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Ireland: John Bull's Other Island

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Edward Said's influence on cultural, literary, and historical theory in post-colonial Ireland is highly significant. Theorists such as Seamus Deane, Declan Kiberd, and Luke Gibbons have engaged productively with Said's work to elucidate and interrogate the ways in which colonization and decolonization operate(d) in the Irish context, particularly through literary and historical texts. Irish geographers, however, have been slow to engage with the implications of Said's work for the construction of geographic knowledge, despite Said's obvious concern for the intersection of geography, colonialism, and decolonization. "The geographical sense," he wrote, "makes possible the construction of various kinds of knowledge, all of them in one way or another dependent upon the perceived character and destiny of a particular geography" (1994, 78).

In this essay, we draw on Said's insights into the process of decolonization to speculate on ways in which geography and geographic knowledge in newly independent Ireland may have been shaped by this perceived character and destiny. In doing so, we are inspired by a comment in one of Said's final essays, written as an afterword to an edited volume on Ireland and Postcolonial Theory. Said wrote that "nationhood after decolonisation has also brought a whole roster of new problems to be encountered, all of them in one way or another connected inevitably to the prior distortions of colonialism" (2003, 179). We argue that whereas the nationalist imperative that pervaded independent Ireland was exclusive and reactionary, constructing Britain as the dominant "Other," the construction of academic geography in post-colonial Ireland virtually avoided any involvement with the nationalist agenda. There were heated debates about the production of geography school texts, but practices of academic geography showed more continuity with the colonial past, emphasizing geomorphology,

commerce, and especially historical geography. For the founders of the discipline, the "perceived character and destiny" of the country was—implicitly or explicitly—that of John Bull's Other Island.

Key words: Ireland, independence, post-colonialism, representation, academic geography

L'influence d'Edward Saïd sur la théorie culturelle littéraire et historique de l'Irlande postcoloniale est importante. Les théoriciens comme Seamus Deane, Declan Kiberd et Luke Gibbons se sont pleinement inspirés de l'œuvre de Saïd pour clarifier et questionner les manières dont la colonisation et la décolonisation ont opéré dans le contexte irlandais, en particulier au travers de textes littéraires et historiques. Par contre, les géographes irlandais ont été lents à s'intéresser aux implications de l'œuvre de Saïd pour la construction de la connaissance géographique, en dépit de l'intérêt flagrant que Saïd a porté à l'intersection de la géographie, du colonialisme et de la décolonisation. « Le sens géographique, » écrit-il, « rend possible la construction de différentes sortes de connaissance, toutes dépendantes, d'une manière ou d'une autre, sur la personnalité et la destinée présumées d'une géographie particulière » (1993 : 78).

Dans cet essai, nous partons des idées de Saïd sur les processus de décolonisation pour discuter des façons dont la géographie et la connaissance géographique dans une Irlande nouvellement indépendante auraient été façonnées par sa personnalité et sa destinée présumées. Pour ce faire, nous nous sommes inspirées d'un commentaire dans un des derniers essais de Saïd, écrit pour la postface de Ireland and Postcolonial Theory. Saïd écrit que « la nation après la décolonisation a introduit tout une gamme de nouveaux problèmes à confronter, tous inévitable-

ment liés d'une façon ou d'une autre aux distorsions antérieures du colonialisme » (2003, 179). Nous avançons que bien que l'impératif nationaliste qui prévalut dans l'Irlande indépendante eut été exclusif et réactionnaire, construisant la Grande-Bretagne comme l'« Autre » dominant, la construction de la géographie universitaire dans l'Irlande post-coloniale a quasiment évité toute complicité avec l'agenda nationaliste. Il y a certes eu des débats houleux sur la production de livres de géographie scolaire, mais les pratiques de la géographie universitaire ont montré une continuité certaine avec le passé colonial, insistant sur la géomorphologie, la géographie commerciale, et surtout la géographie historique. Pour les fondateurs de la discipline, « la personnalité et la destinée présumées » du pays était—implicitement ou explicitement—celle de *L'Autre Ile* de John Bull.

Mots clés : Irlande, indépendance, post-colonialisme, représentation, géographie universitaire

You Irish people are amazingly clever. Of course it's all tommy rot; but it's so brilliant, you know. How the dickens do you think of such things! You really must write an article about it: they'll pay you something for it. If Nature won't have it, I can get it into Engineering for you: I know the editor (Shaw 1904).

