The Village
as seen from the
Archway of the Keep
of Donegal Castle.

Donegal Castle
and the Village Green.

St Lawrence
Gate

The Old
Irish Piper

The Wishing Chair

Mrs
Ernest
Hart
Patroness
of the
Village

The Village
Smithy.

Shelah
Spinning
in the Homespun
Cottage.

Lace
Making and
Wood Carving
Cottages.

A Bit of the
Tower Garden,
from the Restaurant.

The representation of Ireland at long nineteenth-century exhibitions

ZOË COLEMAN

THE WANDERINGS OF *OISIN AND OTHER POEMS*, WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS' FIRST collection of poetry, was published in 1889, marking the height of the Celtic Revival, an Irish-based literary revival of romanticised 'Celtic' prose and poetry. In common with his literary Anglo-Irish contemporaries, Yeats had a great interest in Irish mythology, and his other publications included *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) and *Fairy Folk Tales of Ireland* (1892). By the turn of the new century, the tradition of representing Ireland using the peasant as a metaphor led to the development of a definite type of national character. This ambition divided many commentators, artists and literary figures, all searching for their individual definitions of 'Irishness'. Art, national character and colonial manipulation were interchangeable, and a singular concept of Irish nationality remained elusive as the turn of the century approached.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, there was a contemporary concern with the 'less trodden' corners of the world, the exotic 'other'. In America, as in Europe, a number of international expositions were significant in creating an interest in the 'exotic'. These expositions allowed their visitors to enter upon a fantastical world and experience a journey through different countries, including Ireland. London's Great Exhibition of 1851 set the mould for the exhibitions that were to follow. To date, the literature on Ireland's role in international exhibitions has focused on philanthropy and lace-making, and the foundations of Irish arts and crafts, in all of which exhibitions played a pivotal role in displaying these industries to an international audience.

This essay examines the representation of Ireland at three international exhibitions – the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893; the Glasgow International Exhibition, 1901; and the Dublin International Exhibition, 1907. Of these, the two Irish villages at the World's Columbian Exposition have received the most sustained attention in academic studies, due largely to the association of Lady Aberdeen (1857-1939) and the

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1 – Sketch of the Donegal Village for the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893 from QUEEN magazine, 1893 (courtesy Dr Janice Helland)

newly founded Irish Industries Association (IIA) with one of the two Irish pavilions. The two other exhibitions selected for discussion were significant in different ways. The Dublin exhibition of 1907 was the largest international exhibition witnessed in Ireland, staged during the peak years of the second wave of the Celtic Revival. The Irish pavilion at the Glasgow exhibition of 1901 was the first international project co-ordinated by the newly founded Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI), and was also significant as a project with the potent association of being staged within an imperial context. More broadly, given its ambiguous status in Europe at the time, this paper explores how, and for what purpose, Ireland was exhibited, constructed and mythologised at these fairs.

IRISHNESS, PHILANTHROPY AND THE REVIVAL OF COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

Jeanne Sheehy's pioneering book, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past: the Celtic Revival 1830-1930* (1980), provides a concise background study of the foundations of the Celtic Revival in art and literature, and of the philanthropic aspects of the Irish Arts and Crafts movement. Viceregal society in Dublin at the end of the nineteenth century was an area in which arts and crafts were important, largely because they gave the wives of lord lieutenants the opportunity to participate in charitable work without getting involved in anything politically contentious.[1] This was made conspicuous by Lady Aberdeen's (1857-1939) involvement with the revival of home industries in Ireland. The Home Arts and Industries associations of late nineteenth-century Ireland sought to bring together the sale and exhibition of beautiful objects with improved living and working conditions for Irish peasants and rural labourers. As Elaine Cheasley Patterson has noted, 'Directed by educated, middle-class women, these ventures intertwined art, entrepreneurial activity and philanthropy with an unusual brand of nationalism.'[2] Maria Luddy has also explored the motivations behind the unique nature of philanthropy in Ireland at this time, and why Irish philanthropic ventures seemed to have been dominated by the Protestant Ascendancy classes.[3]

The cottage industries in Ireland were the projects of philanthropists. Their aim was to provide 'relief work' for the rural peasantry, supplying workers with a regular income for their family, and with an occupation. The purchase of national products had in fact become a fashionable cause during the latter part of the century. A drive to 'buy British', for example, was a large boost to the regeneration of cottage industries there. In this way, new directions merged with revivals, complicating issues of production: projects were both anti-modern in their attempt to capture a romanticised past, and yet modern in their desire to engage contemporary sophisticated consumers.[4]

Sheehy uses the term 'Irishry' to describe the art, generally of a popular kind, being produced in Ireland by the mid-nineteenth century, and which used symbols such as shamrocks, harps, round towers and wolfhounds.[5] By the third quarter of the century, this type

of art continued to flourish, particularly in the wake of the 1851 exhibition in London. The philanthropist Ishbel Maria Hamilton-Gordon (known as Lady Aberdeen), during her husband's tenure as the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1886, 1905-15), exploited this inclination and applied it to textiles that she sought an international market for. Aberdeen's public patronage of Irish-crafted textiles was vital in creating a demand for them amongst women of her own class.

Another benefactor, Alice Hart (b.1850), prompted by a tour of the Donegal congested districts in 1883, founded, with her husband Ernest Hart, the Donegal Industrial Fund (DIF) in 1884. Hart saw the revival of cottage industries in this region as a solution to the chronic conditions there. The DIF initiated and implemented improvements; the focus was therefore not on 'rescue work', but on domestic production that would subsidise rural workers in remote areas and provide them with constant employment. Hart pioneered 'Kells Embroidery'. The designs were taken from early Irish manuscripts, such as the Book of Kells, from which it derived its name. Its unique idea was that the use of Celtic ornament, along with Irish materials, would make it truly Irish. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Hart could see and name the colonisation process. While she understood how and why the English had exploited Ireland, she also succumbed to the contemporary desire to romanticise its folklore and peasant class.[6] Hart soon established a market for Irish cottage crafts in London.

