THE BUSINESS OF PLEASURE: MODERNITY, MARKETING, AND MUSIC HALL IN *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* IRELAND

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> Advertising is an emotional striptease for a world of abundance. (McLuhan 21)
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> Dan Lowery's Star of Erin: O Infinite Variety past Dame Street's horse trams and curricks, newsboys and flower sellers, past the importunate pandhandling tinkers, bursting into the imperial lobby, gilt ceiling studded with regal gasoliers, Star lamps and Sun lamps, past the hulking mahogany bar, the brass and garnet leather, the gouts of frothy porter, the glint and tinkle of faceted glass or into the huge hall, the Hibernian Night's Entertainment … (Kershner 433)

In his compendious book on Irish Advertising imaginatively entitled *The Advertising Book: The History of Advertising in Ireland* (1986), Hugh Oram asserts that "Irish Advertising did not come of age until the start of *Telefis Eireann* on January 1st, 1962" (1). Furthermore, much, if not all of the advertising employed in the period prior to the twentieth century he describes, somewhat witheringly, as 'passive.' This article will work from the premise that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence,[1] and argue that popular entertainment and advertising were symbiotically linked, the one mediating the other in late-nineteenth-century Ireland as a characteristic and vitally important part of the visual and cultural mix of the modern urban metropolis.

I will concentrate on the remarkable and ingenious range of advertising strategies adopted by a music hall magnate such as Dan Lowery Junior and suggest that reading these exemplary and hitherto largely overlooked ephemera offers a powerful segue into the commercial ethos surrounding the 'leisure' industries in Ireland. Moreover, I will argue that such material sheds light on the concerns of Cultural Nationalists around the unwelcome current of 'imported entertainments,' viewed as social and national pathogens on the nascent body politic of an Ireland coming into being in the maelstrom of modern life and as encroachments of European Modernity. Music Hall was a harbinger of Modernity viewed by many Revivalists as virtually synonymous with the imperial project of Anglicisation: advertising was its life-blood, instilling false desires for non-Irish, non-national products. Thus, in its discussion of the politics of advertising and the advertising of politics this essay will concentrate not on the influence of Ireland on Europe, but on the (sometimes unwelcome) influence of Europe on Ireland as the nineteenth century came to a close.

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1 Tracy C. Davis in keynote speech at Buried Treasures Symposium at Royal Holloway, University of London, 27 September 2008.

Advertise, Advertise, Advertise[2]

In the preface to his 1881 book *Hours with the Players*, Dutton Cook observed that "the blower of his own trumpet is usually rather a suspected sort of soloist […] yet some measure of self-assertion is necessary: traders must advertise their wares" (iv). This sentiment is corroborated in *Consuming Passions* (2007), where Judith Flanders allies the Victorian fascination with spectacle with larger cultural changes such as industrialisation and urbanisation, both of which heralded the emergence of a culture dominated by a consumerist ethos: an ethos which employed and deployed spectacle as a means to promote, reproduce, circulate, and merchandise commodities (some of them being the bodies of the spectacles or entertainers themselves). In Victorian England, the list of such spectacles which had the punters begging for more included: automata, wax works, *trompe-l'oeil* illusion (usually suffixed with "orama"), pleasure gardens, military displays, recreations of famous battles, animals (mechanical, deformed, dancing or "learned"), peep shows, freak shows, and firework displays, all of which passed before the eyes of the delighted and captivated patrons "in one day" (Flanders 286). Flanders continues: "The shows were advertised in a similar melange, with strident messages bombarding the public daily" (286), and, quoting from Pückler-Muskau[3] to stress the umbilical link between popular entertainment and advertising: "They must either advertise or perish" (Flanders 287).

This sentiment regarding the importance of advertising in the circulation of theatrical commodities (shows and actors included) was clearly shared on a more general level by Horace Greeley, who opined to the *Anglo-Celt* of 3 December 1898:

> To neglect ADVERTISING is like resolving never to travel by steam or communicate by telegraph. It is to close one's eyes to the light and insist on living in permanent darkness. (11)

Mr Greeley's comments clearly ally advertising with a concomitant surge towards modernity, a point which has been endorsed by theorists such as Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, and later by cultural historians such as Thomas Richards and also Jennifer Wicke,[4] who argues that advertising is arguably the chief emblem of modern life, "a sign of the sign of the times" which "signifies the modern predicament" (Wicke 593), a concretisation of what Richards, following Guy Debord, describes as "the era of spectacle" (Richards 3).

