

Athabasca University  Master of Arts - Integrated Studies

SMITHY OF THE SOUL:  
COLONIALISM, EDUCATION, AND IRISH RESISTANCE

By

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Integrated Studies Project

submitted to Dr. Gloria Filax

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Integrated Studies

Athabasca, Alberta

February 2010

Dedication

To my parents, Paul Martin and Barbara Banfield Martin.  
To my brother and sister-in-law, Stephen Martin and Wanda Delorme Martin.  
To my nephews, Mitchell Paul Martin and Leyton Patrick Martin.

Thank you all for your love, understanding, and encouragement.

*“Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience  
and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.”*

--Stephen Dedalus  
in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

*“History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.”*

--Stephen Dedalus  
in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*

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1 Irish meaning “disease of power”.

2 “the person who does not know what he is and who apes the manners and affectations of others” (Sisson 2).

3 “a recognition of the importance, knowledge and love of place” (Sisson 18).

4 “To the old Irish the teacher was aite, ‘fosterer’, the pupil was dalta, ‘foster-child’, the system was aiteachas, ‘fosterage’” (*The Murder Machine*).

*Smithy of the Soul:  
Colonialism, Education, and Irish Resistance*

Chapter 1--Galair Cumhacht

Introduction:

When James Joyce wrote of the “smithy” at the conclusion of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and of a “nightmare” in the opening pages of *Ulysses*, both he and his protagonist/alter-ego, Stephen Dedalus, had endured nearly seven hundred years of a “relationship” with England and the British Empire that had taken on many nuances across the centuries. Successive Tudor monarchs “including Elizabeth I [had] conducted a prolonged conquest of Ireland piece by piece, section by section, earldom by earldom...they never put quite enough effort into it to get the job done properly and it became, partly because of that, very nasty and very bitter in the later stages” concludes historian Liam de Paor (*The Celts*). Before the reign of Elizabeth I, during the 14th-century, a “Gaelic resurgence” started which prompted many of the Anglo-Norman descendants of former conquerors become “immersed in Irish ways and society”. This led to the creation in 1397 of the “Statutes of Kilkenny...a series of laws enacted by Parliament, meeting in Kilkenny, [that saw] the wearing of Irish dress, the use of the Brehon Laws and the speaking of the Irish language...banned (Mac Annaidh 68).”

Refusing to be silenced across these centuries in Irish history, from the thirteenth century through the late twentieth century, across all of Ireland’s four provinces and thirty-two counties, Irish nationalists offered resistance, rebellion, and finally revolution against England’s presence. Much like the early centuries of conquest, resistance came intermittently, and was suppressed first by England’s and

then the British Empire's social and political efforts to deny and destroy Irish culture-- efforts that are intrinsic to colonisation and synonymous with the sweep of "Empire". Accordingly, resistance was not confined to the political arena and the barricades: a line of political figures linked to cultural movements strove to revive the culture-- ethnic and social--and the Irish language. Ultimately, many of these figures took up the fight for freedom, independence, and democracy.

A closer look at Irish life reveals that education was consistently used as a means of resistance, revolt, and cultural survival; the ways and means of this resistance began with the hedge schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was re-ignited by the work of Padraig Pearse in the early twentieth century. This resistance-via-education culminated in his efforts as an educator at St. Enda's school for boys, and as an education activist-writer until his execution in 1916. Indeed, a survey of these two historical movements suggests that they are, despite being separated by time, space, and ideologies, viable avenues of political resistance and cultural survival consistent with the work of key critical pedagogists from the last half of the twentieth century.

The questions that remain, however, are: to what degree do the efforts of the hedge schoolmasters and Pearse predate yet align with the critical pedagogy movements forged elsewhere in the mid and late-twentieth century? To what degree are they early examples of the movements that became known in the late twentieth century as "democracy movements"?

#### Invasion, Rebellion, Conquest:

The English conquest of Ireland had several fits and starts from the moment assistance was offered by Henry II to Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster in the

late 12th-century to defend his lands under threat of attack by the Norsemen of Wexford (Mac Annaidh 54). Due to the spread of the Black Death of 1348-1349 “the Irish economy [was so depleted] that Ireland as a colony ceased to be seen as a benefit to England (Mac Annaidh 66)” and efforts to control the island ceased for a time. Attempts were later made to resuscitate its economy following repeated “major campaigns launched by the English from 1361, culminating in the arrival of Richard II himself in 1394”; however, similar uncertainties in the economy of England “meant that these expeditions were sporadic rather than sustained (Mac Annaidh 66).”

During the 14th-century a “Gaelic resurgence” commenced which saw many of the Anglo-Norman descendants of former conquerors “becoming immersed in Irish ways and society”. This led to the creation of the “Statutes of Kilkenny”, the collection of laws described in the Introduction that sought, effectively, to erase Irish culture, the existing laws, and the language. However the “power and influence of the natives increased so much at the time of the Wars of the Roses that the authority of the English Crown became limited to...a small coastal district around Dublin and the port of Drogheda (Mac Annaidh 69).”

In the century that followed this tenuous and shifting relationship continued. Ireland had previously been a base of support for the House of York; this history and its potential use “as a base by Yorkist pretenders or anyone else who might pose a threat” to the rule of Henry VII led to the passing of Poyning’s Law in 1494. This piece of legislation “aimed to reduce the whole country to obedience and remove for good” potential threats (Mac Annaidh 80). The details of the legislation were sweeping: the “Irish parliament was made subservient to the British one so that an Irish governor could no longer act independently in a manner that could be construed

as being a potential threat to the English king”; “parliament could not be summoned without the knowledge and agreement of the king”; and, “its proposed laws had to be submitted to him for approval as well.” An uprising resulted, however, when the Earl of Kildare was arrested under the terms of the Law; Henry VII “was forced to restore him to power in 1496 (Mac Annaidh 80).”

Under the rule of this English monarch’s second son, Henry VIII, the relationship between Ireland and its people and the English throne evolved into something more contentious, finite and, seemingly, infinite. It was “during Henry VIII’s reign that religion became, for the first time, a major cause of strife and division in Ireland (Mac Annaidh 82).” Uniformity in religion was demanded: “In an effort to subdue and rule Ireland, Henry sent Protestants to colonise Ireland and take control from the Gaelic Catholic native population (Mac Annaidh 89).” As he endeavoured to do in his home country, Henry advanced his break with the Roman Catholic Church beyond its borders; according to de Paor, the “very nasty and very bitter” conquest of Ireland by England was “exacerbated by the religious change...so that in the end of the sixteenth century we have a war of conquest that becomes virtually a genocide. Some of the Tudor commanders induced famine...they tried various variants on replacing the Irish with imported people...occasionally they tried to Anglicise the Irish” (*The Celts*).

Resistance from the Irish was met with force: in 1537, “artillery [was used] for the first time in Ireland with great effect” when a “rebellion was ruthlessly put down” (Mac Annaidh 84). Despite this obvious challenge by the Irish, “In 1541, Henry VIII was declared King of Ireland by the subservient Irish parliament (Mac Annaidh 86-87).” To bring all of Ireland under his control Henry insisted not only on

the mandate to force uniformity in religion, but he continued the cultural conquest by insisting “on a uniformity of English language, customs and dress...mounting the first serious challenge to the Gaelic culture in many parts of the country (Mac Annaidh 87).”

The death of Henry VIII did not quell England’s desire to bend and shape Ireland in its likeness. Indeed, “Subsequent rulers increased the efforts to install plantations, claiming land for England and forcing the Irish to rent their own land back from their conquerors (Mac Annaidh 89).” Among these rulers was Mary Tudor, the first-born child of Henry VIII who bore the title Queen of England and Ireland. “Mary confiscated lands belonging to [Gaelic chieftains] in counties Laois and Offaly [and] renamed them Queen’s County and King’s County” respectively. “The dispossessed chieftains waged a guerilla-type war against the English settlements...Unable to defeat these Irish, the English summoned [them] to a conference...and had them and their families treacherously murdered (Mac Annaidh 91).”

Despite repeated uprisings in various parts of Ireland, Anglicisation as an official, administrative process continued. “Trinity College, Ireland’s first university, was opened in 1592, not merely to provide an English education but also to support the established [Anglican] Church (Mac Annaidh 93).” In 1600 “The last of the significant Irish chieftains [was] defeated...at the Battle of Kinsale” signaling the passing of “the old Gaelic order into history (Mac Annaidh 99).” Then, in 1801, the Act of Union “refashioned the British nation, creating the precarious new entity, ‘the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland’, through the legal and juridical absorption of a colony into the imperial nation (Martin 190).”



This legislated name change meant that power in Ireland and the people themselves had been absorbed “into the nationstate through parliamentary and economic structures and given the title of citizens” (Martin 190); but Ireland had become a “dependency of the Crown for which Westminster legislated without Irish representation (Clayton 236).” Further, the Irish remained marginalised and colonised having been “denied certain fundamental rights of citizenship”; they were subject to further isolation as the Irish “continued to be constructed as culturally, religiously and racially other (Martin 190).” The centuries-long attempt to gain absolute control of the island made necessary a conquest of the people by way of cultural genocide.

#### Pathologies of Power:

In simple terms colonialism refers to the “Political, military, cultural and economic subordination to another country” (McDonough ix); the cultural implications of colonialism are often more nefarious, diseased, and difficult to remedy than the markers and consequences of the other three. In this regard Edward Said, not surprisingly, cites Eqbal Ahmad’s “pathologies of power” that are found across the formerly colonized world as particularly problematic. These were bred, in part, by “the common history that it presumes of colonizer and colonised...a salient trait of [imperialism’s] modern form is that it was...an educational movement; it set out quite consciously to modernize, develop, instruct, and civilise (Said 269).” The ultimate conquest is, of course, the conquest of hearts and minds.

To this end, Hardt and Negri offer that “the object of [Empire’s] rule is social life in its entirety” (xv); thus, control over culture is indispensable for the colonizer.

Culture--ethnicity considered or set aside--is defined as:

...what is common in the minds of a given group of people; it refers to a community of society. People in a community share many ideas, values, and

images, in short, representations which are collective to them and differs from others. (Vansina 124)

Creating hegemony, as Hardt and Negri observe, is critical to establishing a colonial society that is more than simply an occupied society:

Colonialism constructs figures of alterity and manages their flows in what unfolds as a complex dialectical structure. The negative construction of non-European others is finally what founds and sustains European identity itself...The colonized subject is constructed in the metropolitan imaginary as other, and thus, as far as possible, the colonized is cast outside the defining bases of European civilized values. (124)

Thus, culture and language represent weapons of oppression by the colonizer; the suppression of the native tongue, the imposition of the language of the colonizer, and the strategic use of the latter prove effective in pushing and keeping the colonized in the margins away from the centre of power.

But then discipline is, in the words of Michel Foucault, “a technique for the transformation of arrangements...it distributes [individuals] and circulates them in a network of relations (146)”, a far more organic and shifting process than those of marginalisation and fixed categories. Indeed, here is where Britain's “othering” of the Irish required more attention and a continuously insidious approach: they weren’t “non-European others” but would have to be portrayed as subhuman within the context of white and Christian. To thrive as a nation Ireland needed to be protected from the Irish: “the rhetoric of power” writes Edward Said, “all too easily produces an illusion of benevolence when deployed in an imperial setting (xix).”