The philanthropic ventures of Lady Aberdeen, Alice Hart, and their contemporaries sought to redress the impoverished lot of the rural poor, with women and children taking priority. From this arises the dialogue of Ireland's quasi-familial relationship with Britain.[7] Were these exhibitions an intentional material manifestation and expression of this relationship on behalf of British middle and upper-class philanthropists? Was Ireland's representation intentionally always kept within Britain's compass, not merely geographically but culturally by using the feminine to express this dialectic?

NATIVE VILLAGES AT INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

Towards the end of the century, the entertainment aspect of international exhibitions had become such a draw that education, commerce and propaganda had to be disguised as pleasurable activities in order to attract the masses.[8] Native villages were organised and displayed to this end. When studying the international exhibitions of the nineteenth-century, one cannot avoid Eric Hobsbawm's concept of the 'invention of tradition'. Hobsbawm identifies invented traditions as a set of practices which are 'normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition'.[9] Hobsbawm demonstrates the fact that most 'traditions' in practice today have their roots in the nineteenth-century and are not as ancient as we are inclined to believe. David Cannadine identifies aspects of this ritual, performance and context, and how they create

a 'tradition', such as the political power of the country, the nation's self-image, and the prevailing state of technology and fashion within a country. Cannadine further underlines the fact that ritual was rendered urgent by economic and social developments during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Art historian Paul Greenhalgh describes how between 1889 and 1914, the exhibitions became 'human showcases'. Native peoples were brought to sites in order to be seen by others for their gratification and education. The villages provided an 'authentic' backdrop for the natives to go about what was considered to be their daily business. One of the contradictions that lay at the conceptual heart of these villages was in their creation of an exaggerated reality, or 'hyperreality'; the very practice of gathering together natives within an imperial environment, physically and psychologically, communicated a definite message about the nature of empire to visitors. The majority of visitors likely did not comprehend the exploitative nature of these villages; rather they were fascinated by the exotic and romantic spectacle of these constructed 'realities'. Thus, the educational motive behind the display of peoples became interchangeable with the imperial motive.[10]

IRELAND AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1893

The Irish villages at the Chicago exhibition were not the first time that Ireland had been represented at an international exhibition. Displays of Irish goods had been exhibited at London's Great Exhibition of 1851, which was held in the wake of the worst years of the Great Famine in Ireland. The *Illustrated London News* gave extensive coverage of the 1851 exhibition, and the 'othering' of the Irish exhibits is often evident in the journal's coverage. In the official rhetoric of the exhibition, Ireland was configured as a region of the United Kingdom, apparent from its positioning in the Crystal Palace.[13] Inspired by this landmark event, some in Ireland saw a window of opportunity to market Ireland on its own terms, and so the National Exhibition of the Arts, Manufactures, and Materials took place in Cork in 1852, followed by the Irish Industrial Exhibition in Dublin in 1853. However, it wasn't until the 1890s in Ireland that a definite exhibition tradition caught on.[14]

The Chicago exhibition was the most sensational show of its kind in America, and the Irish villages had to compete with popular spectacles ranging from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show to novelty attractions such as a replica of the Venus de Milo, made entirely from 1,500 pounds of chocolate.[15] It is apparent that the proceedings were more than tinted with an element of novelty and amusement, and the Irish villages were made to stand out in their own unique way by their reference to the past, through their replicated architectures, and by their live exhibits.

There were seventeen native villages at the Chicago exhibition altogether. These villages were located on the Midway Plaisance, a mile long strip of land between the 'White City' and the amusements. As a result of their conspicuous positioning in the

exhibition – seemingly bridging the gap between the 'low' forms of entertainment, the novelties, and the 'civilized' White City – the villages on the Midway were presented for touristic consumption. The uncomfortable association of the 'human zoo' narrative of the native villages was made palatable by integrating them into the marketplace. 'Exotic' objects made by the villagers were available for purchase, as one progressed through the Midway towards the frivolity of the amusements. This solved the ambivalent relationship between spectators and 'other'.[16]

The Donegal Village

Alice Hart had already established a market for Irish cottage crafts in London, yet despite her best intentions, Hart's reconstructed Donegal Village at Chicago (Plate 1), because of its proximity to the novelties and amusements of the fair, became commodified and even further removed from the more artistic world of arts and crafts. The entrance to the village was a reproduction of the medieval St Laurence's Gate of Drogheda (built *c*.1280) (Plate 2). Upon entering, the visitor encountered a street of industrial cottages 'picturesquely grouped around the village green, in which was the carved market cross. On this green, jigs were frequently danced by the villagers to the stirring music of an Irish piper.'[17] Hart's village featured her famous Kells embroideries, as well as a reproduction of Donegal Castle (built *c*.1474), to half its original scale. The interior of the castle housed a gallery of portraits of great Irish men (prominently featuring Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847)), alongside paintings of Irish scenery and reproductions of Celtic jewellery. Within the cottages, the Irish 'villagers' carried out the whole process of dyeing, spinning and weaving homespun cloths. Other activities included lacemaking, linen-weaving, sprigging and embroidery, woodcarving, and the designing of Celtic crosses. The village also included a concert hall, and regular lectures were given on Irish industry, art, history and literature. According to *Queen*, a British socialite publication, Hart's village was the 'representative exhibit of Ireland at the World's Fair'.[18]