John Bull's Other Island was written by George Bernard Shaw in 1904. It is the only play that Shaw, an Irishman living in London, wrote about Ireland, and it centres on the relationship between Broadbent, a romantic English businessman (responsible for the opening quote), and Doyle, his Irish partner, in their efforts to return to Doyle's home area of Rosscullen for the purposes of property development. On seeing the play, W.B. Yeats wrote to Shaw that "you are taking your situations more from life, you are for the first time trying to get the atmosphere of a place, you have for the first time a geographical conscience" (Foster 2003)—high praise from the person who had earlier rejected the play

on behalf of Ireland's Abbey Theatre. In London, where the play was first staged, its audience included Arthur Balfour (then British prime minister) and King Edward VII, who allegedly broke his chair because he was laughing so much at the production (Kiberd 1995, 61). The play thus operates as a comedy, but it also works as a satire, in that it undermines stereotypes of Irish and British identities that were then being used both by the process of colonialism and by the Irish independence movement.

In 1995, Declan Kiberd published *Inventing Ireland*, a critical study of the relationship between Irish literature and Irish identities. Kiberd was particularly interested in the redefinitions of identity that occurred in relation to the search for and the aftermath of Irish independence from Britain, and *John Bull's Other Island* is one of the texts he addresses in support of his assertion that "if Ireland had never existed, the English would have invented it" (Kiberd 1995, 9). In his analysis of the play, Kiberd comments that it demonstrates the way in which Shaw (among other writers) used England as a laboratory to redefine what it meant to be Irish, but he also suggests that Shaw used the play to argue that the Irish and the English needed to develop a closer relationship, freed from the distortions of colonialism.

The distortions of colonialism have been a particular focus of the work of Edward Said, particularly in texts such as *Orientalism* (1979) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994). Kiberd is just one of a range of academics interested in Ireland for whom Said's ideas on colonialism have been highly influential. Said's work on orientalism and on decolonization had a powerful resonance in the Ireland of the 1980s, scarred by the ongoing conflict in Northern Ireland, by economic and social crises that had led to high levels of emigration and unemployment, and by an ongoing sense of failure in relation to the dream of independence. Links with Said were strong: for example, Kiberd invited Said to speak at the Yeats Summer School, and the Field Day collective

published Said's essay on Yeats and decolonization in 1988. These links translated into a range of academic work that drew on the insights of Said and other post-colonial scholars, analyzing the relationship between Ireland, Britain, and the colonized world in the context of colonialism and decolonization.¹ This work was particularly rooted in literary theory and in cultural studies.

Said's work has thus been appropriated and extended by a range of Irish academics to reflect on colonial and post-colonial relationships and on Ireland's complicated connections to the colonial process. Said's influence within the discipline of geography has also been noted. Alison Blunt and Jane Wills highlight *Orientalism* in particular as crucial to the "reorientation of research into the colonial politics of representation and identity" (2000, 182), and Blunt and Cheryl McEwan open their introduction to *Postcolonial Geographies* with a discussion of Said's memoir, *Out of Place* (2002, 1). Daniel Clayton writes that Said has a "talismanic status" in post-colonial work in geography (2003, 356), and the work of Clayton and others on the historical geography of Canada, for example, is suffused with Said's influence (Clayton 2000; Harris 2002). Despite the obvious relevance to geography, however, geographers have been slow to engage with the implications of Said's insights for the construction of the discipline and the disciplining of geographic knowledge within Ireland. In this article, we are concerned with bringing Said's work to bear on the development of geography in Ireland in two ways. The body of the article is concerned with reassessing the history of the discipline of geography in colonial and post-colonial Ireland, and we conclude with speculations on how a post-colonial approach to geography and geographic knowledge in contemporary Ireland could move beyond what Said described as the "prior distortions of colonialism," so ably satirized in *John Bull's Other Island*.

Representing colonial Ireland in geography textbooks

"At the beginning of the seventeenth century," one historian has claimed, "Ireland was thought to be as foreign, and almost as savage, as Virginia" (Taylor 1930, 42). Colonization of Ireland by the middle of the 17th century led to a geographical and cartographic revolution. F.V. Emery claims that Ireland figured in at least 12 geographical accounts written between 1575 and 1623 and that these accounts held a very special place in British regional literature (1958, 263). The mapping of Ireland was completed in the Down Survey by Sir William Petty in 1655–57. His *Political Anatomy of Ireland* (1672) has been described as "a first attempt at studies which were resumed in the nineteenth century with the title of human geography" (Emery 1958, 265). Throughout the 17th century and for most of the 18th, landlordism became more entrenched in the imperial system, the population grew dramatically, and agricultural, industrial, and commercial activity increased. The Penal Code was rigorously imposed on all non-conformists—Jews, Quakers, Catholics, or any group that did not belong to the "Established" Church. The Irish language and culture and the Roman Catholic faith in particular were viewed as significant barriers to Anglicization, and their eradication was central to political and educational movements of the period (Buttimer and Fahy 1999).

