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# MAGNERS MAN: IRISH CIDER, REPRESENTATIONS OF MASCULINITY AND THE 'BURNING CELTIC SOUL'

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**In this paper we go in search of the Celtic soul, tracking its historical intertwining with, and relation to, Irish masculinity, from Ireland's pre-colonial past to its colonial days and finally to its postcolonial present. We argue that the Celtic soul manifests itself, with great success, in the Magners Irish Cider advertising campaign. As a key part of our analysis, we also illustrate how representations of the Irish Celt serve as a means of enabling young male consumers to reconcile the many tensions and contradictions they are experiencing over what it means to perform ideals of masculinity in contemporary western culture. Magners Irish Cider is a fitting exemplar of how the 'Celtic Soul' that is embedded in ideals of Irish masculinity can be marketed in order to resonate with young men, as it represents and celebrates an alluring and enduring cultural myth to which men may aspire.**

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## Introduction

This is a golden rule of booze marketing. If you're English, Welsh or Scottish then heavy drinking is seedy, depressing and wrong. But if you're Irish it's somehow artistic and glamorous. Alcohol is what drives your burning Celtic soul. It helps you write poetry and informs your heartfelt political convictions. When we drink, we all pretend to be Irish in a bid to stave off the nagging emptiness in our souls. This explains the continued popularity of Guinness despite the fact that it tastes like Benylin mixed with Nescafeacute; and Bovril. Damn it, if you're Irish, you can even get away with drinking cider! (Delaney, 2006)

Cider has made a somewhat remarkable comeback in the UK over the last three years, despite normally being associated with binge-drinking teenagers or down-and-out alcoholics. This paper explores the nature of the 'Celtic soul' that lies at the heart of this comeback, a soul that has convinced twenty-something males throughout the British Isles that it is ultra-cool to drink cider on the rocks. As a key part of this study, we go back into the mists of Ireland's past in order to better understand how this Celtic soul has evolved. In so doing, we highlight how gender and nationality are two of the most important discourses to shape identity, and also how they are often conflated to produce a single, powerful discourse (Howes, 1996). In Ireland, this conflation of gender with nationality is expressed, in both colonial and post-colonial discourses, as one that defines Ireland as a

'feminine' country. Historically, this identification of Ireland with the feminine has been wrestled with by Irishmen, both politically and personally, for centuries.

In this study we look at the implications of Ireland's 'feminine' identity for contemporary cultural representations of Irish masculinity. To illustrate our arguments, we draw on the highly successful advertising campaign conducted for Magners Original Irish Cider, which we believe encapsulates contemporary conceptualisations of Irish masculinity. Magners was launched just under ten years ago as the overseas version of the brand known in Ireland as Bulmers Original Irish Cider. Now available in 17 markets around the world, Magners is single-handedly credited with changing consumer attitudes to cider and of resurrecting a whole product category that was singularly out of fashion and in severe decline.

Advertisements are increasingly regarded as important bearers of meaning in contemporary society (Fowles, 1996), and advertisements for alcoholic beverages targeting men, such as beer, are highlighted as especially insightful in terms of the discourse of masculinity they celebrate. This discourse is about 'challenge, risk and mastery – mastery over nature, over technology, over others in good natured "combat", and over oneself' (Strate, 1992, p. 82). The Magners Irish Cider campaign very successfully taps into this beer discourse in order to

position and legitimise cider as a masculine and culturally empowering drink. We will illustrate, however, that a crucial aspect of the campaign's success is that it also draws on nostalgic, age-old images of the Irish male as being in touch with his deeply romantic, sensitive and emotional 'feminine' self, thereby creating a space and restoring a sense of the 'intense masculinity' that has become displaced and unfashionable in 21st century representations of masculinity. Indeed it is perhaps no exaggeration to suggest that Irish men have cornered the market in intense, soulful masculinity. In its blending of Celtic soul with masculinity, Magners Irish Cider is creating a resonant commercial myth that intersects with both historical and popular memory (Thompson and Tian, 2008; Arnould, 2008). We argue that the power of this myth is that it enables young male consumers to resolve a salient contradiction in their lives (Holt, 2004), as they find themselves caught between the 'sissiness' of the feminine and the widespread disapproval of the 'brutish' masculine.

Our study commences with a historical overview of colonial and postcolonial discourses on Ireland and how these have influenced cultural representations of Irishness and the Celt, particularly in relation to Irish masculinity. We have chosen to begin at this point because these tensions also highlight the tensions between masculine and feminine elements at a key stage in Ireland's history. We then go on to explore how these discourses impact on contemporary representations of masculinity as reflected in the Magners Irish Cider television advertising campaign, a campaign that has captured the popular imagination and has resulted in Magners becoming the UK's leading cider brand.