A range of eclectic 'Irish' artefacts were to be found scattered around the village: a replica round tower had at its base models of dolmens, ogham stones, and early Christian crosses.[19] Uniquely, the village possessed a 'wishing chair', with a stone for the seat brought from the Giant's Causeway in county Antrim; this was mounted on Irish soil brought over specifically for the purpose. This use of ancient materials to construct new or invented traditions for novel purposes represents such an example of how new 'traditions' are often readily mapped onto older ones.[20]

The Irish Industries Association Village

Lady Aberdeen's village was the first grand achievement of the Irish Industries Association (IIA) at the Chicago Fair (Plates 3, 4). About £18,000 worth of Irish goods had been bought in Ireland by the association and successfully sold at the exhibition, a success that

IRISH VILLAGE.
IRISH VILLAGE

IRISH VILLAGE.
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generated good publicity for the IIA.[21] Lady Aberdeen commenced on a tour of Ireland, early in 1893, visiting the Irish industrial centres that were to be represented at the exhibition. £20,000 of the profits generated from her Irish village at Chicago went to the workers in Ireland, with part of this sum going towards the opening of an Irish Industries depot in Chicago to regulate the supply of Irish manufactures for sale in America.

Aberdeen wrote a comprehensive guide to her village, *Ireland at the World's Fair* (1893). It includes a map of the village and provides detail about the cottages and the industries on display. Chapters are devoted to the IIA, but also to such topics as the 'Selection of the Fittest; Or, How Irish Colleens Were Chosen to Represent Ireland at the World's Fair'. The text encourages visitors to inhale the bog turf and to listen to 'Irish voices making the air melodious with the wild and pathetic strains of Irish song'. For visitors handing over their entrance fee, this slice of romantic escapism was probably what they expected. Aberdeen, however, acknowledged the peculiar circumstances of the village: 'It is impossible absolutely to represent a quiet and peaceful cottage life in the wilds of Ireland in a place where thousands of visitors pass daily, yet this comes as near the original as circumstances will permit.'[22] The façade of Aberdeen's village encapsulated political tensions (a Union Jack flag flew above Blarney Castle) and issues of displacement and emigration. Authenticity was replicated and presented as spectacle; it was also something that could be purchased (for example, the lacework made by the village girls). Like Hart's village, it played to Irish-American loyalties, some of whom supported the various Irish philanthropic enterprises at that time through their purchase of Irish goods, and so can be seen as a public relations exercise on behalf of the IIA. But Aberdeen may also have wished to assert some sort of traditionalist, historical continuity on behalf of the country she had grown to admire, in the wake of so much personal and political upheaval (particularly the Irish Parliamentary Party split during 1890). In 1893 Ireland was no nearer to the prospect of self-governance. In creating a village for the display of industrial progress, Aberdeen was arguably making a subtle political statement, placing Ireland on a world stage to be admired by new world audiences.

By reproducing Celtic Revival as spectacle, national identity was commodified. During the turbulent decades after the Great Famine, and against a backdrop of complicated political discourse, the two villages at Chicago came to materially symbolise the fractured nature of Ireland at this time.[23] Janice Helland elaborates: 'The attempt to authenticate the exotic other ... has become the quintessential identifier of exhibiting the colonial experience.[24] This same compulsion characterised the ambitions of the Irish villages at the Chicago exhibition. Indeed, the impact of these two villages served to colour the representation of Ireland in America right up to the present day.

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2 – Donegal Village at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893

3 – Irish Industries Village at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893

both from C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition (photos: Press Chicago Photo-Gravure Co, 1893)

4 – Sketch of the Irish Industries Village, World's Columbian Exposition, 1893
from QUEEN magazine, 1893 (courtesy Dr Janice Helland)

IRELAND AT THE GLASGOW INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION, 1901

THE EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE IN PARIS IN 1900 SWEPT THE OFFICIAL HONOUR OF BEING the first international exhibition of the new century, so 1901 was settled upon for the Glasgow exhibition, as it marked the jubilee of the Crystal Palace Exhibition (1851). It has been noted that international exhibitions at this time tended to have a celebratory circumstance to them, which seemed to permit their lavishness. Other motivating factors came into play, such as promoting the idea of peace among nations, of education (particularly of the masses), and of developing trade and progress.[25] The Glasgow exhibition was no different in this regard. The newly built Kelvingrove Art Gallery dictated not only the layout but also the architectural style of the exhibition. The overall tone of the exhibition, at least in architectural terms, was conservative; the white buildings reflected the influence of Chicago's 'White City', and therefore stood in marked contrast to the modern art nouveau exhibition architecture of Paris the year before, and Turin the year after. The Kelvingrove Art Gallery formed a major part of the 1901 exhibition, as it opened its doors to the public that year. Irish-born artist John Lavery was commissioned to paint a number of paintings of the 1888 Glasgow International Exhibition, and these works formed a part of the display at the 1901 exhibition (Plate 5).

The city's 1851 census confirms that Glasgow held the third highest population of Irish-born residents in Britain at 59,801.[26] The great influx of Irish immigrants into Britain took place in the years directly after the Famine, and steadily continued into the twentieth century. The vast majority of these immigrants were unskilled and mostly illiterate; they took the least desirable jobs and lived in the worst housing. The Home Rule movement provided Irish immigrants with a political voice, due to the prevalence of 'the Irish question' in British politics. Unlike Britain, Ireland had no industrial revolution to react against. In common with other impoverished, agriculturally based nations seeking political independence and vernacular expression, the growing spirit of national consciousness in Ireland was legitimised by archaeological and antiquarian research from the mid-century onwards; this, in turn, acted as the catalyst for the expression of the Celtic Revival in visual arts.[27] This inclination was revealed in the exhibits of decorative art within the Irish pavilion at Glasgow, a fact to which the visitor was made aware by the official guide: 'new factories are starting up, and the Celtic renaissance is visible in more things than literature.'[28]

