Gender, Nationality and Cultural Representations of Ireland

An Irish Woman's Place?

Lorna Stevens and Stephen Brown

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Pauline Maclaran

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT Ireland has struggled with its 'feminine' identity throughout its history. The so-called 'chasmic dichotomy of male and female' is embedded in colonial and postcolonial constructions of Irishness and it continues to manifest itself in contemporary cultural representations of Ireland and Irishness. This study explores issues of gender and nationality via a reading of a 70-second television advertisement for Caffrey's Irish Ale, titled 'New York'. The article suggests that, although colonial and postcolonial discourse on Ireland continues to perceive the 'feminine' in problematic terms, this is gradually changing as Irish women increasingly, in poet Eavan Boland's words, 'open a window on those silences, those false pastorals, those ornamental reductions' that have confined us.

KEY WORDS advertising ◆ feminism ◆ gender ◆ Ireland ◆ nationality ◆ postcolonialism

INTRODUCTION

Until comparatively recent times Ireland was a text written by men. Not only was it written by men, but Ireland was perceived in both colonial and postcolonial discourse as 'feminine'. The spokesmen for each of the various phases in Ireland's history have articulated, and in varying degrees struggled with, Ireland's 'feminine' identity. Indeed, as this study

The European Journal of Women's Studies Copyright © SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi), Vol. 7, 2000: 405–421 [1350-5068(200011)7:4;405–421;014636]

seeks to illustrate, the so-called 'chasmic dichotomy' of male and female embedded in Irish nationhood (Boland, 1995) is a problematic that continues to manifest itself in cultural representations of Ireland and Irishness.

The cultural representation that forms the basis for this study is a 70-second television advertisement for Caffrey's Irish Ale. Caffrey's Irish Ale was launched on St Patrick's Day in 1994 by Bass Ireland in Belfast. It has proved to be an outstanding commercial success with sales rising to more than £1m per month. The number of public houses selling Caffrey's on draught rose from 1300 to 15,000 in three short years and it is now the market leader in the UK's 'premium ale' segment. The centrepiece of Caffrey's highly successful promotional campaign in 1997 and 1998 was its 70-second television advertisement titled 'New York', with its strap-line 'Strong Words Softly Spoken'. Conceived by an all-male marketing team in Bass Ireland, Belfast, working with an all-male marketing team in a leading British advertising agency, its target market is young men from 18 to 35 in the UK and Ireland (Bass Ireland, pers. comm., 1997).

Advertisements are increasingly regarded as important bearers of meaning in contemporary society (Fowles, 1996), and beer advertisements may be particularly insightful, argues Strate (1992), in terms of the discourse of masculinity they celebrate; a discourse which is about 'challenge, risk and mastery – mastery over nature, over technology, over others in good natured "combat" and over oneself' (Strate, 1992: 82). We suggest that the Caffrey's Irish Ale advertisement provides an ideal starting point not only for how it represents masculinity and femininity but also for how it locates this perceived dualism within the broader dialectics of colonial and postcolonial constructions of nationality. The conflation of gender and nationality is well documented; indeed Howes (1996) suggests that they are two of the most important discourses to shape identity.

We commence this study with a brief discussion of postcolonialist criticism, before going on to offer a historical overview of colonial and post-colonial discourses on Ireland / woman. We then go on to discuss gender and nationhood as illustrated in cultural representations of Ireland and Irishness, with particular emphasis on Irish poetry. This discussion leads us to a reading of the Caffrey's Irish Ale advertisement, a 'personal' and at the same time a 'political' reading, which seeks to address issues of gender and nationality embedded in the text and offer a feminist, post-colonialist interpretation of the advertisement. The purpose of doing so is to transgress boundaries (Schwab, 1996) and give 'the other', namely Irish womanhood, a voice and a space, through a feminist, postcolonialist deconstruction of the advertisement. We conclude with some further discussion of how cultural representations of gender and Irishness continue to revolve and evolve, as Irish women increasingly find a space and a voice, reinterpreting and rewriting the narrative of Ireland and Irishness.

POSTCOLONIALIST CRITICISM: GIVING A VOICE TO 'THE OTHER'

Postcolonialist criticism profoundly questions the traditional, imperialist values of the West, particularly in relation to its degrading or romanticizing figurations of otherness in all its various guises, guises that may range from an exoticizing primitivism to a paranoid vilification (Schwab, 1996). It involves questioning the universalist claims made on behalf of the western intellectual tradition (Barry, 1995; Newton, 1997) and contends that western standards are not timeless, nor absolute, nor incontrovertible but an instantiation of imperialism. At the same time, it celebrates the indigenous approaches, perspectives and traditions suppressed or marginalized by the colonial power. Epitomized by the critical endeavours of Edward Said (1978, 1993), Homi Bhabha (1990) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1990), postcolonialism is as much a reaction to as a rejection of the colonial inheritance. On the one hand, it involves the reclamation of local, regional and national forms of expression, combined with a critique of canonical caricatures of the 'native', the 'oriental', the 'exotic'. On the 'other' hand, postcolonialist discourse does not constitute a complete break, since it invariably employs (or, rather, deploys) the 'mother' tongue, comprises a conversation with the 'centre' and, by its very existence, forces the colonizers to reflect on, and possibly forswear, their own colonialism (Boehmer, 1995).

