

The Knit of a Nation?

How Irishness was marketed
to the world by the Aran
sweater (1950-1980)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2017, the Museum of Modern Art in New York housed its second-ever fashion exhibition (the first was in 1944) entitled *Items: Is Fashion Modern?*, showcasing 111 fashion items which had become (and remain) ubiquitous and iconic symbols of the design landscape of the 20th century and beyond. The exhibition's deliberately provocative title aimed to draw attention to the contradictory nature of modern fashion, which simultaneously straddles positions of ephemerality and timelessness.¹ In amongst the pieces like Levi's 501s, Aviator sunglasses, the hoodie, and the hijab, was the Aran sweater, a traditional piece of woollen knitwear from the remote rocky outcrop that is the Aran Islands, off Ireland's West Coast. The inclusion of the Aran sweater in such an exhibition would appear to cement its position as a quintessential piece of stylish modern clothing: a practical warm jumper, monochrome, but with subtle yet distinctive patterns that, depending on the context (or the wearer), could even be described as cool. However, the image of the Aran sweater is not so simple or one-sided. As with pints of Guinness, leprechauns and shamrocks, various developments in the latter half of the twentieth century have seen it evolve into "more than a garment", but a tangible symbol of Irishness recognised the world over."² Today it is often the souvenir of choice for those looking to bring home an authentic but fashionable heritage item that exudes notions of romantic, rural simplicity; one that may even bind them to their Celtic ancestry. The Aran sweater, then, occupies a dual space: in certain contexts it is a modern fashion item, in others it is a kitsch touristic keepsake, yet consistently it is symbolic of Ireland. Within this paradigm there is a problem: The ever-changing nature of fashion does not necessarily sit well with the notionally more static concept of nationhood, particularly when fashion is exposed to global markets.

Symbols have long been employed intentionally or otherwise in the formation of national identities, as Anthony Smith has argued with his conceptualisation of the *ethnie*, or "populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with

¹ Paola Antonelli and Michelle Millar Fisher, *Items: Is Fashion Modern* (New York: MoMA, 2017). 15.

² Vawn Corrigan, *Irish Aran, History Tradition Fashion* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2019). 1.

a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity”.³ The Aran sweater is a garment that is bundled up in myth and culture, with a region-specific history synonymous with the West of Ireland that has been adopted by the island as a whole, and by those looking to capitalise on Irish heritage. However, as will be outlined in the second chapter, much of this is a far more recent development than many marketing departments would have consumers believe, and, as such, it appears analogous with what Hobsbawm and Ranger have termed “the invention of tradition”, or further still with Anderson’s “imagined communities”.⁴ In spite of this recent history it has still managed to become what McQuillan describes in her seminal work ‘The Aran Sweater’ as an “unconquerable symbol of Irish style and almost an Irish national emblem”.⁵ To date, there have been a number of in-depth studies on the history of the sweater. The work of scholars such as Siún Carden and Richard Rutt has served to debunk myths suggesting its root in antiquity.⁶ Similarly, its relationship with the Irish national identity is touched upon again by Carden, and by Burke.⁷ However, its status “almost a national emblem” is often taken as a given, and this is a topic that merits further exploration, particularly in relationship to its representation in the media and popular culture, and furthermore due to its role as a fashion symbol. The ever-changing nature of fashion does not necessarily sit well with the more supposedly static concept of nationhood, particularly when fashion is exposed to global markets. Likewise, the shift in its image from a sophisticated fashion piece in the 1950s to an almost tongue-in-cheek indicator of Irishness (in certain contexts) by the 1970s indicates a fluid, rather than stationary, symbolism, and this development is analysed in this thesis. Over the course of its history, different interest groups have all played a part in its popularisation: the knitters themselves; folk acts; the Irish (and international) wool industry; the Irish tourist board; and even the Irish government itself. This thesis therefore intends to explore how the Aran sweater’s

³ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1986). 32.

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and Benedict Anderson. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

⁵ Deirdre McQuillan, *The Aran Sweater* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1993), back cover.

⁶ Siún Carden “Cable-Crossings: The Aran Jumper as Myth and Merchandise”. *Costume* 14 no. 2 (2014), and Richard Rutt, *A History of Hand-Knitting* (London: B.T Batsford Ltd., 1987).

⁷ Siún Carden “The Aran Jumper”. In *Design Roots: Culturally Significant Designs, Products and Practices*, eds. Stuart Walker, Martyn Evans, Tom Cassidy, Jeyon Jung and Amy Twigger Holroyd, (London: Bloomsbury 2018) 67-78, and Mary Burke, “The Cottage, The Castle and The Couture Cloak: ‘Traditional’ Irish Fabrics and ‘Modern’ Irish Fashions in America, c. 1952-1969”. *Journal of Design History* 31, no.4 (2018).

convoluted image of being modern but traditional; cool but kitsch, came about during this time, why it occurred, and what influence it has had on the perceived notion of Irishness.

Research Question, Sub-Questions, and Justifying the Periodisation

Taking the above into account this thesis asks:

- How was Irishness marketed to the world through the Aran sweater and what are the implications for this on the garment as a national symbol?

As a fashion item and a symbol of Ireland the Aran sweater treads somewhat uneven ground. It is not uncommon for national *costumes* to be considered national symbols, but this is a more precarious role for the more transient fashion garments to occupy. The theme during this period has been examined by scholars such as Burke and de Cléir, but their studies have been concerned with the Irish fashion industry as a whole.⁸ Conversely, similar studies have been done on other traditional fashion icons outside of Ireland but which are garment and fabric-specific, such as Anderson in *Tweed* and Helgadottir's "Nation in a sheep's coat: The Icelandic sweater".⁹ Following this thread, it is hoped that by focusing on the Aran sweater alone, a more fine-tuned conclusion surrounding its status as a constantly changing garment within the realm of fashion, in contrast to its position as a national symbol can be reached, and that an overall richer history of the garment will be mapped out. The following sub-questions are posed at the beginning of each chapter to steer the discussion and analysis:

- Chapter 2: In what context did the storytelling surrounding the Aran sweater's origins develop?
- Chapter 3: How did early advertisements of the Aran sweater portray Irishness?
- Chapter 4: What effects did the mass-marketing of the Aran sweater have on the portrayal of Irishness in advertisements?

⁸ Burke, "The Cottage", and Síle de Cléir. "Creativity in the Margins: Identity and Locality in Ireland's Fashion Journey" *Fashion Theory, The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*. Vol.15. No. 2 (2011): 201-224.

⁹ Fiona Anderson, *Tweed* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), and Gudrun Helgadottir. "Nation in a sheep's coat: The Icelandic sweater". *FormAkademisk - Forskningstidsskrift for Design Og Designdidaktikk*, 4, no. 2 (2011).

- Chapter 5: Did over-exposure to market influences reduce the Aran sweater's cachet?

The time period of 1950-1980 was chosen following preliminary research which revealed significant turning points in each decade, plotting a developmental arc in the changing perception and status of the Aran sweater during this time. The periodisation of historical marketing research has been problematized most notably by Hollander et al., who note the restrictions it can have in terms "reductionism", "duration", "consistency" and conveying a "false sense of progress".¹⁰ However, they conclude "that the most appropriate technique for periodizing marketing history is to use turning points in the material itself being studied."¹¹ In the case of the Aran sweater, the beginning of each decade considered here is punctuated by a significant event which marked how the trajectory of the Aran sweater changed, and thus its status as a national symbol developed in different ways. Firstly, the Republic of Ireland was proclaimed in 1949, and by 1951 it had established the Irish Export Board, dramatically changing how Irish products were marketed abroad, and influencing how the Aran . In 1961 The Clancy Brothers (Ireland's biggest cultural export of the decade) appeared on US TV for the first time to an audience of 50 million viewers wearing Aran sweaters, the garment was etched into the American pop culture overnight, the sweater was ushered into an era of mass-appeal. Then in 1971, a campaign was launched in Ireland between Pure New Wool (an Australian wool authenticating body) and Opel (the German car manufacturer). A discourse analysis of an Aran sweater ad from this campaign highlights the jumbled, hyper-commodified marketing that now influenced what was supposedly a national symbol, and was indicative of trends to follow. Of course, time is a fluid concept and decades are somewhat arbitrary labels which are societally- constructed. Thus there are instances where trends overlap or phenomena occur at different times in different places, so this s a general guideline. For example, when discussing the popularity of the Aran sweater in Japan, the analysis extends slightly into the 1980s. However, in an effort to both impose useful "parameters on historical investigation by identifying criteria or principles that allow the historian to sort through masses of material and identify patterns", and to

¹⁰ Stanley C. Hollander, Kathleen M. Rassuli, D. G. Brian Jones, and Laura Farlow Dix, "Periodization in Marketing History" *Journal of Macromarketing* 25, no. 1 (June 2005): 38-39.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

“facilitate understanding”, these broad labels, which also begin with significant turning points, have been applied.¹²

Theoretical Background

This thesis employs two main concepts as part of its theoretical background. These aid the deciphering and analysis of the storytelling and advertising elements of the Aran sweater story.

The first of these is Storytelling Theory, the basic tenet of which holds that, in marketing, stories speak to a deeper part of the human consciousness than straight facts do, and these make certain brands and products more memorable, identifiable and give them longer staying power. The intricacies of Storytelling Theory are outlined extensively by Woodside et al. in “When Consumers and Brands Talk: Storytelling Theory and Research in Psychology and Marketing”.¹³ How stories actually achieve this works on a psychological level, the science of which is beyond the scope of this thesis, but which is outlined by Woodside et al. in a highly comprehensive and understandable manner. The main reason why stories are so effective is explained as follows. Firstly, Woodside et al. note that humans tend to think in a narrative way, rather than an argumentative one, and that most of our memories are stored and recalled in an episodic manner, where incidents and experiences feature prominently.¹⁴ When brands and products are promoted through storytelling, consumers can identify with and even assume certain primal archetypal roles such as “the hero”, or “the rebel”.¹⁵

Woodside et al. cite the earlier influential work of Holt who examined the process of storytelling in *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*.¹⁶ Using numerous case studies, Holt proposes that certain brands (or in our case products) “become iconic when they perform identity myths”, which enable consumers to “forge tight

¹² Ibid., 35.

¹³ Arch G. Woodside, Suresh Sood, Kenneth E. Miller, “When Consumers and Brands Talk: Storytelling Theory and Research in Psychology and Marketing”, *Psychology & Marketing* 25, no.2 (February 2008).

¹⁴ Ibid., 99.

¹⁵ Ibid., 100.

¹⁶ Douglas Holt, *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*, (Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2004).

emotional connections to the brand”.¹⁷ He goes on to say that iconic brands “typically use commercial media to weave their stories into the culture”, and as this is repeated over time, consumers begin to identify the myth in the markers of that brand, such as its name, logo and design. In the case of this thesis, these “markers” would include the ‘Aran sweater’ name itself, as well as the báinín wool, and the ornate stitching patterns. These ideas behind the impact of storytelling in marketing are applied to the mass media publications of the Aran sweater, in order to assess its status as an iconic product, symbolic of Ireland. Furthermore, the application of this theoretical framework allows us to examine the relationship between the consumer and the Aran sweater, how it spoke to the emotional and identity-based sensibilities of consumers on a conscious and sub-conscious level, and why marketing influences behind Aran sweaters persistently implemented storytelling as part of their branding and marketing practices.

Because of the importance the media played in pushing these myths and stories to the masses, this thesis examines popular advertisements and publications promoting the Aran sweater. For the analysis of the publications, Guy Cook’s ‘discourse analysis’ from *The Discourse of Advertising* will be employed.¹⁸ “Discourse”, according to Cook, involves a combination of “text”, that is the actual language used in an advertisement, and “context”. “Context” is more complex and is broken down under the following headings: substance, music and pictures, paralanguage, situation, co-text, intertext, participants and function.¹⁹ “Participants” refers to those who send and receive the advertisements. On the sender side of things this could include designers, producers, authors and sponsors, while the receivers could be tourists, consumers or observers. This is particularly significant to this thesis as it considers the many influences behind the popularisation of the Aran sweater, such as the Irish Export Board, and the international bodies which they recruited for consultancy on how Irish products could be marketed. There is also a variety on the receiver end of the scale, whose perception of the publications can vary depending on their heritage and nationality, their position as tourists in Ireland, or other factors, such as their economic means.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Guy Cook, *The Discourse of Advertising*, Second Edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁹ Ibid., 4.

The interplay between participants and the function of the advertisement can yield compelling insights into the socio-economic context in which they were published, and, as we shall see, with relation to Aran sweaters and Irishness, this can change and hold different significances over time. Furthermore, the discourse analysis framework allows for a wide range of publications to be considered as advertisements, highlighting that there are other “genres” of publications “which *become* ads by being used in a particular way”.²⁰ The genre of advertisements considered in this thesis ranges from traditional advertisements, to knitting booklets, album covers, movie posters, newspaper clippings and tourist posters. Cook’s criteria in general have provided a useful framework for examining publications and deciphering them beyond a more basic, perfunctory observation.

Literature Review

The research for this thesis required a broad range of secondary reading, from historical theories to specific pieces on the Aran sweater itself. The most significant pieces consulted in this thesis are discussed chronologically here. As much of the literature relates to developments in fashion, it appears in waves, as fashion tends to do. Remarkably, the first Aran sweater-specific publications appear only in the early 1990s.

One of the earliest and most relevant texts consulted in this thesis is Hobsbawm and Ranger’s *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), which is useful when considering the Aran sweater, as the concept, in essence, takes shape as a result of persistent storytelling. They define invented tradition as “a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual of symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”²¹ Arguably the most prominent example from their book is that of Scottish tartan, which, in spite of its image as being of ancient Celtic origin and representing Scottish clans of antiquity, was actually a more recent development from the 18th century. However, in its relatively short history, it has come to be a universally recognised symbol of Scotland. Given that the history of the Aran sweater has been made out by various marketers to be

²⁰ Ibid., 10.

²¹ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction”. In *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). 1.

centuries old, and that it has come to occupy a prominent space in Irish symbolism, we can then apply these ideas to representations of the Aran sweater in the media. Hobsbawm notes that invented traditions “are highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the 'nation', with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest “. ²² When viewed through this lens, the Aran sweater becomes more than a simple knitwear garment, but a vehicle for national identity, employed to make the sweater more appealing. Hobsbawm also concludes by saying “the study of the invented tradition is interdisciplinary”, legitimising the novel approach adopted in this thesis, which will analyse mostly visual primary sources as a means to ascertain the role of invented tradition in the marketing of the Aran sweaters. ²³

Several years later, Richard Rutt’s *A History of Hand-Knitting* (1987) ambitiously attempted to give a concise account of knitting over the past 500 years, and devotes a generous five pages to the knitting of the Aran Islands. ²⁴ Rutt discusses the convoluted history of the jumper’s iconic patterns, the symbolic nature of which were popularised by a German visitor to Ireland, Heinz Kiewe, in his book *The Sacred History of Knitting* (1967). Rutt, however, concludes that they cannot be thousands of years old, but are rather a 20th century amalgamation of various fishing sweaters of the British Isles, combined with expertise brought back by some returning emigrants from America, and innovated upon by the rustic dexterity of the women of the Aran Islands. Regarding invented tradition, Rutt makes an important assertion regarding the impact of the stories surrounding the jumper’s recent relatively short life-span “The folk art of a community does not lack authenticity simply because it has a short history”. ²⁵

The first textbook published specifically about the Aran sweater was Deirdre McQuillan’s work *The Aran Sweater* (1993), which gives a brief but concise historical overview of the development and dissemination of the jumper over the course of the 20th century, noting how it has, to a degree, become a national emblem of Ireland. ²⁶ As an overview it is ambitious and all-encompassing, and is regularly cited in the few articles published on Aran

²² Ibid., 13.

²³ Ibid., 14.

²⁴ Rutt, *A History of Hand-Knitting*, 199.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ McQuillan, *The Aran Sweater*.

sweaters, but it mainly functions as a resource glossary and its brevity opened up avenues for further research. Four years later, Alice Starmore did just that in *Aran Knitting* (1997).²⁷ Starmore, an expert knitter, examined four early examples of Aran sweaters, studying the development in their stitches and patterns in an effort to reveal how the sweater as we know it came about. Starmore's research is the most comprehensive study into the sweater's origins and her forensic dissection of very early Aran sweater samples lends a lot of weight to her findings. Starmore's definition of what constitutes an Aran sweater was used in this thesis.

The following years saw something of a dearth in the printing of books and articles surrounding the Aran sweater itself, though other publications relating to the marketing of Irishness did appear. Diane Negra's article "Consuming Ireland: Lucky Charms Cereal, Irish Spring Soap and 1-800-SHAMROCK" (2005) is an illuminating study on how Irishness came through in advertisements for supposedly Irish products in America.²⁸ Negra astutely observes that these advertisements "code Irishness as an available ethnicity", that can be consumed by people abroad and tourists, which, to an extent, is common to some of the Aran sweater publications which feature in this thesis.²⁹ However, Negra posits that these advertisements promote an image of Ireland as static, and free from the complications of the modern world. Again, this was certainly true for the advertisements studied in her paper, and indeed for plenty of Aran sweater advertisements. However, it also does not tell the full story, and as we shall see, certain advertisements pushed an image of Irishness that was more forward-thinking and of the time.

The relevance of the concept of Irishness in fashion was outlined by Síle de Cléir in "Creativity in the Margins: Identity and Locality in Ireland's Fashion Journey" (2011).³⁰ De Cléir highlights the importance of appreciating the local nature of Irish fashion however she also notes the lack of relevance that traditional Irish dress holds in relation to the discourse of nationality. While this may be true for Irish fashion on the whole, this thesis will contest

²⁷ Alice Starmore. *Aran Knitting* (Colorado: Interweave Press, 1997).

²⁸ Diane Negra, "Consuming Ireland: Lucky Charms cereal, Irish Spring soap and 1-800-SHAMROCK". *Cultural Studies* 15, no.1: 76-97.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

³⁰ De Cléir. "Creativity in the Margins", 201-224.

that Aran sweaters offer a counterpoint to this idea, and became significant items of dress in forming how the Irish were perceived and perceived themselves.