### **Ireland's Gendered Historical Discourses**

This historical overview is intended to illustrate why Irish masculinity is feminised. At this point it is important to note that whilst postcolonialism has contributed to our understanding of this feminised identity, it is not the purpose of this present paper to present a postcolonial analysis of the Magners advertisements that we subsequently introduce. Rather, we seek to explore the ways in which Irish masculinity has historically appropriated the feminine in its quest for actualisation, a quest which we argue continues into the present day.

The perception of Ireland as a feminine, colonised, exotic 'other' has been well-documented (see, for example, Cullingford, 1993; Howes, 1996). The colonisation of Ireland by England began in the twelfth century and continued until the Anglo-Irish War in the early 1920s. The representation of colonised countries as 'feminine' and exotic 'others' enabled eighteenth century European colonisers to better position and indeed realise themselves as rational and enlightened men (Boehmer, 1995). Indeed, throughout its long history as a colonised country, Ireland, a Catholic country, was regarded by its English, Protestant colonisers as a land of primitive and superstitious idolaters (Cairns and Richards, 1988).

Aside from its religious and cultural differences, Ireland's 'feminine' nature was deeply enmeshed in English colonial discourse on Ireland. The country was represented as a weak, ineffectual and unstable woman who needed to be controlled and dominated by a strong, powerful and resolute man (Britain). The 'intrinsic' femininity of the Irish race was well documented throughout the nineteenth century by British commentators on the Celtic nature of the Irish race, notably Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold, both of whom published studies of the Irish race in the 1860s. Matthew Arnold observed that the Celt was particularly and 'peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret.' Ernest Renan pronounced that the Celts were 'an essentially feminine race.' Indeed Renan argued that no other race had so carefully conceived the ideal of woman, or been more fully dominated by it. He described this as a kind of intoxication or madness (in Cairns and Richards, 1988). When the Celtic race were referred to in affirmative terms by British colonial commentators and scribes, descriptions tended to focus on their sensitivity, their ethereal qualities, their affinity with nature, and their otherworldliness. However, the negative side of this discourse was also much documented and emphasised, namely their impractical, feminine nature and, worse, their emotional excesses and mental instability, their complete unfitness to govern themselves and, of course, their dangerous, disruptive potential (Cairns and Richards, 1988).

As Ireland increasingly struggled to shake off the yoke of British rule in the nineteenth century,

Irish nationalism emerged as a powerful force to be reckoned with. Irish nationalists continued to identify their country as 'feminine', however, perhaps to emphasise the oppositional discourse, which was fundamental to their struggle to overcome their colonial oppressors. Indeed, this was perhaps the only thing they had in common with their oppressors! The traditional, indeed ancient, romantic perception of Ireland as a woman was deeply embedded in the cultural narrative of Irish nationalism. Understandably, this identification was far from unproblematic for the makers of the new Ireland. On the one hand, Celticism was viewed in affirmative terms as a powerful means of asserting *difference* from its colonial oppressors, and indeed Ireland was represented as a woman in distress in Irish nationalist tradition (Howes, 1996). But being a Celt clearly created problems for Irish nationalists, given the negative connotations attached to the feminine, largely thanks to the role of their colonial oppressors and helped, in no small part, by the systematic devaluing and eroding of the feminine in Ireland that had been going on for centuries (Condren, 1989; Billington and Green, 1996).

Irish nationalists needed an oppositional discourse that was indicative of masculine domination, agency and power (Cairns and Richards, 1988). Meaney (1994) observes that this alternative, repositioning discourse is true of all subject people, who 'in rebelling and claiming independence and sovereignty, aspire to a traditionally masculine role of power' (p. 191). Thus, in response to British imperialist discourse, which described Ireland as feminine, inferior, dependent and weak, Irish nationalists took up a discourse that emphasised an exaggerated masculinity (Kiberd, 1996).

The feminine element, however, proved hard to quash, and the 'feminine' qualities identified in the Celt were duly transformed into positive attributes such as passion, emotion, sensitivity and empathy. These were folded into the mix, along with the privileged masculine qualities, in order to produce an alluring and enduring ideal of Irish masculinity.