Postcolonialist criticism, then, is essentially concerned with giving a voice to the marginalized, hitherto silenced 'others', developing readings of otherness that challenge and indeed disrupt colonialist perceptions of the other (Schwab, 1996). Needless to say there are striking parallels between postcolonialist and feminist literary criticism. Both set out to provide a voice and a space for the marginalized, the silenced others, and to offer alternative readings of national texts.

Spivak writes that in oppositional discourse postcolonialist criticism offers specific formations of collective 'identities-in-resistance' (Humm, 1995: 215). To put it another way, perhaps, postcolonialist critics do not speak with a single voice; single voices speak postcolonialist criticism. In keeping with postcolonialist criticism, then, this reading of Caffrey's Irish Ale valorizes a single voice, that of an Irish woman, the doubly silenced, perhaps, in postcolonialist terms. Indeed, as Condren (1995: 176) asserts, 'Irish women . . . were doubly colonized by virtue of their gender.' It is hoped that our reading of this well-known commercial will expose the colonial discourse embedded in the Caffrey's Irish Ale advertisement, and offer an alternative reading in its place, one which valorizes the perspective of Irish womanhood. By so doing we want to go some way to address the already advanced project of Irish women poets, such as Eavan Boland, whose work challenges and dislocates the conventionally accepted fusion

of the feminine and the national, the mythical and the real, by focusing instead on Irish women's lived experience (Mills, 1995).

IRELAND AS COLONIZED 'OTHER'

In her study of gender and history in relation to the work of the poet W.B. Yeats, MacCana writes 'it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of this idea of land and sovereignty conceived in the form of a woman' (cited in Cullingford, 1993: 57). Indeed, as with other colonized countries, gender and nationality are constructed in relation to 'others', and national discourses embrace gender in both metaphoric and concrete terms (Howes, 1996). Ireland's colonization by England began in the 12th century and continued until the Civil War in the early 1920s. Ireland, like other colonized countries such as India and Africa, was indisputably conceived by its imperial masters as feminine, as 'the other', as 'objects of study, bodies of knowledge' assembled and given shape by men (Boehmer, 1995: 72). This visualization of the colonized country as feminine enabled European colonizers to better realize themselves according to 18th-century Enlightenment perceptions of rational man. Throughout its period as a colonized country, its English Protestant colonizers regarded Ireland, a Catholic nation, as a land of primitive and superstitious idolaters (Cairns and Richards, 1988).

Aside from religious and cultural differences Ireland's 'feminine' nature was enmeshed in English discourse on Ireland. It was visualized as a weak, ineffectual woman that needed to be controlled by a strong, resolute man (Britain). The intrinsic femininity of the Irish race was well documented throughout the 19th century by British commentators on the Celtic race, notably Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold, both writing in the 1860s. Matthew Arnold observed that 'the Celt is peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret'. Arnold was following in the footsteps of his contemporary Ernest Renan, who had earlier pronounced that the Celts were 'an essentially feminine race'. Indeed, Renan argued that no other race had 'conceived with more delicacy the ideal of woman, or been more fully dominated by it. It is a sort of intoxication, a madness, a vertigo' (in Cairns and Richards, 1988). When the Celtic race were described in affirmative terms, for example, when their sensitivity, their ethereal qualities, their affinity with nature, their otherworldliness were extolled, these merely served to emphasize their impractical, feminine nature, and worse, their emotional and mental instability, their unfitness to govern themselves and, not least, their revolutionary potential (Cairns and Richards, 1988).

IRELAND AS POSTCOLONIAL NATION

Throughout the 19th century, as Ireland increasingly struggled to shake off the yoke of British colonization, Irish nationalism emerged as a force to be reckoned with. Interestingly, Irish nationalists continued to identify their country as 'feminine', perhaps the only thing they had in common with their oppressors. The traditional romantic perception of Ireland as a woman was embedded in the cultural narrative of Irish nationalism, but this identification was clearly problematic for the makers of the new Ireland. On the one hand Celticism was viewed in affirmative terms as a powerful means of asserting *difference* from its colonial oppressors, and indeed the Irish nationalist tradition represented Ireland as a woman in distress (Howes, 1996). But being a Celt clearly had a problematic side, given the negative connotations attached to the feminine, and this was deemed inappropriate for an oppositional discourse that needed to be suggestive of masculine domination, agency and power (Cairns and Richards, 1988). Indeed, as Meaney (1994: 191) observes, referring to Ashis Nandy's work, this is true of all subject people, who 'in rebelling and claiming independence and sovereignty, aspire to a traditionally masculine role of power'.