Richards' and Wicke's arguments, roughly summarised, revolve around the notion that the emergence of advertising as a serious cultural form was concomitant with the heyday of the new market capitalism of the nineteenth century, dependent to some extent on industrialisation and technological developments which revolutionised retail marketing by stimulating mass production. In short, they argue that advertising, the

2 *Irish Weekly Advertiser* 25 March 1863. Thanks to John Strachan for this quotation.

3 A nineteenth-century Lusatian aristocrat, cultural commentator, and eccentric.

4 See also Loeb and Rappaport.

child of ‘commodity culture’ effectively instantiated modernity, emerging in tandem with the changing economic and social rules of the mid-to-late nineteenth century.[5] Further, mass production based on low margins and high turnover relied on the creation and arousal of demands and desires in nineteenth-century consumers, thereby lubricating the circulation of goods. Thus, in part European Modernity was ushered in under the aegis of advertising. Indeed, as Wicke suggests, “advertising is a key way of *being* modern, because modernity must advertise” (604).

In other words, the ubiquitous and aggressive spectacle of advertising is *avant la lettre* the symbol of the modern, deleteriously bound up with the frenetic flux and chaos of the capitalist-driven, modern metropolis. Such compulsive and uncompromisingly visible capitalism exerted a disaggregating influence on the modern urbanite, as Marshall Berman points out:

> These expansive, dynamic, frenetic energies generated by the heat of capitalism lay at the heart of cities such as London, Paris and New York; it is in these bustling metropolises where one locates the essence of modernity in the nineteenth century, where business transactions, commerce and strangers from numerous cultures all converged in a concentrated social stew. (95)

Thus, the advertisement in all of its kaleidoscopically changing and gratuitously riveting forms speaks of the cultural tensions regarding the freedom of the marketplace and sanctity of the individual, characteristic of the *fin de siècle.* Here, Berman singles out the metropolitan titans of London, Paris, and New York, as exemplary loci of modernity, yet a stroll through Joyce’s Dublin shows a cityscape punctuated with advertisements for everything from Plumtree’s Potted Meat to music hall cantatrices and soubrettes created to appeal to a consuming body, who were as Thomas Richards observes, “beginning to yield to the ministrations of commodity culture” (205). To suggest that such images, which litter the pages of *Ulysses*, were designed as a verisimilitudinous jigsaw to be reconstructed by interested scholars is short-sighted. They offer an opaque and possibly unconscious testimonial to the ubiquitous melange of advertisements, signifying a modern mass culture, which lined and laced the streets of Dublin at the turn of the century.

The Flâneur

This understanding of ‘the age of consumption’ as coeval with the condition of urban modernity is best exemplified by Walter Benjamin’s notion of the flâneur, the perfect idler with a predilection for leisure, drawn to, and anaesthetised by, the force of the crowd and carefully managed commodity spectacles. In such circumstances the crowd, according to Benjamin, becomes a mass lulled by the opiates of consumerism. Therefore, as he suggests:

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5 Wicke gives the date for the emergence of this phenomenon as circa 1840, while Richards suggests that advertising and commodity culture emerged as significant forces at the time of the Great Exhibition in 1851.

> The crowd is not only the newest asylum of outlaws; it is also the latest narcotic for the abandoned. The flâneur is someone abandoned in a crowd. In this he shares the situation of the commodity. He is not aware of this special situation, but this does not diminish its effects on him and it permeates him blissfully like a narcotic that can compensate him for many humiliations. The intoxication to which the flâneur surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity around which surges the stream of customers. (Benjamin, *Baudelaire* 55)

Thus, according to Benjamin, in the marketplace of modernity the individual is dehumanised and anaesthetised by the lure of commodities and the illusory glitter of mass culture. Catapulted into what he describes as a "phantasmagoria"[6] the mass becomes entangled in the ephemera of capitalism, fascinated by its "artificial palaces of intoxication and pleasure" (Cronin 12), such as monster stores and music halls, and compelled to consume, often to the detriment of society.[7]

Notably, in Benjamin's account the flâneur is described as 'intoxicated' by commodities and mesmerised by the subliminal seductions presented by the new temples to consumerism: the department store, the arcade, the theatre and the music hall. Psychically debilitated and manipulated thus flâneurs become part of an unmediated mass, "united only," as Anne Cronin observes, "in their common capitulation to the lure of commodity" (24), testifying to what Thomas Richards describes as "the inherent weakness and gullibility of the masses" (183).