"Early in the 1740s," Gordon Davies writes, "a group of Irish gentlemen began to feel disquiet at the regular presentation of their land as one populated by people who were primitive, barbarous, superstitious and unruly ... a grotesque caricature of reality" (1983, 1). The mid-18th century, indeed, witnessed the awakening of interest in geography as a professional field, particularly among the Anglo-Irish ascendancy. In 1731, a society was founded "for Improving Husbandry, Manufactures, and Other Useful

Arts and Sciences" (after 1820 known as the Royal Dublin Society), the first society of its kind in Europe (Berry 1915, 24–27). This group stimulated interest in the Irish landscape and its resources (de Vere White 1955; Campbell 1991). Statistical surveys of Irish counties were conducted, and by 1830 a survey of land quality for the entire island was completed by Richard Griffith and others (Davies and Mollan 1980). In 1747, Edmund Burke and some fellow students at Trinity College founded a "Historical Club" which, together with its successor Historical Society (after 1770), afforded distinguished orators to the Irish Parliament and eventually to the Royal Irish Academy, founded in 1785. Dublin in the latter part of the 18th century was alive to the sound of printing works. Several standard texts, such as those by William Guthrie, Martin, and Robert O'Sullivan, originated during these decades. Guthrie's *Compendium* (1759) was the prescribed text for entrance examinations to Harvard College in Massachusetts, Martin's *Geography Methodised* was in its 10th edition by 1784, and Sullivan's *Geography Generalised* (1789) was continually updated to 1909.

Towards the end of the 18th century, the Penal Code was relaxed. Coinciding with this relaxation, there was a rise in Irish nationalism, unprecedented commercial prosperity under Grattan's Parliament, and demands for greater economic and political independence from England. Anti-Irish views were condemned, and anti-English sentiments were expressed in geography books published by hedge school masters² such as Martin and Paul Deighan (Martin 1784; Deighan 1810). Native voices, increasingly self-confident, sought to correct prevailing images of the country and its people, while simultaneously initiating field research on its landscapes and resources. However, following the Act of Union (1800), whereby all Ireland was ruled directly by Westminster, native voices were again silenced or marginalized in the production of formal geographic

knowledge. In 1811 the Kildare Place Society established schools to provide a system of education acceptable to all religious denominations and published popular reading material for use in its schools. These books included much geographical material and were used as readers throughout the English-speaking world. Little attention, however, was devoted to the geography of Ireland. The society's most widely circulated publication was *Geography Generalised*, a 384-page textbook with a set of 30 coloured maps. The maps became known as the "Dublin Maps," and, with the book, they were used in schools "wherever the English language was spoken" (Moore 1904, 3, 227). The texts advised students that if they were to migrate to other colonial settlements, "you will find there schools quite as good as our own; and, in fact, the very same books are used in them that you are now reading" (Coolahan 1993, quoted in Willinsky 1998, 101).

In 1831 the first state-aided system of national education in the English-speaking world was established in Ireland. The Commissioners of National Education closely followed the pattern set by the Kildare Place Society. Geography was taught incidentally in scripture studies and from the various *Readers* which they published. In 1844 the Commissioners authorized the publication and use in national schools of Carlile's *Epitome of Geography*, and this textbook was widely used up to the 1870s (cited in Akenson 1970, 87). Like previous *Readers*, this one studiously avoided controversial issues and was widely used throughout the English-speaking world. And like its predecessors, it paid scant attention to Ireland or the Irish. In general, the treatment of Ireland and the Irish in geography textbooks during the 19th century reflects a general policy commitment within educational institutions to eradicate the Irish language, Catholicism, and Irish national identity. The policy regarding the Irish language was, for various reasons, largely successful, but the other aims failed. Official textbooks maintained an

image of the Irish as the architects of their own situation, so lazy, so treacherous, and of such low intelligence that they were incapable of maintaining or governing themselves—a perception which lasted up to the outbreak of World War I. With the various waves of 19th-century religious, social, and political agitation, commencing with the movement for Catholic Emancipation, the Great Famine, the Fenian Rising, and the Land League and Home Rule campaigns, editorials and cartoons in English newspapers and magazines became very anti-Irish (Curtis 1971). Media propaganda resorted to environmental determinism and physiognomy, “the art cum science of judging character and temperament from the features of the head and face, the body and the extremities” (Curtis 1971, 3).

From the 1850s to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, by far the most popular geography textbook in use in Irish- and English-speaking secondary-level schools in the British Empire was Robert Sullivan’s *Geography Generalised* (Sullivan 1884). By 1884, sales of the book numbered more than 8 million and had run to 68 editions (Gillmor 1978, 103). Although written by an Irishman and published in Ireland, *Geography Generalised* devotes only 10 pages out of 512 to Ireland and the Irish. Ireland is regarded as an integral part of the British Empire. Sullivan glosses over the causes and effects of the Great Famine of 1845–48, the worst in the history of peacetime Europe, and stresses the benefits to Ireland of being part of the Empire. One Archbishop Walsh condemned Sullivan’s textbook, noting, “Geography is not well treated; there seems to be a fixed aversion to teach the Geography of Ireland” (Walsh 1890, 174).