Just as British imperialist discourse described Ireland as feminine and therefore inferior, dependent and weak, Irish nationalists too took up a compensatory and exaggerated masculinity and thus were unsure whether to worship or revile those women who took up the cause of Irish nationalism. This was not helped by the British press's reaction to the Irish women who campaigned alongside Irish men, witness *The Times* comments in 1881 that Irish men were 'fighting behind petticoats and pinafores' (in Ward, 1983: 22). Kiberd (1996) argues that the colonial projection of despised 'feminine' qualities on a race led to a diminishment of womanhood at home. This proved to be the case, as is evidenced by the fortunes or rather the misfortunes of women political activists during that time. Indeed despite the political fervour of a number of radical Irish women's groups, including, among others, the Inghinidhe na hEireann ('Daughters of Erin'), started by Maud Gonne in 1900, the Cuman na mBhan ('The Society of Women'), founded in 1914, and the personal charisma of individual activists such as Maud Gonne, Constance Markievicz and Hanna Sheffy-Skeffington, Irish nationalists were more often than not unnerved by these women's 'manly' and 'martial' rhetoric and demeanour (Kiberd, 1996: 398). Eamonn De Valera's phrase 'Women are at once the boldest and most unmanageable revolutionaries' vividly demonstrates this attitude (Ward, 1983: viii). Women's contribution and indeed rights as Irish citizens were soon to be forgotten when Ireland finally won its independence from Britain in the early 1920s and the Irish

Free State was set up. Ireland's first president, De Valera, soon decreed that women's place should once more be the private domain of hearth and home (Valiulis, 1995).

It was hardly surprising that those female figures who resonated with Irish nationalists at the end of the 19th century were women who had sacrificed themselves to the greater good, ideally figures from Ireland's distant past. These strong female figures from Ireland's mythology provided Irish men with an opportunity to idealize contemporary Irish womanhood. Women's sacrifice for the cause of Irish nationalism reinforced the view that realization of self could only be achieved by (female) dedication to the greater glory of the (male) nation (Cairns and Richards, 1988). Thus it fell to women to make the necessary sacrifices so that their fathers, brothers and sons could free Ireland from the yoke of colonialism. While self-sacrifice and martyrdom were idealized and extolled, this inevitably led to a perception of women, those who had often sacrificed most, as 'powerless in their early manifestations to affect the social order' (Condren, 1995: 181).

After the Civil War was over and Ireland at last emerged into a postcolonial future in the 1920s, women continued to be 'the other'. When the political party Fianna Fail came to power in the late 1920s their right-wing, traditionalist values ensured that women were no longer considered relevant to the project of shaping the new nation, and their contribution to the Irish struggle was effectively erased (Ward, 1983). Irish womanhood was again consigned to 'the other', as 'site of contest rather than agent of her own desire' (Kiberd, 1996: 407). Indeed, and somewhat ironically, by the 1930s Irish women were being defined in oppositional terms as the antithesis of Irish men, Irish leaders using rhetoric which drew on the same stereotypes the British had used to describe the Irish and other colonial people (Valiulis, 1995).

READING AND WRITING IRELAND

Kiberd (1996) argues that culture in general and literature in particular have played an important role in the creation of new forms of national identity in postcolonial Ireland. Central to the project of rereading and rewriting Ireland have been the issues of nationhood and gender, played out most vividly perhaps in cultural representations of Ireland and Irishness. Many cultural representations of Ireland within Ireland have portrayed the nation in romantic, 'feminine' terms. For example, W.B. Yeats (1865–1939), as leader of the Celtic revival in Ireland, Ireland's so-called Literary Renaissance, regarded Ireland as manifestly gendered, and that gender was feminine. But his earliest Celtic writings challenged the negative connotations perpetrated by those English commentators who

presumed to define Celticism in negative and subordinate 'feminine' terms. Drawing on Irish myths, legends and folklore, he reinvented Celtic Irishness (the feminine) in oppositional terms to the Anglo-Saxon (the masculine) and in a wholly positive way. For him the Celtic nation represented sensitivity, brilliance and turbulence, springing from an excess of culture and civilization, not a lack of it (Howes, 1996; Welch, 1993). Ireland / woman was thereby repositioned as symbolic of culture, rather than nature. Yeats's assertion of Irishness and Irish tradition manifested itself as a rewriting of Ireland in Romantic, mystical terms with the spirit of Ireland embodied in symbolic female figures such as Cathleen ni Houlihan and Dark Rosaleen (Welch, 1993). Of course, his celebration of and elevation of the feminine led other Irish writers, including James Joyce, to question his 'virility' as a writer, and Yeats's ultimate rejection of Celticism, his turning away from the 'sweet, insinuating feminine voice' of the Celtic Twilight, was in many respects a rejection of the feminine in favour of the masculine (Howes, 1996).

