation did not allow for the possibility of nationalism explicitly replacing religion as the major value-system of the society. The power of the Catholic Church derived itself also from the fact that it had played a key role in the process of the formation of modern Irish society. Due to this fact, the increase of socio-political significance of Catholicism in Ireland preceded the wider European trends (the rise of "political Catholicism").

Towards the end of his essay "The Battle of Two Civilizations", D.P. Moran encapsulates what he perceives as the essence of the Irish endeavour in two questions: "What is Irish Nationality and what in reality do we want to see realised in Ireland?"[92] The Catholic and the Gaelic Irish Ireland seemed to agree on the answer to the first question. Nevertheless, an unresolved tension concerning the precise nature of the regeneration of Irishness was inherent in both the Gaelic and the Catholic strain of the Revival. In fact the tension concerned the relation of the Gaelic-Catholic revivalist project to the question of modernity. Did the expected regeneration consist merely in a restoration of the pre-modern mode of existence? Its prevailing vision of Ireland was aptly summarized by John Hutchison: "a unique spiritual haven of

[91] Cf. O'Farrell, *Ireland's English Question*, 230-2; Ruth Fleischmann, *Catholic Nationalism in the Irish Revival. A Study of Canon Sheehan, 1852 – 1913*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).
[92] Moran 109.

traditional folk simplicity, free from all the evils of modernity – a secular literature, alcoholism, sexual immorality, socialist agitations and materialist ideals".[93] Or should it rather pursue a synthesis of tradition and modernity – a modernisation, but conducted in an Irish manner? Both strains where present in both the Gaelic League and among the clerical and lay Catholic intellectuals. Hutchinson characterized this dualism as a rivalry between a "neo-traditionalist" and a "reformist" wing of revivalism.[94] The answer to the antithesis of tradition and modernity was provided through the discourses of European "anti-modern modernism", mediated into the Irish context mainly via the Anglo-Irish Literary Revival. Although Yeats, Gregory and Synge remained, as Kevin Collins points out, "spectators rather than participants"[95] in the creation of the Catholic Irish national ethos, they played a crucial role in bringing Ireland into a closer contact with the pan-European trends reacting against "modernity" identified with representative liberal politics and philosophical and economic rationalism. In Roger Griffin's words, in this discourse, modernity was perceived as "a trope for decadence" which results in a disenchanted world and disoriented selves. In the following chapter, I attempt to delineate Pearse's position in the debate between tradition and modernity. In my reading, Pearse aimed at fusing the impulses of the Gaelic-Catholic revivalist project with the discourse of modernism understood "as an attempted rebellion against Modernity" carried out in order to inaugurate a "new beginning".[96]

[93] Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* 140.
[94] Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* 37-39, 116-7.
[95] Collins, 23-4.
[96] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*…, 45-53. Griffin distinguishes Modernity written with capital "M" and signifying a modernist trope identified with decadence.

Chapter Three

"The Necessary Synthesis": Pearse and the Dialectics of Tradition and Modernity

Here comes the time of radical negations and sovereign assertions.[1]

Carl Schmitt

Re-writing Patrick Pearse's most famous poem "Mise Éire," Eavan Boland declares that she "won't go back to (…) old dactyls" of the traditional meta-narrative of the nation, which she characterises as a discourse "where time is time past".[2] The poem summarises the position commonly associated with Pearse.[3] In literary works ranging from Joyce's *Stephen Hero*, where a young Pearse is caricatured as a narrow-minded Gaelic fanatic (under the name of Mr. Hughes), to Boland's poem, the leader of the Easter Rising has been often described as the epitome of backward-looking cultural isolationism or as a sentimental neo-traditionalist who dreams of extending the reality of *Iar-Chonnacht* – the Irish speaking district he repeatedly visited and admired – to the whole of Ireland. Admittedly, Pearse's juxtaposition of pristine rural Conamara *Gaeltacht* about which he said "I feel that I am in Ireland [there]" and urban and anglicised Dublin, where to feel the same, in Pearse's view, "requires a more rigorous effort of imagination than I am capable of',[4] certainly seems to justify this opinion. In this respect, Boland's (popular) view reproduces Ernest Gellner's thesis referring to nationalist revivalist movements as generally driven by a "fear of modernity" which is counteracted by the escapist embracement of the relics of the past.[5]

At the same time, Philip O'Leary locates Pearse within the ideological spectrum of the Gaelic League and characterises his mature stance in the internal debate as the most

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[1] Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*. Trans. Ellen Kennedy (Boston: MIT, 1988): 69.

[2] "I won't go back to it – // my nation displaced / into old dactyls, / oaths made / by the animal tallows / of the candle – // land of the Gulf Stream, / the small farm, / the scalded memory,/ the songs / that bandage up the history, /the words / that make a rhythm of the crime // where time is time past. / A palsy of regrets." Eavan Boland, *The Journey and Other Poems* (New York: Carnacet/Arlen House, 1987) 10-11.

[3] We may add that in the psychoanalytic interpretations of authors such as Sean Farell Moran or Michael Boss, Pearse's personality is defined as "looking obsessively towards the past" in order to escape the "all-too-complex present" (Moran, *Politics of Redemption* 50).

[4] "Education in the West of Ireland," *A Significant Irish Educationalist: The Educational Writings of P. H. Pearse*, ed. Séamas Ó Buachalla (Dublin and Cork: Mercier Press, 1980) 313-316.

[5] Ernest Gellner*, Nations and Nationalism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983)* 58-62. See also: John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, 49-51. A good example of such "popular readings" of Pearse may be found in a recent statement by Pillar Villar-Argaiz: "Pearse's form of cultural nationalism attempted to create an image of an Ireland which was pastoral, mythic, and unmodernized, a new country that defined itself as 'not-English', and therefore, uncontaminated by foreign influence." Pillar Villar-Argaiz, *The Poetry of Eavan Boland: A Postcolonial Reading* (Bethseda: Academica Press, 2008) 122.

comprehensive "defense of the progressive position."[6] In an *ACS* editorial from 22 May 1909, Pearse summarizes his position poignantly: "Ní 'obscurantists' ná 'provincialists' ná 'Medievalists' Gaedhil".[7] He at once positions himself in opposition to both backward-looking traditionalism and to inward-oriented nativism. Although O'Leary stresses the fact that his use of the terms "progressives" and "nativists" is limited solely to the debate over the future of the Irish language, without any political or social connotations,[8] it is impossible to overlook Pearse's "modernist" position – not only in the debates over the future of Irish-language literature, where he vehemently opposes its antiquarian and nativist tendencies, but also in the educational issues in which he proved to be most receptive to current continental trends. A significant number of Pearse's contemporaries commenting on his artistic achievements stressed "newness" as their basic quality.[9] Consequently, in recent scholarship, Pearse's cultural nationalism earned him the title of a precursor of postcolonial theories who, in his texts, "anticipates much of the thinking associated with pre-eminent […] theorists of the second part of the twentieth century".[10] In the synthesizing view of Declan Kiberd, he even became a fellow passenger of Joyce and Beckett in the boat of Irish modernism, a seeker of an alternative way to modernity who firmly believed that tradition was not opposed to innovation, rather than a mere nostalgist.[11]

The situation changes when the perception of Pearse's political thought is considered. The tendency to evaluate his opinions as an "atavistic" and "tribal […] reversion to the primitive" (in the words of Eugene McCabe) persists, wonderfully summarised in the already quoted statement by J.W. Foster in which he juxtaposes the "progressive Pearse" of the Revival with Pearse as a prophet of the "blood sacrifice for Ireland".[12] This standpoint, however, overlooks the fact that European modernism understood itself as a revolt against the values of the rationalist liberal mode of socio-political organization, simultaneously articulating a nostalgia for the pre-modern past and expectations of an alternative modernity. Modernism is a phenomenon notoriously difficult to define due to the fact that it was "an extraordinary compound of the

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[6] Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881 – 1921* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994) 108-9.

[7] "Gaels are not 'obscurantists' nor 'provincialists' nor 'medievalists'." (Quoted in O'Leary 52).

[8] O'Leary 15.

[9] Stephen Mac Kenna's review of *Macghníomhartha Chúchulainn* may be taken as an example, stating that the performance displayed "a new form of art and a new reason for hope in the country." Stephen Mac Kenna, review of *Macghníomhartha Chúchulainn*, *An Macaomh* 1.2 (December 1909): 36-7. There are also similar comments praising the "newness" of Pearse's works such as his *Passion Play* (*An Pháis*) or his short stories.

[10] Róisín Ní Ghairbhí, "The battle before us now is a Battle of Words: Pearse and Postcolonial Theory," *The Life and After-Life of P.H. Pearse* 157. See also: Máire Ní Fhlathúin, "The anti-colonial modernism of Patrick Pearse," *Modernism and Empire*, eds. Nigel Rigby, Howard J. Booth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 156-174.

[11] Declan Kiberd, "Patrick Pearse: The Irish Modernist," *The Life and After-Life* 79; Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* 134.

[12] Eugene McCabe, "Introduction" in: Patrick Pearse, *Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta*, ed. Dermot Bolger (Dublin: New Island Book, 1993) 14; John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival* 303.

futuristic and the nihilistic, the revolutionary and the conservative, the naturalistic and the symbolistic, the romantic and the classical".[13] For a long time it had been perceived solely from an aesthetic perspective. Nevertheless, as Modris Eksteins points out, the crucial notions subsumed under this term, "avant garde and the intellectual impulses behind the quest for liberation and the act of rebellion" formed "a broad wave of sentiment and endeavour" penetrating the social and the political life as much as the sphere of art.[14] Similarly, Roger Griffin in his *Modernism and Fascism* defines modernism as a reaction to modernity whose dynamics transcended the sphere of "high" culture and shaped numerous political and social movements, ranging from anarcho-syndicalism to conservative authoritarianism.[15] The term "politics of modernism" lacks a clear definition and seems to be applied to a wide variety of often contradictory impulses from left to right and consist rather in a set of meta-political premises then in any kind of specific programme. Nonetheless, it can be understood in socio-political terms as well. It is in this broader meaning that the term "modernism" is used throughout this text.

This chapter attempts to analyse the apparent paradox of Pearse's thought in relation to the dialectics of tradition and modernity, or, to put it in broader terms, continuity and change, by positioning his writings in the theoretical context of John Hutchinson's "cultural nationalism" and Roger Griffin's wider concept of "primordial modernism." Firstly, Pearse's position within two central meta-narratives of Irish nationalism is discussed, revealing a pragmatic and creative – rather than nostalgic and antiquarian – attitude to the past, as well as a preference for a revolutionary change over the stalemate of the status quo. In the second part of the chapter, the revolutionary turn in Pearse's cultural nationalism is to be explicated by the influence of the modernist *Zeitgeist*.

3.1. Continuity and Change

In the discourse of Irish nationalism, as it developed during the nineteenth century, we may identify two central "mythical narratives": the story of a golden age and the narrative of the unbroken chain of resistance against the foreign rule. Both are concerned with the issue of temporalization of human time typical for modernity, and both participate in the dialectics of the past and the present in the re-creation of the national community.

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[13] Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (eds.), *Modernism 1890 – 1930*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) 46.
[14] Modris Eksteins, *The Rites of Spring. The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company 2000. First published 1989) xvi.
[15] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* 116-7.

As Eric Hobsbawm suggests, narrating the story of a nation consists mainly in "attempts to establish continuity with a suitable historic past".[16] Throughout his entire career, Pearse was deeply involved in constructing such a narrative of continuity. This crucial mode of Irish nationalist discourse manifests itself at the most basic rhetorical level in the recurring device of enumerating names of heroic figures such as Owen Roe O'Neill, Wolfe Tone, the Manchester Martyrs and others in order to structure the course of history as a continuous cycle of attempts to gain a sovereign status for Ireland.[17] Pearse's collection of early modern bardic poetry *The Songs of the Irish Rebels* attempts to prove an unbroken line of separatist tradition from the late Gaelic era to that of republican (and English-speaking) United Irishmen and Fenians. His final series of political essays, from "Ghosts" to "The Sovereign Nation," creates a similar sense of continuity within the history of modern Irish nationalism, from Wolfe Tone through Davis, Lalor and Mitchel to Pearse himself. Finally, the same discourse can be traced in the wording of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic from Easter Monday 1916, which starts with the invocation of "the dead generations from which [Ireland] received her old tradition of nationhood" and proceeds to the careful enumeration of the cycles of Irish history: "In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms."[18]

Characteristically, his only *literary* venture into this discourse acquires a form approaching a prayer. The poem "Mionn" (1912) takes on the structure of the Catholic litany, beginning with the invocation of God, Christ and Mary, and then turns from the universal Christian worship to

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[16] Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 1, 5.

[17] Cf. Zimmerman, *Songs of Irish Rebellion* 70. In the issue of the IRB-controlled journal *Irish Freedom* from March 1912, we may find a telling (and particularly extensive) example of the national litany on which the discourse of the continuity is based and to which Pearse's own writings refer. The text at the same time provides an example of history turned into a meaningful narrative that is conveyed simultaneously as an accusation and obligation: "We do not forget! The ancient civilization of Ireland calls out to us never to bend the knee, never accept less than all, never to cease struggling until we can take up again the entire civilization and develop it to the full. Cuchulainn and Fionn, and Feargus, Conaire Mor, Niall and Daithi, Diarmuid and Malachi, and Brian Mor; these speak to us out of the past when Ireland was independent. And out of the other years, the years that the stranger has been in the house, there comes a long company – Conor Mainmoy, and Daniel O'Neill and Brian O'Neill, who strove to unite the nation against England at the beginning, and Edward Bruce who fell at Faughart, and Felim O'Connor who fell at Athenry, fighting gallantly for Ireland, and Art Mor Mac Murchadha, poisoned at Ross, and James Fitzmaurice, first Nationalist of the Sean Gaill, and the O'Neills, Shan Mor assassinated after two unsuccessful attempts, Hugh exiled, and Eoghan poisoned, and the gallant Aodh Ruadh, poisoned, Henry Munroe, beheaded opposite to his own door, Lord Edward with half a dozen wounds, in a high fever in prison, tended by a lunatic asylum attendant, Tone with his bleeding throat, Emmett in Thomas Street, Allen, Larkin and O'Brien at Manchester – these mark out the path of Irish Nation, mark it in blood and in suffering, in courage and in endurance, defiance and resolution, and they point it irresistibly to independence – independence absolute and unchallenged!" ("Under Which Flag?", *Irish Freedom*, May 1912, 3)

[18] "The Proclamation of the Irish Republic", http://www.nli.ie/1916/pdf/1.intro.pdf As Joep Leerssen points out, the Proclamation, contrary to its American counterpart, invokes as its fundament and justification not some universal moral values but history, "trans-generational continuity" (*National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History* [Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006] 163).

the tribal, yet still perfectly orthodox figure of St. Patrick. Afterwards it follows the structure of the Litany to All Saints, this time, however, taken from the pantheon of Irish history: "Dar dúnmharú Aodha Rua, / Dar bás truamhéalach Aodha Uí Néill, / Dar oidhe Eoghain Rua, / Dar mian an tSáirséalaigh le hucht a bháis."[19] Pearse subsequently broadens the scope of reference from the unique heroic figures to the anonymous totality of the suffering nation – "Dar corpaibh an Ghorta, / Dar deoraibh deoraí nGael"[20] – and asserts the continuity of the narrative in the coda: "Do-bheirimid na mionna do-bheireadh ár sinsir."[21] The poem evokes the overall quality of Pearse's thinking. Firstly, its treatment of the national narrative is distinctively oriented towards the future, despite all its nostalgia. "Mionn" can be in this respect compared to Pearse's definition of "patriotism" from his address "Robert Emmet and the Ireland of To-Day", delivered in New York in 1914: "patriotism is in large part a memory of heroic dead men and a striving to accomplish some task left unfinished by them".[22] Secondly, "Mionn" freely combines the sacred and the secular history into a single national narrative.

The motif of rewriting Irish history as a national version of the "communion of the saints" appears to be quite common in the nationalist press of the time.[23] Where Pearse's rhetoric starts to differ from the nationalist mainstream is in the embracement of the second part of the dialectical relation – *change*. Characteristically, Pearse, who so often relies on the language of the Gospel, never quotes Christ's most famous declaration of continuity: "I haven't come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfil them" (Mt 5, 17). On the contrary, one of the quotations often invoked by Pearse to support his argument are Christ's words that herald a radical disorder brought into the world by His message: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother" (Mt 10, 34-35).[24]

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[19] "By the murder of Red Hugh / By the sad death of Hugh O'Neil / By the tragic death of Owen Roe / By the dying wish of Sarsfield." "Mionn" was first published in *An Barr Buadh*, 16 March 1912. English translation quoted according to: Edwards, *The Triumph of Failure* 161-2.

[20] "By the Famine corpses / By the tears of Irish exiles."

[21] "We swear the oaths our ancestors swore."

[22] Patrick Pearse, *Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse. Political Writings and Speeches* (Dublin: Maunsel & Roberts, 1922) 368-9. Later in the text, references to this edition are given in brackets within the text, with the abbreviation *PWS* and the page number.

[23] In a poem by Terrence MacSweeney revolving around the image of Heaven, saints and Irish heroes rejoice together at the news of the formation of the Volunteers (published in the issue of *Irish Volunteer* from 30 May 1914). In August 1914 (two years after the publication of "Mionn"), *Irish Freedom* published Adam Mickiewicz's "Litany of Polish Pilgrim" – an archetypal text of Romantic messianism, freely modifying the model of the Litany to All Saints to the narrative of the oppressed nation. It had been carefully adapted to the Irish context by the author / translator who signed himself as "Giolla Eireann" (pseudonym of Aodh de Blácam) –, but it retained the major feature of the Polish original, i.e. a complete conflation of the religious and national narrative.

[24] Cf. Pearse for example in "How Does She Stand?" (*PWS* 77).

The Master, written in 1915, is a play which exemplifies the tension between continuity and change in Pearse's thinking most prominently. Although commonly – and quite rightly – interpreted as a text revealing personal doubts about his chosen revolutionary path, it also contains several elements referring to the dialectics of continuity and change. The small community consisting of the teacher Ciaran and his pupils is repeatedly compared to the fellowship of Christ and the Apostles. Ciaran is accused by "the druids" of "overturning the ancient law of the people", just as Jesus was by the Pharisees. Arriving to face Ciaran, King Daire reproaches him for presenting a threat to social concord: "You have come into my country preaching to my people new things, incredible things, things you dare not believe yourself. I will not have this lie preached to men" (*LWPP* 83, 97).

Surprisingly to many, in *The Master*, Pearse sides with the new against the old, although Ciaran's doubts about his vocation may to some extent reflect a similar tension in Pearse's thinking. Nevertheless, in search of the answer to a very modernist question that Declan Kiberd articulates as "how to bring newness into the world",[25] Pearse shrinks from a direct revolutionary response and instead provides a Divine sanction for his argument. The conflict is solved not by Ciaran himself but by a supernatural intervention. Archangel Michael appears onstage, proving the truthfulness of Ciaran's teaching and as the king kneels before the apparition, implicitly, confirms the radical change in the socio-political order.

In this particular scene, the essence of Pearse's attitude towards the dialectics of continuity and change is revealed. Various elements, drawn either from the realm of religion or from the historical narrative of the nation, are employed in order to legitimise the goal towards which the whole ideological construction aspires. This goal is the creation of an Ireland that is "free" and "Gaelic" (to invoke Pearse's famous oration), i.e. built upon the remnants of the past ("Gaelic") yet made possible by an act of radical negation of the present reality in favour of the future.

3.2. The Golden Age

In 1904 Pearse wrote in *ACS*: "[…] we intend to build the castle of the new learning. For that purpose we must first dig until we strike the bedrock of the old learning. Then we will begin to raise the walls of the castle."[26] Such a statement might have been uttered by almost any cultural nationalist of that time in any European country. Smith sums up this seemingly backward-looking essence of many nationalist projects, claiming that "[n]ationalism […] seeks to fashion a future in

[25] Kiberd, "Patrick Pearse, the Irish Modernist", *The Life and After-Life of P. H. Pearse* 70.
[26] Quoted in: O'Leary, 108-9.

the image of the past". It is, of course, not any past but only the "authentic" and "genuine past of a people in its homeland".[27] This process necessarily requires, as Aviel Roshwald suggests, disrupting the linearity of history in order "to enclose historical epochs in parentheses" and design "mythical structures" that can serve "to bridge yawning gaps in time" and connect the present community of a nation to distant events.[28] It is no accident that nationalist movements across Europe owe a great debt to the generations of antiquarians who managed to restore the ancient past by means of creative archaeology. The myth of the golden age lies at the junction between the antiquarian research and the political movement lies and embodies the "true essence" of the community, thus providing the present with a model to refer to and aspire to.[29] Benedict Anderson describes this crucial process of the "re-discovery of glorious past" on the example of Greece, quoting Adamantis Koreas's statement about "this painful discovery" of the "distance separating it [the Greek nation] from its ancestors' glory".[30] He could also have used A.E.'s memorable reflection on the emotions stirred by his first encounter with O'Grady's Cú Chulainn: he compared himself to a "man who suddenly feels ancient memories rushing at him, and knows he was born in a royal house, that he had mixed with the mighty of heaven and earth and had the very noblest companions".[31]

"The myth of the golden age," which A. D. Smith lists among the "sacred foundations" of nationality,[32] appears in Irish nationalist discourse even before O'Grady and the revival. Its first version can be found in the Catholic version of the national meta-narrative. In his pastoral letter on St. Kevin's Day in 1866, Cardinal Cullen summarised this position as follows: "[…] the sixth century was a golden age of our early church. From north to south monasteries and convents adorned our island; […] his missionaries went forth as new apostles to stem the tide of barbarism, which had well-nigh submerged all civilization on the continent."[33] The Anglo-Irish revival brought forth a counter-myth of the Celtic, pre-Christian Ireland, but the Gaelic League – at once predominantly Catholic and oriented towards the restoration of the Gaelic past in its pagan as well as in its Christian dimension – nevertheless gradually managed to provide a common ground for both versions of the myth. Again, Pearse himself may be viewed as a catalyst of one of the most important synthetizing attempts. In his writings, he did not hesitate to pair Cú

[27] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernity* 112.
[28] Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism. Ancient Roots and Modern Dillemas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 55, 60.
[29] A.D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* 212-3.
[30] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 72.
[31] Patrick Rafroidi, "Imagination and Revolution: The Cuchulainn Myth," *Irish Culture and Nationalism, 1750 – 1950*, eds. O. MacDonagh, W.F. Mandle, P. Travers (London: Macmillan, 1983) 138-9.
[32] A.D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples,* esp. chapter 7 and 8.
[33] Kevin Collins, *Catholic Churchmen and the Celtic Revival in Ireland* 29.

Chulainn and Columcille as two equal models of virtuous life[34] and, describing his own educational experiment, he claimed to draw inspiration both from St. Enda's Aran monastic community and from Conchubar's "boy corps" from the Ulster Cycle.[35]

A firm belief in the superiority of the ancient Irish culture suffuses a number of Pearse's texts. In his youthful essays, he exalted the Gaelic literary heritage above Greek antiquity, and later on in *An Macaomh*, he posited Cú Chulainn as the ideal model of knighthood.[36] The glorification of "the old" would go as far as describing the physical superiority of ancient Gaels:

> […] the men are splendid specimens of manhood – just such tall, lithe, graceful figures as one sees in Aran […] They can run down the wild boar on foot; they can bear hunger and cold and thirst without complaint…[37]

This quotation comes from an extended essay "In First-Century Ireland" which Pearse published as a serial in *ACS* in winter 1907-1908. Significantly, the ending of this imaginative journey into the world of pre-Christian Ireland introduces a metaphor that problematizes any straightforward notion of the restoration of the past. Whereas five years earlier Pearse spoke of "the bedrock" of tradition that had to be reached and which would provide a firm ground for a Gaelic renaissance, now he declares: "Our civilization has met with shipwreck, and from the battered fragments we in our day are attempting to build up anew that noble ark. A blessing on ye, builders!"[38]

The imagery of this passage reveals inherent traits of a modernist sensibility at the core of Pearse's project. Another example of how this notion of continuity evolved can be found in the mysterious unfinished story "An Choill" / "The Wood" from 1914.[39] The narrator is going to tell a story of a boy who lived on the verge of the same forest long before his own time. First, however, he engages in reflections that verge on meditation over the essence of memory and story-telling:

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[34] For example in the article "An Ideal in Education" (*Irish Review,* June 1914: 170-173) or in the essay "Murder Machine" (*PWS* 38-9).

[35] It must be noted that Pearse's approach has an ancient precedent in the intellectual history of Ireland. According to Kim McCone, in the early Christian writings such synthetizing served as a major instrument for re-storing the unity of the national narrative of the pagan and Christian era. The stories of such key-mythical figures as Conchubar and Cú Chulainn were simply inscribed into the context of Christian history of salvation (McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature*, [Maynooth: An Sagart, 1991], esp. chapter "Pagan Myth and Christian History").

[36] "Our Heritage of Chivalry", *An Macaomh*, 14 November 1908, 9.

[37] Patrick Pearse, "In First-Century Ireland," *ACS* 21 December 1907, 11-2.

[38] Patrick Pearse, "In First-Century Ireland," *ACS* 11 January 1908, 10.

[39] Published bilingually in one of the final issues of *Irish Review* in July – August 1914 (248-255) and September – November (307-317).

> At times the story used to come to me like the voice of a waterfall or the scent of a flower borne by the wind, or I would feel it in my heart without anything suggesting it to me, but as if the memory of an old dream were coming back to me unconsciously or in my despite. And there were times when it used to seem to me that it was to myself all those adventures had happened hundreds of years ago, or that I and the little lad […] were one and the same, or that those adventures had never happened to anyone at all, but that I was putting the thread of story-telling on my own thoughts and my own desires […] And I used to call upon him in the loneliness of the Wood, but he never came to me, and I would realize that he had been dead for hundreds of years […] And that there was nothing alive about him on earth but a few of his thoughts and a few of his words and some memory of a few of his deeds.[40]

On the stylistic level this fragment reads as an example of Pearse's sentimental, romantic sensibility, typical for the majority of his writings. Nevertheless, at the level of ideas, it provides us with a whole repertoire of conflicting discourses of national continuity, thus disclosing a modernist, rather than a neo-traditional mindset. The primordial idea of the story of a nation "emanating" from nature itself; the Andersonian notion of the semi-mystical "imagined" bond stretching not only horizontally in space but also diachronically in time; the hint at the possibility of the artificial ("invented" – to invoke Eric Hobsbawm) character of the narrative; all finally absorbed in the mature acknowledgement of the elusiveness and inherently narrative essence of continuity ("few words and memory of the deeds").

Building from scattered ruins and gathering fragments of memories are creative rather than merely restorative tasks. Both images signal the futility of any kind of Burkean conservative discourse of tradition as an organic, evolutionary process, and contrast it with an image of continuity that is disrupted, broken and can only be restored by artificial means. Such treatment of the relation between the national past, present and future locates Pearse in the context of cultural nationalism and political modernism of his age.

3.3 Alternative Modernity

In J.J. Lee's words, Pearse's writings, with their constant invocations of the superiority of the ancient Gaelic order, give "commentators who portray him as the personification of the reaction against modernization, considerable excuse for their misunderstanding". His call for going "back

[40] "The Wood", *Irish Review* July/August 1914, 248-255.

to the sagas," his attempt to model twentieth-century educational methods on the boy corps of Emain Macha and countless other examples point to an antiquarian mentality directed at the restoration of the past, whereas in reality Pearse was only mobilising "the sagas as weapons to achieve his goal of modernization without Anglicization".[41]

Pearse's dialectics of tradition and modernity thus closely follows John Hutchinson's model of cultural nationalism. According to Hutchinson, cultural nationalism – although superficially based on sentimentalising the past – in fact views the nation as a dynamic phenomenon, with cycles of decay and regeneration. The evocation of the golden ages of a nation does not serve as a call for regression to some prelapsarian arcadia but rather as a mobilising device to stimulate "the young" to reject their parents in the name of "the authentic values for the future". Revivalists are therefore

> […] neither outright modernists nor traditionalists, but ideological innovators. They articulated the shifting options for societies seeking to determine their path to modernization, in a manner that balances their concern to preserve a distinct identity with a drive for progress. [42]

In Hutchinson's theory, modelled on the example of Irish revivalism, cultural nationalists should be differentiated both from the past-oriented "traditionalists" and the "modernizers" who on the contrary perceive the heritage of the native past as an obstacle to the attainment of the status of the modern nation. Against the traditionalists they argue that "tradition is not passive repetition of customs" but has to be continually renewed and they point out to the modernisers that the best embodiment of "modernity" should be sought not abroad but in the nation's own golden age.[43] Although their programme necessarily involves a certain degree of confrontation with traditionalism, contrary to the political nationalism which uproots the traditional order for the sake of creation of the modern rational society, the objectives of cultural nationalists are integrative.[44]

Pearse exemplifies this revivalist position in almost every dimension of his public activity. There is, however, only one extensive attempt to visualise the new form of Ireland in Pearse's *oeuvre*. Writing for the 1906 special *Oireachtas* issue of *ACS*, he describes – Rip-Van-Winkle-like – a dream of awakening in Ireland a hundred years later. Although the text is primarily focused on the renaissance of the Irish language, several insights into the reality of the independent state may

[41] J.J. Lee, *The Modernization of Irish Society* 146.
[42] Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* 49-51.
[43] Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* 65-71.
[44] Hutchinson, *The Dynamics* 14

be detected in it. Surprisingly, they differ substantially from De Valera's later vision of the autarkic agricultural Ireland of "comely maidens" and "athletic youths," of "hard work and simple pleasures".[45] It is a country of vast economic projects ("draining of the bogs", reforestation) and booming foreign trade, with its capital humming with Parisian–like outdoor cafés. At the same time, it is undoubtedly a Gaelic Leaguer's vision of the future. First of all, Ireland is linguistically and culturally "Gaelic," yet with no traits of a neo-traditionalist sentimentalism. The cultural method that has moulded the new reality is hinted at in the passage about the literary movement that "saved Irish poetry from death": the imaginary writers from the Gaeltacht simultaneously raised "the banner of the Ancients" and "the banner of Liberty" that allowed them to "mock at conventions" and concentrate on their only "sacred duty" — "to utter the soul's thoughts" rather than keep to any pre-modelled standards, be they native or foreign.[46]

In his quarrels with the "traditionalists" within the Gaelic League, such as Richard Henebry, Pearse advocates the primacy of the contemporary and the individual – both, of course, deeply rooted in and inspired by the nation's heritage – over slavishly following the defunct norms of the previous epochs.[47] Instead of doctrinal insularism preached by the activists of the vigilance movement (for instance, the return to the Irish language as a shield against the spiritual perils of modernity), he propounds active contact with other cultures and with the centres of modern development in order to enrich "Irishness" and make it competitive in the contemporary world.[48] He attempts to raise the "banner of the Ancients" and the "banner of Liberty" at the same time, combining the return to what is vital in the native tradition with a daring embracement of the future. In fact, in one of his articles on literature,[49] Pearse stresses "a spirit of daring," an eagerness to discover new horizons both in the spiritual world and in the material reality, as the central feature of ancient Gaeldom. Accordingly, he ends with a call to the creators of the new Irish culture to "[b]e bold and resolute" (which is, to make things even more complicated, a quote from *Macbeth*[50]). Contrary to many of his fellow "Gaelic Leaguers," for Pearse, rendering "the present a rational continuation of the past" (the Gaelic League's proclaimed goal[51]) did not mean moulding contemporary Ireland into some imitation of the lost golden age. Instead, it conveyed for him a notion of a vital, dynamic relationship, close to T.S.

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45 Passages from De Valera's legendary RTE speech on St. Patrick's Day 1943.
46 Patrick Pearse, "In My Garden", *ACS* 4 August 1906 (Oireachtas Supplement).
47 See Chapter One of O'Leary's *Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival.*
48 Cf. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, 35-6. As early as in 1903 article ("Gleó na gCath", *ACS*, 22 August 1903) Pearse asks: "Do you seriously contend that we should be wise to cut ourselves adrift from the great world of European thought?"
49 Patrick Pearse, "About Literature", *ACS* 26 May 1906.
50 *Macbeth*, Act 4, Sceneethn 1.
51 Quoted in: A. De Blácam, *Gaelic Literature Surveyed* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1973) 376.