Also from 2011 and relevant to this idea is Gabriella Elgenius' *Symbols of Nations and Nationalism*, which examines the role of formal national symbols such as national flags and national days in constructing identity.³¹ Elgenius' study is far-reaching, and offers some interesting takes on how national symbols can be interpreted. She notes "Symbols are effective precisely because they are ambiguous, imprecise and their meanings are 'subjective' without undermining their collective nature", adding that they "express meaning without imposing a static one".³² As we shall see the Aran sweater came to hold many meanings for different audiences, however, in contrast to the formal symbols which often "heighten and reinforce" cultural boundaries, the Aran sweater, as a fashion item and symbol of Irishness, was specifically marketed to be worn by international consumers, thus traversing these cultural boundaries in a manner all of its own.³³

In 2014, Siún Carden's illuminating article, "Cable-Crossings: The Aran Jumper as Myth and Merchandise", picked up where McQuillan and Starmore left off, reigniting interest in the Aran sweater, and uncovering the depth of the mythology of the sweater.³⁴ It details the supposed meaning behind each individual pattern, and how, in folklore, the patterns would have been used to identify fishermen who had died at sea. She then goes on to dispel these myths, and discusses the dichotomous relationship between the image of the jumpers as representations of kinship and family, in contrast to their symbolism as a touristic cash-cow. Carden also outlines how the Aran jumpers became particularly symbolic of the Irish diaspora, and were popularised by Irish folk acts in the US in the 1950s and 60s. The myths surrounding the jumpers were partly kept alive by these folk performers, as well as by the media, to the extent that certain present-day islanders will maintain that they are true.

In the later part of the thesis, the Aran sweater's journey to Japan is discussed and analysed. While, due to spatial and linguistic barriers, it has been difficult to find as many sources

³¹ Gabriella Elgenius, *Symbols of Nations and Nationalism: Celebrating Nationhood* (Oxford: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

³² *Ibid.*, 15.

³³ *Ibid.* 15.

³⁴ Carden, "Cable-Crossings"

from Japan as have been looked at for elsewhere, W. David Marx's *Ametora: How Saved American Style* (2015) gives a comprehensive overview of post-war fashion in Japan, and how certain American trends took off in the most unlikely of ways, Ametora being a Japanese hybrid word meaning 'American Traditional'.³⁵ One of these was the Take Ivy movement which saw young fashionable Japanese people adopt the preppy collegiate style of American Ivy Leaguers. Remarkably, for reasons that will become clear, the Aran sweater fit this aesthetic, and became part of the wardrobe of trendy young people's fashion. However, Marx has, understandably, not devoted more than a line or two in his book to fisherman's sweaters specifically, and so this thesis will aim to shed light on the topic in a way that has not been done yet in the English language.

The broader topic of Irish fashion during a similar period to this thesis is dealt with by Mary Burke in "The Cottage, The Castle, and The Couture Cloak: 'Traditional' Irish Fabrics and 'Modern' Irish Fashion in America c. 1952-1969" (2018).³⁶ Burke outlines how various governmental policies were implemented during this period which marketed a certain image of Ireland to the US, which in certain instances manufactured an idyllic past as part of the narrative, while also showcasing Ireland's "economic modernisation and openness to international markets".³⁷ Burke suggests that the manner in which Irish fashion was marketed in the 1950s was actually what led to its unglamorous, folksy image in the 1960s. This thesis looks at this particular shift specifically in relation to the Aran sweater, and challenges the notion that the image of Ireland pushed in publications was one of an unchanging landscape, stuck in the past. While this may have been true for earlier advertisements, the publications featured in this thesis will show that there was a certain progression of how Irishness was promoted, becoming slightly more avant-garde in the 1960s.

A second relevant article of Carden's, "The Aran Jumper" (2018), appears in *Design Roots: Culturally Significant Design Products and Practices*, where she outlines how the lower cost of air travel in the 1950s and 1960s facilitated mass tourism, making transatlantic travel

³⁵ W. David Marx, *Ametora: How Japan saved American Style* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

³⁶ Burke, "The Cottage", 364-382.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 365.

more feasible for regular people and products.³⁸ This opening-up of a new avenue between Ireland and the US, whose relationship was growing under the Kennedy administration, saw the need (or the creation of a need) for a heritage product that would unite the diaspora and the Irish-Americans with their roots. As Carden puts it, “the idea of the Aran jumper as an identity document fell on very fertile ground”.

The most-consulted work in the thesis is Vawn Corrigan’s *Irish Aran: History Tradition Fashion* (2019), which is the newest and most up to date publication focusing on Aran knitting.³⁹ The scope of the book is remarkably ambitious, charting the development of the garment from its beginning to the present day and is a major addition to the field. As such, there is much overlap between it and this thesis, with both works looking at aspects such as storytelling, and the Aran sweater as a symbol of Irishness. For this reason, an interview was conducted with Vawn Corrigan, and excerpts from this appear throughout the thesis. Certain restrictions imposed on her published work has allowed for perhaps a broader range of advertising images to be included in this thesis. The academic framework in this thesis also complements Corrigan’s work, allowing for a more rigorous dissection of the primary sources.

Innovative Aspects

While there have been numerous illuminating studies on Aran sweaters over the 20th century (most notably from Corrigan, McQuillan and Carden) the central focus of these has been on debunking the myths behind their heritage.⁴⁰ These authors have to some degree dealt with the life of the sweater from the 1950s onwards but this has usually been done in brief, and often only makes reference to its link with the folk performers the Clancy Brothers in the 1960s. Similarly, studies have been carried out on the state of Irish fashion in a similar period to that covered in this thesis and on the involvement of state bodies in promoting this abroad (Burke and de Cléir).⁴¹ However, little in-depth research pertaining to the image of Ireland that was portrayed to the world through the Aran sweater itself appears to have been carried out. Furthermore, Ireland has constantly been painted in advertisements

³⁸ Carden, “The Aran Jumper”, 67-78.

³⁹ Corrigan.

⁴⁰ McQuillan, *The Aran Sweater*, and Carden, “Cable-Crossings” and “The Aran Jumper”.

⁴¹ Burke, “The Cottage”, and De Cléir. “Creativity”.

during the timeframe of this research as stuck in past. This thesis posits that while this is sometimes true for Aran sweater publications that the picture of Ireland as portrayed by the Aran sweater was more complex and nuanced, and thus its status as an Irish symbol of old is called into question. Considering the cultural prominence that the sweater has grown to embody, which has been crystallised by its inclusion in the MoMa exhibition mentioned in the beginning, it appears this is a niche but relevant topic that will prove fulfilling, and that hopes to shed some light on the construction and portrayal of Irish identity during this period. The methods of analysis, as outlined below, also appear to be somewhat novel. Again, advertisements and publications relating to Irish fashion have been briefly examined, but not in relation to the Aran sweater itself, and certainly not in sufficient depth to offer a well-rounded answer to the central research question of this thesis. This thesis is the first to apply a discourse analysis to many never-before-analysed primary sources, and it is hoped that by breaking-down these representations of the Aran sweater in the media and popular culture, it will arrive at a fulfilling and original conclusion.

Research and Methods

The analysis of this thesis has been carried out by archival research, supplemented by secondary literature, and complemented by an in-depth interview with Aran sweater expert Vawn Corrigan, author of the recently published *Irish Aran, History Tradition Fashion*.

Given the nature of the thesis, and its focus on representations of the Aran sweater in the media and popular culture, much of the primary source material has come from visual sources. Advertisements and features in fashion publications like *LIFE*, and *Sports Illustrated* provide a range of images and captions that shed light on how the Aran sweater was marketed. In addition, newspapers, such as *The Irish Times* and *The New York Times* have included pieces on the Aran sweater over the years as its success has been something of an economic and cultural phenomenon. Furthermore newspapers also have much to say about important tangential subjects which are also relevant such as the Irish diasporic experience. These were then compiled into a database (See Appendix 1), which was delineated by the country in which they were published and divided by decades, in line with the turning points that mark out each chapter. This allowed for efficient cross-referencing of the publications which unveiled certain trends across certain time periods and in different countries. The

images were then given a thorough discourse analysis, as laid out by Guy Cook, and the elements of storytelling present in them was examined.

The interview with Vawn Corrigan was extremely useful in that she provided expert guidance on how the images in these archives could be analysed. We discussed a variety of themes relevant to the Aran sweater's journey on a macro level, as well as topics of specific importance to this thesis, such as storytelling, mass media coverage, and branding.

These publications from popular culture and the media were then set against the information from this interview, as well a variety of secondary sources ranging from theories relating to national identity, fashion, economics, knitting and, of course, those which consider the history of the Aran sweater itself. The most relevant secondary literature analysed in the research has been included in the literature review.

Chapter 2

Myths of the Wild West

In order to more fully comprehend the cultural significance of the Aran sweater in the latter half of the 20th century, and how Irishness was used in its popularisation in global markets, it is crucial to understand the context in which its early production developed on the islands. This chapter will act as a contextual foundation upon which the later argumentation will stand, and asks “In what context did the storytelling surrounding the Aran sweater’s origins develop?” It begins by describing the islands themselves, their rise to cultural prominence during the Gaelic revival, and then examines the sweater’s rise as an ‘invented tradition’. From there it considers the Irish storytelling sensibilities of the 20th century, which enabled archetypal roles to be embodied through the Aran sweater, their link with notions of Irishness, and ultimately their relevance to the foundations of the story of the Aran sweater itself.

The Aran Islands

The Aran Islands off of Ireland’s west coast give the Aran sweater its name. The group comprises three islands: Inis Mór (or Inishmore, the big island), Inis Meáin (Inishmaan, the middle island) and Inis Oirr (Inishere, the east island). The islands became of cultural prominence on a large scale in the 19th century after a renewed interest in Irish nationalism, history and language arose during the movement known as the Gaelic Revival. At that time, the Irish language had all but died out, except in small pockets mainly around the Irish coast. In an effort to reconnect with their heritage and find inspiration for new work, many poets and playwrights (as well as folklorists, scientists and anthropologists) travelled to these areas, mainly in the West of Ireland. The unspoilt landscape of the countryside and the traditional lifestyle of the people there was a far cry from the now-industrialised cities around the country. Alice Starmore describes the islands’ “alien landscape that looks as if it has just emerged freshly scrubbed from the Atlantic Ocean”, which “represents man’s ability to survive in the harshest of locations”.⁴² It is not surprising that this challenging frontier-land has been likened by Siún Carden to the Wild West in relation to the national identity of

⁴² Starmore. *Aran Knitting*, 10.

the US, where the islanders themselves make up the “*dramatis personae*” of the Aran sweater’s story.⁴³ Thus, the physical and socio-economic environment acted as fertile ground upon which literary figures could base romantic narratives sprouting from a land that seemed almost dreamlike in the rapidly modernising world.

Economic activity on the islands at this time was mainly limited to farming, fishing and the harvesting of kelp and seaweed, with knitting only just beginning to serve as a viable source of additional income, having been promoted by the Congested Districts Board since the late 19th century.⁴⁴ Farmers sold their livestock on the mainland (where they could also buy peat for fuel), but kept the wool which could be used to make clothing for their families.⁴⁵ As such, the dress of the islanders was simple and practical, but with a uniformity and sensibility for design which made it striking to outsiders. Deirdre McQuillan writes that “To understand the history of the Aran sweater it is essential to have some picture of the traditional clothes”, and some of the best description of turn-of-the-century island dress comes from one of the most famous literary visitors to the island, J.M. Synge.⁴⁶ Synge, perhaps best known for his 1907 play *The Playboy of the Western World*, published an account of his travels that same year in *The Aran Islands*. “The simplicity and unity of the dress increases in another way the local air of beauty”, writes Synge, before going on to describe the clothes worn by the islanders.⁴⁷ The women wore red petticoats and woollen jackets with a plaid shawl, accompanied by a skirt which fell just below the knee, leaving visible thick indigo stockings. The men wore clothes in three colours, the natural white wool (báinín), indigo, and a grey flannel (made with indigo and báinín threads). They would often wear pampooties (or raw-hide slippers) as footwear. Synge also noted that “many of the younger men had adopted the usual fisherman’s jersey”.⁴⁸ This “usual fisherman’s jersey” would not have strictly been an Aran sweater, but rather a generic sweater which could be found across the British Isles and Northern Europe (with minor variations). The patterns on these more basic sweaters usually consisted of alternating vertical chevrons, as can be seen

⁴³ Carden, “The Aran Jumper”, 10.

⁴⁴ McQuillan, *The Aran Sweater*, 7.

⁴⁵ Starmore. 16.

⁴⁶ McQuillan, 8.

⁴⁷ J.M. Synge, *The Aran Islands* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1907) 8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

in *My Wallet of Photographs*, a collection of photographs Synge took from around Ireland at the turn of the 19th century (See Appendix 2).⁴⁹

The Aran sweater as it is known today is somewhat distinct from these other fishermen sweaters, and only appeared in its own form around the 1930s. McQuillan notes that the defining quality which sets the Aran apart from Scottish and English equivalents is “the sheer exuberance of the Irish design”, which she compares to skilled musicians composing their own arrangements.⁵⁰ A strict definition has been provided by Starmore, who has described it as “a hand knitted garment of flat construction, composed of vertical panels of cabled geometric patterns and textured stitches. On each piece of the sweater there is a central panel, flanked by symmetrically arranged side panels. The use of heavy, undyed, cream wool is a classic – though not essential – component of the style”.⁵¹ Such are the characteristics of the archetypal example provided by the National Museum of Ireland to the Museum of Modern Art in New York for the 2017 exhibition ‘Items: Is Fashion Modern?’. As we shall see the ‘Aran’ label has now been applied to a wide variety of knitwear which does not adhere completely to the boundaries of Starmore’s definition, but all of which seek to capitalise on the distinct feel which the islands convey. This primordial island feeling has contributed much to the mystique and cachet crucial to the garment’s popularity worldwide, and which, despite having been exposed by numerous writers as largely fabricated, has persisted in the marketing campaigns of Aran sweaters down through the ages and to this day.

Origin Myths of the Aran Sweater and Invented Tradition

Throughout this thesis, the persistence and repetition of the storytelling in Aran sweater advertising will be highlighted. Storytelling has been a key player in the Aran sweater journey since its creation, and from there it has gone on to be a major feature in almost all of Aran sweater marketing campaigns, to some degree or another. According to Siún Carden, to this day the myth of the Aran sweater “continues to be elaborated as it travels

⁴⁹ Trinity College Dublin. “My Wallet of Photographs: The Collected Photographs of J.M. Synge”. Trinity College Dublin. May 26, 2010. Accessed June 24, 2019.

(https://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS_ID=MS11332_02. (See Appendix 2).

⁵⁰ McQuillan, *The Aran Sweater*, 19.

⁵¹ Starmore, *Aran Knitting*, 40.

through transnational networks of migration, tourism and commerce”.⁵² Some of the earliest myths surrounding the sweater’s origins can still be seen in circulation today, and perhaps the most far-fetched claim surrounding the origins of the Aran sweater is that the design is over a thousand years old. The most prominent propagator of this idea was Heinz Edgar Kiewe. Kiewe was a German textile journalist with a needlework shop in Oxford, who visited Ireland in 1936. Despite never visiting the islands himself, he saw an early example of an Aran sweater in a shop-window in Dublin, and bought it. This sweater was one of the first commercially available examples to make its way to the capital, brought from the Aran Islands by Dr Muriel Gahan, founder of Country Workers Limited and the Irish Homespun Society.⁵³ Kiewe became transfixed with the patterns and began researching the garment’s origins, making some fantastical claims along the way, and linking specific patterns to biblical stories.⁵⁴ One of his most infamous speculations was that entire body-suits of the ornate báinín wool could be seen in The Book of Kells, a famous, illuminated, early-Christian manuscript housed in Trinity College Dublin.⁵⁵ Kiewe then showed his Aran sweater to the fashion journalist Mary Thomas, who featured the design in her book *Mary Thomas’s Book of Knitting Patterns* (1943) and began producing the sweaters on a large scale in Scotland where skilled knitters were more prevalent.⁵⁶ Though Kiewe’s admiration for the design was clear, his unscientific claims have been thoroughly refuted by knitting historians, notably Richard Rutt, and Alice Starmore who concludes that “the Kiewe mythology clings on in the face of all known facts”, but which has found “particular resonance as advertising copy”.⁵⁷

Rather ironically, the newness of the Aran sweater, combined with Kiewe’s arrival, created a window for this supposedly ancient myth to be spread. Aran sweaters were still relatively fresh arrivals to the mainland, and were even more so abroad, so little was known of their provenance and there was ample opportunity for stories to spread. In addition, the three-dimensional nature of the knitted patterns draws inspiration from carved, stone Celtic crosses, which lent credence to this supposed ancient origin. The ease with which Kiewe

⁵² Carden, “Cable Crossings”, 261.

⁵³ McQuillan *The Aran Sweater*, 24

⁵⁴ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 53.

⁵⁵ Carden, “Cable Crossings”, 262.

⁵⁶ Rutt, *A History of Hand-Knitting* 194, and Starmore, *Aran Knitting*, 20.

⁵⁷ Starmore, *Aran Knitting*, 20.

managed to spread this faux-history of the Aran sweater is clear evidence of Hobsbawm and Ranger's idea of the invention of the tradition, but one where the impetus has come from outside the item's original home. In this case, a relatively new craft was spotted by a foreign observer, who took the initiative to disseminate his story of how the product came to be, and in so doing removed decisions over how the product was popularised out of the hands of the islanders themselves. This was the first of many examples of the Aran story being interpreted and subsequently propagated by an external entity.

Another of the myths central to the Aran sweater story is that the patterns on each jumper were unique to whichever family had knitted them, and so, were used to identify the bodies of fishermen who had fallen victim to violent Atlantic storms and were washed ashore, unrecognisable. This romantic, if tragic, story has remained a prevalent feature of marketing campaigns for the sweaters, and is evident in a vast array of publications and advertisements, as will be shown later. The roots of this idea can be traced back to the writing of the aforementioned J.M. Synge. His 1911 one-act play *Riders to the Sea* takes place on the Aran Islands, and in clothing belonging to Michael, a young fisherman, is indeed used to identify his corpse, as the story goes. However, the item of clothing used is not Michael's unique Aran sweater, but a knitted woollen stocking, of which the character Nora, his sister, knows the exact details: "It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up three score stitches, and I dropped four of them."⁵⁸ In *The Aran Islands* (1907) Synge made no mention of any such practices relating to sweaters, yet over the coming decades the idea appears to have evolved to include them, and caught on among those who were beginning to see potential in the Aran story. Carden attributes the spread of this story to Pádraig Ó Síocháin, who wrote in his 1927 book *Aran: Islands of Legend* that "the Aran gansey has always been an unfailing source of identification of Islandmen lost at sea".⁵⁹ Ó Síocháin's role in developing the branding behind the Aran sweater will be examined in more detail later, but it should be noted that he established his own Aran knitwear company, Galway Bay Products Ltd. in 1955.⁶⁰ In addition, as the islanders themselves honed their craft, personalisation and sophistication of this level actually became possible in

⁵⁸ J.M. Synge, *Riders to the Sea*, (Boston: John W. Luce, 1911).

⁵⁹ Carden, "Cable Crossings", 262.

⁶⁰ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 82.

their designs. McQuillan notes the famous Irish theatre actress Ria Mooney, the first female producer at the Abbey Theatre, telling of each family dressing their children in spotless white jumpers with traditional, individual designs, for Mass on Sunday.⁶¹ As such, it seems that while eventually Aran sweaters did reach a level where the designs could be individualised, that this had little historical or practical application.