If the monster store represented an overwhelming temptation to its mass-purchasing patrons, the music hall was viewed as capitalism at its most venal, irredeemably vulgarised by commercial considerations and thus at least as debased as its primarily working-class audiences. Marked as the favoured locus of tipplers, drunkards, and backsliders the Halls were seen by many as licentious dens of intemperance, nurseries of drunkenness, designed to demoralise and literally intoxicate their socially deviant habitués. Indeed, as Francis Grierson argues in *The Celtic Temperament and Other Essays*:

> The music-hall is a law unto itself. It exists by itself and for itself […]. The people who flock to it night after night, are people who are incapable of any serious thought during the day, who have not worked particularly hard and who wished to be amused in the most neutral manner possible in the evening. (110)

Thus, as in the city in Benjamin's account of the flâneur, in the Halls the crowd becomes an unthinking, aimlessly consuming mass, evacuated of will and morality by the commercially generated commodity spectacles, designed specifically for such a degenerate mass culture.

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6 A collective dream.

7 It has been extensively argued that these intoxicants encouraged 'disorders' such as kleptomania and oniomania (compulsive shopping) in women; see, for example, Abelson. In men the literal intoxicant of alcohol was thought to be the main cause of poverty and wretchedness and was linked to its easy accessibility in the mainly working-class recreations of the public house and the music hall.

From this perspective music hall was viewed as an inauthentic, anaesthetic, and unwholesome palliative to the working classes emerging from, and symbolising, a nascent commodity culture. Moreover, in Ireland the Halls were viewed as tinder boxes for sectarianism and violence, as the following 'complaint' from *The Nation* of 30 November 1867 makes clear. The writer Thomas Francis Meagher recollects that, after jostling through a "large and noisy mob outside" a Belfast music hall,

> [w]e entered by a side door and ascended the platform; but our appearance was the signal for one of the most horrible scenes of uproar I have ever beheld in Ireland; shrieking, whistling, stamping, imprecations in the most uncouth accentuations of Antrim county – groans, cheers for John O'Connell (who was then administering the dilapidated remains of the Liberator's Conciliation Hall agitation) but no Kentish fire, from which circumstance it was plain that mob was not an Orange mob and that the demonstration was an entirely 'Old Ireland' affair … the turmoil became rapidly more and more menacing: until at last a volley of stones from the mob outside came crashing through all the windows of the building.

Here, the audience, far from being stunned into mute subjection by the commodified spectacles on stage, become a homogenous mob who are galvanised to acts of sectarian violence. In short, intoxicated by the on-stage spectacle they are transformed into a frenzied rabble, incapable of self-control.

Of course, it would be a case of *reductio ad absurdum* to suggest that riots in Belfast theatres and music halls could be attributed solely or even in part to the massification of the crowd therein. However, it stands as an exemplar of the way in which the phenomenon of mass culture was viewed by its censors – as an anarchic force which impoverished the intellectual faculties of its stupefied and benumbed patrons and encouraged rowdiness, drunkenness, and cultural disintegration.