Eliot's understanding of culture as "an embodied experiential mode of the present arising out of and continuously reformulating the past".[52]

3.4. The Sense of a Beginning

Hutchinson's theory deconstructs the apparent contradiction in the attitude to tradition and modernity in the discourse of Irish revivalists. Nevertheless, it falls short of explaining the crucial step made by the generation schooled by the Gaelic League towards the revolutionary movement. Significantly, it centres on the figures of Arthur Griffith and D.P. Moran, who pragmatically opposed the use of violence, did not cherish mystical leanings and attempted to combine Gaelicism with the ideology of economic modernization, and on Eoin MacNéill who opposed the Rising, both on the basis of strategic prudence and the Catholic ethics of just war.[53] In the writings of the separatist inner circle, however, with the approaching insurrection, the language of the rediscovered continuity is often paired with the rhetoric of abrupt change. This new disconcerting mode is most powerfully demonstrated in one of the final paragraphs of "The Sovereign People" where Pearse approvingly quotes Mitchel: "Do you take up a reproach against the lightening for that they only shatter and shiver, but never construct? […] This destruction is creation: Death is Birth…" (*PWS* 368-9). This notion of creative destruction – with its Nietzschean undertones – links Pearse decisively to the rhetoric of various political movements emerging all around Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century. Roger Griffin posits "creative destruction", triggered by the decadence and desolateness of the modern reality, as one of the basic impulses behind the discourse of the political modernism. It is derived ultimately from Nietzsche's "crusade against Modernity", generated by "cultural despair", yet it embodies the "will to cultural change". In Nietzsche's words from *Ecce Homo* (1888), "negating and destroying are conditions of saying Yes"[54] – they contain the seeds of the future. It is important to add that this impulse transcends the sphere of arts from which it originally arose and participates in the process that G.L. Mosse (following Walter Benjamin) describes as "aesthetisation of politics".[55]

According to Roger Griffin, in Nietzsche's notion of creative destruction we encounter two basic strains of modernist sensibility: "epiphanic" or "aesthetic" modernism and the "programmatic" one. For both a starting point is an acute perception of decadence of modernity

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[52] Patricia Waugh: *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992) 137. Waugh refers here to Eliot's essay "American Literature and American Language".
[53] Cf. Hutchinson: *The Dynamics*. See also: F.X. Martin, "Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising," *Irish Historical Studies* XII.47 (March 1961).
[54] Griffin 59-61.
[55] Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Mases*.

and a search for "a previously invisible door" appearing in "the endless corridor" of modernity's "Cronic time". For the former strain, it is a search for "fleeting episodes of spiritual union with something 'higher'", realized by means of an artistic epiphany. For the latter, "the rejection of Modernity expresses itself as a mission […] to inaugurate a new epoch, to start time anew", in other words to turn the *kairotic* moment of revelation into a new beginning.[56] Not only did modernism articulate a diagnosis of the crisis of modernity in a "traditionalist" fashion (Kermode's "sense of an ending") but, more importantly, it offered a vision of a new dawn (Griffin's "sense of a beginning"). The "metanarrative of renewal", at once nostalgic and future-oriented, occupies a central place in various modernist discourses. To grasp its paradoxical essence, Griffin coins "a primordialist definition of modernism" that claims that the apparent *aporia* of nostalgia and futurism lies in fact at the very core of the modernist project(s). "Mythicized past" is used as "the source of the inspiration needed to inaugurate a new, revitalized [...] society." The discourse of the "lost origin or suppressed national essence" occupies a central place in the rhetoric of primordial modernism, yet its dynamics is "rigorously futural". The mechanism of primordial modernism in relation to the past is defined as "mazeway resynthesis" – a tendency to syncretically incorporate the traditional elements in the new order. Elsewhere, the dynamics of the process is fittingly referred to (following Arthur Moeller van der Bruck, the German ideologue of *Conservative Revolution*) as "reconnection forwards": "the paradoxical appropriation of elements found in the pre-modern, mythic, 'reactionary' past to serve the revolutionary task of creating a new order in a new future".[57]

In December 1907, discussing Beatrice Elvery's painting "Éire Óg" (later to be placed at the entrance to St. Enda's school), Pearse follows the pattern of primordial modernist attitude. He interprets the image as showing the triad of "Past, Present, and Future – Memories, Disappointments, Hope." The painting features a hooded woman with a child on her lap, surrounded by shadowy figures: the "radiant shapes in the dark sky above her – shapes with heads mitred or cowled or crowned or helmeted" are saints and warriors of the heroic past; "those others who crouch shivering and naked, in the shadow of her mantle" are "our current generation". The small child "who stretches out his hand fearlessly" obviously symbolises the future of the nation.[58] According to Tom Garvin, the Pearsean variety of nationalism "mingles nostalgia and futurism" in order to create a "deprecation of the present".[59] Pearse's last essays, from "Ghosts" to "The Sovereign People," develop this basic theme through a series of key

[56] Griffin 61-3, 114-6.
[57] Griffin, esp. pp. 107-108, 114-117, 175-179.
[58] *ACS*, 7 December 1907: 7.
[59] Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* 109 – 116.

concepts, frequently leaning towards Griffin's "re-synthesis" of various elements of the national past. In the juxtaposition of "the old" and "the new", the generational conflict is rewritten as a moral and philosophical one.

The word "synthesis" provides a key to Pearse's final political essays.[60] At the end of "The Sovereign People," dated 31 March 1916, Pearse declares:

> I who have been in and of each of these movements make here the necessary synthesis, and in the name of all of them I assert the forgotten truth and ask all who accept it to testify to it with me, here in our day and, if need be, with our blood. (*PWS* 371)

The chronological dimension of the fragment is present in the dialectics of "the forgotten truth" and "here in our day". The assumed process – a movement from "forgetting" to "asserting" – therefore consists in the re-constitution of the fundamental continuity out of the apparent discontinuity. Nevertheless, the emphasis here must be placed on "synthesis," which is, moreover, "necessary," thus implying its functional, deliberate character as a means of mobilisation towards action ("testify to it").

This short quote allows us to further examine Pearse's rootedness in the discourses of primordial modernism. Firstly, as has already been mentioned, it points to the integrative, synthetic tendency of such an attitude. According to Griffin's definition:

> The hallmark of modernism […] is a tendency to syncretism, so that conflicting values and principles, sometimes drawn for quite different spheres of society and history, are combined in the search for the founding principles and constitutive values needed for a new world to be constructed out of the decadence or collapse of the old one.[61]

Pearse's shameless syncretism allowed him to list – writing for his prevailingly Catholic and Irish-Ireland audience – three figures from a Protestant background (Tone, Davis and Mitchell) among the "four Evangelists" of Irish separatism, and to postulate the status of a saint "holier" than St. Patrick himself to the Jacobin agnostic Wolfe Tone. In this inclusive discourse, a "masculine"

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[60] It is interesting that Pearse also points to the notion of synthesis as one of the keys to his own personality. Discussing his mixed family background in his unpublished and unfinished *Autobiography*, he sums up: "And these two traditions worked in me and fused together by a certain fire proper to myself, but nursed by that fostering of which I have spoken made me the strange thing I am." ("Fragment of Autobiography by Patrick Pearse". A manuscript preserved in Pearse Museum, PMSTE.2003.0946).

[61] Griffin 117.

republican affirmation of action, personified by Tone, is paired with the "feminine" guardianship at the "nation's hearthside" symbolised by Davis's Gaelic cultural nationalism.[62] Cú Chulainn may be described as an anti-type of Christ, thus uniting the pagan and Christian tradition of Gaelic Ireland. All *aporias* are merged in the indivisible unity of Irishness. This is the same mental mode as one finds in Charles Peguy's diaries from the first weeks of the Great War: "To bring the republican and the reactionary which are within me into harmony I've taken to shouting on alternate days *Vive la Republique* and *Montjoie et Saint Denis.*"[63]

Secondly, the primacy of a deliberately constructed myth is suggested in Pearse's "necessary synthesis". Mentioning Charles Peguy in this context is by no means accidental. After all, the French poet was creating a national "myth incarnated" in the character of Joan of Arc, uniting various strains of national experience in a single symbol. [64] Peguy and Pearse were both practitioners of the political theories of primordial modernism, which through the writings of Georges Sorel and later on in the works of Carl Schmitt pointed to the central role of myth in human ability to act in a heroic manner, thus locating the mythical as the source of the dynamics of history. As such it resists any attempt at a rational definition, but rather springs from "life itself". Pearse approaches this discourse in the opening of "The Separatist Idea":

> Freedom is so splendid a thing, that one cannot worthily state it in terms of definition; one has to write it in some flaming symbol or to sing it in music riotous with the uproar of heaven. A Danton and a Mitchel can speak more adequately of freedom than a Voltaire and a Burke, for they have drunk more deeply of that wine with which God inebriates the votaries of vision. (*PWS* 261-2)

A prophetic insight, rather than intellectual deliberation, is needed for stimulating the change. A consolidating role in the construction of the myth is given to the "flaming symbol" and to the ritual. Griffin points to "the persistence of liturgical behaviour into the modern age", which is the society's answer to "the maelstrom of modernity".[65] George L. Mosse describes how in the nineteenth-century Germany "the new politics attempted to draw the people into active participation in the national mystique through rites and festivals, myths and symbols, which gave a concrete expression to the general will".[66] Turning back to Pearse's visualization of Ireland in

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[62] Cf. Boss 281.
[63] Majorie Villiers, *Charles Peguy. A Study in Integrity* (London: Collins, 1965) 13.
[64] The comparison between Pearse and Peguy was made for the first time by Sean Farrell Moran in *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption* 188-9.
[65] Griffin 69.
[66] Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses,* 2.

2006, we may discern the features of the modernist "liturgical nationalism". The opening ceremony of the 2006 *Oireachtas* in the new Ireland bears all the features of "political liturgies", described by Mosse as the central "means of mobilization" of the people in the process of creating nationalism as a modern mass movement.[67] The festival operates within a symbolically structured space, as the procession marches through places renamed after the heroes of Irish nationalism. It is bolstered by the transcendental sanction of the Church: the whole ceremony is opened by the Cardinal of Dublin. The demonstration of power and energy of the young nation is mixed with the symbolic invocation of its past and of its spiritual heritage.

The synthetizing and mythopoeic quality of Pearse's conceptualization of Irish nationalism, summarized in the phrase "necessary synthesis" from the ending of "The Sovereign Nation", requires its completion in the form of a battle-call to "assert the forgotten truth", if necessary also "by our blood". According to Griffin, the mechanism of modernist "re-synthesis" manifested itself fully in the fusion of the avant-garde and patriotic enthusiasm on the eve of the Great War.[68] Pearse, as well as Peguy, remains in this respect a member of the "generation of 1914", characterised by its rejection of the materialism, utilitarianism and banality of the bourgeois society. It fights for the new world, but at the same time reaches back to the values of spiritualism, obfuscated by modernity.[69] On the surface, this contrast manifested itself in the juxtaposition of the daring youthful spirit and energy with the decadence and weakness of the "elders". These notions, as Mosse points out, had the capacity to unite such seemingly distant discourses as Marrinetti's Futurism, Peguy's heterodox national mysticism, Expressionists and the German "reactionary" *Volkist* movement. Although "the wishes and hopes" of the members of these movements varied from the *Volkist* escape from modernity to the Futurist embracement of its speed, "they created a mood in which such young men opposed the society of their elders", looking to war as to an opportunity "to bring about the fundamental change" and to put "an end to bourgeois complacency, tyranny, and hypocrisy, as they saw it".[70] In Pearse's writings, this notion found an explicit expression in the recurring juxtaposition of "the young" and "the old", which becomes prominent especially in his final statements before the Rising. One of the final sentences of *The Singer* is MacDara's admonition "old men, you did not do your work well enough", and "The Sovereign People" ends with the words "And we are young. And God has given us strength and courage and counsel" (*PWS* 372; *LWPP* 125).

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[67] Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses,* esp. chapter 1, 2.
[68] Griffin 153-9.
[69] Cf. Eksteins 92.
[70] Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers* 56 - 58

The inter-generational conflict had both a moral and philosophical dimension. As Eksteins indicates in the passage quoted above, the rejected present was identified with the "mercantile", "burgeois" values of liberalism and rationalism. These values allegedly brought about the domination of economic rationality in other spheres of life and subsequently led to the evasion of heroism and loss of manliness. As Mosse suggests in *Fallen Soldiers*, one of the most prominent themes of the cultural debate on the eve of the Great War were the critique of the effeminacy of the decadent modern society and the renewal of manliness postulated by various youth movements – both *avant garde* and nationalist. This yearning for the return of manly virtues triggered also the war enthusiasm of August 1914.[71] In Pearse's "Ghosts", "the last generation's" failure – "mean and shameful" – is ascribed to their belief that the nation's future could be guaranteed by the mechanisms of political and economic liberalism, "defined by statutes and guaranteed by mutual interests", while national freedom "may not be brought into the market places at all or spoken of where men traffic" (*PWS* 225). In Pearse's view, the constitutional nationalist movement in Ireland, stupefied by this ideology, lost the ability to act (to display its manliness) and degenerated into "a debating society". This statement is actually directly echoed in Carl Schmitt's critique of liberal democracy. Schmitt calls the bourgeoisie a "debating class", which, if confronted with the choice between "Christ and Barabbas", would have responded by "establishing a commission of investigation".[72] It is a juxtaposition powerfully conveyed in the laconic lines of "Mise Éire". On the one hand, there is the glorious heritage of "Cú Chulainn cróga", on the other hand one encounters the present depravation of "mo chlann féin a dhíol a máthair".[73] The epitome of heroic manliness, of the ability to act and to sacrifice oneself is confronted, in a manner typical for the period, with the image of moral baseness motivated by cowardice or greed.

In *The Concept of the Political,* Schmitt argues that the bourgeois preference for "debate" over "action" springs from the basic key feature of its psyche: the inability to accept the necessity of the ultimate sacrifice. Dying for one's community transcends the mercantile logic of gain and loss and thus remains unimaginable within a society ruled according to the principles of liberal economy.[74] Pearse's critique of the "last generation" of Irish constitutional nationalists and their "ignoble failure" heralds Schmitt's arguments. Both authors reflect the general tendencies of the period, symbolized for Modris Eksteins by Stravinsky's *Rites of Spring* in which the rejuvenation of

[71] Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers* 56-60.
[72] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. G. Schwab (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1985) 62.
[73] "Cúchulainn the valiant" is juxtaposed with "children who sold their mother" ("Mise Éire / I am Ireland", *LWPP* 35).
[74] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. G. Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) 48-9.

the earth is linked to the inevitable human sacrifice. It is in this context that we have to read some of the most controversial statements made by Pearse in his essays from the 1914 – 1916 period, where he refers to the "exhilaration of war" (*PWS* 217) and to "bloodshed" as "cleansing and sanctifying thing" (*PWS* 99). Both Schmitt and Pearse focus on the moment that cuts apart the linear time of modernity organized by legal, rational procedures. For Schmitt, such a moment is identified with a sovereign decision, analogous to the Divine intervention but entirely secularized, an instrument devoid of any moral or theological meaning. Pearse turns towards the *kairotic* moment of revelation/revolution that retains to a large extent the religious roots of the concept. "The necessary synthesis" of his political and literary writings, directed towards the rediscovery of "forgotten truths", only prepares the ground for the actual move forwards. As in Elvery's painting, the purgatorial present time of purgatorial "crouching" and "shivering" shadows must be overcome and a bridge needs to be built between the heroic past and the promises of the future. In the last paragraph of his last essay, the dialectics of past and present is immediately supplemented with an eschatological urging: "The day of the Lord is here."

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Summing up the general European tendencies in the years preceding the war and during its first months, Paul Fussell claims that "the movement was towards myth, towards the revival of the cultic, the mystical, the sacrificial, the prophetic, the sacramental, and the universally significant".[75] The pan-European war fever led to a radicalization of what Griffin perceives as a basic feature of modernist thinking. Griffin characterizes the inherent impulse of modernism as a "rebellion against a world without transcendence". From Wagnerian "total art" through Kandinsky assuming a role of "Moses leading his people to the promised land" to Yeats's occult studies, the modernist artist aims at locating "the fresh sources of transcendence in the increasingly desertified wastes of Modernity, and channel the resulting outpouring of creativity into slaking the raging spiritual thirst of society" .[76] According to Griffin, there is a close affinity between modernist "extreme experimentation with new aesthetic forms conceived to express glimpses of a higher reality that through into relief the anomy and spiritual bankruptcy of contemporary history" (116), such as Joyce's epiphanies or Eliot's search for a "still point in the turning world", and the political expressions of modernism longing for a "breaking point" and "new beginning" based on the mythicized reconnection with the spirit of the past.[77]

[75] Paul Fussell: *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 131.
[76] Griffin 123.
[77] Griffin 116.

The analysis of Pearse's thinking in relation to the dialectics of tradition and modernity proves the discrepancy between the "progressive cultural nationalist" and the "anachronistic prophet of blood sacrifice" to be largely illusory. Pearse follows the spirit of the generational revolt of the modernist children against their modern (liberal and rationalist) fathers. The idea of the messianic blood sacrifice thus becomes a part of the same continuum as his educational concepts and his attitude towards the restoration of the Irish language. Instead of juxtaposing tradition and modernity and positing this juxtaposition as an "either/or" choice the nation has to face (which is what the mainstream Catholic "Irish Ireland" and in fact the writers of the "Celtic Twilight" actually did), 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. This threefold structure is representative of 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.[78]

Thus, on the deeper level, Pearse's texts from the final period of his career transcend the limit of cultural nationalism as such and must be located within the context of modernist search for transcendence, represented by a *kairotic* moment of change. Despite its essential linearity, the Christian perception of time always remains two-dimensional, for it also acknowledges the existence of transcendent Divine time. The redemptive moment represents a messianic breakthrough of the vertical, Divine time into the linear course of the human time, represented in theology by the juxtaposition of *kairos* and *chronos*. Both *The Master* and the last paragraphs of "The Sovereign People" introduce at their climactic moments this intersection of the timeless with the temporary. Nevertheless, the question about the nature of this intervention seems to be crucial. As Griffin notices, "all the many sources of transcendence" exploited by various modernist projects were nevertheless compatible with the notion that modernity discredited the possibility of "suprahistorical, preternatural realities". Instead, the modernist longing for "a sacred canopy" resulted in transcendence "being supraindividual but not suprahistorical". As such, "modernist transcendence could be conceived as woven immanently into the woof of life itself".[79] As we have seen, however, , Ireland presented a specific case of postponed secularization in which the traditional religious sources of transcendence remained as attractive as

[78] Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism. The Case of Poland* (Notre Dame 1994) 250; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium. Revolutionary Messianism in Medieval and Reformation Europe* 4.
[79] Griffin 124.

those proposed by the secular thinkers of, for example, the Literary Revival. When looking for a deeper structural framework for his ideas, Pearse intuitively reached towards the realm of Catholic theology.

Chapter Four

"Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Ireland": Pearse's *Translatio Sacrii*

Son imagination poétique s'est retrouvée au sein du symbolisme aussi national qu'évangélique.[1]

Charles de Montalembert

In the issue of Arthur Griffith's journal *Nationality* dated from 25 March 1916, that is one month before the Rising, Herbert Pim reviewed what were to become Pearse's final political essays. In Pim's description, Pearse

> with a seriousness akin to the spiritual seriousness of the anointed of God, has preached the truth, has condemned national heresy, and hurled anathemas at those who would sell their claim to a full and complete nationality.[2]

Starting with title – "The Apostle of No Compromise" – a string of religious images suffuses the text, establishing the image of Pearse as a nationalist priest or prophet on the basis of parallels ranging from external appearance to rhetorical style. As various scholars point out, Pim belonged to the most radical and very limited group of nationalist intellectuals who to a large extent shared the precepts of Pearse's political theology.[3] Nevertheless, the prominence of religious language in Pearse's texts seemed to create an impression of deep devotion and made even many less radical listeners to read his message in a religious context. In a slightly satirical anecdote which appeared in the separatist paper *Gael* from 26 February of the same year, an anonymous reader of the moderate constitutionalist *Freeman's Journal* is quoted after having heard Pearse's speech. He has realized that the portrayal of the separatists as "godless revolutionaries", common among Dublin's "respectable society", was false, and he claims instead that he has listened to "a most estimable and religious man […] I could almost have thought it was a young priest speaking".[4]

Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski, a contemporary Polish historian of nationalism, speaks in his seminal work on the formation of the Polish national consciousness about the "translation of the sacred" as one of the basic mechanisms of nationalist thinking. The logic of this

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[1] Montalembert in the introduction to the French 1834 edition of Adam Mickiewicz's *Books of the Polish Pilgrim*. Quoted in: Witor Weintraub, *Poeta i prorok. Rzecz o profetyzmie Mickiewicza* (Warszawa: BN 1982): 241.
[2] Herbert Pim, "The Apostle of No Compromise", *Nationality*, 25 March 1916: 2.
[3] Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation. Irish Nationalist Life 1891 – 1918* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1999) 162; Ben Novick: *Conceiving Revolution. Irish Nationalist Propaganda during the First World War*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001) 222-3.
[4] Quoted in: Maume, 167.

"translation" reveals itself in the prominence of religious motifs and imagery in the rhetoric of various nationalist movements. Yet in the end, it serves as one of the engines of secularization, due to the fact that it is based on "the use of the sacred traditions for the construction of utterly new and secular edifice".[5] By inscribing the narrative of a nation, with its heroes and rituals, into a religious framework, the nationalist discourse achieves a transposition of the aura of sanctity from the religious tradition to a modern and secular phenomenon. Similar tendencies have also been noted by several Irish scholars. Michael Tierney, commenting on the discourses of Irish nationalism in 1940s, points out that "phrases which have a clear meaning in religion and nowhere else are so constantly used in nationalistic context that they pass without the oddity of the transfer being noticed".[6] Brian Jenkins, addressing the same issue, speaks about two parallel processes involved in the evolution of the nationalist discourse: the "ethnicization of religion" makes possible the "88emoriam88y8888n of ethnicity".[7]

Tomaszewski's "translation of the sacred" refers back to one of the basic terms of medieval political theology, *88emoriam88y88 imperii*, which denotes a process of transposition of the mystical source of world-power. It was initially supposed to reside in the Roman Empire, then it was transposed first to Byzantium and later to the empire of Charlemagne and his Ottonian or Hohenstaufen successors. The concept of *88emoriam88y88* in the medieval context rests, however, on the belief in the unchangeable foundation of authority. As J.G.A. Pocock has it: "*Translatio* implied that the empire had been transferred from hand to hand and place to place, from Romans to Greeks and from Greeks to Franks (both remaining *Romans*), and had therefore survived." (emphasis mine) The idea of Rome – converted by Eusebius into a kind of "*Civitas Dei* militant on earth" – remains intact in the process of transposition, changing only its external "accidents" of time, place and circumstance. According to Pocock, "the discourse of the *88emoriam88y88* is metahistorical" and transcends time and place – it is a sacred "type or form" of authority.[8] The "migration" of *imperium* is not a verbal, rhetorical operation, but a materialization or revelation of noumenal reality – *88emoriam88y imperii Romanorum*.

It might be said that Tomaszewski's concept and the medieval use of *88emoriam88y88 sacrii* to some extent contradict each other. Whereas for Tomaszewski it is a mere rhetorical tool of the essentially modernist and secularist project, its medieval counterpart assumes a preservation of the unchangeable content of the transposed symbolic system. The former limits

[5] Tomaszewski 193; Hutchinson, *The Dynamics* 138.
[6] Michael Tierney, "Nationalism. A Survey", *Studies* XXXIV.136 (December 1945): 474.
[7] Jenkins 55.
[8] J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 3: *The First Decline and Fall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 127-131 (chapter "The Historiography of the *translatio imperii*")

itself to the field of rhetoric, constructing artificial and merely functional analogies between words, the latter claims to convey the actual relation between its elements. I would argue that Pearse's treatment of religion and nationalism participate in both types of relations and thus contain an inherent paradox that renders any attempt to encapsulate it in a straightforward definition so difficult. Therefore, acknowledging this inherent tension, I would use the term *89emoriam89y89 sacrii* as the major instrument in my attempt to delineate the basic mechanism of Pearse's use of religion in his conceptualization of Irish nationalism.

Using evidence from the contemporary nationalist press, I discuss in the following chapter how ubiquitous were the motifs of "ethnicization of religion" and "89emoriam89y8989n of ethnicity" in the discourses of Catholic Irish nationalism of Pearse's time. Nevertheless, Pearse's own writings provide in this respect a significant radicalization of what can be called a "mainstream" perception of the issue, which actually made many critics from within the Catholic community to accuse him of heretical divinization of the national cause. Without attempting to resolve this essentially theological controversy, I delineate the basic mechanism of Pearse's *89emoriam89y89 sacrii* that in my opinion provides an underlying structural principle of his thought.

4.1. Tribal Religion

In the January 1916 edition of *The Catholic Bulletin*, in its children section, a little Agnes MacCarthy from Dublin relates to a reporter of the *Bulletin* that as a prize at the last Dublin *Feis,* she "got 'Songs of the Gael', 'Speeches from the Dock', Mitchel's *Jail Journal* and a prayer book".[9] Listing the most accomplished Irish work in the genre "gospel of hate"[10] – i.e. Mitchel's memoirs – alongside with "a prayer book" seems perfectly natural to the anonymous journalist who leaves it without a single comment. Altogether, the books given to little Agnes form an ideal synthesis of Catholic Irish nationalism – religion, cultural heritage of "Gaeldom" and the separatist tradition, made into a single "package" of Irishness. Such examples, common in the nationalist press of the period, confirm the view of the Czech literary historian Martin Putna who reflects on "the potential of the essentially universalist religion to become – in cultural terms – a tribal creed".[11]

The contrast between the universal and the national aspect of Catholicism is a recurrent motif in the nationalist press of the time. In *ACS* from 14th November 1908, we find e.g. an

[9] *The Catholic Bulletin* 6.1 (January 1916): 116.
[10] As Francis Shaw calls it in his already quoted article "The Canon of Irish History. A Challenge".
[11] Martin Putna, *Česká katolická literatura v evropském kontextu 1848-1914* (Praha: Torst, 1998) 18.

article on "Gaelic traditions in religious accessories" which criticizes strongly not only the use of English (which would be understandable in the Gaelic League organ) but also the "cosmopolitan character" of Irish divine services. As the article suggests, it is the "spirit of nation" that moulds "the outward shape of religious practice" and "what is suited to the French and Italian religious mind is not suited to the Irish", for "each nation has its own spirit".[12] A few years earlier *ACS* reported with approval on the Polish tendency to use as much of the vernacular in the Divine services as possible, claiming this to be one of the major strategies of survival under the conditions of both national and religious persecution.[13] In January 1916, *The Catholic Bulletin* published a long essay by Mary Butler in which she attempted to explain the essence of the relation between religion and nationality: she claims that "national idiosyncrasies are never more pronounced than in the spiritual side of people's life". She quotes at length from a treatise by a French Catholic priest Jean Baptiste Bougard who – writing about saints – distinguishes the "universality" of their virtues and their "profoundly national" personal characteristics and imagination.[14]

According to Jozef Bocheński, "Catholic nationalism" does not contradict "Catholic universalism" – "actually, it makes it possible".[15] His statement from 1930s confirms the completion of the process that led in the preceding debate to the alliance between the Church and nationalism. A nation was considered a part of the God-ordained natural order, just like the Christian family. Such "tribalization" of Irish Catholicism at that time was by no means unique in the European context. In the period before the Rising, nationalist press frequently addressed this issue, commonly resorting to the foreign examples to back the conviction about the Divine sanction of the national cause. Facing the German occupation of his country in 1914, a Belgian cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier delivered a famous sermon in which he reminded his flock about the fact that "the Religion of Christ makes of Patriotism a positive law; there is no perfect Christian who is not also a perfect patriot", stressing afterwards that a nation, understood as a communion of souls, should be "defended and safeguarded at all costs". His speeched received wide publicity and was quoted at length in *The Spark*.[16] Irish authors followed this doctrine of patriotism as a Christian virtue and of the protection of the nation as a moral obligation without hesitation. For example Arthur Clery speaks about patriotism as one of cardinal virtues stating

[12] "Gaelic traditions in religious accessories", *ACS*, 9 November 1908: 10.
[13] "Ireland and Poland", *ACS*, July 22 1899: 299-300.
[14] Mary Butler, "Some traits of the Catholic Gael", *The Catholic Bulletin* 6.1. (January 1916): 99.
[15] Bocheński 28-9.
[16] Marcier's speech was quoted at length for example in: Rev. Jas. Campbell, "Patriotism", *The Spark* 2.46 (December 1915) and in Arthur Clery's "A Forgotten Virtue" published originally in *The Leader*, later included in his *Dublin Essays* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1919) 26-9.

inadvertently: "you may be damned for want of patriotism." Later he adds: "Christ himself chose to come before us as a patriot. His Crucifixion was brought about by one of the meanest crews of anti-patriots that history has ever seen." [17] In one of his early articles, Pearse himself presents Christ as a Jewish patriot: "Christ, our Exemplar, wept over Jerusalem, the fallen capital of his nation".[18]

Nonetheless, the confusion with which many of his contemporaries reacted to Pearse's rhetoric may suggest that it deflected to some extent from the major voices of the Irish Catholic opinion-makers of that time. Although neither the radical nor the moderate part of Irish nationalist public opinion would disagree with Cardinal Mercier's statements about patriotism as a Christian virtue, it must be noted that almost all the articles dealing with the religious sanction of patriotism also emphasize a proper hierarchy of spiritual values. The children section of *The Catholic Bulletin*, mentioned above in relation with the story of little Agnes and her books, starts with a poem: "Next to God I love thee / Dear Erin, my native land". In *The Spark*, Rev. Jason Campbell, in a fervently separatist article, describes patriotism as "the Will within us that, *after God*, we be faithful, loyal and true to our motherland" (emphasis mine). What disturbed many of Pearse's contemporaries was the impression that his discourse violates this obligatory hierarchy. Describing in his memoirs his personal meetings with Pearse and evaluating the legacy of the Rising, J. J. Horgan, a staunch representative of the moderate wing of Irish Catholic nationalism, claims: "This small body of conspirators by *putting nationalism before religion* had placed themselves outside the pale of the Church"[19] (emphasis mine).

Horgan's denunciation of the heretical character of Pearse's Rising seems to echo a statement from John Millington Synge's unfinished autobiography in which he describes how he relinquished "the kingdom of God" for the sake of "the kingdom of Ireland".[20] From this perspective, Pearse appears as a typical nationalist who substitutes the people for the Divinity and (mis)uses religious language for purely secular goals. As Conor Cruise O'Brien sums up: "Pearse's fusion of Catholicism and nationalism is not (by 1913) the Catholic nationalism that was general in the Irish-Ireland of 1900 to 1912 and preached in *The Leader*. *That* Catholic nationalism was

[17] Clery, *Dublin Essays* 27-9.
[18] Quoted in O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival* 262.
[19] John J. Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse. Some Recollections and Reflections* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2009. Originally published in 1948) 289.
[20] John Millington Synge, *Collected Works*, eds. Robin Skelton, Alan Price, and Ann Saddlemeyer (Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1982) 13.

religiously orthodox and so put Catholicism first. Pearse's mystical nationalism puts nationalism first."[21]

In order to delineate this sense of difference, I will briefly examine two modes in which religious motifs occur in Pearse's texts in the most explicit way. The first of them is based on the common concept of the close interrelation between the material and the transcendent in the world-view of Gaelic peasantry. It was Pearse's short stories – deeply engaged with the reality and spirituality of the Irish-speaking West – that convicted critics such as Father Ó Braonáin about religion being in Pearse's case "warp and woof of all his weaving".[22] The second mode is connected to the final stage of Pearse's career, which is generally characterized by a growing engagement with the political. It introduces religious vocabulary into a completely different context: that of the political propaganda of radical nationalism. Moreover, it does so with consistency and intensity unmatched by anything that has so far been heard on the platforms of Irish nationalist meetings.

4.2. Rhetoric of *Translatio*

The motif of the spiritualization of the Irish cultural and natural environment was common among the revivalists, associated with both the Gaelic League and the Literary Revival.[23] Pearse's short stories abound in situations in which the sacred reveals itself within the material landscape of the nation. Íosogán plays with the children in a Connemara village in the eponymous tale, and Virgin Mary visits a childless woman in the short-story "An Mhathair". Pearse himself addresses the theme of the intermingling of divine and secular spaces as the crucial element of the traditional Gaelic society in his well-known comment:

> I am imagining nothing improbable, nothing outside the bounds of the everyday experience of innocent little children and reverent-minded old men and women. I know a priest who believes that he was summoned to the death-bed of a parishioner by Our Lord in person; and there are many hundreds of people in the countryside I write of who know that on certain nights Mary and her Child walk through the villages and if the cottage doors be left open, enter and sit awhile in the firesides of the poor.[24]

[21] O'Brien, *Ancestral Voices* 101.
[22] Cathaoir Ó Braonáin, "Review of *The Works of P.H. Pearse*", *Studies*, VI.23 [September 1917]: 512.
[23] Cf. Douglas Hyde's introduction to *Religious Songs of Connacht* (quoted in Chapter 5 of this dissertation).
[24] "By a Way of Comment", *An Macaomh* 1.2 (December 1909): 35.

He claims to draw here on deep-rooted beliefs, still alive among the Gaelic-speaking peasantry, as well as on the heritage of Irish literary tradition: "the intimacy with spiritual things" being a recurring feature of both "mystical hymns of the Middle Ages" and "the folk-tales of the Western countryside".[25]

The discourse of the innate spiritualism of the native Irish population remains a commonplace both among the authors of the Gaelic and of the Literary Revival. In Pearse's case, however, we may perceive a gradual shift from the notion of the transcendent *visiting* the Irish countryside to one being *inscribed* into it. The entrance to St. Enda's was decorated by two paintings by Beatrice Elvery and it seems that both were very important to Pearse. One of them, "Éire Óg", has been already discussed in the previous chapter as a model of Pearse's vision of the relations between the past, the present, and the future of the nation. Moreover, it is also a painting that builds an explicit analogy between the spheres of the national and the religious. Its arrangement copies the motif of Madonna with the Child, surrounded by figures clearly alluding to the modes of representation of the redeemed and the damned in Christian iconography. At the same time, the composition leaves no doubt about its national character: from the red hair of "Madonna" through the Celtic cross in the background to the clothing of the Mother figure which bears clear marks of the "Celtic Twilight" aesthetics.

"Íosogán", painted in 1907, exhibits a more subtle interplay between the national and the religious. It features Boy Christ, aged twelve according to the Gospel, standing in a rural setting. The lower part of the painting features a veil with a quote from St Luke in Irish: "And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit." (1, 80). However, there are several elements that introduce new meanings into the painting. Firstly, as Elaine Sisson points out, the Boy is standing with his arms spread out, "as if in the anticipation of crucifixion". Secondly, the Irish version of the Biblical quotation used in the final version of the painting contains the word "macaomh" – the old-Irish term denoting the boy-warrior and connected in the sagas to Cú Chulainn.[26] *An Macaomh* was the title of St. Enda's journal edited by Pearse and one of the keywords of Pearse's pedagogical practise. Christ is thus linked to the Irish pagan hero. Finally, the hill beside the figure seems to resemble Great Sugar Loaf, the most prominent peak in the close vicinity of Dublin.[27] Not only is the story of Christ as a child immediately linked to His death, but he is also positioned into the

[25] Patrick H. Pearse, "Some Aspects of Irish Literature", *Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse. Songs of the Irish Rebels*… 157.
[26] Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots. St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004) 62-3.
[27] The first sketch of the painting preserved in Pearse Museum features the quotation in English only and the introduction of the word "macaomh" seems to be a result of Pearse's personal intervention. Moreover, in the first sketch, the setting is an unspecified romantic landscape. The final version, on the other hand, exhibits remarkable similarity to Dublin surroundings (see Appendix).

Irish landscape and by the connotations of the word "macaomh" conflated with the Irish mythological narrative.

Pearse's preoccupation with Elvery's paintings as demonstrated in his article in *ACS*, his (highly probable) involvement in the final version of "Íosogán" and their prominent position in St. Enda's building may indicate a gradual development of the manner in which he used religion in his writings. The essentially apolitical presentation of the spirituality of the West in the short stories is followed by the spiritualization (at least on the level of rhetoric) of the political narrative of modern Irish history – often quite detached not only from the immediate religious context as such but also from the legacy of Gaelic tradition. Just as the life of the Western peasant is clothed in the intimations of the transcendent, so is the discourse of Pearse's political pamphlets suffused with religious vocabulary. Whereas in case of his short stories the relationship between humankind and the transcendent remains essentially vertical, in the new context we should rather speak about Elvery-like parallelism of the two spheres.