The ornate patterns which began to characterise Aran sweaters from the 1930s onwards have since been codified and each of the stitches has been given its own meaning and backstory, adding to the layers of significance associated with the garment, and increasing its appeal worldwide. The stitches can be representative of Aran's natural surroundings (such as the Honeycomb stitch), as well as bearing religious significance (as seen in the Trinity stitch), and, furthermore, some knitters interpret the stitches in their own way, making for a varied assemblage of possible stitches from place to place. More abstract symbolism has also been associated with the stitches, for example the Tree of Life stitch is said to symbolise family, while the Cable stitch is said to be a symbol of luck.⁶² The newness of the Aran tradition means that many of the knitters still have a variety of the earliest stitches in their repertoire, and while some became popular very quickly, others, which fell out of favour in the early days of Aran production, are now being reinvigorated.⁶³

A present day example of how the marketing of these symbolic and individual family stitches has taken off is the example of clan knits, such as the 'Clan Aran' range from the Aran Sweater Market, with stores located on the Aran Islands, throughout Ireland, and, significantly, online. The 'Clans' section of the company's website reads "Over the years, in line with ancient Irish folklore, many Clans adopted the Aran Sweater as the ultimate Clan symbol. Historically these patterns were safeguarded within families and passed down from generation to generation."⁶⁴ The store offers over 130 distinct family patterns which are displayed on the website next to the coats-of-arms for each family name. Currently, a 'Clan' knit sells for €175, about twice the price of their generic offerings. Carden has also noted the 'Clan Aran' offerings from GlenAran Ltd., whose website reads that "the history of our

⁶¹ McQuillan, *The Aran Sweater*, 16.

⁶² Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 15-26.

⁶³ Vawn Corrigan, "Interview". Interviewed by author. Rotterdam, March 27, 2019., audio, 41:05.

⁶⁴ "Home." Aran Sweater Market. Accessed May 23, 2019. <https://www.aransweatermarket.com/clan-aran-sweaters>.

forefathers is woven into our being.”⁶⁵ Carden points out the Clans example’s obvious parallels with the family tartans of Scotland, the earliest examples of which date back to the late 18th century, but which have also be labelled an invented tradition, notably by Hugh Trevor—Roper.⁶⁶ The list of family names and places with designated tartans is still growing in what Stuart Reid says is “a reflection of the degree to which tartan is an *inclusive* Scottish icon”.⁶⁷ Expanding the number of clan Arans on offer has also increased its inclusivity, particularly overseas, rendering it something of an identity garment among the Irish diaspora and Irish-Americans, which will be looked at in greater detail further on. Another comparable example of invented tradition in a similar garment closely tied to national identity is the Lopapeysa, or Icelandic sweater as outlined by Gudrun Helgadóttir in “Nation in a sheep’s coat: The Icelandic sweater”, which has had a similar trajectory to the Aran sweater, originating back to sometime around the mid-20th century.⁶⁸ These numerous examples are evidence of the capacity of clothing embedded with a distinct sense of place, to act as a vehicle for national identity, capturing the imaginations and romantic inclinations of both home and foreign audiences.

The strongest and most useful summary of the actual facts of the Aran sweater’s birth comes from the work of Alice Starmore, who, in analysing four very early examples of the garment, has come to several conclusions. Firstly, Starmore concludes that the Aran sweater was a development from traditional Scottish ganseys, adapted from designs of Scottish fishermen who had visited the islands. However, in spite of this, Starmore has found no evidence that the sweater was ever used as a functional fisherman’s jumper, until the mid-20th century.⁶⁹ In fact, the sweaters were worn by children at Mass and when celebrating their Holy Communion. When one considers the impracticality of wearing white clothing for a rigorous, down-and-dirty job like Atlantic fishing, the formalwear explanation actually makes more sense. Hobsbawm points out that “objects or practices are liberated for full

⁶⁵ Carden, “The Aran Jumper”, 265.

⁶⁶ Carden, “Cable Crossings”.

and Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland’, In *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 15–42.

⁶⁷ Stuart Reid, *Scottish National Dress and Tartan* (Oxford: Shire Library, 2013), 54.

⁶⁸ Helgadóttir, “Nation in a sheep’s coat”.

⁶⁹ Starmore, “Aran Knitting”, 34-40.

symbolic and ritual use when no longer fettered by practical use".⁷⁰ This was the case from the beginning of the Aran sweater's production, where the myth of practical use was present from the start. Freedom from this practical use allowed the Aran sweater to occupy a symbolic role in the early stages of its emergence into the market, while still drawing on the fisherman tradition.

The true motivations behind the increased production of the Aran sweater were financial, a welcome new source of income to the relatively impoverished islands, which over a short period of time developed into formal wear on the islands.⁷¹ Knitting only began on the islands in the late 1800s when it was funded by the Congested Districts Board, a body established to alleviate poverty in the peripheral areas of Ireland that had been decimated by the Great Famine (1845-1849) and which had not experienced the same progress in agriculture or industry as other more urbanised areas, such as Dublin and Cork, had done.⁷² This also means that any purported ancient meanings behind the symbols are superficial, a finding which was corroborated by Vawn Corrigan, author of *Irish Aran: History Tradition Fashion* (2019), in our interview. From Corrigan's interactions with the islanders, she found "they were happy enough for it to gain all of these multiple interpretations, many of which were superimposed from the outside. This wasn't something that caused distress, because from their side they were making sweaters and making some money selling them".⁷³ This attitude is indicative of the susceptibility of economically vulnerable areas to profiting from invented traditions. It should be noted however, that in spite of the recent origins of these meanings, for many, consumers and producers alike, they have become real for those who enjoy crafting and wearing them. Rutt sums up this sentiment aptly when he says "The folk art of a community does not lack authenticity simply because it has a short history."⁷⁴

Storytelling and Irishness

That the dead fisherman story has its roots in fictional literature, and that distinct family patterns appear only to have been applied to the Aran sweater in the 1930s, certainly

⁷⁰ Hobsbawm. "Introduction", 4.

⁷¹ Starmore, *Aran Knitting*, 34-40.

⁷² Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 102.

⁷³ Corrigan., interview.

⁷⁴ Rutt, *A History of Hand-Knitting*, 199.

appear grounds that it be can be considered an invented tradition. Furthermore, it appears that this invented tradition was one which appealed to the storytelling sensibilities of marketers and consumers, as seen in the Clan Aran example. Vawn Corrigan elaborated on why storytelling became so important for Aran sweater marketing in our interview, outlining how Irish people had been conditioned to appreciate writing and literature over any indigenous handicrafts. Corrigan notes that “it wasn’t enough that it was an Aran sweater, we had to layer it with stories because that was very much a part of how we perceived and translated ourselves for others”.⁷⁵ Corrigan echoes some of the earlier observations of Starmore, who emphatically states that “with legends as stunning as this, facts have very little chance of competing”.⁷⁶ From a consumer point of view, these stories appeal to emotions and excite imaginations, and often move people far more than facts or figures would.⁷⁷

Storytelling has been a constant buzzword in marketing practices since the early days of corporate advertising, and the stories used will often comply with certain age-old archetypes which speak to some of our deepest human desires and tendencies.⁷⁸ Lauzaskas and Snow identify one of the most popular and widely referenced of these story-types as “The Hero’s Journey”: a familiar tale where a humble protagonist is brought out of their comfort zone, overcomes adversity, and is transformed into a hero in the process.⁷⁹ The drowned fisherman in the Aran sweater story almost follows the same arc, but ends on a tragic note; a potentially jarring narrative in traditional marketing practice, but one which has a distinctly Irish tone to it. Throughout the 20th century Irish-based literature and drama was littered with tales of misery and hardship, often portrayed to an absurd extent and eventually bordering on comedy, or ending in moments of bathos. From the Irish-language work of Máirtín Ó Cadhain, to the Dublin-centred plays of Seán O’Casey, and the memoirs of Irish-American Frank McCourt (*Angela’s Ashes*), themes of death and tragedy are rife

⁷⁵ Corrigan, interview.

⁷⁶ Starmore, *Aran Knitting*, 20.

⁷⁷ Robert Mighall, *Only Connect, The Art of Corporate Storytelling* (London and New York: Lid Publishing, 2013).

⁷⁸ Joe Lauzaskas and Shane Snow, *The Storytelling Edge: How to Transform Your Business, Stop Screaming into the Void, and Make People Love You*, (New Jersey: Joe Wiley and Sons, 2018).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

throughout the modern Irish literary canon.⁸⁰ By the end of the century these associations were recognised by audiences worldwide. In the 1998 Hollywood film *The Devil's Own*, the character of Rory Devaney (played by Brad Pitt) reminds the audience: "Don't look for a happy ending. It's not an American story, it's an Irish one".⁸¹

A crucial step in the development of the particular sense of Irishness provoked by the Aran Islands themselves was Robert J. Flaherty's production of the fictional ethno-documentary *Man of Aran* in 1934. Flaherty was an American filmmaker of Irish and German parents who had garnered acclaim for his films *Nanook of the North* (1922) and *Moana* (1926). *Man of Aran* was given a budget of £10,000 and was a highly dramatized and fabricated depiction of island life.⁸² Against an emotive score, the opening narrative exposition reads:

The Aran Islands lie off of Western Ireland. All three are small...wastes of rock...without trees...without soil.

In winter storms they are almost smothered by the sea...which because of the peculiar shelving of the coastline piles up into one of the most gigantic seas in the world.

In this desperate environment the Man of Aran, because his independence is the most precious privilege he can win from life, fights for his existence, bare though it may be.

It is a fight from which he will have no respite until the end of his indomitable days or until he meets his master – the sea.⁸³

Man of Aran was a critical success, the cast having undergone press tours in Dublin and London, and with the film winning the Best Foreign Film at the Venice Film Festival in 1934.⁸⁴ This came in spite of the islanders' frustration with the overly romanticised depiction of island life.⁸⁵ No Aran sweaters were included in the film, though it served as one of the first visual portrayals that many audiences had seen of the Aran Islands, and, in

⁸⁰ Máirtín Ó Cadhain. *Cré na Cille* (Churchyard Clay), (Dublin: Sáirséal agus Dill, 1949), and "Sean O'Casey." PlayographyIreland. Accessed June 24, 2019.

<http://www.irishplayography.com/person.aspx?personid=38358>, and "Frank McCourt." Simon & Schuster. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Frank-McCourt/1660330>.

⁸¹ Todd McCarthy, "The Devil's Own." *Variety*. March 30, 1997. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://variety.com/1997/film/reviews/the-devil-s-own-1117341575/>.

⁸² Martin McLoone, "Realism, Romanticism and the Documentary Form: Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran*." 24 *Frames: The Cinema of Britain and Ireland*, 2005.

⁸³ Robert J. O'Flaherty, *Man of Aran*, Gainsborough Pictures, 1934.

⁸⁴ McLoone. "Realism".

⁸⁵ John C. Messenger. "Man of Aran Revisited: An Anthropological Critique". *University Review* 3, no. 9 (Autumn, 1966) 15-47.

doing so, raised their profile on an international level, and presenting an idealised, primordial take on Irishness to the world. The film was screened one year after Muriel Gahan had shown the first example of the Aran sweater at the Spring Show at the Royal Dublin Society, and two years before Heinz Edgar Kiewe came to Ireland and began to spread the myths about the sweater's origins.⁸⁶ Corrigan notes that *Man of Aran* was "priceless from a marketing perspective" for the Aran sweater.⁸⁷ Arguably, combined with Gahan and Kiewe's influences, the film was a crucial element in the combined confluence of factors which would lead to the rise of the Aran sweater in the decades to come, and it is again indicative of the powerful role of storytelling in marketing the invented tradition of the Aran sweater.

Conclusion

This second chapter has served as a contextual basis for the larger argumentation of this thesis. It has established the setting of the Aran Islands and the origins of the myths surrounding the Aran sweater. In line with the trajectories of many folk crafts from remote, impoverished regions, the Aran sweater can be classed firmly as an invented tradition, which, in this instance, was propagated by outside influences (the islanders themselves content to go along with the notion because of its economic benefit). It has highlighted the importance of storytelling in appealing to the romantic sensibilities of consumers, and, in outlining the tragic and naturalistic characteristics present in these stories, the elements of Irishness with which they have been imbued. From this introductory chapter we can identify three myths that became bound to the Aran sweater and which, as outlined by Holt, through storytelling, would strike an emotional chord with consumers and lead the Aran sweater to "iconic" status.⁸⁸ Firstly, that the Aran sweater was a centuries-old garment, and thus owning one could make the wearer feel connected to their Irish past. Secondly, that the stitch-patterns on the sweater held deeply embedded meanings, and thus wearing one might appeal to those who believed in the symbols like wealth, luck, and love. Finally the sweater was used to identify drowned fishermen, and thus it might enable the wearer to embody adventurous and/or tragic archetypal role

⁸⁶ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 59.

⁸⁷ Corrigan interview.

⁸⁸ Holt, *How Brands become Icons*.

Chapter 3

New Exports from Old Ireland

The 1950s was the breakthrough decade for Aran sweater production and design. The fashion and design scene into which it emerged was both vibrant and dynamic, and was being actively developed by forces at home and abroad. The Irish Republic was effectively sovereign since 1922 as the Irish Free State, becoming definitively so in 1937 with the enactment of the Irish Constitution, and then, when the Republic was declared in 1949, Irish goods began to be actively marketed abroad on a State level. In addition, the transatlantic movement of people was becoming cheaper and more common, facilitating the transfer of both culture and fashion, particularly between Ireland and the US. As such, national image became increasingly important. The more attractive Ireland as a nation could brand itself the more it could capitalise on its new position in the global marketplace. With this in mind, this chapter asks “How did early advertisements of the Aran sweater portray Irishness?” It analyses the conscious effort of official Irish bodies to enlist foreign support in developing native crafts, the role of individual Irish designers at the time, and the interplay between Aran sweater production and the emergence of the Irish tourist industry.

The New Republic looks Abroad

The recently established Republic of Ireland carried into the early 1950s a protectionist approach which focused on internal trade and high tariffs on exports.⁸⁹ Many historians cite the late 1950s as the moment in which Ireland began to open up to world markets, however, there were early indications in the early stages of the decade that already Ireland would increasingly look abroad for investment and expertise on how best to integrate into global markets. The Irish Export Board (Córas Tráchtála Teoranta) was established in 1951. It was an early example of State investigation in global export opportunities and was, furthermore, a turning point in terms of how the Aran sweater was marketed. As we shall see, over the coming decades, the Irish Export Board played a pivotal role in the marketing of Irishness to the world through Irish products. Their efforts during this period culminated in the Export Promotion Act of 1959, which established a more developed iteration of the initial board,

⁸⁹ Frank Barry, Clare O’Mahony, “Regime Change in 1950s Ireland: The New Export-Oriented Foreign Investment Strategy” *Irish Economic and Social History* 44, no.1 (2017): 46–65.

promoting Irish exports even further, and in a more structured manner.⁹⁰ One of the early initiatives of the Irish Export Board was to invite the Philadelphia Fashion Group to Ireland in 1952, to see a collection of the Irish designer on-the-rise, Sybil Connolly. Conscious that this was possibly the first time Irish fashion would be put on display and scrutinised by outsiders, Connolly decided that “Ireland” would be a fitting theme for her collection.⁹¹ The choice of the theme apparently came to her on a twilit evening in the rural West of Ireland, when she saw a family in traditional dress beside a white-washed cottage, in a story which Richard O’Byrne has called the circumstances behind this decision “a perfect example of Connolly’s romantic approach to fashion”.⁹² The designs were an immediate hit with the group, and Connolly soon began to attract the attention of American buyers and press from fashion publications such as *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*. By August 1953 Connolly’s designs made a seminal appearance on the front cover of *LIFE* magazine, with the title ‘Irish Invade Fashion World’. In analysing this five-page editorial we see a clear semantic and visual attempt to portray a sense of Irishness to the reader through storytelling.

⁹⁰ “Export Promotion Act, 1959”. Electronic Irish Statute Book (eISB). Accessed June 24, 2019. <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1959/act/20/enacted/en/print#sec13>.

⁹¹ “Sybil Connolly Interview.” RTÉ Archives. January 02, 2014. Accessed June 24, 2019.

<https://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1922-irish-fashion-designers/495575-sybil-connolly-interview/>.

⁹² Robert O’Byrne, “The Mink and Diamonds of Irish Fashion Sybil Connolly”, *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 16 (2000): 109-119.



AT BUNNANSY CASTLE Ann Conroy, whose family has produced many noted Irish beauties, wears a pleated cantrix top and satin skirt for evening.

Enterprise in Old Erin

THE IRISH ARE MAKING A STYLISH ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD OF FASHION

With all the air of a feudal baron marrying off his favorite daughter, 32-year-old Dublin Designer Sybil Connolly invited Paris-bound U.S. fashion editors and buyers to a showing of her new collection and all by herself launched Ireland in the world of fashion. In the stately drawing room of 12th Century Dunmoy Castle the visitors saw a small group of day and evening outfits which strikingly displayed Designer Connolly's stylish editing of native crafts. She used hand-woven wools that had been

labored over by whole families of cottage workers, delicate lace made by Carrickmacross nuns who hopefully offered their prayers for the success of the collection, and even some new colors, greenish in Ireland, like the wool homospun in brilliant red (see cover) which generations of Connemara women have worn as petticoats. Although everything but the tweed suits and coats would be made to order, Irish prices had as much charm as Irish styles. For samples of both, see following pages.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47

IRISH FASHIONS CONTINUED

Designer made a quick trip to the top

Sybil Connolly was buyer for a Dublin dress shop when, in 1950, she reluctantly replaced the store's departed designer who had left for a more promising fashion future in the U.S. Her designs grew quickly popular and last spring she brought a group to the U.S. for a highly successful showing (LIFE, May 10). Since the practical Irish will not accept extremes in fashion, Miss Connolly concentrates on the tweed daytime clothes and extravagant ball gowns that go with the local round of sporting events and fancy parties. This fall's collection again showed off her knack with classic Irish materials. Because of impressive labor costs in Ireland, U.S. stores can import the styles ready made and, even after duty, sell them at prices relatively low for a top European label.



THE DESIGNER Sybil Connolly came to Genoa Livorno from Wales when she was 7. This fall she will bring a collection of her new clothes over for showings in U.S. department stores.



THE "CRISIN" OF ARAN, colored braided belts which women of the Irish island weave with help of their toes, make slim skirts worn in stable doorway at Dunmoy Castle. Irish price: \$32.50.

"RAININ" TWEED, fabric woven by Aran fishermen, is used in bulky jacket with knit sleeves and hood. The wool is pronounced "harrowed." It will cost about \$115 (Lord & Taylor, New York).

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

IRISH FASHIONS CONTINUED



BAININ COAT with large lapels and pockets will be sold for about \$175 at Bloch's, Atlanta. Traditional top frock of Aran will cost \$7 in U.S. This is Wellington Quay in Dublin.