Irish arts and crafts in Scotland

The 1901 exhibition was not the first time that Irish arts and crafts had been exhibited in Scotland. In 1886 Lady Aberdeen organised a selective exhibition for the Edinburgh International Exhibition on behalf of the Irish Industries Association. Three years later, in 1889, the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland (ACSI), which had been founded in 1894 by Lord Mayo (1851-1927) to foster Irish industries through regular exhibitions and events, curated a selection of Irish arts and crafts at the newly inaugurated People's Palace in Glasgow. Up to this point, cottage and home industries throughout Ireland were scattered and isolated from one another, with no proper organisation in place; they also produced outdated designs that were increasingly hard to market and sell.[29] Lord Mayo soon identified that the problem with Irish decorative and applied arts, in commercial terms, was not a lack of skill, but of poor design.[30] While the IIA exhibited examples of lacework and embroidery at the 1901 exhibition, Alice Hart's did not.[31] Instead, the Irish pavilion at Glasgow was curated and managed by the newly formed Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI).[32]

The Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act was passed in 1899, and this legislation resulted in the formation of the DATI in 1900. The DATI fell under the vice-presidency of Horace Plunkett, a Home Rule supporter and an Anglo-Irish unionist. The Act's general governing principle was the regeneration of Irish industrial and economic life. It aimed 'to stimulate and strengthen the self-reliance of the people', and recognised the importance of technical education.[33] The presentation of the Irish pavilion in Glasgow in 1901 appealed to departmental policy, presenting Ireland as progressive yet passive, an emerald isle with an abundance of native resources and industries to be used for the benefit of Empire.

In the official catalogue of the Glasgow exhibition, the Irish pavilion is described as having been designed by a Dublin architect, 'T. Maule Deane'. This refers to Dublin-based architect Thomas Manly Deane (1851-1933), who had a prior link to Glasgow, having entered the design competition for the Kelvingrove Art Gallery in 1892.[34] The pavilion itself was modelled on the style of an old Irish country house and courtyard in county Dublin. The official exhibition guide describes it as being 'A description of house once common in all parts of Ireland as the residences of small landlords. It is quaint and pretty in appearance, inexpensive to build, and is admirably adapted for the requirements of a small tourist hotel.'[35] Deane's official commissions were mainly national and municipal institutions (he was responsible for the design of the National Library and National Museum (1877) in Dublin), and he seems to have had little experience designing domestic buildings. This is apparent in his design for the Irish pavilion. This was not unique to Glasgow; in general, Irish pavilion designs were arguably more English in their romantic presentation than the Irish vernacular originals.[36]

The Congested Districts Board for Ireland (CDB) and the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) also exhibited in the Irish pavilion in Glasgow, the former exhibiting co-operative societies, agricultural banks and home industries societies affiliated with the IAOS; the latter showing the materials available for use in industry from the congested areas. There was a definite emphasis on Ireland's potential for industrial progress; the Irish exhibits were described as 'unpretentious ones, indicating possible lines of development', and the official catalogue emphasised the interest of the cottage industries to the visitor. Some of the Irish industries that exhibited at the pavilion are listed in the catalogue, and include familiar names such as the Royal Irish School of Art Needlework, the Irish Needlework Depot, and the Crawford Municipal School of Art (for Art Embroidery).

The tone of the Glasgow exhibition, and the position of the Irish pavilion within it, was complicated by associations with Empire. At this time, the Boer War was continuing in South Africa. The display of Empire, one of the exhibition's stated purposes, acquired a special patriotic edge. The exhibits reflected the relationship of the different members to the 'mother' country, whose prosperity they fed.[37] The supernatural folklore and imaginative wealth of the Irish peasant was thus posed against the modern industrial and commercial British spirit, through the both design of the pavilion itself and the artistic handmade goods exhibited in it. As in contemporary genre paintings, the truth of grinding poverty, frequent famine and substandard housing was veiled by romanticised and manipulated images of the 'dear little cabin' augmented by sprays of shamrock.[38]

After 1900, the number of 'white' villages built at exhibitions increased. The purpose of these was usually to perform a public relations role for the respective country. The realism of these villages was not a priority; the standard format of these villages was one of 'an exaggerated vernacular, emphasising rural values rooted in tradition, language and local custom'.[39] While the Irish pavilion at Glasgow could not be described as a village on the scale of those at Chicago in 1893, the format remained the same. On this occasion,

however, exoticism and novelty was provided by the foreign contributors. Britain's larger colonies exhibited independent and impressive pavilions; the Canadian water chute, for example, was one of the most popular exhibits, and it would reappear six years later at the Dublin exhibition. Undoubtedly, foreign pavilions in the grounds of the Glasgow exhibition were recognised as a major enhancement of the exhibition's rather conservative atmosphere.

The overall portrayal of Ireland at Glasgow was cautious. After the first Boer War (1880-81), international exhibitions were increasingly vocal about Empire, as, for the first time, its permanence was no longer stable.[40] The meticulous organisation of the Glasgow exhibition seems to confirm this anxiety. While it borrowed some elements from the 1893 exhibition, such as the use of live 'exhibits', there was discernible lack of novelty to its presentation. As a result of the Irish collaboration with the Glasgow exhibition, *Ireland, industrial and agricultural* (1902), was published by the DATI. Its purpose was that of an official handbook dealing with Ireland's chief economic resources. It is clear from the contents that artistic instruction was not equated in terms of achieving a national art, but rather through the adoption of what were considered national symbols, such as Celtic interlacing. The apparent purpose of utilising these symbols was to decorate a product to be sold on the international market, in order to supply work for those in congested districts.