To identify this strain of Pearse's thinking, it is enough to look up the lines of his public address at the Wolfe Tone commemoration in Bodenstown in 1913: "We have come to the holiest place in Ireland; holier to us even than the place where Patrick sleeps in Down." The speech locates both nationalism and religion within a single narrative of Irish history, and a prominent place is reserved for the separatist tradition. "Patrick brought us life, this man died for us" – Pearse continues, moulding the narrative of Wolfe Tone's life into a parallel to the Christian vision of history, with its dialectics of the Old and New Testament, i.e. the stories of Creation and Redemption. Later in this speech, the nationalist gathering at the grave of the founder of Irish nationalism acquires the quality of the congregation at the Sacrament of Confirmation: "We have come to renew our adhesion to the faith of Tone; to express once more our full acceptance to the gospel of Irish nationalism." In Pearse's perspective, "to come into communion" with the spirit of Tone "is to come unto a new baptism, unto a new regeneration and cleansing" that brings "a new resurrection of patriotic grace in our souls" (*PWS* 53-7).

A similar density of religious vocabulary may be found in Pearse's other public speeches and propagandist articles of the final years of his public activity. The motif of the "renewal of the baptismal vows" and "spiritual communion" transcending the flow of time features prominently in his graveside panegyric for the old Fenian activist O'Donovan Rossa, delivered in 1915. In this same speech, he explicitly describes the cause to which the deceased dedicated his life as "splendid and holy" (*PWS* 134-6). In a pamphlet from the same year, entitled "Peace and the

Gael", the use of religious rhetoric reaches the highest possible degree of intensity as the approaching rebellion is rendered in terms borrowed from the Book of Revelation:

> Christ's peace is lovely in its coming, beautiful are its feet on the mountains. But it is heralded by terrific messengers; seraphim and cherubim blow trumpets of war before it. We must not flinch when we are passing through that uproar; we must not faint at the sight of blood. Winning through it, we (or those of us who survive) shall come unto great joy. (*PWS* 218)

Talking about Pearse's rhetoric, scholars frequently mention "a vocabulary deeply dyed with religious feeling" or a language "thoroughly permeated by Catholic devotional feeling".[28] It has also been noted that Pearse uses religious vocabulary most extensively in his literary works (the spiritual tone of his short stories) and public speeches (sacralisation of the nationalist cause). Supposedly, he was trying to avoid explicitly religious language only in his final essays, starting with "Ghosts", which form the most comprehensive outline of his conceptualization of Irish nationalism. It is often argued that this tuning down of Catholic motifs was motivated by tactical reasons in the view of the approaching insurrection. He was reputedly attempting a vision of the separatist ideal that would be more inclusive (in relation to the question of the Irish Protestants) and less controversial for the orthodox Catholic readership.[29] Nevertheless, I would argue that in Pearse's case the adherence to theological vocabulary and symbolism cannot be limited to mere rhetorical colouring. Taking the introductory section of "Ghosts" as my point of departure, I would argue that in Pearse's case the adherence to the theological transcends the level of mere rhetoric and provides him with the basic framework within which he construes the edifice of Irish nationalism.

4.3. The Anatomy of *Translatio*

Pearse's "tetralogy" of essays, from "Ghosts" through "The Separatist Idea" and "The Spiritual Nation" to "The Sovereign People", written and published between autumn of 1915 and early spring of 1916, is considered a summa of his political thought, or his "final testament" as Desmond Ryan has it.[30] It is important to emphasize that Pearse repeatedly, especially in short prefaces to each essay (published as separate booklets), pointed to the continuity of his argument, first outlined in "Ghosts" and later developed in the following texts. If we take "Ghosts" as an

[28] Deane, *Celtic Revivals* 71; O'Brien, *Ancestral Voices* 102.
[29] Cf. O'Brien, 104. Seán Patrick Walsh confirms this view: Pearse's "nationalist essays are devoid of religious pronouncements or pious remarks" (*Free and Gaelic. Pearse's Idea of a National Culture*, [Baile Atha Cliath: Coiste Chomóradh an Phiarsiagh, 1979] 16).
[30] Desmond Ryan, *The 1916 Poets*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1995. First published in 1963) 1.

introduction to the whole tetralogy, the first section of the essay sets the scene and delineates the foundations on which Pearse's *summa* is built. The essay starts with the language of romantic chivalric ethos, well-known from Pearse's earlier texts, which links his project to the pan-European rejection of the bourgeois ethics (as outlined in the previous chapter).

> There has been nothing more terrible in Irish history than the failure of the last generation. Other generations have failed in Ireland, but they have failed nobly; or, failing ignobly, some man among them has redeemed them from infamy by the splendour of his protest. But the failure of the last generation has been mean and shameful, and no man has arisen from it to say or do a splendid thing in virtue of which it shall be forgiven. The whole episode is squalid. It will remain the one sickening chapter in a story which, gallant or sorrowful, has everywhere else some exaltation of pride. (*PWS* 223)

The "mean and shameful", utilitarian logic of the current national elite, i.e. the constitutional nationalism of the Irish Parliamentary Party, is confronted with the attitude of the past generations, who – although unsuccessful from the pragmatic point of view of "gains and losses" – saved the honour of the community by their adherence to noble goals. Pearse's condemnation of the "last generation" in the following sentences reaches almost metaphysical heights: "When they speak they speak only untruth and blasphemy. Their utterances are no longer the utterance of men. They are the mumblings and the gibberings of lost souls" (*PWS* 224). The image, in its Dantesque intensity, seems to set a comparison between contemporary Ireland and Inferno, sending us back to Pearse's interpretation of Elvery's *Eire Óg* with its vision of the present generation as an assemblage of ghosts, "shivering and naked".

It is also worth noting that the keywords of the theological representations of hell, i.e. sin, punishment and damnation, feature prominently in this and in the following paragraph: "One finds oneself wondering what sin these men have been guilty of that so great a shame should come upon them?" What is the original sin of the "last generation"? Its description opens a set of comparisons built according to the logic of *96emoriam96y96*, creating an analogy between the religious and national dogma: "They have conceived of nationality as a material thing, whereas it is a spiritual thing. They have made *the same* mistake that a man would make if he were to forget that he has an immortal soul" (*PWS* 224, emphasis mine). A nation, similarly to man, is composed of two elements, material and spiritual.

This parallel between nation and man, articulated in a language constantly referring to the Gospel, is also developed in the following paragraph, by means of a "collectivization" of the basic metaphor of *Genesis*: "They have not recognized in their people the image and likeness of God". If "nationality" occupies the same position as the immortal soul in man, then it must be "holy, a thing inviolate and inviolable, a thing that a man dare not sell or dishonour on pain of eternal perdition". The sinners of the "last generation", unconscious of the difference between the material and spiritual realm, had treated it as just another commodity which can be "negotiated about as men negotiate about a tariff or about a trade route", whereas it is "an immediate jewel to be preserved at all peril". This phrase, with its allusion to *Othello* ("immediate jewel"), should nevertheless be linked to one of the most important evangelical images of the salvation of the soul – the Parable of the Pearl, describing a single precious stone worth gaining at all costs (*PWS* 224-5).[31]

In the following sentences, Pearse's delineates the relation between "nationality" and "freedom" or "national freedom". Whereas the first is a "spiritual thing" that cannot be "negotiated", the other is characterized as "the condition of hale nationality". Importantly, it is not "a status to be conceded" but "a *glory* to be achieved" (emphasis mine). In this passage, Pearse again implicitly employs a set of notions that can be derived from the realm of Catholic theology. The relation between "nationality" and "freedom" is sketched in analogy with the relation between immortal soul ("holy and inviolable" per se yet corruptible) and the status of grace in which a soul achieves its originally ordained state by overcoming its sinful tendencies. It cannot be reached automatically, for example by mere fulfilment of the letter of the Law, but requires a spiritual opening to the influence of transcendence. "Freedom", just as theological "grace", is a "spiritual necessity" which – due to the priority of soul over body – "transcends all corporeal necessities" (*PWS* 225).

Characteristically, in this paragraph, just as in the previous ones, Pearse consistently juxtaposes the "truth" about the nation's existence articulated in the theological language with the "untruth" expressed in the language of liberal economic rationality and liberal theory of social contract. Pearse proclaims that "[w]hen freedom is being considered interests should not be spoken of" and repeatedly defies the notion that nationality and freedom could be "defined by statutes and guaranteed by mutual interests". Moreover, he is conscious of the kind of language he uses. After a series of religious images he uses to delineate his vision of national freedom, he adds, suddenly shifting to another register: "Or, if the terms of the counting-house be the one

[31] *Othello* 3, 3; Matthew 13, 45-6.

that are best understood, let us put it that it is the highest interest of a nation to be free" (*PWS* 225).

The first paragraphs of "Ghosts" feature a re-formulation of the political debate within the Irish nationalist movement in terms consistently derived from the language of religion. Afterwards, Pearse sets himself about providing his own definition of a nation according to this new framework. In Pearse's writings, the prevailing metaphor used to describe the community of a nation is, not surprisingly, family. Drawing on the long-established Herderian tradition, in "The Sovereign People" he speaks for example about "ties human and kindly" that unite a nation in contrast to an empire, bound together only by force or mutual interests. It must be noticed, however, that to those "biological" and social bonds he immediately adds (and classifies them as equally "natural") also "ties mystical and spiritual" (*PWS* 343). The other metaphor – already described above and used in "The Spiritual Nation" – compares a nation to a human being, again "twofold in nature, […] yet one", i.e. endowed with "a body and a soul" (*PWS* 305). In "Ghosts", a third metaphor is introduced – arguably the most surprising one from the point of view of history of European nationalisms and the one that is most specifically "Pearsean". Following the preceding re-writing of the nationalist controversy by means of theological imagery, Pearse sets a nation alongside another community of a "twofold nature" – the Church. Here the logic of Pearse's *98emoriam98y98 sacrii* is most clearly exposed:

> Like a divine religion, national freedom bears the marks of unity, of sanctity, of catholicity, of apostolic succession. Of unity, for it contemplates the nation as one; of sanctity, for it is holy in itself and in those who serve it; of catholicity, for it embraces all the men and women of the nation; of apostolic succession, for it, or the aspiration after it, passes down from generation to generation from the nation's fathers. (*PWS* 227)

Four features that define the one Church in the Nicean Credo ("*unam, sanctam, apostolicam et catholicam Ecclesia*") are here ascribed to "national freedom" which in the light of the previous arguments must be viewed as the desired state of completeness of a nation's "body and soul". In details, Pearse's image reproduces the basic premises of almost any nationalist theory: the exaltation of the popular sovereignty, the emphasis on horizontal sameness and on unity of the community, and the discourse of continuity. Nevertheless, the image as a whole provides the most persistent example of the construction of the nation by means of an analogy with the realm of religion. Moreover, Pearse continues in the same vein, speaking in the following sentences about "national freedom" in terms explicitly borrowed from the teaching about the development

of the Catholic doctrine. The doctrine in its orthodox wording on the one hand acknowledges the notion of development, but on the other stresses the essential immutability and closeness of the doctrinal system. As the first rector of the Catholic University of Ireland, John Henry Newman pointed out "the tradition of the Apostles, committed to the whole Church in its various constituents and functions *per modum unius*, manifests itself variously at various times".[32] St. Thomas, when speaking about the definitions of "the articles of faith" provided by different Councils and periods of Church history, suggested that they "differ in one way only […] – by making explicit some elements of the unchangeable body of truth which were earlier contained only implicitly" ("*in nullo alio 99emoriam99, nisi quod in uno plenius explicantur, quae in alio continentur implicite*").[33] Now, turning back to Pearse and "Ghosts", we read:

> A nation's fundamental idea of freedom is not affected by the accidents of time and circumstance. It does not vary with the centuries, or with the comings and goings of men or of empires. The substance of truth does not change, nor does the substance of freedom. Yesterday's definition of both the one and the other is to-day's definition and will be to-morrow's. As the body of truth which a true church teaches can neither be increased nor diminished – though truth implicit in the first definition may be made explicit in later definitions – so a true definition of freedom remains constant; it cannot be added to or subtracted from or varied in its essentials, though things implicit in it may be made explicit by a later definition. (*PWS* 226)

The introductory section of "Ghosts" thus provides the most explicit illustration of the ways in which Pearse situates the nation in relation to religion. When talking about nation and religion, Pearse seems to be very consistent in his employment of simile as the major trope, establishing a relation of analogy between the two phenomena. In his address delivered at the Emmet Commemoration in New York in March 1914, which contains several examples of the intellectual process leading to the fully formulated concept of *99emoriam99y99*, Pearse claims that patriotism is:

> a faith which is of the same nature as religious faith and is one of the eternal witnesses in the heart of man to the truth that we are of divine kindred; a faith which, like religious faith, when true and vital, is wonder-working, but, like

[32] John Henry Newman, *The Rambler*, Volumes 1-2 (London: Central Publishing Office, 1859) 205.
[33] *Summa Theologiae* 22, 1.9.

religious faith, is dead without good works even as the body without the spirit. (*PWS* 65)

It might be claimed that delineating his concept of the nation, Pearse almost instinctively reaches to the sphere of religion for symbols and images by means of which he articulates his ideas. The persistence of this method allows one to suggest that the constantly re-asserted parallelism of the theological and the national, which I termed *100emoriam100y100 sacrii*, provides the basic underlying mechanism of Pearse's construction of Irish nationalism. Admittedly, he is conscious of other discourses of justification of the national struggle and uses them extensively in his final essays. In "The Separatist Idea", he upholds the national cause by employing the language of Paine's "Rights of Men", mediated in the Irish context by Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen. In "The Spiritual Nation", the Herderian romantic organicism is introduced through Pearse's interpretation of Thomas Davis. Nevertheless, the introductory section of "Ghosts" discussed above and the closing section of "The Sovereign People", which was dealt with in the previous chapter, provide a definite framework for those discourses.

4.4. Pearse's Heresy

For the mainstream of Irish Catholic nationalism of nationalist opinion of Pearse's time, the sanctity of the national cause derived from the people's adherence to religion. It depended on their faithfulness to the religious creed. In the already quoted examples from nationalist press, patriotism was exalted as the second most important value – "next to God" or "after God". Such a perception is based on the Catholic social teaching, derived from Thomist philosophy. Church and State are viewed as essentially different and autonomous, but perfect and necessary (*societas perfecta*) bodies in their own way. Their legitimacy is derived from the Divine authority – both are rooted and sanctioned by the natural order, the Church however additionally sanctified by its connection to the Revelation. They have different goals and operate on different levels – one changeable and timely, the other eternal. With the changing political reality – the transition from the multinational medieval monarchies to the nation-states – the process of "nationalizing Thomism" was triggered, with "nation" being freely substituted for "the State" as the second *societas perfecta* (a change justified by the fact that each nation aspires to the status of sovereignty and can thus be identified with the State). This essential autonomy acquires a higher degree of complexity when viewed from the perspective of individual ethics: an individual is bound to give his allegiance to both, yet the primacy of the spiritual over the social (individual salvation of the soul is still the highest goal) defines the limits of the state's / nation's autonomy. The values of patriotism and the holiness of the national cause, so pronouncedly articulated in the nationalist

press of the period, result from their inscription into the ethical system of Catholicism. Irish Catholic nationalism declares the significance of those values also from the religious perspective, at the same time acknowledging, by the very fact of situating them into the religious framework, their subordinate position to the spiritual, transcendent goals.

Pearse's perspective is considerably different. Significantly, he very rarely follows the two most common concepts of the Irish Catholic nationalist discourse in his own writings: the narrative of the war of two civilizations and the narrative of the exceptional Irish piety hardened by centuries of persecution. When he claims in "Peace and the Gael" that the carnage of the Great War was less terrible "than the enslavement of the Poles by Russia, than the enslavement of Irish by England" (*PWS* 217), what he means is not the amount of "physical" suffering but the lack of freedom. Similarly, only once and in a very early text (1901), he speaks about "the War Between Two Civilizations" out of which one is "a civilisation concerned with spirit, mind, intellect, good manners and piety" and the other "of the body, worldly force, the strength and power of money, and the comfort of life", of course positing "the native language" as "the barrier and firm protective wall against the onslaught of the enemies of our nationality and our civilisation".[34] Simultaneously with the radicalization of Irish politics, this discourse gained prominence and in countless articles in the nationalist press, England was presented as a modern equivalent of Sodom and Gomorrah, the source of impure literature and base entertainment. *The Spark* from March 1915 introduced "Redmondism and West Britonism", i.e. Irish versions of the English malaise, as synonyms to "vulgarity and immorality".[35] The argument that the language provides a protective wall against the morally disastrous effects of exposure to the English cultural influence remains one of the most prominent justifications of the Gaelic Revival.[36] Apart from the very early texts, this morally grounded argument is, however, conspicuously absent from Pearse's writings. Similarly, the narrative of Ireland as the most faithful daughter of the universal Church, which provided another source of energy for the Catholic nationalist rhetoric, remains largely untouched in his texts. Pearse is even as bold as to explicitly call into question the exceptional character of Irish piety, claiming that "untrue is the dictum that Catholicism is 'the Celtic form of Christianity'" because "it is amongst non-Celtic peoples, Slavs in Poland and

[34] Quoted in O'Leary, *Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival* 26.
[35] Ed Dalton, "Khakism in Song", *The Spark* 1.5 (9 March 1915): 2. See also for example: Joseph Plunkett, "Civilized Nationhood." Irish Volunteer (7 February 1914): 1. For thorough analysis of the nationalist press of the 1914 – 1918 period see: John S. Ellis, "The Degenerate and the Martyr: Nationalist Propaganda and the Contestation of Irishness, 1914 – 1918." *Eire-Ireland*, 35 (2000), 7–33.
[36] Such a view seems to have been very common among the rank-and-file of the Volunteers. In the words of Brian O'Higgins, the author of a memoir *The Soldier's Story of Easter Week*, "the Rising of 1916 was a spiritual victory over selfishness, expediency and compromise and materialism". Quoted in: F. X. Martin, "1916 – Myth, Fact and Mystery, 20.

Bohemia, and Teutons in Germany, Austria, and Flanders, that one finds the most intensely Catholic populations".[37]

Pearse's conceptualization of the nation based on the mechanism of *102emoriam102y102* operates on a different level, re-drawing and blurring the borders between *polis* and *ekklesia*. In his critique of the insurrection, J.J. Horgan demonstrates Pearse's "cynical" and "wicked" behaviour by invoking the Christian doctrine of *bellum iustum*. Horgan actually lists the Augustinian premises of "intolerable tyranny", "failure of all legal means of redress" and "support of majority" twinned with the "reasonable chances of success" in order to show that the insurrection failed to meet any of those ecclesiastically sanctioned conditions of justified use of violence.[38] The doctrine, however, as well as Horgan's anathemas, is based on the orthodox view of the two distinct and autonomous entities, one of which remains the superior authority at least in the matters of ethics.

According to Fitzgerald's account from inside of the GPO, the question of the theological "justness" of the insurrection remained a hotly debated issue.[39] This topic seemed to disturb the leaders of the Rising profoundly, leading even to a secret mission of Count Plunkett to the Holy See in order to obtain papal blessing for the Volunteers. Significantly, Plunkett in the account given to the Pope clearly follows the Augustinian doctrine, multiplying the actual numbers of the Volunteers (and thus claiming "reasonable chances for success") and exaggerates the level of British oppression, declaring among other things that the war taxation could induce famine.[40] In Pearse's case, however, another discourse of justification seems to be at play. Le Roux tellingly described the essence of Pearse's conceptualization of the Rising as "self-immolation to *save the soul* of the nation *in danger of damnation*" (emphasis mine).[41] The doctrine of

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[37] *An Piarsach Sa Bheilg*… 126 (originally published in *ACS*, 19 August 1905).

[38] Horgan 285-9. It seems that the reason for Eoin MacNeill's final rejection of the plan of the Rising should be looked for in the same doctrinal context. "The only reason that could justify general active military measures –as distinct from military preparations" (MacNeill in his *Memorandum* from January 1916) on the part of Irish nationalists would be a reasonably calculated or estimated prospect of success, in the military sense. Without that prospect, military action (not military preparation) would in the first place be morally wrong…" (F.X. Martin, "Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising", *Irish Historical Studies* 12.47 (March 1961): 234; see also David W. Miller, *Church, State, Nation*, 319-320).

[39] Desmond Fitzgerald, *Desmond's Rising. Memoirs 1913 to Easter 1916* (Dublin: Liberties Press, 214. First published 1966).

[40] Jérome van de Wiel (*The Catholic Church in Ireland 1914-1918. War and Politics*, [Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003] 79-80. In the separatist press during the war, there was a growing tendency to aggravate the "material" dimension of Irish oppression at the hands of "the foreigners". In this respect, the radical opinion-makers attempted to cater for the need for a perfectly orthodox justification of the violent rejection of the English rule. It could draw on the long tradition of describing the incomparable intensity of Irish sufferings throughout, suffusing not only nationalist press but also basic history textbooks of Pearse's youth. In J. M. O'Brien's *Catechism of Irish History* (basic Christian Brothers' textbook published in 1876) we read for example about the exceptional "duration of her [Ireland's] torture and the ferocity of her executioner" (Coldrey 122). As early as in 1912 *Irish Freedom*, in the article "Resistance to Arms" (October 1912), lists the theological conditions for a rightful revolt and declares that in the Irish context they are all fulfilled. During the war, with its threat of conscription, this theme re-appears more frequently.

[41] Le Roux 79.

bellum iustum is applied to a state (as material and this-worldly entity) and to the acts of peoples within this-worldly context. The image of a nation built on an analogy with *Ecclesia militans,* as delineated in the opening of "Ghosts", alters this picture substantially. If we perceive nationality as "a thing holy and inviolable" – just as man's immortal soul – and "freedom" as something similar to grace, transcending "all corporeal necessities", another ethos within the Christian tradition seems to be invoked. Medieval theologians made an exception for the use of violence in the situations when man's soul, rather than mere material existence, is at stake. In such situations to wage a war was not only justified but even necessary. If the nation is conceived in analogy with both man and the Church, then its protection should not be perceived in terms of the doctrine regulating the conflicts between states (ontologically belonging solely to the material reality) but essentially gains the status of the holy war.[42]

As the Rising was approaching, Pearse added one more justification, again derived from the sphere of theology. In "The Spiritual Nation", dealing with Thomas Davis' cultural nationalism, Pearse defines two basic elements forming the nation, "nationality" and "nationhood":

> The word "nationality" I have used here and elsewhere for the inner thing which is a nation's soul, and the word "nationhood" I have made to include both that inner thing and the outer status, political independence. (*PWS* 320)

Pearse seems to assume at this stage of his argument that whereas the material element, "nationhood", may be lost for some period of time, the spiritual one, "nationality", must be preserved at all cost: "[…] the soul of the enslaved and broken nation may conceivably be as more splendid thing than the soul of the great free nation […]" (*PWS* 302). Nonetheless, "The Sovereign People", concluded with the immediate prospect of the Rising, relates both dimensions more closely: the protection of "nationality" or "the inner thing" is not enough to preserve "the continued existence of the nation" for a longer period of time: "physical freedom is necessary to the healthy life […] Without it nation droops, withers, ultimately perhaps dies" (*PWS* 335-6). Instead of a mere dualism of the material and the spiritual in man, typical for the Platonic strain in the history of philosophy, Pearse defines the nation in a more Aristotelian / Thomistic way, in accordance with the dominant anthropological doctrine of the Catholic Church (Thomism being

[42] Pearse's hierarchizing (spiritual over physical threat) was shared by some other nationalist authors. The columnist of *Irish Freedom* known as Lucan (along with Pim he was Pearse's closest intellectual ally among the nationalist journalists) wrote in an article entitled "Not Peace but Sword" about the "poisonous and corrupting peace" that is more dangerous to Ireland than "cruelties and tortures" inflicted on her earlier (Lucan, "Not Peace but Sword", *Irish Freedom* September 1911, 1-2).

considered a semi-official philosophical doctrine of the Church at least since Leo's XIII *Aeterni Parentis* encyclical from 1879). It conceives man only as a unity, encompassing both spiritual and material dimension and complete only as a whole.[43] Pearse's decision to distance himself from the original cultural nationalism of the Gaelic League should be read in this context: just as a living man's soul cannot exist without its body, so the Gaelic League's care for the nation's "inner thing" must be supplemented with the attainment of political sovereignty. Ireland which is "Gaelic" needs a necessary complement in the form of Ireland which is "free". On a higher level, this approach also diverts from the discourse of Irish exceptionalism based on the idea of "the home of ancient idealism" or of Ireland as "the most faithful nation". The sanctification of Ireland's cause is not derived from its status as the representative of a universal, external idea. It participates in the sphere of the sacred as a whole, just as other entities of twofold nature – man and church.

In this chapter I attempted to present the mechanism by means of which theological content keeps re-appearing in Pearse's writings. As I demonstrated in the analysis of the introduction to "Ghosts", it actually provides a crucial imaginative framework within which Pearse's argumentation operates. At the same time, his discourse, though suffused with religious terminology and imagery, differs considerably from the Catholic nationalism common in Ireland at that time – as confirmed by religiously motivated critique of Pearse by Horgan, MacNeill or, few decades later, Francis Shaw.

It may be claimed that the disturbing character of Pearse's thought springs from the fact that he apparently constructs a totalizing system of a national faith that is parallel, analogous to the universe of the Catholic Church. The mechanism of *104emoriam104y104* transcends the level of mere rhetoric but, as I demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs, structures Pearse's conceptualization of nationalism as a whole. The community of the nation is constructed *per analogiam* to the community of the Church. As such, it aspires to a different status in the ontological and ethical order of the universe. The rules applied to the state in the orthodox Catholic doctrine are not relevant in this case anymore. At the same time, despite the obvious heretical potential of such an idea, Pearse is attempting not to break the essential links connecting his concept to the doctrine of the Church. The laboriously constructed analogies and

[43] Pearse's attitude here differs significantly from both major strains of Irish nationalist opinion at that time. Moran's "Irish-Irelandism" as well as Yeats' "Celtic Note" (or in fact Catholic hierarchy) both upheld the primacy of the preservation of the soul of the nation over the political programme of autonomy. On the contrary, the Irish Parliamentary Party was accused of pursuing the programme of political autonomy (caring for the "body" of the nation) but at the same time tacitly conceding to the destructible cultural "West Britonism" (killing the "soul"). Pearse's final essays are exceptional in their rejection of this dualism and in the accentuation of the necessity to unite both dimensions.

comparisons of Pearse's writings do not serve – as I argue in the following chapters – the purpose of dethroning religion and installing a new, all-embracing value system in its place. They seem to try very hard (no matter if successfully) to remain within the context of the Christian universe. Nation, built on the principle of analogy with the Church, remains its "younger brother", rather than its equal.

In the following chapters I elaborate on this thesis mainly on the basis of the analysis of Pearse's literary writings where the mechanism of *105emoriam105y105* becomes more apparent. The first three chapters demonstrate the process of transposition and constant interrelation of the theological and the political, which is in my view the organizing principle of Pearse's thinking. The final chapter examines the ways in which Pearse's nationalism attempts to preserve its link to the Christian framework, in other words it tackles the issue of "theological implications" of Pearse's thinking that Augustine Martin (quoted at the beginning of the Introduction) was so happy to avoid.

Chapter Five

"Wise Foolishness of Saints": The Evolution of Christian Ethical Radicalism in Pearse's Writings

> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.
>
> *Revelation* 3.16

In a recent analysis of the aftermath of the Easter Rising, Charles Townshend wrote that it "shifted the horizons of possibility, both at the subliminal and practical level" and that the "symbolic effect" of the rebellion "was to burst the limits of what could be imagined".[1] Townshend describes the impact of the Rising in terms directly referring to the language of Griffin's modernist "sense of a beginning". "Shifting the horizons of the possible and imaginable" is a quality underlining two new theories of political leadership emerging in the same period and from the same *Zeitgeist* as the Rising itself: these are Carl Schmitt's decisionism and Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority. Both challenge the rationalist basis of authority and both refer to the "creative, revolutionary power", asking the people to submit to "something which was not here before".[2] At the same time, however, both find their imagery in the religious and theological realm and thus provide a useful set of tools for disclosing the mechanism of Pearse's thinking. In the present chapter, their theories are used for reading a selection from Pearse's writings. The chapter concentrates mainly on three literary texts written in the last two years before the Rising: a poem entitled "The Fool" and two plays, *The Master* and *The Singer*.

In his canonical study of the literary and psychological profiles of the leaders of the Easter Rising, William Thompson claims that: "Accused of being foolish, Pearse made a metaphysic out of foolishness. Throughout his plays, poems and stories, he celebrates children and fools, for in them he is steadfastly resisting maturity."[3] This chapter follows Thompson's suggestion of positing "foolishness" as one of the central notions in Pearse's writings. Nevertheless, I argue that Pearse was in no way unique in making "metaphysic out of foolishness" and that the true antithesis of Pearsean "foolishness" is not really, as Thompson claims, "maturity"(synonymous for him, it seems, with "wisdom"). Moreover, the term "metaphysic" seems to be used by Thompson in a rather imprecise manner. In the following

[1] Townshend 355.
[2] Max Weber, *Autorita, etika a společnost. Pohled sociologa do dějin*, trans. J. Škoda (Praha: Mladá fronta, 1997) 140.
[3] Thompson 121.

argument, the motif of "foolishness" is used as a key to the *ethics* of Pearse's revolutionary nationalism. Departing from the dialectic of foolishness and wisdom in Pearse's writings and then relating those dialectics to the question of political action, this chapter ultimately connects this specific Pearsean notion of "foolishness" to the issue of authority and leadership in a time of crisis on the basis of the analysis of the character of MacDara from Pearse's final play, *The Singer*.

5.1. "Fools for Christ's sake"

In his essay *Catholicism and Political Form*, Carl Schmitt, referring to the political flexibility of Catholicism, juxtaposes Donoso Cortes, a conservative defender of authoritarian dictatorship, and Patrick Pearse, "the Irish Rebel with syndicalist connections" who "led by his Franciscan love sacrificed himself for the poor Irish nation".[4] It is interesting that in this context, Schmitt invokes St Francis of Assisi, one of the few saints in Western Christianity who comes close to the model of the "holy fool", otherwise strongly rooted in the Orthodox Eastern tradition. "Holy fool" is a person whose special relationship with the transcendent manifests itself by a complete rejection of material possessions and by a seemingly deliberate defiance of conventions, which for many observers may verge on insanity. Pearse himself consciously appeals to the same tradition in his 1913-1914 essays "From a Hermitage". On one level, the title refers to the traditional name of the building located in the Dublin suburb of Rathfarnham, in which St. Enda's school, was based since 1910. At the same time, in these texts, the author deliberately assumes the role of a "hermit", the most common representation of the "holy fool" tradition: an outsider, a stranger to the "things of this world", who is however endowed with the "wise foolishness of the saints" (*PWS* 157).

The roots of this tradition lie in St Paul's theology, in particular in his sentence from the First Letter to Corinthians: "We are fools for Christ's sake" (1 Cor. 4.10). The use of the word "fool" should be read in the context of the basic antithesis in St Paul's epistemology, i.e. between the "wisdom of this world" and the "wisdom of God", which is in turn a re-writing of the Platonic distinction between *episteme* and *doxa*. True knowledge, coming from a transcendent source, *appears* as "foolishness" to those indulging in the false knowledge pertaining to this world. Therefore, the epistemological perspective must be turned upside-down if one is to gain access to what *is* (rather than merely *appears*) true. In St. Paul's words: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1 Cor. 3.18). In these terms, St. Paul explains even the central Christian symbol of the Cross,

[4] The official English translation of the passage by G. L. Ulmen is imprecise here: Ulmen speaks of "Good Samaritan" where in the original Schmitt has "franziskanischer Güte" (Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and the Political Form*, transl. G.L. Ulmen, [Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996] 7).

claiming that it appears as 'scandal to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles' (1 Cor. 1.23). From this perspective, following the example set by Jesus Christ means behaving according to the rules of another reality, understood as the exact opposite of the false reality of "this world". Thus, necessarily, to imitate Christ means to expose oneself to being misunderstood, ridiculed or even hated by those lacking an insight into the truth. The process of approaching the sacred is identified to some extent with the transgression of the rules of the "earthly" reality. This tradition finds its most radical realisation in the Eastern tradition of the holy fools (known in Russian as *yurodivy*), people who are characterized not only by their rejection of material possessions and seclusion from society, but also by a deliberate transgression of social conventions, such as walking about naked in public.

Among the greatest personalities of Irish history, Patrick Pearse, a rather stiff "Victorian Gael" as Pat Cooke puts it,[5] is extremely difficult to imagine walking naked around Dublin. Nevertheless, Pearse's personal philosophy seems to follow very closely the Pauline antithesis of the false wisdom of this world and the true wisdom of the spirit. In an article for St. Enda's periodical *An Macaomh*, he claims that "the spiritual always triumph over the actual (for the spiritual, being the true actual, is stronger than the forms and bulks of the actual)".[6] His definition of "the spiritual" as "the true actual" seems to be a precise echo of Pauline thinking. In another article for *An Macaomh*, he also presents an argument very closely modelled on the tradition of evangelical ethical radicalism:

> Our Christianity becomes respectability. We are not content with teaching the ten commandments that God spake in thunder […]: we add thereto the commandments and precepts of Respectable Society […] Thou shalt not be extreme in anything – in wrongdoing lest thou be put in gaol, in rightdoing lest thou be deemed a saint […] Thou shalt not have an enthusiasm lest solicitors and clerks call thee fool; Thou shalt not endanger thy Job. One has heard this shocking morality taught in Christian schools, expounded in Christian newspapers, even preached from Christian pulpits. Those things about the lilies in the field and the birds of the air, and that rebuke to Martha who was troubled about many things, are thought to have no relevancy to modern life. But if that is so, Christianity has no relevancy to modern life, for these are the essence of Christ's teaching.[7]

[5] Pat Cooke, "The Victorian Gael", *The Life and After-Life*… 45-64.
[6] Pearse, "By Way of Comment", *An Macaomh,* Christmas 1910
[7] Pearse, "By Way of Comment", *An Macaomh*, 2 May 1913.