At the heart of this debased drama of consumerism stood the advertisement, the illusory and inauthentic creator of false need and catalyst for desire, "an equal opportunity scapegoat," according to Jennifer Wicke, excoriated by both "left wing critical theory" and right wing "reactionary thought," united in their desires to excoriate it or "to mourn its presence among us […] as all that is commercially debased" (Wicke, "Modernity" 593). Wicke goes on to say that

> [t]he guilt is almost always there […] even in the gilt – since an ad's reason for being is to put forth or to enhalo a commodity in order to instigate public desire for it, the ad is contaminated to its very origins. Original sin defines the ad, and no matter how aesthetic, it cannot redeem its genesis in the commodity nexus. (598)

Advertising is thus seen as the lowest form of aesthetic poverty in mass culture – lower even than the degradations of music hall, yet the two were fundamentally and intrinsically reliant on one another. Both offered instant gratification. Both employed an aesthetic of intoxication stimulating 'unhealthy' desires which could only be sated in the consummation of consumer and commodity. In late-nineteenth-century Ireland this phenomenon was attributed to, and exemplified by, Music Hall in general and Dan Lowery's Music Hall in particular.

Dan Lowery's Music Hall

Dan Lowery Junior, 'the Guv'nor' (1841-1897), was a *monstre sacré* to the general populace of turn-of-the-century Dublin and *a bête noire* to the highbrow and temperance brigades. To the former, he was a venerable, eccentric philanthropist who met their entertainment needs in a pleasurable, ambient, and affordable environment. To the latter, he was a commercially savvy Machiavel, purveying smut and salaciousness to the masses and bombarding the city with a barrage of profit-oriented advertisements and mercantile displays. The truth, as is often the case, lay somewhere between these two extremes.

Lowery was enlisted to take over the management of the family business after his father (Dan Senior) was engaged in legal skirmishes with the Gunns – proprietors of the patented Gaiety, who saw the "Star of Erin Music Hall" as unwanted and very powerful competition for the hearts and minds of Dublin audiences. Arriving in 1881, he set about rebuilding, remodelling, and re-branding the venue to create a "Monster Palace of Enchantments" with a capacity of over 1,000. Having done this, as Watters and Murtagh record,

> [h]e sat down in his Office above the Stage to draft his posters and newspaper advertisements. He meant business. Notices of the Re-opening appeared in all the Dublin dailies and weeklies, and coloured posters were displayed on hoardings throughout the Town. He bought two high cars, horse drawn, to be driven through the streets, bells jingling, carrying huge placards of the current Bill of fare. (45)

In short, he promoted the establishment with a missionary zeal, taking every available opportunity and using every conceivable method to brand and market his emporium of entertainments, to the extent that Lowery's advertisements became part of the visual mix of the city, aligned to the rhythms of its day-to-day life:

> His advertising campaign was incessant – two inch column space in Pat and its successor The Irish Diamond, three inch columns in the Times and the Freeman's Journal. His bright posters thirty inches long and ten inches wide were everywhere – in bars, sweetshops, tobacconists, bun-shops, on brick walls and billboards. He himself phrased all the publicity, making everything larger than life. (Watters & Murtagh 51)

It is clear that in his relentless and sedulous promotion of his emporium, Dan Lowery had the first rule of advertising in mind – to keep his name in front of the public continually – hence the melange of strident advertisements he produced and displayed, each of them barking colossal claims, framed in a language of gigantism. His "Star of Erin" was "world famed," unparalleled, a "terrific cannonade of entertainments," "dazzling," "explosive," a "whale among minnows," and "the Crystal Palace of Ireland" (Watters and Murtagh 119).

It is worth pausing to ponder what this allusion to the Crystal Palace actually entails. As Thomas Richards comments:

> The Crystal Palace […] at one and the same time was a museum and a market: it brought together a host of rare and exclusive things and promised, in a way that is very

> hard to pin down, that each and every one of them would one day be democratically available to anyone and everyone. (19)

In keeping with this spirit of 'great exhibitionism' Lowery also brought together "rare and exclusive things": subhominoids and "freaks," performing animals, one-legged trapeze artists, "serios, roseyposies, arch-eyed soubrettes, lesbics and Hebes in bursting bodices" (Richards 99), pickannines, stage-Irish, Lions Comique, tumblers, pugilists, swells, mashers, educated donkeys ("marvellous comprehension"), leg-and-knicker shows, dwarves, stage-Cockneys, stage-Scots, and stage-Geordies, marionettes, mimics, and mediums – all of these things presented in a glittering marketplace, lubricated by liquor in which everything, including the performers were spectacular, fetishised commodities. It is tempting to view this melange of essentially plebeian entertainments as nothing more than pandering to voyeuristic gawking at grotesquery, wrapped up as mass-spectacle and entertainment. However, it testifies to Lowery's ability to predict a need and to supply an increasingly demanding audience with an ever-expanding list of sensational theatrical commodities. Blatant consumerism it may have been, but it was a manifestation of a commercial ethos in *fin-de-siècle* Dublin which was, according to Cheryl Herr, "quite simply a fact of life" (204).