Academic geography in newly independent Ireland

The turn of the 20th century witnessed the establishment of geography as a university

discipline in most European countries. By 1922, it was taught in 120 European universities; the only countries without geography at university level were Latvia, Albania, Greece, and Ireland. Courses were offered at Queen’s University Belfast by the late 1920s and at Trinity by the 1930s. The first Professor of Geography in the National University was appointed in 1959 at University College Cork and the second in 1960 at University College Dublin. Today, geography claims its territory at the tertiary level in 12 institutions in this island.

There were early moves towards the construction of academic geography in Ireland. In the mid-19th century, Ireland had attracted attention for its potential mineral resources and its potentially strategic geopolitical role within the British Empire. Railroads were to be built and canals dug; surveying and mapping, for example, by the Ordnance Survey, were needed. In 1845 the Geological Survey of Ireland was inaugurated, and a 1”-to-the-mile geological map of the island was completed in 1890. It was in 1845, too, that the Dublin Museum of Economic Geology was founded. Later to be renamed the College of Science for Ireland (1865), this was the first institution to establish a Chair of Geology (1890). The Queen’s Colleges of Belfast, Cork, and Galway were also founded in 1845, and physical geography was taught there in the context of geology departments. Commercial geography was also taught at several levels by century’s turn (Campbell 1991). As an academic subject, geography courses were offered in departments of geology and commerce, but as late as 1922 there was no department of geography in any Irish university (Buttimer 1995).

Possible directions

One of the early advocates for geography at the tertiary level in independent Ireland was Grenville Arthur James Cole (1859–1924). Cole was appointed director of the Geological Survey of Ireland in 1905 (Wyse Jackson

1989) and, as such, was Ireland's first professional geographer (Davies 1977). As a researcher, Cole was interested in glacial geomorphology and geology, and he published a range of texts on these topics. He also taught at the Royal College of Science in Dublin, where geography was an integral part of the curriculum. Cole was a staunch internationalist who believed in the indissoluble unity of the British Isles, as well as the unity of physical and human geography. He claimed that geography was no longer a purely descriptive subject but, rather, a challenging, analytical discipline concerned with the interrelation of spatial phenomena—a subject where geologist, historian, meteorologist, and even psychologist could meet. He argued strongly for the inclusion of geography in Irish universities, both as an antidote to Irish parochialism and as a measure that would assist the integration of the new Irish state into the global community of nations (Davies 1986). Cole's best-remembered work, *Ireland the Outpost* (1919), written during the turbulent war years, argued that the notion of a pure Irish national stock was a myth: Ireland was an outpost of Europe, and her people were an amalgam of ethnic waves from the east. Hence his plea for better Anglo-Irish relations:

It is entirely normal for nations to harbour resentment toward other nations, but a nation usually has many neighbours ... In the case of Ireland such diffusion of national sentiments has been inhibited by a simple fact of physical geography: since the twelfth century, the Irish have had to settle their external differences with one power only, whose territory, like a huge breakwater, divides them from the continental turmoil to the east (cited in Davies 1997, 93).

Cole's pleas were, to a large extent, disregarded. In vain he tried to link his college with Trinity College Dublin. The Irish Geographical Association, founded by him in 1918 as an affiliate of the British Geographical Association, disbanded within four years

of his death. It was only through his work in geology that Cole was to have any lasting effect on the development of geography within Irish universities. His joint book with Timothy Hallissy, *Handbook of the Geology of Ireland* (1924), remained the standard text in the field for 30 years (Davies 1977, 91).

Cole represented a path for geography within Ireland that would have allowed the discipline to move beyond parochial dualisms. This path was not taken, and geography at the tertiary level was to remain a distant dream. The disciplines that flourished in newly independent Ireland were those that fostered a conservative, traditional, and dualistic sense of Irish identity. Kevin Whelan describes the emerging Ireland as "a gratefully provincial, pseudo-Gaelic, Catholic backwater" that retained the "apparatus of the prior colonial state" (2004, 182, 183). The focus on geography in newly independent Ireland was directed away from the university level and towards the production of knowledge that was deemed useful in the construction of this national artificial identity. Advocates of geography as a discipline in independent Ireland were significantly more likely to direct their attention to geography in primary and secondary schools. In particular, teaching geography was seen as crucial to inculcating a sense of national identity and national pride, and textbooks of geography were viewed as fundamental to this process. As a consequence, debates over geography centred on school textbooks and their content and on the need to train young people—particularly the rural youth—towards authentic national development. Two particular voices, neither of them from the ranks of professional geography, call for attention. Sir Horace Plunkett (1854–1932), founder of the Irish Co-operative Movement, and Father Thomas Corcoran, S.J. (1872–1943), Professor of Education at University College Dublin, both addressed these issues, though their scenarios for training in geography and rural development were quite different.