The work of poet Seamus Heaney (born 1939) also illustrates how gender and nationality are inextricably entwined in Irish cultural representations. 'The act of poetic composition', he wrote, 'is a kind of somnambulist encounter between masculine will and intelligence and feminine clusters of images and emotion' in which 'the feminine element . . . involves the matter of Ireland' (Cairns and Richards, 1988: 144). Heaney thus genders and sexualizes the creative process itself, his skills as a male poet being used to shape and master the fluid, bog-like protean darkness of his creative urges. Woman is nature, the earth goddess, to be brought to heel by art and culture. She is a facilitator, a muse, to be shaped and formed by men's creative actions. In both colonial and postcolonial terms, she remains a territory to be possessed (Lillington, 1995). Heaney's project to coopt and articulate the feminine voice merely leads to woman's identification as 'the other', as elsewhere, and to the privileging of the male voice. 'The other' cannot speak for herself; she is defined by and given a voice and indeed a form by the commentator, the viewer, the writer, the outsider. As the Irish woman poet Eavan Boland (born 1944) so cogently expresses it: 'Irish women . . . became part of a corrupt transaction between nationalism and literature which feminized the national and nationalized the feminine . . . their place in the poem was prescribed; it was both silent and passive' (Boland, 1995: 7). If the assumption that the poem was feminine and the poet masculine dominated the creative arena how then could Irish women poets enter that arena (Mills, 1995)?

Idyllic images of Ireland's Edenic primitiveness, its rural simplicity, its Celtic passion and humour, its idiosyncrasies, qualities which had been used to justify colonial oppression, came to be embraced by the Irish themselves and indeed appropriated by both those within and those outside of Ireland engaged in a discourse to redefine Irish cultural and

national identity. Indeed romantic cultural nationalism is still an important aspect of this postcolonial identity construction (McLoone, 1995) and it continues to resonate. It is visible in cinematic representations of Ireland (*The Quiet Man*, 1952, is perhaps the most celebrated example) and it is a style much favoured by both Bord Failte (the Irish Tourist Board) and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to promote Ireland abroad. The use of Romantic imagery is less often used in Irish beer commercials and in that sense the Caffrey's Irish Ale advertising campaign is a highly original variation on a theme. The romanticization of Ireland, seductive and alluring as it is, inevitably goes hand in hand with the romanticization of Irish womanhood, of Irish nationhood, an ongoing cultural project to define both, which may merely serve to reinforce the gender dichotomy which continues to persist in Ireland's cultural fabric. Our project, then, is to 'break with the imagined binaries of the past' (*Feminist Review*, 1995: 3) and challenge the assumptions on which they are based.

The Caffrey's Irish Ale advertisement offers a number of binary oppositions, within an overriding urban vs rural framework. The reading that follows responds to the oppositional discourse of the advertisement and offers an alternative reading of it. We argue that the Caffrey's Irish Ale advertisement evokes a colonial vision of Irishness, which portrays a Romantic, 'feminine' view of the Irish, a perspective which also blends very nicely with constructions of masculinity in the 1990s (see Kimmel, 1996). We believe the advertisement evokes and addresses the gender issues inherent in writing Ireland and Irishness, and raises important points regarding who is in power, who is doing the writing, who is doing the reading and who, exactly, is 'the other' in postcolonial Ireland. We hope that our deconstruction of a popular art form, the advertisement, goes some way to challenge, dislocate and establish a 'dialogue between the mythical and the real in the context of the lived experience of women in Ireland' (Mills, 1995: 69).

CAFFREY'S IRISH ALE: SOME CONTEXTUAL NOTES ON THE READING

Although Caffrey's Irish Ale is a new product, the advertisement stresses its credentials as a traditional beer evoking Ireland and Irishness, appealing to a romanticized view of an idyllic, pastoral past. With its strong cinematographic elements – a strong storyline, good characterization, vivid visual images and the powerful use of music to create the desired effects – it memorably evokes a mood of nostalgia for Ireland and a strong sense of male bonding between the four young friends.

This article began as a discussion about the advertisement but we quickly realized that although we could all admire its virtues as an

advertisement there was an added dimension that we found disconcerting. We felt the advertisement had a subtext which was androcentric and even misogynistic. It seemed to us that the advertisement consistently offered only stereotypical images of women while glorifying and privileging the activities of the men, notably their taste for good beer. In so doing, the makers of the advertisement deliberately put a wedge between male experience and female experience and privileged the former. Our initial responses to the advertisement were therefore highly 'personal' ones (particularly on the part of the two female authors). These responses led us to search the literature on the relationship between gender and nationality in the Irish context, and between colonialism and post-colonialism. In so doing, our 'personal' responses thus found a wider 'political' context that enabled us to better understand some of the uneasiness we felt about the advertisement. The reading that follows, while still a 'personal' and individual reading, is the result of that search for a wider cultural context within which to locate our responses.