In 1911, Walter Dill Scott described the quintessential advertising impresario thus:

> The man with the proper imagination is able to conceive of any commodity in such a way that it becomes an object of emotion to him and to those to whom he imparts his picture, and hence creates desire rather than a mere feeling of ought. (35)

Dan Lowery Junior was such a man. He knew that to create consumption he had first to create consumers, and with this in mind he adopted a promiscuous repertoire of promotional formats, from the kinetic and three-dimensional with decorated elephants and faux-drownings to the more conventional newspaper ads, sandwich boards, trade cards, playbills, daybills, and hand leaflets he used to pitch his premises to prospective punters. Aware of the importance of maintaining a public profile he peddled a sustained and concentrated conglomerate of spectacles which stressed the novelty, exoticism, escapism, and titillation available at his establishments, all of it accessible, affordable, and affably purveyed to a 'modern' mass audience.

Music Hall and Marketing

Without question Lowery's posters and programmes, even the design of his buildings, emulated images commonly associated with the European culture of *la belle époque*. For example, The Empire Theatre of Varieties, opened in 1894 by a consortium led by Lowery Junior, was described by the press as "a marvel of Moorish magnificence" comparable to "the Palace in London" (Findlater 230). Here the venue exemplifies the decadence of the European *fin de siècle* in the opulence of its extravagant architecture and gilded décor. One might also argue that the building inadvertently embraced the philosophy of *l'art pour l'art* in that, due to a design fault, it couldn't function as a music hall until it was re-modelled. Facetiousness aside, The

Empire's advertising, like its architecture, looked outward from Erin, mimicking and mass-producing the *panneaux décoratifs* of the neo-Rococo Art Nouveau movement in the asymmetrical, undulating lines, insouciant colours, and sensual, eroticised women of the posters and programmes.

In one such poster for an 1898 variety show a scantily clad beauty in scarlet corsetry sits astride a harp, surrounded by exotic foliage in jewel colours. Her gaze is direct, implying her unabashed sexuality and disavowal of Victorian rectitude and Revivalist prudery. On the reverse, a high-kicking soubrette in gold looks coquettishly over her shoulder, in a classic 'come hither' pose hinting at the pleasures available within this temple of seduction. In both instances the images arrest the attention of passing trade, seducing the prospective consumer to stop, stare, and step inside.

In another, earlier image for Dan Lowery's "Star of Erin," a vivacious beauty dressed in a revealing décolleté dress raises her leg and her skirts while holding a hand coquettishly up to the side of her face.[8] As in the vivid images from the Belfast Empire the provocative woman engulfed in lavish materials is a luxury product used to advertise the mouth-watering gaiety and *joie de vivre* of cosmopolitan life.

In both instances the images echo and emulate the commercial poster-art used to advertise the *carpe diem* spirit of the *Folies Bergère*, where vibrantly iconic female figures, or 'cherettes,'[9] tout commodities with sex. This, as Wicke argues, is an advertising commonplace: "Advertising is a mobile, fluctuating sexual subject position; erotic because advertisement puts commodities of all kinds into sexualised narrativity, makes them labile sexualised encounters" (102). In short, in the dynamics of advertising, the sexually charged image of women is used to peddle market commodities by symbolically selling sexual titillation to the voyeuristic, predominantly male consumer. In this, as Marcus Verhagen argues, "the poster was itself involved in a form of prostitution. Like a streetwalker it accosted passers-by in public, using every artifice to gain their attention; like her it was garish and immodest" (117).

Notably, the parallel is drawn between the shamelessness of the prostitute and that of the advertiser, each touting for trade, flaunting their wares in order to manufacture false wants in their clientele. After visually accosting the strolling flâneur, according to Verhagen, the posters seduce him into believing that the product will offer gratification, implied by the sexualised images of the women. It is a commonly employed legerdemain of the advertiser: allurement by association centred on the fetishised female form, through which, as Benjamin argued, "the woman herself becomes an article that is mass-produced" ("Central Park" 40).