The conflict between radical and charismatic Christianity on the one hand and the established and routinized Christianity on the other has been emerging repeatedly throughout history since the followers of Christ left the catacombs for the first time and entered social life. At first sight, this conflict remains very far removed from the sphere of the political, being primarily interested in the individual and his/her resignation from the "things of this world". Nevertheless, as the history of Christianity confirms, it contains significant potential for evolving into a *political* conflict between the established order and the revolutionary utopia, represented by various chiliastic and millenarian movements which have repeatedly occurred within the Christian community from the late antiquity to the modern times.

5.2. The Fool Enters Politics

"The Fool" is also the title of one of Pearse's most famous poems. Together with "The Rebel", they form a strange pair, since both were written very shortly before the Rising, in English and both resemble a sermon or a pamphlet rather than a work of poetry, although they have quite rightly been compared by some critics to the quasi-Biblical prophetic free verse of Blake or Whitman.[8] Nevertheless, while "The Rebel" communicates a relatively straightforward message of revolutionary messianism, "The Fool" remains more elusive in its theological implications.

On the surface, "The Fool" (*LWPP* 23-4) articulates the typical features of the Christian "holy fool" tradition. Phrases such as "a man shall scatter, not hoard"[9] or "ye shall venture your all, lest you lose what is more than all" are perfectly in tune with the ethical radicalism of the Gospel. Moreover, the persona of the poem repeatedly stresses that, in his radical choices, he is only imitating Christ, "taking Him at his word" and awaiting His "miracle". The reaction of the powers-that-be to the Fool's non-conformism also follows the Pauline scheme exactly: he is ridiculed ("and the wise have pitied the fool") or accused of blasphemy ("and others have said, 'He blasphemeth'"), echoing St. Paul's description of the Cross as either "a scandal" or "foolishness" (1 Cor. 1.23).[10] Nevertheless, the vocabulary of radical Christianity is not used here to promote the doctrine of the individual ethical perfection achieved through resignation from the things of this world. Rather, the poem moves towards a political interpretation of the Pauline scheme, modifying the ethical radicalism of St. Paul's with elements clearly drawn from the Romantic tradition.

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[8] Ní Ghairbhí, "A Nation that Does Not Exist?" 165.

[9] "For this I have heard in my heart, that a man shall scatter, not hoard, / Shall do the deed of to-day, nor take thought of to-morrow's teen […]"

[10] "The lawyers have sat in council, the men with the keen, long faces, / And said, 'This man is a fool,' and others have said, 'He blasphemeth;' / And the wise have pitied the fool that hath striven to give a life / In the world of time and space among the bulks of actual things, / To a dream that was dreamed in the heart, and that only the heart could hold."

Many authors of the Romantic period take a similar starting point as the Pauline tradition, juxtaposing the spiritual and the material and declaring the superiority of the irrational and supra-rational. In the words of Adam Mickiewicz's poetical manifesto: "feeling and faith are more to me / than savant's glass and eye".[11] It also shares the supposition that in order to transcend the reality of reason and matter, a rebellion against its rules is needed. According to the early Romantic philosopher Johann Georg Hamann, God is closer to what is abnormal than to what is normal. Similarly, Adam Mickiewicz exalts "madness" against "reasonableness".[12] Both authors reproduce in their thinking the basic Pauline motif: what seems abnormal according to the standards of everyday reality may actually prove to be a path towards the true knowledge. In this way, they create a Romantic version of the holy fool tradition. Nevertheless, the Romantic "fool" differs from his Biblical predecessor in at least two crucial respects. Firstly, the source of "real wisdom" seems to be immanentized, re-located from the Divine into the human heart. Secondly, the energy generated from the revelation of the "real wisdom" is directed not towards the transformation of the individual on his solitary march towards the otherworldly salvation, but rather towards the goal of the collective and this-worldly "salvation" of humanity.

Isaiah Berlin demonstrates how authenticity became the central moral criterion for the Romantics, who evaluated human actions not on the basis of objective ethical norms but according to the subjective quality of "sincere belief".[13] The Fool in Pearse's poem reveals this new ethics quite clearly in his address to God: "Do not remember my failures / But remember this my faith." In this context, we may also quote Pearse's explanation of how he had chosen the four "Evangelists" of Irish freedom in his essay "Ghosts": "I am seeking to find, not those who have thought most *wisely* about Ireland, but those who have thought most *authentically* for Ireland, the voices that have come out of the Irish struggle itself" (PWS 246, emphasis mine). The Fool in the poem attempts to bring to life "a dream" that is his own rather than a Divine creation ("a dream that was dreamed in the heart, and that only the heart could hold") and juxtaposes it with "the world of time and space among the bulks of actual things". This dream awaits its realisation here and now, within the reality of this world. Its subject is "the house" for "millions unborn" to dwell in.[14] The basic Pauline juxtaposition between the false wisdom of this world, which prefers "things of the body" to "things of the spirit", and the real, albeit unseen, wisdom is thus upheld yet modified. Instead of the redemptive wisdom that comes from the transcendent source and

[11] Adam Mickiewicz, "Romantyczność", *Wiersze* vol. 1 (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1982) 27 (transl. mine).
[12] Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 56; Walicki, *Romantic Nationalism* 251.
[13] Berlin 7-12, 139-140.
[14] "O wise men, riddle me this: what if the dream come true? / What if the dream come true? And if millions unborn shall dwell / In the house that I shaped in my heart, the noble house of my thought?"

invites people to pursue the transcendent, otherworldly goal, the poem introduces a vague yet definitely this-worldly notion of salvation from the yoke of the material world.

The need to refuse the compromises and falsities of reality is a necessary condition for change. The inner transformation of the individual in Romantic philosophy serves only as an introductory step towards the transformation of the outside reality. Living a "dream" is making a *deed* possible – with "deed" meaning here not any kind of activity but a "radical transformation of reality".[15] Thus, the individualised perspective of Christian redemption is exchanged in a considerable number of Romantic texts for the millenarian longing for a collective renewal. In the statement about the false commandments of the respectable citizen quoted above, Pearse contrasts the ethics of the bourgeois society ruled by conventions and the priority of the material over the spiritual with Christ's exaltation of "lilies in the field and birds of the air"[16] which do not care about material possessions and the logic of gain and loss. The same contrast between the material and the spiritual, the natural and the mechanical is made again later in "The Sovereign People" – this time transposed from the individual to the collective level – in order to create an antithesis between the nation and the empire. Whereas the first is bound together by "natural ties, ties mystic and spiritual" and "ties human and kindly", the latter is held together solely by mutual commercial interests or physical power; one is sustained by faith and love, the other by the promise of gain (*PWS* 343). "The Fool" takes this juxtaposition for granted and completes the transition from the individual towards the collective by means of a call for revolutionary action. Not only does the speaker's dream concern the whole nation ("millions unborn") but its realisation is also to be pursued by the multitude: "O people that I have loved, shall we not answer together?"[17]

It must be noted, however, that this call for collective action is constantly balanced in Pearse's writings by emphasising the primary role of the supreme individual, the elected One. This overlapping of the individual and the collective dimension seems again a common feature of Romantic thinking, present for example in Giuseppe Mazzini's and Mickiewicz's revolutionary national messianism. Mickiewicz wrote in this respect that in the time of crisis, the "supra-individual national reason" is articulated through the voices of the outstanding individuals, "the men of feeling and of duty".[18] "The Fool" of Pearse's poem occupies a similar position. He speaks "for the people", yet it is him who dreams the "dream" and who makes a final decision:

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[15] Tomaszewski 84.
[16] Pearse, "By Way of Comment", *An Macaomh*, 2 May 1913.
[17] I speak to my people and say: / Ye shall be foolish as I; ye shall scatter, not save; / Ye shall venture your all, lest ye lose what is more than all; / Ye shall call for a miracle, taking Christ at His word. / And for this I will answer, O people, answer here and hereafter, / O people that I have loved, shall we not answer together?"
[18] Walicki, *Romantic Nationalism* 251.

"Lord, I have staked my soul, I have staked the lives of my kin / On the truth of Thy dreadful word" (*LWPP* 23-24).

5.3. Miracles and Politics

In his early article from 1912, entitled "Don Quixote and the Public", Carl Schmitt meditates on the close connection between lunacy and truth. His argument provides a parallel to both St. Paul's image of "fools for Christ's sake" and Pearse's diatribe against the "respectable society", yet re-written in the language of modern social criticism: "A man who has motives other than those usual in bourgeois life will be a laughingstock […] the public sees quite rightly what it laughs at; the question is only whether it is right."[19] Few years later, in *Political Romanticism* (1919), Don Quixote rises to the position of an emblematic political figure. As Schmitt suggests, "his battles were fantastically absurd", resulting from his "disregard for external reality" yet "they were still battles". Don Quixote was able to make a decision differentiating between right and wrong and then turn his belief into deeds.[20] Pearse himself follows similar dialectics most apparently in his description of Wolfe Tone, one of his avatars in the history of Irish separatism. Pearse calls Tone a dreamer and a doer: "dreamer of the immortal dream and doer of the immortal deed" (*PWS* 55). The credo of the 'holy fool' becoming a revolutionary is thus not only to transcend the world to the sphere of the spiritual ("a dream") but also to implement this dream by means of a decision and consequent deeds.

Still, the movement towards the Romantic and revolutionary modification of the Pauline radicalism does not seem to be complete in "The Fool". The final stanzas of the poem are filled with an uneasy tension between a passive and an active attitude towards the implementation of the visionary promise of transformation. The Fool speaks about "giving life" to his dream, yet at the same time ascribes its origin to God: is this my sin before men, to have taken Him at His word?" and, in the final stanza, advises "call[ing] for a miracle, taking Christ at His word". Here, the word "miracle" seems to be the final obstacle to the transformation of "wise foolishness" from the category of individual morality into revolutionary political force. It necessarily invokes the notion of passive expectation of the intervention of a supra-human power beyond reality. St. Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Contra Gentles* defines miracles as events "which are wrought by Divine power apart from the order usually observed in nature", emphasizing not only that a miracle is beyond the natural order of things but also that it must be caused by a power outside that order.[21] Nevertheless, examining the genealogy of the notion of the miraculous in Pearse's

[19] Quoted in: Ellen Kennedy, *Constitutional Failure. Carl Schmitt in Weimar*, (Duke University Press, 2004) 43.
[20] Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*. Trans. Guy Oakes (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986) 183-4.
[21] *Summa contra gentiles* III, CII.

writings can help to illuminate the evolutionary trajectory of his ethics. In the first stage, the embracement of the miraculous is part of the politically passive spiritualism of the peasant West. "The Fool" and the play *The Master* signalize the transposition of the miraculous to the political dimension and open the space for the final transformation of the notion of the Divine miracle into its political equivalent: an ability to make a decision that – quoting Townshend once again – "shifts the horizons of the imaginable".

Douglas Hyde's statement about Irish natural proneness to seeing "God's hand" in the ordinary matters of life, articulated in the introduction to *Religious Songs of Connacht*, is one of the commonplaces of both the Anglo-Irish and the Gaelic Revival.[22] Pearse also constructs the setting of his Connemara short stories as a place suffused with the intimations of the other world.[23] In one of his articles on the Irish-speaking region of Iar-Connacht, he claims that even the physical appearance of the Irish-speaking peasants – their "beautiful and spiritual" faces that could serve as models for "St. John, St. Peter or a Mater Dolorosa" – strengthen the feeling of "in-betweenness" of their lives, constantly open to the influence of the other world.[24] Miracles, that is, divine interventions into the natural order of things, are an unquestioned and recurring element of life in the West in Pearse's stories: Virgin Mary appears with Her Son in the cottage of the childless woman in "An Mhathair", Christ drags His cross through the forest near Rossnageeragh in "Na Boithre" and the Child Jesus, as a golden-haired Irish-speaking boy, brings the last consolation to sean-Mhaitias in "Íosogán". In all these cases, the human protagonists of the stories are confronted with a miracle, often willed and longed for, yet always ultimately independent from their own doings. Without exception, the characters are passive receivers of grace which invades the reality of this world.

The central virtues of the peasant West are for Pearse, as John Wilson Foster observes, "feminine", which in case of Pearse's texts denotes the qualities of endurance, "suffering and patience".[25] Theologian and sociologist Margaret MacCurtain defined this type of attitude as typical for the traditional folk-religiosity, especially connected to women spirituality. MacCurtain quotes in this respect an emblematic phrase from Peig Sayers' memoirs from the Blasket Islands: "I remember bending to my work with my heart breaking. I used to think of Mary and the Lord – the hard life they had. I knew that I had a duty to imitate them and bear my sorrow patiently...[26]

[22] Douglas Hyde, *Religious Songs of Connacht*, (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972. First published 1906) 8.
[23] It must be noted, however, that Pearse's rendering of the peasant spirituality leaves off the "pagan" element of folklore, so significant for the writers of the "Celtic note". His stories abound in the motifs of folk religiosity, but lack almost any mention of the "fairies".
[24] *ACS* 26 April 1902. Quoted in: Sisson 64.
[25] J.W. Foster, *Fictions of the Literary Revival* 308
[26] MacCurtain 237.

The West lives in a constant interaction with the miraculous, yet it is the miraculous of a perfectly orthodox, evangelical type, stressing humility, service and a passive acceptance of fate. This notion is slightly different from the "feminine" gendering of "the Celt" by Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold, so prominently present in the discourse of colonial English dominance over Ireland, however, it results in similar political consequences. The passivity of the female and child characters of Pearse's stories, although brought about, it seems, by the harsh conditions of life rather than by some innate "Celtic" inability to rule their own affairs, highlights the relatively apolitical atmosphere of his stories. Even when echoes of anti-colonial rhetoric appear on the surface of the texts, they are immediately counteracted by the dominant spirituality. After all, male characters are almost completely absent from the majority of the texts. Quite tellingly, 'An Bhean Chaointe', the last of Pearse's stories, ends with the following exchange in which the two gendered types of attitude to reality are explicitly confronted (in Joseph Campbell's translation):

> My father laid his hand on Seaneen's head. "Maybe, little son," says he, "we'll all be taking tally-ho out of the black soldiers before the clay will come on us."
> "It's time for the Rosary," says my mother.[27]

The father's revolutionary, nationalist longings for a confrontation with the colonial rulers are immediately checked and pacified by the mother's call to prayer. Masculine fantasies of violence are exchanged for an image of the archetype of passive, "feminine" spirituality – Virgin Mary.[28]

The ending of "An Bhean Chaointe", published in *ACS* in December 1907, signalizes the gradual evolution of Pearse's thinking. His short stories depict the idealised image of the pristine Western community, preserving, thanks to its isolation, the intact Gaelic heritage. It is the first of Pearse's stories in which the reality of external oppression becomes a prominent theme. Nonetheless, its protagonist, "the keening woman" struggling to save her unjustly imprisoned son, again represents mainly the "feminine" power to endure suffering. Another kind of spirituality and another type of interaction with the miraculous is needed in order to ignite an armed rebellion. Pearse's move away from the short stories towards the political pamphlets, late poetry and drama may be seen as a parallel to his gradual distancing from the Gaelic League (which conducts the feminine duty of "guarding the nation's hearthside") in favour of a new, "masculine" type of spirituality. In "From a Hermitage", Pearse exhorts:

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[27] Patrick Pearse, *Short Stories*, ed. Anne Markey, trans. Joseph Campbell (Dublin: UCD Press, 2009. First published 1917) 102.
[28] Cf. also Foster's comment about the same story: "The mother counsels against violent reaction, advocates passive acceptance of oppression, and in general looks after the Catholic welfare of the family" (Foster, *Fictions of the Literary Revival* 308)

> I want a missionary, a herald, an Irish-speaking John the Baptist, one who would go through the Irish West and speak trumpet-toned of nationality to the people in the villages. I would not have him speak of Gaelic Leagues, or of Fees for Irish, or of Bilingual Programmes, or of Essential Irish in Universities: I would have him speak of Tone and Mitchel and the Hawk of the Hill, and of men dead or in exile for love of the Gael. (*PWS* 166-7).

Pearse's play *The Master* also centres on the motif of the miraculous which in this case undergoes a significant transformation. A Christian teacher is challenged by a pagan king to prove the truthfulness of his religion by making God or one of his angels appear before them. Assailed by doubts about his faith, the teacher does not feel worthy enough to meet the challenge. Help comes from one of his pupils, Iollann Beag. A child becomes an even better example of innocence and immunity to the falsity of the material world than the holy fool. Iollann Beag summons the Archangel Michael who actually appears before the king and the master in his heavenly splendour. The play ends with a miracle – a very literal invasion of the supernatural into the natural world. This time it is an apparition very different from the humble and benign miracles in Pearse's short stories. The Archangel arrives as a "mighty warrior" and speaks the language of war ("I am he who rideth before the squadron […] I am he that is Captain of the Host of God" [*LWPP* 99]). The miracles of Pearse's short stories are "private", directed towards the individual, but this time the significance of the miracle is public and political. Ciaran, the Master, is an agent of a major political and cultural change, as he persuades the king to convert from paganism to Christianity. As we have already discussed in Chapter 3, Ciaran, from the perspective of the establishment represented by the king, is a disturber of the social order. It is interesting that his dialogue with Daire, the King, can be at the same time read as a dramatized debate between the "Romantic" holy fool and a representative of "respectable society". The King accuses the Master: "You have spent your life pursuing shadows that fled before you" and contrasts it with his own "life busy with the little vulgar tasks" which however have a real "substance". In his apology, Ciaran argues that there is a "deeper antagonism" between them, based on the Pauline differentiation between what appears to be reality and what is real: "[…] I have been discontent, seeking things remote and holy and perilous […] they alone are real; or rather, it alone is real. For though its name be many, its substance is one" (*LWPP* 95). Crucially, however, in the moment of the direct confrontation Ciaran fails to prove the superiority of the new religion due to the weakness of his own conviction and must be redeemed from outside. His own failure does not change the fact that the result of the confrontation between the Master and

the King is the triumph of the new creed symbolized by Daire kneeling before the Divine messenger in the ultimate scene.

The Master and "The Fool" transfer the notion of miracle into the public domain. They bring with them the promise of a political rather than spiritual salvation and suggest for the first time in Pearse's works that a miracle can be also provoked, forced to occur as a result of man's faith. The power enabling to induce miracles lies, however, only in the outsiders: in the poem it is the despised Fool, in the play an innocent little boy. Both texts and their protagonists prepare the ground for the appearance of the ultimate "holy fool" of Pearse's writings: MacDara, the protagonist of his last play *The Singer*, who is convinced that through his own sacrifice he can re-enact the greatest of all miracles, that is the redemptive death of Christ on the cross.

This transformation of the notion of the miracle from the Divine intervention to the human act can again be related to Schmitt's political philosophy. His already discussed apology of Don Quixote in *Political Romanticism* heralds one of the central doctrines of his thinking: decisionism, formulated a few years later in *Political Theology*. This essay is a powerful critique of the liberal belief in the possibility of a rationalist, mechanised political system where the supreme power lies in a non-human entity, namely the legal norm. Schmitt argues that "sovereign is he who decides on the exception", restoring to political theory both the centrality of the individual for political practice and the centrality of emergency situations, which, at least temporarily, render the rules of the rationalised legal systems useless. During the course of Schmitt's text, the notion of exception undergoes a process of theologization: it turns into a secular equivalent of the miracle. It is a transformative and life-giving power: "In the exception, the power of real life breaks through the crust of mechanism that has become torpid by repetition." Miracle is after all also an exception from the rules, an intervention into reality coming from beyond reality. Schmitt argues that "all political terms are in fact only secularized theological symbols".[29] Modern bureaucratic and rationalist order bans the exception just as deistic philosophy of the Enlightenment banned the miracle, denying the possibility of any kind of supernatural intervention into the natural order. Everything has to be contained within the legal system and regulated by it in the same way as everything is subject to the mechanical processes of the natural world designed (and left alone) by the "Great Architect". In contrast, Schmitt argues, real politics reveals itself in the state of emergency, in a crisis which forces the leader to make a decision which transcends the rigid framework of the rationalist legal order. This decision of the real sovereign is the political equivalent of the theological notion of miracle.

[29] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006) 7-15.

The theme of the ability to decide and act accordingly – considered a basic sign of manliness and juxtaposed to the liberal exaltation of discussion – suffuses Pearse's writings at least from the time of the publication of his well-known poem "Fornocht do Chonac Thú" ("Naked I saw thee", first published in *The Irish Review* of February 1912), which 117emoriam117y ascetic renunciation of the sensual beauties of the world for the sake of the chosen "road".[30] The recurring motif of the ability to make a decision becomes almost an obsession in the last months before the Rising. Haunted by doubts about the political and moral legitimacy of the imminent rebellion, Pearse escapes into an exaltation of decision-making not dissimilar from Schmitt's line of argumentation. In "The Fool" the speaker rejects doubts about the legitimacy of his acts by an unequivocal statement "No man shall judge me but God". In *The Singer*, the ability to make a decision differentiates the messianic figure of MacDara from "the old ones", the leaders of the village militia who keep waiting "for the word [orders] to come" from Galway, unable to launch an insurrection by themselves (*LWPP* 119-123). Dialogues between MacDara and the elders must have borne an uneasy resemblance to the actual debates between Pearse and his circle in the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the more hesitant part of the separatist leadership in the first months of 1916. MacDara's ability to make a political decision makes him, in a Schmittian sense, a political equivalent of the sovereign God intervening into the natural order of things through His miracles. The concept of miracle, the ultimate sign of God's sovereignty over the world, adapted in order to fit a political cause, helps us to trace the development of Pearse's radicalism towards the final transformation of "wise foolishness" from the sphere of individual non-conformism towards the ethics of revolution.

5.4. Wise Foolishness of the Rebels

In a short article with the intriguing title "Pearse and Pontius", written in 1919 for the periodical *Mayo News*, Arthur Clery describes Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Palestine at the time of Christ's death, as a model civil servant, characterized by "real sympathy for injustice and oppression tempered with a reasonable regard for public opinion and a complete respect for authority". Nevertheless, he is found lacking when it comes to "something essential", "some light" that Pearse apparently possessed and attempted to inoculate his students, readers and listeners with it.[31] In this text Clery, probably unconsciously, echoes Max Weber's distinction between rational (bureaucratic) and charismatic type of authority formulated at the beginning of the century. Schmitt's theory of decisionism, heavily indebted to Weber's theory of charisma, will

[30] For an interesting discussion of the poem, especially the relation between the Irish original and English translation see: W.J. McCormack, *"We Irish" in Europe: Yeats, Berkeley and Joseph Hone* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2010) 128-138.
[31] Arthur Clery, "Pearse and Pontius", *The Idea of a Nation*, ed. Patrick Maume (Dublin: UCD Press, 2002) 84-5.

serve in the following paragraphs as a guide to the analysis of MacDara, the protagonist of *The Singer* and the character who provides the final solution to the question of the connection between "wise foolishness" and political authority.

In his sociological studies, Weber worked out a triple classification of the types of *Herrschaft* or "authority": traditional, which is legitimised by its longevity; bureaucratic, which derives its legitimacy from rationality and effectiveness; and charismatic, centred on the personality of the leader who is a bearer of some specific spiritual or physical feature. In the case of charisma, the leader's authority and agenda are located specifically "outside the realm of everyday routine" and thus constitute the "genuine opposite" to the other two forms of authority. The traditional and the bureaucratic *Herrschaft* are "forms of everyday routine control" while charismatic authority is a "specifically creative, revolutionary force in history".[32] It recognises only its own mission and "sets its own limits", rejecting any kind of external order, transforming all values and breaking all traditional and rational norms.[33] Significantly, in its "pure" religious form, Weber's charisma describes in a detached sociological vocabulary what St Paul articulated in mystical terms: " […] to fulfil their mission, the bearers of the charisma must free themselves from all the bonds connecting them to this world, from their everyday employment, yes, even from the family ties."[34] Charisma also stands in opposition to any kind of rationalised ordered economy as "the only authority based on economic unrule"[35] – the attitude reproduced in Pearse's "The Fool" in the statement that "man shall scatter, not hoard".

MacDara, the Singer, is a "man of the mountains", expelled from his native Connemara village due to the political content of his poems. When he returns home after years of exile, it is to lead its inhabitants into a rebellion against the *Gall* ("Foreigners"). His character is defined by several key features which are, in Weber's terms, preconditions of charisma, particularly his non-conformism and ability to influence the minds of others. His youth is a series of rebellious acts and transgressions leading to punishment in the form of a series of banishments and exiles. From the very beginning, he defies the colonial rule in his poetry. Apart from the political aspect, there is also a religious dimension to the accusations against MacDara: his songs are not only "full of […] great anger against the Gall" but according to some, "there was irreligion in them and blasphemy against God" and the threat of imprisonment is connected to a religious sanction ("he may be excommunicated"). His further experiences involve further conflicts with various types of

[32] Weber 140-1.
[33] Weber 134; Thomas Dow, "An Analysis of Weber's Work on Charisma", *British Journal of Sociology* 29.1 (1979): 83.
[34] Weber 135. For the link between St. Paul's and Weber's notion of charisma see for example Roger Eatwell "The Concept and Theory of Charismatic Leadership", *Charisma and Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed. A. Costa Pinto, R. Eatwell, (Oxford: Routledge 2007), 3; or John Garder, *On Leadership*, (New York: Free Press 1990), 34 .
[35] Weber 135.

authority, including the authority of his pupil's parents ("he was so true to me that his mother grew jealous of me and […] bade him choose between her and me"). His rebellion reaches its peak when he defies the ultimate authority of God in an act of apostasy ("it became clear to me, with an awful clearness, that there was no God"). Upon MacDara's return to the village, he immediately overturns the traditional hierarchy, criticizing the passivity of the elders and taking the lead in the prepared insurrection himself: "Old men, you did not do your work well." MacDara also displays another crucial feature of charisma, namely its public, performative character. Charisma "must be made manifest".[36] MacDara, although "shy in himself and very silent", is transformed when "he stands up to talk to the people". Then "he has a voice of a silver trumpet, and words so beautiful that they make the people cry." (*LWPP* 100-126)

MacDara is a charismatic leader whose power is based not on previous legitimisation but solely on his self-assertion as the creator of the new law. This newness and the revolutionary character of his teaching are emphasised by the recurring phrases such as "I do not understand you rightly" or "This is a strange talk" (*LWPP* 119, 124), which are uttered by his older followers and friends. He is the direct opposite of another key figure of nationalist drama, namely Michael from Yeats's and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902). Whereas Michael is a passive receiver of Cathleen's intoxicating message, MacDara himself puts the listeners under the spell of his voice. As Nicholas Greene observes, "the call of Kathleen Ni Houlihan, like the call of Christ, can come to anyone". Michael as a paradigmatic figure is an Everyman, as his individuality is utterly irrelevant.[37] However, MacDara is the elected One: a born leader, not a follower.

The final scenes of *The Singer* provide the best summary of how the ethical ideal of "wise foolishness" has evolved towards the zone of revolutionary politics. MacDara's final exchange with other rebels establishes a definite link between the two:

> Diarmuid: We thought it a foolish thing for fourscore to go into the battle against four thousand…
>
> MacDara: And so it is a foolish thing. Do you want us to be wise?
>
> Cuimin: This is strange talk.
>
> MacDara: I will talk to you more strangely yet. It is for your own souls' sakes I would have had the fourscore go, and not for Colm's sake, or for

[36] Weber 157-58
[37] Nicholas Greene, *The Politics of Irish Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 70.

> the battle's sake, for the battle is won whether you go or not (*LWPP* 124).

To do a "foolish" thing – foolish in the eyes of this world – means both to *save your soul* and *win the battle*. Again, it is a characteristically Pearsean statement. At this point, he employs the discourse of Pauline spirituality in a very literal way, by means of juxtaposing the "wise foolishness" that rejects the logic of this world for the sake of the truth, and the wisdom of this world that has been proved useless in the time of crisis. Similarly to St. Paul, MacDara explicitly plays with the false epistemological premises of this world: "[…] and so it is a foolish thing. Do you want us to be wise?" Just like the Apostle of Tars, MacDara also connects the issue of accepting the true knowledge with the moral and spiritual dimension – "It is for your own souls' sake". Crucially, he at the same time refers to an actual battle with the enemies of the tribe. The context in which the language of Pauline theology is applied here constantly switches from the religious to the political, from the spiritual to the material, without abandoning either of them completely.

MacDara moves forward to face the enemies alone, invoking in his last words the sacrificial death of Christ as a model for his actions. At the beginning of this chapter, the image of Pearse as a highly improbable candidate for a "holy fool" running naked through the streets of Dublin was invoked. Despite this being largely a tongue-in-cheek remark, it must be noted now that the final stage direction which closes Pearse's last play is: "He moves through them, pulling off his clothes as he goes." (*LWPP* 125)

Pearse's contemporaries and many later commentators were puzzled by the contrast between the gentleness and sentimentality of his short stories and the alleged "bloodthirstiness" of his later political writings. Pearse of the short stories concentrated on children in terms of characters, praised the simple, natural life of Gaelic peasantry and his texts conveyed intimations of a deep, yet passive and resigned folk-spirituality. Pearse the politician exalted the qualities of manliness and decisiveness, arguing for the use violence as a necessary component of the life of a nation. The motif of "wise foolishness" provides a bridge between those seemingly antithetical tendencies in Pearse's thought. "Wise foolishness" springs from the same epistemological idealism which features as a major characteristic of Pearse's West: openness towards the miraculous and the transcendent and conviction that truth should be sought behind the façade of material reality. At the same time, "wise foolishness" signalizes a transition from the "de-politicized" West of the short stories to the insurgent West of *The Singer*.

By celebrating "children and fools" Pearse was not – as William Thompson suggests in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter – rejecting "maturity" but rather confronting the modern rationalist Western epistemology from the positions of the Biblical and the Romantic tradition. "Children and fools", thanks to their innocence and naivety, 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 enter into conflict with this majority, to tackle the established rules. To accept the perspective of "children and fools" thus means to confront the conformist attitude of "respectable society". As Pearse's Fool sums up in the poem: what seems to be "folly" to the majority in reality may be in fact "grace".

> I have squandered the splendid years that the Lord God gave to my youth
> In attempting impossible things, deeming them alone worth the toil.
>
> Was it folly or grace? Not men shall judge me, but God.
>
> I have squandered the splendid years:
> Lord, if I had the years I would squander them over again, (*LWPP* 23)

"Attempting impossible things" is an essential feature of the mode of life Pearse calls "wise foolishness". Juxtaposing "folly" and "grace" in that passage, he once again confirms the theological background of his ideas. Pauline epistemology and ethics are by definition "activist", as they call for a transformation of one's life and of society as whole, despite the fact that it may be undertaken against all odds. They provide a perspective that enables one to reach towards (as Weber says) "something that was not here before" and to imagine something that has so far been unimaginable. In the case of Fool's dream, it is "the house for millions unborn", i.e. free Irish Republic.

The motif of "wise foolishness" provides one of the keys to the convoluted logic of Pearse's thought. A primary inspiration is drawn from the dynamic of Pauline epistemology; however, St. Paul's topsy-turvy understanding of wisdom and foolishness is modified by being applied in the political (rather than merely ethical) and collective (rather than merely individual) context. Finally, even the source of such wisdom – so far transcendent and intervening into the natural order of human affairs by means of miracles – seems immanentized. Despite all this, the mechanism cannot be described as a straightforward secularization of the Pauline tradition in the spirit of revolutionary Romanticism. The process of transposition from the realm of theology to

that of politics does not seem complete, and Pearse's discourse remains rooted in both spheres simultaneously.

By tracing how the motif of "wise foolishness" evolved in Pearse's thought, I attempted to pinpoint the sources of the revolutionary turn in his writings. Springing from the sphere of individual ethics, this attitude triggers a process leading to the emergence of an outstanding individual who transcends the limitations of the social and political context and opens the space for goals that have so far been deemed impossible and unimaginable. In the following chapter, I continue my analysis of the character of MacDara in order to demonstrate why this charismatic energy was channelled in the service of the national community and how it was possible to accommodate the expectations of the awakened self and the requirements of the collectivity.

Chapter Six

The Übermensch of the Western World: Self and Nation in *The Singer*

Tír bhocht bhuaidheartha, is uaigneach céasta,
Tír gan fear, gan mac, gan chéile[1]
Aoghán Ó Rathaille

Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority, which provided a framework for the analysis of Pearse's ethics of wise foolishness, represents in a basic sense "a pattern of psychological, social, and economic release". It liberates the individual from the burden of "everyday economizing" that characterizes the bourgeois society, as well as from "custom, law and tradition". Moreover, its revolutionary potential to destroy existing hierarchies releases one from all "ordinary worldly attachments and duties of occupational and family life". The individual endowed with charisma places himself and his mission above all existing "notions of sanctity".[2] In contrast to that, nationalism came to be associated most commonly with "the abandonment of the self" and "being gathered up" in the collective body of a nation.[3] At the first sight, Weber's charisma – based on the idea of the total emancipation of the exceptional individual – and nationalism seem to form an antithetical pair.

A similar tension between the ideas of emancipation and subjugation of the self seems to be present in Pearse's writings. If we consider Pearse's literary and pedagogical practice separately from his political engagements, we encounter a very strong emphasis on the individual and the subjective.[4] In his literary criticism (within the context of Irish-language literature), Pearse was a tireless preacher of art based on the expression of the self: criticizing the tendency to revive Irish literature on the basis of imitating "the fettered, complicated, vacuous eighteenth century Irish model".[5] Instead he advised the writers (in a very basic Wordsworthian manner) to be "be simple and natural" and to "express oneself".[6] According to Pearse's definition, art "is a revelation of the artist's soul: a giving back again to others of something as he see it and feel it".[7]

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[1] "A poor afflicted, lonely and tortured land, / A land without a man, without a son, without a spouse." Quoted in: Ewan Morris, *Our Own Devices. National Symbols and Political Conflict in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005) 22.
[2] Dow, 83-5.
[3] Michael Mays, *Nation States. The Cultures of Irish Nationalism* (Lanham: Lexington books, 2007) 42.
[4] See, for example, Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival* 108, Declan Kiberd, "Patrick Pearse: Irish Modernist," *The Life and After-Life of P.H. Pearse* 65-80.
[5] Ó Tuama, *Repossessions* 6.
[6] Quoted in: Caerwyn Williams, *Irish Literary Tradition* 293.
[7] Pearse, "Literature, Life and the Oireachtas Competitions, *ACS*, 2 June 1906: 6-7.