The DATI's involvement in the Irish pavilion at Glasgow was arguably politically unambiguous. The use of shamrock motifs and standardised cottage design, coupled with live exhibits and well-known examples of Irish home industries, followed a prescribed formula that had been dictated by previous exhibitions. However, the Irish exhibit at Glasgow can also be interpreted as an experimental exercise in diplomatic relations. The new department sought to legitimise its activities by participating in an international exhibition, particularly one under the official auspices of Britain. The pavilion enjoyed a measure of success, witnessed by the successful staging of the Cork International Exhibition the following year (1902-03), and the Dublin International Exhibition five years later (1907). The links between Glasgow and Ireland were also strengthened after the exhibition.[41]

Overall, Ireland's representation in the 'Second City of Empire' is a difficult one to objectively assess, as it was located within the geographical boundaries of Empire. The pavilion was not overtly nationalist, yet it can be said that it achieved the traditional expectations of a national pavilion by promoting the industrial and artistic output of its country. The self-consciousness of the Irish display also promoted a unified, stable vernacular rooted in an 'invented tradition'. As Brian P. Kennedy has suggested in his analysis of contemporary paintings of Irish life: 'In portraying a happy peasantry in their

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overleaf *5 – Sir John Lavery,*
State Visit of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria to the Glasgow International Exhibition 1888
1890, oil on canvas, 257 x 406 cm (Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow)

pictures, the artists ignore the hardship of life in a thatched cottage, and, instead convey a moral message. Patrons were to be spared reminders of poverty, famine, and poor housing and sanitary conditions.'[42]

The Irish pavilion in Glasgow followed the same formula as the pictorial tradition established in the early nineteenth century by visiting artists. There was little romance in reality; a genuine cottier's dwelling would not have been the ideal venue to promote Irish manufactures. The pavilion was pleasing to the eye, and to the foreign observer it met all traditional expectations of Ireland, right down to the iconography of the shamrock. Generally speaking, within arts and crafts circles, architecture and the decorative arts were seen as a reflection of the health of a society. The purpose of the Irish pavilion at Glasgow was clearly to reflect all of these values.

THE IRISH INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION, DUBLIN, 1907

JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE'S INFAMOUS COMIC MASTERPIECE *THE PLAYBOY OF THE Western World* opened to an audience receptive to Celtic Romanticism in the Abbey Theatre on 26th January 1907. As has been well documented, the play never reached its conclusion, descending instead into the infamous 'Playboy riots'. The realism of *Playboy* derived from the Abbey tradition of 'the peasant play'. Synge's realism was not intended to be sentimental, but aimed to replace the rampant 'stage Irishman' stereotype (a primarily English invention) by using the real language and actions of the people he depicted.[43] The set, as Synge had conceived it, was to the exact dimensions of an Irish cottage. Synge had visited the Aran Islands in 1898, and spent five summers there collecting stories, folklore and perfecting his Irish language; as a result, his plays depicted the peasants of the west as he had witnessed them, in all their pathos.

The Ireland on display at the Irish International Exhibition of 1907 was billed by its organisers as an opportunity to represent Ireland's industrial progress on a world stage. These potent political associations, retrospectively, make this exhibition an important signifier in the history of the yet to be established Irish state. The push for an Irish international exhibition followed in the wake of the success of the Cork International Exhibition in 1902. The wealthy industrialist, William Martin Murphy (1844-1919), was one of those elected to an organising committee in 1903 for an international exhibition in Dublin. Herbert Park, in Dublin's fashionable southern suburbs, was chosen as a suitable site for the exhibition, and work commenced on the buildings by February 1906. In order to maximise numbers attending from all around Ireland, large employers were targeted, as were entire towns and villages. Special fares were offered on transport across the country through the Great Scottish and Western Railway Company, and within the city via the Dublin United Tramways Company.

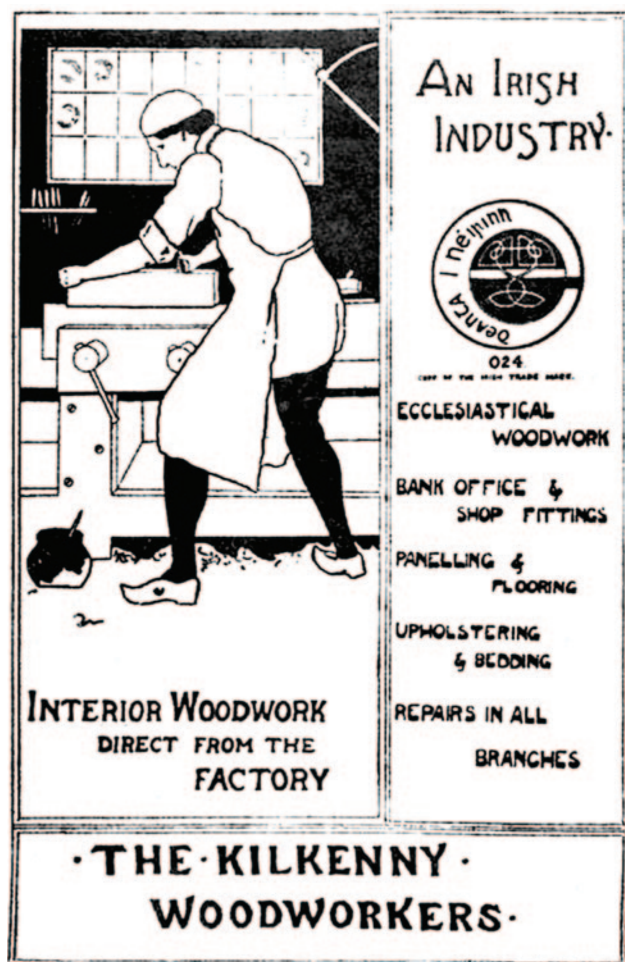
By the time of the 1907 Exhibition, a definite artistic tradition had taken root in Ireland: the Dun Emer Guild had been founded in 1902 by Evelyn Gleeson (1855-1944)

and the Yeats sisters, in Dundrum, county Dublin.[44] This craft collective was formed under the medieval guild model favoured by William Morris. Its aim was to 'find work for Irish hands in the making of beautiful things', along with the hopes of educating young Irish women so they too could pass on their acquired skills. A pamphlet was issued in accordance with the 1907 exhibition, targeted at those 'living outside Ireland' and with the purpose of educating them about the aims of the exhibition and about Dublin city itself, as well as the opportunities for development within Ireland. The pamphlet began by stating the two main objectives of the exhibition: firstly, to promote the industries, art and science of Ireland, by a display of the products for which the country was famous (and the partially developed industries, for which special facilities existed), and, secondly, to stimulate commercial development and promote industrial education by inviting all nations to exhibit their products, both in the raw and finished state.[45]