As Benjamin has famously suggested, the commercial spirit of the modern crystallises in the joint images of the prostitute and the flâneur – city dwellers who can often be found in what the cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer describes as the "distraction

8 Dan Lowery Music Hall Poster, NLI Ephemera. 4 July 1891.

9 A soubriquet taken from the originator of these mass-produced images, Jules Cheret.

factories" and "barracks of pleasure": superficial, mass-culture industries, designed to delude and, unsurprisingly, 'distract' the crowds from their alienation and isolation in the modern city. At the epicentre of these industries, according to Kracauer, was "the mass ornament," the aimless trappings of commercial culture, included among which are, as he argues, artificially manufactured troupes of dancing girls, beating out the rhythm of modernity to the tempo of the city:

> When they formed an undulating snake, they radiantly illustrated the virtues of the conveyor belt; when they tapped their feet in fast tempo it sounded like business, business; when they kicked their legs high with mathematical precision, they joyously affirmed the progress of rationalization; and when they kept repeating the same movements without ever interrupting their routine, one believed […] the blessings of prosperity had no end. (Kracauer 75)

For Kracauer the mesmeric spectacle of the dancing troupe thus symbolises and incarnates the conspicuous consumption and cultural dislocation of modern mass culture. The 'distraction factory' that was Music Hall was thus viewed as a crucible of Modernity in which the atomised and alienated individual, glutted on immoral and libidinal fare was made submissive to the logic of capitalism and, as was argued in *fin-de-siècle* Ireland, the acceptance of Imperialism.

No Turn Unstoned

Unsurprisingly, in this charged political climate, as Cheryl Herr observes, "no turn was left unstoned" (199). The halls attracted everything from paternalistic hand-wringing from temperance campaigners to booming jeremiads from Revivalists such as the firebrand D.P. Moran, who inveighed against the importation of English amusements as detrimental to the formation of a 'people nation' and inducements to 'shoneenism' and 'West-Britonism.' For Moran, as Frank Biletz points out,

> [t]he primary issue facing Ireland was not the continuation of English rule, but rather the dominance of English culture […]. This process, according to Moran, threatened the survival of the indigenous language, music and literature; hampered the development of a self-sufficient Irish economy; and generally degraded the national character. (61)

Although Moran differed from other Revivalists in that his vision of an Irish Ireland was a *de facto* Catholic one, his stance can be seen broadly to epitomise the views of a burgeoning cultural nationalist lobby who advocated the consumption of Irish produce (entertainment included). The mass consumption of these standard Irish goods, it was thought, would create a homogenisation of collective Irish identity. Moreover the moral, cultural, and national propriety associated with these home-grown wares was seen as a route to economic stability, in that the working classes were encouraged to renounce the wayward pleasures associated with the Halls and shun the debauched habits of modern-day urban life in favour of the bucolic and frugal utilitarianism of the peasantry. The mass-production and mass-consumption of imported English 'shoddy' was viewed as having a disaggregating effect, fragmenting a unified nation coming into being. Moreover, attendance at the halls was seen as

wasteful, frivolous spending at a time when the consuming patriot was being exhorted to create sufficiency out of meagre resources.

Unsurprisingly, in her role as consumer woman took on a new significance in the patriotic rhetoric of national protectionism. Her patriotic duty became that of a sacred guardian of hearth and homeland, and the fate of the nation lay in her consumer choices. In this context, according to Susan Cannon Harris, woman is culturally marked as a patriotic consumer synonymous with the unsullied Irish nation:

> The chaste body of the virtuous Irish woman stands for both the economically independent Ireland, with its closed ports and thriving native industries, and the culturally pure Ireland, whose citizens would never dream of abandoning traditional Irish dress or of reading a decadent Roman novel. (74)