Geography and Modernization

Horace Plunkett, best known in Ireland as founder of the rural cooperative movement, had a keen interest in education at all levels. He was schooled in the radical Liberalism of the 1870s in Oxford; his travels in Scandinavia and North America stirred his enthusiasm for education towards self-help and economic development. He was a friend of Theodore Roosevelt and imbibed much of the progressivist spirit of late-19th-century America. The root cause of Ireland's backwardness, he felt, was not so much British rule but, rather, the deficiencies of Irish education. For the rehabilitation of Irish economic life and the fostering of courage, initiative, and self-reliance, Plunkett encouraged his Belfast friends to extend "the economic thought with which you are indoctrinated ... to the rest of Ireland" (Plunkett 1899, 89-90). While the Home Rule efforts were floundering and a Conservative government reinstated in England, Plunkett convened a committee of inquiry into Irish affairs during the parliamentary recess of 1895-96. One outcome of this Recess Committee's report was the setting up of a Department of Agricultural and Technical Instruction (DATI), which was to promote improvements in agriculture, cooperative development, and the training of rural youth.

Plunkett's central aim was the modernization of agrarian life in Ireland. To achieve this end, the question of education was vital. The educational system in Ireland at the turn of the 20th century, however, was "geared to the multiplication of clerks and professional men with a distinct distaste for any industrial or productive occupation," and this should be supplemented by vocational education better attuned to Ireland's needs. "I believe that by awakening the feelings of pride, self-respect, and love of country, based on knowledge, every department of Irish life will be invigorated," he wrote (Plunkett 1904, 129). In his search for a suitable model, Denmark's *Folkhögskolor* offered promise. There Plun-

kett found programs involving courses on history, geography, and technical skills for rural adults. Plunkett was impressed with Bishop N. F. S. Grundtvig:

It is to the "High Schools" [*Högskolor*] founded by Bishop Grundtvig, and not to the Agricultural schools that the extraordinary national progress is mainly due ... the manufacture of bacon in large factories equipped with all the most modern machinery and appliances which science had devised for the production of the finished article (1904, 131).

Danish friends explained that their success was not due to the technical training provided but, rather, to the humanities. Plunkett added "the nationalities": "for nothing is more evident to the student of Danish education ... than that one of the secrets of their success is to be found in their national basis and their foundation upon the history and literature of the country" (1904, 133). Would Irish rural people not benefit from these lessons?

In stark contrast to the situation in Ireland, the form of education involved here qualified as geography in several European countries during the early years of the 20th century. From Balkans to Baltic, Catalonia to Norway, *Heimatkunde* (home area studies) had become one of the discipline's greatest appeals: students from many branches of science and humanities queued up for summer courses in surveying, documentation, and mapping of their territories (Buttimer 1994). Its social (and political) relevance, of course, had taken diverse forms throughout Northern and Saxon lands in the first quarter of the 20th century, from the eliciting of national consciousness in Estonia and Finland through the totalitarian geopolitics of expanding *Lebensraum* in Germany. Just as the ethos of Boy Scout training in the conquest of nature served to build character for the British imperial service, so indeed would the building of cooperatives serve to conquer economies of scale and market niche

in a commercially competitive world.

Plunkett's vision drew inspiration from 18th-century Enlightenment views of economic and social development. Graduates of his curriculum would constitute "an industrial army ... organised and disciplined for the task of doing battle for Ireland's position in the world market" (1904, 183). The DATI took steps to promote programs in commercial geography. In 1899 the Royal College of Science for Ireland was adumbrated under its aegis, and steps were taken to improve the quality of science teaching in secondary schools (Campbell 1991). Arguing along the lines previously charted by the Royal Dublin Society, it supported the setting up of a Faculty of Commerce at Queen's University Belfast in 1910. A Higher Certificate in Geography for secondary school teachers was announced in DATI's *Journal* for 1917-18, and set of textbooks initiated by Plunkett's Assistant Secretary for Technical Instruction, George Fletcher. In 1926 the Royal College of Science was absorbed into University College Dublin. Its graduates, many of whom were English, had all returned home. And it was from the National University in Dublin that the most vocal opposition to all Unionist-inspired school geography texts emerged: The training of teachers and the editing of textbooks in this newly independent state generated much ideologically charged rhetoric associated with Irish independence.