### **Writing the Romance into Irish Masculinity**

Culture, and literature in particular, has played an important role in this process, which we charac-

terise as the ongoing perpetuation and celebration of the Celtic soul in postcolonial Ireland (Kiberd, 1996). The project of re-reading and re-writing Ireland and, in turn, the Celt, has centred around issues of nationhood and gender, and these were played out most vividly perhaps in cultural representations of Ireland and Irishness, which portrayed the nation in romantic, 'feminine' terms. This process began at the time of the so-called Celtic Revival in Ireland. The poet W. B. Yeats, who led the Celtic Revival and Ireland's Literary Renaissance, drew on Irish legend and folklore, and reinvented Celtic Irishness (the feminine) in a wholly positive way, in dichotomous contrast to the 'masculine', Anglo Saxon, British ideal. For Yeats, the Celtic nation represented sensitivity, brilliance and turbulence (Howes, 1996; Welch, 1993). Indeed Yeats repositioned Ireland (woman) as the embodiment of culture, rather than nature, and his assertion of Irishness and Irish tradition was manifested as a rewriting of Ireland in romantic, mystical and passionate terms (Welch, 1993).

In this way idyllic images of Ireland's Edenic primitiveness, rural simplicity, emotion, humour and wildness, perceived characteristics which had been used against the Irish to justify colonial rule, were re-appropriated by the Irish themselves as they engaged in re-inscribing a discourse of Irish cultural and national identity. Indeed, romantic cultural nationalism continues to be an important and resonant aspect of postcolonial identity-construction and re-construction in contemporary discourse on Ireland (McLoone, 1995), and is very much linked to the notion of the passionate and soulful Celt. It is visible in popular representations of Ireland and Irishness, from mainstream cinema to beer advertisements, from butter promotions to tourist campaigns as has frequently been highlighted by conceptualisations of Celtic marketing concepts (Brown, 2006, 2007). Irishness, and specifically Irish masculinity, has thus come to be synonymous with poetry and passion, as well as purpose and power.

Recently Kuhling and Keohane (2007) have highlighted the significance of a pre-modern Celtic culture in advertising campaigns for Guinness Stout, Ballygowan Water and Jameson Irish Whiskey. They draw attention to the inherent ambivalence and conflict between this ancient (and nostalgic) Celtic culture discourse and what

they term 'a postmodern hybridised aspirational cosmopolitanism' (p. 1). In their study these are key tensions that they identify as underpinning contemporary Irish advertising. We seek to explore similar tensions, but specifically in relation to representations of Irish masculinity. Such images (of Celtic culture and cosmopolitanism), especially in relation to alcoholic beverages, are highly influential, acting as a 'manual on masculinity' (Strate, 1992), and mediating young men's sense of self in their performance of masculinity (Ging, 2005). Moreover, in relation to contemporary Irish masculinity, Ging (2004, 2005) pinpoints the important influence of 'lad culture', a masculine culture that is anti-feminist and sexist, and that displays these values in an ironic and playful manner.

Before going on to look at how these various discourses influence representations of masculinity in the Magners advertising campaign, we give a brief background to the development of Magners as a brand, and then we offer an overview of the methodology employed for the study.

### **Overview of Magners Original Irish Cider**

Magners Original Irish Cider is produced in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary by Bulmers Ltd. The drink is named after the founder of the company, William Magner, a local man who first set up the commercial production of cider in Clonmel in 1935. Two years later he went into partnership with H.P. Bulmer & Co, an English cider-maker (Wikipedia.com). When Magner left the business in 1949, the Bulmers name assumed dominance, although by now the Irish company was completely separate from its original English counterpart H. P. Bulmer. Importantly, the international rights for the Bulmers trade mark (currently owned by Scottish and Newcastle, makers of Strongbow) remained with H. P. Bulmer, and this ultimately led to the launch of the Magners brand in 1999 to develop markets outside Ireland.

The Magners advertising campaign has its roots in the marketing strategy developed to reposition Bulmers Original Cider in the Irish marketplace. A focal point for this repositioning was the creative message 'nothing added but time', a phrase used to differentiate it from traditional cider advertising and intended to convey a sense of

quality craftsmanship in order to overcome the many negative perceptions of cider. This positioning strategy centred on the fact that the product originated in Ireland in the apple orchards of Clonmel in Co. Tipperary. This fact ensured that the product had authenticity, history, and quality. The cider was made using a supposedly unique blend of over a dozen different varieties of apples, giving it a special quality and taste. The campaign, using a mixture of media including television, outdoor advertising and sponsorship, was also intended to make cider a year-round drink. This campaign, with its clever use of sponsorship, proved highly successful in the Irish market. The Bulmers Saturday Sports Show on Radio Ireland was the first radio show to report a live coverage of premiership football.

Building on this Irish success story, the Magners brand really took off in the UK in 2003 with the creation of a £20m promotional campaign to reposition cider as a drink for 18–34 upwardly mobile males. This campaign spectacularly used experiential marketing to offer billboards that rained apple blossoms down on unsuspecting passersby, and to create an apple orchard in Waterloo underground station in London, complete with complementary apples (Stokes, Jenkins and Nolan, 2007). This campaign has been highly successful by any standards. In 2006 Bulmers announced a 40 per cent increase in its cider sales over a two-year period (BBC News, 2006), and cider has recently been described as the 'new chardonnay' (Bowcott and Bowers, 2006).