As an educationalist, drawing from Continental sources such as the ideas of Maria Montessori, he strove to promote a concept of education derived from the idea of cultivating the individual (and unique) self of the pupil where the teacher plays the role of a guardian. His article, tellingly entitled "An Ideal in Education" (1914), defines the theoretical basis of his pedagogical practice exactly in terms of tension between the emancipation and subjugation of the individual self:

> I wrote that the true work of the teacher may be said to be to help the child to realise himself at his best and worthiest. One does not want to make each of one's pupils a replica of oneself (God forbid) holding the self-same opinions, prejudices, likes, illusions. Neither does one want to drill all one's pupils into so many regulation little soldiers or so many stodgy little citizens, though this is apparently the aim of some of the most cried-up of modern systems. The true teacher will recognize in each of his pupils an individual human soul, distinct and different from every other human soul that has ever been fashioned by God, miles and miles apart from the soul that is nearest and most akin to it, craving, indeed, comradeship and sympathy and pity, needing also it may be discipline and guidance and a restraining hand, but imperiously demanding to be allowed to live its own life, to be allowed to bring itself to its own perfection; because for every soul there is a perfection meant for it alone, and which it alone is capable of attaining.[8]

Pearse's position in the dialectics of individualism and collectivism is, however, much more nuanced than it may appear from the above-quoted passages. In the very same article where he praises such an educational system that instead of "the code of rules" introduces "the person" as its "centre and inspiration", he proposes Cú Chulainn and Columcille as role models for his students at St. Enda's (as I have already mentioned in Chapter One). In Pearse's view, they are worthy of being imitated due to the fact that they represent life dedicated to "a service so excessive as to annihilate all thought of the self". The notion of total subjugation of the individual to the goals of collectivity recurs in his writings almost as frequently as the defence of the subjective in education or literature, despite the fact that the two positions seem to point in exactly opposite directions.

Gal Gerson extends this Pearsean paradox also to sphere of the political. Quoting from Pearse's essay "The Coming Revolution", he claims:

[8] Pearse, "An Ideal in Education", *Irish Review,* 4.41 (June 1914): 170-173.

> Collective action, according to Pearse, did not depend on the commands of an established hierarchy, but on an inner imperative, which would lead different people in different paths to "a common meeting place [...where] on a certain day we shall stand together, with many more beside us, ready [...] for a trial and a triumph to be endured and achieved in common."[9]

Gerson's phrase "inner imperative" – with obvious Kantian echoes –brings us once more to the same notion of the autonomous subject fostered in Pearse's literary and pedagogical writings, only this time in the context of political nationalism. The answer to this paradoxical pairing of individual autonomy and collective struggle, I would argue, lies in the character of MacDara, the protagonist of *The Singer*. MacDara is much more than a Gaelic arch-propagandist of the nationalist cause; I suggest that his story should be read as a *Bildungsdrama* of the Irish national hero, a narrative of the national awakening and simultaneously of the emancipation of the self. Through MacDara, the above-mentioned tension between the principles of individual freedom and collective duties in Pearse's thought is most explicitly articulated. In this chapter I attempt to examine this tension especially in the context of continental Romantic nationalist messianism. As James Billington points out, nationalism was "the dominant revolutionary creed" throughout the nineteenth century, embodying the ideals of individual and group revolt against the social and political order. Therefore to consider nationalism solely as a victory of the collective over the individual would be a gross oversimplification: in many nineteenth-century narratives, both biographical and fictional, the processes of the emancipation of the subject and of the national emancipation are often concomitant and, actually, interdependent.

6.1. Self and Nation

Shortly after the Rising, Padraic Colum, earlier closely connected to the St. Enda's project, speaks about Pearse as a "great Catholic writer". At the same time he describes some of Pearse's texts as decisively "Nietzschean" in spirit – a highly paradoxical claim considering Nietzsche's reputation in the Catholic Ireland.[10] Colum points specifically to "From the Hermitage" as a proof of Pearse's "gay and deliberate commitment to the dangerous courses".[11] Looking at one of Pearse's earliest essays, "The Intellectual Future of the Gael", it is impossible not to detect in the mind-set

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[9] Gal Gerson, "Cultural Subversion and the Background of the Irish 'Easter Poets'," *Journal of Contemporary History* 30.2 (1995): 333 – 347.
[10] For Nietzsche's reception in Ireland of Pearse's time see for example Austin Clarke's "A Centenary Celebration", *The Massachusetts Review* 5.2 (1964): 307-310.
[11] Padraic Colum, "Padraic Pearse", *The Irish Rebellion of 1916 and its Martyrs. Erin's tragic Easter*, ed. Maurice Joy (New York: Devin Adair Co, 1916) 291-4.

of young Pearse echoes of a distinctly Nietzschean sentiment, so typical for the atmosphere of "primordial modernism" as defined in Chapter Three:

> Do the millions that make up the population of modern nations – the millions that toil and sweat, from year's end to year's end, in the mines and factories of England, the Continent, and the United States – live the life intended for man? Have they intellect? Have they soul? Are they conscious of man's dignity, of man's greatness? Do they understand the grandeur of living, and breathing, and working out one's destiny on this beautiful old earth? The sea, with its mighty thunderings, and its mysterious whisperings, the blue sky of day, the dark and solemn canopy of night spangled with its myriad stars, the mountains and hills steeped in the magic of poetry and romance – what are these things to them? What are the hero-memories of the past to them? Are they one whit the better because great men have lived, and wrought and died? Were the destiny of the Gael no higher than theirs, better for him would it have been, had he disappeared from the earth centuries ago.[12]

In this passage the discourse of the rejection of modernity as the source of disorientation and de-individualisation is more apparent than in other Pearse's writings, where he addresses less universal and more specifically Irish matters. Nonetheless, it is not difficult to detect the note of a Nietzschean outrage directed at the modern world populated by passive and soulless "last men", products of the age of technology and egalitarianism. I would argue that Colum's assessment, though made in passing, grasps the essence of Pearse's system which combines adherence to the Catholic theology with an inherent tendency towards the emancipatory discourses of modernism.

In his biography of Nietzsche, Heidegger delineates the central process of modern philosophy, i.e. the emancipation of *subiectum,* announced most prominently by Cartesian *cogito,* and finds its climax (as well as its breaking point) in Nietzschean philosophy.[13] According to Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski, the nineteenth century is, however, the age of the self in a more "popular" sense: it is the time when the idea of *subiectum* as the autonomous, self-proclaimed and self-governing entity leaves the university departments of philosophy and enters the popular imagination, which is then articulated in novels, poetry and history writing. By the end of the nineteenth century, images of revolt against the tyranny of class distinctions, official morality or political system have become commonplace, although one hundred years earlier such ideas were

[12] Pearse, "The Intellectual Future of the Gael", *Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse. Songs of the Irish Rebel…* 234-5.
[13] See also Tomaszewski 53-4.

only marginal and behaviour based on them would be considered as verging on insanity. In its extreme form, symbolised by Stendhal's Julian Sorel or Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the self is established as the sole lawmaker and sense-giver, perfectly autonomous and desiring total control of its universe.[14]

According to Tomaszewski, a distinct pattern can be detected in a vast number of nineteenth-century narratives of the self, from great works of art such Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* or Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* to the private diaries and literary attempts of average members of the public. A cycle of psychological development starts with the discovery of subjectivity and its gradual establishment, concomitant with the rejection of limitations imposed by society and external reality, i.e. of the forces that threaten the sovereignty of the subject. At the same time, the process generates unbearable suffering resulting from the feeling of "cosmic loneliness". For many of the literary and historical figures, such as Sorel or Flaubert's Moreau, this creation of a personal "world-apart" provided the ultimate solution, the embracement of full individuality. Nevertheless, as Tomaszewski claims, for the majority, "this was only the beginning of the journey". "Cosmic loneliness" leads in turn to a desire for a new type of communal experience. In the nineteenth century, the most common harbour for the tormented self was the idea of nation.[15]

According to Tomaszewski, national consciousness – as an intrinsically modern construct – depends on the prior awakening of the separate, individual self and its emancipation from traditional social structures and loyalties. Only the inherent interdependence of both processes can resolve the paradox of the nineteenth century as both the age of the self and of the nation. Drawing on numerous literary works as well as autobiographies of the period, Tomaszewski constructs a typical "national hero": a young male deeply attached to his *Heimat,* yet alienated from it by the convulsions of modernity and passing through the process of self-discovery in total opposition to and rejection of the external world. The final affirmation of the "I" results in the "cosmic loneliness", often described by the metaphor of death, and leads to the desire for a reconstruction of the relation to the "not I," but on different grounds that would reflect the newly gained subjectivity. One of the effects of this process is a powerful drive to "change the world," i.e. to remake the external reality after the image of the self, expressed in the Romantic "philosophy of the deed". Another was the appearance of the modern nation as a both "imagined" and "material" fellowship of equal, liberated individuals.[16]

[14] Tomaszewski 53 - 61.
[15] Tomaszewski 58-61.
[16] Tomaszewski 52 – 103.

As Tomaszewski suggests, the problem with grasping the relationship between self and nation springs from *a priori* definition (derived mainly from Hobbes) of nation as a *subiectum* in itself. [17] Nation, just as "State-Leviathan" in Hobbes's political philosophy, becomes "man writ large": it acquires the quality of an abstract Person, a collective self which automatically deprives the individual of subjectivity at the moment he becomes part of the superior entity. Such concept of nation naturally collides with the philosophy of personalism central to the Christian tradition and with modern individualism.

The dilemmas inherent in such a perspective were a recurring theme in the context of many Catholic nationalist movements of the period. Discussing the development of the Polish national consciousness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and its relation to the parallel birth of artistic modernism, Tomaszewski discerns what might be recognised as a general pattern, also traceable in the Irish case: Polish art participated in the pan-European process of the emancipation of the subject and at the same time linked this process inalienably with national emancipation.[18] In the Irish context, an example of a similar mode of thinking may be found for instance in an article from the 1911 edition of the nationalist women journal *Bean na h-Eireann*. The author of the article, one John Brennan, starts with a quotation from Walt Whitman, where the poet, described as "the great American patriot", addresses a young man: "Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your own personality." [19] Brennan claims that according to Whitman, "the individual who is without personality is the individual who accomplishes nothing in this world". A crucial turn in the article is Brenan's following declaration: "What is true of the individual is equally true of the nation: it is admitted by all who give thought to the subject that nationality and personality are interchangeable terms." The conclusion seems to be that "Irish Nationalists are all agreed that Irish personality can be published by one means only, and that is the self-government of Ireland".[20]

In a rather simplified form, Brennan's argument reproduces a discussion which had lied at the heart of the nationalist discourse since the time of its "marriage" with Romantic philosophy. In the Irish context, the best analysis of this question may be found in David Lloyd's examination of Young Ireland's thought. As Lloyd points out in "The Spirit of the Nation", the Romantic nationalists viewed disunity as a major factor preventing the regeneration of the national community. Drawing on Mazzini's *Duties of Man*, Young Irelanders perceived disunity in ethical

[17] Tomaszewski 109-110, Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* XVII.13.
[18] Tomaszewski 333-4.
[19] Several critics have compared Pearse's pre-Rising English poems "The Rebel" and "The Fool", on the basis of their "Biblical", incantatory rhythm, to Walt Whitman's "Songs of Myself". See for example: Ní Ghairbhí, "A People that did not Exist?" 165-6.
[20] John Brennan, "The Things that are Not Caesar's", *Bean na h-Eireann* 2.24 (February 1911): 9-10.

terms, as a major "sin", and meditated how "to find a centre for all the many interests" and how "to prevent the clash of individualities", that is how to accommodate the premises of the modern emancipation of the self with the demands of the national cause.[21] The answer provided by Young Irelanders, especially by Davis, as Lloyd argues, consisted in fostering individuals who would be however submerged "in the national spirit". "The whole man, the man of integrity, becomes thus the man who is integrated with and reproduces the spirit of his nation"– the individual's "true meaning" is "bound up" with the nation and its identity.[22]

Catholic nationalism – gradually emerging on the European scene during Pearse's lifetime – had to solve a similar dilemma. Presenting itself as an enemy of the liberal, individualistic understanding of the community as a legally regulated coexistence of more or less accidental subjects (social contract), it at the same time rejected the extreme monistic organicism of many post-Herderian nationalists, who endowed the nation with the substantial status of a superior being absorbing each individual completely. Struggling to provide a Catholic definition of nationalism in the interwar period, Fr Bocheński explicitly denies the possibility that the ungraspable and mutable form of nationality could be pinpointed by means of such "biological" concepts as race or blood. He proposes instead a definition built on the subtle Thomist ontology and his concept of the *universals*, i.e. entities real yet immaterial. Nation is thus a set of *shared* values and it manifests itself solely via *relations* between individuals who perceive it. On the one hand, those relations (universals) possess actual existence (are *real* in the ontological sense), yet on the other they are merely "facts of the intellect", contained and dependent on their "bearers". It is a highly dynamic notion, presuming an active orientation towards and pursuit of those values.[23] Pearse actually arrives at similar conclusions in "The Spiritual People" where he declares his belief in a "spiritual *thing*" (emphasis mine) of Irish nationality, yet at the same time binds its existence to the existence of the people willing to bear this "thing" in their "hearts":

> Irish nationality is an ancient spiritual tradition, and the Irish nation could not die as long as that tradition lived in the heart of one faithful man or woman. But had the last 129emoriam129y of the Gaelic tradition, the last unconquered Gael, died, the Irish nation was no more. (*PWS* 303)

[21] The theme of disunity seems to be one of the central topic of the nationalist press of Pearse's time as well. In an editorial to the January 1911 edition of *Irish Freedom*, we read: "The principle of the integrity of the nation that ought to be the common centre round which they all work, is either ignored or distorted." Pearse himself in one of his editorials in *ACS* (commenting on language issues, 28 November 1908) exclaims: "Instead of buckling ourselves to this great fight for Ireland we are criticizing one another's idioms! It is the tragedy of Irish history all over again."
[22] David Lloyd, "The Spirit of the Nation", *Theorizing Ireland*, ed. Claire Connolly, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 167.
[23] Bocheński 72-7.

As Gal Gerson's sums up, Pearse in the context of Irish Catholic nationalism re-defines the way of thinking about the foundations of national life. This new concept is analogous to Pearse's attitudes in education and literary criticism. According to Gerson, for the nationalist "mainstream" of the time the nation was "embodied" and founded upon institutions such as "the Party, the Church or even the Gaelic League". On the contrary, Pearse repeatedly recognized "the subjective individual as the foundation of the nation".[24]

At the same time, it remains undeniable that Pearse perceived "nationality" (the "spiritual thing") in accordance with Thomistic ontology – as an entity with real, actual existence. It is similarly impossible to ignore his repeated calls for a complete subjugation of the individual will to the national cause. A possible answer to this apparent contradiction between the emphasis on the subjective and the call for unity within the nation may be provided by a recourse to the theological roots of the Catholic social thought, which Nikodem Tomaszewski has identified in the development of Polish national consciousness in the nineteenth century. According to Tomaszewski, the concept of the nation has its roots in the ancient understanding of communal bonds derived from Pauline theology and its idea of the community as a body (*soma/corpus*). This concept, however, has very little in common with the organicism of modern biological metaphors denoting socio-political entities. In the Greek context, *soma* is a part of man separated from the "soul" (*psyche*), through which the "I" participates in the external reality. In James Dunn's words, *soma* is a "relational concept" whose meaning "transcends mere physical body" (*sarx*, i.e. "flesh", in St. Paul's vocabulary). It actually denotes the "means by which 'I' and the world can act upon each other".[25] It thus enabled St. Paul to visualize the establishment of a tightly bound community without denying the individual identity of each member. What is crucial, in Paul's letters the idea of *soma/corpus* acquired a transcendental dimension: the unity of the Church is guaranteed by the participation of each particular body in the *corpus mysticum* of Christ. In his seminal work on medieval political theology, Ernst Kantorowicz demonstrates how medieval jurists applied the theological concept to the political reality, creating by analogy the image of the "king's two bodies" – one temporal, the other mystical. This second body, timeless and detached from the actual person, enabled each particular member to participate in the community.[26] By its differentiation between a particular ruler and the very idea of kingship, it also led in the late Middle Ages (the time when the political and cultural boundaries between main European proto-

[24] Gerson 343.
[25] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids: Erdman's Publishing, 2006) 56.
[26] Ernst H. Kantorowicz's theory is formulated in his principal work *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in the Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

nations became stabilised) to the notion of the body of the *patria* – the unity of people and territory made possible and guaranteed by the person of the ruler.[27]

Both the Pauline theological concept of *corpus mysticum* and its medieval political re-writing were essentially vertical. The community was constituted and its perseverance guaranteed through the person of the ruler (Christ/king, even if this effect was achieved through their mystical, not earthly, bodies): "To use modern apparatus – only a king has full subjectivity."[28] According to Tomaszewski, the concept persists in modern nationalism, yet it underwent the process of secularization, immanentization and horizontalization. Through the process of emancipation of the self, everyone "becomes a king" and participates in the mystical body of the nation to the same degree, without the need for mediation via a central, unifying figure. On the other hand, the process reaches its fulfilment with the "appropriation" of *patria* by the individual, i.e. with identification and acceptance of its every aspect (from language and customs to landscape and climate) as "one's own".[29] Tomaszewski concludes his argument by re-emphasising that "although the idea of subjectivity lies at the basis of the national consciousness, it is not an attribute of the community as a whole, but of an individual participating in nation".[30] Instead of Hobbesian "total participation" in the body of state where the individual is absorbed into the collective entity, the philosophy of *corpus* allows "participation without a loss of autonomy" by constructing *patria* as an "external manifestation of the subject".[31]

6.2. The Body of the Nation

Implicit intimations of the concept of the nation as a "fellowship participating in the body of patria" constitute one of the central themes of Pearse's final play *The Singer*. In the following paragraphs I attempt to reconstruct a "spiritual biography" of its protagonist, reading Pearse's final dramatic utterance as an exemplification of the mutual interdependence of the processes of individual emancipation and the awakening of national consciousness, of the parallel *subjectivization* and *nationalization*.

In MacDara's story, the process of emancipation of the self is structured as a gradual transcending or transgressing all external limitations imposed on the awakening subject, in accordance with the Romantic scheme outlined above. It also follows (as we saw in the previous chapter) the pattern of the birth of the charismatic leader. MacDara's non-conformist attitude

[27] Tomaszewski 106 – 110.
[28] Tomaszewski 125.
[29] Tomaszewski 125-6.
[30] Tomaszewski 138.
[31] Tomaszewski 110, 126.

forces him into a series of conflicts with various types of authorities: religious, political and communal. The process of MacDara's emancipation starts with banishment from his *Heimat* – an atemporal village in Connemara. He leaves behind the basic traditional structures of family and local community, with their limited horizons and set rules which provide the existential and intellectual framework for individual lives. During the ensuing journey, all other ties binding him to "not I" are loosened: as a man, he rejects the earthly love of a woman; as a teacher, he is deprived of the love of his pupil; as a poet, he finally abandons and rejects his vocation of a "maker of songs". He experiences a total alienation from society, encapsulated in his resignation from its most basic rituals: "I could neither pray when I came to a holy well nor drink in the public house when I had got a little money. One seemed to me as foolish as the other" (*LWPP* 118).

The process culminates with the final transgression which consists in rejecting the basis of the individual and communal existence:

> Once, as I knelt by the cross of Kilgobbin, it became clear to me, with an awful clearness, that there was no God. Why pray after that? I burst into a fit of laughter at the folly of men in thinking that there is a God. (*LWPP* 118)

This newly acquired knowledge is, however, by no means a Nietzschean "gay science".[32] Emancipation reveals itself as a process consisting in suffering, imaginatively described as the "death of the old self" or, in terms borrowed from mysticism, as a passage through the "dark night" of the deepest depravation and deprivation. MacDara, stripped off "all illusions" and his creative powers, appears to the people he meets on his way as "a wandering, wicked spirit" (*LWPP* 118).[33]

In a paradigmatic Romantic text, Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve,* 1832), the protagonist erects a tombstone to symbolise the death of his former self and to mark a new beginning, highlighted by his change of name (from Gustaw to Konrad). He undergoes a similar process of loosening of all the ties with the external reality culminating in the act of defiance of God's authority. Nevertheless, both Mickiewicz's Gustaw-Konrad and Pearse's MacDara deviate from the way leading towards an equivalent of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. The process of death of the old, "enslaved" self and the birth of the emancipated subject are in their case paralleled by,

[32] At the last moment, MacDara in fact shrinks from becoming an Irish peasant Zarathustra, saying to himself: "why take away their illusion […] their hearts will be as lonely as mine" (*LWPP* 118).
[33] It is of course not too difficult to discern below the structure of the Romantic / nationalist story of the self a basic narrative pattern of heroic biography as defined by van Gennap, Leach or Campbell, i.e. the subsequent rites of separation, marginalization and aggregation (cf. Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* 185-6).

and inalienably bound to, a movement towards national illumination. As Nietzsche himself noticed: "The desire for individuation is merely one phase in life […] there comes a point when we wish to go beyond the individual and idiosyncratic."[34] Characteristically, when Roger Griffin discusses the "August madness" of 1914, he describes how the undelaying notion of individual revolt of "Nietzsche's passive last men" against "the old world" ended not in the spirit of Zarathustra but in the embracement of the nation as "the womb, the home, and the horizon-framing myth".[35]

According to Joep Leerssen, in the nineteenth century in the dominant Ascendancy discourse (represented in this case by William Allingham), Ireland was perceived as a congregation of small communities, as a *Gemeinschaft* rather than *Gesellschaft*. In this perspective, an Irishman has no country, but only a region, a homeland, a place of origin.[36] The question of a higher level of political and social organization remains transcendent to the Irish context. *Gemeinschaft*, Leerssen adds, also implies stable power relations, based on unquestioned tradition and perpetuating the existent order.[37] When MacDara abandons the microcosm of his native village, the source of his creativity seems to wither as a result of his being an exile: "When I first went away my heart was as if dead and dumb and I could not make any songs" (*LWPP* 115). Nevertheless, a gradual transfer from the level of *Heimat* to that of the wider fellowship of the nation is triggered. Whereas for his fellow "mountain men" the utmost horizons reaches no further than to Oughterard and Galway, MacDara's progress towards Dublin is concomitant with the widening of his "imagined community". Crucially, he gradually learns to perceive it as "his own": mapped, absorbed and articulated in a series of poems:

> The first song I made was about the children I saw playing in the street of *Kilconnell*. The next song that I made was about an old dark man that I met on the causeway of *Aughrim*. I made a glad, proud song when I saw the broad *Shannon* flow under the bridge of *Athlone*. I made many a song after that before I reached *Dublin*. (*LWPP* 115 – 116, emphasis mine)

The people and the landscape, the human and the topographical element, all merge together into the first intimation of the *corpus* of the *patria*.[38] What used to be a mere emotion in his youthful

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[34] Quoted in: Otto Buhlmann, *Yeats and Nietzsche. An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of W.B. Yeats* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble books, 1982) 123-5.
[35] Griffin 154.
[36] Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination. Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996) 167
[37] Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, 170.
[38] We may compare this passage with Michelet's description of the "individual/national genesis": "And however large this Patria may be, he [a member of the nation] enlarges his heart so as to embrace it all. He beholds it with the

poems ("love for the people" and "great anger against the Gall") now becomes a material reality and gains a corporeal existence, i.e. a status which was earlier reserved only for the limited reality of his "place of origin".

The final step towards the birth of the subject in MacDara's story is linked to the symbolic deicide. As I have already mentioned, MacDara's fate in this respect copies both the path of a romantic rebel, defying the highest authority, and a typical *via mystica* in which the moment of re-entering into a communion with God is preceded by the deepest fall. The moment of MacDara's illumination and reawakening is again clothed in the imagery and language of mysticism: "He has revealed His Face to me. His Face is terrible and sweet, Maoilsheachlainn. I know it well now." The newly regained God reflects the transformative and generative power of suffering: "His Name is suffering. His Name is loneliness. His Name is abjection." Crucially, the process of re-embracement of the Divine and MacDara's return to the community are concomitant; they are in fact articulated in the same monologue and through one set of images:

> I have lived with the homeless and with the breadless. Oh, Maoilsheachlainn, the poor, the poor! I have seen such sad childings, such bare marriage feasts, such candleless wakes! In the pleasant country places I have seen them, but oftener in the dark, unquiet streets of the city. […] The people, Maoilsheachlainn, the dumb, suffering people: reviled and outcast, yet pure and splendid and faithful. In them I saw, or seemed to see again, the Face of God. Ah, it is a tear-stained face, blood-stained, defiled with ordure, but it is the Holy Face! (*LWPP* 119)

In MacDara's story the religious illumination merges almost invisibly (and also indivisibly) with the national illumination. Communion with the people and communion with God becomes a single experience. MacDara's God is undoubtedly the tribal God of the Gaels, but at the same time retains essentially Christian features. As has been stated above, the unity of the Church in theological terms results from individual participation in the body of Christ. At the same time, the image of Christ's body – due to its theological complexity and due to its function in the popular religious practice –contains an inherent tension between the suffering human body of the

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eyes of the mind and clasps it with the longings of desire. Ye mountains of the native land, which bound our sight but not our thoughts, be witness that if we do not clasp in one brotherly embrace the great family of France, it is already contained in our hearts. […] ye sacred rivers, ye holy islands, where our altar was erected…" (Jules Michelet, "On the Unity of Fatherland, from Historical View of the French Revolution from its Earliest Indications to the flight of the King in 1791", ed. Hans Kohn, *Nationalism. Its Meaning and History*, [Princeton: D.Van Nostrand, 1955] 101-2).

Crucified and the glorified mystical body of the Resurrected.[39] The same tension is transferred in MacDara's monologue onto the national level, as he speaks of "a tear-stained face, blood-stained, defiled with ordure" that nevertheless remains a splendid "Holy face".

In Tomaszewski's theory, nationalism – even if relying heavily on religious symbolism – is essentially a secular and *secularising* movement. Contrary to the general secularising discourse of European nationalism, Pearse's national "communion" acquires a vertical dimension parallel to the mode of existence of *ecclesia* in St. Paul's concept of *corpus mysticum*. In MacDara's monologue quoted above, the community is established through participation in the body of Christ – at the same time splendid and defiled, even if it stands here not for the universal brotherhood of the Church, but for a particular community of the Gaels. The movement towards affirming both the individual and the communal identity fails to eradicate the vertical, transcendent dimension. Nevertheless also in this respect, the theological notions in Pearse's writing enter into an interplay with the entirely modern discourse of Romantic messianism. The preservation of the vertical dimension of the construction of the community is followed by a full revelation of the status of MacDara within this community. He returns to the collectivity of the nation not merely as one of its members, but as the elected One.

6.3. Messiah of the Gaels

An inherent characteristic of the emancipated *subiectum* is a will to act, to actively change the external reality. According to Romantic philosophy from Schelling to Carlyle, the subject fulfils itself through a *deed*.[40] In Tomaszewski's words, "the deed for the Romantics is not simply *any* human activity but rather the act of transformation, which by itself creates the new world".[41] The nineteenth-century obsession with the deed can be easily detected as one of the central features of Pearse's political writings, with constant attacks on the "current generation" because of their reluctance to act and their preference for the politics of a "debating society," which in reality means choosing animal vegetation instead of exercise of will (*PWS* 144). Reading Pearse's diatribes against the majority who have succumbed to the temptations of a comfortable and respectable life as opposed to the "rare phenomenon" of Man (with a capital "M", cf. *PWS* 169), one cannot but think of the Nietzschean dualism of the Last Man and the *Übermensch*.

The tension between deliberative rationalism and "will to power" is directly reproduced in *The Singer* through the debates of MacDara and his brother Colm with the "elders" of the village

[39] See Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 302.
[40] Cf. Berlin 13, 78, 88-90.
[41] Tomaszewski 84.

about the legitimacy of the insurrection (as quoted in the previous chapter). The philosophy of the deed is articulated most explicitly in MacDara's statement:

> Aye, they say that to be busy with the things of the spirit is better than to be busy with the things of the body. But I am not sure, master. Can the Vision Beautiful alone content a man? I think true man is divine in this, like God, he must needs create, he must needs do [….] The true teacher must suffer and do. He must break bread to the people, he must go into Gethsemane and toil up the steep of Golgotha. (*LWPP* 117)

Again the language and imagery of religion and eternity is invoked only to be translated into the political and temporary context. Following the model of Gnostic[42] revolutionaries of all times, MacDara transforms the politically passive message of Christianity ("Vision Beautiful") into the activist desire to change *this* world. As in the case of the prophets of Romantic millenarianism – Mazzini, Michelet and Mickiewicz – it necessarily gives rise to messianic imagery.

In January 1914, a strange text appeared on the pages of *Irish Review*, at that time edited by Pearse's close friend Joseph Plunkett. In a short article entitled "The Messiah – A Vision", one Ita O'Shea prophetically envisaged the emergence of the "Irish Messiah". Quite in accordance with Pearse's dialectics of tradition and modernity as delineated in Chapter 2, the Messiah is characterized as "the heir par excellence of Her [Ireland's] Past" and simultaneously "the most Modern of the Moderns". Two recurring words are employed to describe this exceptional figure: "incarnation" ("of the Spirit of Ireland") and "representative" (of all the elements of Irishness).[43] As the theoretician of hero-worship Stefan Czarnkowski claims, a heroic figure is an incarnation of the idea of collectivity.[44] Thus, his role is revelatory (awakening and incarnating the hidden essence) and synthetic (representing the community as a whole). Pearse's *oeuvre* is centred on different heroic figures, both historical – such as Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmett – and legendary, such as Cú Chulainn. Crucially, as I have already discussed in Chapter 3, he presents those individuals as evincing the spirit of the nation, sometimes attempting to incorporate within their cult very distant traditions, pairing the warrior hero Cú Chulainn with Christ or the agnostic Jacobin Wolfe Tone with St Patrick. In Mickiewicz's writings, we encounter a similar tendency: the messianic leader is to combine "the spirit of Christ" with "the spirit of Napoleon". His

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[42] In the sense given to the term by theorists of the modern mass political movements such as Eric Voegelin or Alain Besancon, i.e. "immanentization" of the eschatological message of Christianity, enclosing the Christian redemptive narrative in the limits of earthly history (see for example Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951]).

[43] Ita O'Shea, "The Messiah – A Vision", *Irish Review* 3.35 (January 1914): 553-5.

[44] Czarnkowski, *Kult bohaterów* 16-7.

description of the messianic figure, bridging different and often antithetical traditions by means of his charismatic power, could easily feature in Pearse's writings as well:

> This man will have the zeal of the apostles, the devotion of the martyrs, the simplicity of the monks, the audacity of the men of 1793, the firm unshakeable and overwhelming valour of the soldiers of the *Grande Armee*, and the genius of their leader.[45]

The concept of a great man re-presenting (in the original sense of the Latin *repraesentatio*) or incarnating the whole community points to the crucial tension in Romantic messianism. Mazzini and Michelet ascribed messianic qualities to the people as a whole: "Messiah will be a whole people, free, great and bound together by a single thought and great love."[46] Pearse himself uses the word "Messiah" in his essays only once (in "The Coming Revolution") and almost echoes Mazzini's formulation:

> The Gaelic League was no reed shaken by the wind, no mere *vox clamantis*: it was a prophet and more than a prophet. But it was not the Messiah. I do not know if the Messiah has yet come, and I am not sure that there will be any visible and personal Messiah in this redemption: the people itself will perhaps be its own Messiah, the people labouring, scourged, crowned with thorns, agonising and dying, to rise again immortal and impassable. (*PWS* 91)

This passage, with the explicit employment of the image of Christ's passion and resurrection applied to the collectivity of the nation, provides an Irish parallel to the motif used most prominently in Mickiewicz's texts such as *Forefathers' Eve* and *The Book of Polish Pilgrims* (1833).[47] Nevertheless, as has been mentioned above, Pearse's works are centred on specific messianic figures, from Cú Chulainn to Tone and from Emmett to MacDara. It seems that among the three great Romantic messianists, Mickiewicz remains the closest to Pearse's thinking, as he directly opposes Michelet and Mazzini, claiming that "the essence of Messianism points to a single man,

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[45]Quoted in: Walicki, *Filozofia i mesjanizm* 54. It is interesting to notice in this context that Le Roux, listing the most important "heroes" of Pearse's imagination, mentions in the same passage Napoleon and St. Francis of Assisi (Le Roux 47-8).

[46]Talmon 265.

[47] The motif appears for the first time in *Forefathers Eve* in the vision of Priest Peter: "I see my nation bound, all Europe drags him on / And mocks at him: / "To the judgment hall!" – The multitude leads in the guiltless man. (…) The cross has arms that shadow all of Europe, / Made of three withered peoples, like dead trees. / Now is my nation on the martyr's throne." Quoted in: "Adam Mickiewicz: Prophecies", *National Romanticism. The Formation of National Movements*, eds. Balazs Trencsenyi and Michal Kopeček (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013) 408-420.

Polish Messianism ascribes to its nation a mission that is however represented by a single person".[48] Even if the divine qualities are repeatedly ascribed to the people as a whole, Pearse's writings focuse on charismatic individuals who perform the basic messianic functions (revealing and realising, preaching and acting) and who receive their power simultaneously from above and from below. Both Pearse and Mickiewicz distinguish between the passive part of the nation, which undertakes suffering parallel to that of Golgotha, and the active process of redemption whose agent is a single man. Such a leader is an individual lifted above the multitude: "the Man-Word, the organ of God's revelation" whose mission is "to lead the lesser and weaker brethren", as Talmon describes Mickiewicz's concept.[49] In a similar vein, the speaker of Pearse's poem "The Rebel" posits himself "in between" the people and the divine, being the One who is "of the people" and "understand[s] the people" but who has at the same time been chosen to speak "with God on the top of His holy hill" (*LWPP* 25-6).

Characteristically, both in Mickiewicz's and in Pearse's thought, the identification of the elected one with the national community transcends a merely spiritual or emotional dimension. In the lengthy poetic monologue "The Great Improvisation", Gustaw-Konrad, the protagonist of *Forefathers Eve*, claims his physical unity with the nation:

> Now my soul is incarnate in my country,
> My body has swallowed her soul,
> And I and my country are one.
> Million is my name, for I love
> And I suffer for millions.
> I look at my unfortunate fatherland
> As a son at his father on the wrack,
> And I feel all the pain of my people
> Like a mother the child in her womb.[50]

He concludes then with a final demiurgical gesture:

> I love a whole Nation! And I have embraced
> All its generations, past and to come;

[48]Paweł Rojek, "Mesjanizm integralny". *Presje* 28 (2012): 39.
[49]Talmon 273.
[50] Quoted in: "Adam Mickiewicz: Prophecies" 408-420.