In contrast to the dire housing situation endured by Dublin's poor at the beginning of the twentieth century, it has been suggested that Ireland's rural labourers were 'among the best housed of their class in Western Europe'.[46] Indeed, at the Dublin Exhibition there was a competition, organised by the Local Government Board, for the design of two labourers' cottages. These were to be erected at a cost not exceeding £130 each, with the object of 'affording a practical demonstration to those interested in the important question of housing the working classes in rural districts'.[47] These cottages had a practical objective in place as opposed to the picturesque cottages erected at previous Irish pavilions. The curious omission and apparent lack of regard for Dublin's poorer inhabitants may be attributed to the heavy focus on industry and making provisions for the expansion of localised cottage industries, rather than the pressing needs of those on the city's doorstep.

Murphy was totally opposed to trade unions, and, particularly, to new or general unionism for the unskilled.[48] In the opening years of the century, a 'buy Irish' campaign was in place, a reaction to the increased reliance on imported manufacturing materials, which Murphy supported. It was promoted by many who believed it to be a practical form of patriotism, and who regarded technical education as the most effective way of countering the effects of foreign competition.[49] In a spirit of innovation, probably buoyed on by the prospect of the exhibition opening, a national protective trademark had recently been designed, and was used to mark items of purely Irish material and manufacture (Plate 6).[50] The effort that went into producing and regulating the trademark demonstrates Ireland's willingness to be recognised internationally, and emphasises its industrial progress, marking its ability to compete with foreign imports.

The exhibition organisers, aware of Ireland's image as predominantly rural, and facing continued emigration, wished to emphasise the fact that Ireland was industrialising, with regional groups seeking to improve the lot of the rural population. *Irish rural life and industry, with suggestions for the future* (1907) was published in connection with the Home Industries section of the exhibition. Lady Aberdeen provided the book's foreword, and its contents marry Ireland's artistic and cultural traditions with its industrial



6 – Advertisement for Kilkenny Woodworkers, with 'Déanta i nÉirinn' ('Made in Ireland') trademark, 1907
(courtesy Dr Joseph McBrinn)

aspirations. The book is expansive in its outlook, with chapters focusing on the concern for adequate housing, village halls and hospitals, and the housing of the Irish artisan. A possible political motivation can be deduced from the publication, as much of its contents read 'as a source book for information about what was being done to prepare Ireland for Home Rule'.[51]

The book was in sympathy with the Irish co-operative movement's journal, *The Irish Homestead*, which was edited by George Russell (1867-1935) from 1905 onwards. The fourth and final issue of the journal was published in 1906, with an article by Irish literary figure T.W. Rolleston (1857-1920), entitled 'Art Work at Irish Exhibitions'. This was critical of much of the crafts to be seen at Irish exhibitions, and bemoaned the fact that Irish artists were too concerned with the liberal use of Celtic ornament and its revival. He encouraged the study of the arts of the past, 'above all those of your own land, but remember you do not live in the times of Brian Boru, but Mr Edison. Recollect that the

decorative artist has, primarily, to decorate objects of utility.'[52] The Dublin exhibition seems to have taken some of this rhetoric into account, but without the participation of the more avant-garde artistic groups and collectives it was hard to follow through with the theme of progress when a more nostalgic type of imagery and ornament was still liberally applied to its official publications.

Horace Plunkett, founder of *The Irish Homestead*, Head of the DATI and a member of the CDB, had doubts about the wisdom of having yet another exhibition, following so closely behind those held in Glasgow (1901), Cork (1902) and St Louis (1904), in all of which the DATI had an input. The DATI contributed only towards the cost of the Irish Home Industries section, and the Dublin exhibition received no other government funding, relying mainly on the fundraising efforts of its organisers. As well as gathering together examples of Irish industries, this section contained models of labourers' cottages and a village hall. Within the Home Industries section, Lady Aberdeen found an outlet for promoting her Women's National Health Association (WNHA), which had been established in 1907. On the other hand, the Palace of Fine Arts was prominently located on the grounds. It was divided into seven compartments under the direction of Sir Walter Armstrong (1849-1918), director of the National Gallery of Ireland (who curated works by Irish artists), and Alfred Temple (1848-1928), director of the Guildhall Gallery in London. Temple's decision to include only works from the previous half-century ensured that the display was vibrant and current. The reception to the fine arts section was overwhelmingly positive and had long-term ramifications; Harry Clarke was first introduced to the works of Aubrey Beardsley here.[53] The Irish fine arts section, curated by Armstrong, was just as impressive, with works by William Orpen, Mary Swanzy, Daniel Maclise, John B. Yeats, Walter Osborne, Nathaniel Hone, Charles Shannon, James Barry and John Lavery.[54] This representative selection propelled the exhibition into the newspapers and journals at home and abroad.[55]