### **The Methodology**

Our overall research design emerged out of an interest in how the Romantic Celt discourse plays out in contemporary representations of Irish masculinity. Inspired by the journalistic quote at the start of our paper, we sought to explore how this discourse intersects with more traditionally masculinised discourses around alcohol (especially beer) advertising. The choice of the Magners Irish Cider was made on the basis that its advertisements represented a highly successful, and relatively recent, alcohol advertising campaign that was targeted at young men in both Ireland (as Bulmers Irish Cider) and the UK and beyond (as Magners Irish Cider). It should be noted here that although we focus on Magners as the brand sold outside Ireland for reasons explained earlier, the

advertisements for Bulmers, its parent brand within Ireland, are exactly the same in content. Thus we believe our analysis is as relevant to young Irish men as it is to their UK counterparts. The point here is that we are looking at representations of Irishness by an Irish company in order to understand more about the role of Celtic culture in contemporary cultural discourse.

The research design adopts a postmodern approach to analysing texts, in that we take a historical and genealogical perspective to track the many interwoven threads of symbolic meaning on which the Magners advertising texts draw (Fischer, 2000). This is particularly appropriate for exploring the cultural myths and narratives that may be embedded in advertising texts. In view of the multiple ways that advertising texts can be read (see Scott, 1994), we are not trying to predict an overarching meaning behind the text, either for consumers or advertising creatives. Rather, we are trying to explore the various, intersecting discourses that have found their way into the advertisements and how they complement or compete with each other.

In the first instance, this genealogical approach necessitated exploring colonial and postcolonial representations of gender and Irishness, as discussed above, in order to better understand the masculine–feminine dialectic embedded in the concept of 'Celtic soul'. We then sought to understand the ways that these representations influence the advertising campaign for Magners, by tacking back and forth in our analysis between the literature and the advertising texts. As this iterative process evolved, so too did our understanding of the multiple layers of symbolic meanings encoded in the advertisements.

This analysis is based on twelve TV advertisements that ran over a three-year period (Spring 2005 – Spring 2008) and that changed with each of the four seasons. All the advertisements follow a similar thematic pattern, and open with a cinematic shot, panning in from above on an orchard that reflects the four seasons: apple blossom in spring; luscious green with ripening apples in summer; falling leaves and tumbling apples in autumn; bare and snow-covered apple trees in winter. Then each advertisement shows a group of people enjoying themselves with a drink: inside a

marquee in spring; outside in the summer sunshine; harvesting apples then gathering together in a pub in Autumn; indoors beside a blazing wood fire on a winter's night. Classic soundtracks accompany these scenes, such as Donovan's 1965 'Sunshine Superman', the Kinks' classic 'Lazing on a Sunny Afternoon' and Steve Earle's 'Galway Girl', recently popularised in the Hollywood film *PS I Love You* (2007) with Hilary Swank and Gerard Butler, a film based on the novel by Irish writer Cecilia Ahern, and a movie that is regarded by many as one of the most romantic film releases of 2007.

Key themes emerged from our analysis of the TV advertisements around each of the two central discourses previously highlighted: 1) the Challenge and Mastery (beer advertising) discourse; and 2) the Romantic Celt discourse. Themes around the former are: *Cultivation of Nature* and *Craftsmanship*. Themes around the latter are: *Affinity with Nature* and *Leisure and Play*. Together these form two sets of dialectical tensions that underpin the Magners advertising campaign, tensions that provide a more contemporary and sensitised masculinity in their resolution. We now go on to discuss each pair in more detail, namely *Cultivation of Nature* versus *Affinity with Nature*; and *Craftsmanship* versus *Leisure and Play*.

### **Cultivation of Nature**

Masculine characteristics of mastery and control are intimately bound up with the cultivation of (feminine) nature. Camille Paglia (1992) provides an eloquent historical account of this identification of women with nature and men with culture. All of the advertisements in the Magners campaign focus on the apple orchard. As a deliberate and controlled planting of trees that are annually harvested, the orchard recurs throughout the campaign as a powerful symbol of the cultivation of nature. It also acts as a constant reminder of masculine productivity and the values inherent therein, values that are reinforced through scenes that depict an exclusively male workforce that tends the trees and gathers the apples in large wicker baskets at harvest time.