SHAGGY SUIT with shawl-like sling cape, shown as accompanying day outfit, will be available for about \$250 at Bloch's, Atlanta. Cyclist on main street in village of Trillick is going to milk cows.



HAIRY THICK CRIBBANS in Dunmoy Castle were made up into back-belted apron coat. Dublin City's top Parliament Street, Dublin, is made more busy infrequently invaded by women.

Tweeds, knits and colorings are full of Ireland's flavor

Some of the trimmings came from England, France and Italy, but the inspiration for Designer Connolly's clothes was strictly Irish. She worked out lightweight tweeds which retained a holly look and replaced the usual dark colors with virgidity, iridescent shades. From the island of Aran she brought back quantities of handknit fishermen's caps, each slightly different, and the coarse fabric bainin, the color of vanilla ice cream, which she used in a heavy open jacket, a coat (\$160) and a tweed afternoon dress. Since the fashions depend on native workmanship as well as on designs, the clothes will not be copied by U.S. manufacturers, which is the custom with most Paris designs, but will all be made in Ireland.

OUTWEEZ LAPELS top styled tweed coat which will cost around \$125 at Filene's in Boston. Camera alignment is put on door in Dublin's Fitzwilliam Square to keep one from falling point.



Fig. 3. 3. A selection of images from the 1953 LIFE Magazine editorial spread – 'Enterprise in Old Erin'.⁹³

⁹³ "Irish Invade Fashion World", LIFE Magazine, August 10 1953, 44-50.

Using Cook's discourse analysis approach and examining both the "text" and the "context" of this feature enables a thorough breakdown to become possible.⁹⁴ Entitled 'Enterprise in Old Erin', the theme of the editorial piece is immediately clear: The traditionally 'old-fashioned' Ireland (known folklorically as 'Erin's Isle') is bringing a new taste for design to the fashion industry. The images show models in a variety of clothes designed by Sybil Connolly, made using Irish textiles, in idyllic and traditional countryside surroundings, from the lavish green lawns of Dunsany Castle, to a humble thatch cottage in Trim, but also to the quays in the capital of Dublin.⁹⁵ The sophisticated elegance of the clothing, in contrast to the antiquated backgrounds support the message of the title - this is familiar Irishness, but with a new design edge. In addition, the strong poses and mannerisms of the models form part of the piece's paralanguage, conveying a sense of confidence in both the quality of the clothing, as well as in the attitude of the women (the model in the bottom-left corner placing a flower in an elderly man's coat-pocket). The text accompanying the images informs the reader that these "Tweeds, knits and colorings are full of Ireland's flavor", and note the "bainin tweed' fabric worn by Irish fishermen", referencing the Aran origin story discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, the text also provides practical information to the potential consumer, informing them that the cheap labour costs in Ireland have made the prices of these garments relatively low for a European label, a message which also would have been appreciated by the Irish Export Board.⁹⁶ In all, through a variety of storytelling techniques, the editorial capitalises on an array of qualities of Irishness which could be appealing to a US audience.

As a designer, Sybil Connolly was expert in understanding the appeal of these romantic ideals, and a handful of other Irish designers joined her in applying them to their work, Maureen Evans ("the Balenciaga of hand-knits"), "Daring" Digby Morton, and Irene Gilbert among them.⁹⁷ Mary Burke notes that in this period "any internationally-known aspect of Irish culture could be recruited in the cause of fashion sales, since collection titles often referenced famous locales or literature".⁹⁸ Indeed, Connolly continued to do this throughout

⁹⁴ Cook, *The Discourse of Advertising*. 4-5.

⁹⁵ "Irish Invade Fashion World", LIFE Magazine, 44-50.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 47.

⁹⁷ Burke, "The Castle", 369, and Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 71.

⁹⁸ Burke, "The Castle", 370.

the decade, with one 1954 evening outfit aptly being named ‘Man of Aran’, referencing the Flaherty film discussed previously.⁹⁹ The United States was undoubtedly the biggest market for Irish knitwear at the time, with one-third of the 600,000 yards of Irish wool produced by Gaeltarra Éireann (the national body for rural development) per year being exported to America by 1956.¹⁰⁰ By 1957 Connolly’s estimated gross earnings amounted to some \$500,000, three-quarters of which was generated by the US market.¹⁰¹ Over these years, a consistent sense of Irishness continued to be communicated to US consumers. This is exemplified in the ‘Sporting Look’ segment in the September 1957 issue of *Sports Illustrated* magazine. The headlines for the two page spread read ‘New Tweeds from Old Ireland’, and ‘Aran Isle Provides Bainin’.¹⁰²



Fig. 3. 4. ‘New Tweeds from Old Ireland’ in *Sports Illustrated* September 29 1957.¹⁰³

The sentiment of the first headline is remarkably similar to that in the *LIFE* magazine example earlier, with Ireland again being referred to as “old” and with this sense of antiquity being contrasted with the novel designs emerging from the country. The accompanying text also references the “fishermen’s pattern typical of those used by the

⁹⁹ O’Byrne, “The Mink and Diamonds”, 112.

¹⁰⁰ Burke, “The Castle”, 377.

¹⁰¹ O’Byrne, “The Mink and Diamonds”, 112.

¹⁰² “Sporting Look”. *Sports Illustrated*, September 29 1957, 49-52. <https://www.si.com/vault/issue/42639/49>

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Aran islanders to identify individual families”, indicating that the Aran story was still present in how Irish fashion was presented to consumers in the US. What has changed is the subject matter in the photos. Those pictured are elegantly dressed, some wearing Irene Gilbert designs, but, significantly, they are not just models posing for a photoshoot. These are sophisticated spectators having a day-out at the Royal Dublin Horse Show. Aran knitting had thus successfully transferred from the earlier high-fashion pictorials to the Sunday-Best wardrobes of Dublin’s upper class, and was now being promoted as new fashion to Americans – with a sense of Irishness persisting throughout.

It should be noted that the United States was not the only market where Aran jumpers and knits were being promoted. Sybil Connolly also made two trips to Australia in 1954 and 1957.¹⁰⁴ In the 1954 trip, Connolly was accompanied by three models to join some fashion parades in Sydney, where her clothes would be presented to buyers. The trip was covered by *Australia Women’s Weekly*, which also described and interviewed the models. Pat O’Reilly is described as being “of the elfin charm”, while Rachel Fitzgerald’s “patrician face carries a hint of Celtic melancholy”.¹⁰⁵ The third model, Maureen Trendell says in an interview “I find Sybil Connolly’s clothes so Irish and so romantic they put me in just the right mood. Her clothes bring out the Irish in you – and of course that’s the best part”.¹⁰⁶ The models are described almost in folkloric terms, as if from some faraway, mystical Celtic land, while the interview explicitly states the joy that is derived from these clothes in bringing out a sense of Irishness in the wearer. It is implied that Irish is a desirable, attractive quality, which other wearers, Irish or otherwise, can also convey, and be a member of the club. In 1957, the year of Connolly’s later journey, the same magazine published another piece: a special feature entitled ‘The New Knitteds’.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ O’Byrne. “The Mink and Diamonds”, 122.

¹⁰⁵ “Irish models for our parades”. *Australia Women’s Weekly*, September 15 1954, 20-21. Accessed May 5 2019. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/aww/read/222272?q=sybil+connolly&s=0&resultId=num0#page/20/mode/2up>

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ “The New Knitteds”, *Australia Women’s Weekly*, March 13 1957, 31. Accessed May 5 2019. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/aww/read/220947?q=aran+sweater&s=0&resultId=num0#page/31/mode/1up>

Special Feature

The New Knitteds

● Centuries-old designs from the fascinating Isles of Aran, off the west coast of Ireland, are high fashion news today. Two traditional patterns are shown below. More high-calibre knitteds are on following pages.

HERE are the instructions for the Aran cardigan shown at right:

Materials: 24 balls P. W. Hughes Bulkyknit wool, 1 pr. each Nos. 7 and 10 needles; 2 cable needles; 7 buttons.

Measurements: Length from top of shoulder, 25½ in.; bust, 32 to 34 in.; length of sleeve seam, 17½ in.

Tension: 8 sts. to 1 in. over pattern panel of "tw. 2, tw. 2" 7 rows to 1 in.

Abbreviations: c.n., cable needle; tw. 2 b, k into the back of 2nd st. on left needle, then use 1st st. and sl. both sts. off; tw. 2 f, k into the front of 2nd st. on left needle; then k into the 1st st. and sl. both sts. off; c. 8 b, sl. 4 sts. on to c.n. to back; k 4, k 4 from c.n.; c. 8 f, sl. 4 sts. on to c.n. to front; k 4, k 4 from c.n.; c. 2/2f (using 2 c.n.) sl. 2 sts. on to c.n. to front; sl. 2 p sts. on to back; k 2, p 2 from c.n.; k 2 from c.n.; c. 2/2 b (using 2 c.n.); sl. 2 sts. on to c.n. to back; sl. 2 p sts. on to c.n. to back; k 2, p 2 from c.n.; k 2 from c.n.

PATTERN

1st Row (wrong side of work): K 1, p 12 (k 2, p 2) twice, k 2, p 17 (k 2, p 2) twice, k 2, p 8, k 2, p 16, k 2, p 8, k 2, p 17 (k 2, p 2) twice, k 2, p 12, k 1.

2nd Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 1, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 11, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 15, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 1.

3rd and Every Alternate Row As 1st row.

4th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 2, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

5th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 3, * p 2, c. 8 b, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, c. 8 f, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

6th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 2, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

7th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 4, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 4, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

8th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 5, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

9th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 3, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

10th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 5, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

11th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 4, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 4, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

12th Row P 1, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 5, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 1.

13th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 3, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

14th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 7, w.fwd, sl. 1, k 2 tog, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 7, * p 2, c. 8 b, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, c. 8 f, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 1.

15th Row P 1, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 5, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 1.

16th Row P 1, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 3, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 1.

17th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 5, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

18th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 3, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

19th Row P 1, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 5, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 1.

20th Row P 1, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 3, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 1.

21st Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 5, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

22nd Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 3, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

23rd Row P 1, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 5, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 1.

24th Row P 1, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 3, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 1.

25th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 5, sl. 1, k 1, p.s.s.o., w.fwd, k 5, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

26th Row P 1, (tw. 2 b, tw. 2 f) 3 times, p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, * k 3, w.fwd, k 2 tog, k 3, * p 2, k 8, p 2 (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 4 times, p 2, k 8, p 2, rep. from * to * p 2 (k 2, p 2) twice, (tw. 2 f, tw. 2 b) 3 times, p 1.

Fig. 3. 3. The New Knitteds: Aran knitting patterns in *Australia Women's Weekly*, 1957.¹⁰⁸

In this instance, though set against the unfamiliar backdrop of palm trees in sunny Australia, the Aran pattern is still instantly recognisable. In addition, the caption promotes the myth that the “Centuries-old designs from the fascinating Isles of Aran, off the west coast of Ireland, are high fashion news today”, and is a clear example of the ease with which invented traditions, through storytelling, can seep into common knowledge around the world, and at quite a pace. A further element of note in this piece is what Cook calls “the participants”, or the “senders and receivers” of this advertisement.¹⁰⁹ This is part of a knitting-pattern guide (a trend which was growing in popularity) and so, sees the Aran sweater again move from the glamorous, model-based, pictorials of earlier years, and into people’s hobbies and homes. *Vogue Knitting* had also published the pattern for a similarly glamorous ‘Aran Island patterned sheath’ in 1956, suggesting the specific yarns and needles amateur knitters could use to achieve an authentic Aran-knit effect.¹¹⁰ As an ordinary, domestic craft, knitting is described by Joanne Turney as a “gendered”, “vernacular” craft,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Cook, *The Discourse of Advertising*, 4.

¹¹⁰ “Aran Island patterned sheath”. *Vogue Knitting*, January 1956. 49.

“distant to the industrial or post-industrial urban contemporary world”.¹¹¹ Viewed in this way it is easy to see how an invented tradition, particularly one with such pre-modern themes as that of the Aran sweater can seem attractive and take hold of the popular imagination. In addition, although still seen in these instances as ‘high fashion’, the gap between designer and consumer is lessened somewhat. Domestic knitters could increasingly take part in the production process of Aran sweaters, contributing to the garment’s universality and accessibility.

The Rise of Tourism

Another development in the 1950s which was to have an impact on Aran sweater production in Ireland, and the role Irishness played in this regard, was the rise of transatlantic transportation. This not only boosted the growing diasporic movements away from Ireland, but also facilitated the fostering of Ireland’s early tourist industry. Many Irish-Americans, who had been settling in large numbers in the US since the time of The Great Famine (1845-1849), had, after initial decades of deprivation and poverty, experienced a high level of social mobility, and now had disposable income to holiday back to their homeland. In terms of popular culture, a central element to this Irish-American transatlantic story was the release of the double Oscar-winning film, *The Quiet Man*, in 1952. Hollywood director John Ford’s mother was an Aran Islander, and his film, starring John Wayne and Maureen O’Hara, tells the tale of a returning Irish immigrant and his gradual reacceptance into his home community. Drama, conflict and humour arise from the similarities and differences played out between Irish and American culture, giving powerful and romantic insight into the experiences surrounding exile and homecoming.¹¹² In 2013, *The Quiet Man* was added to the US Library of Congress’s National Film Registry for films which are "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant", and worthy of preservation.¹¹³ Building on *Man of Aran*, the film would also convey a sense of the beautiful and wild nature of the

¹¹¹ Joanne Turney, *The Culture of Knitting* (Oxford: Berg, 2009) 45.

¹¹² Richard C. Allen, “I’ve Come Home and I’m Gonna Stay’. *The Quiet Man* in Irish-American Cinematic History”. In *Irelands of the Mind: Memory and Identity in Irish Culture*, eds. Richard C. Allen and Stephen Regan, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 110-128. 112.

¹¹³ Michael O’Sullivan, "Library of Congress Announces 2013 National Film Registry Selections." *The Washington Post*. December 18, 2013. Accessed June 24, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/movies/library-of-congress-announces-2013-national-film-registry-selections/2013/12/17/eba98bce-6737-11e3-ae56-22de072140a2_story.html?utm_term=.36414c88ada7.

West of Ireland to American audiences, only this time in a “Technicolor-enhanced landscape”, in a similar vein to the ever-popular and over-saturated John Hinde postcards of the era.¹¹⁴ The costume-design for the film also heavily influenced its overall aesthetic, and was carried out by the Ó Máille House of Style, the first commercial producers of Aran sweaters on the mainland.¹¹⁵ The cast themselves were not dressed in Aran sweaters, but the costumes were made from Irish textiles, such as Donegal tweed, and the stars visited the Ó Máille store in Galway.¹¹⁶

The Quiet Man caused a sensation which was not limited to Irish shores. In our interview, Vawn Corrigan described it as “a celebration of Irish-Americanism”, after which “we had the first real influx of American tourists coming to Ireland”, and all of a sudden “everything that the Irish wore became of interest”.¹¹⁷ Fans flocked to the set-locations from the film, enjoying the dramatic and beautiful West of Ireland landscape, and visiting Ó Máille’s, where they could buy hand-knitted Aran sweaters.¹¹⁸ This was arguably the beginning, in Ireland, of what Angela Wright has termed “light-touch ancestry”, a less intense form of in-depth genealogical tourism, where tourists might visit graveyards in search of their surname, or go to local areas of interest to get a sense of how their ancestors might have lived.¹¹⁹ An extension of this could be the purchase of an Aran sweater, particularly given the invented tradition imbued in their manufacture which conveys a supposed generations-old history and tradition. The early waves of US tourism to Ireland fed into the story-telling narratives associated with the Aran sweater’s origin, and laid the groundwork for the more elaborate marketing campaigns to take hold, such as the Clan Aran example discussed in the previous chapter.

The advent of commercial transatlantic flight to and from Ireland and the US undoubtedly played a major role in accommodating this rise in tourism. State-owned airline Aer Lingus began its transatlantic service in 1949 and, partnering with the National Tourist Publicity

¹¹⁴ Burke, “The Castle”, 371.

¹¹⁵ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 64.

¹¹⁶ “The Quiet Man.” Ó Máille - The Original House of Style. Accessed January 11, 2019. <https://www.omaille.com/about/the-quiet-man/>.

¹¹⁷ Corrigan interview.

¹¹⁸ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 63.

¹¹⁹ Angela Wright, “Managing the American Tourist Experience in Ireland: An Emotional Context” *International Journal of Business and Management* 3, no.8. (August 2008): 85-91.

Organisation (then Fógra Fáilte), began investing in new methods to attract an international clientele to Ireland.¹²⁰ It was decided that a clear, striking design approach should be adopted to promote the new airline that would paint Ireland as an exciting destination, rich in history and culture.¹²¹ One of the ways this was achieved was by recruiting a group of Dutch graphic designers who became known as 'The Dutch School', some formerly of KLM (the Dutch national airline), to come and work in Ireland. The group consisted of several designers including Guus Melai, Jan de Fouw, Bert van Embden, Willem van Velzen, Gerrit van Gelderen, and Piet Sluis.¹²² The Dutch aesthetic was classic 1950s design, though would have been somewhat radical in the relatively insular Irish context. The Dutch design approach has been described as a "combination of analytical professionalism and artistic freedom" which has led to its nickname "official anarchy."¹²³ One of the posters issued by the National Tourist Publicity Organisation which is of particular interest to this discussion was completed by Guus Melai in 1953.

¹²⁰ Adrian Redmond (ed.). *That was then, This is now, Change in Ireland 1949-1999* (Dublin: Central Statistics Office, February 2000).

¹²¹ RTÉ Culture. "National Treasures - Linda King on Ireland's Design History." RTE.ie. April 13, 2018. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://www.rte.ie/culture/2018/0410/953478-national-treasures-linda-king-on-irelands-design-history/>.

¹²² "You Wait Around For One Guus." Broadsheet.ie. November 28, 2012. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://www.broadsheet.ie/2012/11/27/you-wait-around-for-one-guus/>.

¹²³ "Interview with Conor Clarke." Creative Ireland. Accessed June 24, 2019. <http://www.creativeireland.com/articles/clarke.html>.



Fig. 3. 4. 'Ireland Invites You': Poster by Guus Melai for the National Tourist Publicity Organisation, 1953.¹²⁴

Melai chose to illustrate the image of a welcoming Ireland by depicting an Aran Islander in traditional dress, similar to that described by J.M. Synge (as referenced in the previous chapter), though here the man wears a strikingly-patterned Aran sweater, and crafts a crios belt (the traditional woven belt worn by Aran Islanders). In the background, we see fishermen carrying a currach (a fishing boat common in the West of Ireland) in a scene reminiscent of Flaherty's *Man of Aran*. The use of this image in particular, in combination with the caption 'Ireland Invites You', is noteworthy. The specific setting of the Aran Islands is used to convey the message of the entire country, and plays on the notion of Ireland as

¹²⁴ "'Land Of Legend'." National Museum of Ireland. Accessed June 24, 2019.