In the British-Irish experience, for example, English imperialism was, from its earliest foundations, busy portraying “the Irish...to be physically much the same as the English [but] Irish culture was alien and threatening (Ashcroft et al *Key Concepts* 202).” Control over culture, however, is not limited to control over language,

customs, and the features of daily life: considering culture is, as Vansina offers, the “ideas, values, and images...[and] representations” which are shared collectively amongst a people, the sweep of Empire’s prevailing narrative must be more pervasive. Accordingly, the subjugated population will have its history written and re-written by the colonial power via many, many avenues. As Jurgen Kremer observes, “History is not a unitary phenomenon but a weaving of a multiplicity of stories” which had often been “devalued as ‘stories’ or ‘folklore’ or legends’ ...that [enrich and question] the dominant story” (12).

Terry Eagleton offers that “Nineteenth-century Ireland is a striking illustration of Karl Marx’s dictum that those who dominate the means of material production will also tend to control the means of intellectual production (29).” In the Irish example, intellectual production across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries included history itself but also artistic output and, to complete the process, the popular presses. He continues: “the domain of artistic culture...in Ireland follows the trajectory of class power with an exactness enough to embarrass even the most vulgar of Marxists (29).”

Franz Fanon writes of this process:

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. (qtd. Said 286)

The Irish novelist James Stephens “complained [in the eighteenth-century] that ‘We lack a mirror, a synthesis, we cannot see ourselves’, and yearned to pen a kind of *Comedie Humaine* of his native land (Eagleton 32).” This desire must have been overwhelming considering “the fate of the Irish at the hands of English writers for eight centuries” meant a “reductive and slanderous encapsulation of Irish actualities”

to “ahistorical rubrics like ‘potato-eaters’... ‘bogdwellers’... ‘shanty people’ (Said 286).”

These notions of “racial and moral superiority that permeated the nineteenth-century British Empire” (Clayton 237)--both overt and insidious--that emanated from the centre of power in England to impact those as far away as India or as close to its shores as those in Ireland, did not go unnoticed by one key political observer and commentator of this time. Having completed a survey of the letters and articles written by Karl Marx in the 1860s and early 1870s, Amy Martin notes that Marx believed that “The exploitation and domination of Ireland provided the British ruling classes with a ‘moral strength,’ a powerful image of themselves as effective colonisers which in turn secure them not just economic but hegemonic power in Britain”; consequently “the power of the British ruling classes was maintained in part by an ideology of anti-Irish prejudice (187).”

Observing the lived experiences of Irish and English workers in the nineteenth century, Marx concluded:

The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker because he sees in him a competitor who lowers his standard of life. Compared with the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the *ruling nation* and for this very reason he makes himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists *against* Ireland and thus strengthens their domination *over himself*. (qtd. Martin 187)

And so the “othering” works not only to conquer a people and their culture, but to divide the oppressed by creating the false promise that crossing or negotiating class barriers is facilitated by one’s ethnic identity. The biases that serve the top of this hierarchy infiltrate and infect those who populate the bottom; ultimately this “othering” created a pervasive public belief that transcended class about the inferiority of the Irish:

[The English worker] cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude is much the same as that of the ‘poor whites’ towards the ‘niggers’ in the former slave states of the American Union...This antagonism is artificially sustained and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. (qtd. Martin 187)

That this “othering” had become more concerted, crafted, and critical across the centuries is not surprising: “if recalcitrant Irish people could not,” according to one commentator, “by the nineteenth century, be slaughtered with impunity, they could be portrayed as inferior and even sub-human (Clayton 237).”

“The nature of the stereotype,” continues Pamela Clayton, “is of particular interest, in that it was the one applied to ‘native’ peoples everywhere; the Irish were accused of being lazy, dirty, ignorant, superstitious, content to be poor, uncivilised, violent, irrational, ungrateful, impractical, childlike, easily aroused and easily manipulated by self-serving agitators (239).” Hardt and Negri advise that “although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace” (xv). And so, in fashioning and perpetuating an Empire, the centre of power will, in order to justify its hegemonic power, appear benevolent; thus, “The older liberal and humanitarian ethos” that swirled around and through the British Empire, held that “ ‘natives’ had a right to the law, protection and education, but their immutable inferiority meant that they were permanently unfit for self-determination (Clayton 237).”

Ultimately, the ways and means to “civilise”, justify and, ultimately, maintain control over the Irish were instituted: in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century “the belief [was] in government circles that it was through education that the Irish would be socialized and politicized along loyal, law abiding

lines (McManus 237).” Ashcroft et al assert that “One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language” and the main vehicle for this oppression is the “imperial education system” (*The Empire* 7).

## Chapter 2--*Seonin*

### Pedagogy of the Inoculated:

That education became a means for indoctrination and obedience across the Empire was not unique; it was critical and Ireland was no exception. According to Ahmad’s concept of “pathologies of power”, imperialism was “an educational movement [that] set out quite consciously to modernize, develop, instruct, and civilise.” In line with the class links incipient with this process, for those with class mobility in mind, the imperial system of education taught “important truths about history, science, culture... [in turn] they grasped the fundamentals of modern life, yet remained subordinate dependants of an authority based elsewhere than in their lives (Said 269).” To this baseline of the imperial mission one must consider the political, social, and intellectual attempts to rank and classify institutions and individuals that were, seemingly, universal in the eighteenth century. According to Foucault it is in this era that “rank” becomes the method that establishes “the great form of distribution of individuals in the educational order: rows or ranks of pupils...rank attributed to each pupil at the end of each task and each examination...a succession of subjects taught and questions treated, according to an order of increasing difficulty (147).”

An imperial or colonial education system is one in which social reproduction is critical in order to justify and perpetuate the Empire; here “students are erased by social, cultural, and political processes (Dei 242).” In contemporary writing about public education in Canada and elsewhere in the world, the idea that students are

reduced to common denominators within a market-driven system of schooling is commonplace thinking among cultural studies theorists and critical pedagogists. While their writings may focus on current curricula and classroom practices that embrace neo-liberal dogma, corporate partnerships with schools, and standardized testing, these seemingly new trends simply follow the basic premises of the theory of historical materialism offered by Karl Marx. According to one commentator, although Marx wrote very little about formal education, “his method and theories to analyze capitalist society offer a foundation for critical analysis” (Wotherspoon 34). It is the “contradictory nature of schooling” which “like other institutions within capitalism...constrains human potential that is otherwise necessary for social progress (Wotherspoon 34).”

In a similar vein, Noam Chomsky writes: “Education is...a matter of schools and colleges and the formal information systems. That’s true whether the goal of education is education for freedom and democracy, as Dewey advocated, or education for obedience and subordination and marginalization, as the dominant institutions require (48).” Recognizing that education is used for obedience, subordination, and marginalisation by schools and their relationship with the “formal information systems” in a given society provides the vital link between education critics of the late twentieth century and resistance movements in Ireland across the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. This link provides an understanding of these historical movements; it also furthers one’s understanding of how neo-liberal economic agendas influence schools and the lives of students in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as the economic and political mission of the British Empire had on Irish students under colonialism.

Indeed: the current economic and political global climate is a “global political economy of the production and circulation of subjectivities (Olaniyan 139).” And as an active partner within this swirl education does, simply put, make “us both subjects of and subjects to relations of power (Giroux et al 4).” How is it, then, that education succeeds in this imperialising mission? Why is it that students and their parents will--albeit, often unwittingly--choose to surrender their individual powers to the will of the system? The prevailing narratives from the centre of power posit that benevolence is at the heart of the system--the ability to allow students to determine their futures and find material success within the capitalist system. The promise of success implicit in the curriculum and its delivery inoculate those subject to the system and its narrative against voices of resistance.

Across the world’s great capitalist societies at the close of the twentieth century, political and educational activists observe that education is subject to “imperialisms” much the way the British Empire used education to as a means to an end. In his early observations of capitalism and the economic and power struggles at work within, Karl Marx observed that “capitalism transformed feudalism’s readily identifiable personal relations of dependence into obscure and mystified interpersonal relations of dependence, creating, at the same time, an impression of greater independence (Briton 69).” Barlow et al, writing of educational reforms in Canada, observe that “survival of the fittest is the message, but for public consumption, right-wing education reform must be couched in the language of excellence and achievement (121).” The content of this education “directly validates particular points of view and teaches assumptions about privilege and power through the topics it evades as well as those it addresses (125).” Elsewhere in Canada, Jane Gaskell



observes that “The emphasis on making students ‘employable’ leads to a classroom discourse that...reproduces the class relations of the workplace.” In a simple equation, “Students want to get jobs; teachers want to get them jobs...to do this...is to learn what the employers want employees to do (268).”

Terry Wotherspoon, also writing from this contemporary economic power and former British colony, offers that in Canada students’ lives are forced by policy and practice to correspond to the economic goals of contemporary schooling; “Schools and school rules... signify externally imposed authority structures that are threatening to students, particularly those for whom meaningful participation in secure jobs and influential social positions seems unattainable (119).” In this culture of inoculation by what Paulo Freire refers to as “the bourgeois appetite for personal success” (*Oppressed* 149), to deny the value of a mainstream education and to hinder one’s success in this system is seen as unsavory; a “student learns that when the boy seated next to her drops out of school, he is solely responsible for the decision... In the words of the Conference Board of Canada, he has ‘apparently ignore[d] the tremendous cost to himself and society’ (Barlow et al 82).”

Writing of school life from another contemporary economic power and a former imperial power, Japan, Norma Field observes that “School and work are becoming increasingly continuous, such that the goals of education fail to suggest even a modicum of autonomy from the goals of the economy (62).” Writing of school life from another contemporary economic power and a former imperial power, Great Britain, Mary John observes:

...with regard to the educational process, what roles are children being prepared for in adult life? It seems that in the present educational climate in the United Kingdom, we are preparing children to compete, to look after their

own interests, to attach differential values to other children in terms of their abilities/disabilities. (116)

Equating education with self-determination, capitalism with self-determination and, ultimately, equating capitalism with democracy has meant that “the nation’s politics of self-seeking individualism has become children’s everyday psychology in school (116).” But then again, across the life of the British Empire, “imperial education instilled the superiority of the conquering culture, its right to guidance, and its claim to emulation (Rajan 710).”

Ashcroft et al assert that the “imperial education system installs a ‘standard’ version of the metropolitan language as the norm” (*The Empire 7*); thus the language of schooling becomes, most immediately, the King’s English and, in the fullness of time, the “metropolitan” nature of the language is realized. According to John Willinsky the teaching of English, even to native speakers, grew out of the “overriding critical standards” of Great Britain’s imperial mission and its intention of “civilizing” its students both at home and abroad: “From India to Canada...students were to be infused with this civilizing testament to the mother country’s natural moral and literary greatness (5).” Indeed: language is “a medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and ‘reality’ become established (Ashcroft et al *The Empire 7*).”