The first advertisement in the series (Spring 2005) commences this link between men and their cultivation of nature. To the soundtrack 'Love is in the

Air' ('Everywhere I Look Around') by John Paul Young, the camera pans in on an orchard with its trees offering a profusion of soft pink blooms that fall gently to the ground in the breeze. We see a bee searching for honey amid the petals, raindrops rippling on water. The shot takes us swiftly to the inside of a pub where a young man pours himself a glass of Magners and catches the eye of a beautiful young woman as he puts his pint to his lips. As he studies her, a deep Irish voiceover asks, 'What is it about this time of year that awakens our interest in nature?' Woman is conflated with nature. She is nature. Moreover, the man is seated, at ease with the world, master of all he surveys. The woman, significantly, is the object of his gaze, a moving image of loveliness that he can gaze at appreciatively. She too can be admired as one of nature's marvels, like the bee or a ripe apple in an orchard, ready for plucking or about to fall into his hands. The mastery of the male gaze is omnipresent throughout the campaign in many other similar scenes. For example, the Autumn 2005 advertisement focuses on tumbling apples and falling leaves, to the classic Van Morrison track: 'Here Comes the Night' (1965). The voiceover says: 'Some say this would be the most beautiful season if it weren't for the shortening of the days. But hey, that does mean longer nights.' As he gives us a knowing look, the Magners man glances over towards what we assume is an attractive woman, underlining the perceived benefits of longer nights and echoing the ironic, playful sexism of 'lad culture' (Ging, 2004, 2005).

The cultivation of the apple also draws on another well known patriarchal myth that underpins Western culture, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Kitzinger, 1990). Here woman is cast as the evil temptress in cahoots with the devil, who easily succumbs to her desires by biting the apple, thereby bringing about Adam and Eve's fall from grace and their banishment from an earthly paradise. As an archetypal symbol of Eve's temptation to Adam, the apple potently conveys the power of female seduction, seduction that must be resisted if a male is to maintain mastery and control. Threads of this cultural myth resonate in the campaign and, of course, the overall idea of cider being produced from the apple: man transforms a potential seduction and loss of control into a pleasure for himself over which he has mastery.

The summer 2005 campaign illustrates this well. The opening shot pans in on an apple-laden orchard, before closing in on the brilliant red apples hanging heavily from the trees. Then the scene cuts to a group sitting outside around a table. It is summer and we can feel the heat in the air as a young woman reclines lazily on her seat, fanning herself with a piece of paper. She tilts her head back as if soaking up the sun and one of the guys gives her an admiring stare. Immediately the shot pans to another close-up of the red apples, then back to her. She is an apple, an object of desire, of temptation, but these men are in control of nature, rather than being controlled by nature (woman). The scene suddenly focuses in on one of the young men in the group, as he pours his Magners with great care into a pint-sized glass. The bubbles effervesce and a long, cool drip rolls down the outside of the glass. The guys concentrate on drinking their Magners and temptation is rebutted, a rebuttal that also signifies their overall mastery and control.

### **Affinity with Nature**

The discourse of mastery and control is very much tempered by the Romantic Celt discourse against which it is juxtaposed, a discourse that draws heavily on the Celts' affinity with nature. This latter discourse is one that intertwines with colonial and postcolonial representations of Ireland as a feminine nation, and the land as female. Alongside its deep associations with the cultivation of nature, the Magners TV advertising campaign is a veritable homage to nature – the passing of the seasons, sunshine and rain, growth and maturity, and, above all, the importance of patience and time in ensuring that nature's bounty can be enjoyed. The campaign revolves around the apple tree and this is a particularly apt symbol, given that the apple symbolises healing, prosperity, strength, beauty, love and perpetual youth. Harking back to Ireland's pre-Christian past, this focus on apples, apple trees and apple orchards gives the campaign a strong pagan-like emphasis in that it is based around a devotion to and affinity with nature.

A core aspect of the Magners brand strategy was to make it a brand for all seasons, and the apple tree has proved to be the perfect symbol for Magners' year-round appeal. The tree is a symbol of nature in many mythologies, and it was a particularly powerful symbol for the Celts, reflecting

the passage of time and the cycle of nature. Indeed in Celtic mythology the high priests or wizards, the Druids, are so-called because the name 'druid' means tree, a highly sacred symbol of life and nature for the Celts. In Neolithic times the tree was a universal whole: male and female, dark and light, knowledge and mystery, the natural and the supernatural. In pre-Celtic, Pagan Europe, matri-centred societies revered and sanctified nature and the land. Intricately bound up with this reverence was the never-ending cycle of birth, life and death, the pagan cycle of 'eternal return' (Condren, 1989, Green, 1997). The landscape itself embodied the sacred goddesses, and according to this polytheistic belief system, these goddesses were all around, in the rivers, the trees, the mountains, and the earth itself (Stewart, 1990). Celticism embraced and appropriated mother culture and strongly believed in the omniscience of Mother Nature, which was to be expected, given that the Celts were a rural culture (Green, 1997).