<https://www.museum.ie/Country-Life/Exhibitions/Previous-Exhibitions/Come-Back-to-Erin/Land-of-Legend..>
The description reads: Signed Melai. 1953. The Museum's caption reads: This organisation was the precursor of Bord Fáilte Éireann (the Irish Tourist Board). The empty strap-line allowed different company logos and slogans to be inserted. The scene is pure Aran Islands and reminiscent of a famous John Hinde postcard.

the land of 'one hundred thousand welcomes' (*céad míle fáilte*), a popular Irish saying. It also sells the image of Ireland as a place where locally handmade goods are readily available. The romantic image is again similar to the postcards of John Hinde, the "King of technicolour tourism", who was a popular British photographer and postcard designer who had come to Ireland and became famous for his nostalgia-evoking, oversaturated images of everyday life.¹²⁵ Again, the participants present in this piece are significant. The poster is most likely aimed at Americans, though, as the National Museum of Ireland explains, the strip at the bottom of the poster is left blank for logos and slogans from different companies. Though it is a tourism promotion, the use of an Aran sweater sells the promise that this culturally significant garment will be available to travellers who arrive on Irish shores. Significantly, however, while the "sender" of the message is the Irish State, the message is being communicated through the vision of a Dutch designer, which, to an extent, calls into question the authenticity of the Irishness that is conveyed. The Irish government was aware of this. In another poster designed by Melai for 'An Tóstal' (a government promoted tourist event aimed at people of Irish descent), the artist was asked to leave his name out, for fear of stirring up unnecessary controversy.¹²⁶

In a study of advertisements for US audiences in this period, for products such as Lucky Charms breakfast cereal, Irish-Spring soap, and PanAm airlines, Diane Negra notes "that for as long as there have been attempts to package Ireland for the tourist trade, there has been an inclination to represent it as eternally unchanging".¹²⁷ Such is the image portrayed not only in the Melai poster, but also in the earlier images from *LIFE* and *Sports Illustrated*, both of which depict Ireland as a place of antiquity. Negra points out that advertisements such as these "present Ireland as a static place activated only by the arrival of the tourist".¹²⁸ This idea explains the powerful external influence which tourism can have over how a nationality chooses to represent itself, and this influence was to grow as the efforts of the Tourist

¹²⁵ Burt. Kate "King of Technicolour Tourism: A New Exhibition Celebrates John Hinde's." *The Independent*. October 22, 2011. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/king-of-technicolour-tourism-a-new-exhibition-celebrates-john-hindes-postcards-2307780.html>.

¹²⁶ Eric Zuelow, *Making Ireland Irish: Tourism and National Identity since the Civil War*, (New York: SYRACUSE University Press, 2009). 94. The 'Ireland Invites You' image was also used for the promotion of An Tóstál.

¹²⁷ Diane Negra. Consuming Ireland: Lucky Charms cereal, Irish Spring soap and 1-800-Shamrock. *Cultural Studies* 15. no. 1, (October 2001): 76-97, 89.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

Board continued. The Aran sweater provided an adequate vehicle to present Ireland as a romantic island, steeped in tradition, and left behind by the progress of time.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the entry of the Aran sweater into the design landscape of Ireland in the 1950s, and how Irishness was presented in Aran sweater publications of the time. A variety of factors contributed to its commercial success in this regard, much of which had to do with the assistance of foreign actors. As the Irish government began to look to international markets, they enlisted the help of international actors, from the Philadelphia Fashion Group, who helped Sybil Connolly's Designs enter the US, to the Dutch School of graphic designers, who promoted a striking new vision of Ireland to potential tourists. Storytelling was widespread in its promotion, and the invented tradition behind its origins was evident in stories spread as far as Australia. The Aran sweater played a key role in this adolescent period of Irish economic growth, contributing to something of a second Gaelic Revival, similar to that of the late 19th and early 20th century, only this time with a more commercial thrust behind it. On the one hand it showed the capabilities of Irish designers, and helped Irish fashion reach its peak in terms of prestige, while also it used the romanticism and pure notions of Irishness that had become bundled up within the sweater to entice people to the country, be they tourists or investors. The sense of Irishness which came across in Aran sweaters advertisements since the establishment of the Irish Export Board was romantic and antiquated, symbolic of a simpler time, and the attractiveness of which was available to tourists and Irish-Americans.

Chapter 4

Aran Sweaters for the Masses

It was noted in the last chapter that the gap between Irish knitwear designers and global consumers was being narrowed towards the end of the 1950s. This chapter aims to examine how the Aran sweater went from elite, 'high fashion' to a garment for the masses. From 1952 to 1962, knitted Irish exports had risen in value from £25,000 to £551,000 per year, with this figure growing to £1.2 million by 1967.¹²⁹ As such, this next section addresses the question "What effects did the mass-marketing of the Aran sweater have on the portrayal of Irishness in advertisements?" It will begin by discussing the report of the Scandinavian Design Group to Ireland and the impact this had on Irish design in general. The findings of this report coincided with the folk music revival in the US, and so, there was a growing market for genuine, high-quality Irish products. This was a major turning point in the Aran story, and, as such, it will ask what role the popular folk group The Clancy Brothers had to play in popularising the Aran sweater, and how their particular version of Irishness affected its social symbolism. Moreover, it will examine the impact celebrity involvement had establishing the Aran sweater as a 'cool' garment to own. Furthermore, it will question how the larger social movements of the Swinging 60s affected the marketing of Aran sweaters, which ultimately adopted a more light-hearted and self-aware version of Irish national identity.

The Scandinavian Design Group and Irish Wool

As was shown in the previous chapter, the Irish government were quick to look abroad for advice from international experts on how to capitalise on foreign markets. This trend continued into the 1960s with arguably greater effect, as the protectionist strategy still in place for most of the 1950s had been eradicated. The success of Irish designers in the 1950s had shown that there was demand for Irish-made products, but this had so far been confined to a small number of producers and there was a sense that a much broader exploitation of international fashion markets was within reach. Furthermore, the overall state of Irish design outside of textiles, from industrial design to handicrafts was rather

¹²⁹ McQuillan, *The Aran Sweater*, 43.

underdeveloped. An overt instance of the government availing of foreign consultancy in this regard is evident in the report of the Scandinavian Design Group in 1961. At the government's request, the Irish Export Board turned to Scandinavian experts for a thorough audit of the state of Irish design, a "natural" choice, based on their "enviable" achievements in design and their impressive success in export markets.¹³⁰ Basing their findings on a two-week tour of Irish schools, institutions and factories, the group presented their findings to the government.

Mindful that "Irish products contribute fundamentally to the picture of Ireland presented to the outside world", the feedback from the Scandinavian Group was extremely frank, an almost damning indictment of the Irish design scene, which called for a complete overhaul of the institutions and infrastructure involved.¹³¹ Part of their reasoning came from their observation that Irish culture had developed a tendency towards "literature, theatre, the spoken word and abstract thinking", while "creation by hand or machine and the visual arts", had been neglected.¹³² This shows that, even from an outsider perspective, the natural storytelling instincts of the Irish people, as discussed in Chapter 2, were plain to see. There were, however, some hand-crafts which they believed were diamonds in the rough, and the group made exception for the wool and tweed industries, which were potentially of world class standard. The report indicated that knitted garments such as the Aran sweater were really the only clothing items of international quality that the country was producing at the time. It advised against the practice of dyeing the white wool, and described the báinín knitwear as a "treasure" to be "safeguarded", encouraging the government to become more involved in Irish design.¹³³ While it should be noted that this report was somewhat controversial, many believing it a harsh and overblown take on the Irish design scene, the government did take on board what the Scandinavian group had to say, and the effects were visible in the Irish wool industry.

The quality of Irish wool had been improving in recent years because of the Clean Wool Campaign, an initiative from the Department of Agriculture and the Irish Wool Federation.

¹³⁰ Kaj Franck, Erik Herlow, Ake Huldt, Gunnar Biilmann Petersen, Erik Chr. Sorensen, *Design in Ireland : report of the Scandinavian Design Group in Ireland, April 1961*, (Córas Tráchtála / The Irish Export Board, 1961). Xi.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 15.

Meeting these high standards made the cost of production relatively high for wool farmers, although they were conscious of the greater yield they could gain from a high quality product.¹³⁴ In an effort to navigate these obstacles, and to play a bigger role in wool marketing as the Scandinavians had suggested, the government eventually passed the Wool Marketing Act of 1968. The Act established An Chomhairle Olla (The Irish Wool Council) which sought to improve the quality, quantity and prices of Irish wool exports.¹³⁵ The Scandinavian Design Group's report is thus relevant on two fronts. On the one hand it recognised the Irish tendency for creativity to manifest in literature, poetry and drama over handicrafts, while it also initiated the harnessing of the full potential of Irish wool. As we have seen, the Aran sweater is both a monument to quality Irish design and a vehicle for storytelling, and as such, it can be viewed as a particularly strong garment through which Irishness was communicated to the world.

Celebrity Endorsement

The extent to which Aran sweaters had passed into the mainstream of the fashion landscape in the 1960s is evidenced by the number of celebrities who were photographed and filmed wearing them during this time. In our interview, Vawn Corrigan noted that when it came to the popularisation of the Aran sweater "celebrity endorsement cannot be overstated enough".¹³⁶ McCracken outlines the significant role celebrities can play in transferring meaning to consumers, and notes the difference in ability between anonymous models and celebrities in conveying this meaning, with the latter capable of offering more precise and powerful messages of status and style.¹³⁷ Aside from popular Irish acts and films, international celebrities were also filmed and photographed wearing Aran sweaters throughout the decade (and beyond). From Marilyn Monroe and Jean Seberg, to John Lennon and Steve McQueen, some of the popular culture's biggest names were spotted in the sweater throughout the decade. Speaking of Steve McQueen's appearance in an Aran sweater while filming what she described as "probably one of the coolest movies around at

¹³⁴ "Exporting Irish Wool." RTÉ Archives. June 19, 2018. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://www.rte.ie/archives/2018/0619/971608-exporting-irish-wool/>.

¹³⁵ "Wool Marketing Act, 1968, Section 12". Electronic Irish Statute Book (eISB) Accessed June 24, 2019. <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1968/act/26/section/12/enacted/en/html#sec12>.

¹³⁶ Corrigan interview.

¹³⁷ Grant McCracken, "Who is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process", *Journal of Consumer Research* 16, no.3 (December 1989):310-321. 315.

the time” – *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), Corrigan described it as “perfect advertising”.¹³⁸ Celebrities engage in storytelling not just in the roles they play in films, but their public persona also acts as a story which may be appealing to consumers, and enabling them to act out certain archetypes through clothing.

A compelling example of celebrity endorsement was expressed through Marilyn Monroe in the 1960 film *Let's Make Love*, in which she starred alongside French actor and singer Yves Montand. Aside from Monroe's obvious status and allure as one of Hollywood's biggest stars, the film is also noteworthy in terms of Aran sweater endorsement because of the various international movie posters that accompanied its release. A selection of these is presented below.

¹³⁸ Corrigan interview.



Fig. 4. 1. International movie posters for the film 'Let's Make Love' (1960).¹³⁹

Each of the posters, from Japan, Italy, Spain/Latin America and the US, feature Monroe as Amanda Dell, and Montand as Jean-Marc Clement, and aim to represent the tricky relationship between the two main characters. Monroe is the central focus in most of the images, and in terms of paralanguage, she is posed mid-dance in a sultry, confident manner, with Montand in the background, seemingly her pursuant. The image is slightly different in the US poster, where Monroe appears somewhat coy, and Montand appears to have more control over the situation. The caption reads "Meet that man MONTAND! He's dedicated to the new Monroe Doctrine!", shifting the focus on to his character. This is

¹³⁹ "Let's Make Love." IMDb. Accessed June 22, 2019.

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0054022/mediaindex?page=2&ref=ttmi_mi_sm. A selection of posters for *Let's Make Love* (1960) Clockwise from top-left: The Japanese poster. The Italian poster. The US poster. The Spanish/Latin-American poster.

presented in a bright, pop-art style, typical of the era. What is striking about these posters is that in all of them, bar the US image, Monroe appears in an Aran sweater. This decision on how to present Monroe becomes relevant when we consider how 20th Century Fox would have wanted to market the film to different international audiences. It is possible that the Aran sweater, which up to this point had been represented as a garment of Old Ireland, was not considered sexy enough in the US to communicate the racy themes present in *Let's Make Love*. On the other hand, in other countries, the sweater (or Monroe's poses in the sweater) did fit this messaging, possibly because the storytelling, and thus the old-world notions it conveyed, had been less developed in these cultures.

The Clancy Brothers

Irish celebrities too became endorsers of the Aran sweater during the 1960s. The Folk Revival in the United States at the time also created a market for Irish music. The Folk Revival was a movement championed by a liberal, intellectual underclass, mostly based in Greenwich Village in New York, which saw the breakthrough of artists such as Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie.¹⁴⁰ The political climate at the time created a demand for a hybrid of rebellious protest and anti-establishment songs, which could be sincere, humorous and satirical. Furthermore, the large numbers of the Irish diaspora living in New York, and throughout the US created longing for songs of home with which they could identify. Irish music thus fit right in. The poster boys for traditional Irish music, and, ultimately Ireland itself, for many in the US, were The Clancy Brothers who came from the land-locked Carrick-on-Suir in Co. Tipperary, and two of whom had served in the Royal Air Force in WWII, and their bandmate Tommy Makem. Their appearance on US TV screens marks a turning point in the story of the Aran sweater. In 1961, the group appeared on the Ed Sullivan show, which due to the limited number of TV channels available at the time, was viewed by an estimated 50 million viewers.¹⁴¹ By something of a coincidence, the trademark style of The Clancy Brothers became the Aran sweater. Hearing of the fierce cold of the New York winter, the Clancys' mother supposedly knitted for them and their bandmate Tommy Makem, four Aran sweaters, and sent them to the US, which they then wore on the Ed

¹⁴⁰ Ron Eyerman and Scott Barretta. "From the 30s to the 60s: The Folk Music Revival in the United States" *Theory and Society*, 25, no.4 (Aug., 1996): 501-543.

¹⁴¹ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 98.

Sullivan Show, and which became their trademark.¹⁴² Reportedly, the Irish Export Board told Liam Clancy that the sale of Aran sweaters in the US increased 700% almost overnight.¹⁴³



Fig. 4. 2. A selection of album covers from The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem in the 1960s.¹⁴⁴

A useful item for a discourse analysis in terms of The Clancy Brothers' influence is the album cover, which almost ubiquitously featured Aran sweaters and which essentially acted as

¹⁴² Liam Clancy, *The Mountain of the Women: Memoirs of an Irish Troubadour* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2002).

¹⁴³ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 99.

¹⁴⁴ "The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem Discography: LP Releases - Columbia - 1961-1969." The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem: Discography (Original Releases 1956-1967). Accessed June 24, 2019. http://clancybrothersandtommymakem.com/cbtm_d02.htm. Clockwise from Top Left: Hearty and Hellish. 1962. The Boys Won't Leave The Girls Alone. 1962. The Bold Fenian Men 1969. Isn't It Grand Boys 1966.

advertises for the garment as well as for the music. The following analysis is based on a selection of four album covers spanning the 1960s, during which time the Clancys were signed to the US label Columbia records. In the top left image, we are presented with an early Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem album 'Hearty and Hellish!' (1962). The album's title appears in a striking green text bubble, next to the image of the musicians, who appear confident and serious, and who are wearing pristine white Aran Sweaters. On the top-right, in 'The Boys Won't Leave The Girls Alone' (1962) (a line taken from a popular Irish folk song), we see the band outdoors, in front of an idyllic lake, again wearing their Aran sweaters. The bottom-left image sees a slight departure from the previous styles, with the Clancys now dressed in stylish tuxedos for 'Isn't it Grand Boys' (1966), but with their Aran sweaters still in hand. In the final album cover, 'Bold Fenian Men' (1969) the band are presented with light-hearted expressions, superimposed in front of an image of the rebellious Flying Columns of the West Mayo Brigade of the Irish Republican Army during The War of Independence, and again are wearing their Aran sweaters. This selection of album covers is indicative of the multi-faceted character behind what Irishness meant in the United States. All of the images appear somewhat self-contradictory, and display a certain sense of irony which is indicative of the self-awareness and playfulness which Irishness had been developing. The first image has an irreverent title while the band has a serious expression; the title of the second paints the Clancys as Casanovas, but they appear in a wholesome, nature scene; the juxtaposition of the tuxedos and the sweaters is an intentionally comical contrast; while the final cover depicts a serious topic, with connotations of Irish nationalism and violence, but the band appear to be jolly. That the sweaters are present throughout is indicative of their multi-layered symbolism, but also a conscious decision on behalf of the record label. Each of the album covers tells a slightly different story, which through the image of the Clancy Brothers became immediately connoted with Irishness. Not only did the sweaters symbolise the Clancys, but they were synonymous with Irishness, and all that that had come to mean in the 1960s.

As in the album art, the range of themes present in the Clancys' repertoire was vast: songs could be bawdy or about excessive drinking, or they could be political ballads, rebel songs, love songs and laments. As Irish immigrants in New York during the folk revival, their music spoke not only to the Irish diaspora, but for huge numbers of Americans who were looking

either for a cause, or for a distraction in the post-war United States. Susan Motherway describes this as assimilating the local into the global, thereby creating a “transnational expression of Irishness”.¹⁴⁵ Motherway also cites popular Irish folk musician Christy Moore who believed the Clancys expressed Irishness in a new way, enabling listeners to experience a culture in growth, which had “cast off the shackles of conservative Catholicism”, and had broken “free from the dark sentence that Mother Church had read out”.¹⁴⁶ Through the Clancy Brothers, Aran sweaters also came to symbolise a wide variety of qualities of Irishness, and these could all, in turn, be employed by producers, record labels, advertisers and designers to sell their product. The Clancy Brothers thus brought elements of continuation and innovation to Aran sweater storytelling. Through the band, the sweater remained symbolic of Irishness, though it also took on new forms, most notably a slightly different archetypal character, that of the rebel, as portrayed on the cover of *The Bold Fenian Men*. Holt notes that “more often than not, in America at least, those who win in myth markets are performing a myth of rebellion”, going on to remark that this appealed to US audiences as “No matter the era or the ideological climate, Americans are resolutely pragmatic and populist in spirit, deeply distrustful of political dogma and concentrated authority.”¹⁴⁷

Wearing the Red, White and Blue

As the Clancy Brothers’ fame grew, wool exports increased, and transatlantic tourism rose, so too did the popularity of the Aran sweater. However, it appears that the Irish Export Board was not content to let the production of the sweaters stagnate, and looked to adapt them to different consumer needs. This is explained in a *Sports Illustrated* piece from September 1966, headlined ‘A Light New Breed of Irish Tweed’.¹⁴⁸ The editorial in the magazine’s ‘Sporting Look’ section reveals that the Irish Export Board had enlisted the help Norbert Ford, a pioneer of lightweight American sportswear, so that Irish clothing would no

¹⁴⁵ Susan H. Motherway, *The globalization of Irish traditional song performance*, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013). 25.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁴⁷ Douglas B. Holt, “What Becomes an Icon the Most?” *Harvard Business Review* (March 2003): 43-49.