I pressed it to my breast
Like a friend, a lover, a husband, a father […][51]

We have already encountered a similar image of the absorption of the whole community by a single individual in Pearse's "Fool" where the speaker wants to build in his heart "a noble house" for all the members of the nation "to dwell". In *The Singer*, however, MacDara echoes also the "physical" dimension of Konrad's attitude: "My heart has been heavy with the sorrow of mothers, my eyes have been wet with the tears of the children."[52] What is crucial, MacDara (contrary to Konrad) turns his verbal declarations into practice by facing the enemies of the tribe alone, in a redemptive act of sacrifice. The corporeal metaphors of both texts take us back to the image of Christ's body, at once tormented and glorified, as the guarantor of the unity and identity of the community of the Church. In the final passages of the play, MacDara moulds himself into a "lesser Christ", offering his own body[53] – at once earthly and temporary, and glorified by the act of sacrifice – as a similar guarantor that the community of the nation exists. The language used in MacDara's final speech ("one man can free a people as one Man redeemed the world") is the language of Pauline theology of *corpus* that enables all humanity to participate both in the body of Adam and his sin and in the body of Christ and his sacrifice.[54]

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MacDara's journey – away from his *Heimat* and back again – forms a physical correlative to his spiritual evolution. The abandonment of the native village is concomitant with the gradual repulsion of the confinements of tradition and of the old, "unformed" self, culminating in the establishment of the sovereign subject free of all social and spiritual bonds. There is an opposing movement of appropriation or absorption of the external reality, i.e. the *corpus* of the *patria* now identified as MacDara's own, into the self. He returns to his native village to teach by his words and example both how to become a sovereign self and how to become a part of the community of the nation. Finally, MacDara transcends the boundaries of his earthly, temporal body, moulding it through the act of sacrifice into the mystical foundation of the national community. The *bildungsdrama* of the Irish national consciousness turns in this final step into a dramatization

[51] Quoted in: "Adam Mickiewicz: Prophecies" 408-420.
[52] The same motif is elaborated on in "The Rebel": "I am sorrowful with their sorrow, I am hungry with their desire: / My heart has been heavy with the grief of mothers, / My eyes have been wet with the tears of children" (*LWPP* 25-6).
[53] We should notice the prominence of the motif of the body in the final lines of the play, from Maire's "there will be many a noble corpse to be waked before the new moon," through the mention of Christ "hung naked before men" to the scene of MacDara's exit, where we see him "pulling off his clothes as he goes." (LWPP 104, 124-5).
[54] 1 Cor. 15: 21-2. See also: Daniel O'Neill, "The Cult of Self-Sacrifice. The Irish Experience", *Eire-Ireland* 24.4 (Winter 1989): 95.

of the narrative of the national Messiah, comparable to other texts of Romantic national messianism.

Any discussion of *The Singer* always requires balancing on the uneasy border between literary text and history. Pearse's last play reached a wider public only after his death and thus, inevitably, has always been read through the lens of what followed in the biography of its author. As a dramatic text written in the run-up to the political performance of Easter Week, *The Singer* reads, according to many critics, as a "blueprint" for the coming revolution, reverting and blurring the boundaries between performance and life, gesture and action, metaphor and reality.[55] The play has been described, with the benefit of hindsight, as a "literary rehearsal of the act of liberation", an earlier draft of the final "performance" played out in the streets of Dublin by the Volunteers.[56] Actually, it is highly probable that the decision not to perform the play in the early spring of 1916 was motivated by fear of uncovering the conspiracy.[57]

In his provocative essay "Patrick Pearse: Irish Modernist", Declan Kiberd outlines the tense artistic atmosphere of Dublin of the 1910s, suggesting that its central feature was a desperate cry "for implementation [of artistic / intellectual vision] in some form of action, some enactment". Kiberd poses the main dilemma of the revolutionary generation in the following manner: "How does one turn image into event?"[58] *The Singer*, with its uneasy relation between the world onstage and the off-stage reality, provides an epitome of this tension. In the following chapter, using the interpretation of selected Pearse's plays as my starting point, I attempt to find a framework within which this relation between text and event may be conceptualized.

[55] See, for example, Ben Levitas: *The Theatre of Nation. Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism 1890-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 224-5; David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland: colonialism, nationalism, and culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) 110.
[56] Cairns and Richards 110.
[57] See for example Desmond Ryan, *The Man Called Pearse*, (Dublin: Maunsel, 1919) 94; Róisín Ní Ghairbhí and Eugene McNulty, "Patrick Pearse and Theatre", *Collected Plays / Drámaí An Phiarsaigh* 40-1.
[58] Declan Kiberd, "Patrick Pearse: Irish Modernist," *The Life and After-Life*…72.

Chapter Seven

Liturgy of Revolution. Pearse's Liturgical Drama.

Hæc quotiescúmque fecéritis, in mei 141emoriam faciétis

Canon Missae

Now is my nation on the martyr's throne.[1]

Adam Mickiewicz

7.1. The Rising as Theatre

W.B. Yeats may have been the first to explicitly connect the events of the Easter Rising to theatre in his famous lines: "Did this play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot". Since the publication of Yeats's "The Man and the Echo", the connection between the Easter Rising and theatre has been firmly established. In one of the first serious scholarly accounts of the Rising, F.X. Martin claims that it was "staged consciously as a drama", pointing to many features from kilts and bagpipes worn by the Volunteers to the choice of both the date (Easter) and the site where the Proclamation was read (Ionic portico of the GPO, situated at the heart of the capital's main street). As Declan Kiberd comments, the rebels were "consciously literary in their demanour". Moreover, Dublin crowd received Pearse's "performance" with ovations or (more often) with booing; and when the rebels were surrounded, the reactions of one part of the citizens may be fittingly compared to the angry indignation of the "*Playboy* rioters" of 1907.[2] Nuala Johnson, comparing the Dublin insurrection with the reality of the Western front, claims:

> the fact that the rebellion was small scale, sharing the intimacy of the playhouse, that its principal actors were well-known, that it was staged in "civilian territory" rather than along organized trench lines, and that the audience was so close to the action, all contributed to the appropriateness of the theatrical metaphor as the guiding aesthetic of the Rising.[3]

Such a perspective has been by no means limited to the literary critics and historians. Already the down-to-earth pragmatist Michael Collins once commented on the irritating "air of Greek

[1] Adam Mickiewicz, "Forefathers Eve, Part III" *Poems by Adam Mickiewicz*. Ed. George Rapall Noyes (New York: Polish Insitute of Art and Sciences in America, 377.
[2] F. X. Martin, "1916 – Myth, Fact, Mystery," 10-11; Kiberd, "The Elephant of Revolutionary Forgetfulness" 12.
[3] Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the Geography of Remembrance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 146.

tragedy" surrounding the insurrection.[4] Collins might have been right in detecting the overall "theatricality" of the event, yet I would suggest that he mistook the genre. A more recent critic, Ben Levitas, came much closer when he described the republican "street theatre" as "part mystery play, part melodrama, part avant-garde provocation".[5] Levitas' *bon-mot*, setting side by side medieval religious theatre and radically modern theatrical practises, provides the first crucial insight into Pearse's conceptualization of the Rising. The second key interpretative framework may be derived from Conor Cruise O'Brien's ironic comment on Pearse's concept of the Rising as "a Passion Play with real blood".[6]

Levitas and O'Brien summarize the two most important sets of images connected to the Rising: its theatrical aspect and the concept of "blood sacrifice". They share the view of the insurrection not as a primarily military project undertaken in hope of achieving military goals, but rather as a "staged rebellion" conceived as an intended, expected and pre-arranged sacrifice. Most of the commentaries ascribe the central role in introducing both concepts to Pearse. In her study of nationalist theatre in Ireland at the time of the Revival, Mary Trotter stresses the histrionic aspect of Pearse's personality: "Pearse approached all his nationalist activities with the self-conscious intensity of a trained actor", generating in many of his contemporaries the feeling that his life was a "calculated performance of himself as Irish hero in almost every private and public situation".[7] Edna Longley characterized Pearse as a "narcissist performing before the mirror of history", a director "conscious of the audience" and "a martyr arranging his martyrdom".[8] Shaun Richards and David Cairns also single Pearse out of the group of the leaders in this particular respect:

> […] what was important, however, was that the liturgical quality of the conduct of the leaders, particularly Pearse, made it possible for Pearse's followers to forge an immediate, and in some cases enduring, sentimental connection of feeling-passion, with the people-nation.[9]

Interestingly, Richards and Cairns exchange the word "theatrical" here for "liturgical". In my opinion, this difference provides us with a key to the conceptualization of the Rising and to the fusion of the two sets of images mentioned above. The meeting point between them is the Catholic liturgy of the Mass, or more precisely the Sacrament of the Eucharist – the aesthetic and

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[4] Quoted in: Thompson 107
[5] Ben Levitas: *The Theatre of Nation. Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism 1890-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002) 224.
[6] O'Brien, *Ancestral Voices* 108.
[7] Trotter 140.
[8] Edna Longley, "The Rising, The Somme and Irish Memory," *Revising the Rising*… 33-34.
[9] Cairns and Richards 111-2.

symbolic framework that was most intimately known to Pearse and to any Irish Catholic of the time.

In Catholic theology, the Eucharist is understood as the centre of the existence of the Church, moreover in multiple meanings. Firstly, it commemorates the most important events from the history of salvation, the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ. Secondly, it is the sacrament in which the Divine is actually revealed, present in the form of bread and wine on the altar. Thirdly, it provides an insight into the future reality of the heavenly beatitude. Thus, through the Eucharist, the diachrony of the Church's earthly pilgrimage is transcended each time in the miraculous synchronicity of the redeemed time. Finally, besides its theological essence, it is also "the rite of integration" that functions as a communal centre of the life of the Church and which by its recursive character places every Christian in the same symbolic system re-enacted every day on every altar.[10] It functions as an axis of both the earthly, horizontal life of every believer and the vertical narrative of salvation. Earlier in this dissertation (Chapter 4), I quoted a passage from Pearse's essay "Ghosts" to demonstrate that the Church served as an analogy in his construction of the nation. It can be assumed that just as the Sacrifice of the Mass is the centre of the life of the Church, so Pearse's nation, built *per analogiam* to the Church, requires a similar crucial point of intersection between the timely, the historical, and the eternal: a single moment that absorbs the past and the future into a single flash of revelation. In this chapter I attempt to prove this hypothesis, seeking traces of the Eucharistic symbolism in Pearse's writings, mainly in his three plays – *An Pháis*, *An Rí* and *The Singer*. In the final section I follow the transposition of the liturgical model from the theatrical stage to Pearse's final "production" performed on the streets of Dublin at Easter 1916.

7.2. Eucharist: Theatre of Sacrifice

In the Irish context, the cultural significance of the Eucharist became more emphatic as a result of the religious controversies at the time of the Reformation. The dogma of Transsubstantiation, emphasizing the real presence of Christ's body and blood under the species of bread and wine, provided the major differentiating theological issue between Catholics and Protestants. For example Pearse's favourite author Geoffrey Keating starts his literary career with the treaty *Eochair-sgiath an Aifrinn* (1631), which is probably the first concise theological tract on the Mass in Irish, with special attention paid to the sacrificial dimension.[11] Afterwards, the reality of the penal

[10] Cf. Rubin 13-14; Mateusz Kapustka, *Figura i hostia. O obrazowym przywoływaniu obecności w późnym średniowieczu* (Wrocław: Wyd. Uniw. Wrocławskiego, 2003) 129.
[11] See for example: Bernadette Cunningham, *The World of Geoffrey Keating. History, Myth and Religion in the Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004): 32-40.

era was perceived also through the prism of the lack of priests, which meant a limited access of the Catholic population to the sacrament. The radical turn of the post-Famine "devotional revolution" consisted mainly in re-emphasizing the importance of the Eucharist and of the sacramental life for both the individual and the community. Emmet Larkin stresses the prominence of "Mass and Eucharist" in this "new" devotional model and "the heavy reliance on sacrament and sacramental". Margaret MacCurtain points to the intensive promotion of other devotional practises connected to the cult of Christ's real presence, such as "Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament" and private adoration of "the Blessed Sacrament in the parish church".[12]

In the post-Rising eulogies of Pearse, he is repeatedly characterized as a "daily communicant" to secure his status of a deeply religious person (see Introduction, sub-chapter "The Genealogy of Myth"). In his last moments before the execution, in a letter to his mother, he expressed joy both because he himself was able to receive the sacrament and because he was told James Connolly was reconciled to the Church and received the Holy Communion.[13] He addresses the Holy Communion also in what is probably the only explicitly devotional poem in his whole *oeuvre,* entitled "Teacht Chríost" ("Christ's Coming", first published in *An Macaomh* in 1914):

Do ghlanas mo chroí anocht
Amhail mhnaoi do ghlanfadh a teach
Roimh theacht dá leannán dá fios:
A leannáin ná téirigh thart!

Do leathas doras mo chroí
Amhail fhear do dhéanfadh fleadh
Ar theacht i gcéin dá mhac
A Mhic, is álainn do teacht[14]

The poem operates within a similar imaginative and rhetorical framework as for example the small booklet *Welcome Holy Communion* – the most basic "manual" for children preparing for their First Communion (preserved in the library of St. Enda's), where the Communion is compared to "the reception of a king, a father, a conqueror, a benefactor, a friend, a bridegroom" and an advise that "we should not dare to invite a king into a miserable hovel". Another book from Pearse's St. Enda's library, *Manual of Christian Piety,* contains a similar "reflection before the

[12] Larkin 644, MacCurtain 234-6.
[13] Mac Lochlainn, *Last Words…* 214
[14] *ACS* 19 December 1914. (I have made my heart clean to-night / As a woman might clean her house / Ere her lover come to visit her: / O Lover, pass not by! // I have opened the door of my heart / Like a man that would make a feast / For his son"s coming home from afar: / Lovely Thy coming, O Son!) (*LWPP* 37)

Communion": "Represent to your imagination that your Angel guardian addresses you in these words: 'Behold, the spouse cometh: go forth now and meet him.' Arise as early as possible, to receive the great guest, who deigns to honour you with this visit."[15]

In theological terms, the Eucharist is the repetition of Calvary, the re-enactment and renewal of Christ's Passion and Resurrection. The image of the cross and violent death lies at its very core, although the connection between the Eucharist and Calvary was – at least on the rhetorical level – somehow loosened in the discourse after the Second Vatican Council. In Pearse's time, however, there was no doubt about the principle way of interpreting the liturgical action. *The Short Catechism* "for the general use throughout the Irish Church", preserved in St. Enda's library and presumably used for religious instruction of the pupils (a subject Pearse himself is said to have taught[16]) states clearly that "the Mass is the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, which are really present under the appearance of bread and wine […] offered to continue and represent the sacrifice of Christ on the cross till His second coming". Later, it points out that "the Mass is not a different sacrifice from that of the Cross – it is the very same sacrifice, though offered in a different manner […] in both we have the same victim and the same offerer; for the same Christ, Who once offered Himself a bleeding victim to His heavenly Father on the cross, continues to offer Himself in an unbloody manner, by the hands of His priests on our altars".[17]

The celebrant re-presents (in the etymological sense of *re-praesentatio*) the Passion of Christ. At the same time on the surface level it is still a re-enactment, by means of gestures, movements and words. No wonder that many medieval theologians pointed to the dramatic form of the Mass and described it using the vocabulary of the eleventh-century dramatic theory by Honorius of Autun, who wrote:

> It is known that those who recited tragedies in theatres presented the actions of opponents by gestures before the people. In the same way our tragic author (the celebrant) represents by his gestures in the theatre of the Church before

[15] Mother Mary Loyola, I.B.V.M., *Welcome! Holy Communion: Before and After*, ed. Fr. Thurston, S.J. (London: Burns Oates & Washboure, 1936. First published 1904) 30, 201; *The Manual of Catholic Piety Containing A Selection of Fervent Prayers, Pious Reflections, Pathetic Meditations, and Solid Instructions by the Rev. William Gaham OSA*, (New York: Edward Dunigan & Brother, 1857) 311.
[16] See for example Augusteijn 162-4.
[17] *The Short Catechism extracted from The Catechism. Ordered by the National Synod of Maynooth, and approved by the Cardinal, the Archbishops, and Bishops of Ireland, for general use throughout the Irish Church* (Dublin, Gill & Son, 1891) 20, 51.

> the Christian people the struggle of Christ and teaches to them the victory of his redemption.[18]

The dramatic potential of the Mass provided one of the impulses for the re-birth of theatrical tradition in the Middle Ages. On the margins of the officially approved and steadily regulated divine service, there emerged theatrical productions that were gradually moving out of the churches into the secular space, at the same time maintaining the connection with the ritualistic core.

If we accept Mary Pearse's account of Patrick's childhood, pretending to be a priest performing Mass was one of Pearse's first ventures into the world of acting.[19] He actually reproduces this childhood recollection in his short story "An tSagart". Little Paraig in the story is later told that the Mass is not a performance like all others and that it requires the divine sanction – it can be conducted by a priest only.[20] Little Patrick takes this fact for granted and when he grows older, he becomes an ardent playwright, starting nevertheless at the same point as the Western theatrical tradition – from the liturgical play.

From the theological perspective, the ceremonies of the Holy Week and Easter are the source of the whole liturgical tradition, commemorating the events that gave rise to the liturgy of the Mass as such and re-connecting it to its sacrificial source. In her account, Pearse's sister Mary stresses the importance of this period of the liturgical year for Pearse:

> He was particularly fond of the Holy Week ceremonies and was never absent from them […] his greatest devotion was to the tragedy of Calvary – to Christ Crucified, and to the Crucifix. He showed this very quietly but very plainly, in the arrangements of the little Oratory at St. Enda's. He placed the Crucifix in the most prominent position on the altar, and would not allow it to be disturbed or outplaced by any statue or picture.[21]

It is interesting to add that the Pearses seemed to be particularly attached to the Mount Argus church in Dublin, administered by members of the Passionist Order, who are especially dedicated to the mystery of the Cross. Pearse visited the church on Good Friday 1916 in order to attend the Sacrament of Penance and – according to the memories of Fr. Leo Gribben C.P. – listened to

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[18] Quoted in: O. B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages. Essays in the Origins and History of Early Modern Drama* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969) 39-40.
[19] *The Home-Life of Padraig Pearse: As Told by Himself, his Family, and Friends*, ed. Mary Brigid Pearse (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1934) 50.
[20] Pearse, *Short Stories*, 14-20.
[21] *The Home-Life of Padraig Pearse* 109.

the Seven Last Words liturgy, which is a special devotional practice revolving around the last sentences uttered by Christ on the Cross.[22]

The Passion Play, *An Pháis*, was a turning point in Pearse's dramatic career, his first "play for grown-ups" and probably his greatest success as a director. The production made its way to the stage of the Abbey Theatre on Good Friday 1911. It is striking that Pearse's mind, gradually evolving towards political separatism and the affirmation of the violent insurrection, found its first considerable dramatic expression in the Passion Play. Firstly, it meant a return to the archetype of all sacrifices, secondly to a principal source from which modern European drama was born and which displays most explicitly the link between religious ritual and theatre. The script of the play is lost; however the Abbey programme notes preserved in the Allen Library in Dublin with Pearse's introduction shows a completely orthodox and literal re-production of the Biblical story.[23] As Pearse explains, "all the words put into the mouths of the characters are taken from the Gospels, with the exception of certain speeches in the last Act attributed to Jesus, Mary, and Peter by a very old Irish tradition". In one of the reviews of *An Pháis*, a highly sympathetic author, Padraic Colum, describes the play as "a return to origins" that "has root power" because Irish drama (as was the case everywhere else in Europe) "begins with the Passion Play, the Miracle Play, or the Morality Play".[24] Although contemporary scholars point to the peculiar absence of liturgical drama from the medieval Gaelic culture,[25] the theme of Christ's Passion exerted an immense influence on its symbolic and emotional framework. In *Religious Songs of Connacht*, we find many examples of poems such as "Naomh-smuainte" ("Holy thoughts") with the refrain "Think of the cross each day" ("Cuimhnigh ar an gcrois gach lá") and elaborate images of Christ's suffering.[26] Pearse translated into English Geoffrey Keating's poem "Caoin thú féin, dhuine bhoicht" ("Keen Thyself, Poor Wight") with a stanza beginning with "Keen the sufferings on thy behalf / Of Christ, Who redeemed all upon a tree". Finally, Pearse's *Specimens from Irish Anthology* (1910), published first as a series in *Irish Review*, starts with "Caoineadh Muire" (better known as "Caoineadh na dTrí Mhuire", i.e. "The Keening of Three Marys") – a wonderful medieval dialogue between the Apostle Peter, Christ's Mother and other two Marys,

[22] Transcript of Cassette Tape Recording: Fr. Herman Nolan C.P. interviewing Fr. Leo Gribben C.P. Regarding Good Friday Night 1916 in Mount Argus (1974/08/03). I am grateful to Róisín Ní Ghairbhí for providing me with materials from the Mount Argus Monastery archives.
[23] I am grateful to Brian Crowley, the curator of Pearse Museum, for providing me with a copy of the programme notes. Most detailed accounts of *An Pháis* can be found in Holloway's papers in the National Library of Ireland and in Desmond Ryan's *Story of a Success*. In the recent scholarly sources, the play is most thoroughly treated in Sisson's *Pearse's Patriots*.
[24] Padraic Colum, *Irish Review* (May 1911): 107-8
[25] Alan J.Fletcher, *Drama, Performance, and Polity in Pre-Cromwellian Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000) 9-60.
[26] Hyde, *Religious Songs of Connacht*, vol. 1, 32-35.

about the scene of the Crucifixion and the instruments of Christ's suffering.[27] It is almost certain that "Caoineadh" is the text Pearse refers to enigmatically in the synopsis of *An Pháis*.

Although the play as such consists in a perfectly orthodox re-production of the well-known and universal story, it resonated very strongly among the Dublin audience also because of its local elements. It seems that the play, staged in Irish and containing some Irish "flavouring", such as the appearance of keening women after the death of Christ, inspired members of the audience to contemplate the parallels between the Biblical and the national story. As Pearse's pupil and later secretary Desmond Ryan observed:

> Some of us thought, though to many it may seem an irreverence, that our national and individual struggle was in ways a faint reflection of the Great One just enacted. The man is crucified as Nation and the Soul moves slowly, falteringly towards the Redemption.[28]

As has already been mentioned, A. D. Smith illustrates his narrative of the birth of modern nationalism with two eighteenth-century paintings that transpose the motif of Pietà to the national context (see Chapter 2). Significantly, in Pearse's *Specimens from an Irish Anthology*, "The Keening of Mary" over the body of Christ is followed by "The Keen for Fair-Haired Donough" – a poem about a boy hanged in Galway by the English that transfers in a similar way the *Pietà* motif from the religious into the political context.[29] A probably even more interesting example of the interplay between the traditional Irish material and the motif of Christ's sacrifice may be found in an English poem "A Song for Mary Magdalene" which is included in *The Master*. On the one hand, the poem alludes to the Biblical story of the repentant prostitute, on the other, its imagery is built in accordance with the Irish *aisling* tradition. In the *aislingí* the image of a beautiful woman raped by a brutal conqueror or simply unfaithful to her rightful spouse serves as a personification of Ireland dominated by the Gall. Pearse's "Song for Mary Magdalene" preserves this imagery with such expressions as "O woman of the gleaming hair […] Many a lover hath lain with thee," or "O woman spendthrift of thyself". Similarly, the Christ of the poem is characterized in an identical way as Irish heroes coming to save the damsel in distress: as a "lover", "captain", exiled "*shuiler*". In the final stanza, the perspective of the Passion is again introduced: "is it not for this / The hero Christ shall die for thee?" (*LWPP* 22)

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[27] One of the stanzas in Pearse's translation: "And is this the very hammer that struck the sharp nails thro' thee? / M'ochon agus m'ochon, O!" / And this the very spear that thy white side pierced and slew thee?"/ "M'ochon agus m'ochon, O!" / And is that the crown of thorns that thy beauteous head is caging?" / "M'ochon agus m'ochon, O!" (*Specimens from an Irish Anthology*, 91-7).
[28] Desmond Ryan, *The Story of a Success*, 108.
[29] *Specimens from an Irish Anthology*, 97-103.

Similarly to Beatrice Elvery's "Íosogán" in the vestibule of St. Enda's school (discussed in Chapter 4), *An Pháis* as well as "A Song for Mary Magdalene" displays Pearse's fascination with the motif of Christ's sacrificial redemptive death. The Biblical story is, however, in all three cases located within the specifically Irish cultural, linguistic or natural landscape. The next stage in the process of nationalizing the Passion narrative is reached with another play invited by W.B. Yeats to the Abbey stage, a year after *An Pháis*.

7.4. National Sacrifice

What can be only indirectly deduced from these early manifestations of Pearse's separatism becomes more clearly revealed in his two major "messianic" plays: *An Rí* (*The King*) from 1912, and *The Singer*, completed shortly before the Rising. Although their message of mystical nationalism is widely recognized in the critical discourse, the centrality of liturgical vocabulary and imagery has so far remained largely ignored.

From one medieval genre – a liturgical play *per se* – rPearse moves towards another: *An Rí* bears the subtitle "Morality Play". What connects both plays is the theme of sacrifice. If in *An Pháis* we had a biblical theme with some additional national flavouring, this time we encounter a national play in the frame of religious symbolism. The kingdom seems doomed to fall due to the sinfulness of its king. A little boy, Giola na Naomh, pupil at the monastic school, is chosen as the most innocent and thus most worthy to receive the kingship. The boy accepts the crown, leads the troops into the battle and miraculously saves the kingdom from enemies, paying for it, however, with his own life.

The play makes a consistent use of Eucharistic motives. Their point of reference is the struggle fought "for the people" and against "the foes of the kingdom" rather than the narrative of universal redemption from the power of sin and death. It is by the equation of Sacrifice of the Mass and the battle that the incompetence of the sinful king is displayed (I am quoting from the English translation): "Do you think that an offering will be accepted from polluted hands", asks the Abbot and the stress falls on the liturgical term "offering".[30] Shortly afterwards he pushes the comparison even further and makes it more explicit: "It is an angel that should be sent to pour out the wine and to break the bread of this sacrifice"[31] – again speaking about battle and this time employing the terminology of Eucharistic ritual. In the final scene, when the dead body of Giolla

[30] "An dóigh libh go nglacfar iobairt ó lámha truaillithe" (Patrick Pearse, *Collected Plays / Drámaí an Phiarsaigh* 133/153).
[31] "Aingeal do mba chóir do chur ag doi fíona briseadh arán na híobartha seo" (*Collected Plays / Drámaí an Phiarsaigh* 133/153).

na Naomh is brought back to the monastery from the battlefield, the King's exclamation "O white body […] it is thy purity that hath redeemed my people"[32] inevitably alludes to the image of the Host. The allusion seems even more explicit when we take into consideration that Giolla na Naomh is elevated above the crowd (as the Host during the Transubstantiation) and brought into the church with the accompaniment of *Te Deum* – the anthem sung on exceptional occasions such as great military victories, yet also anchored within the liturgical year, for example as the closing hymn of the *Corpus Christi* procession.

A fascinating conflation of two sets of images surfaces in the dialogue between the King and the Abbot, shortly after Giolla leaves with the army to confront the enemies: "O God, save this nation by the sword of the sinless boy", says the Abbot. "And O Christ, that was crucified on the hill, bring the child safe from the perilous battle", adds The King, only to be confronted with the Abbot's assertion: "King, freedom is not purchased but with a great price."[33] Christ and Giolla, both sinless; cross and sword, both instruments of salvation, all merge into a single, inter-related system of symbolic references.

As Ben Levitas notes, Giolla (whose name translates into English as "The Servant of the Saints") is a direct successor of Íosagán, the child-Christ of Pearse's earlier texts.[34] This time, he is turned into a national figure. The difference between the Christian martyrdom and the death of Giolla na Naomh, as well as between medieval morality play and Pearse's re-formulation of the medieval tradition, lies in the exchange of the individual salvation in the afterlife for a collective, communal, and this-worldly "redemption" by means of a sacrifice performed by an outstanding individual.[35] This issue is touched upon in the opening scene of *An Rí*, where the theological roots of Pearse's nationalism are confirmed in an exchange between the Monk and the Abbot concerning the nature of guilt and salvation:

> FIRST MONK: And are all guilty of the sins of the King? If the King is defeated it's grief will be for all. Why must all suffer for the sins of the King? […]

[32] "…a ghealcholainn, óir do ghlainese do shaor mo mhuintir" (*Collected Plays / Drámaí an Phiarsaigh* 145 / 164).
[33] "A Dhia, saor an cine seo trí chlaíomh an linbh ionraic / Agus a Chríost do céasadh ar an gcnoc, tabhair an leanbh slán ón gcath contúirteach / a Rí, a Rí, ní cheannaítear an tsaoirse ach le mórluach" (*Collected Plays / Drámaí an Phiarsaigh* 141 / 161).
[34] Levitas 212.
[35] Cf. Talmon 295.

> THE ABBOT: The nation is guilty of the sins of its princes. I say to you that this nation shall not be freed until it chooses for itself a righteous King.[36]

In this dialogue, we can trace the transformation onto the national level of the basic organicism of Catholic theology, best summarized by St Paul in First Corinthians: "For as by one man – Adam – came death, by one man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:21–22). The basic unity of human beings is an underlying principle of the concept of the original sin and of the universal salvation brought about by the death of Christ.[37] Ireland, constructed in analogy to *corpus mysticum* of the holy Church, provides a space for a repetition of this universal sacrifice on a lower, more limited scale but with the same notion of the virtual unity of the community which participates first in the sin and later in the redemptive act.

In *An Rí,* a national deliverance is attained via *imitatio Christi* - innocence and piety. The last of Pearse's plays that in my reading works intensively with liturgical motifs is *The Singer*. Just as *An Rí*, it narrates the story of tribal rather than universal redemption, and similarly to *An Pháis,* it is a story of a messianic act of sacrifice. Giolla na Naomh is an inherently passive character: his pronounced obedience and humility may evoke Rene Girard's concept of a "scapegoat", chosen due to his/her exceptionality to bear the sins of the whole community. The sacrifice of a scapegoat channels the violent energy created by the conflicts within the community and thus enables it to transcend those conflicts and to preserve stability. Giolla is exceptional due to his purity, obedience and humility. He does not choose his fate: he merely accepts it, functioning to a great extent as an instrument in the process of communal deliverance. Giolla imitates Christ in the sense of following Jesus' call to "give one's life for others". From the comparative point of view, the exceptionality of Christ's sacrifice consists in the fact that He is at the same time the sacrifice (the thing that is offered) and the offerer. A truly messianic figure is necessarily an active actor in the redemptive narrative. In Pearse's final play, this role is ascribed to MacDara, the Messiah of the Gael.

The text of *The Singer* abounds in explicit parallels between the character of MacDara and Christ. He repeatedly calls himself "the teacher" and speaks to his fellow mountain men in a puzzling way that may be compared to Jesus' parables. Most significantly, MacDara himself frequently compares his story to the last days of Christ, with frequent invocation of motifs such

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[36] "Agus an ciontach cách i gcionta an Rí? Má bhuaitear ar an Rí beidh a dhólás ar chách. Céard faoi a n-imrítear díoltas ar chách mar gheall ar chionta an Rí?" / "Is ciontach gach cine i gcionta a ríograí. A deirim libh nach saorfar an cine seo go ngabhfaidh chucu Rí ionraic" (*Collected Plays / Drámaí an Phiarsaigh* 133 / 163).
[37] Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988. First published in 1938) 39.

as *via dolorsa* or Gethsemane. The process of interrelation of the two narratives finds its climax in MacDara's final decision to face the enemies alone and with bare hands: "one man can free a people as one Man redeemed the world". Christ's passion as a point of reference for the figure of the national Messiah is a theme well established in the scholarly analysis of Pearse's writings. What has remained largely overlooked are again traits of the Eucharist imagery. Most prominently, the sacrament is mentioned in Sighle's (young step-sister of the protagonist) monologue in a telling context: she speaks of her recurrent memories of the exiled hero – MacDara – and adds that "at Mass his face used to come between me and the white Host" (*LWPP* 103). The image seems to herald the final scene of the play in which MacDara attempts to take the place of the community's Messiah.

From the perspective of *An Rí* and *The Singer*, the axis of the material and spiritual life of the nation is formed by the notion of the outstanding individual who sacrifices himself "for his brethren", structured in analogy with Christ's offering at the Calvary. In the background of the more explicit "messianic" motifs, the Eucharistic imagery is constantly reiterated. In the following paragraphs I argue that the liturgy of the Mass provides the most efficient tool not only for an analysis of Pearse's plays as literary texts but also for explaining their relation to the events of the Easter Rising. As formulated by Pearse, the act of insurrection shares with liturgy not only the central theme of sacrifice but also the constant tension between performance and actual event.