Evoking a 'pre-modern Celtic Culture' such as that found in other representations of 'Irishness' (Kuhling and Keohane, 2007), the Magners campaign fully realises and in many ways re-enacts this fundamental tenet of Celtic belief. Each advertisement reveres the ongoing cycle of nature in its dedication to a particular season, just as pagan worship celebrates the yearly cycle of birth, death and rebirth in its rituals and festivals (Samhain, Beltaine, Imbolic, Lunasa). The Spring 2007 campaign celebrates the rebirth of nature as the apple trees burst into life, their blossom heralding the fruit to come: 'Isn't it refreshing to see things coming back to life again?' Similarly the Spring 2005 advertisement celebrates the sap rising and the pollination of the apple blossom by the bees. The Summer 2005 advertisement is set to the tune of The Kinks' 'Lazing on a Sunny Afternoon' (1966). The voiceover says 'Funny how we wait all year for it to get hot just so as we can cool down again.' The advertisement celebrates men who have earned the right to chill out and enjoy the fruits of their labour. This promise of sensual pleasure heralded by spring is reinforced by outdoor advertising which uses images such as an uncapped bottle with effervescent cider bursting forth with the caption 'Open Season' (Spring 2008), and one that shows a Magners Irish Cider bottle with a special Magners bar pump, and the slogan 'The Pull of Nature' (Spring 2008). The

double entendres of these advertisements, appealing as they do to the laddish culture previously discussed (Ging, 2004, 2005), are not accidental, we suggest, and are fairly obvious even to those of us who are not experts in Freudian symbolism!

Autumn, which heralds the end of summer, is celebrated as a time to be thankful and a time to enjoy nature's bounty: 'Magners original cider. Time dedicated to you.' The stark, white, frosty branches of winter suddenly dazzle with a profusion of fairy lights in the Winter 2007 TV advertisement: 'We have always believed in the magic ... of a little ice.' The lights on the bare branches recall the ancient Celtic tradition of lighting sacred fires in the dead of winter to appease the deities, and to signify the forthcoming rebirth of nature at the end of winter, the return of light and life after the long, dark, dead days. They also recall the 'christmas tree,' an enduring symbol of optimism in the dead of winter.

### **Craftsmanship**

The second pair of dialectic tensions that we have identified are craftsmanship versus leisure and play. Taken together, the series of Magners Irish Cider advertisements communicates 'Naturalness, Tradition, Heritage and Craft' ([www.Bulmers.ie](http://www.Bulmers.ie)). The overall message plays on the idea of 'Nothing added but time', to emphasise the quality and maturity normally associated with other alcoholic drinks such as wine and spirits, but not generally associated with cider, or indeed beer. This emphasis on time is reflected in other slogans that recur throughout the campaign, such as 'All in its own good time' and 'A time to create.' Craftsmanship is about skill, manual dexterity and taking time to do something well. The concept thus reinforces the previous theme of mastery and control that links Magners so well to beer discourses.

The notion of craftsmanship also contributes something more powerful, however, by tapping into the Heroic Artisan male archetype, one that can be traced to the craft guilds of Medieval European craft guilds. A virtuous figure, this archetype is independent and honest, as well as extremely loyal to his male companions (Davis, 2005). Typically working on the family farm, or sometimes also to be found in an urban shop, the Heroic Artisan has a very strong work ethic and a self-reliance that ennobles him. At the core of this

archetype is the power of creation itself (emphasised in the Magners campaign by the message 'a time to create') and a manliness associated with production. The Heroic Artisan's 'productive labour' (Currarino, 2007, p. 479) asserts his independence, an independence that many men have lost in working for large corporations where they cannot control their destinies. The Heroic Artisan image thus evokes a postmodern nostalgia for a past where men remained in control of their own production, a time when they were not competing with women in the workplace. The orchard scenes with the all-male workers and brotherly bonding between them reinforce such associations.

The voiceover in the Autumn 2006 advertisement says 'The wonderful thing about this time of year is that you can always be sure of quite a gathering.' The word 'gathering' conflates the gathering of the apples with the convivial gathering of the men after their day's work, thus emphasising the fruit of their labours and the reward that awaits them: the companionship of other men, all of whom have earned, by the sweat of their brows, the right to relax with their fellow workers. Beer bonding is, of course, well established in advertising, but the special ingredient added in the Magners campaign is that of Celtic (male) souls gathering together in harmony. This is the triumph of the Celtic warrior discourse over the Celtic mother goddess discourse in Irish culture, but Irish masculinity is allowed to retain the feminine sensitivity of a matrilineal past (Cairns and Richards, 1998). This is indeed the 'time to gather' (Autumn, 2006), as the heroic male artisan unites both producer and consumer, and is in harmony with production and consumption, and, above all, his craft.