¹⁴⁸ “Sporting Look”, *Sports Illustrated*, September 4 1966, 43-47. <https://www.si.com/vault/issue/42922/43>.

longer be “thick enough, hairy enough and waterproof enough to thatch the roof of a Galway cottage”.¹⁴⁹



Fig. 4. 3. From 'A light new breed of Irish tweed' in *Sports Illustrated*, 1966.¹⁵⁰

The article tells us that “the famous fisherman sweaters, hand-knit on the rocky isles of Aran, now come in colors as well as the well-known off-white of the natural wool”, while the youthful models appear in a Dublin harbour emphasising the Aran’s rugged, maritime quality and harking back to the fisherman story of legend, and appealing to those looking to embody adventurous archetypes. Significantly, the outfits of the models, however, are slightly different to those we have seen thus far. The colours red, white and blue conjure up vaguely patriotic notions for an American audience, with the decision to dye the báinín wool occurring in contrast to the earlier recommendations of the Scandinavian Design Group. In addition, the Arans appear here in a preppy, collegiate style, complemented by the models’ pressed chinos and espadrilles, indicative of the Ivy League fashions which were becoming

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

popular in the US at the time. These sweaters were produced by Pádraig Ó Síocháin's company, Galway Products Ltd., were available in Brooks Brothers New York, and were priced at \$47.50 (some \$375 in today's money).¹⁵¹ The casual yet sophisticated Ivy League look was epitomised in the 1960s by John F. Kennedy and the Kennedy family, whose summers on Cape Cod saw them don blazers, chinos, polo shirts and sweaters.¹⁵² The Kennedy Administration was a high point for Irish-American reputation the US and in Ireland, and JFK was the first serving US President to visit Ireland, in 1963. A reception was held at Áras an Úachtaráin (the Irish President's residence) for Irish exporters which JFK attended, and there Pádraig Ó Síocháin presented him with a copy of his book *Aran: Islands of Legend*, which explored various fables and myths surrounding the islands. Despite JFK's tragic assassination later that year, it was not to be the end of the Kennedy ties with Irish fashion. The dress worn by Jacqueline Kennedy in her White House portrait in 1970 was designed by Sybil Connolly.¹⁵³ The presence and legacy of an Irish-American president of the US was a huge source of pride for both the diaspora and the Irish people themselves. When these connotations are taken into account, Aran sweaters, like sports jerseys today, can also be seen to operate as identity garments, where the wearer shows they are proud of their Irish heritage, and are part of a particular club. In contrast to other more formal national symbols like flags which, as outlined by Elgenius, are often employed to create boundaries between nations, the Aran sweater actually functioned as a cross-cultural symbol which, for some, reinforced between Ireland and the US.¹⁵⁴

Irishness in the United Kingdom in the Swinging 60s

Just as the Clancy Brothers played with different interpretations of Irishness in the US, another Irish designer, Cyril Cullen, did this with his knitwear designs and advertisements in the UK. The myths surrounding the sweater's origin did not initially appear to have taken off in the UK with the same fervour that they did in the US. In 1962, a *Times* article entitled 'Knitters of Aran' was remarkably open about the unknown origins of the drowned fisherman story, pointing out that it had appeared in Synge's *Riders to the Sea* in reference

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Corrigan. *Irish Aran*, 88.

¹⁵³ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 81, 86.

¹⁵⁴ Elgenius, *Symbols of Nations*. 15.

to a stocking, but that at some point in time “an anonymous genius conceived the notion of transferring the pattern to jerseys”.¹⁵⁵ The remainder of the piece speaks highly of the design, but the author has a slightly different take on its origins. It notes the “charm of the Aran jersey lies in [its] sculptural quality”, which the author believes to be inspired by patterns from Celtic Christian times. It concludes that the garment is one which is “eminently wearable and suited to country life in England, yet which has its physical origin in the lonely islands of the Atlantic, and its decorative origins in the classical past”.¹⁵⁶ It would appear then that the proximity and familiarity between Ireland and the UK did not lend itself to the spreading of romantic myths about the sweater’s origins. However, just three years later, in 1965, *The Times* published a piece entitled ‘Charm and Symbolism of Island Knitwear’, featuring Aran sweaters. According to the article the knitwear “gives expression to the tough everyday life” on the islands, and recounts the myth that the sweater’s “uniqueness was often useful in identifying the body of a fisherman drowned at sea”.¹⁵⁷ In addition to pointing out the difficulty which daily newspapers face in remaining consistent over time, this article also highlights how, through storytelling, the Aran’s invented tradition had found some footing in the UK, in a sense becoming re-enchanted, and was now being spoken about in terms of antiquity and romantic island life. Cyril Cullen, a prolific designer and knitter, who supplied Aran sweaters to the Ireland House Shop in London, played with the images of Irishness in the UK in his advertisements.

¹⁵⁵ Special Correspondent, “The Knitters of Aran”, *The Times*, January 1 1962.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Carol Wright, “Charm and Symbolism of Island Knitwear”, *The Times*, November 1 1965.

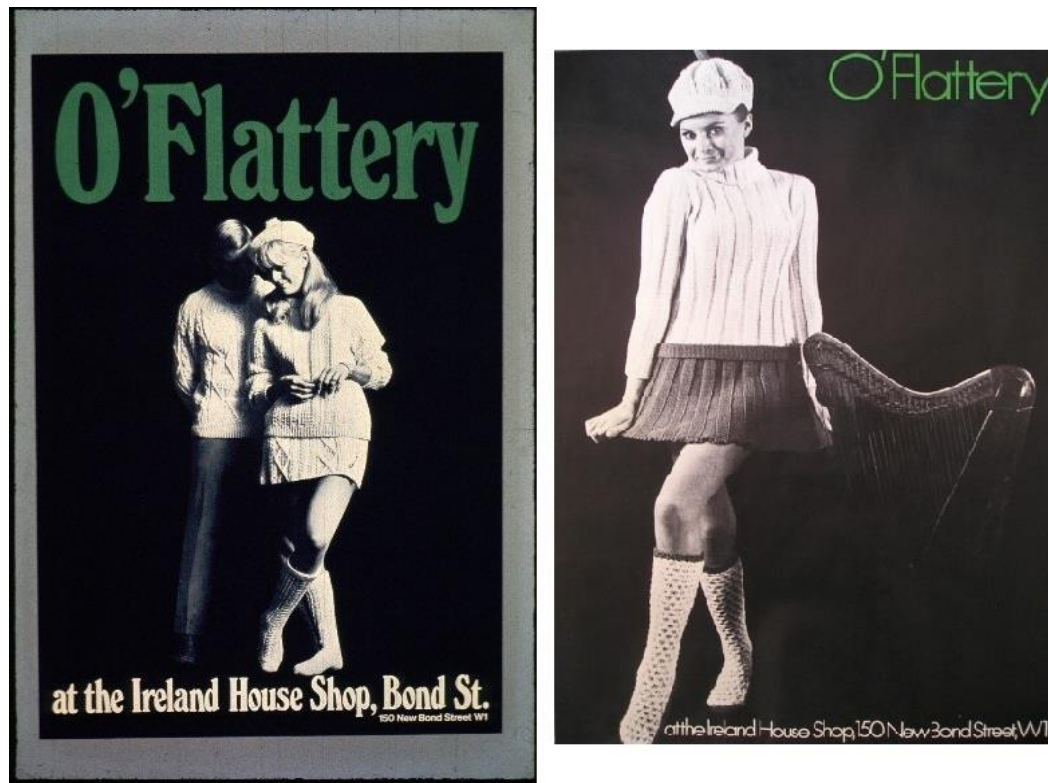


Fig. 4. 4. Advertisements for Cyril Cullen's *O'Flattery* range, on sale at the Ireland House Shop in London.¹⁵⁸

The image on the left is held in the Design Council Slide Collection and is credited to graphic designer Peter Butler, for the Irish Export Board in 1968. The exact origin of the image on the right is not as clear, as it is not held in that archive, but was sourced from Cyril Cullen's website, in a piece entitled 'A Retrospective on Cyril's Knitwear Designs'. It is most likely from the same designer, though, judging by the typography, the two images could have been created a number of years apart. A discourse analysis of the two images reveals a number of points for consideration. Firstly, the colour scheme is black and white, conjuring up notions of old-fashioned classic styling, while the use of green for the name 'O'Flattery' hints at Irish origins. The name 'O'Flattery' is also a clever use of wordplay, and is a pun on the common name O'Flaherty (or even Flaherty, the director of the *Man of Aran*), implying that these garments are traditionally Irish, and are flattering to the wearer. Both images feature women in knitted miniskirts, an emblem of the new liberal attitudes of the Swinging

¹⁵⁸ Left image: Peter Butler, O'Flattery poster for the Irish Export Board, 1968. Design Council Slide Collection. "Irish Export Board, O'Flattery - DCSC - VADS: The Online Resource for Visual Arts." VADS. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=59641&sos=10>. Right image: "A Retrospective of Cyril's Knitwear Designs." Cyrilcullen. July 02, 2012. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://cyrilcullen.wordpress.com/cyrils-knitwear-designs/>. Year unknown. Possibly same designer as the first.

60s. The image on the left places a man (also in an Aran sweater) in the background with his face obscured, and the woman in the foreground has seemingly attracted his attention, which could be seen as the woman having more control in the relationship – another theme of 1960s socio-political movements. The model in the right-hand image sports knitwear from head to toe, while she is posed in a manner evocative of Irish dance, but in such a way that also bares her leg to the viewer. She stands next to a harp, the national instrument and centuries-old heritage symbol of Ireland. The images undoubtedly subvert the viewer's traditional perceptions of what Irishness is, and how Aran sweaters should be viewed. This new Irishness is confident, self-aware and more irreverent than earlier advertisements.

It should be noted that the ideas expressed in these Cyril Cullen adverts are similar to that of a 1968 Clancy Brothers' album 'The Girls Won't Leave the Boys Alone', a play on the title of their earlier 1962 album. Unlike their earlier records previously discussed, this album was released by Emerald, a UK label. The cover work depicts four women dressed in only Aran sweaters, again with their legs bare. The image again jests at traditional notions of Irish Catholic prudishness, presenting the Aran sweater with added sex-appeal, and hinting at themes of women's emancipation. The models are photographed barefoot in front of what appears to be an old countryside farmhouse, which is evocative of the traditional, pastoral Irish lifestyle, but which seems somewhat comical juxtaposed next to the new-age models.

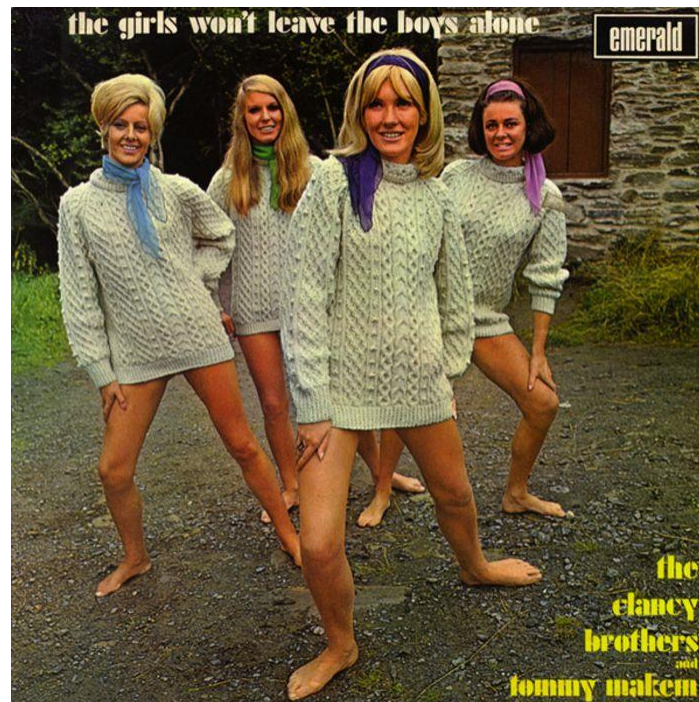


Fig. 4. 5. 'The girls won't leave the boys alone': From *The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem*, 1968.¹⁵⁹

These images run somewhat contrary to notions of Irishness expressed in earlier advertisements evident in the previously discussed study from Diane Negra, that Ireland was an unchanging land, stuck in time.¹⁶⁰ This idea is echoed by Burke who notes that “the demands of promotion required the fantasy of a sealed uninterrupted Irish past”.¹⁶¹ The models featured here wear similar outfits to those sported by Monroe in the international *Let's Make Love* posters, but which was excluded in the US poster. In the American advertisements Negra and Burke studied from the 50s and 60s, as with the earlier advertisements included in this thesis, the image that came across was one of Old Ireland. Negra found that “In the world of these ads, Ireland as a kind of twilight vision also promises freedom and a reversion to the de-complicated class relationships of an earlier time”.¹⁶² In contrast, the images shown here to the UK market are evidence of a New Ireland, conscious of its past, but attempting to keep pace with some of the more progressive fashions and ideas of the time.

¹⁵⁹ "The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem Discography: Compilations - Tradition Records." Tradition Reissues: At the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem. Accessed June 24, 2019. http://clancybrothersandtommykem.com/cbtm_d06.htm.

¹⁶⁰ Negra, “Consuming Ireland”, 90.

¹⁶¹ Burke, “The Castle”, 365.

¹⁶² Negra, “Consuming Ireland”, 90.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the varied uses of Irishness in promoting Aran sweaters in a decade which saw them rise hugely in popularity, marked by the entry of The Clancy Brothers into the US. It has shown again, that the initiative was taken by the Irish Export Board to seek foreign advice on how best Irish products ought to be marketed abroad, resulting in an improvement in the quality of Irish wool and the adaptation of the sweaters to meet the needs of international consumers. From there we have seen how Aran sweaters were portrayed in different ways to different audiences, by celebrities like Marilyn Monroe and, most notably, in The Clancy Brothers' transnational expression of Irishness, which was often multi-layered, rebelliousness and ironic, in a time when Irish heritage could be worn as a badge of honour in the US. Publications in the UK, were slightly different, taking on a more provocative style. It can be surmised that the difference between the two is possibly a result of Ireland having differing socio-political and historical relationships with each country. Historically, Irish immigrants had made an almost mystical crossing of the Atlantic, had risen to the top of American society, and had made a name for themselves as romancers and rebels along the way, and this is reflected in the Aran sweater imagery promoted there. Ireland had only recently become independent from Britain however, and shared a much more troubled past with it, thus it is possible that a more provocative imagery was employed by the designers to more confidently assert Ireland's presence to its nearest neighbour and former master.

Chapter 5

The Aran Identity Crisis

Having charted the emergence of the Aran sweater into commercial markets as a high-fashion item in the 1950s, then examining its entrance into more mass appeal markets by the 1960s, this chapter asks where could the Aran sweater have left to go, and whether or not the storytelling behind its marketing, based on Irishness and invented tradition, had run its course. It begins by examining an ad from a campaign by Pure New Wool and Opel Cars in 1971 representative of the turning point Aran sweaters faced in terms of the impact global markets held on their popularity. Specifically it asks “Did over-exposure to market influences reduce the Aran sweater/s cachet?” New developments in textile production and global markets also presented new challenges to the small-scale fashion industry, particularly true one that prided itself on producing hand-knit garments, and the relative size of its industry was becoming apparent.¹⁶³ The economic and fashion trends of the time are reflected in much of the Aran sweater publications during this period, and this chapter will examine whether Aran knitwear managed to maintain a level of cachet, or whether a repetition of the storytelling tropes had transformed it into a kitsch tourist keepsake, void of the supposed authenticity and quality which had set it apart in its early days of production.

Marketing Mixed Messages

At the beginning of the 1970s the Aran sweater was relatively well-known garment worldwide, but it had been influenced by so many actors in its relatively short life span that its original sophistication and attractiveness appeared to be fading into obscurity. The Irish Government, tourist boards, advertisers, designers, musicians, manufacturers and knitters, all formed part of the dense web of interest groups which had been trying to capitalise on the sweater’s appeal, and this resulted in mixed messages becoming apparent in the marketing of the garment worldwide. In 1971, a Pure New Wool catalogue was produced in Ireland which marketed Aran sweater Safari Jackets.¹⁶⁴ In the same year, on the other side of the world, *Australia Women’s Weekly* published a knitting pattern with the title ‘Knits for

¹⁶³ De Cléir, “Creativity in the Margins”, 203.

¹⁶⁴ “Pure New Wool & Opel Cars – Irish Fashion Catalogue 1971.” Brand New Retro. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://brandnewretro.ie/2013/02/24/pure-new-wool-opel-cars-irish-fashion-catalogue-1971/>.

Action', headlined with 'Young Arans for the Snow'. It was accompanied by a posed picture of a couple in ski attire and Aran sweaters, ready to take on the slopes. The magazine described it as the "pop sweater of snow country" for "smart young swingers".¹⁶⁵ It appears that at this point in time the Aran sweater could be adopted and repurposed for whatever the next trend was going to be. Negra sums up this idea well, noting (with relation to other advertisements) that "Irishness finally becomes an entirely vitiated category subject to any and all appropriating influences, and ideally suited to commodification".¹⁶⁶ A discourse analysis of the Irish advertisement reveals the wide spectrum of influences present in its marketing at the time.

**Báid agus Báinín:
That's living in any language.**

"Gaeltarra" launch Aran's traditional, ocean-going bainín in new, high-fashion styles — Safari Jackets®, his and hers, machine knit or custom handknit in pure new wool. Live out rough weather and love it in these new classics. Prices ranging from £7.50 to £15.00.

*Safari Jackets take like ducks to water —they're washable, shrink resistant, pure new wool.

Up on shore, take the wheel of an Opel Commodore Coupe and rule the high road—with 2,500 cc engine, 6 cylinders, power steering and brakes, radial tyres. Electrically heated rear window, vinyl roof with sliding panel for sun. Fully reclining seats. Price: £2,197 (automatic transmission, £194 extra).

Photographed on Howth Pier.

GAELTARRA

PURE NEW WOOL

GM

OPEL

Fig. 5. 1. 'Báid agus Báinín': A Pure New Wool and Opel cars collaboration, 1971.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ "Young Arans for the Snow." Australia Women's Weekly, June 16 1971. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/45651060?searchTerm=aran%20sweater&searchLimits=l-availability=y>

¹⁶⁶ Negra. 94.