Irish novelist Bram Stoker (1847-1912) was commissioned by American magazine *The World's Work* to report on the exhibition. In his review, Stoker, who coined the phrase 'the great white fair' to describe the exhibition, hailed the passing of the era of the stage Irishman and of unrest between landlord and tenant, and asserted that 'there has come in its place a strenuous, industrious spirit spreading its revivifying influence so rapidly over the old country as to be worth more than even historical bitterness.' He pointed out that Ireland was well placed (geographically) to reap a benefit from the attention.[56] Stoker, now permanently resident in London, perhaps had little direct knowledge of the ongoing social tensions at the time, as this period saw the decline of popular interest in Home Rule and the rise of left-wing political groups interested in attaining full independence. Contemporary journalism was not blind to the tensions surrounding the Dublin exhibition: a review in the *Art Journal* commented that 'It is international, and therefore has not attracted the support of every Irishman.'[57] The exhibition aimed to promote Ireland as an island onto itself, progressive in its outlook and with a rapidly expanding industrial and labour force. Progress meant self-sufficiency, and this exhibition was

necessary to broadcast that message.

Perhaps the central contradiction that existed here was that Ireland, in staging the exhibition, had overreaching ambitions, prioritising international relations over its own national political situation. The organisers of the Dublin exhibition desired to present Ireland as an industrial nation, able to compete on an international level with other rapidly industrialising nations at the turn of the century, and thus liberating it from its rural associations. It is apparent that leading figures in the organisation of the exhibition, such as Lady Aberdeen, aligned themselves with romantic nationalism as opposed to political nationalism. Indeed, this was the sort of association that the exhibition sought to avoid in its industrial and craft exhibits. However, by its wholehearted adoption of Celticised motifs and imagery for promotional materials, it served to endow the 'international' scope of the proceedings with a sort of hackneyed, tourist board revivalism.

CONCLUSION

The Irish cottage represents a complicated myriad of associations. On the one hand, it represents a whitewashed, neatly thatched, picturesque image of an idealised Ireland. The more uncomfortable associations include that of emigration, displacement and eviction. Nonetheless, the image of the Irish cottage unites all these exhibitions. While nationalism dominated all aspects of the Celtic revival, different facets of the revival developed their own style in opposition to one another. From what we have seen, the aesthetic presentation of Ireland at these exhibitions was ultimately unthreatening, as the national character was manifested in the figure of the peasant and the thatched cottage, both in the products and in the 'living exhibits'.

The representation of Ireland at these exhibitions, conceived and mediated by a majority Anglo-Irish class, further complicates their interpretation. Other national pavilions at these same shows were state-sponsored, rendering them more 'official' than the philanthropically driven Irish pavilions. Some organisers were more concerned with the industrial progress of Ireland, but for capitalist gain. For the Anglo-Irish Celtic revivalists, the exhibition site became a domain where they could justify their claims of Irishness, yet they struggled within the boundaries of invisible yet precarious definitions of nationality. For philanthropists such as Lady Aberdeen, they could navigate the complicated terrain of Irishness through philanthropic enterprises and the practice of what were, in reality, invented traditions. As with the majority of invented traditions, these 'traditions' were adopted as constituting an Irish identity, at least to an international audience.

Opposing attitudes as to how Ireland should be represented were made apparent by these exhibitions. The imperial ambitions of groups such as the Irish Industries Association contrasted with the small crafts-based mentality of the Dun Emer Guild, and, as a result, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, 'neither the imperial claim to have pacified Ireland, nor the nationalist insistence that there was a clear,

unified Irish culture was well founded. Many visions of what Ireland should be had begun to compete with each other.'[58] Art, national character and colonial manipulation were interchangeable, and a singular concept of Irish nationality remained elusive as the turn of the century approached. The roots of the culture and identity Ireland sought to establish, and the growing spirit of national consciousness, were given substance by archaeological discoveries, complemented by philological and antiquarian research from the 1840s onwards.[59] These influences were broadly on display at Irish pavilions, but seem present only as an exercise in diplomacy, to legitimise the organiser's claim to Ireland's positioning as a hub of industry that could be used for the benefit of the Empire.

Collectively, these exhibitions confirm that Irish identity at the turn of the century was read through its complicated relationship with Britain. Furthermore, the ambition and the hopefulness of the 1907 exhibition was ultimately unfulfilled, as Ireland's dependence on the agricultural economy did not diminish as rapidly as expected. With the foundation of a new state in 1922, and a corresponding heavy adherence to Catholic doctrine, Ireland arguably became more inward-looking. While freedom of expression and creativity in art continued to flourish throughout the twentieth century, it wasn't until the first Rosc exhibition in 1967, more than half a century after the Dublin exhibition of 1907, that Ireland was finally ready to exhibit itself on an international stage.

ENDNOTES

1 Jeanne Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past: the Celtic Revival, 1830-1930* (London, 1980) 147.
2 Elaine Cheasley Paterson, 'Crafting a National Identity: The Dun Emer Guild, 1902-8' in B.T. FitzSimon and J.H. Murphy (eds), *The Irish Revival Reappraised* (Dublin, 2004) 106.
3 Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995).
4 Janice Helland, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries 1880-1914: marketing craft, making fashion* (Dublin, 2007) 12.
5 Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past*, 90.
6 Helland, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries*, 34.
7 See Fintan Cullen's exploration of Ireland as feminised by nineteenth-century artists. Fintan Cullen, *Visual Politics: the representation of Ireland, 1750-1930* (Cork, 1997) 155.
8 Peter Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester, 1991) 42.
9 E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1992) 1.
10 Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 96.
13 The first exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland was held on the 26th November, 1895.
14 [Anon.], 'Progress Made Visible: World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago', www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/fairs/colum.htm, accessed 9th August 2011.
15 The process of commodification relied on the premise that at the bottom everything is for sale and

everything has a price, that the world is reducible to cash terms. C.M. Hinsley, 'The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition', in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds), *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display* (Washington DC, 1991) 362.