### Leisure and Play

The old adage that 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy' could never be applied to this campaign, because the advertising campaign is a celebration of men who know when and how to take it easy and enjoy themselves. This notion is cleverly framed within a context of hard work and reward. The theme of craftsmanship is juxtaposed with one of leisure and play, two important facets of the Celtic spirit that continually recur throughout the series of advertisements. The Celt knows how to enjoy himself, how to work and play, and, especially, how to relax with a long, cool glass of Magners Cider after a hard day's work. Here a

Celtic discourse of fun and pleasure is used in stark opposition to the Protestant work ethic, with its Calvinistic distrust of pleasure and self-indulgence, so espoused by their fellow countrymen, the Ulster-Scots, in the North of Ireland (Brown, Hirschman and Maclaran, 2006).

The summer 2006 advertisement, for example, celebrates summer's lazy days and pays homage to the summer sun: 'The perfect time to put everything on ice,' as the men cast off their boots, laze around in the sunshine and down their Magners cider, to the soundtrack 'Sunshine Came Softly Through My Window Today' by Donovan. The Spring 2008 advertisement also illustrates these associations well. The ad opens lazily with shots of clear water running over stones that pan out to become a river. We see a cobweb laced with raindrops, a horse, some cows in a field, and then two men, who stroll in an unhurried fashion on a bridge over the river. One is carrying a ladder, the other a basket. We're not sure whether they are going to or from work but they're in no hurry. The Irish voiceover tells us that 'At Magners we've long understood the importance of making time'. Now we are in the orchard, where the pace is slow. Walking in pairs, the men nonchalantly carry full panniers of apples as they walk away from the orchard, against the backdrop of a setting sun, and we realise that they are all winding down at the end of their day's work.

The husky tones of Steve Earle singing 'Galway Girl' set our feet tapping and the scene shifts to an Irish Ceilidh that is being held in a marquee at the edge of the orchard. The rest of the ad concentrates on the lively crowd of musicians, dancers and revellers that the men have joined in the marquee. A beautiful, dark-haired, fresh-faced young woman is the centre of our attention as she dances vigorously amidst the throng. As Steve Earle sings 'I took her hand as I gave her a twirl' the shot pans from her to a glass of Magners being poured. A young man sits at the side, content to relax and have a moment to himself, as the voiceover says 'Time dedicated to you'. The theme of craftsmanship is broadened to incorporate a monadic gift-giving element as the advertisement legitimises and indeed validates time off after toil: the men have earned a break and a pint of cider.

Interestingly, Holt and Thompson refer to the musician Steve Earle as being a perfect example of

the 'rebel' archetype in mass culture in his youth, namely a man who refuses to conform to society's norms and instead lives life as a hard drinking, hard living rebel who is loved and revered for his anti-establishment attitude (Watson and Helou, 2006). This archetype also parallels colonial representations of the wild, uncontrollable and emotionally unstable Celt. Earle is now, of course, a reformed character, it seems, living in Ireland and combining his American country style with the Irish traditional music genre to create an appealing 'country' sound which is perfect for the Magners campaign.

### Discussion

As a rich and ancient form of narrative, myths have a powerful influence on us. Their stories encode significant meanings that help us make sense of our experiences and indicate appropriate ways for us to behave. Myths are continuously being told and re-told, appropriated and re-appropriated, as they change and evolve in response to the needs of particular social groups. Whereas in bygone times myths were most frequently religious and circulated by word-of-mouth, nowadays myths are likely to be commercially mediated, and circulated through marketplace phenomena such as films, television, brands and advertising (Arnould, 2009; Holt, 2004). In this sense companies can now be seen as competing in myth markets rather than product markets (Holt, 2004).

Traditionally, myths make us aware of oppositions that they progressively mediate, such as good/evil, life/death, science/nature, male/female and so forth; their tales take on life's central contradictions and the complexities of being human. It is in this respect that they speak across cultures. Fraser (1922), for example, has shown how similar myths and symbolic associations exist across very different religious beliefs. And so it is for commercial myths also; they can resonate with us at profound, unconscious levels. The nature/culture binary is central to the Magners' campaign and is played out in the two sets of dialectical tensions we have discussed above. Thus, the core contribution of our study, in relation to the theme of this special issue, has been to show the power of an Irish voice, literally in terms of the persuasive voiceover narrative in the Magners advertisements, and metaphorically in terms of the Celtic spirit contained therein. Our analysis of the Magners campaign illustrates how the Celtic soul that lies at its core enables young

men to negotiate a masculinity that restores ideals of manliness (culture) alongside a celebration of the feminine (nature). As a commercial myth, this conception of Magners man conveys a new mythic ideal that draws on many existing cultural myths to achieve its unique 'syncretic blending of narrative and imagistic elements' (Thompson and Tian, 2007). This new mythic ideal, we would argue, is also helping to reconcile the conflicting representations noted by Kuhling and Keohane (2007) that are currently present in Ireland, namely the tensions between premodern Celtic Culture and aspirational cosmopolitanism.