¹⁶⁷ Brand New Retro. Pure New Wool and Opel Cars Catalogue 1971. <https://brandnewretro.ie/2013/02/24/pure-new-wool-opel-cars-irish-fashion-catalogue-1971/>

The advert presents us with an image of a young couple in matching Aran Safari Jackets, on a boat in a harbour in Dublin, and in the background on the quay there is a new Opel. The caption begins in Irish: “Báid agus Báinín” translates to ‘Boats and Báinín (the white Aran wool), and claims “That’s living in any language”, suggesting that Arans can be associated with glamour and the high-life, despite their traditional roots. The maritime setting shows the adventurous fisherman archetype is still being alluded to. In the blurb, consumers are encouraged to “live out rough weather and love it in these ‘high-fashion’ “new classics”. The next section advertises the Opel Commodore Coupe which the happy couple can drive “up on shore”. The logos present on the bottom are ‘Gaeltarra’, the company that produces the Aran garments, ‘Pure New Wool’, now known as the Woolmark, an international authority representing quality wool products, as well as the ‘General Motors’ and ‘Opel’ logo. It is an interesting example of cross-industry collaboration, where Opel sought to take advantage of the market of domestic tourism within Ireland. The advertisement is symbolic, however, of just how globalised markets had become, and how Arans were perhaps struggling to find a distinct voice amongst the mess of influences. In this instance the Irish language is being used to promote an Irish product from Gaeltarra, designed in the style of colonialists in Africa; while Pure New Wool is an Australian initiative, and Opel is a German car manufacturer, owned by the American General Motors.

An image that is perhaps more symbolic of the state in which the Aran sweater stood is a later Clancy Brothers album cover from this period. The record *Show Me The Way* was released in 1972 by the New York record label Audio Fidelity. A discourse analysis of this image reveals a somewhat hollow take on what Irishness had become. The Clancy Brothers themselves do not appear in the image, but rather we see a standalone Aran sweater laid on a table. Next to the sweater there are small plastic figurines of a traditional band playing a song. Music critic Sean McGuinness described the cover as looking like “it was thrown together at the last minute”.¹⁶⁸ From a sender point of view, the intended message is most likely that the Clancys had become so synonymous with the Aran sweater that their actual image was not necessary on the cover. From a receiver point of view this message is not necessarily so clear. Instead, the sweater looks abandoned, while the figurines show none of

¹⁶⁸ "The Clancy Brothers with Louis Killen, Show Me The Way." The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem. Accessed June 24, 2019. http://clancybrothersandtommymakem.com/cbtm_d30_show.htm.

the vigour and life of previous Clancy Brothers album covers. The storytelling elements here present little opportunity for any archetypes to be embodied by consumers and listeners. McGuinness says of the music itself on the album that “The old Clancy sound is clearly not dominant here, but neither has a new sound come into its own”, which is perhaps an apt analogy for the role the Aran sweater held at this time.¹⁶⁹ The Aran sweater was becoming something of an empty vessel, communicating a decidedly jumbled and deflated image of Irishness to consumers.



Fig. 5. 2. *Show Me The Way*: Album by The Clancy Brothers 1972 ¹⁷⁰

The sentiments surrounding Aran sweaters at this time were mixed outside of Ireland. Just as the differences between US and UK markets made for different advertising approaches, consumers on either side of the water also felt differently about Arans. In 1973 the Irish Tourist Board surveyed English and American tourists regarding their thoughts on shopping in Ireland and Irish merchandise.¹⁷¹ Reportedly, the American tourists actively sought to buy

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Zuelow. *Making Ireland Irish*, 98.

Aran sweaters when they came to Ireland and were attracted by their “rustic charm”.¹⁷² On the other hand, the English tourists were not excited by the products Ireland had to offer, did not see Ireland as an exotic destination and believed Aran sweaters were “bulky and unfashionable”.¹⁷³ Markets in the US however were beginning to experience a decline in department stores, where the Irish Export Board had been consolidating most of their ready-to-wear Aran sweater sales, while Irish scenery was still being used for *Vogue* editorials, but the designers were no longer Irish.¹⁷⁴ The different perceptions of the Aran sweater thus required different versions of Irishness to be communicated to make them appealing in varying consumer contexts.

A similar instance of somewhat convoluted messaging in Aran sweater marketing at this time is evident in the publications Pádraig Ó Síocháin’s Galway Bay Products Ltd., which we saw in the previous chapter had been featured in a more slick American design style in *Sports Illustrated*. Ó Síocháin, one of the pioneers of Aran sweaters, was known as a master of branding when it came to Irish knitwear. Vawn Corrigan spoke of Ó Síocháin in our interview, and how he understood that “it was the romance that people were after”, and how he managed to create a “connection with the Aran sweaters and a kind of primordial Irishness which was very refreshing against the displacement” people felt in the ever-urbanising world.¹⁷⁵ Ó Síocháin would use the paintings of Seán Keating, the renowned Irish artist in his sales brochures, adding a sense of romance and freedom to the branding.¹⁷⁶ Keating was one of Ireland’s foremost painters of the 20th century, who depicted Aran islanders almost like cowboys or gauchos from the frontier, as evidenced by his 1915 work *Men of the West*.¹⁷⁷ However, as the decades passed, it appears that maintaining a level of coherence in branding Irishness through the Aran sweater became less palpable. This is evident in the following discourse analysis of a Galway Bay Product’s piece from the French knitting magazine *100 Idées* in 1974.

¹⁷² Ibid., 99.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 99.

¹⁷⁴ Burke, “The Castle”, 377.

¹⁷⁵ Corrigan interview.

¹⁷⁶ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 85.

¹⁷⁷ Ruth Keating, “Men of the West.” Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://www.hughlane.ie/curators-choice/1224-menofthewest>.



Fig. 5. 3. 'L'Étole de Molly Malone': Knitting patterns and storytelling in *100 Idées*, 1974.¹⁷⁸

The segment provides some background information on the garment's provenance in advance of giving instructions on how 'L'Étole de Molly Malone', or 'The stole of Molly Malone' can be knitted. Draped over a stone wall, with a suitably grand castle in the background, we see the stole of Molly Malone, which is modelled by a woman in the bottom right-hand corner. The text accompanying the pictures begins with the lyrics of the famous Dublin ballad, 'Molly Malone': "In Dublin's fair city/where the girls are so pretty/I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone". The message of the song appears suitable for such a campaign, though the setting of the photoshoot and subject matter is jarring. It goes on to say that, despite how the song goes, their model was photographed in Galway, before explaining that these Aran shawls are no longer worn in Ireland and are made exclusively for export. The advertisement probably achieves the desired outcome of steeping every element in a sense of Irishness so that it appears authentic. In reality, however, we are presented with a mish-mash of loosely linked elements of Irish culture: a Dublin city ballad, accompanying a photoshoot of a shawl in front of a typical Irish castle, and a garment which was not typical of Aran Islanders. This calls into question the participant actions involved in the publication. From the receiver side, the French audience may not be aware, and/or may

¹⁷⁸ 100 Idées, "L'Étole de Molly Malone". No.10. July- August 1974.

not be concerned about the authenticity of Irishness portrayed. However, from the sender's side, one wonders whether there is any concern for presenting a convoluted, generic picture of Irishness, or whether the possible financial gain outweighed the need for authentic portrayals. Publications such as this are indicative of the vulnerability and malleability of local crafts when stories are repeated and interpreted by global market players.

Sweater Souveniring

Authenticity is a necessary yet unquantifiable dimension of the Aran sweater which ought to be discussed in relation to this stage in its story. Amy-Twigger Holroyd outlines the usefulness of the authenticity issue of culturally significant design. While she does note that tradition is not static, and adapts to maintain relevance in the long-term, she argues that authenticity "reminds us that there is a limit to how far and how fast culturally significant designs, products, and practices can be changed without losing the identity and meaning that underpin social, historical and aesthetic values".¹⁷⁹ The earlier examples of this chapter have arguably already shown that for the Aran sweater the line of authenticity had perhaps already been passed: having been on the market for 20 or so years the Aran sweater could now be bought in almost any colour, be applied to any activity, and marketed worldwide based on vague notions of imagined Irish heritage. As we have seen, the Aran sweater has been imbued with a certain sense of inauthenticity since the beginning, with storytelling and invented tradition always having been a part of its marketing plans. However, by the 1970s this appears to have reached a new level, with the Aran sweater becoming little more than a tourist souvenir in many people's eyes. Carden describes how the skilled nature of the knitting work, coupled with low rates of pay and the high demand for the jumpers meant that there was a shortage of Irish knitters by the late 1960s and throughout the 70s and so, much of the work was outsourced.¹⁸⁰ She learned of the frustration of some of these outsourced knitters in England, who thought it ridiculous that "people would pay good

¹⁷⁹ Amy Twigger-Holroyd, "Forging New Futures: Cultural Significance, Revitalisation and Authenticity". In *Design Roots Culturally Significant Designs, Products and Practices*, eds. Stuart Walker, Martyn Evans, Tom Cassidy, Jeyon Jung and Amy Twigger Holroyd, (London: Bloomsbury, 2018). 25-37. 32.

¹⁸⁰ Siún Carden, 'The Aran Sweater', 73.

money for something they thought was made on a specific island”, and would sometimes secretly write ‘Made in Sunderland’ on the ‘Aran’ sweaters they knitted.¹⁸¹



Fig. 5. 4. Inishmore Shop, Fáilte Ireland Tourism Photographic Collection, 1976.¹⁸²

The photo above was part of a photo round of the Irish Tourist Board in 1976. It shows a small shop on the Aran Island of Inishmore proudly hanging out its hand-knit Arans on display to potential customers, with gleaming sheep pelts hanging on the wall in the foreground. This image would have been used to promote the Aran Islands, and Ireland as a whole to tourists. While we can assume that the Irish Tourist Board was well-intentioned in its photoshoot, a more cynical observer might conclude that this kind of promotion was contributing to the hyper-commodification of the Aran sweater, turning garments that had once been the backbone of the Irish fashion industry into little more than souvenirs. It is unclear how much benefit the largely underdeveloped West of Ireland was receiving from Aran sweater production at this time. Gaeltarra Éireann, established in 1958, the body tasked with providing “for the initiation of new industries and productive schemes of

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Dublin City Library and Archive. “Inishmore Aran Islands Co.Galway”. Fáilte Ireland Tourism Photographic Collection. 1976.

employment in the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking regions)”, was too high a cost during this period of economic rationalisation and was dissolved in 1979, reformed later as Údaras na Gaeltachta (Regional Development Authority). There was a feeling that more needed to be done to sustainably develop these regions and support local industries than relying on tourism. This was especially pertinent when a Woolmark Aran sweater could be bought in Marks & Spencer for £5.99 in 1976.

The discourse in advertising surrounding Aran sweaters was also markedly more kitsch. A New York Times piece entitled ‘Shop Talk: Where Irish Good Are Selling’, gave a rundown on a shop called Irish Imports in Mineola, Long Island, New York. It describes the shop as wearing an “Emerald Isle smile”, and selling “shamrocks and shillelaghs”, “blessings, banners, books and leprechauns”. The shop owner goes on to explain that the Aran sweater is its most popular item, and she details the drowned fisherman story. The “maudlin” story of the drowned fisherman is quickly brushed aside to explain “the sweeter custom of the Claddagh ring”, a traditional symbol of love and loyalty in Ireland.¹⁸³ The reality of the economic situation in rural Ireland, the idea of which the souvenirs is based on, is glossed over, and marketed in the form of charming, twee collectibles. Burke notes that in this regard “the demands of promotion required the fantasy of a sealed uninterrupted past”.¹⁸⁴ The Ireland that was being sold to the world was a dreamland, and Aran sweaters were now forming a part of that landscape. Parallels can be drawn here with the “Tartan Monster” in the Scottish heritage industry as outlined by Zumkhawala-Cook.¹⁸⁵ There, the “use of mass-produced Scottish commodity-kitsch items, available to any who can afford them, certainly shows a close connection to free-market ideology”, ultimately “embraces a narrow version of Scottish culture and transforms it into a hobby”.¹⁸⁶ As mentioned in the beginning, Scottish tartan was also identified by Trevor-Roper as an invented tradition, bound-up in storytelling, and thus we see a correlation between the prolonged use of storytelling in marketing heritage and the loss of cachet and credibility which heritage items may face over

¹⁸³ Muriel Fischer, “SHOP TALK: Where Irish Goods Are Selling”. New York Times, March 13, 1977, 434.

¹⁸⁴ Burke, “The Castle”, 365.

¹⁸⁵ Richard Zumkhawala-Cook, “The Mark of Scottish America: Heritage Identity and the Tartan Monster” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 14 no. 1, (2005): 109- 136.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

time.¹⁸⁷ While the Irishness portrayed in Aran sweater advertisements was not always static, the repetition of certain stories, and the economic viability of these, meant it did not manage to escape a shallow view of Ireland being marketed to consumers.

Arans find a New Market – Japan

Despite this seeming spiral into cultural redundancy and tokenism, the Aran sweater was still finding its way down certain lucrative avenues where new markets were opening up. Just as many fading rock stars of the era had done, having exhausted European and American audiences, it was time for the Aran sweater to become big in Japan. Corrigan notes that “sourcing outlets in Japan was probably Pádraig Ó Síocháin’s most significant contribution to the Aran story”.¹⁸⁸ The Japanese attraction to hand-crafted goods in contemporary design was popularised in the 20th century by the Mingei Arts and Crafts movement, inspired by the philosopher Yanagi Soetsu. The hand-crafted Aran sweaters fell on fertile ground in Japan mainly because of their symbolism. Corrigan noted in our interview that “It’s [the meaning of the stitches] one of the reasons why the Aran sweater has resonated so strongly in Japan, because the Japanese culture is full of symbols as well.”¹⁸⁹ Although the meaning imbued in the stitches was of recent historical origin, it caught on among Japanese consumers who, despite inhabiting one of the most consumerist economies in the world, still hold symbols, rituals and charms in reverence. Corrigan notes that the Japanese “fascination with symbol of power also translated into an attraction of the clothes of the global elite”.¹⁹⁰ This fascination was part of the reason behind the success of the pictorial book *Take Ivy* from 1965, a collaboration between Kensuke Ishizu (founder of the VAN clothing company), publishing house Fujingahosha (which published the fashion magazine *Men’s Club*), and photographer T. Hayashida.¹⁹¹ The book features a collection of photographs taken on Ivy League college campuses of the US in the 1960s.¹⁹² The clean-cut preppy style took off in Japan and there was a huge demand for authentic clothing which

¹⁸⁷ Trevor-Roper, “The Highland Tradition of Scotland”, 15-42.

¹⁸⁸ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 86.

¹⁸⁹ Corrigan interview.

¹⁹⁰ Corrigan, *Irish Aran*, 87.

¹⁹¹ W. David Marx, “The Man Who Brought Ivy to Japan.” *Ivy Style*. December 9, 2017. Accessed June 19, 2019. <https://www.ivy-style.com/the-man-who-brought-ivy-to-japan.html>.

¹⁹² T. Hayashida, *Take Ivy*, (Fujingahosha, 1965).

had been produced outside of Japan and which had the label to prove it.¹⁹³ As discussed earlier with relation to JFK, Aran fitted this aesthetic. Later, when the Take Ivy movement became more radical and expanded to include 'French Ivy', 'British Ivy' and 'Italian Ivy', it has been reported that "red suspenders went over off-white fishermen sweaters and tapered tartan pants".¹⁹⁴

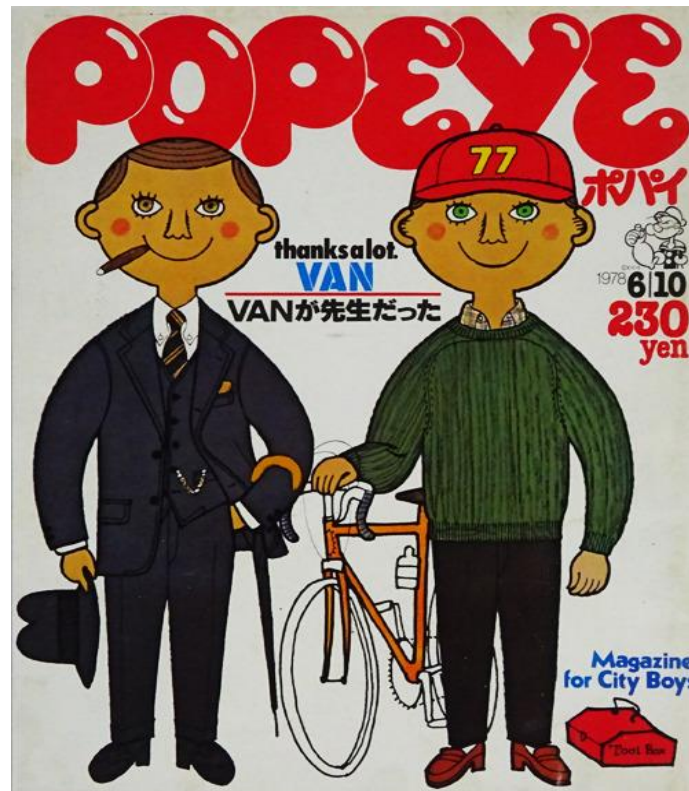


Fig. 5. 5. Front cover of Popeye Magazine 1978.¹⁹⁵

The image above comes was featured as the front cover of men's magazine Popeye, the 'Magazine for City Boys' in 1978. The illustrations come courtesy of Kazuo Hozumi who featured cheerful Caucasian cartoon characters in the collegiate style in *Ivy Illustrated* (the original 1980 version of which featured an Aran sweater), and who worked with Ishizu for VAN advertisements.¹⁹⁶ The cover here features two young men in variants of the Ivy style, one with a blazer, cigar, and umbrella, the other with a bicycle, baseball cap and fisherman-style sweater. Their clothing oozes notions of upper-class wealth, while the cartoon-style is

¹⁹³ Marx, "Ametora" 149.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁹⁵ "Popeye No.32 Special Issue." Mandarake, October 6 1978. Accessed June 24, 2019.

<https://order.mandarake.co.jp/order/DetailPage/item?itemCode=1037570169&lang=en>.

¹⁹⁶ Kazuo Hozumi, *Ivy Illustrated*, (Japan:Tallboy Books, 1980).

irreverent and playful, indicative of the fun that Japanese fashion trends were having with ideas of tradition and heritage. The caption thanks VAN, the company which kicked-off the Ivy League movement in Japan, and which had just filed for bankruptcy in 1978. The inside cover features a picture of JFK, and it was possible Popeye was running a story to commemorate the upcoming 15th anniversary of the former President's death.

VAN would return to business in 1981, when the Ivy League movement was given a second-wind.¹⁹⁷ The style became fashionable again in the US and Japan, part of which was down to the popularity of *The Official Preppy Handbook*. Edited by Lisa Bernbrach in 1980, it was a tongue-in-cheek take on the Ivy lifestyle, which included essays on 'Regulating the Cash Flow', and 'The Old Boy Network'.¹⁹⁸ The 'Irish Fisherman Pullover' is included in the chapter 'Dressing the Part', with the caption stating:

Must be hand knit in the Aran Isles. Heavy, cream-colored wool with distinctive raised patterns. Originally each family had its own pattern, so when bodies of lost fisherman washed up on the shore they could be identified. This is a boon around the tennis club. For men and women.¹⁹⁹

Here we see that the ideas surrounding the invented tradition of the Aran sweater were still in print, and that storytelling was still being used as a marketing mechanism. The juxtaposition of the tragic fisherman story with the quip about now being able to identify friends at the tennis club exemplifies how far the Aran sweater had come since its inception, and Bernbrach pokes fun at the contrived position it held amongst the upper-class fashion of Ivy Leaguers.