Geography and Irish Civilization

Father Thomas J. Corcoran, Professor of Education at University College Dublin from 1909 to 1942 and a close associate of Eoin MacNeill, Minister of Education from 1922 to 1925, was one of the most influential architects of educational policy in the Irish Free State. "The principal duty of an Irish educational policy," MacNeill argued in the *Irish Statesman*, should be "the building up of an Irish civilisation," for, he claimed, "Irish political freedom without Irish nationality is

not worth one drop of ink" (MacNeill 1925, 169). Geography could be a vital shaper of such a vision. As A.E. Russell had provided rhetorical support for Plunkett's vision, so did the rhetoric of MacNeill and the Gaelic League provide a rationale for Corcoran's curricular designs for geography. MacNeill stressed the importance of the native language, literature, and folk traditions. Without its native language, Ireland would become "a mere geographical expression" (McCartney 1973, 79). Education for life on the land, Corcoran claimed in 1915, should be the aim of primary schools in Ireland. What the future land-worker has to secure in the years of primary education is an absolutely accurate mastery of the essential means of applying intellect to land (Corcoran 1915, 358). Geography, he claimed in 1923, was the best possible field in which the Irish language could be fostered: "No other subject of the whole course of general education is as suitable as Geography for training in a new vernacular" (Corcoran 1923, 618). And, as was demonstrated by the French tradition, geography's closest ally should be history (Corcoran 1923, 622; Campbell 1991).

Corcoran was a practical man, eager to cultivate geography as vital ingredient in "education for the land," in rural schools particularly. His views on rural development in Ireland were quite different from those of Plunkett. He harangued against those curricular reforms promulgated by the DATI, which "stretched out its grasp towards secondary and primary schools," seeking "absorption and control, not adjustment of studies" (Corcoran 1923, 617). Not only had the teaching of geography through English, by teachers of English literature, brought the subject into disrepute in secondary schools, but the texts were misleading for Irish youth:

The Geography manuals too often used in Ireland have descended from the text-books devised fifty years ago in English, when the doctrines and the point of view of the Manchester School of Economics widely prevailed. In the eyes of its

writers, thinkers, teachers, it was the big factory town that mattered. Its growing population was a clear index of progress and happiness. The countryside, where food was produced, counted for little ... For the good of the Irish people this policy should be reversed. A regional treatment of the country, directed towards the land and its uses, can be made, on the basis of structural geography, to yield abundance of varied and practical matter (Corcoran 1923, 619–620).

Corcoran, echoing, indeed, some of the concurrent anti-urban bias within French geography of the 1920s, was adamantly opposed to the biases of the “Manchester School.”

the Manchester School, real authors of the teaching of Geography in English, had one judgment process. Concentrated population counted: mass production impressed; big financial returns, represented by the movement of trade in a port, signified human well-being and civilisation. The ultimate insolence came in discourses on the infant mortality of Ireland, though the infant death rate of Dundee, for instance, vastly exceeded that of Donegal, as did that of Manchester surpass that of Mayo (1923, 620).

If a foreign standard were desired, then Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland might provide better guidance. “Much better,” however, “if we develop our own scale of human and economic values and apply them in teaching Geography no less than in handling History” (620).

Odd indeed, and counterproductive, was the impasse between Plunkett’s and Corcoran’s views of geography. Obviously there were conflicting ideological positions on Irish independence, but both evinced highly pragmatic views in their championing of geography and rural development. Both, too, were potentially powerful “gatekeepers” on education for development in post-Independence Ireland. There were, however, major differences in their rhetorical styles, Plunkett emphasizing “freedom to” develop rural

Ireland, Corcoran emphasizing “freedom from” all ideas that he deemed alien. The approach he advocated was one that, in a sense, would “don the mantle of the oppressor”: just as geography has previously been taught and examined in the framework of English language and literature, so, in future, it would be subsumed under the teaching of Irish language and life. In hindsight, it appears that Plunkett may have lost the battle on the curriculum for geography but eventually won the war on modernization within Irish agriculture. Corcoran won the battle on curriculum and thereby influenced the training of potential candidates for university-level development of the subject (Buttimer 1995).

Reconstructing Irish geographies

Until 1922, when Ireland gained independence, geography textbooks treated Ireland as still an integral part of the British Empire. Any aspect of geography or the history of Ireland that might be regarded as anti-British was studiously avoided. Geography textbooks were written from a British Empire viewpoint, and very little attention was given to the systematic or regional geography of Ireland. Even in the state examinations, very few marks were allotted to the geography of Ireland. In 1922 Michael Hayes, the first minister for education in the Free State government, announced that half of all marks in the geography and history examinations would be awarded to the geography and history of Ireland. This was a deliberate attempt to turn Irish students’ attention to their own country and to inculcate in them loyalty to the Irish Free State. School texts by Eleanor Butler, the *Structural Geography of Ireland* (1922) and *The Irish Student’s Geography* (n.d.), reflected these aims. “Ireland – Our Native Land,” *The Irish Student’s Geography* begins, is

a land shined in song and story. Poets have sung her, calling her “a rich and rare land,” “the land of

the pure and the free," "a land of eternal youth." They have personified her as "Dark Rosaleen," as "The Shan Van Vocht," as "Cathleen Ni Houlinhan." Of yore they sang of her as Banba, as Fodhla, as Eire—three fair queens of the Celtic imagination; and today, as centuries ago, they still revere her, addressing her as Inisfail, the Isle of Destiny (1).