#### Imperial Education in Ireland:

A system of state-sponsored schools and curricula in Ireland grew out of the cultural, political, and religious motivations of the British Empire. In 1733 Charter schools were created via the “Incorporated Society for Promoting English Protestant Schools” that were “expressly intended for use as proselytising institutions and as part of the political governance of Ireland (Adams 100).” Then, on 12 April 1787, “Thomas

Orde, the chief secretary of Ireland...introduced his plan of education to parliament...On that occasion he attributed ‘all the violent and atrocious acts which had too often disgraced this nation’ to a ‘want of education’. He saw education as a means of infusing ‘the balm of information into the wound of ignorance’ (McManus 237).”

Ultimately, of course, the violence and atrocities referred to were acts of rebellion against British rule, the tyranny of its agents, and the ways and means used to oppress and suppress the native Irish. From “penal times, British legislation had curtailed all educational opportunities for the majority of the Irish population: the Catholic labouring and middle ranks (Raftery et al 448).” Later, the notion grew and persisted that “a practical education [would] ‘rescue the souls of thousands of popish children from the miseries of idleness and begging’ ”(McManus 237) and quell rebellions. Thus, “The national schools were to be founded only in the 1830s, after the first wave of militant nationalism” in Ireland (Eagleton 31); the government “felt that schools could serve certain goals by ‘cultivating attitudes of political loyalty and cultural assimilation’ and initiated a national educational system throughout Ireland (Sisson 23).” With Ireland fused to England in government “greater loyalty must surely have been expected from its young citizens”; certainly approved “lesson books would appear to have been an attempt to win favour for the English ‘connection’ (McManus 228).”

The National Board of Education was established in 1831. Under this new body “A person or a group (priest, clergyman, nuns, brothers or a voluntary organization) could apply to this Board, based in Dublin, for a capital grant to set up a school and, thereafter, ongoing funding for teachers’ salaries (Clear 43).” Schools

were not set up throughout the country, but funding was available to those who wished to access it; “once begun, they had to show how it was done...[and] one ‘model’ school was set up in every county and various training schemes were devised (Clear 43).” And so, ultimately, a school’s establishment and operations followed the guidelines prescribed by the National Board, not by the group planning and executing the school.

Once in operation, the “Teachers followed a curriculum specified by the Board, with religious instruction provided during specific hours only” in these denominational primary schools that “were quite openly state schools (Clear 43)”. In textbooks “The values of social deference, respect for one’s ‘betters’, loyalty and obedience to the State and to officialdom were explicitly promoted” (Clear 43). A poem that was printed in a textbook used in Irish schools of the era, is quite explicit in this regard:

The phrase ‘happy English child’ is contained in a verse of a poem from the Third Book of Lessons (1835), which was a textbook in use in the national schools of the time. It was controversially retained by the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, and National Board member, Dr Whateley, in his revised edition of the text in 1846. The text of the verse reads:

I thank the goodness and the grace  
That on my birth have smiled,  
And made me in these Christian days,  
A happy English child. (Relihan 130)

Further, these textbooks were written exclusively in English which “was increasingly recognized as the language of politics and commerce in Ireland”, and they also “contained extracts from English literature, moral lessons, and some British history and geography (Raftery 452).” Thus, to realize success in school based on this content, students would have to learn British history, geography, and literature over those of Ireland.

As for the language of instruction, “The failure to teach English through Irish severely compromised the education of pupils in Gaeltacht areas where almost all schoolchildren would have been monoglot Irish speakers (Raftery et al 438).” Until Irish language instruction was provided for as an “additional subject” at the turn of the twentieth century, teachers were “Often very hostile to the Irish language, with children frequently being punished and victimized for speaking their tongue (Mac Annaidh 159).” Deep into the twentieth century, “In these rural areas, illiteracy remained a serious problem (Raftery et al 452-453).” Overall, however, despite having had National Schools for five years, “In 1836-7, [Ireland] had only 1300 schools for a population of around eight million, and a few years later over half that population was reported to be illiterate (Eagleton 31-32).”

The force of economics was also evident in the guidelines governing school attendance for the first sixty years of state-sanctioned schooling: until 1892 parents could decide “which of their children to send to school, and for how long (Clear 43).” In agricultural areas more girls than boys attended school “because there was work for the boys locally; fewer girls when to school in the north-east and in towns and cities where factory or sweated work was available to them (Clear 43).” An economically analogous system to the means of production operated in education from 1872 through 1899: “The system of ‘payment by results’...is generally believed to have introduced a mechanistic, rote-learning system, but it succeeded in its objective of elevating literacy and numeracy standards (Clear 44)” by holding teachers accountable for the results of their students. That said, the mechanistic-style of “skills and drills” learning employed in Irish schools further eroded Irish culture by promoting “the delivery of a curriculum that promoted English practices and

[murdered the] Irish educational traditions including the oral transmission of culture (Raftery 451).”

Such encouraging news no doubt tempered the less encouraging news: with historical hindsight, the “state-funded system that was developed in Ireland in the nineteenth century was designed to support the British cultural assimilation policy for Ireland” (Raftery et al 450); ultimately, this rigorously standardized system “effectively erased the Irish language, history and culture from the curriculum (Raftery et al 451).” And, while “Its aim was to provide literary education for the poorer classes...Modern social historians of Irish educational systems have tended to interpret the provision of education, by the solidly upper-middle-class National Board, as an attempt to control the poor (Raftery et al 451).”

Further, despite an emphasis on standardization and centralization, the early state sponsored schools “were characterized by massive student absenteeism, untrained teachers, low salaries and a dismally unenlightened curriculum” (Eagleton 31). Teacher-training colleges were not set up until the 1880’s: “Up to this time, likely pupils were kept on as ‘pupil-teachers’ and monitors...An examination in their mid-teens qualified them for a five-month training course” in Dublin; a two-year teacher-training program was available to those who could afford to attend (Clear 44). In spite of these conditions, “traditionally the local schoolmaster in Ireland...was held in esteem and local schools were—for different reasons—of great importance (Raftery et al 448).”

According to Caitriona Clear, the allegation of “massive student absenteeism” in the late-nineteenth century is murky: “Numbers attending National schools rose from 321, 209 in 1865 to 492,928 in 1884...Granted that children who attended very

seldom were kept on the rolls, the opposite was also true;...[an] inspector in 1884 for [four] counties...noted that the lack of agricultural work in winter drove many children into school who never appeared officially on the rolls at all (45).” Other sources have put the figure at approximately 75% absenteeism (Raftery 451). Ultimately, school attendance at all levels in Ireland was usually based on “Family income and priorities” (Clear 54); and, according to the state, attendance was only compulsory through the age of twelve years, facilitating the option of keeping a child out of school to work and contribute financially to the family.

If the limited and limiting curriculum or economics did not provide the impetus to stay away, the condition of the schools themselves just might. The overall condition of the schools was, reportedly, abysmal: “The practice of having schools near or on graveyards (or adapting buildings already there) was sufficiently common...and the fact that some schools were held in their proximity indicates a neglectful attitude (Clear 45).” Further, “Under-resourced schools with poor lighting, and damp and cold interiors were held responsible by some medical authorities in the 1870s for [eye disease]...[and] they must also have spread all kinds of respiratory illnesses (Clear 45).” Often enough “fuel and books [were] provided by parents and building repairs by teachers (Eagleton 31).”

As for secondary schooling, “There was no state school-leaving examination until the Intermediate, with its Junior, Middle and Senior Grades, was established in 1878 (Clear 46)”; however, secondary schools were not formally regulated until 1918 because it “was far too lucrative and its practitioners too powerful for there to be ready agreement to any kind of standardization (Clear 50).” The examination did, however, provide “a clear qualification at age 16 or 17 for those whose parents could

afford to keep them at school, and afforded an avenue into many white-collar and professional jobs (Clear 47).” The advent of the Intermediate exam “provided an incentive for the setting up of secondary, or high schools”; another advance at this time was the “opening up of university entrance to women”; despite both “only a very small proportion of either men or women attended university (Clear 46-47).”

Michel Foucault--Governmentality and Ireland’s Imperial Education:

From a universal perspective, Michel Foucault observed of the eighteenth century--the century when the colonisation of Ireland and the notion of a colonial school system were first envisioned--that emerging disciplinary power in this and successive eras drove schools. Focusing on the general realms of governance and legislation he offers that “it is frequently through the mechanism of legislation that [strategies of domination] become visible (Hunt et al 20).” In order to understand how lives are dominated in a society or an institution such as a school, Foucault asserts that there is a “need to ‘conduct an *ascending* analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms...and then see how these mechanisms of power have been...invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by ever more general mechanisms’ ”(Hunt et al 19).

When analysing power and its impact, then, “one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with ‘dominators’ on one side and ‘dominated’ on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are *partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies* (qtd. Hunt et al 19).” That education in Ireland was part of an integrated part of a sweeping imperial strategy has been established; further, the benevolent but inoculating mission of this strategy sought to erase or soften any allegation of a binary structure to this



brand of domination. In thinking about schools universally, Foucault noted that the coercion and codifying of “discipline” was “at work in secondary education at a very early date, later in primary schools”; this “Discipline [increased] the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and [diminished] these same forces (in political terms of obedience) (Foucault 138).” For his part, Foucault’s thinking and writing into the seemingly nebulous sweep of disciplinary power does, when he introduces the notion of governmentality, reveal the ability to label and categorise all human subjects through regulation, control, and oppression. Governmentality pulses concurrently and convincingly through the tripartite sweep of sovereign, disciplinary, and pastoral power each with an array of overlapping technologies, including schooling and education, to regulate, control, and oppress.

Governmentality is the term he gives to describe a form of governance that is both a means and a destination: it works by combining or commingling sovereign, disciplinary, and pastoral powers, and is founded on the combining or commingling of the three. While the word governmentality stands as a tidy encapsulation of a paternal political agenda and activity at the imperial centre, its sweep via its three component powers is vast: sovereign power dominates subjects and disciplinary power normalizes subjects--all under the cloak of pastoral power that positions itself as caring and benevolent to these subjects. The raider or invader, at all points on the continuum of power relations, exerts governmentality in a colonial or imperial system of conquest and control.

David Holmes asserts that a “Foucauldian perspective makes it possible to handle matters regarding social control differently through [the] concept known as ‘governmentality’” because it depicts the “powerful web of power relations that

[unite]...three distinct forms of power” (85). These three distinct forms of power are identifiable in the politics of both government and hierarchical human relationships; thus each are found emanating from the imperial centre of active colonialism to its institutions such as schools. It is at this juncture that the tripartite nature of governmentality serves to complete the colonial or neo-imperial goal of “hegemonic boundaries and the determinants that create unequal relations of power” (Gilbert et al 3).

Foucault’s notion of sovereign power moves beyond the authority of an independent state: it is about regulation, repression, and domination and “plays a pivotal role in settings where human beings are kept captive and where the rulers have significant discretion in the application of sanctions” (Holmes 88). The colonisation of Ireland was amplified across the eighteenth century, the same century that gave the world the theories of modernity; and, it is within modernity that Foucault notes a shift from the centre of power such as that at the heart of a colonial government. “In modernity ‘small power’ [relations] in particular is located in sites away from the central locations of ‘big power’ (e.g. The state or capital) (Hunt et al 16).” Viewed from this perspective, a colonial government’s agencies and the colonists themselves step into the role of rulers, keeping colonial subjects captive through directives and sanctions that affect the direction of domestic policies in the colony and in the lived experiences of all its subjects. In the life of Ireland and the education of its students, this meant the establishment of The National Board of Education.