16 William B. Yeats, 'The National Theatre and Three Sorts of Ignorance', reprinted in Colton Johnson (ed.), *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats, Vol. X: uncollected articles, reviews and radio broadcasts written after 1900* (New York, 2002) 99-100.

17 "Mrs Ernest Hart's Irish Village at the Chicago Exhibition", *Queen*, 14th October 1893, 638.

18 Johnson (ed.), *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*, 99-100

19 The invention of tradition, according to David Cannadine, occurs in a particular vacuum, or context. It depends on the self-image of the nation, its political power (or, in this case, the lack of), as well as the status, economic and social structure of the country. David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", *c*.1820-1977', in and Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 106.

20 Paul Larmour, *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Ireland* (Belfast, 1992) 53.

21 I. Gordon Aberdeen and Temair, *Ireland at the World's Fair* (Boston, 1893) 20.

22 The Irish Parliamentary split of 1890 was predicated on revelations about MP Charles Stewart Parnell's private life. Parnell had been a leading Irish politician and a prominent figure in the struggle for Irish Home Rule. His subsequent fall from grace was a result of his adulterous affair with Kitty O'Shea, an affair that scandalised Ireland's Catholic elite and caused

23 Helland, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries*, 56.

24 Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 16.

25 Graham Davis, 'Irish Migration to Nineteenth-Century Britain', *North Irish Roots*, 17, no. 1, 2006, 26.

26 Nicola Gordon-Bowe (ed.), *Art and the National Dream: the search for vernacular expression in turn-of-the-century design* (Dublin, 1993) 184.

27 [Anon.], 'Irish Pavilion', *Glasgow International Exhibition (1901): the official guide* (Glasgow, 1901) 31-32.

28 Larmour, *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Ireland*, 57.

29 *ibid.*, 57.

30 The Donegal Industrial Fund had participated in an earlier Glasgow exhibition of 1888, an event which catapulted the Fund onto a larger stage, reaching its peak in Chicago and declining thereafter. Helland, B*ritish and Irish Home Arts and Industries*, 50.

31 Larmour, *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Ireland*, 75.

32 K.R. Byrne, 'The department of agriculture and technical instruction: Administrative structure and educational policy, 1900-1906', *Irish Educational Studies*, 2, no. 1, 2008, 237.

33 '1892 – Kelvingrove Museum Competition, Glasgow', Archiseek online at http://archiseek.com/2009/1892-kelvingrove-museum-competition-glasgow, accessed 16th August 2011.

34 'Irish Pavilion', *Glasgow International Exhibition (1901): The Official Guide*, 32.

35 Bowe (ed.), *Art and the National Dream*, 194.

36 Perilla Kinchin and Juliet Kinchin, *Glasgow's Great Exhibitions, 1888, 1901, 1911, 1938, 1988* (Wendlebury, 1988) 80.

37 Claudia Kinmonth, 'Rags and Rushes: Art and the Irish Artefact, c. 1900', *Journal of Design History*, 14, no. 3, 2001, 183.

38 Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 106.

39 *ibid.*, 58.

40 For example, the Glasgow School of Art would go on to participate in the Cork exhibition. See

Records of the Glasgow School of Art (formerly the Glasgow Government School of Design Ephemera collection), 'Records relating to Cork International Exhibition, 1902', http://epona.lib.ed.ac.uk:1822/cgi-bin/view_isad.pl?id=GB-1694-GSAA-EPH-6&view=basic, accessed 12th August 2011. A recently published book documents the Cork Exhibition in photographs: Daniel Breen and Tom Spalding, T*he Cork International Exhibition 1902-1903: a snapshot of Edwardian Cork* (Dublin, 2014).

[41] B.P. Kennedy, 'The Traditional Irish Thatched Houses', in A.M. Dalsimer (ed.), *Visualising Ireland, national identity and the pictorial tradition* (Boston, 1993) 169.

[42] Malcolm Kelsall, introduction to *The Playboy of the Western World*, by John Millington Synge (London, 1997) xvi.

[43] Dun Emer translates as 'Fort of Emer'. The craft collective was named for Emer, the wife of Cúchulainn, hero of Irish folklore.

[44] Irish International Exhibition pamphlet (Dublin, 1906).

[45] Ruth McManus, *Dublin, 1910-1940: shaping the city and suburbs* (Dublin, 2001) 32, quoted in Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London, 2004) 53.

[46] W.T. Macartney-Filgate (ed.), *Irish rural life and industry, with suggestions for the future* (Dublin, 1907) 281.

[47] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, 56.

[48] *ibid*., 60.

[49] Macartney-Filgate, *Irish rural life and industry*, 307. Reference to a national trademark is also found in *The Irish Homestead* (19th January 19th 1907).

[50] Brian Siggins, *The Great White Fair: the Herbert Park exhibition of 1907* (Dublin, 2007) 56.

[51] Larmour, *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Ireland*, 76 .

[52] Siggins, *The Great White Fair*, 33.

[53] William F. Dennehy, Irish International Exhibition 1907 (Dublin, 1909).

[54] The *Art Journal*, particularly, was extensive in its coverage of the exhibition. Along with its commentary on the exhibition itself, a number of travel articles were dedicated to spots along the west coast of Ireland. These were written by Alfred Yockney and illustrated by W. Monk, and appeared at various times between January and November 1907.

[55] Siggins, *The Great White Fair*, 33.

[56] 'The Irish International Exhibition – I', *Art Journal*, May 1907, 129.

[57] Fintan O'Toole, *The Irish Times Book of the Century* (Dublin, 1999) 39.

[58] Throughout the century, these findings would provide a vocabulary for politics, literature, the revival of the Irish language, music, theatre, dress and the applied arts. Bowe, *Art and the National Dream*, 184-5.