One might regard Butler, a disciple of Cole, friend of Eamonn de Valera, and author of several textbooks, as perhaps ultimately the most influential voice in shaping images of school geography. Her works, which were translated into Irish, both incorporate the spirit of the nation and provide a compendium of relevant information, all in one volume, something that had not been attempted since the days of Guthrie (1789).

Butler's books were key texts for geography teachers in Ireland up to the 1970s, but they were not sufficient to cover the entire geography curriculum. As a consequence, Irish teachers of geography also used British books, though they expressed resentment about the ways in which these texts represented Ireland and the Irish (Fahy 1973). In a range of geography textbooks, widely used within Ireland and the Commonwealth, Ireland was poorly represented, or represented in such a way as to reinforce colonial understandings of the hierarchical relationship between Ireland and Britain. For example, Dudley Stamp's *World Geography*, first published in 1929 and by 1960 running to 17 editions, was the most widely used secondary-level geography textbook in Britain and in Ireland. Still popular in Irish schools in the 1970s, the text constructs London as "the centre of the land hemisphere" (195) and devotes 102 pages to Britain and six and a half pages to Ireland (Stamp [1929] 1960). A.R. Barbour Simpson's *The British Isles*, first published in 1937 and reprinted eight times, with a new revised edition in 1952, devotes 13.5 pages out of 167 to Ireland (Simpson [1937] 1952). Its representation of Ireland repeats common tropes of backward-

ness, with descriptions of Ireland's lack of agricultural, economic, and social resources and explanations of mass emigration from 19th-century Ireland that absolve Britain of complicity: "These [famines] co-incident with improved trans-Atlantic facilities, which (in southern Ireland), coupled with dislike of the English amounting to hatred, led to large-scale emigration to the United States of America" (Simpson [1937] 1952, 59). These and other texts, such as Thomas Pickles's *The British Isles* (1958, first published in 1935) and *The World* (1939) and *British Isles* by Eric William Young and John Henry Lowry (first published in 1960), repeated this limited engagement with Ireland and perpetuated colonial stereotypes that served not only to construct Ireland and Irishness but also to reinforce ideas of Britain and Britishness in the classroom and in broader society.

Geography as taught in Irish schools in newly independent Ireland thus suffered from a number of inconsistencies. Marked as a means towards the cultivation of national pride and identity, it was hampered in this role by its reliance on the lasting products of imperial and colonial education in the form of textbooks. As geography became established as a discipline in Irish universities, too, it failed to adequately escape the strictures of either the colonial or the post-colonial construction of knowledge. For the three acclaimed "founding fathers" of 20th-century geography at the university level in Ireland—Estyn Evans at Queen's, T.W. Freeman at Trinity, and Tom Jones Hughes at University College Dublin—it was neither commerce, geology, nor 20th-century politics or rural development that was of primary concern. All three fostered links with history, and virtually all were devoted to research on landscapes and life in pre-20th-century contexts. Evans especially cultivated the trilogy of humanities—geography, anthropology, and history. Freeman supported traditional regional geography and the integration, or at least peaceful coexistence, of physical and human branches of the field.

Jones Hughes cultivated historical and social geography and strengthened the Welsh connection, which continues to this day. The fact that all three “founders” were themselves Welsh non-conformists may indeed be significant, for the new orthodoxy had actually begun to wear the garments of the former oppressor. The National University of Ireland, with its statutes laid down in 1908, still behaved in imperial fashion, imposing uniformity and Irish-nationalist style “civilitie” on all. The types of geography taught and fostered at the university level during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s in Ireland showed little concern for the profound ideological developments in continental Europe or for the heated intellectual debates that raged among geographers elsewhere. It also showed scant concern for the contemporary geographies of Ireland, preferring instead to focus on a past described and defined as in some way pre-conflictual.

Ireland, geography, and Edward Said

Nationhood after decolonisation has also brought a whole roster of new problems to be encountered, all of them in one way or another connected inevitably to the prior distortions of colonialism (Said 2003, 179).