The repression and domination of sovereign power (Holmes 88) are dependent upon disciplinary power—that which “operates through an impressive set of tools such as hierarchical observation, normalization, judgement and examination (Holmes

89)”—in order to maintain its hold over its subjects. At work consistently “through punishment” and “penances for bad behaviour”, and the meting out of “rewards [for] good conduct” and compliance, the subject becomes objectified further through “the exercise of power (Smart 86-87).” The issue of language in Irish schools serves to illustrate the interdependent relationship of sovereign and disciplinary power: “repression and domination” serve to normalise the colonial subjects through “surveillance-punishments-rewards” (Holmes 88). The punishments for the use of the Irish language in schools, and the exclusion from the market place at the heart of the capitalist system of the British Empire, successfully “othered” the cultural idiosyncracies of the language’s nuances and idioms along with conversations about a distinct Irish history or resistance.

Disciplinary power continually works to contain and level any diversity or resistance in the subject or “other”. Hence the advent in Irish education of standardised testing and the skills and drills required to maintain state-prescribed standards: punishments and rewards were meted out to individual schools, teachers, and students for a poor performance. Further, the use of standardised textbooks taken from a prescribed list of books, both the list and the books emanating from England, for use in state-sanctioned schools cemented the notion of “other”.

Finally, pastoral power works to control both the subjects and the narrative of power and domination by presenting the powers that be as caregivers; according to Holmes, it involves the “care of others” with “trust as a key element” (89). Completing governmentality, pastoral power allows authority in any form to recast neo-imperial tyranny as common values geared to the protection and promotion of the best interests of subjects and the subject group; here is Said’s “illusion of

benevolence” within the “rhetoric of power” feeding Freire’s “bourgeois appetite for personal success” that motivates both the working and the middle classes seeking an education for their children and, ultimately, material success within a capitalist system. The eighteenth century of which Foucault wrote about extensively gave birth to the social and political theories of modernism and liberalism; the latter, he believed, sought “to delineate the conditions under which the application of state coercion [could] be justified (Hunt et al 16).”

Within imperial education in Ireland this is evident in the proviso that basic literacy and numeracy skills are the goals of education before a child leaves school at the age of twelve for the workplace. For the middle class and those moving on to intermediate and post-secondary education, pastoral power is evident in the overt inclusion of preparation for the civil service entrance examination. In spite of the pessimistic sweep of colonial power via governmentality and its evidence in the history of Ireland and education in Ireland under British rule, Foucault did offer that “power always involves and engenders ‘resistance’ (Hunt et al 17).” Consider that power of this sort “marginalises, silences and excludes”, however “the marginalised, silenced and excluded are always present (Hunt et al 17).” Indeed; so while disciplinary power regulates to produce the normal, it also produces resistance.

### Chapter 3--*Dinnseanchas*

#### Resistance--The Hedge Schools:

The charter schools and the early National Schools may both have been intended as “bids at rescuing the Irish from being Irish (McManus 237)”, but they were not entirely successful. The primary reason for the limits on the success of these ideological, legislative, pedagogical, and informational assaults on culture and

conscience was the illegal hedge schools. A variety of reasons prompted their popularity across the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that were not overtly political in nature: parents found that they offered more flexibility in attendance, greater choice in a curriculum that was not largely vocational in nature, and a secular setting that did not promote the Episcopalian religion of the British Empire.

The hedge schools were often referred to as “Catholic” schools because they were the sole choice of schooling for that population before Catholic Emancipation in 1829; “Catholics in the eighteenth century were forbidden by law to run schools” (Clear 46). The reality was, however, that “Catholics and Presbyterians rejected [charter] schools and supported instead the non-denominational fee-paying hedge schools (McManus 237).” Whether political resistance was or was not the intention, the fact remains that the dissident hedge schools, the commitment of their teachers and the support, morally and financially, of parents all represented resistance to the Penal Laws and the early state-sponsored schools, and established a parallel system of education. They received their name from their early locations: education was conducted “surreptitiously and schools were hidden away from public gaze”; and, the “safest area was considered to be beneath the sunny side of a hedge (McManus 16)” as

The hedge school was simply a mirror or natural extension of the earliest form of education--that for which the island has been heralded as the land of saints and scholars--the bardic and monastic schools. “Writing in 1924,” Antonia McManus offers, “Daniel Corkery...explored what he called the ‘hidden Ireland’ of the eighteenth century. This was the underworld of the Gaelic Munster poets, several of whom were hedge schoolmasters (74).” In this sense, the hedge schoolmaster

continued ancient traditions and passed along information about culture and heritage orally that would have died under colonisation: indeed, “songs and poems continuously reminded [the peasantry and the displaced Gaelic families] that they were the ‘children of kings’ ” (McManus 74). Following Elizabeth I’s defeat of the Gaelic chieftains at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 which effectively “put an end to the Gaelic way of life”, the chieftains continued this tradition by supporting “the Gaelic poets”, many of whom then became teachers (McManus 107-8). Thus the hedge schools and their teachers embodied traditions “that had been passed down to them from early Christian times” in Ireland (McManus 107).

If political resistance is defined, simply, as resistance to a state-prescribed status quo, then hedge schools represent, on the historical landscape, an early form of political resistance-via-education during the years of the Penal Laws, and the early years of state-sponsored schooling. “Irish parents set a high value on a hedge school education and made enormous sacrifices to secure it for their children,” according to Antonia McManus, a fact made even more exceptional considering “the difficult social conditions which prevailed with the poor overburdened with various taxes (239).” In contrast, hedge schools could provide more options upon exit or “graduation”, particularly for the poor including: an education “for students intended for the priesthood”, an education “for service in the foreign armies”, and an education “for trading on the continent or for employment” at home (McManus 13), rather than simply providing basic literacy, numeracy, and workplace skills. Their schoolmasters met “the demands of the marketplace by satisfying the wishes of parents who desired social advancement for their children (McManus 131).” In this time, considering the depth and breadth of poverty and oppression, social advancement was self-

determination and a grab at democracy rather than the collusion and extension of oppression it came to represent in the twentieth century.

Despite poverty and oppression--or perhaps because of poverty and oppression--"Irish society demanded high academic standards from its educators"; thus, prospective hedge schoolmasters were "poor scholars [that] had to undergo a long and arduous training, under [hedge] schoolmasters of repute" (McManus 87), unlike the factory-like nature of the training received by their state-sponsored counterparts. Accordingly, payment for the education of their children took on a creative means outside of the flow of the official state currency: as "a tenacious people who survived by" resilience and enterprise, the Irish peasantry "knew that if they were to provide their children with an education, they would have to employ some imaginative strategies for making money" or for barter. These included the "provision of board and lodging" for the hedge schoolmaster, "the sale of milk", or the "illicit distilling trade" (McManus 95). Not surprisingly "The hedge schoolmaster was a central figure in the life of the community and his social status was therefore enormous (McManus 95)." That said, "the parent/teacher relationship would be a close one based on mutual respect"; according to Antonia McManus this relationship was more of a "strong partnership in which the master allowed parents to select the curriculum for their children (240)."

Unlike their state-sponsored counterparts, the hedge schools offered "a very broad curriculum" that was "taught...to a very high standard, but the government of the day remained blind to this fact (McManus 106)." In a testament to their popularity an official commission in 1824 "calculated that there were about 11,000 schools in Ireland, of which 9000 were 'hedge schools'...Four out of every five

children participated in this unofficial system (Raftery et al 448).” The subjects taught included “religion, history, arithmetics, book-keeping, science, surveying and land measuring, astronomy, geography, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, English, Irish and dancing (McManus 118).” In spite of its rarity outside of universities, “Science was taught...and was eagerly sought after by the poor” (McManus 122). There was a freedom of choice in texts for the study of literature with parents providing a reading list for the schoolmasters; often these included the “best available literature of the time” (McManus 241). Unlike the readers provided by the state-sponsored schools, those that facilitated basic literacy and passed along state-approved ideas, children attending hedge schools were permitted to read the popular novels of the day that were engaging, and are now regarded as classics of English literature (McManus 117).

This varied and challenging curriculum was delivered in an environment that, despite its apparent poverty and other challenges, stands as one of a type that was conducive to learning; in short, the available descriptions of the hedge school portrays an early example of what has become known as the child-centred classroom.

“Contemporary progressive educators, as well as future ones, would have approved of many of the practices enacted daily” in their routines (McManus 110). A hedge schoolmaster of the nineteenth century, William Carlton, and “[Padraig] Pearse, a schoolmaster of the twentieth century, drew an analogy between the great educator [and] philosopher Plato...who favoured a personalized approach to education and the hedge schoolmasters (McManus 107).” Antonia McManus observes that this “comparison was a fair one as [the hedge schoolmasters] were among the finest exponents of this educational method” (107).



Borrowing Plato's techniques and approach to teaching and learning also meant that the ranking and categorizing of pupils and the learning process found in conventional, state-sponsored education was absent; McManus notes that in this regard "modern day educators would scorn [this method's] total disregard of the economics of time (107)." The age of students ranged from young children to young adults, and they interacted and assisted each other in a cooperative setting; the daily routine included both play and social support in a "homely atmosphere" (110). The agreement struck between parents and hedge schoolmasters--beyond the selection of subjects and the texts supplied by parents--provided for the schoolmasters giving "three classes of individual instruction to their children before lunch (240)." Certainly their methods must have produced results based on their prevalence and popularity; accounts from "Eminent past pupils...recalled the infectious love of classical learning displayed by their former masters [that was] passed on to them, so that they retained a partiality for the classics" (129).

According to observers in this era, including the German writer J. G. Kohl, "Even though there was awful poverty in evidence...the children [attending hedge school] looked very cheerful, smart and bright-eyed in appearance as they poured over their studies (McManus 108)." The noted philanthropist, John Howard, "found the children in the hedge schools 'much forwarder than those of the same age in the charter schools' (McManus 108). The results produced by the hedge schools are certainly notable. A "graduate" of one hedge school in County Tyrone, "James McCullough became one of the leading mathematicians of the age"; in spite of the restrictions and social prejudices within higher education of the day, McCullough "went on to become a professor of mathematics at Trinity College, in 1836, at the

tender age of twenty-five (McManus 122).” The eminent eighteenth century philosopher and commentator on the French Revolution, Edmund Burke, “claimed to have learned more Latin and Greek from an obscure schoolmaster on the banks of the Nore” than he acquired at university (McManus 129).