7.5. Gesture and Act

In his work on performativity, Richard Schechner repeatedly stresses the constant "flowing back and forth, up and down, characterizing the relationship between social and aesthetic dramas".[38] The nineteenth century witnessed the formation of a profound interconnection between drama and revolution. In his book on the idea of revolution in modern Europe, James Bilington sums up: first "people left churches for the theatres" and later "revolution seemed to be moving from the stage to the street".[39] Ireland at the turn of the nineteenth century was no exception: theatre came to play a central role as the major medium for the new nationalist imagining of Ireland and as "the central arena for the formulation and contesting of Irish identity".[40] The Abbey Theatre actress Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh described the crucial position of theatre in the Irish metropolis: "Dublin was drama mad in every sense of the word."[41] The controversies surrounding dramatic

[38] Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (Routledge Classics, New York, 2003) 152.
[39] Bilington 152-155.
[40] Matthews 22, 64.
[41] Quoted in: Townshend 16

productions of Yeats' *Countess Cathleen* and Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* inflamed the most fervent debates on the nature of national identity. The 1902 production of Yeats' and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* was later described as a crucial element in the birth of revolutionary nationalism.[42] A similarly explosive interplay of theatre and politics was present in various minor groups and productions, including also Pearse's plays and pageants performed at St Enda's. Mary Trotter points to the great popularity and seminal role of all those semi-amateurish performances that attempted "to enact an idealized image of the Irish nation on stage" in order to counter the English modes of representing Ireland and to provide a "vital part of imagining of an independent Irish nation".[43]

The political emotions stirred by theatrical productions staged by St. Enda's students under Pearse's direction are a common motif in the recollections of the sympathetic nationalist audience. Thomas MacDonagh, Pearse's collaborator at St Enda's as well as in the Volunteers, relates how once, when returning from a staging of Cú Chulainn's story, the young male actors from St Enda's, dressed as ancient Irish warriors, were surrounded by a crowd that started singing nationalist songs as if "expecting us to lead them against the Castle [the seat of British Viceroys in Ireland]".[44] The visionary and rhetorical power of the plays blurred the borders between the audience and the actors, as well as between theatre and actual political action. These productions were, in Mary Trotter's words, "moments when Pearse's conception of an ideal Ireland was embodied before the nationalist community".[45]

Significantly, MacDara, the protagonist of Pearse's last play, comes to the conclusion that the path of the poet must be abandoned for the sake of the Romantic philosophy of deed. MacDara speaks disparagingly about his poetic talent and exchanges his role as the maker of songs for that of the revolutionary leader: "I think true man is divine in this, like God, he must needs create, he must needs do" (*LWPP* 117). The Romantic emphasis on the activist "philosophy of deed"[46] means that the "creation" MacDara mentions is no longer purely verbal but turns into the creation of history. Inevitably, especially if we recall that the play was completed only weeks before the planned Rising, the ending of *The Singer* raises questions about the relation between Pearse's on-stage theatrical productions and the final off-stage performance in the streets of Dublin he helped to orchestrate.

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[42] See for example Grene 69-72.
[43] Trotter 6.
[44] Augusteijn, 174.
[45] Trotter, 142.
[46] Cf. Walicki, *Filozofia i mesjanizm* 21. Schelling was fascinated by the link between ritual and a specific act in Christianity. In his view, "the spirit of Christianity is the spirit of the deed" rather than an abstraction (Joanna Jagodzińska, *Misterium romantyczne. Liturgiczno-rytualne wymiary swiata przedstawionego w III części „Dziadów" Adama Mickiewicza* [Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2006] 41).

I suggest that Pearse's plays should not be approached as examples of mere political propaganda but in the context of liturgical drama. Medieval and baroque liturgical drama functions as preparation for and explication of a ritual. It serves as an initiation into the conscious participation in the sacrament. Calling into life the fictitious world of the play, it necessarily requires inscribing the ritualistic core into a narrative, a historical and fictionalizing pattern. They remain essentially unfinished, as they require completion in the liturgy itself.[47] Echoes of the medieval and baroque notion of the liturgical play, yet re-written to incorporate a new, national dimension, may be detected in a theory of national romantic drama formulated by Adam Mickiewicz. He primarily sought the roots of national drama in the medieval mysteries and their conflation of the natural and supernatural space. According to Mickiewicz, drama should "express the nation in its wholeness". Its role, however, lies primarily in its potential to "exert direct influence on the audience". Drama does not only commemorate and celebrate the national hero: its aim is "to inspire – or better to say – to force into action those who are reluctant to act".[48] Mickiewicz's precepts were widely shared by writers towards the end of the nineteenth century and we can find their counterparts in the Wagnerian strain of German theatre or in D'Annunzio's political liturgy staged in the Fiume Republic. Mickiewicz's national drama seeks to be materialised in an actual revelation/revolution, thus attempting to erase the differentiation between the stage and the world and between mere acting and actual happening.[49] In other words – it is drama that approaches the qualities of a ritual.

According to Schechner, any ritual performance can be turned into political theatre just as any theatrical production can acquire the quality of a ritual. Nevertheless, ritual as such "uses theatre but does not become theatre".[50] Liturgy and theatre are both performances and both require from their audience some level of the suspension of disbelief. Schechner lists also the elements which distinguish one from the other. Firstly, there is a difference between participants (in ritual) and spectators (in theatre). Secondly, whereas the basis of theatre is entertainment, ritual is perceived in terms of efficiency: it is an "efficacious event upon which the participants depend".[51]

The crucial aspect of liturgy is the complex relation between the gesture and the actual act or between the symbol and the actual event. In the sacred dynamics, the border between these

[47] Jagodzińska, 46
[48] Adam Mickiewicz, *Literatura słowiańska*, Wykład XVI, *Dzieła*, vol. XI, (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1955) 116 – 126.
[49] Jagodzińska 81.
[50] Schechner, *Performance Theory* 136-7; Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual. Writings on Culture and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993) 55-7.
[51] Schechner, *Performance Theory* 134-8.

poles is transcended in the miraculous synchronicity of the redeemed time. Despite the definite and unchangeable form and despite the fact that it seems to comprise solely of a static set of symbols and gestures, for the believer it is much more than theatre – it is the *act*. As James Hardison points out, at the moment of the establishment of the Eucharist, Christ says "Do this in my memory" rather than "Say this in my memory".[52] In contrast to the theatrical performance, for the believer the Eucharist is an act with definite, substantial results – the transformation of bread and wine into the actual body and blood. The effects of this act are permanent and transcend the conventional space in which the ritual is enacted. The Polish theologian Paweł Rojek, applying Edward Leach's semiotical anthropology, points out that from the outsider's point of view, the Eucharist may be considered a metaphor: bread as a substance sustaining physical life becomes equated with Christ as the source of spiritual life. For the believer, however, it is understood – through the process of "ritual condensation" – as a metonymy: bread really becomes substantially identical to Christ's body, although this transformation remains undetectable by human perception[53].

The context of the Romanticized and nationalized variety of liturgical drama enables a different perception of Pearse's dramatic works. Such a perspective includes the notion of the unfinished structure of such productions that points outside theatre and demands completion in the actual event. This perspective helps also to explain one of the paradoxes connected to the reception of Pearse. On the one hand, Pearse's plays are considered (from the literary point of view) mere exercises in political activism. On the other hand, his final action – the Rising – is often disparaged for being little more than theatrical gesture. Liturgy, which employs a complex set of symbols and gestures, yet results in a definite and substantial, even if invisible, transformation of reality, provides in my opinion a template for Pearse's understanding of the Rising in relation to his writings.

The *event* of the Eucharist comprises a complex symbolic system which underlines the perception of the Eucharist as the centre of temporal and spatial continuum. In the Catholic theology, it is the subject of elaborate exegesis often referred to as the theory of liturgical sign. I suggest that Pearse's construction of the Rising not only follows the logic of liturgy in terms of relations between stage and world, gesture and action, performer and the performance, but that it also mirrors the inner structure of the liturgical sign.

[52] Hardison 30-2.
[53] Paweł Rojek, "Semiotyka Eucharystii", *Pressje* 22/23 (2013): 16-33.

7.6. *Signum demonstrativum*

As the central moment of the Catholic liturgy, consecration – the moment when the host and the chalice with wine are elevated – has been the subject of very complex exegesis. The liturgical sign in Catholic theology functions in a fourfold sense. The classification is based on Aquinas' *Summa* (III, 60.3), although some elements have developed throughout history and were re-formulated in the twentieth century by such theologians as Cipriano Vagaggini. The liturgical sign is first a commemoration of the past event (*signum rememorativum*, i.e. of the death and resurrection of Christ). Secondly, it demonstrates the supernatural reality revealed in the present moment, in the transformation of bread and wine into Body and Blood (*signum demonstrativum*). Thirdly, it heralds the future reality of salvation (*signum prognosticum*). Finally, it addresses the faithful as an obligation to follow and repay the supernatural gift (*signum obligativum*).[54]

The Easter Rising, as constructed by Pearse in his late political pamphlets and major orations (from the speech at the funeral of Fenian veteran O'Donovan Rossa in 1915 to his reading of the Proclamation and his final "speech from the dock"), conforms in a striking way to the theological pattern. There is a growing tendency in Pearse's writings to absolutize the armed effort to gain independence as the central point of the nation's existence. He actually seems to compare the phases of development of the nationalist movement to the two stages of Christ's public career. The period of *teaching* the gospel must necessarily form only a prelude to the *act* of redemptive sacrifice. MacDara in *The Singer* points to the fact that "Gethsemane" and "Golgotha" form a necessary complement to the preaching of the "Teacher" (the title by which the Apostles addressed Jesus). In "The Coming Revolution", Pearse calls the Gaelic League "a prophet […] but not a Messiah" (*PWS*, 91) and declares: "Our Gaelic League time was to be our tutelage: we had first to learn to know Ireland, to read the lineaments of her face, to understand the accents of her voice; to repossess ourselves, disinherited as we were, of her spirit and mind […]."He stresses that League's "appointed work was done" (*PWS* 92, 95). As in the case of MacDara's personal process of emancipation, Pearse's "generation" first had to internalize their national identity (via the teaching of the Gaelic League), only to reach the more dignified goal of asserting the "Irish claim to nationhood" actively.

Taking this explicitly stated parallel as a starting point, I attempt to apply the theory of the liturgical sign to Pearse's conceptualization of the Rising. Edna Longley, among other critics, points to the *commemorative* (*signum rememorativum*) aspect of the Rising. The motif of "the tribute to the Dead" was stressed in the recurrent invocations of the "seven heroic centuries" of Irish

[54] Cf. *Summa Theologiae* III, 60.3; Jagodzińska 60.

resistance to the English rule. It generates also Pearse's repeated references to the "communion of saints" of the Irish separatism from Wolfe Tone to O'Donovan Rossa. Finally, it is present in his almost obsessive inclination to "mimic Robert Emmett".[55] In Longley's interpretation, the rebellion seems to be almost a "back-formation".[56] In Chapter 3, I explained Pearse's strategy of constructing a continuous narrative of Irish separatism, consisting however in the recurring pattern of insurrectionary moments that tear apart the continuum of everyday existence. Pearse's discourse often (quite in accordance with many other contemporary thinkers) divides historical time into "generations" and each of these time-units has some kind of insurrectionary effort as its centre: 1798 and 1803, 1848, 1868. For each generation, such moments provide a kind of intersection of the linear flow of time with the eschatological flash. At the same time they form a repetitive pattern. "The failure of this generation", i.e. Pearse's contemporaries, he castigated so unequivocally in "Ghosts", consisted in their inability to act and led to the gradual weaning of the Nation-Church. The response to this process of degradation is the renewal of sacrifice. In each of those cases, the sacrifice was, at least in Pearse's view, undertaken with little hope of success in the political or military sense. This, however, just as in the case of the Christian sacrificial archetype, is perceived as of secondary importance. Such a view of history seems to reproduce quite succinctly the role played by the Eucharist within the human time: a repetitive event which consists in a radical disruption of the linear time-flow. The essential unity of all the particular moments of consecration is guaranteed by the fact that each of them re-enacts the same story: in each case the priest re-presents Christ's sacrifice. As Nuala Johnson sums up: "The deployment of the Christian liturgy to underlie the Rising provided the rebels with an ideological link with previous uprisings, and the Irish historical narrative could be conceived in cyclical rather than in strictly linear terms."[57]

The use of the word "cyclical" here may be slightly misleading. The Eucharist is a repetitive event which nevertheless occurs in a closed time-frame. It is always suffused with the expectation of the Second Coming. The Rising, even if apparently doomed to a military failure, is thus an obvious *prognosis* of future Irish independence (*signum prognosticum*). As the day of the insurrection drew near, Pearse's rhetoric often tended towards an eschatological framing of the event. He pointed towards the approaching decisive moment, the intersection between the divine time and the historical time, invoking repeatedly St. John's Revelation. In "Peace and the Gael", the language of the Apocalypse provided a metaphorical cover for the message of the imminent revolution and national deliverance when Pearse spoke about "Christ's peace" being "heralded by

[55] Higgins, *Transforming 1916* 8.
[56] Longley 32-3.
[57] Johnson 146.

terrific messengers" who "blow trumpets of war before it" (*PWS* 218). In "The Sovereign People", the present and future of the nation are described with imagery explicitly borrowed from the main eschatological turning points of the Christian narrative – Passion and The Last Judgement:

> Let no man be mistaken as to who will be lord in Ireland when Ireland is free. The people will be lord and master. The people who wept in Gethsemane, who trod the sorrowful way, who died naked on a cross, who went down into hell, will rise again glorious and immortal, will sit on the right hand of God, and will come in the end to give judgment, a judge just and terrible. (*PWS* 345)

On the other hand, Pearse was conscious of the fact that in all probability, their insurrectional effort would not be sufficient to achieve that ultimate goal. Nevertheless, in his Address to Court Martial, the day before the execution, he explained his view of the chain of repeated sacrifices forming the essence of the nation's story: "If you strike us down now, we shall rise again […] You cannot extinguish the Irish passion for freedom. If our deed has not been sufficient to win freedom, then our children will win it by a better deed."[58] From such a perspective, the Rising is also a powerful reminder of the *obligation* (*signum obligativum*) for next generations to assert the nation's existence, if necessary also through arms.

The three above-mentioned aspects of the liturgical sign are fused together in a single sentence from Pearse's "Graveside Panegyric" for O'Donovan Rossa. He describes his own generation as "re-baptized in Fenian faith" (legacy of the past), calls his contemporaries to "re-new their baptismal vows" in emulation of the gift received from the generations of dead revolutionaries (obligation), in order to visualize a "free and Gaelic" Ireland (of the future). He summarizes them again in his speech from the dock: "We have kept faith with the past, and handed a tradition to the future."[59]

In Pearse's writings, the miraculous transformation is always linked with the ability to act, irrespective of whether we are discussing his plays or the political pamphlets. As he wrote in "The Separatist Idea", freedom of the nation is so "splendid" a thing that it cannot be defined in words: it must be written in "some flaming symbol" and asserted by deed (*PWS* 261-2). The commemorative, prognostic and obligational aspects of the liturgical sign connect the event of the Eucharist with the past and the future. The "demonstrative" (*signum demonstrativum*) aspect remains, however, crucial to the event itself, as it happens at the particular moment. To some

[58] Quoted in: MacLochlainn, *Last Words* 28-9.
[59] Quoted in: Mac Lochlainn, *Last Words* 28.

extent, it thus contains all the other strata of meaning. In this most complex dimension of the Eucharistic symbolism, the link between the sign and the actual happening is performed in the clearest way, as the words of the consecration result in the transformation of bread and wine.

Shortly after the Rising, as Redmond Fitzgerald relates, posters appeared in the streets of Dublin, featuring Pearse's dead body in the arms of Mother Ireland, with the caption "All Is Changed".[60] This image may serve as a visualization of Pearse's conceptualization of the Rising. Just as the Eucharist is the sacrament of miraculous transformation and of Real Presence of Christ at a specific moment in a specific place, the Easter Rising is a miraculous transformation of men and the assertion of the Real Presence of the spiritual being called the Irish nation in its full splendour and glory. At the commemoration of Robert Emmet in 1914, Pearse juxtaposed the military and political failure of the rebellion with the importance of its assertion of Ireland's existence, calling it "a triumph for that deathless thing we call Irish Nationality" (*PWS* 71). A year before, at the grave of Wolfe Tone, Pearse spoke about dying "in testimony of the truth of Ireland's claim to nationhood" (*PWS* 53). Finally, he ended his career as a writer in the last paragraphs of "The Sovereign People" with a declaration: "I assert the forgotten truth and ask all who accept it to testify to it with me, here in our day" (*PWS* 371-2). "Our day" becomes here a collective equivalent of Christ's "*hora mea*", "my hour" which Biblical exegesis reads as synonymous to *kairos* – often defined in theology as "the time when the Lord acts"; the salvation time in which the timely and the timeless intersect.

The conceptualization of the Easter Rising mirrors the symbolic system of the Catholic liturgy of the Mass. It also forms a logical continuum with Pearse's liturgical plays, partaking in the medieval progress from the fictional preparation for to the ritual fulfilment of the redemptive event. The connection between the Eucharist and the violent insurrection may seem confusing; on the other hand, it is important to realize that from the theological perspective a "bloody" equivalent of the "bloodless" sacrifice of the Mass is martyrdom. The Church Fathers repeatedly compare the body of the martyr to the body of Christ – transformed by suffering into the incorruptible and ennobled "body spiritual", but also, in accordance with the theological premises outlined above, to the white bread of the Host. St. Ignatius says in the letter to Romans: "I am God's corn and I am grinded into flour by the teeth of wild beasts in order to become the pure bread of Christ." In the description of the martyrdom of Polycarpus, we encounter a literal vision of the body "baked" in the fire into "golden bread".[61]

[60] Redmond Fitzgerald, *Cry Blood, Cry Erin* (Dublin: Barrie and Rockliff, 1966) 112.
[61] Quoted in: Dariusz Karłowicz, *Arcyparadoks śmierci* (Warszawa: Fronda, 2007) 295–96.

Moreover, as Michael P. Jensen points out, martyrdom – just as the liturgy of the Eucharist – is a "*dramatic* performance of the death of Christ" (emphasis mine). According to Jensen, "Christian martyrdom" resembles drama as "a narrative performed or enacted". Moreover, it also "invites the outsider to consider the truth to which the martyr testifies".[62] The verbs "to show", "to prove" and 'to testify", which we have just heard in Pearse's orations, appear very frequently in the final words of martyrs as given in hagiographical literature and the stress on visualization remains a recurrent theme. In the *Martyrio Pionii*, the saint exclaims: "I am in a hurry to *convince* you all, *showing* you the resurrection of the dead" (emphasis mine). By means of their deed, they assert and embody the Truth which cannot be explained in words, but can only be made *visible*.[63] The Catholic theologian Urs von Balthasar defines a martyr as "the external representation of the inner reality".[64] Martyrdom is a proof of rightfulness of the creed, a radical testimony that outweighs the rational arguments of philosophy.

The presentation of the Rising as an act of martyrdom regained its central position in Irish historiography simultaneously with the escalation of political violence in the North. The rhetoric of the Provisional IRA, in many respects explicitly referring back to Pearse, confirmed both the importance and the malicious influence of Pearse's legacy. Alan Ford claims that "no one can deny the power of political martyrdom in modern Irish history"[65] and, as Ian McBride adds, "it was Pearse who defined the ideal of sacrificial martyrdom for future generations".[66] Richard Kearney identifies the myth of sacrifice as the "mythical nucleus" of Irish nationalism. He blames the rhetoric into which the Easter Rising was clothed for the definite conceptualization of Irish history as a chain of acts of martyrdom, of recurrent individual sacrifices intended to bear witness to the continuity of the existence of the nation.[67]

I leave the discussion about the theological implications of Pearse's vision to the final chapter. What remains more evident here is the form in which this ultimate goal of Pearse's literary and political career is conveyed. It seems that only within the logic of the liturgy can we fully conceptualize Pearse's symbolic construction of the Rising. The application of the model of liturgical drama and of the theory of the liturgical sign enables us to bridge the gap between Pearse the author and Pearse the revolutionary. It delineates the evolution of Pearse's thought and shows how he gradually explored the potential of the mechanism of *translatio sacrii*. Only

[62] Michael P. Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity. The Self on Trial* (London: T&T Clark, 2010) 190.
[63] Karlowicz 337.
[64] Jensen 159.
[65] Alan Ford, "Martyrdom, history and memory in early modern Ireland", *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 43.
[66] Ian McBride, "Introduction: memory and national identity in modern Ireland", *History and Memory*… 35.
[67] Kearney 209–16.

liturgy provides a similar pattern of "gestures and symbols" that result in a concrete event and serve to materialize the inexpressible. Only liturgy, finally, provided a framework and a point of reference intimately known to the whole of Irish society at that time. This also helps to explain the powerful grip of Pearse's vision over generations of Irishmen.

Chapter Eight

A Little World in Itself

> I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels - a plentiful harvest of new lives.
>
> John 12.24
>
> Gaeil iad féin is ní Francaigh ná Spáinnigh.[1]
>
> "An Dord Féinne" (Pearse's version)

Some forty eight hours before his execution, expecting the court martial and its inevitable (and welcomed) results, Pearse wrote, in the Arbour Hill Barracks, cell a poem entitled "A Mother Speaks":

> Dear Mary, that didst see thy first-born Son
> Go forth to die amid the scorn of men
> For whom He died,
> Receive my first-born son into thy arms,
> Who also hath gone out to die for men,
> And keep him by thee till I come to him.
> Dear Mary, I have shared thy sorrow,
> And soon shall share thy joy. (*LWPP* 28)

An almost unbearable level of emotional exaltation, quite understandable concerning the circumstances in which the text was written, should not conceal the fact that some of its features point to the core of Pearse's idea of the Rising and of the mechanism of *translatio sacrii*.

The consistent parallelism between the national and the theological narrative in Pearse's writings that I attempted to outline in the previous chapters reached its peak in the construction of the act of insurrection itself in analogy to the redemptive sacrifice, and of the figure of its leader in analogy to Christ or at least Christ's priest and martyr. The previous chapters concentrated on displaying the *mechanism* of *translatio sacrii* and we were somehow postponing a more thorough discussion of the sense of uneasiness generated by Pearse's writings and by his posthumous apotheosis, as conveyed in Augustine Martin's comment quoted at the beginning of this work. Actually, in the same article in which he utters a sigh of relief about not having to deal with the "theological implications" of MacDara's final statement, Martin comes very close to

[1] "Gaels they are, neither French nor Spaniards". Patrick Pearse, "An Dord Féinne", *Irish Volunteer*, 4 April 1914.

defining the source of confusion experienced by any Catholic intellectual when confronted with Pearse's thought. Bearing in mind the closing scene of *The Singer*, he describes how Pearse managed to transfer

> the concept from the region of metaphor to the region of actuality: the patriot's cause *was* a holy one; the revolution he foresaw was to be *in fact* a holy war; the spilling of the patriot's blood was to be *in fact* redemptive.[2]

Martin's dualism of metaphor and actuality resembles to some extent the juxtaposition of metaphor and metonymy in the understanding of the sacrament of Eucharist that I referred to in the previous chapter. From the theological perspective, such a transfer must necessarily be understood as a heretical appropriation of the religious by the political, the "immanentization" (in a sense given to the word by Eric Vogelin, i.e. enclosing in the context of human reality and time[3]) of what is transcendent. Such an argument lies behind Francis Shaw's rejection of Pearse's ideological premises as being "in conflict with the whole Christian tradition" as well as Sheridan Gilley's assertion that "Pearse's sacrifice was magnificent, but hardly Christian".[4] Those objections form a starting point of the following argument. Pearse's notion of sacrifice is first examined from the perspective of the evolution of the discourses of sacrifice in the Christian tradition. Pearse's concept is then tested against the background of the most elaborate modern re-writing of the narrative of passion and salvation – Adam Mickiewicz's national messianism.

At the same time, I would like to argue that Pearse's "A Mother Speaks", read outside the context of the Irish debate on the legacy of the "blood sacrifice" concept, remains perfectly "Catholic" in its spirit. It takes the form of a prayer to the Virgin who occupies a role of the intermediary between humankind and God, typical for Catholic imagination. The image of the "son's" sacrificial death is *compared* to the death of Christ, yet by no means *equalled* with it. Despite the obvious (and very prominent) element of self-stylization, I would claim that the emotional intensity of Pearse's final texts, as well as the accompanying evidence (Pearse's letter from the jail, memoirs of the Capuchin friar attending to the spiritual needs of the imprisoned leaders of the Rising before the executions), make it impossible to assume that Pearse's construction of the Rising as a redemptive act may be described either in terms of a mere pragmatic propagandist trick (designed to win the support of the Catholic Irish population) or as a consistent attempt to substitute the Catholic narrative with the new national myth. Actually none of the Catholic critics

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[2] Martin 39.
[3] Cf. Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).
[4] Sheridan Gilley, "Pearse's Sacrifice. Christ and Cuchulain Crucified and Risen in Easter Rising". *Sacrifice and Redemption. Durham Essays in Theology*. Ed. S.W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 218-234

of Pearse, be it J.J. Horgan or Francis Shaw, ever question the sincerity of Pearse's personal religious conviction. The question that remains to be answered in order to illuminate the ultimate character of Pearse's *translatio* is thus how he attempted to bring his conceptualization of the Rising into accord with the doctrine of the Church of which we wanted to remain a member. In the final part of the argument, I propose a metaphor that visualizes the cosmology of Pearse's thinking about religion, the nation and his own place within this universe.

8.1. The Calvary Metaphor

In Fr Francis Shaw's article condemning Pearse's "nationalist heresy", the author quotes Pearse's short poem "Christmas 1915":

> O King that was born
> To set bondsmen free,
> In the coming battle,
> Help the Gael! (*LWPP* 27)

He points out, quite unsurprisingly, that Pearse misunderstood here Christ'smission, which was not to "set bondsmen free" but to save man's soul from damnation. According to Shaw, Pearse exchanged Christ's "gospel of love" for a nationalist "gospel of hate", as the former is concerned with the individual's spiritual struggle, while the latter is directed towards the collective and actual violence.[5] Nevertheless, Shaw seems to neglect two crucial points: firstly the persistence of "military" ethos within the Christian discourse, and secondly the long tradition of elaborate attempts to inscribe the patriotic sacrifice into the realm of Christian ethics.

Catholicism of Pearse's time distinguished several "modes" of Christian ethos. The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount coexisted with the medieval chivalric tradition with its emphasis on the necessity to resist evil – not only in the spiritual but also in the "physical" sense. The language of Catholic spirituality was suffused with military rhetoric. Six years after Pearse's birth, Pope Leo XIII added into the Roman Missal an obligatory prayer to St Michael, invoking "the Prince of Heavenly Host" to "defend us in battle".[6] Although what is meant here is mainly a spiritual struggle, the ethos of chivalry and crusades was alive in Pearse's time and he himself referred to it repeatedly in his writings, from the exaltation of Cú Chulainn as the "model of chivalry"[7], through focus on Christ's words "I bring not peace, but a sword" which he read as a declaration

[5] Shaw 123.
[6] "Sancti Michaelis Archangeli, defenderent nos in proelio […] princeps militiae celestis".
[7] J.J. Lee, among many other aspects, stresses Pearse's strict adherence to the military ethics. He gentlemanly refused to distribute among the Volunteers the explosive bullets gained at Howth Gun Running, as it opposed "the rules of civilized war" (J. J. Lee, "In Search of Patrick Pearse", *Revising the Rising* 133).

of war "between right and wrong […] justice and oppression", to the Proclamation expressing hope that "no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine".[8]

The connection between Eucharistic symbolism and the theme of violent struggle becomes less confusing when viewed from the perspective of this ethos. As I have already discussed in the previous chapter, in the earliest Christian writings we are confronted not only with the equation between Eucharist and Calvary, but we also realize that the form of Christian behaviour linked most strongly to the sacrament is martyrdom. Martyrdom, although on the surface consisting in passive submission to death, is often described in "combative" language, for example by comparing martyrs to gladiators. Tertullian addresses potential martyrs in the following manner: "You are entering a noble struggle, in which the living God is the judge of the contest, the Holy Spirit is the master of the athletic association."[9] Similarly, devotional re-iterations of the Passion narrative are filled with military terminology. Two most ancient and venerated Easter anthems are after all "Victimae paschali laudes", with the striking stanza: "Mors et vita duello / conflixere mirando: / dux vitae mortuus, / regnat vivus"[10] and "Pange, lingua, gloriosi proelium certaminis".[11] In her study of the medieval Eucharistic imagery, Moiri Rubin quotes as an exemplary a Middle English poem: "Behold my woundes wide, man and se, /My blood tha schedde in batayl for the."[12]

As Ernst Kantorowicz outlines, it is very early in the Middle Ages that the discourse of martyrdom, inalienably connected with the Eucharistic symbolism, becomes employed in the service of the political community. It was transferred from the sphere of passive to active resistance to evil, but retained its aura of sacredness. Christian imagery seems to be adapted to the ancient ethos of *dulce et decorum*, actually incorporating into itself the subliminal element of cultic sacrifice that – in Rene Girard's argument – serves as a guarantor and instrument of social cohesion.[13] In a telling extract from the twelfth century *Historia Regum Britanniae,* we encounter the following sequence of ideas and images:

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[8] After all, the chivalric ethos is very prominent both in the text of the Proclamation (expressing hope that "no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine") and in Pearse's orders issued during the actual combat. Earlier in his writings, Pearse was often very persuasive when he referred to the Irish adherence to that ethos: "Not only was Ireland the first nursing ground of chivalry, but chivalry in Ireland reached a finer flower than every afterwards in Europe" ("Our Heritage of Chivalry", *ACS*, 14 November 1908, 9).

[9] Quoted in: Nicole Kelley, "Philosophy as Training for Death: Reading the Ancient Christian Martyr Acts as Spiritual Exercises", *Church History* 75.04 (December 2006): 723-747.

[10] "Death and life contended / in a spectacular battle: / the Prince of life, who died, / reigns alive."

[11] "Sing Tongue Glorious Battle Contest"

[12] Rubin 304.

[13] The cultic, "pagan" element of the sacrificial myth in relation to Pearse is analysed by Richard Kearney in "Myth and Martyrdom: Some Foundational Symbols in Irish Republicanism" (220-3).

> It is your country which you fight for, and for which you should, when required, voluntarily suffer death: for that itself is victory, and the cure of the soul. For he that shall die for his brethren, offers himself a living sacrifice [*hostiam*] to God, and has Christ for his example, who condescended to lay down his life for his brethren. If therefore any of you shall be killed in this war, that death itself, which is suffered in so glorious a cause, shall be to him for penance and absolution of all his sins.[14]

Despite Shaw's denunciation of the doctrine of Irish nationalism as the "gospel of hate", Catholic nationalism of Pearse's time is in its own understanding grounded in the specific use of the Thomistic philosophy of love – *caritas*. Aquinas claims that "love" is like fire – it naturally provides more heat to those who are closest to us (family, community) than to those who are distant (enemies).[15] Of course *caritas* also implies the willingness to sacrifice life for the object of love. In the words of the Gospel: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (J 15: 13). Significantly, in Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* the theme of just war – the only doctrinally approved type of collective violence – is discussed within the chapter concerning the virtue of *caritas*.[16]

The analogy between the death in defence of one's fatherland and the sacrificial death in the religious context is present throughout the history of Europe. As G.L. Mosse points out, during the Great War all parties involved in the conflict employed the religious imagery of life-through-sacrifice quite extensively.[17] Early in 1916, no one other than John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, spoke about the blood of Irish soldiers dying in Flanders as "giving life to the nations".[18] The motif was firmly rooted in the nationalist rhetoric, from the moderates to the radicals, intensified especially by the celebrations of the centenary of the 1798 rebellion that actually coincided with Pearse's entrance into the public life. At that time even the moderate *Freeman's Journal* wrote that "wherever the blood of a martyr of '98 fell upon Irish earth, there today the creed of Irish nationality is living and indestructible".[19] O.D. Edwards points also to the prominence of "God Save Ireland" as an unofficial anthem of Irish nationalism (including

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[14] Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. First published 1957) 241.

[15] *Summa Theologiae*, II.2, 27, 7: "Yet just as the same fire acts with greater force on what is near than on what is distant, so too, charity loves with greater fervour those who are united to us than those who are far removed; and in this respect the love of friends, considered in itself, is more ardent and better than the love of one's enemy."

[16] Arthur Clery wrote about a nation as "the largest extension of individual love and hope." (Clery, *The Idea of a Nation* 5).

[17] George L. Mosse, "The Jews and the Civic Religion of Nationalism", *The Impact of Western Nationalism*, ed. J.Reinharz and G.L. Mosse (London: Sage Publications, 1992) 321; cf. also Fussell 119.

[18] Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* 284.

[19] Quoted in: Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* 264.

the Irish Party) that played a role in "acquainting people" with the notion of "armed martyrdom".[20] The motif of the Irish as a "martyred nation" suffused the rhetoric of both clerical and lay intellectuals, reaching the press as well as the schoolbooks.[21] A radical literary expression of this development may be found by the already mentioned last novel by a priest-writer Canon Sheehan who let his Fenian protagonist of *The Graves of Kilmorna* claim: "You and I will be shot […] our blood will have soaked back into our mother's breast." Yet "if no blood is shed, the country will rot away".[22]

Drawing even more explicit analogies between the fate of Ireland and the story of Calvary was almost a commonplace in the nationalist press of the period. Desmond Ryan's comment on the staging of Pearse's *An Pháis* in the Abbey in 1911 ponders upon the parallels between "our national and individual struggle" and "the Great One just enacted", in which "The Man is crucified as the Nation".[23] In *The Catholic Bulletin* (January 1916), Mary Butler, speaking about the historical persecutions of the Irish nation, asserts that: "It has trod the road to Calvary, and will surely emerge into the glory of the resurrection."[24]

8.2. Christ of Nations

Introducing the messianic vision of Adam Mickiewicz to the Irish nationalist audience in 1915, Aoidh De Blácam quotes a passage from Mickiewicz's mystical prose *Books of the Polish Nation and Pilgrimage* that summarizes the central motif of the text:

> And the Polish nation was crucified, and brought into its tomb. And the kings shouted: "We have killed freedom-we have buried it." And their shouting was

[20] Edwards, *Celtic Nationalism* 173.

[21] Its most prominent roots can be found in the religious context, i.e. in the Catholic presentation of the Irish history as a narrative of faithfulness despite persecution. In one of his sermons, Cardinal Cullen summarized this perspective: "Other nations may justly boast of having given birth to individual heroes of the faith, but if we examine the histories of all countries, from the earliest ages to the present, perhaps we shall find that Ireland alone can claim the proud title of the martyr nation of the Church of Christ" (quoted in Collins 100). It was actually this discourse of victimhood that was often invoked to emphasize the interchangeability of the terms "Irish" and "Catholic": in a publication called *Irish Catholic Banner* from 1868, we read: "Our country suffered for being Catholic; our people suffered for being Irish; the bond between our Nationality and our Faith is, therefore, One for ever." (quoted in Jenkins, 55)

[22] Canon P.A. Sheehan, *The Graves of Kilmorna* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1918. First published 1915) 67. Cf. Ruth Fleischmann, *Catholic Nationalism in the Irish Revival. A Study of Canon Sheehan, 1852 – 1913* (Ipswich: Ipswich University Press, 1997) 148-9. An anonymous reviewer in *Nationality* puts it bluntly: "Nothing else but the salt of blood could save the country from putrefaction" (*Nationality*, 18 September 1915).