CAFFREY'S 'NEW YORK': THE READING

The funky opening chords of that American classic 'The Harlem Shuffle' set the scene: yellow taxi cabs, four young men walking alongside one another down a city street, looking around them, laughing, masters of all they survey, like a rock band, modern-day heroes, slightly wild, slightly dangerous, the journeying questers of male mythology who have left their motherland far behind in search of adventure (Cullingford, 1993). It is apparent from these first scenes that we are in the domain of the cult of brotherhood, a domain in which women have no place (Benton, 1995). As befits this domain, the men look suitably revolutionary. One, for example, resembles Che Guevara, complete with black beret, one wears dark glasses, one has dark, flowing locks; the fourth is not yet visible to us. There are flashes of unpeopled cityscape, of tall buildings, then we are in a crowded bar and see the barman, fat, pasty-faced, middle-aged, cigarette behind his ear, calling out orders; an American. We see a plump, middle-aged barwoman, improbably dark hair swept up off her forehead in a lacquered roll, saying 'we need ice, baby', in a drawling American twang.

The first glimpse of Caffrey's on draught. One of the young men leads his friends through the crowded bar. He is a vision of long, dark hair, fine, sensitive features, a dark Adonis, a Byronic hero, moving slowly, dreamily, through the mass of people. The music has by now become a driving, repetitive, rhythmic beat. In contrast to this vision of male perfection, we encounter an ageing glamour puss: blonde bouffant, diamanté earrings and necklace, leopard-skin print coat, black elbow-length gloves,

saying 'so I could make my point'. Then we see a morose elderly man in profile, beside him a flash of cleavage. The individuals we see, their age, their harsh accents, their ordinariness verging on ugliness, contrast with the fine young men moving among them, dreamlike, different, together. This is an accolade, a celebration of virile young men, of man in his prime, unlike the image of woman. She is a parody of womanhood, a once glamorous sex symbol clinging desperately to the last remnants of her sexual allure, a caricature, an image meant to cause derision in male hearts.

Our first close-up of the hero follows, playing pool. He is lean-faced, with a long, stubbled chin; brown haired, of melancholy demeanour, an Irish wolfhound in human form. He wears a brown leather jacket and speaks in a soft Irish brogue, his voice lilting, pleasing to the ear, in contrast to the harsh American accents around him: '12 ball all the way down there'. He is serious, intent. Despite the noise, the jostling bodies, he is focused on the pool table, about to demonstrate his talent. A fat, elderly man with moribund features sits against the wall, shirt buttons fit to burst as they strain over a beer belly. The ageing glamour girl complains: 'it was 12 o'clock at night!' Meanwhile the Irish wolfhound, our Celtic dreamboat, prepares to hit the ball. Clearly a man with a mission this, who takes his pool seriously, unlike one of his friends, weak-chinned, coarse-mouthed, ordinary-looking, who is staring transfixed, mouth agape, at an attractive, smiling game show hostess on a television screen; 'the power of television is a fascinating thing' he drawls in a deadpan American voice.

Our hero strikes the ball. We have a quick flash of a young attractive, unsmiling, pony-tailed barmaid, then a black man says 'Othello is behind the curtain', another fragment of conversation to add to the eclectic mix. Our hero strikes the ball again. Byron stands beside the scoreboard, saying 'you cheat, I cheat', matter-of-factly. Snatches of conversation, glimpses of faces, talking heads, jostling bodies – the scenes are clearly framed within an anti-urban discourse of alienation, materialism and disharmony (Williams, 1973). We return to the pretty barmaid and glasses being washed. The plain one, clearly the buffoon, the joker in the pack, says something amusing to Che. Our Celtic hero, a suggestion of a smile on his face, says in slightly reprimanding tones, 'we're trying to play pool here boys!' Such dedication, such concentration; clearly this man is oblivious to the clamour, the noise, the shenanigans, the urban grotesquerie all around him. The tousle-haired barmaid has now inexplicably livened up and is gyrating, arms aloft, in time to the driving beat. The joker, open-mouthed yet again, watches her strut her stuff and cannot take his eyes off her. Nor can the other men lined up along the bar, who by now are rocking backwards and forwards in time to the music, egging her on, enjoying the show. 'Shake, shake, shake, shake your tail feather baby.' This is the unreason attributed to women by Aristotle: wild, unreasoning

nature, there to be tamed by culture, reason and, of course, man (Ward, 1996).

Except our Celtic hero, of course. As the jester sips from a fresh pint of Caffrey's – the hero's Caffrey's, we presume – he comes alongside him and looks at him in disgust: 'thanks a bunch'. This guy is clearly on a different plane from the mere mortal men around him, immune to the obvious charms of loose women displaying themselves, above the lusts of ordinary men; all he is interested in is his pool and his pint. He is, after all, the archetypal hero of the cult of brotherhood, one who forswears all contact with womankind (Benton, 1995). The joker, somewhat abashed, beer foam dripping from his upper lip, shuts his mouth, as our hero calls 'Give a Caffrey's here *please*!' The last word rings out, echoes, and the music changes to the melodic, evocative strains of romantic, haunting music, music that evokes Ireland and Irishness. A pint of Caffrey's Irish Ale fills the screen, in shades of brown and cream, slowly settling, and then the camera circles round from the side of our hero to the front of him and behind him are the green fields of Erin.