One early hedge school observer writing in the twentieth century, P. J. Dowling, described the hedge schools as “ ‘a kind of guerilla war’ in education” (qtd. McManus 16). Although there was evidence that the decision to send a child to a hedge school was not always an overtly political one, the political resistance implicit in this selection cannot be entirely discounted. Despite the risk of disobeying statutory provisions for education and turning their education over to possible political radicals in these early years of Empire, Irish parents willingly did so. Writing of the experiences of disenfranchised students in the public schools of twentieth century Canada--namely school leavers and those who discount school achievement--education critic Terry Wotherspoon defined resistance as “student responses to the dehumanizing and restrictive aspects of schooling that diminish creativity, enlightenment, and self-worth or that devalue meaningful social experiences (118).” In this sense, then, when students attended and embraced the hedge schools they and their parents were resisting the limits of the state-sponsored schools, and the denial of their access to a quality education.

For their part the schoolmasters “were independent of state control and to a certain extent of church control” and so it is probable that many were “motivated to participate in [radical political organizations] because of the resentment they felt at perceived inequalities” in Irish life (McManus 31). During their era of strength, many hedge schoolmasters became involved in radical political organizations (McManus

36). As they came to cater to “those children who were denied formal education under the Penal Laws, the hedge schools were the source of much anti-English teaching (Sisson 23).” Their own education did, undoubtedly, prime these schoolmasters for political action:

The main reason why so many hedge schoolmasters became involved in radical political organizations was firstly because they were sufficiently well educated to understand the radical writings of Thomas Paine (1737-1809), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) and William Godwin (1756-1836), and their relevance to the Irish political situation. (McManus 36)

Certainly their teaching and curriculum represented cultural resistance: during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “The cultural survival of the people depended to a large extent on the hedge schoolmasters as it was in the hedge schools that the people developed an appreciation of music, song, dance, and poetry (McManus 101).”

Then the force exerted by the imperial campaign of the British along with the other historical factors that fuelled the birth and growth of the state-sponsored schools lead to the eventual decline of the hedge schools; they “largely died out after 1850” (Clear 46), with evidence that the sole remaining hedge school vanished during the 1870s (Fernandez-Suarez 45). During these years the Irish, their culture, and their language suffered a further blow that decimated the population: *an gorta mor* or “the great hunger” resulted in millions of deaths, and widespread emigration in these years and across the century that followed. There was a distinct “political advantage” for the British when they standardised education and outlawed the use of the Irish language in schools: “schools [that] taught in Gaelic also taught the Gaelic version of Irish history and preserved and fanned the traditional historical prejudice against the British (McGrath 179).”

“The Smithy of the Soul” and Resistance--St. Enda’s:

The decade that marked the death of the hedge schools is the decade that marked the birth in Dublin of the activist, educator, and revolutionary, Padraig Pearse. As a young man Pearse received both a formal and an informal education in Irish language and folklore while enrolled at a Christian Brothers’ school, and from a maternal aunt. He then went on to obtain a BA in Modern Languages that included Irish as well as French. In his early twenties he became deeply involved with The Gaelic League--an organization aimed at reviving and promoting the Irish language in Ireland, and reviving and promoting elements of Irish culture stifled or deadened under British rule. This “involvement in the Gaelic League convinced Pearse of the primary importance of educational reform in securing ‘the intellectual independence of Ireland’ (O’Buachalla ix).” If the colonial power offered the English language as the superior language--the unifier, homogenizer, and the language of commerce--Pearse came to believe that a subjugated population’s vernacular language “was a principle characteristic of [their] nationhood, reflecting a sense of ‘otherness’ or separateness (Walsh 221).” Soon he articulated the belief that children “should constantly be reminded of and made to realise the fact that they are a separate race from England and that it is a disgrace and a badge of slavery for a race to use the language of any other in preference to its own” (qtd. Augusteijn 14).

As dangerous and extreme as that proviso might sound considering both the times and the regime, the reality was that, on the cusp of the twentieth century, the political ambitions that would lead to Pearse’s execution in 1916 were very distant from the political conscience of the man. On the contrary, Pearse believed that “it was a forlorn hope to believe Ireland would ever achieve independence because the

Irish were neither a military nor a commercial or manufacturing race and its leaders were forever hopelessly divided (Augusteijn 11).” However intellectual independence was possible, he concluded, and “the Irish should [instead] concentrate on their special role in the intellectual advancement of mankind (Augusteijn 11).” At this precise yet seemingly nebulous juncture Pearse believed that a “fundamental distinction between Britain and Ireland” between the colonial power and the subjugated population existed; consequently, he set his path for “cultural regeneration” (Augusteijn 12) through education.

His vision for an education that would inspire a new nation, resuscitate a culture, and forge an Irish consciousness was not centred solely on the teaching of the Irish language. Instead he hoped for the “creation in the schools of an Irish atmosphere, the Irishising of the hearts and minds of the children” (qtd. Augusteijn 14). A survey of the existing system of education made it clear that “progress at [the] primary level” on the cultural front was not likely “in the existing secondary schools” (Augusteijn 14); and so he decided to realize his vision by setting up his own school, “showing that in his mind saving the Irish nation was a long-term process in which a totally Irish school could play a pivotal role (Augusteijn 14).”

Pearse established St. Enda’s in 1908 “at a time when the education system was wholly examination-driven and informed by colonial assumptions about the relationship between Ireland and England (Walsh 221).” The emphasis on standards spoke to the capitalist system that fueled the British Empire; the colonial assumptions spoke to the primacy awarded the colonial culture--a political phenomenon that preserved and justified the imperial mission of the British Empire. Thus, Pearse came to conclude, “schooling in Ireland had become a political act, aimed at fostering a

compliant, Protestant, English-speaking people (Walsh 222).” And so, recognizing that this pervasive, domesticating system of control over the Irish conscience “could be subverted by a system in opposition”, Pearse designed a school that “was radical in its purpose and operation (Walsh 224).” Accordingly St. Enda’s, in both idea and practice, embodied “Pearse’s objective...to provide a modern, child-centred, bilingual education for Irish boys (Sisson 6).”

Drawing on knowledge of how education was conducted in pre-colonial Ireland, Pearse fueled his vision for the school based on a “system of fosterage that had existed in both pagan and early Christian Ireland” until the seventeenth century (Sisson 14). He believed that the hedge schoolmasters “of the nineteenth century were the last repositories of a high tradition” (qtd. McManus 108). He noted that the old Irish word for teacher translates, literally, to “fosterer”, and the old Irish word for student translates, literally, to “foster child” (Pearse 376). Moving beyond concerns over the language of instruction, and the content and skills prescribed by the curriculum, Pearse seized an opportunity to counter the capitalist and imperialist oppression of the state-mandated education: “The modern child,” he wrote, “is coming to regard his teacher as an official paid by the State to render him certain services; services which it is in his interest to avail of, since by doing so he will increase his earning capacity later on (Pearse 377).” If liberation for Ireland started with education, then liberation for the Irish did too; and in the context of the classroom, “Freedom for the individual lay in a child-centred curriculum which sought to ‘discover the hidden talent that is in every normal soul’ (Sisson 18).”

According to one commentator, the methods and curriculum Pearse offered students at St. Enda’s seem, “Even by today’s standards....modern, liberal and

engaging...” (Sisson 37). He lived out his vision, “his liberal, child-centred theories of education...as a revival of Gaelic fosterage traditions (Kiberd 70).” In drawing on this tradition “and the notion of learning as craft rather than process, Pearse identified the significance of learning as a transaction; a deeply human activity in which the learner is encouraged, not simply to become learned, but good...education was a moral activity (Walsh 227).” In “quasi-monastic terms”, Pearse envisioned school as “a type of retreat where children could engage in learning without being troubled by the coercion of state examinations (Walsh 229).”

The curriculum was as broad as that found in the hedge schools, making a variety of classic and contemporary subjects and studies accessible to those enrolled. The school offered European languages (French, German, Italian, and Spanish), botany, zoology and geology, as well as more vocational subjects such as typewriting, book-keeping and shorthand (Sisson 37).” Other subjects listed in the prospectus of St. Enda’s for the 1910-11 school year included: “Experimental Science (Chemistry and Physics), Mathematics (Arithmetic, Algebra, Euclid, and Trigonometry)”; in the arts, “Drawing...Vocal and Instrumental Music, Dancing”, and “Physical Drill” (*St. Enda’s School*). Perhaps most appealing to parents and students--like those who sought out the hedge schoolmasters-- “a suitable course [was] selected for each pupil. In making this selection, not only the wishes of the parents or guardians, but...the wishes and inclinations of the pupil himself [were] carefully consulted (*St. Enda’s School*).” Contrary to the nature of imperialist, colonizing and standardizing education, Pearse offered that “No pupil of St. Enda’s is forced into a groove of study for which he evinces no special talent or native inclination (*St. Enda’s School*).”

In keeping with his political and cultural standards, the object of the school was to provide “a secondary education...of a high modern type generally” that is “distinctively Irish in complexion (*St. Enda’s School*).” According to the prospectus Pearse authored for the 1910-11 school session: “In the general curriculum the first place is accorded to the Irish Language, which is taught as a spoken and literary tongue to every pupil (*St. Enda’s School*).” That said, the teaching of courses outside of language courses was “as far as possible bilingual,—that is to say, each subject is taught both in Irish and in English (*St. Enda’s School*).” While European and general History were taught, Irish History was brought to the fore; likewise, “The geography of Ireland [was] thoroughly taught, and...the industrial conditions and possibilities of the country” were considered (*St. Enda’s School*). Outside of the classroom, in sports, “he nurtured a love of Gaelic games” (Sisson 37).

The arts held a special place at St. Enda’s. Across the first half of the twentieth century “progressive educators such as William Curry and A. S. Neill insisted upon the place of the arts in schooling”; Pearse practiced this principle through a variety of activities, demonstrating “the importance [he] placed on the arts as imperative to an enlightened understanding of education (Walsh 227).” This mission combined well with Pearse’s embrace of authentic and performative assessment for students: “Between 1908 and 1912 the boys performed in seven different plays at the Abbey Theatre” and “also acted in at least six open-air pageants of Irish history” (Sisson 8). Often productions at the school “received attention in the national press” (Walsh 227). In addition to the school magazine Pearse compiled for public consumption, the students compiled their own in-house publication, *An Scholaire* or “The Scholar” (Walsh 227).



Culture and politics formed interesting bridges between content and methods in the classroom, and between the classroom and life outside the classroom in the daily functioning of St. Enda's. According to Brendan Walsh, the school was "radical in its purpose and operation...a schooling in democracy...politically potent and deliberate at a time when post addressed in Irish could be returned-to-sender by the General Post Office (224)." Perhaps most impressive was the school's roster of "Half-Holiday Lectures on Irish and general History, Literature, Art, Science, and so on" (*St. Enda's School*); guest speakers from outside the staff included "a number of the most prominent [cultural]Revivalists of the period"; these "lectures reflected a key aspect of Pearse's founding philosophy" and his students "would sit at the feet of the 'heroes and seers and scholars' of early twentieth century Ireland (Walsh 229)." In retrospect, "St. Enda's provided a training ground for the teasing out of a new definition of Irish masculinity--as yet unformed in the bodies of its young pupils" (Sisson 9); this in a country that still laboured under emasculating and crushing British imperialism and all that these conditions implied for gender, class, cultural identity, and students' understanding of their relationship to authority.