Such reified images which place pure, pious women at the heart of a familial-national economy were part of a nation-building exercise designed to present Ireland as a discrete and homogenous 'family' sharing a pedigree which was Gaelic, Catholic, and Celtic. Within this conception, wayward women such as the music hall entertainer or her graphic counterpart, the 'cherette,' were treated with contempt and suspicion. As Louise Ryan remarks, "the modern girl came to be everything that was disorderly, threatening and dangerous to the future of Irish cultural identity" (185). In part, this related to the modern girl's function as a metonym for modernity and its discontents, in particular at the level of identity. Thus, paradoxically, innovation can lead to enervation of the self and society. As Marshall McLuhan rightly observes, "new technology disturbs the image, both private and corporate in any society, so much that fear and anxiety ensue and a new quest for identity has to begin" (126). The momentum of modernity sunders the image of society from its roots, undermining the pristine and authentic. This in turn leads to cultural dispersal, fragmentation, flux, and, as McLuhan notes, "fear," often resulting in what Iain Chambers refers to as "a rearguard action against modernity," as its proponents turn to the timeless sanctuary of an imagined past. Thus, "in disavowing the discontinuous tempos of the city, commerce and modernity, this critical tradition has persistently sought radical alternatives in the assumed continuities of folk cultures, 'authentic' habits and 'genuine' communities" (Chambers 71).

This summarises the stance of Cultural Revivalists in Ireland, who attempted to regenerate the nation from its moribund state by using the past against the incursions of the present and ensuring the 'Irishness' of their endeavours was not compromised by shoddy external contaminants, including, as Edward Martyn of Abbey Theatre fame complained, the entertainments of "a half-civilised country" (England) whose taste "is for nothing but an empty parade, where the stage is degraded to the booth for foolish exhibition of women, or for enacting of scenes purposely photographing the manners of society rakes and strumpets of the day" (2).

The advertising images discussed in this paper would appear to support Martyn's objections. They do exhibit women who are antithetical to the Irish ideal, and they do

emulate European (though not specifically English) models. Their focus on "pretty, fashionable, fickle, desirable but venal"[10] women implies a bohemian and brazen sexuality which, like the products they tout, can be possessed at a price. Driven by market forces, these images represent a composite of new women and fallen women – luxury goods in and of themselves, but also advertisers of other intoxicating commodities which promise a similar frisson. The scarlet-clad temptress in the Empire programme effervesces like "Cantrell & Cochrane's Aerated Waters"; the golden-dressed coquette high-kicks in a swirl of spheres above an ad which barks the benefits of "THE CELEBRATED OLD BUSHMILLS WHISKY," with the order "AT ALL THE BARS ASK FOR IT. SEE THAT YOU GET IT." Nestling between these images is a vividly ornamented, highly-coloured advertisement for "FINDLATERS A1 WHISKEY," above which "BODEGA" offers an assortment of wines, spirits, and "other refreshments" for the comfort of visitors, while below "THE STRAND BAR AND BILLIARD SALOON" offers further inducements to the entertainment-hungry patron. Elsewhere, wine merchants, restaurateurs and purveyors of whiskey cajole the prospective consumer with enticements to carouse. Lyle & Kinahan's, for example, offer whiskey, wine, stout, ale, lager, pilsner, hop bitters, and cider, while the appropriately named 'Thomas J. Beer' informs customers that "DEWARS PERTH WHISKY (AWARDED FIFTY PRIZE MEDALS)" is "sold in all the bars." Also, "to be had in all the bars in this theatre" is "the finest whisky in the world," "DUNVILLE'S SPECIAL LIQUEUR": a "pure and wholesome" brand "esteemed by connoisseurs." Other 'luxury' items in the programme include perfumes and "toilet requisites," evening dress suits from "the King," clothier, and entrance to the "splendidly furnished Eagle: The Finest Billiard Room in Ireland" sporting cheaply priced premium beers and "a newsroom" for the commercial traveller and transitory flâneur.

It would be an extraordinarily grandiose claim to suggest that a mass-produced theatre programme exemplified the spirit of the age, however many of the component elements are characteristic of the *belle époque*. Taken as a whole, the programme embraces the Art Nouveau desire to take art out of the galleries and into the streets, thereby blurring the distinctions between 'high-brow' and 'low-brow' culture. It democratises luxury, cajoling customers into an environment which oozes sanctioned hedonism and addresses its advertisements to a developing leisure class who have the wherewithal to buy into these palaces of popular pleasure and assume the cachet of the luxury products on display. Subversive, scandalous, ambivalent, and destabilising, the images and advertisements in the programme embrace the frivolity, flux, eclecticism, and entrepreneurialism of the modern, putting them on display in an elaborate shop-window environment of gorgeous, lavish opulence.