[23]Desmond Ryan, *The Story of a Success*, Dublin, Phoenix, 1919, p. 108

[24] Mary Butler, "Some Traits of the Catholic Gael", *The Catholic Bulletin* 6.1 (January 1916): 103. Mary Helen Thuente in "Folklore of Irish Nationalism" shows that the comparison between a patriot's death and Golgotha has a long tradition. In *Paddy Resource*, a fake folklore collection made for the United Irishmen, we encounter for example a ballad ending "Countrymen, unite! he cried, / and died – for what his Saviour died" (*Perspectives on Irish Nationalism*, eds. Thomas E. Hachey, Lawrence J. McCaffrey, [Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1989] 44-5.

> but folly […] [F]or the Polish nation is not dead! Its *body*, indeed, is in the tomb, but its *soul* has ascended from the surface of the earth; that is, from public life to the abyss, or domestic life – to the homes and hearths of those who endure distress and oppression in their country, and far from their country, in order to be the witness there of their suffering, and of their misery. And on the third day, the soul shall return to its body; and the nation shall rise from the dead; and shall free all the nations of Europe from slavery.[25]

The article is fittingly entitled (if we keep Pearse in mind) "Poland's Resurrection and its Prophet" and fits into the general eschatological atmosphere which had been prevalent in the nationalist press since the beginning of the Great War. Attempting to explain Mickiewicz's ideas to the Irish public, de Blácam writes in a mode similar to the passages from Ryan or Butler quoted above:

> What may be called the eschatology of Messianism was this dream of Mickiewicz that Poland was a nation chosen by God to be slain as victim for liberty, her resurrection would bring the end of tyranny throughout Europe. Daringly, yet with reverence, the drama of Poland's destruction by the Powers is compared […] to the drama of Calvary.[26]

De Blácam's summary highlights the crucial features of Mickiewicz's text: the eschatological character, the centrality of the sacrificial theme, set in the context of Christ's death and resurrection, and the overall uneasy relation to Catholic orthodoxy, alluded to in the phrase "daringly, yet with reverence". As has already been demonstrated in the previous chapters, Mickiewicz and Pearse share many basic ethical, ontological and epistemological precepts, as well as a vision of history and of the individual acting *in* history. First of all, it is ethical radicalism confronted with the conformism of the majority: the attitude described by Pearse as "wise foolishness of the saints", disrespectful of "the commandments of Respectable Society"[27] – a bourgeois version of the Decalogue. Secondly, it is the repudiation of rationalism, connected in their thinking with the soulless, the mechanical and the commercial. On the political level, the antithetical pairs that define their ethics and epistemology are transposed into a juxtaposition of freedom and despotism (Mickiewicz) and nation and empire (Pearse). The nation, bound together by "natural" and "spiritual ties" (*PWS* 343) is juxtaposed with "the rule without love"

[25]Adam Mickiewicz, „Księgi narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego", *Dzieła 2* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1983) 223.
[26]Aodh de Blácam, "Poland's Resurrection and its Prophet", *Nationality,* 24 July 1915: 6-7.
[27] Patrick Pearse, *An Macaomh* 2, 2 May 1913, p. 8.

(Mickiewicz), "held together by ties of mutual interest" or "brute force" (Pearse, *PWS* 136). Finally, serving the cause of this holy fellowship requires moral perfection (or at least striving for it) and evangelical virtues, as summed up in O'Rossa's graveside oration ("splendid and *holy causes* are *served* by men who are themselves splendid and holy" *PWS* 135 – emphasis mine) or in Mickiewicz's *Books* ("you shall be risen from the tomb, because you have faith and love and because hope lives in you").[28] Finally, they hold a similar dynamic vision of history that bridges the past and the future, the paradise lost and paradise regained (skipping with contempt the present moment), "giving new meanings to old elements and clothing the new ones with traditional connotations".[29] It seems that they also share an uneasy relation to religion, in the sense of swinging between the poles of "reverence" and "daring".

According to scholars such as Jacob Talmon or Andrzej Walicki, such a combination of ideas forms a precondition to modern romantic messianism. The connection between Pearse's ideas and messianism seems to spring logically not only from passages such as the end of *The Singer* but also from the way in which Pearse was presented in the republican ideology. "Messianism" has thus become one of the key-words of Pearsean scholarship. To mention only a few of the prominent early voices in Irish Studies, F.S.L. Lyons described Pearse's ideas as a culmination of the "messianic strain" in Irish writing and Patrick O'Farrell spoke of Pearse as "the first Irish rebel to have made explicit and substantial use of the messiah concept".[30] In passing, O'Farrell links Pearse's nationalism to the phenomenon of millenarianism.[31] Sean Farrell Moran also locates Pearse's discourse of a martyr's death for Irish freedom in the millenarian context. According to Moran, the "archetypal Irish patriot", as created by Pearse, "re-enacts a redemptive myth", combining in his Christ-like act the role of the sacrificer and that of the offering.[32] Nevertheless, it seems that apart from the above-mentioned texts, the term "messianism" is generally taken for granted and the Pearsean variety of this universal phenomenon has rarely been located within any comparative or theoretical context. Such a context may be provided by Mickiewicz's messianism.

Taking Mickiewicz as an "ideal case" of Romantic messianism, Polish scholars have attempted to identify some key features of the concept. Firstly, like the Christian millenarian

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[28] Adam Mickiewicz, „Księgi narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego" 226.
[29]Walicki, *Filozofia i mesjanizm* 292.
[30] F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890 – 1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) 88; Patrick O'Farrell, "Millenialism, Messianism & Utopianism in Irish History" 45 - 68.
[31]Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium. Revolutionary messianism in medieval and Reformation Europe and its Bering on modern totalitarianism*, New York: Harper & Row, 1961.
[32] Sean Farrell Moran, "Patrick Pearse and Patriotic Soteriology: the Irish Republican Tradition and the Sanctification of Political Self-immolation", *The Irish Terrorism Experience* eds. Yonah Alexander and Alan O'Day (Dartmouth: Dartmouth Pub. Co., 1991) 9, 14

movements, Mickiewicz's messianism is based on the belief in a decisive transformation leading to the state of social and moral perfection of mankind. It is a quest "for total, imminent, ultimate, this-worldly, collective salvation".[33] A special emphasis has to be placed on the words "this-worldly" and "collective", both contradicting the orthodox Christian view of history and instead referring back to the heretical millenarian movements which elaborated upon the visionary image of the earthly Thousand Year Kingdom of Christ and His saints mentioned in the Book of Revelation. The transformation must be mediated through the elected nation, group or individual, i.e. the bearer of the messianic mission. Finally, the election is conditioned in most cases by undergoing a period of trial and suffering comparable to the Passion of Christ. *Millenium*, *mission* and *passion* thus form three pillars of the messianic vision.[34]

It is not difficult to realize that Pearse's vision entirely lacks the universalist grandiosity of Mickiewicz's. Some traces of a universal spiritual mission of Ireland may be detected in his earliest essay, "The Intellectual Future of the Gael", where he claims:

> The Gael is not like other men; the spade, and the loom, and the sword are not for him. But a destiny more glorious than that of Rome, more glorious than that of Britain awaits him: to become the saviour of idealism in modern intellectual and social life, the regenerator and rejuvenator of the literature of the world, the instructor of the nations, the preacher of the gospel of nature-worship, hero-worship, God-worship – such […] is the destiny of the Gael.[35]

Nevertheless, this too-often quoted passage seems merely to reproduce the contemporary mode of Irish exceptionalism which I defined in Chapter Four as a mixture of Yeats's "home of ancient idealism" with the Catholic narrative of "the most pious nation". Most importantly, it does not continue in Pearse's later texts. Similarly, although the tendency to present the approaching struggle in apocalyptic terms became more apparent in the months preceding the Rising, Pearse's ventures into the future cannot match Mickiewicz's eschatological exaltation. The approaching revolution cannot be really understood in terms of the almost cosmological upheaval and the following era of Irish freedom cannot be taken for a "paradise on earth". Pearse's goal is again limited to the microcosm of the nation, aiming for nothing else than to occupy its due place among the nations of Europe. The description of Tone's and Emmet's ideology he gives in "The Separatist Idea" may serve here as a definition of his own attitude: "Both, however, were

[33] Andrzej Walicki, *Filozofia i mesjanizm*, p. 10.
[34]Paweł Rojek, "Mesjanizm integralny". *Pressje,* 28 (2012): 20 – 49.
[35] Patrick Pearse, "Intellectual Future of the Gael", *Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse. Songs of the Irish Rebels* (Dublin: Phoenix, 1919) 231.

Nationalists first, and revolutionists only in so far as revolution was essential to the establishment of the nation (*PWS 291*).

The last of the three pillars of the messianic vision is Passion, the motif of redemption via suffering. According to the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdaiev, "the Poles revealed to the world the idea of messianic sacrifice".[36] It was the oppression of Poland under the imperial rule that triggered the growth of Mickiewicz's messianism and it crystallized around the image of Calvary and its collective repetition in *Forefathers' Eve* and in *The Books*. His primary aim was to give meaning to the suffering and defeat by connecting the sacrifice of Poland and the sacrifice of Christ. The nature of this connection and the meaning of the image of the "Christ of nations" remains one of the most disputed themes of Polish intellectual history.[37] Is it only a metaphor, treating the Polish nation as a collective subject whose fate *resembles* the fate of Christ and who draws its spiritual power and endurance from this mystical parallel? From this perspective, it may appear as a "daring", collective form of *imitatio Christi*, but still acceptable from the doctrinal point of view. Or is it, on the contrary, a blasphemous usurpation of the messianic status which actually reverses the logic of the figural understanding of history and turns Christ's death and resurrection into a mere type (*figura*) of future happenings? To a great extent, those questions parallel Augustine Martin's point, whether Pearse's vision belongs "to the realm of metaphor" or "actuality".

According to Talmon, a "messianists proper" considered "Christianity, at times religion as such, always the historic form of Christianity, as the arch-enemy. Indeed they triumphantly proclaimed themselves substitutes for it."[38] After all, the author of the archetypal Western messianic theory, Joachim of Fiore, prophesized in the thirteenth century the end of Christ's era and the dawn of the new era of the Holy Ghost. In the evolution of Mickiewicz's messianism, such an attitude surfaces most prominently in the 1840s in the so-called *Parisian Lectures*. Nevertheless, Mickiewicz of *The Books*, invoked and discussed by De Blacám and translated into Irish by Liam Ó Rinn, still attempts to balance loyalty to Christianity and the heretical potential of his own mystical revolution. At the moments of highest mystical exaltation, Mickiewicz seems to uphold a doctrine of salvation through blood carried to the utmost limits:

> In the daring enterprises aimed at the enemies of the cause, we may, despite the good intentions, fail […] but man who is full of devotion […] is infallible

[36]Rojek, "Mesjanizm integralny" 40.
[37] See for example *Ryszard Przybylski, Słowa i milczenie bohatera Polaków*, (Warszawa: IBL 1993).
[38]Talmon 25.

> as far as the nation's cause is concerned. He pours blood on the scales of destiny. The blood which is needed to tip the scales.[39]

At other points Mickiewicz's mysticism is checked by the orthodox framework: "The Polish nation is not divine as Christ, so its soul wandering through wilderness may go astray."[40] Nevertheless, Mickiewicz's vision in the end entails if not a substitution of Christianity by the new "Church of the Spirit", then at least a complementation of the individual salvation brought about by Christ by the collective salvation and the "reign of Freedom" on earth.

The concept of the redemptive sacrifice is the only pillar of messianism Pearse's shares with Mickiewicz. Pearse's idea of sacrifice remains, however, limited to the exclusively Irish context. The drama of the fall, sacrifice and redemption is staged within the microcosm of the nation, without any attempt to universalize its message. Instead, the notion and vocabulary of a divinely inspired mission are transposed to the chosen group or to a single individual *within* the nation. The principle that we may call "mystical subsidiarity", which does not attempt to replace or deny the higher level of the universal Christian narrative, prevails decisively in Pearse's writings. Eamon McCann's ironic description of Pearse as "dying for an Irish section" of humankind (see Chapter One) may be thus closer to the actual workings of Pearse's concept than might have been expected. A similar motif is conveyed in the often quoted poem composed by another member of the Volunteers, Thomas Ashe: "Let me carry Your Cross *for Ireland*, Lord" (emphasis mine).[41] When Mac Dara rises to perform his messianic sacrifice, his words are: "One man can free a people *as* one Man redeemed the world" (emphasis mine). His act is thus not a cancellation of Christ's universal sacrifice but its repetition on a lower ontological level ("a people" versus "the world").

8.3. *Sanguis Martyrum…*

According to Gerd Theissen, since the time of the early Church fathers, the sacrificial death of Christ has been conceptualized either as *exemplum* or *sacramentum*, i.e. either in ethical or in eschatological terms. In the first case, Christ was taken as "a model of divine and human behaviour", demonstrating how one "should bear his action and his suffering". The second understanding pointed to the unique character of Christ's sacrifice and its power to "overcome disaster". Both interpretations can easily coexist in the context of the Church's teaching: the first as an example for all the people to imitate, the other as the definite, unique act in the history of

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[39] Quoted in: Wiktor Weintraub, *Poeta i prorok. Rzecz o prefetyzmie Mickiewicza* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1998) 244-5.
[40] Mickiewicz, *Księgi narodu*... 224.
[41] Quoted in: F.X. Martin, "1916 – Myth, Fact and Mystery" 116-7.

salvation. The faithful can therefore imitate Christ's behaviour, including the martyrdom, yet cannot attempt to match its transcendent effects.[42] Nevertheless, such a clear-cut division between the two approaches to Christ's Passion obliterates Christian rhetorical practise. The martyrdom of the faithful soon begins to be described in terms of multiplying, strengthening or transferring the effects of the Divine grace, an attitude summed up in Tertulian's famous "Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum" ("Blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians", *Apologeticus* 50.13). The martyr follows the example of Christ, repeats the archetypal model and becomes an example and inspiration for others. I would argue that this image of the chain of martyrs, re-enacting for a particular community what Christ had done for the whole of humanity, comes closest to the essence of Pearse's imagination. In the logic of *translatio*, it results in the image of the chain of national martyrs, sacrificing their lives entirely to the cause of Ireland, from Cú Chulainn through Columcille to Emmet or Rossa. Significantly, only two of the heroes of Pearse's final texts died a violent death; it seems that sacrifice may also consist in a total dedication to the cause. Pearse's words before the court martial – "If our deed has not been sufficient to win freedom, then our children will win it by a better deed"[43] – display that logic of the continuous repetition of the archetype.

Eoin MacNeill's *Memorandum*, issued in February 1916 in order to prevent the prepared insurrection, provides one of the most influential and elaborate critiques of Pearse's idea of the Rising, moreover uttered from the perspective of a fervent separatist and devout Catholic. Nevertheless, in one of the passages MacNeill explains:

> There is a feeling in some minds that action is necessary, that lives must be sacrificed, in order to produce an ultimate effect on the national mind. As a principle of action, I have heard that feeling disclaimed, but I did not fully accept the disclaimer. In fact, it is a sounder principle than any of the others that I have dealt with. If the destruction of our nationality was in sight, and if we came to the conclusion that at least the vital principle of nationality was to be saved by laying down our lives, then we should make that sacrifice without hesitation. It would not be a military act in any sense, and it does not come within the scope of our military counsels. [44]

[42] Gerd Theissen, *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1999) 144-5,
[43] Quoted in: Mac Lochlainn, *Last Words*… 28-9.
[44] The text of the Memorandum was first published in: F.X. Martin, "Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising", *Irish Historical Studies* 12.47 (March 1961): 234 – 251.

He seems to understand and accept fully the ethos of national sacrifice, denying only that the particular moment and circumstances allow one to take this ultimate step. Gilbert Keith Chesterton, one of the most acute Christian apologists of the twentieth century, who arrived to Dublin shortly after the insurrection, grasped this ultimate meaning of the events immediately and moreover described them in language referring explicitly to the sphere of religion:

> Everything seems to point to the paradox that the rebels needed the less to be conquered, because they were actually aiming at being conquered, rather than at being conquerors. In the moral sense they were most certainly heroes, but I doubt if they expected to be conquering heroes. They desired to be in the Greek and literal sense martyrs; they wished not so much to win as to witness. They thought that nothing but their dead bodies could really prove that Ireland was not dead.[45]

Chesterton seems to echo here his essay *Orthodoxy* (1908) in which he famously distinguish a martyr and a suicide:

> Obviously a suicide is the opposite of a martyr. A martyr is a man who cares so much for something outside him, that he forgets his own personal life. A suicide is a man who cares so little for anything outside him, that he wants to see the last of everything. One wants something to begin: the other wants everything to end. In other words, the martyr is noble, exactly because (however he renounces the world or execrates all humanity) he confesses this ultimate link with life; he sets his heart outside himself: he dies that something may live.[46]

Both Chesterton and MacNeill testify to the understanding of the martyrdom as an assertive and life-giving power. They also both point to what the national martyr is trying to witness, what he asserts or attempts to re-invigorate. MacNeill speaks of "the vital principle of nationality", Chesterton simply of "Ireland".

MacNeill's *Memorandum*, however, is explicitly critical of the planned Rising. A major argument against the insurrection is based on the fact that the Volunteers have not yet gained an overwhelming support of the population for their goals and thus cannot act as *representatives* of the nation. Significantly, MacNeill feels obliged to emphasize:

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[45] Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *Irish Impressions* (Glasgow: Collins, 1919) 70-1.
[46] Chesterton, *Orthodoxy. The Romance of Faith*, (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2009. First published 1908) 45-7.

> We have to remember that what we call our country is not a poetical abstraction, as some of us, perhaps all of us, in the exercise of our highly developed capacity for figurative thought, are sometimes apt to imagine – with the help of our patriotic literature. There is no such person as Caitlin Ni Uallacháin or Roisin Dubh or the Sean-bhean Bhocht, who is calling upon us to serve her. What we call our country is the Irish nation, which is a concrete and visible reality.[47]

According to F.X. Martin, MacNeill's *Memorandum* was written around mid-February 1916. I would claim that this particular extract is an allusion to a passage from Pearse's essay *The Spiritual Nation*, dated 13 February. In this essay, Pearse recollects:

> When I was a child I believed that there was actually a woman called Erin, and had Mr. Yeats' *Kathleen Ni Houlihan* been then written, and had I seen it, I should have taken it not as an allegory, but as a representation of a thing that might happen any day in any house. (*PWS* 300-1)

Both passages invoke the mythical image of the Woman of Ireland and both operate with the dualism of "metaphor" and "actuality". Nevertheless, in the following lines Pearse upholds the conviction that there exists a "spiritual thing" which "is distinct from the intellectual facts in which chiefly it makes its revelation", and which in his childhood imagination acquired the material form of "a woman called Erin".

In *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, Carl Schmitt differentiates between two concepts of representation. The first reflects the actual etymology of Latin *re-praesentatio*, conveying the notion that a particular person incarnates a particular "substantive idea". The second, dominant in the modern world, derives its logic from the "process of technological reproducibility – the mass *replication* of *material* objects" (emphasis mine).[48] In the nineteenth century, the second mode of representation infected also the sphere of the political and found one of its outlets in the concept of "representative democracy". For Schmitt, representative democracy has nothing to do with the actual idea of representation, introducing instead a merely quantitative notion of transferring sovereign power from a group of people to an individual via electoral process. In its original, proper, sense, representation does not entail making present something that is already a priori physically present (e.g. electoral constituency). In John McCormick's words, "it indeed means

[47] "Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising" 239
[48] John McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism. Against Politics as Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 158.

making present something real or 'actual' but something that is only given material presence through the representation process".[49] Significantly, according to Schmitt, the last repository of the proper understanding of representation, resisting the pressure of the technological mentality of modernity, is Catholicism, with its constant swinging between the reality of the earthly Church, i.e. community of believers, the idea of mystical body of Christ and the constant actualization of the historical event of Christ's incarnation. Drawing on Schmitt's argument and relating it to the discussion of the Eucharistic symbolism in the previous chapter, we may say that during the Eucharistic ritual, a priest represents simultaneously the material reality of *civitas humana*, the person of Christ and the *link* between human existence and the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ.[50]

Applying Schmitt's concept to the debate between MacNeill and Pearse, we may argue that they uphold two conflicting notions of representation. Whereas MacNeill's invocation of the necessity to gain the support of the "living Irish nation" in its "concrete and visible reality" is based on the modern rational discourse of legitimacy, Pearse once again reaches to its Catholic counterpart, in which a *person* incarnates the *idea* rather than material reality. If we understand "Kathleen Ni Houlihan" as a symbolic personification of "this deathless thing called Irish Nationality" (*PWS* 71), than within the logic of this concept of representation, Pearse's assertion is far from being "a poetic abstraction".

Irish Nationality, understood as a mystical union between spiritual and material reality and the past, the present and the future, requires a representation which the electoral process is not capable of generating. According to Schmitt, "words such as greatness, nobility, majesty, glory, worthiness and honour come close to capturing the special nature of an intensified being that is capable of being represented". In another passage Schmitt specifies: "God or 'the people' in democratic ideology or abstract ideas like freedom and equality can all conceivably constitute a representation." Crucially, it is a concept linked inevitably with the notion of "personal authority": "To represent in an eminent sense can be only done by a person, i.e. not simply a 'deputy' but an authoritative person." Not only does the entity which is being represented naturally maintain some kind of dignity, but also the person who represents is by virtue of the process of representation ennobled: "Representation invests the representative person with a special dignity because the representative of a noble value cannot be without value."[51] It is from this perspective that Pearse's often quoted words uttered at the graveside of O'Donovan Rossa

[49] McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism. Against Politics as Technology* 161-4.
[50] Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism* 19.
[51] Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism* 21.

should be understood: "Splendid and holy causes are served by men who are themselves splendid and holy" (*PWS* 135).

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In Chapter 4, I have defined the mechanism of *translatio sacrii*, on which in my view Pearse's conceptualization of Irish nationalism is based, as a construction of a parallel and totalizing system of the national faith in analogy with the Church. At the same time, Pearse's concept attempted not to break the ultimate connection with Catholicism, perceiving the nation as a microcosm within the wider context of the Christian universe. In the preceding paragraphs I presented the image of Pearse as a *martyr-witness* to the existence of the nation and as its *representative*, incarnating in his person the essence of nation's cause. I suggest that these two roles summarize Pearse's vision of the bearer of national deliverance. At the same time, they provide a coda to the whole mechanism of *translatio sacrii*. 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.

It is interesting to note that daring parallels between the Irish and the universal history constituted one of the major features of the Early Christian writing on the island. As Kim McCone explains, first generations of Irish Christian "men of letters" went "as far as they could to equate" Irish history and the Biblical narrative by "creating deliberate analogues" between them. Irish history was periodized as "a macrocosm of current Christian world history" in which pre-Christian Ireland was modelled on the Biblical Chosen People, and Patrick's mission was presented as "a partial re-enactment of Christ's mission to Israel". One of those attempts – "striking in its audacity" – was in fact a venture into the realm of eschatology: in Muirchú's version of Patrick's *Confessio,* we read about St. Patrick's bargain with God "that all the Irish on the day of judgement" shall be judged by their Apostle and not the Almighty Himself.[52]

Although it is hardly probable that Pearse would be able to reach such overarching conclusions as Kim McCone, it is quite certain that he was acquainted with many of the texts on reflecting this specific mode of conceiving Irish history.[53] The early Christian Irish method of constructing the national narrative bears a striking resemblance to the mechanism of *translatio*

[52] McCone 68-72.

[53] The actual level of Pearse's knowledge of Old Irish as well as of the Irish literary tradition was in the past a subject of considerable controversy. Nevertheless, especially the current generation of bilingual scholars such as Philip O'Leary has provided definite proofs of Pearse's solid expertise in those areas. O'Leary for example rejects the notion that Pearse's view of the Gaelic tradition was based solely on Standish O'Grady's re-writing of Irish mythology and claims that Pearse was able to keep up with the most recent developments in Celtic scholarship (Philip O'Leary, "What Stalked Through the Post Office? Pearse's Cú Chulainn", *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* vol. III, eds. J.T. Koch and J.Rittmuller (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1983) 24-6.

sacrii. Medieval discourse is at once analogous and subordinated to the universal Christian story. In the case of Pearse's *translatio,* we have already demonstrated its dominantly analogical construction. It is, however, less clear how Pearse's vision of Ireland should be located in relation to the Christian cosmos. In Pearse's writings we encounter one image that may help us to visualize the convoluted logic of *translatio*. It appears for the first time in the unfinished short story "An Choill / The Wood" published in 1914, at the beginning of the final phase of the evolution of Pearse's nationalism. The eponymous wood, situated "in the west of Connemara", survives consecutive epochs of Irish history (signalized by the gradual deforestation of the countryside) as the last repository of Ireland's primeval forests.

> But all the trees were not cut down. Dubh-Chruach remained a wood. Ireland is passing through her third bareness, but that much is of the Old Wood is woodland still […] and will be a Wood until the Day of Doom. Small though it be today, the Old Wood is there after all the ages, it and the lives it holds, like a little world in itself. I hail you, O steadfast, ever-living seeds of the Old Wood! (*LWPP* 137-8)

The wood pictured in the short story is a metaphor of the nation's ancient past and tradition, a sanctuary of "surviving native culture".[54] A year later, conceptualizing the nation in analogy with the community of the Church in the introductory section of "Ghosts", Pearse returns to one phrase used in the passage quoted above, this time, however, placing it explicitly at the centre of his argument. At the very end of the first section of "Ghosts", Pearse claims that "the Irish mind" managed to provide some of the most valuable insights into the essence of "nationality and national freedom". To illustrate his point, he invokes "a chance phrase of [Geoffrey] Keating's" that "might almost stand as a definition" of the nation. Keating spoke of Ireland as "domhain beag innti féin" – "*a little world in herself*" (Ghosts, 227-8).

Keating, Ireland's most important historian and a crucial figure in the process of merging ethnic and religious elements of Irish national identity, uses this phrase in a slightly different wording in one passage in his monumental *Foras na Feasa* (Book I, section V). At this point, Keating discusses James Stanihurst's (one of the chief governmental representatives during the Elizabethan period) policies towards Irish customs and traditions. According to Keating, they were motivated by a total misunderstanding of the fact that Ireland was a separate nation,

[54] Róisín Ní Ghairbhí, "The battle before us now is a Battle of Words: Pearse and the Postcolonial Theory", *The Life and After-Life of P.H. Pearse* 158. We may think in this context about the early nineteenth-century Irish poem "Caoine Cill Chaise" ("Lament for Kilcash") where the destroyed wood is one of the symbols of the end of the Gaelic order.

behaving according to her own precepts and rules: "Saoilim nachar thuig Stanihurst gurab amhlaidh do bhí Éire 'na ríoghacht ar leith léi féin, amhail domhan mbeag."[55]

After quoting Keating's statement, Pearse elaborates on the image of "the little world in itself", listing three "characteristic" qualities of the old Gaelic concept of the nation: the emphasis on "the inner thing, […] its soul" as the essence of nationality, the conviction that "the Irish life" in its material and spiritual completeness is "the thing that mattered", and finally that the "vigorous Irish life" is conditioned by political freedom (*PWS* 228). Pearse's invocation of Keating's phrase should be, I would argue, examined from the perspective of the preceding argument. The application of Mickiewicz's precepts of Romantic messianism on Pearse's nationalism demonstrated that despite remarkable parallels between both concepts, Pearse's messianic narrative is enclosed within the Irish context. Similarly, reading Pearse's justification of the Rising from the perspective of Schmitt's concept of representation again resulted in the final image of the nation as a total, complete whole. Turning back to the passage from *Foras na Feasa,* we may assume that where Keating speaks of language, laws or music, Pearse has in mind a complete universe, both in its material and spiritual dimension. The Irish "little world in itself" is not just a microcosm within humankind and within the entirety of the physical world, but also a micro-Church, a miniature *Ecclesia militans*, replicating all the characteristics and mechanisms of the Church on its own ontological level. The relation between the two realms definitely transcends – to quote Martin again – "the region of metaphor", but at the same time does not aim at a substitution of the religious universe with a national one. The two are linked in a kind of *mystical subsidiarity*. The perspective of "little world in itself" justifies on the one hand 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.

[55] "I think Stanihurst has not understood that it is thus Ireland was (being) a kingdom apart by herself like a little world, and that the nobles and the learned who were there long ago arranged to have jurisprudence, medicine, poetry, and music established in Ireland with appropriate regulations" (Geoffrey Keating, *Foras na Feasa ar Éirinn* [London: Irish Texts Society 1902] 40-41)

Conclusion

In *Political Theology* Carl Schmitt argues: "The metaphysical image that a definite epoch forges of the world has the same structure as what the world immediately understands to be appropriate as a form of its political organization."[1] The ways in which the order of the political community is conceived develop in analogy with theological concepts. Crucially, the relation springs not only from the "historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the politics […] but also because of their systematic structure."[2]

Pearse's conceptualization of Irish nationalism is based on such a structural analogy. It delineates individual ethics and epistemology, defines the relation between the individual and the collective and formulates the ultimate goal for the nation. I call this mechanism of the transposition of words, images and concepts from the realm of theology to the context of Irish politics *translatio sacrii*. The working of *translatio* was demonstrated first on the transposition of the ethical and epistemological radicalism of Pauline theology of man into the ethics of revolutionary activism. The resulting image of a charismatic leader was afterwards used to explain the relation between the individual and the nation in analogy with the construction of the Church as the mystical body of Christ. Finally, the centre of the narrative of the nation – the act of sacrifice for the cause – was described as structured in analogy with the theology of the sacrifice of the Mass.

Pearse's thought reflects a specific position of religion in modern Ireland. Due to certain historical processes, Catholicism played the role of a major marker of differentiation and thus of an important modifying factor in the creation of modern national identity. Such a development made it virtually impossible to follow the common path of many European nationalisms which consisted in the act of removing religion from the position of the highest individual goal and highest normative authority and in replacing it with a divinized nation. Instead of exchanging "kingdom of God" for "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".[3] As a result, the discourse of Irish nationalism is characterized by concomitant processes of "tribalization of religion" and "sacralisation of ethnicity". The superiority of the religious element, however, was generally recognized. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the process of binding together Catholicism and Irishness culminated in the rhetoric of Irish Ireland.

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[1] Schmitt, *Political Theology* 46.
[2] Schmitt, *Political Theology* 36.
[3] English, *Irish Freedom* 295; cf. also O'Brien, 16-17.

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 in metapolitical terms of a struggle between "faith and infidelity", "tradition and modernity" or "spiritualism and materialism". The primacy of the religious over the political contributed also to the relative marginalisation of the militant strain of Irish nationalism and to the formulation of national objectives mainly in cultural terms.

Pearse's works are characterized by a rejection of such "either/or" choices and his attitude was typically one of balancing and synthetizing. His ideal, summarized in the call for Ireland "not Gaelic merely, but free as well" (*PWS* 135), required a bridge over the gap between different visions of the nation and between conflicting means of attaining national objectives.

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 into 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".[4] Nonetheless, any 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".[5] He constructs his political theology "daringly, yet with reverence" to its religious sources. He is extremely "daring" in his articulation of the nation in analogy with the Holy Church, with all the far-reaching heterodox consequences of such a consistent parallelism. At the same time, he attempts to stay "reverent" by positing the nation on the lower ontological position, as a microcosm within the essentially Catholic cosmos.

Catholic theology provides the deepest foundation of Pearse's thought. It is a source of symbolic systems he – whether consciously or not – turned to in order to construct and communicate his own ideas. Nevertheless, in each of the cases discussed in the preceding chapters, the catalyst for 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 and modified by the Romantic legacy of Irish revivalism and by the overall Zeitgeist of the modernist revolt against modernity, common to his generation throughout Europe. Pearse's works participate in these generational expectations of the messianic moment

[4] Maume, *The Long Gestation* 166-7.
[5] Trotter 143.

when a decisive break in the existing socio-political and intellectual order will occur and shift "the horizons of what is imaginable". 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."[6]

Two modes of conceptualising the interrelation between religion and politics, representatives of Romantic and modernist tendencies, have been 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 two realms as essentially analogous. At the same time, however, Schmitt clearly differentiates between structural and normative relations, emphasizing that although transferred from the sphere of theology, the "modern political concepts" are thoroughly "secularized". 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 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.

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 "the 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, the microcosm of Ireland replicating in miniature the structure of the Christian universe.

James Moran perceives Pearse "an awkward blend of diverse influences".[7] Admittedly, Pearse was neither a theologian nor a political philosopher. Although his conceptualization of Irish nationalism reveals a surprising consistency, one cannot expect it to provide a complete and closed system. Moreover, the role he assumed was not one of a detached theoretician but – as he himself spoke of Wolfe Tone – one of "a dreamer and a doer" (*PWS* 55). More accurately, he acted first as a *prophet* and then as an *agent* implementing his own prophetic vision. Both his dependence on the Catholic theology and his Romantic and modernist inspirations are results of

[6] Maume, *The Long Gestation* 177.
[7] Moran, *Staging the Easter Rebellion* 5.

inherent convictions he absorbed from the environment where he grew up, as well as of his own open-mindedness and interest in the European intellectual milieu of the time, rather than outcomes of consistent study.

In *Nations and Nationalisms*, Ernest Gellner admits "a lack of interest in the history of nationalist ideas and the contributions and nuances of individual nationalist thinkers" as "their precise doctrines are hardly worth analysing".[8] Such an attitude may explain why in the last few decades Pearse's works have been dealt with from the perspective of historiography, literary criticism or even psychoanalysis, yet have rarely been analysed as an attempt to provide a relatively consistent discourse of Irishness that would bridge the gap between meta-political premises of cultural nationalism and the political goals of the revolutionary movement. Pearse's works, for a long time trapped between the poles of hagiography and demonology of the nationalist / revisionist controversy, were perceived as mere adjuncts to the role he played in Irish history as the leader of Irish Volunteers. In the common view, their significance derives from the event to which they, to a great extent consciously, led – to the Dublin Easter Rising. In this dissertation I have attempted to argue that even without this external point of reference, Pearse's works remain the most elaborate documents of a decisive phase in the development of Irish nationalism. As such, from the perspective of the approaching centenary of the Rising, they definitely deserve re-evaluation. As Herbert Pim, Pearse's ideological ally, wrote in *Nationality* from 25 March 1916: "When we are all gone and most of us forgotten, those *Tracts* of Patrick Henry Pearse will remain as a permanent thing in the literature of Ireland's national process. They represent a turning point."[9]

[8] Gellner 118.
[9] Pim, "The Apostle of No Compromise", *Nationality* 25 March 1916: 2.

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