Pearse was "always conscious of the influence of place, environment and architecture upon a child's experience of school" and so he established St. Enda's as both a boarding and a day school on the site of the Hermitage, a large house and property south of the city of Dublin; there the "environs...would expose the boys to those 'elemental forces' of life and nature (Walsh 229)." Further, this property allowed for more of the authentic, experiential learning that Pearse favoured; the venue known as the "classroom" also varied as students were "encouraged to work outdoors, both in the garden [and] on the playing field (Sisson 37)". The extensive

gardens and natural setting allowed for the teaching of relevant courses in, say, agriculture and botany; but “Each pupil who so desires is allotted a plot of ground, which he [was] at liberty to plan out and cultivate according to his own taste, but under skilled direction (*St. Enda’s School*).” The School Museum permitted students to examine first-hand “zoological, botanical, and geological specimens”; students were also “encouraged to collect specimens for this Museum during their country rambles (*St. Enda’s School*).”

In addition to de-centring the teacher, and advocating for “a re-conceptualisation of the teacher-pupil relationship”, Pearse also advocated for and practiced “changes in teaching methodology, all of which became characteristic of radical educators” (Walsh 228) later in the twentieth century. Students were encouraged to peer edit work in class (Walsh 228). Perhaps most remarkable for the time, Pearse did not permit corporal punishment at St. Enda’s preferring instead to counsel students for transgressions; he “described the use of corporal punishment for mistakes as ‘the very acme of stupid and purposeless folly’” (Walsh 228). Students “were encouraged to organize, administer and promote from within, their own corps and branches of [the Gaelic League]” (Sisson 37). All served to promote “ ‘the formation of a sense of civic and social duty’, an allegiance to Irish-Ireland and represented ‘earnest efforts towards the awakening of a spirit of patriotism’ (Sisson 37).”

The educational background against which Pearse lived and worked displayed a system at odds with his approach, one where “Imperial ideals were institutionalized through a rigid curriculum with prescribed textbooks written especially for Irish schools”; these texts “lacked any material focusing on Irish heritage or traditions

(Sisson 24).” The colonial rigor of this system’s culture and the “examination regimes and practices...formed a complex web of social and economic practices which continually privileged English over Irish (Sisson 24).” St. Enda’s was, in contrast, “a ‘republic of childhood’ in which, for example, the boys were allowed to vote on whether they would play hurling or cricket in the summer term (Kiberd 73-74).” According to the prospectus of 1910-11: “The central purpose of the School is not so much the mere imparting of knowledge...as the formation of its pupils’ characters, the eliciting and development of the individual bents and traits of each, the kindling of their imaginations, the placing before them of a high standard of conduct and duty (*St. Enda’s School*).”

In the prospectus for 1910-11 Pearse notes that at St. Enda’s “The course enters at every point into relations with actual life and is framed with particular reference to the needs and conditions which prevail in our own country at the present day.” Further, their aims and goals were “not at all the ‘cramming’ of boys with a view to success at examinations” (*St. Enda’s School*). It is not surprising, then, that St. Enda’s embodied a theory of education that Pearse forged in response to the colonial experience. In the years between the establishment of St. Enda’s and the execution of Pearse, 1908 - 1916, he wrote and spoke publicly about education, consolidating his educational philosophy while examining its connection to politics. In January 1916, working from his office at St. Enda’s, he published a pamphlet entitled *The Murder Machine*--a compilation of previously published articles on the education system and notes made for a public lecture; he referred to it in the Preamble as “a series of studies of the English education system in Ireland (*The Murder Machine*).” In the main text of the pamphlet he reiterated that “Education should foster...inspire...harden” and yet

under the prevailing system, “this education is meant to repress...is meant to enervate (Pearse 372).”

His “early conceptualisation of schools as a means of resistance--an act of defiance--had antecedents in the nonconformist movements of the early nineteenth century” in England that “so disrupted the machinery that ensured the maintenance of the social elite (Walsh 224).” That said, Pearse “recognized, long before the development of theories of education as resistance, that it could be subverted by a system in opposition, a network of Irish-Ireland schools, informed by the tenants of Gaelic revivalism (Walsh 224).” According to one commentator, his pamphlet *The Murder Machine* “anticipates [Kenyan writer] Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s critique of an imposed and unrepresentative curriculum (Ghairbi 163).” The “importance of nationalist schooling as a conduit for ideas about nationhood” that Pearse pushed is a principle that has been borne out in “The Indian postcolonial theorist Partha Chatterjee’s study of the emergence of nationalism in India” (Sisson 4).

Central to Pearse’s theory of education “was a protest against the fact that everyone was made to read the same books, think the same thoughts, be decidable in an instant (Kiberd 30).” He maintained that from the time of the “Tudor and Elizabethan administrations that founded....schools to encourage English speech and habit” that “schooling in Ireland had become a political act aimed at fostering a compliant, Protestant, English-speaking people (Walsh 222).” Writing of the larger cultural and political sphere beyond the walls of the school in a 1916 pamphlet entitled *The Sovereign People*, Pearse offered that “A nation is bound together by natural ties...an empire is at best held together by ties of human interest and at worst by brute force. The nation is the family at large, an empire is a commercial

corporation at large (qtd. Ghairbhi 161).” In *The Murder Machine* he likened pupils in Irish schools to “raw material” to be “churned out to the pattern of Civil Service Commissioners, devoid of any imagination, creativity or inspiration (qtd. Sisson 35).”

Here, then, is the connection between schooling and the practices and ideology of the prevailing political-economy: if “capitalist/imperialist imperatives were the predominant context for the marginalisation of Gaelic culture”, “Pearse himself believed that an inherent tension [existed] between political economy and the alternative worldview of native Gaelic culture” (Ghairbhi 159) that he and other cultural revivalists were working towards. Further, he believed “that the teacher was becoming popularly regarded as an official whose task it was to assist pupils’ ‘earning capacity later on’ ”; this notion puts him in company with Bertrand Russell who “mused that too often teaching was regarded as helping pupils to make money or achieve ‘a good position’ (Walsh 225).” Instead his work as an educator and theorist “embodies and embraces his vision of identity and culture as fluid, evolving and perennially renewable (Ghairbi 167).” Hence the critical ideal he practiced of keeping “the learning transaction...free from prescribed texts, set curricula and terminal examinations” (Walsh 227).

According to Elaine Sisson, “His indictments against the brutality of colonial systems, the subjugated positions of the self under colonial rule...resonate through the writings of more recent postcolonial critics” including Franz Fanon and Paulo Freire (1-2). However, in spite of the recent re-examination of Pearse’s work and theories, and the evaluation of that work against that of contemporary post-colonial and cultural theorists, Brendan Walsh offers that “his conceptualisation of schooling as an agent of political and cultural resistance anticipated the work of later radical thinkers

such as Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire and has generally remained unacknowledged (220).” In light of the “evolution” of this area of theory and socio-political criticism, “a reappraisal of Pearse’s educational thought and work is now appropriate (Walsh 232).”

#### Chapter 4--*Aiteachas*

##### Pedagogy of the Oppressed:

Midway through the twentieth century, approximately forty years after the execution of Pearse, Paulo Freire conducted ground-breaking educational work with the impoverished population of his native Brazil. The cornerstone of Freire’s work was the transformation of education from a domesticating tool that serves the privileged to a liberating tool that serves the needs of all via social transformation. His seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is “rooted in concrete situations and describes the reactions of labourers (peasant or urban) and of middle-class persons whom I have observed directly or indirectly during the course of my educative work (*Oppressed* 37).” Thus, early in his writing, Freire makes clear that his theory is applicable to rural or urban workers as well as the middle-class: he considers both locations and classes to be oppressed and subject to the domination of a controlling elite.

How is it that education delivered across such disparate sites to such diverse populations can have such a singular, sweeping and complete influence? The answer rests in the remedy: there must be a “change in the way the oppressed perceive the world of oppression...[and]...the expulsion of the myths created and developed in the old order” (*Oppressed* 54-55). These are, in Freire’s ethos, two elements that allow for oppression and, ultimately, inoculation of the masses against the reality of oppression-via-education; the two work hand-in-hand in constant harmony. As has

been established, oppression is frequently cloaked in the security and piety of benevolence while narratives generated at the centre of power perpetuate this mythical benevolence.

Freire is careful to define oppression lest it be taken as a condition that is only marked by traditional notions of tyranny and violence. He reduces it to “Any situation in which ‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person” (*Oppressed* 55). He goes on to allude to the myths and narratives that prevail in a given society to dilute the appearance of oppression and its opposition: such exploitation “constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual’s ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human (*Oppressed* 55).” Rather than mount an opposition, he cautions, the “oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them (*Oppressed* 62).” He adds that the middle class is particularly vulnerable to this phenomenon.

Having set the groundwork for how oppression works in a given society, Freire moves on to present his observations on the role traditional education plays in perpetuating this oppression. In the wide-angle view of the system, “the teacher-student relationship...inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally *narrative* character. The relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students) (*Oppressed* 71).” Narrowing the focus, the daily workings of classrooms are depicted as employing the “banking” concept endemic to an oppressive society. Here, the “more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them”, then, ultimately, “the less they develop the critical consciousness which

would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world  
(*Oppressed* 73).”

Moving away from narration and banking requires dialogue as opposed to monologue. Dialogue in a classroom means more than providing time and space for student voices in education; dialogue is “a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it (Shor et al 98).” It is through “dialogue, reflecting together on what we know and don’t know [that] we can then act critically to transform reality (Shor et al 99).” In a series of published dialogues published nearly thirty years after *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire and respondent Ira Shor re-examined the phenomenon of dialogue and added the qualifier “liberatory” to dialogue; they emphasise that “liberatory dialogue is a *democratic* communication which disconfirms domination and illuminates while affirming the freedom of the participants to re-make their culture.” Otherwise, “Traditional discourse confirms the dominant mass culture and the inherited, official shape of knowledge (Shor et al 99).”

If dialogue appears, in theory, to lack the science or structure of “conventional” teaching and learning, Freire--having worked with the concept for more than thirty years--stipulates that the method is not “laissez-faire” because “education is always directive...The question is to know towards what and with whom it is directive (Shor et al 109).” When the rigor of his method is questioned, Freire offers that “Scientific rigor comes from an effort to overcome a naive understanding of the world”; in short, science is simply “superposing critical thought on what we observe in reality, after the starting point of common sense (Shor et al 106).” His theory, what he later came to call radical pedagogy, “must never make any concessions to the trickeries of neoliberal ‘pragmatism’, which reduces the



educational practice to the technical scientific training of learners, *training* rather than *educating* (*Indignation* 19).”

The “political activity [of] the dominant elites”--in schools, classrooms, academic disciplines, or the world beyond the walls of the institution--that which they use to “encourage passivity in the oppressed, corresponding with the letters’ ‘submerged’ state of consciousness, and take advantage of that passivity to ‘fill’ that consciousness with slogans which create even more fear of freedom (*Oppressed* 95).” This “fear of freedom” is, ironically, denied via the “freedom” offered by the comfort of conforming to an oppressive regime. Freire recognizes the overwhelming task at hand: and so “One of the methods of manipulation,” he notes, “is to inoculate individuals with the bourgeois appetite for personal success (*Oppressed* 149).” Here, Freire challenges his audience to consider that there is no such thing as self-empowerment: liberation must be a social act because “if you are not able to use your *recent* [individualised] freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom (Shor et al 109).”