We see an old boat, abandoned in a field; a dimly lit, rural pub, apparently deserted except for an old man in a cloth cap, his greyhound standing in front of him, who slowly turns his head to look out the window. Perhaps he is thinking about the world beyond his world – the world beyond his pint, his drinking companion, and his dog. Still lifes of rural Ireland, calm and gentle images of peace and quiet. In fast motion now we see the sunlight flitting between scudding clouds, dappling the Irish landscape, almost surreal, yet recognizably of Ireland.

And then a very different image of womanhood from the ones we have seen up to now appears before us, flickering images recalling stills from an old cine-camera reel, emerging out of the mists of time and coming into focus. She materializes before us, a beautiful young woman, standing alone in the midst of an Irish bog, a romantic image that traditionally represents Ireland and the desire for a free nation (Howes, 1996). She has long, untamed, auburn hair; brown clothing; a long, loose coat flapping about her, cloak-like. A woman born of Ireland, clothed in its colours, the earth, the land, our land, Ireland. She is Maeve, goddess of the land, symbol of nationhood, of Ireland's struggle to shake off the yoke of its colonial oppressors (Cullingford, 1993). We see her face, her pale skin, then she is walking away, but she turns to look at us, pale, strands of hair falling across her face as she does so, her expression sad, perhaps reproachful. She is his *spéirbhean* (the beautiful woman awaiting her lover), at once desirable and chaste, waiting for him to return to her (Cullingford, 1993). She stands in watchful silence, an age-old symbol of dispossession and loss, appealing to a male agent for justice and restitution (Mills, 1995).

We are in the dark pub again and see a very different face, an old man's

time-worn, solemn face, and then both old men are revealed to be sitting together on the wooden pub bench, silent, the only movement being the hand of the first man as he strokes his greyhound's back. We see an Irish village street, deserted, except for a racehorse running down it, saddleless, a vision of freedom, escape, of masculine energy and vitality, of purpose and potency; a symbol of the adventuring male perhaps, the quester, an absent son. We see a middle-aged woman with wild, black hair and fine features, beauty still discernible on her face, a shawl about her shoulders. She is rooted to the hearth and home but watches from her doorstep, the threshold of her world, as the horse with its elegant flanks and carefully clipped gleaming body races past her. Is this our hero's mother? She stands, forever fixed, forever stable. She is Mother Ireland, that all-encompassing and powerfully recurrent metaphor to which we return again and again (Mills, 1995), the motherland, symbol of the integrity of the past, icon of national values, custodian of tradition (Boehmer, 1995). She has watched her son depart and now waits, uncomplaining, immobilized, for his return, a symbol of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, De Valera's ideal woman (Valiulis, 1995).

We are transported back to our Celtic dreamer in the bar, a slight hint of a smile on his long, brooding face. He casts his eyes down to break the spell and return from his reveries, but the dreamlike mood continues. We observe his friends, two standing still, Byron passing behind them in slow motion, watching them, silent. Our hero raises his pint, mutely, intently. Finally we see the Celtic dreamer's three friends, pints of Caffrey's Irish Ale in hand, standing together but apart, wordless, facing us. Our hero's Caffrey's-inspired epiphany has transformed his friends, nay, his brothers, into strong silent types, icons of 1990s masculinity, sensitive but sure, bound together by this rite of male bonding, beer bonding, this shared love of Caffrey's Irish Ale.

In many ways the scene seems to recall the triumph of the Celtic warriors of ancient times, whose strength depended on their separation, their going away from women, from their homeland; the cult of the warrior that replaced the cult of the mother in Ireland, the cult that worships woman, the land, nature, yet fears her power, the curse of the goddess Macha, the Great Mother Goddess (Condren, 1989). The cult of brotherhood has no place for real women; underlying it is a fear and mistrust of women. At best women only exist in this narrative as images of absolute loyalty (Benton, 1995), and of course we are offered two powerful images of 'the iconic feminine' to reinforce this message (Mills, 1995). Our protagonist is clearly on a heroic quest for personal and cultural identity, a quest that is always away from his motherland, but one which forever takes him back, nostalgically, to the past (Boehmer, 1995). He may not have his mammy, his da, his fair colleen, but what he has got is *better*: he has got his personal quest, his brothers-in-arms, and

he has got his Caffrey's Irish Ale. The last has the power to summon up his loved ones to him, a Caffrey's-induced return of the native to his mother country, dear 'ould' Ireland, beautifully captured in the romantic images of 'soft primitiveness' which we see, images which deny the material of existence and instead seek to capture 'an idealized essence' (McLoone, 1995), images which ideally suit the nostalgic mood that now prevails, a mood that captures the very essence of Irish cultural nationalism itself (Hutchinson, 1987).

Yes, this is an Irish man's world, and women are where Irish men's women are so often found: at once adored and ignored, consigned to non-existence (Kennelly, 1994). After all, this myth of brotherhood requires the expungement of the reality of women and the erasure of real contact with women (Benton, 1995). They are in our hero's head and in their place; forever separate, different, fearsome; untouched, untouchable; symbols as pure as the Blessed Virgin Mary herself; to be conjured up when the Celtic mood takes him and then put away again, forever enshrined in his Irish heart. An Irish colleen, alone on a desolate moor, calls his name, waiting patiently, as the women of Ireland have waited from time immemorial, for their men to come home, his long-suffering *spéirbhean*, whose narrative of suffering evokes Ireland's cultural narrative of suffering, of Irish nationhood itself (Cairns and Richards, 1988; Howes, 1996; Hutchinson, 1987).