The return to prominence of the Ivy League style in Japan is indicative of the cyclical nature of fashion, but the passion for Aran sweaters in Japan has endured since the 1970s until today. Vintage sweaters from companies like Gaeltarra remain hugely popular in certain niche scenes. The following screenshot is one of many which can be found throughout various online stores. The piece on sale is a Galway Bay Products Ltd. Aran Knit. This

¹⁹⁷ Marx, "The Man Who Brought Ivy to Japan."

¹⁹⁸ Lisa Bernbrach (ed.), *The Official Preppy Handbook*, (New York: Workman Publishing, 1980).

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

example sold for 19,000 Yen, or about €160. The Irishness so meticulously crafted by Ó Síocháin is evident in the label, featuring everything from green Celtic script, to Irish language reading 'Déantús na h-Éireann' (Made in Ireland). These labels, which show the origin of the piece, and whether or not it is handmade, are crucial to the reselling value of the vintage sweaters. The Japanese appreciation for handcrafts in contrast to the relative Irish neglect of this industry has been highlighted by Gemma Williams, curator of the 2017 exhibition *Hi Fashion*, which marked "60 years of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Japan", and celebrated "60 years of sartorial history juxtaposing garments from designers in both countries".²⁰⁰ Speaking on her exhibition she noted "Japan's support of its cultural patrimony when it comes to fashion is better than ours. They see it as a massive component of culture which Ireland is only starting to do. Here industry support is minimal; fashion is not seen as a proper discipline."²⁰¹ This sentiment was echoed by Vawn Corrigan in our interview, who noted the contrast in the Irish approach to cultural heritage with that of Japan. She remarked that "we glorify our poets and our writers, and we largely don't pay too much interest to our indigenous crafts".²⁰² The popularity of the Aran sweater in Japan has shown there is perhaps a need for a reappraisal of the quality of Irish fashion, as was done by The Scandinavian Design Group in 1961.

²⁰⁰ "The Mayo Knitting Factory That Made Jumpers for Japanese Designer Kenzo." County Mayo. Accessed June 24, 2019. <https://www.mayo.ie/news/the-mayo-knitting-factory-that-made-jumpers-for-japanese-designer-kenzo/>

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Corrigan interview.

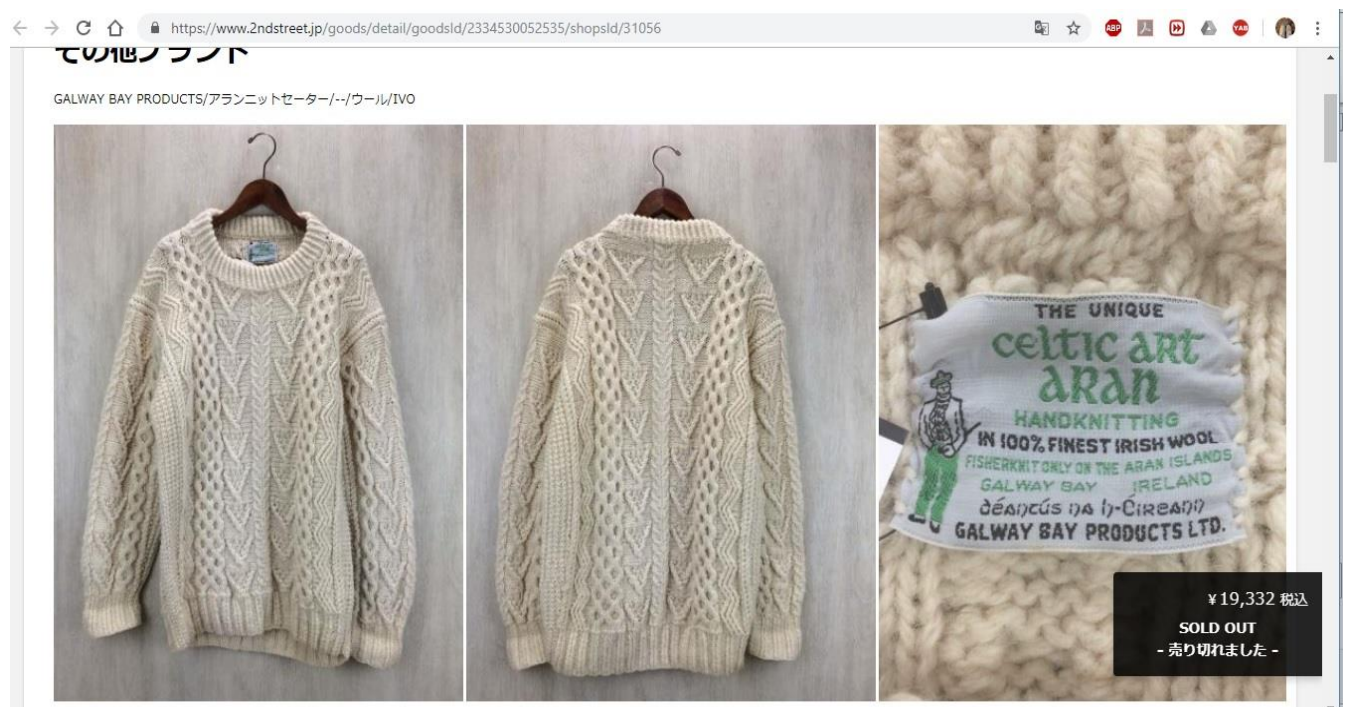


Fig. 5. 6. Screenshot of a Vintage Aran Sweater on the Japanese '2ndStreet Reuse Shop'.²⁰³

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the certain loss of credibility that appeared to follow Aran sweater marketing throughout the 1970s. The advertisements here showed that repetitive, shallow storytelling, influenced by a growing number of interest groups in different contexts, led to a convoluted image of Irishness being portrayed. All the while support for the native craft and fashion industry was on the wane. This was further threatened by the souveniring of the Aran sweater which was essentially turning it into kitsch tourist keepsake. Burke sums this up well, remarking that “the short-term gain of exploiting an image of Ireland as pre-modern arguably contributed to a decline in the cachet of Irish clothing”. Remarkably a new market opened up for the Aran sweater in Japan in the 1970s, where the love for symbolism and authentic vintage clothing has kept certain extinct products, like the Galway Bay Products Ltd. Aran sweater, in circulation. The Japanese appreciation for Irish crafts has called into question whether these industries are treated with enough reverence and given enough developmental support in their country of origin.

²⁰³ "GALWAY BAY PRODUCTS", 2ndstreet.jp. Accessed June 24, 2019. Screenshoted by author. <https://www.2ndstreet.jp/goods/detail/goodsId/2334530052535/shopsId/31056>.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Before final conclusions can be drawn, this thesis will benefit from a brief summary of the research that was carried out, and the findings that were made with relation to both the sub-questions, and the main research question, posed at the beginning. Following an introduction of the relevance of the topic, a review of the most relevant literature and an outline of the theoretical framework, this thesis has examined how Irishness was marketed to the world through the Aran sweater, and what the implications for this process are on the garment as a national symbol. The examination was carried out through an application of Storytelling Theory and discourse analysis to advertisements of the era, which functioned as touchstones of Irishness.

The second chapter outlined the cultural significance the Aran Islands (the home of the Aran sweater) played in the Gaelic Revival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and how they became romanticised by the Irish literary scene, to explain the context in which the storytelling tradition surrounding the Aran sweater developed. In this rugged landscape of myths and stories, the Aran sweater became an invented tradition, and thus storytelling was part of its fabric from the moment it was marketed to consumers. Storytelling allowed wearers to feel connected to an imagined Irish past, to adorn themselves in the 'ancient' symbols of the Aran stitches, and, through the fisherman tale, to embody tragic and adventurous archetypal roles.

From there, Chapter 3 analysed early Aran sweater advertisements to determine how Irishness was portrayed to international audiences, as the newly formed Irish Export Board sought to promote Irish products abroad for the first time. The images considered featured examples from Irish designers as promoted through international media, as well those from the Irish Tourist Board. Both visual and verbal storytelling was strongly in evidence throughout the publications, which promoted the invented tradition of the sweater around the world. The discourse analysis of these images found that Ireland was represented as a romantic, pre-modern island, which was made accessible to consumers and tourists through the Aran sweater.

Chapter 4 examined the growth in popularity of the Aran sweater throughout mass media publications from movie posters, to album covers, to advertisements, in an effort to determine the effects that mass media had on the manner in which Irishness was portrayed. In this period we see something of a new Gaelic Revival, only this time from a more commercialised point of departure. Again, the Irish Export Board played a role here by recruiting The Scandinavian Design Group, whose report urged the Irish government to safeguard its native textiles of wool and tweed. The Irishness that was conveyed in Aran sweater advertisements of this time also began to incorporate new elements. Marilyn Monroe showed that Aran sweaters could be sexy, though this was not explicitly communicated to US audiences. The real poster-boys for Aran sweaters in the US were the Clancy Brothers, whose performances and album covers offered a multi-layered, irreverent, take the Irish-American paradigm, and the storytelling behind these images created a new rebellious archetype to be embodied by the wearer. A playfulness of a different kind was seen in Aran sweater publications in the UK, which were more provocative, and hinted at a different relationship between the two countries. These new, more progressive pictures were in sharp contrast to the images of Old Ireland portrayed in the earlier advertisements.

The fifth chapter inspected a variety of later images from different countries to assess whether over-exposure to global market influences led to a loss in cachet for the Aran sweater. It found that decades of promoting Irishness through Aran sweater stories eventually resulted in a convoluted image of the garment being promoted. To an extent, the sweater could now stand for anything, and Irishness was presented in whatever way was most economically viable; this often resulted in a narrow vision of Irishness being marketed. The continual promotion of the garment as a must-have tourist item led to a loss of credibility, and this was also at a time when ready-to-wear imitations were now available for low prices. In contrast, the Take Ivy movement in Japan gave new impetus to Aran sweater marketing, where storytelling emphasised its preppy image, and the irony of which was noted in *The Official Preppy Handbook*. Nevertheless, the continued appeal of vintage Aran sweaters in Japan shows a reverence for the craft which is perhaps not as pronounced as it is expected to be in Ireland.

Taking this discussion and analysis into account, a number of broad conclusions can be drawn on how Irishness was marketed to the world through the Aran sweater, and what the implications for this are on the garment as a national symbol.

Firstly, in contrast to other findings on Irishness displayed in advertisements during this time period, the image of Ireland portrayed through the Aran sweater publications was not static. Rather it developed over time, and took on new meanings as it entered into new markets and was pushed to new audiences. While the early advertisements represented Ireland as a faraway land, stuck in time and which could be consumed through the Aran sweater, as time passed, more progressive representations of the Republic of Ireland in its adolescence came into view. Ireland was represented not only by idyllic landscapes, traditional lifestyles and ancient castles, but also by celebrities, rebellious folk bands and women in mini-skirts. These new images allowed new archetypes to be embodied by consumers. As well as the invented tradition which enabled people to feel connected to some distant Irish past, wearers of the Aran sweater could also now also enact more rebellious, provocative and preppy roles. However, the Irishness conveyed through the Aran sweater varied not only across time, but also across space. A different image of Ireland was conveyed to audiences in the US and the UK, indicative of the different histories Ireland shared with each of those countries. In the US the shared Irish-American folk tradition and heritage was celebrated, while Irish designers in the UK presented a more new-age and defiant picture of Ireland. In Japan, the image of Irishness portrayed through the Aran sweater was different again, but this arose from a specific fashion trend, outside the realm of control of national influence, but which was capitalised upon nonetheless.

Secondly, the idea of Irishness as promoted through Aran sweater advertisements was the creation of a combination of internal and external influences. The driving force behind this was the Irish Export Board, which, since its foundation in 1951, sought international expertise on how best Irishness could be marketed to the world. The Philadelphia Fashion Group, the Dutch School of graphic designers, and the Scandinavian Design Group, to name a few, were all tasked with presenting an image of Ireland that was attractive from the outside. This was also the case when other market influences, from wool companies, to movie producers, to film companies, got involved. The result was not Irishness as it actually was, but an Irishness that could be. From this perspective Cook's discourse analysis was a

particularly useful analytical tool, as it enabled the motivations of the participants (the senders and receivers) to be considered, in addition to the actual content of the advertisement.

Thirdly, the discourse analysis also enabled the storytelling elements, which were present in almost all of the advertisements considered, to be dissected. The initial, rapid rise to prominence of the Aran sweater is testament to the legitimacy of Storytelling Theory. Consumers became enamoured with the invented tradition behind the Aran sweater, and identified with the myths and stories surrounding its origin, which had grown from the literary landscape of early 20th century Ireland. However, as with the example of Scottish Tartan, persistent storytelling of a tradition that was fabricated in the first place can lead not only to a loss in a garment's prestige, but also to a misrepresentation of the place of origin of the garment, glossing over the economic struggles which its inhabitants may face. This is true for both the Aran Islands and Ireland as a whole. The later advertisements analysed showed the range of global influences which were capitalising on the storytelling potential in the Aran sweater, such that it had now become more of a universal garment, in spite of its local roots.

This idea is not problematic in and of itself, but it can become somewhat contrived when we think of the Aran sweater as a national symbol, as pointed out at the beginning of this thesis. National symbols are notionally timeless emblems, which represent something central to a country's heritage. Holt's take on branding, that brands (or in this case a product) become iconic through persistent storytelling, in this context is thus true only to an extent. The Aran sweater in this period became representative of Ireland, but exactly what this vision of Ireland was, was unclear. The very fact that the Aran sweater's journey began on three small, economically deprived islands in the Atlantic, and in just a few short years began to grace the pages of internationally renowned publications shows the power of storytelling. But the nature of stories is such that they may be interpreted and retold in different ways, which was certainly the case for the Aran sweater, and thus the label 'iconic' in this context is less stable than it normally would be.

While this thesis has analysed the Aran sweater during this period in some depth, there are further avenues of research which could prove fruitful in the future. Firstly, ideas

surrounding gender could be explored further. Most hand-knit Aran sweater production is carried out to this day by women, and is something of a dying art, and the practice of domestic knitting is still mostly associated with being a woman's activity. This thesis also noted certain advertisements from the 1960s which presented the Aran sweater in a progressive, perhaps even feminist light at times. It could therefore be interesting to explore the role women played in Irish society through the lens of the Aran sweater, and whether the nature of this changed or developed depending on the socio-political landscape of the time. Another compelling angle which could also be analysed in more depth, and possibly in a more current timeframe is the internationalisation of the Aran sweater in Japan. The roots of this were touched on in this thesis however certain publications and potential interviewees in the end became untenable due to language barriers. Several books have been written in Japanese about Aran sweaters specifically, and it is today one of the main export destinations for modern, high-quality knitwear companies, such as Inis Meáin Knitting Co., which is a company based on the Aran Islands.

In analysing Aran sweater advertisements of this time one could find tradition and progress, seriousness and playfulness, sophistication and kitschiness all present within the projection of Irishness at different times, and even sometimes simultaneously. This multi-faceted nature of the Irishness that was communicated thus has implications for the role of the garment as a national symbol, given that the very nature of fashion is change, while national heritage symbols are often embraced as constant, affirmative expressions of national cultural identity. Analysis of Aran sweater advertisements of the time shows it might be more accurate to define the Aran sweater as symbolic of the changing nature of Irishness, rather than Irishness in any monolithic sense.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Database of Primary Sources

Archive of Aran Sweater Media Publications	Nationality	1950s	1960s	1970s
Australia Women's Weely	AUS	<u>The New Knitteds 'Centuries-old...' 1957</u>	<u>All the charm of the Irish in their voices 1965</u>	<u>Young Arans in the Snow 1971</u>
	AUS	<u>Irish Models for Our Parades 1954</u>	<u>I'm so mad about Aran 1967</u>	
100 Idées	FRA			<u>l'étole de Molly Malone (Galway Bay Products 1974)</u>
Dublin City Council Libraries and Archives Digital Repository: Fáilte Ireland Tourism Photographic Collection	IRL	<u>Aran Islander and boy 1952</u>		<u>Handcrafts Aran Islands 1976</u>
	IRL	<u>Fishermen and Livestock 1952</u>		
	IRL	<u>Girls Knitting on Aran beach in 1959</u>		
National Museum of Ireland	IRL	<u>Ireland Invites You 1953</u>		
Popeye	JAP			<u>Thanks A Lot Van 1978</u>
The Times Digital Archive	UK		<u>The Knitters of Aran 1962</u>	<u>Counterpoint 1970 (Only Irish design of note)</u>
	UK		<u>Charm and Symbolism of Island Knitwear 1965</u>	<u>Ireland The Island for all seasons 1972 (Traditional Knitwear has evolved)</u>
	UK		<u>Christmas Gifts 1968 (The Traditional as well as the excitingly modern)</u>	<u>County Style 1976 (happy Irish peasant)</u>

VADS	UK	<u>Hand Knitting Council Autumn 1958 (Woolmark)</u>	<u>O'Flattery 1968</u>	<u>M&S 1976</u>
Cyril Cullen	UK		<u>O'Flattery 2 (for London shop) 1968</u>	
LIFE Magazine	US	<u>Enterprise in Old Erin 1953</u>		
Sports Illustrated	US	<u>New Tweeds from Old Ireland 1957</u>	<u>A Light New Breed of Irish Tweed 1966</u>	
San Bernardino Sun	US		<u>Sure and Cyril Cullen is Tops 1968</u>	
LA Times	US			<u>Life is Rugged on the Aran Islands 1975</u>
NY Times	US	<u>IT'S REALLY IRISH: Emerald Isle's Home-Made Souvenirs Are Now Actually Created There 1958</u>	<u>Shop Sell Hand Knits of Ireland 1963</u>	<u>Where Irish Goods are Selling 1977</u>
Vogue Knitting	US	<u>Aran Island Patterned Sheath 1956</u>		
Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem	US/UK/IRL		<u>The Clancy Brothers Discography (1961-1969)</u>	<u>Show Me The Way (1972)</u>
	US/UK/IRL		<u>The Girls Won't Leave the Boys Alone (1967)</u>	
IMDB	US/JAP/ITA/LA		<u>Let's Make Love Movie Posters (1960)</u>	

Appendix 2:



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From J.M. Synge's Album: 'My Wallet of Photographs'

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The men in this photo are from The Blasket Islands, another group of West Coast Irish islands. We can assume that since Synge references the 'usual fisherman's gansey' (i.e. a widespread design) in relation to styles on the Aran Islands, that this was the same fashion he was referring to.