And, for “an alienated person, conditioned by a culture of achievement and personal success, to recognize his situation as objectively unfavourable seems to hinder his own possibilities of success (*Oppressed* 157).” In North America, for example, the entire notion of empowering education has been captured in the U. S. “by private notions of getting ahead (Shor et al 110).” The overwhelming culture of individualism has come to perpetuate a culture that is “a strident pillar of capitalism” that “serves the system’s commercial, conformist culture, contradicting the very individualism it proposes (Shor et al 111).”

However dialogue, in its organic and thorough, ever-evolving reporting uncovers the truth of all oppressions. According to Freire, “my insistence on starting with [students’] description of *their* daily life experiences is based in the possibility of starting from concreteness from common sense, to reach a rigorous understanding of reality (Shor et al 106).” Through dialogue the idea of a classroom dynamic where the teacher is actively relearning concepts as the students learn (Shor et al 100) becomes a method that evolves into “situated pedagogy”. This, in turn, “presents subjective themes in their larger social context to challenge the givens of our lives and the surrounding system dominating daily life (Shor et al 105).”

One observer reports that “If the heart of Freire’s program [was]...its method--dialogue--the soul of his program was its objective--consciousness raising, what he referred to as ‘conscientization’ (Finn 171).” Conscientization via dialogue “refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of relations (*Oppressed* 35).” Here is where dialogue chips away at the prevailing narratives that inoculate, and a curriculum that serves the wheels of capitalism. Dialogue, conscientization, “literacy, and collective struggle pursued simultaneously” shaped “Freire’s program” (Finn 172). Literacy, in this sense, is not the basic literacy and numeracy required for the workplace; instead “the progressive literacy educator”, Freire writes, “must not be satisfied with the teaching of reading and writing that disdainfully turns its back on the reading of the world (*Indignation* 16).”

The breadth and completeness of this program and its emphasis on changing perspectives to prompt real social change came from Freire’s interest in “helping the poor recognize the social and economic interests that bind them...to take strength from

their group identity and begin to struggle to further their interests through democratic means” (Finn 172). The critical consciousness and intelligence that is fostered and grows “results in knowledge as fundamental as it is obvious: there is no culture or history that is immobile. Change is a natural realization of culture and of history (*Indignation 4*).” It is imperative “that education, rather than trying to deny risk, encourages men and women to take it (*Indignation 5*).” Education, then, is a deeply political act, and “progressive education...must never, in the name of discipline, eradicate the learner’s sense of pride and self worth, his or her ability to oppose, by imposing on him or her a quietism which denies his or her being (*Indignation 8*).” Freedom takes root and grows, naturally, “from learning, early on, how to build internal authority by introjecting the external one” (*Indignation 10*).

Henry Giroux--Critical Pedagogy and the Struggle for Democracy:

One hundred years after the decline of the hedge schools, and nearly fifty years after the execution of Padraig Pearse, a particular breed of cultural critic identified as radical or critical pedagogists would come to view education as both a moral and an immoral activity. Education is, according to critical pedagogists, moral in the sense that it can be a source of liberation. However education may, simultaneously, serve an immoral function in the sense that it makes students “both subjects of and subjects to relations of power” (Giroux et al 4).

Giroux observes that “pedagogy is a discourse that should extend the principles and practices of human dignity, liberty, and social justice by engaging in social criticism that acknowledges the serious threats faced by schools, critical cultural spheres, and the state of democracy itself” (*Border Crossings 4*). He goes on to describe how the rush to global capitalism via neo-liberal economic policies in “the

1990's...made visible the colonialism at work in both cities in the United States and in other advanced industrial countries (*Border Crossings* 4).” Colonialism has, in the vernacular of the cultural theorists and critical pedagogists, moved beyond the imperialism of one country annexing another; according to Giroux it has become a subjugating force within a country and its economy. What this brand has in common with past empires such as the British Empire is the colonial/imperial trickle-down impact on schools, curriculum, and students; to some this is not simply a pedagogical problem that requires a pedagogical solution, but a political problem in the pedagogical sphere that requires a political solution. In this sense then, “Critical pedagogy...questions...how culture is related to power--why and how it operates in both institutions and textual terms” (Giroux et al 5).

The role of critical pedagogy is not isolated to schools or the classroom; likewise, critical pedagogists do not work on the proviso that education and learning activities and actions only take place in schools and classrooms. Instead, this ideology steps out of the confines of discussions about classrooms and curricula, acknowledging that education is equally a part of interactions that take place across multiple sites in a society. And just as post-colonial theorists have illustrated how education is part of the social communications, narratives, and exchanges in a colony that are used to oppress the subjugated masses, and that deconstructing the same can be employed to repair a post-colonial community, Giroux offers that pedagogy “both within and outside of schools can be used to link not only learning to social change...and education to the promise of a radical and inclusive democracy (*America* 4).” A “public pedagogy” is one that can be used as a “powerful resource for engaging people in robust forms of dialogue and activism (*America* 4).”

At work inside or outside of schools, critical pedagogy delineates “schools and other educational spheres” as more than “instructional sites...places where culture, power, and knowledge come together to produce particular identities, narratives, and social practices (*America* 4).” Thus, Giroux offers, schooling is about more than the “production of skills”; instead schools turn on the “construction of knowledge and identities that always presuppose a vision of the future”. And so critical pedagogists seek to ask: “Whose future, story, and interests does the school represent (*America* 4)?” It follows, then, that “Pedagogy is directive and is, in part, about the struggle over identities, values, and the future (*America* 8).” Otherwise a school is simply “another space dominated by private interests and market relations (*America* 9).”

To these ends, “school practices need to be informed by a public philosophy that addresses how to construct ideological and institutional conditions in which the lived experience of empowerment for the vast majority of students becomes the defining feature of schooling (*America* 5).” The key notions here are “public” and “lived experience” of students: the practices and content that shape schooling, then, are not generated by private interests or the marketplace, and are not generated or disseminated from the top down. Therefore critical pedagogy has a direct impact on the lives of students, teachers, the information they exchange, and how that exchange is ordered.

The place of the teachers in such an environment is transformed from that of civil servant to that of public intellectual and democratic practitioner. Giroux observes that teachers are trained “to be simply efficient technicians and practitioners” (*America* 4) but must, instead, be given “both the time and the power to institute structural conditions that allow them to produce curricula, collaborate with

parents, conduct research, and work with communities (*America 5*).” If schools act as democratic spheres, in keeping with the goal of critical pedagogy, then teachers are educated “to be publicly engaged intellectuals who address the most pressing problems of their society as part of a wider politics and pedagogy of solidarity and democratic struggle” (*America 5*).

The standardisation that has come to regulate the lives of students has, according to Giroux, come to regulate the lives of teachers. Hence his use of the term “technicians” to describe their roles in the lives of students and the workings of the school. In short, they deliver a prescribed curricula via prescribed methods and report individual results in the context of prescribed descriptors and rankings of achievement. Accordingly he posits that re-addressing the whole teacher is critical: teachers are “agents whose actions have enormous political, pedagogical, and ethical consequences...[they] must be able to analyze their relationship with the larger society in order to critically apprehend themselves as social agents” (*America 7*). Such a role--and the reimagining and recreation of one’s role--allows teachers to contribute to the de-colonisation of themselves and their students; not only do they stand to be a part of democratisation directly, but also through “recognizing how they might be complicitous with forms of oppression and human suffering (*America 7*).”

This revisionist role for teachers is spelled out in simple terms: language, curriculum, and lived experiences. The means of communication within education and the lives of teachers must be “a language of possibility” which allows, among other things, teachers “to speak the unrepresentable, and to imagine future social relations outside of the existing configuration of power (*America 7*).” As direct agents of change, teachers must use this language to “construct curricula that draw

upon the cultural resources that students bring with them to school”; in this construction they must draw on “the languages, histories, experiences, and voices of the students...integrating what is taught in schools with the dynamics of everyday life (*America 6*).”

A key term in Giroux’s critical pedagogy is literacy. In an analogous vein, he places literacy in “a broader critical discourse grounded in a politics of representation” that allows students to “learn how to analyze the cultural and ideological codes” that exist in a variety of texts (*America 4*). In extending the definition of literacy he cautions that “Literacy should be seen not only as a practice of critical comprehension, but also as an act of intervention in the world”; literacy “should never be reduced to the learning of particular forms of knowledge”. It is “a condition for human agency” (*America 4*). Heightened readings and understandings allow students to recognize “the presences and absences that mark knowledge and texts” (*America 5*).

This “human agency” involves “multiple literacies...social literacies that are functional, cultural, and critical”; these collections of literacies “recognize both the importance of cultural differences and the importance of individuals communicating across various social, cultural and political borders (*America 4*).” Literacy then, in the most immediate sense, implies understanding and an ability to communicate via vocabulary, syntax, and diction. This understanding and communication, in turn, allows individuals to construct narratives and to de-construct narratives; to speak to authority and to understand authority; and, to approach, enter, and navigate institutions. Literacy now becomes a more sweeping term that wraps around and comes to encompass what is also known as curricula. As has been noted, Giroux

believes teachers should be writing curricula given particular provisos; and school, as a “democratic public sphere”, can prompt the “rewriting [of] the curriculum in order to address the lived experiences” of students “while not being limited to such knowledge (*America 5*).”

Much of critical pedagogy’s attempt to create curricula involves revision of the existing curricula and the means by which it was generated; in this exercise any possible means of tyranny and hegemony are addressed. For example, Giroux emphasizes interdisciplinary learning through “breaking down disciplines” in order to “create new forms of knowledge” (*America 5*). The process also provides for “a way of reading history as part of a larger project of reclaiming power and identity, particularly as these are shaped around the categories of race, gender, class, and ethnicity” (*America 5*). Outside of the existing structures, curricula, and biases, critical pedagogy “rejects the distinction between high and popular culture so as to make curriculum knowledge responsive to the everyday knowledge that constitutes people’s lived histories differently” (*America 5*).

While simultaneously addressing teaching practices and content via literacies, Giroux simultaneously addresses class in education; class, he believes, “defined in the broadest sense is more relevant than ever” as it is increasingly highlighted “Around the fault lines of power” at the turn of the twenty-first century (*America 10*). Just as a tyranny of disciplines must not dominate schooling, nor must one form of media or text be privileged over another according to notions of “popular” vs. “high” cultures, he addresses the inoculation that emanates from such privilegings. “Getting a good job” remains the goal for many students and their parents at both the secondary and the tertiary levels of education. Accordingly schools shape their course offerings and



students plan their timetables “on the basis of their exchange value on the market, refusing to take courses or major in areas that embody noncommercialized values” (*America* 18). Of course this impetus runs contrary to the notion of democracy in education: “Neo-liberalism”, offers Giroux, “has a stake in uncritical education because it thrives on ignorance in order to proceed outside of democratic accountability (*America* 18).”