And what can bring the two very different worlds we see portrayed, the old, rural, romanticized world of Ireland and the new, urban, materialistic world of America, together? How can our Celtic hero recapture the essence of his motherland and revisit it in spirit, if not in flesh? Why, with a decent pint, of course, that archetypal symbol of Irish masculinity, of male blood brotherhood and bonding. With that and a few kindred (male) spirits a man can recall his past; he can get in touch with his inner nature, the poet, the dreamer, the lover, the son. He is a creation of the discourse of Celticism after all, a man born into a country conceived in colonial discourses as feminine, a Celticism taken up and later abandoned by Yeats because it was effeminate, blurred and melancholy (Howes, 1996), but which persists into present times, bound up as it is with notions of cultural and national identity. Yes, he is strong; he is a Celtic warrior; but he is born of a feminine race, with a tear ever ready to glisten behind his smile (Arnold, 1867, Renan, 1896, in Cairns and Richards, 1988). He has a soft Irish heart that can be opened by Caffrey's Irish Ale. Strong words *softly spoken*.

DISCUSSION

The preceding reading has offered an interpretation of the Caffrey's Irish Ale advertisement that critiques its colonial representation of Irishness (not

to mention its old world colonial snobbery in relation to how it represents the new world of America, but that is another story) and seeks to offer a postcolonial, feminist interpretation in its place. In doing so, Ireland / woman is given a voice over and above Ireland / new man and Europe / traditional man. In its depiction of gender the advertisement embodies and endorses cultural stereotypes, androcentric archetypes of Irish womanhood, framed within the broader cultural stereotype of Ireland as an inherently feminine nation. As we hope our interrogation has demonstrated, Caffrey's portrayal of gender is predicated upon unregenerate notions of femininity: the antiquated dualisms of Madonna / Medusa, virgin / whore, Venus / virago and sacred / profane. These are themselves situated within broader dialectics we have also alluded to in the reading: those of passive(female) / active(male), home(female) / away(male), urban (male) / rural(female), materialism(male) / spirituality(female), America (male) / Ireland(female). Ambivalence and binary thinking are always part of the colonizer's relation to colonial others and are locked into British ways of thinking about Ireland and the Irish (*Feminist Review*, 1995). We think the Caffrey's advertisement amply demonstrates this.

The whole purpose of postcolonial criticism is to read *au rebors* (against the grain), to offer antithetical insights into literary and non-literary texts, to enfranchise the voices of the disenfranchised, and to press the oppressed into self-serving service (Newman, 1997). For feminist critics, furthermore, it is not enough for us merely to highlight the gender issues embedded in a text. The point, rather, is to change the world, as it is in the activity of reading that literature is realized as praxis. 'Literature', as Schweickart (1986: 39) expresses it, 'acts on the world by acting on its readers'. If we accept that advertisements are one of the most pervasive means of communication then we think they are worthy of serious critique, given that they both reflect and indeed affect cultural norms and values.

In offering our critique of Caffrey's Irish Ale's 'New York', we add our voices to those of others who are rereading and rewriting Ireland; the fragmented, ongoing process of Irish identity creation in postcolonial times (Kiberd, 1996). The Irish poet Eavan Boland writes that she articulates the female voice in order to 'strengthen by subversion' how Ireland and Irishness is rewritten, and to open a window on 'those silences, those false pastorals, those ornamental reductions' that have confined women (Boland, 1995: 3). At the same time, she has acknowledged that these images, however distorted, have their roots in a suffered truth (Boland, 1994). Boland believes that Irish women poets are 'subverting and destabilizing a conventionally accepted fusion of the feminine and the national. This is achieved through direct challenge, through dislocation and through establishing a dialogue between the mythical and the real in the context of the lived experience of women in Ireland' (Boland, 1995: 69).

Irish women, then, are no longer the silent objects of poetry but are now increasingly the authors of it and as such can transform Ireland's poetic tradition. We hope that this deconstruction of a different medium, the television advertisement, also goes some way to 'strengthen by subversion' how Ireland and Irishness is represented, and more importantly, perhaps, how Ireland should be represented. As history shows us, these constructions cannot be dismissed as meaningless or harmless. They need to be continually challenged and struggled over, as part of an ongoing project that ensures Irish women's voices are heard above and beyond the romantic cultural nationalist narrative that persists in representations of Ireland and of Irishness, representations that persist in categorizing and oppressing us as Irish women.

REFERENCES

Barry, Peter (1995) *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Benton, Sarah (1995) 'The Militarization of Politics in Ireland 1913–23', *Feminist Review* (Special issue: 'The Irish Issue: The British Question') 50 (Summer): 148–72.