We have argued that the construction of geography and geographic knowledge in newly independent Ireland was highly influenced by the distortions of colonialism. Those distortions were both material and representational, but our emphasis—following Said—has been on the representational. Imperial and colonial geography texts perpetuated representations of the Irish and Ireland as Britain’s Other: wild, uncivilized, untamed, and, some might argue, untamable. Newly independent Ireland sought to challenge these stereotypes but, in doing so, constructed its own distortions. The prospectus for Irish nationhood, as proclaimed by Padraic Pearse, leader of the 1916 Rising, was idealistic and emancipatory:

A free Ireland would not, and could not, have hunger in her fertile vales and squalor in her cities. Ireland has resources to feed five times her population; a free Ireland would make those resources available. A free Ireland would drain the bogs, would harness the rivers, would plant the wastes, would nationalize the railways and waterways, would improve agriculture, would protect fisheries, would foster industries, would promote commerce, would diminish extravagant expenditure (as on needless judges and policemen), would beautify the cities, would educate the workers (and also the non-workers, who stand in direr need of it), would, in short, govern herself as no external power—nay, not even a government of angels and archangels could govern her (Pearse [1916] 1952, 180).

Post-Independence Ireland was to become anything but that globally minded nation of which Thomas Davis, George Russell, and even Pearse had dreamed. Rather, it became, in the words of the historian Terence Brown,

a petit-bourgeois state expressing the prudent and inhibiting values of farm and shop which allowed the children of the nation to bear the brunt of its ostensibly most adventurous policy, the revival of a language, whilst the opportunities implicit in that independence so eagerly sought went begging in a fairly general acquiescence in comfortably provincial modes of social life and art (Brown 1981, 136).

The development of academic geography in Ireland was stifled by the dominating concerns of the petit-bourgeois state. Its late acceptance within universities meant that, in order to establish and retain its newly acquired status, geography had to position itself as a status-quo discipline. The easiest way to do this was to focus on, if possible, a pre-colonial history and to employ an uncontroversial empirical methodology that continued to dominate the discipline within Ireland until recent years. Recently, however,

academic geography and geographic research within and on Ireland have started to employ a range of critical approaches, often influenced by post-colonialism. This is particularly evident in historical geography. Historical geographers such as Brian Graham, Gerry Kearns, Nuala Johnson, John Morrissey, and Kevin Whelan are putting into practice the critiques of representation popularized by Said in *Orientalism* through their critical analysis of landscape and iconography (Johnson 2003; Whelan 2003); of Irish nationalism (Kearns 2001, 2004; Johnson 1992, 1997); and of Irish identity/identities (Graham 1997; Morrissey 2004). They are being joined by social and cultural geographers with interests in broad questions of identity (Nash 1994, 1997; Ní Laoire 2002a, 2002b; Ní Laoire and Linehan 2002) and in post-colonial relationships to place (Nash 1999; Reid 2004). Ireland is also beginning to prove an interesting and useful site of analysis for critical geographers (see, e.g., Dowler 2002; Marston 2002).

Though literary theory and cultural studies have long engaged with Ireland as a site of colonial and post-colonial analysis, and some (Irish-based or Irish-connected) geographers are beginning to engage with the implications of colonialism for the geography and geographies of Ireland, this has yet to be reflected in broader theoretical discussions of post-colonialism within geography. In fact, general theoretical discussions of post-colonial theory in geography are remarkably loath to engage with Ireland, either in a historical or in a contemporary setting. Examples of this avoidance include recent work by James Sidaway, who, in agenda-setting articles on post-colonialism, constantly alludes to and then defers any discussion of Northern Ireland (Sidaway 2000, 2002). Such avoidance has implications for a broader international engagement with the present articulation of colonial and post-colonial cultural politics both of Ireland as a post-colony and of Britain as Ireland's colonial power. "For its British settlers and rulers,"

Said wrote, "Ireland was not only a geographical entity dominated by an off-shore power, but also a history, geography, culture, and population written and represented by what the British and many of their European counterparts said about them" (2003, 178). Geography in newly independent Ireland reacted against but, paradoxically, reinforced these representations. Contemporary post-colonial theory in geography may also serve to reinforce the hierarchies of knowledge and place that characterized colonial geographies. Is it not a reaffirmation of that "geographical sense" of cultural superiority already satirized by Shaw?

We English must place our capacity for government without stint at the service of nations who are less fortunately endowed in that respect; so as to allow them to develop in perfect freedom to the English level of government (Shaw 1904).

Notes

- 1 See Carroll and King (2003) for an excellent overview and commentary. See also Cairns and Richards (1988); Lloyd (1993, 1999); Gibbons (1996); Deane (1997); and Deane and Whelan (2004); as well as the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (Deane 1991).
- 2 The Penal code meant that Catholics could only teach in schools if they were licensed by a Protestant bishop. As a consequence, an underground system of education known as hedge schools developed, free from state influence. The schools were so called because they were sometimes held outdoors, near the safety of a hedge.

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