Holt and Thompson (2004) refer to two dominant models of masculinity in American culture: 'the rebel' and 'the breadwinner'. They argue that the man-of-action hero reconciles these two opposing mythoi of masculinity in American culture. In Ireland, two opposing sides of Irish masculinity, 'the warrior' and 'the artist', are reconciled to create Celtic man, thus accommodating extreme masculinity (strength, mastery, action) with extreme femininity (sensitivity, sentimentality, emotionality), and reconciling the oppositions of nature/woman and culture/man in the process. This dialectic tension is resolved in the archetypal site of masculine/feminine conflict and resolution, the Garden of Eden, as symbolised by the orchard, where nature (the feminine, 'Eve') is tamed, harnessed and cultivated by man (the masculine, 'Adam'). As a man who respects the land but harnesses the power of Mother Nature for his benefit, Magners Man embodies this reconciliation of dualisms. Through the Magners advertisements, men can return to a romanticised, idyllic pastoral past when men worked the land and earned the right to enjoy the fruits of their labour, in this case, chilled cider at the end of a long, hard day of sweat and toil. And indeed in late capitalist, fast-paced, urban cultures, there is a nostalgic longing for an agrarian, slower-paced, rural life.

The crisis of masculinity has been well documented in recent years (Thompson and Holt, 2008). Layton (2000), for example, refers to 'gender wounding' and a perpetually displaced masculinity. We would argue that advertisements such as the Magners Irish Cider campaign have the potential to help heal such wounds, as they show men in unambiguously masculine, active roles at the same time as they display a contempo-

rare cosmopolitanism, a man at ease with his 'nature.' Craig (1992, p. 94) writes that gendered commercials 'are designed to give pleasure to the target audience.' Showing men in an Edenic context, being masterful and strong, harvesting nature's bounty to produce an alcoholic drink, presents men in an empowered and attractive light. The cider comes to embody male potency, purpose and power as well as nurturance and passion. The Celtic soul thus becomes universal in its appeal, taking men back to a time when they were close to the land, and were in tune with the seasons and the cycles of nature, including their own.

The word 'Magners' is well chosen to signify ideal masculinity in the 21st century, an elixir that imbues its imbibers with natural heroism, and indeed the brand name seems to embody male potency, purpose and power, given its close word association with 'magnus' which means great in Latin. It also recalls other masculine brand names in popular consumer culture such as Magnum (a brand of ice-cream by Walls currently being enjoyed by Eva Longoria of American TV series *Desperate Housewives* fame, and the well-known 1980s American TV series of the same name with likeable he-man Tom Selleck). Although the name may have been taken from that of its founder, it is nevertheless highly fortuitous that it is similar to Magnus, and that it carries strong masculine overtones.

'New national identities may struggle to fully overcome the enduring legacy of the colonial encounter

and the binaries it introduced,' write Cayla and Koops-Elsen (2006, p. 153). In postcolonial Ireland, the Edenic primitiveness associated with Celtic Ireland is packaged with playful, postcolonial purpose, we argue, to entice the British to swig the cider and thereby swell the coffers of the triumphant 'Celtic tiger', the Irish. Old rivalries are forgotten, and men are united in tasting the nectar that transforms them into rugged men of the land: artisans, craftsmen, artists, in harmony with nature, and resplendent in homespun clothing, stubble, and well-toned muscles. In postcolonial terms, it may be that former colonised countries, like Ireland, portray themselves and are influenced by 'the colonial experience and the colonial gaze,' (p. 153). And perhaps Irish advertising is deliberately engaging in what Dirlik (1997) refers to as 'self-orientalisation', playing along with the 'exotic other' narrative of its colonial masters. Given that Ireland has truly proved itself to be an independent and economically successful nation, it can happily use its traditional associations with rural life to enhance its economic success. The fact that Magners' highly effective media strategy was to 'colonise and conquer' the British market (Stokes, Jenkins and Nolan, 2007) can be seen as another interesting, not to say ironic, turn of events, an amusing flip of the colonial/postcolonial coin. Magners Irish Cider (and Irish masculinity) has truly cornered the market in Celtic soul. The representation of Irish masculinity it celebrates has come to be a very successful manifestation of the Celtic soul myth which continues to endure, and which continues to enjoy supreme currency in contemporary culture.

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