10 See Abigail Solomon-Godeau's discussion of the Parisienne as an emblem of *fin-de-siècle* sexuality (142).

Ireland on Display

Despite the fact that he embraced the currents of European Modernity which circulated *fin-de-siècle* Ireland, 'Irish-Ireland' was never far from Lowery's mind. In one classic example he was able to combine his support for Irish Industries with self-advertisement, taking up both the opportunity of sponsorship and barking the benefits of his music hall as a monument to consumerism and spectacle. In 1882, immediately prior to the opening of 'The Great Exhibition of Irish Crafts and Manufactures,' Lowery staged *Erin's Awakening, or An Exhibition Rehearsed.* Watters and Murtagh describe the scene:

> The Band broke into the Overture. The Curtain went back, and Irish Manufacturers were summoned to appear by warrant of the Fairy Queen. The green-capped Heralds waltzed, tumbled and wire-walked across the stage, their svelte figures flattered by Mahoney woollens and Lucan tweeds. Weavers mixed into the fun, puppets and ventriloquist's dolls, flaunting Irish flannels among a bevy of Pretty Maidens resplendent in Tuskar serge, Belfast linen, Atkinson's poplin and Balbriggan stockings. Up pops a comic dressed as a big box of Dublin matches, up pops another dressed as a role of Limerick Tobacco, and the slapstick smacks and sizzles between them. Clog-dancers dressed as Guinness Bargemen and Barrels go clattering in jig-time and the Tale is constantly enlivened by a constant stream of Irish Flour, Candles, Clocks, Fruit, Flowers. The Chicks of course dance their delightful ensembles in Limerick Lace. (48)

Here, Lowery capitalises on his knowledge of the culture of advertising to engage in the advertising of culture. The mercenary blandishments and idealised images are designed to claim both the attention and the lucre of the mass audience. Abetted by the ornamented decadence and frolicsome spirit of the *belle époque*, Lowery creates a Hibernian mercantile epiphany, which elicits desire for Irish produce, while celebrating 'Irishness' as a secular essence and shared cultural practice which bridges the gap between tradition and modernity. In short, in stimulating the desires of his audience and incorporating these into the on-stage spectacle of cavorting Irish produce, he sells a lifestyle to be coveted. In the aggressive entrepreneurialism of Lowery's advertising methods, buying Irish is represented as a form of status-enhancing conspicuous consumption disguised as leisure pursuit rather than a sacrifice demanded for the sake of the nation.

Conclusion

There is no question that Dan Lowery was enterprising, entrepreneurial, and alert to the importance of advertising in an entertainment industry which saw the unremitting advance of commodity culture and in a society becoming increasingly in synch with mass production. Faced with this relentless tide of commercialisation Lowery, the apogee of commercial entertainment in *fin-de-siècle* Ireland had two choices: opt out and fail or participate and succeed. He chose the latter, tailoring his acts and advertisements to a clientele who demanded readily available, ephemeral entertainments packaged and processed as marketable commodities. Without question Lowery was motivated by commercial incentives: the pursuit of profit and ceaseless competition.

Furthermore, the Hall itself was a commodity which experienced its coming of age in the age of consumerism. Thus, in accord with other commodities the commercially governed entertainments provided by Dan Lowery cultivated little responsibility to anything, let alone a strategic set of political goals such as those espoused by the Cultural Nationalists.

Lowery may well have been one of the minions of Mammon, living by the morality of the marketplace and selecting his 'products' according to the logic of rampant commerce, yet even in this, Dan Lowery's Music Hall is worthy of note. Due to its position at the centre of cultural life in Ireland during the period of the *fin de siècle,* Lowery's free market funfair approach confirms that, as the century came to a close, urban Ireland saw the dawning of a new era of economic progress ushered in by the relentless tide of European Modernity and heralded by the age of advertising.

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