Bhabha, Homi, K., ed. (1990) *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge.

Boehmer, Elleke (1995) *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford: Opus Books / Oxford University Press.

Boland, Eavan (1994) 'A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition', *A Dozen Lips*. Dublin: Attic Press.

Boland, Eavan (1995) 'The Irish Woman Poet: Her Place in Irish Literature', pp. 31–47 in Chris Morash (ed.) *Creativity and its Contexts*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press.

Cairns, David and Shaun Richards (1988) *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Condren, Mary (1989) *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*. New York: HarperCollins.

Condren, Mary (1995) 'Sacrifice and Political Legitimation: The Production of Gendered Social Order', *Irish Women's Voices: Past and Present, Journal of Women's History* 6(4) / 7(1) (Winter / Spring): 160–89.

Cullingford, Elizabeth Butler (1993) *Gender and History in Yeats' Love Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Feminist Review (1995) 'Editorial: The Irish Issue, The British Question', 50 (Summer): 1–4.

Fowles, John (1996) *Advertising and Popular Culture*. London: Sage.

Howes, Marjorie (1996) *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Humm, Maggie (1995) *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, 2nd edn. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall / Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Hutchinson, John (1987) *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Kennelly, Brendan (1994) 'Introduction', p. xxiii in A. Donovan, N. Jeffares and B. Kennelly (eds) *Ireland's Women: Writings Past and Present*. London: Kyle Cathie.

Kiberd, Declan (1996) *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. London: Vintage.
Kimmel, Michael S. (1996) *Manhood in America*. New York: The Free Press.
Lillington, Karlin J. (1995) 'Woman as "Elsewhere": Seamus Heaney's "Feminine" Voice', pp. 276–86 in E. Patten (ed.) *Returning to Ourselves*, Second Volume of Papers from the John Hewitt International Summer School. Belfast: Lagan Press.
McLoone, Martin (1995) 'The Primitive Image: Tradition, Modernity and Cinematic Ireland', pp. 310–24 in E. Patten (ed.) *Returning to Ourselves*, Second Volume of Papers from the John Hewitt International Summer School, Belfast: Lagan Press.
Meaney, Geraldine (1994) 'Sex and Nation: Women in Irish Culture and Politics', *A Dozen Lips*. Dublin: Attic Press.
Mills, Lia (1995) ' "I Won't Go Back to It": Irish Women Poets and the Iconic Feminine', *Feminist Review* (Special issue: 'The Irish Issue: The British Question') 50 (Summer): 69–88.
Newman, Judie (1997) *The Ballistic Bard: Postcolonial Fictions*. London: Arnold.
Newton, K.M., ed. (1997) *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
Said, Edward W. (1978) *Orientalism*. London: Routledge.
Said, Edward W. (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto and Windus.
Schwab, Gabriele (1996) *The Mirror and the Killer Queen: Otherness in Literary Language*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Schweickart, Patrocinio P. (1986) 'Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading', pp. 31–62 in E.A. Flynn and P.P. Schweickart (eds) *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts and Contexts*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1990) *The Post-Colonialist Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. New York: Routledge.
Strate, L. (1992) 'Beer Commercials: A Manual on Masculinity', pp. 78–92 in S. Craig (ed.) *Men, Masculinity and the Media*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Valiulis, Maryann Gialanella (1995) 'Power, Gender, and Identity in the Irish Free State', *Irish Women's Voices: Past and Present, Journal of Women's History* 6(4) / 7(1) (Winter / Spring): 117–36.
Ward, J.K., ed. (1996) *Feminism and Ancient Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
Ward, Margaret (1983) *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism*. London: Pluto Press.
Ward, Margaret (1995), 'Conflicting Interests: The British and Irish Suffrage Movements', *Feminist Review* (Special issue: 'The Irish Issue: The British Question') 50 (Summer): 127–47.
Welch, Robert, ed. (1993) *W.B. Yeats: Writings on Irish Folklore, Legend and Myth*. London: Penguin.
Williams, Raymond (1973) *The Country and the City*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Lorna Stevens *is a lecturer in marketing at the University of Ulster, Magee College in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. Her research interests lie in the area of feminist perspectives and gender issues in marketing and consumer behaviour, including postmodern perspectives on consumption and popular culture. Address: School of International Business, University of Ulster, Magee College, Londonderry, Northern Ireland BT48 7JL, UK. [email: lmr.stevens@ulst.ac.uk]*

Stephen Brown *has written and edited a number of books on marketing, including* Postmodern Marketing *(London: Routledge, 1995),* Postmodern Marketing Two: Telling Tales *(London: International Thomson, 1997) and* Romancing the Market *(London: Routledge: 1998). He is Professor of Marketing Research at the University of Ulster, Jordanstown, Northern Ireland.*

Pauline Maclaran *is Reader in Marketing at De Montfort University in Leicester, UK. Her main research interests are: feminist perspectives and gender issues in marketing and the theoretical and philosophical assumptions therein; and the utopian dimensions of contemporary consumption, as displayed in festival shopping malls.*

◆