Giroux does not negate the need for students to learn skills that will assist them in the marketplace and the jobmarket, however “they need to be educated both as workers and as critical citizens (*America* 18).” Considering critical pedagogy “is a moral and political practice” (*America* 8), then “Curricula must be grounded in a recognition that students need to be educated in order to govern and to exercise power” with the ultimate goal of allowing “them to be subjects rather than the objects of history (*America* 6).” Shifting the centre of power allows schooling to be “organized to provide students [instead] with the full range of knowledge, skills, values, and competencies” that fosters the “ethical discourse that enables them to develop relations among themselves and others [to] encourage social, cultural, and economic democracy (*America* 6).”

As students experience and learn, in turn, to “promote social justice, freedom, and equality” (*America* 6), schools will then “be seen as a resource for the larger community...[and] should not lose their connection to the neighborhoods they are intended to serve (*America* 7).” Critical pedagogy is, then, part of an effort “designed to address how the shared interests of politics, culture, and education can be articulated” (Giroux et al 2) through “pedagogical practices that are not only interdisciplinary, transgressive, and oppositional” but are “connected to a wider public

project to increase the scope of racial, economic, and social justice” (Giroux et al 2-3).

#### Parallel Pedagogists:

Disciplinary power always breeds resistance. According to Foucault “there is no single locus of great Refusal” but, instead, there exists a “plurality of resistances” (qtd. Hunt et al 17). The iconic educational activist Paulo Freire wrote and worked in the last half of the twentieth century amongst the poor of Brazil. The iconic cultural studies activist Henry Giroux works in North America and writes of schools, outlaw cultures, and neoliberal-global economics in the early twenty-first century. Educationalist and revolutionary Padraig Pearse wrote and worked in Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century. The hedge schoolmasters taught in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in open violation of laws made in London to oppress and shape Ireland and the Irish. The commonalities and points of convergence among these educational and political movements speaks to the universality of their thinking and teaching. Likewise, this universality illustrates the ways and means by which pervasive colonialism as a political, cultural, and economic force crushes the potential for democracy in the public and private lives of subjugated populations.

In his domain, Freire’s focus was on the poor and illiterate of Brazil. Much like Pearse he wasn’t interested in simply helping the poor and marginalised succeed within the existing system: the cornerstone of Freire’s work was the transformation of education from a domesticating tool that serves the privileged to a liberating tool that serves the needs of all via social transformation. His pedagogy sought to tackle oppression at its very core and across all the mechanisms that allow it to be perpetuated. In short, he attacked what Pearse had termed “the murder machine”.

Like Pearse, Freire believed that education is one of several vehicles for social change and liberation, and a key vehicle in the cultural change that is critical if the old order--in whatever form--is to yield once and for all. Pearse saw the construction of power relations in Irish society under colonialism as organic, pervasive, and insidious; likewise, Freire defined oppression outside of concrete notions of tyranny and violence. Instead, he reduces it to “Any situation in which ‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person” (*Oppressed* 55); thus, schools can be--and frequently are--sites of tyranny and violence. Like Freire, Pearse identified and described the manipulation and skewed ideology found in the curriculum and its delivery. The system of education established by the British Empire in Ireland, he observed, “succeeded in making slaves of us. And it has succeeded so well that we no longer realise that we are slaves (*The Murder Machine*).”

So it is that Pearse, in both his writings and his practice, takes a place alongside Freire; likewise, he takes a place alongside Giroux as a critical pedagogist, and as an advocate of democratic action in education as a means of creating democratic spaces in society at large. Pearse may predate the critical pedagogy and democracy movements by more than fifty years, however he revealed the firm correlation between social justice and the transformation of individuals and communities through a cultural re-tooling of education in Ireland. When he established St. Enda’s he did so by mandating educational practices with an “emphasis on the importance of interdisciplinary learning, the primacy of the pupil over the curriculum, the significance of place”; the school was, in the mind of Pearse,

a “home-spun university of life” (Sisson 19) in the face of an “empire [that] is a commercial corporation at large (qtd. Ghairbhi 161).”

Giroux depicts democracy as an ideal that has been hijacked by capitalism through its equation with free markets in the global economy; this relationship has left it stripped “of its political context” because “under the onslaught of global capitalism [democracy] is transformed into market relations” (*Abandoned* 56). When the impact of globalisation in the early twenty-first century is assessed, an imperial order or “empire” of a new scale and scope emerges. According to Hardt and Negri:

Some claim that corporations have merely come to occupy the place that was once held by the various national colonialists and imperialist systems in earlier phases of capitalist development...[but the] activities of corporations are no longer defined by the imposition of abstract command and the organization of simple theft and unequal exchange. Rather, they directly structure and articulate territories and populations. (31)

To completely structure and articulate individuals and communities, in the ethos of Giroux, neo-liberal economic ideology in the curriculum, pedagogical practices, and school governance serve to shape youths’ identities in terms of who they are as citizens and workers. This observation, analogous to those of Pearse, demonstrate that education is a means for the perpetuation of imperial powers of whatever stripe and source.

As a solution Giroux posits radical or performative pedagogy as a “practice that acknowledges the full range of multiple, shifting and overlapping sites of learning that, in part, produce, mediate, legitimate, and challenge those forces that are waging an assault on democratic public life” (Giroux et al 5). Writing of his time and place Pearse observed that the English “have planned and established an education which more wickedly does violence to the elementary human rights of Irish

children” (Pearse 371). Education in a “State-controlled institution [is] designed to produce workers for the State” (Pearse 376). He reduced the prescribed program to an imposition “by an external authority upon every child in every school in a country” in direct violation of “the root idea involved in education (Pearse 38).” A true education system, he offers, has two components: “freedom for the individual” and “adequate inspiration (Pearse 378).”

To this end, as a cure for the aforementioned ills, Pearse created an anti-imperialist education that incorporated democratic principles across a variety of school-based spaces, and interactions between teachers and students. As Paula Allman encapsulates it, humankind moves closer to realising a democracy “when we decide to totally transform our societies so that we produce or work to meet human need rather than to create profit (Allman 130).” In doing so Pearse, like Freire and Giroux *after* him, confronted the capitalist ethos implicit in the British Empire and confronted that Empire’s narratives of oppression by transforming teacher-student relations and the hegemony of the state-prescribed curriculum. As a post-colonialist working within active colonialism, he sought to separate truth from “truth” while reclaiming and making sense of history. For himself and later for his students, he systematically erased the imperial tattoo from the psyche.

The points of convergence for the hedge schoolmasters are less definitive; this is due, in large part, to their historical contexts. Prior to the repeal of the Penal Laws, the role of the hedge schoolmaster was to offer an education to children who were denied one by law. To this end, one could argue that parents were working to guarantee a rise along economic and class lines for their children. However, the fact remains that the parents who sent their children to hedge schools during this time did

so in violation of the the law and the status quo, railing against an imperial power.

Catholic parents who sought an education for their children were breaking the law; Protestant parents who sent their children to hedge schools did so to avoid state-prescribed religious indoctrination. In this historical context, a rise along class lines for these children was a grab for greater power and equity; this power grab came via political resistance that put the schoolmasters, the children and their parents at risk of persecution.

After the Penal Laws the points of convergence are, again, subject to argument. Granted, many hedge schoolmasters did offer vocational training for entrance to the workplace and, ultimately, the capitalist system; further, the desire for parents to gain a multi-disciplinary and a quality education for their children that could lead to university admission hints at the desire for bourgeois achievement. However, in that time and place, the centre of power dictated basic literacy and basic numeracy skills for children destined to occupy sweated-labour jobs. Thus, to seek out a hedge school education in order to cross class lines meant self-determination via education. In essence, middle class success for this population would correct the balance of power in colonial-Irish society.

Perhaps the most definitive point of convergence, the bridge from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, is the recognition by hedge schoolmasters of the place of education in defining and perpetuating a culture. Writing of the experiences of youth of colour in Canada, Jennifer Kelly asserts that “youth do not come to school *tabula rasa*. They come to schools raced, gendered and classed...It would seem that many teachers are unaware of the raced experience of students” (Kelly 128). From the evidence available, students of the hedge schools were largely educated in and

about their culture rather than that of the oppressor. Likewise, the partnership between parents and teachers knocks at the hierarchical style of education that served as an extension of a capitalist Empire.

The Czech playwright, dissident, and political leader Vaclav Havel offers that a parallel structure is a system created by resisters to “usurp the role of the [oppressive] system” to “have an impact on society, not to affect the power structure” (Briton 103). For students obtaining an education in a parallel classroom, this structure affords them the opportunity to live “in the truth” while refusing “to live in the lie” (Briton 102). Without question, the hedge schoolmasters and Padraig Pearse forged parallel structures when they educated Irish children and youth to serve the self-generated interests of those students and their parents, rather than the interests generated from the centre of power. Their missions and work may have predated that of Freire, Giroux and others, and show deviations specific to their social and historical contexts, but they are connected, nonetheless, across time and space.

#### Final Thoughts:

While this educational work, practice, and political resistance to social reproduction is not unique to Ireland, the value of resistance-via-education is steeped deep within the Irish experience and works in concert with the struggle for true and lasting independence. In the spirit of the hedge schools and St. Enda’s, another educational movement emerged out of Ireland in the late twentieth century; this programme of education is described in detail by the American politician and peace activist, Tom Hayden, in a work appropriately titled *Irish on the Inside*.

In Long Kesh Prison during the 1980s, Irish Republican Army prisoners used an educational system of their own design rather than accept the prison-based system

prescribed for “criminals”; this school is referred to in the Republican community as the University of Long Kesh. In the spirit of the hedge schools and St. Enda’s they generated lessons and a narrative of their own making to counter pervasive British propaganda; they did so having “studied the educational techniques of Paulo Freire where the ‘students’ are the ‘teachers’.” To this end, they “subverted prison work by using toolmaking equipment to make and smuggle out Irish handicrafts like Celtic crosses.” They staged “poetry workshops” and “published a prison journal for themselves and the outside world.” Perhaps most significant and lasting, the prisoners “held political education classes, and developed a democratic give-and-take in place of hierarchical lectures.” And, they revived the Irish language by teaching each other Gaelic “often one word at a time (Hayden 259).”

Prior to creating Stephen Dedalus and setting him loose on Ireland and the world, James Joyce wrote an essay entitled *Subjugation*. Writing in 1898 in general terms of oppression and oppressors, he observed:

Rights when violated, institutions set at nought, privileges disregarded, all these, not as shibboleths and war-cries, but as deep-seated thorough realities, will happily always call forth, not in foolish romantic madness nor for passionate destruction, but with unyielding firmness of resistance, the energies and sympathies of men to protect them and to defend them. (Joyce 7)

History is a nightmare from which one cannot easily awaken; the “deep-seated thorough realities” of oppression will, then, act as a persistent hammering on flint that sparks the smithy, and the process of forging the “unyielding firmness of resistance” that is the conscience of one’s race. Across Irish history the soul has served as that smithy, persistently striking, shaping, and revealing resistances of culture and conscience, when silence--in whatever form, by whatever mandate--was the rule of fallacious law.



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