

MAKERS, BALLYMACLINTON

(M'Clinton's Town, erected by the makers of M'Clinton's

FIELD DAY REVIEW

CARRICKMACROSS
AND LIMERICK LAC



Souvenir postcard for
1908 Franco-British
Exhibition. Verso reads:
BALLYMACLINTON
(McClinton's town) erected
by the makers of McClinton's
Soap. The Irish Colleens use
this soap, note their beautiful
complexions.

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The Ideal Home (Rule) Exhibition:

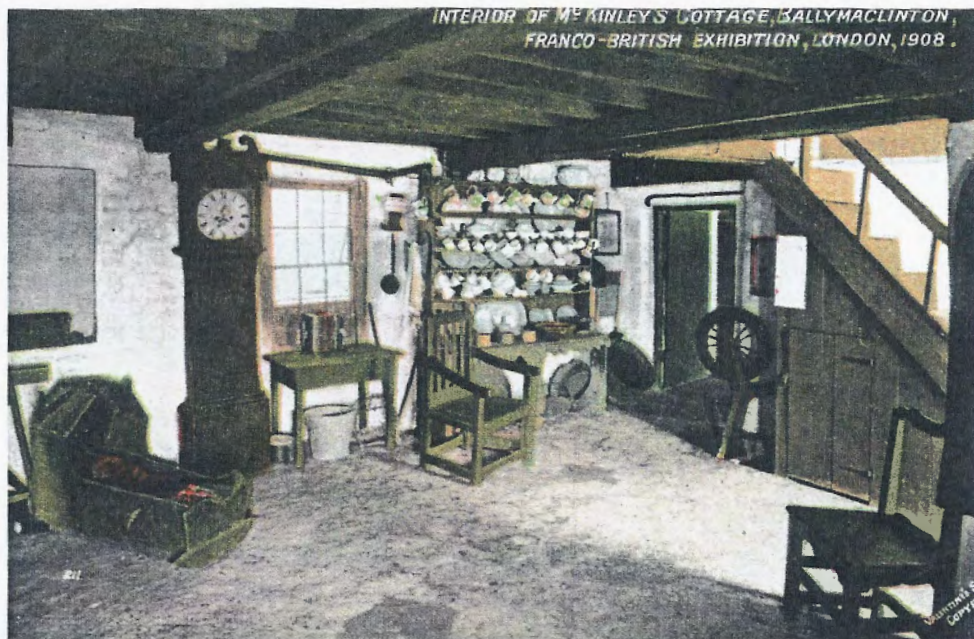
Ballymaclinton and the 1908 Franco- British Exhibition

Stephanie Rains

Introduction

At the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition in White City, London, one of the largest commercial attractions was an Irish 'village', called Ballymaclinton. Erected at a cost of £30,000, Ballymaclinton cost sixpence to enter, and ran for the entire six months of the exhibition.¹ Consisting of several dozen buildings (most of which were variations on the traditional Irish white-washed thatched cottage), it also contained replicas of Blarney Castle, complete with Blarney Stone, the St. Laurence Gate in Drogheda, an art gallery, a round tower, a Celtic cross and a reconstruction

¹ *Lady of the House* (July 1908), 2.



Souvenir postcard for 1908 Franco-British Exhibition.

of the ancestral cottage of former United States president William McKinley. Several of the buildings housed cottage industries, such as Limerick lace and Donegal Carpets, as well as displays of handmade furniture and enamel jewellery produced by the Irish Decorative Arts Association.² It also had its own post office, from which visitors could send one of the many postcards of the village, with a special Ballymaclinton postmark. The village was staffed by 150 women in 'traditional' costume, including a red cloak; their job was to demonstrate the standard crafts of the cottage economy and to welcome visitors. They were uniformly referred to in official publicity and newspaper accounts as 'colleens'.

Fake villages like Ballymaclinton were regular features of fairs and exhibitions throughout Europe and North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. African villages were the most commonly represented, but many Middle and Far Eastern settlements were staged as well. At the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, for example, there were Japanese and Algerian villages among many others, and the 1907 Irish International Exhibition in Dublin had a Somali Village.³ Because

the exhibitions were usually held in major cities, they were generally attended by people who readily took themselves to be metropolitan members of a modern world that staged, with affectionate condescension, the 'backwardness' of such villages as an exotic condition that demonstrated the richness of the imperial tapestry.

Besides the more frequent African or Far Eastern examples, several Irish (and Scottish) villages also appeared at national and international exhibitions across Europe and North America. The first Irish village seems to have been displayed by Alice Hart in aid of the Donegal Industrial Fund at the Irish Exhibition at the Olympia in London in 1888. A larger scale version, a kind that became more popular, first appeared at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893.⁴ In fact, there were two competing Irish villages in Chicago, one organized by Alice Hart, again for the Donegal Industrial Fund, and one by Lady Aberdeen for the Irish Industries Association. The aim of both was to boost Irish industries; a typical product was lace, made almost exclusively by women in rural areas.⁵ Irish villages also appeared at the 1904 St Louis World's Fair

- 2 F. G. Dumas, ed., *Franco-British Exhibition Illustrated Review* (London, 1908), 288.
- 3 Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago, IL, 1984), 38-71; and Stephanie Rains, *Commodity Culture and Social Class in Dublin 1850-1916* (Dublin, 2010), 193-95.
- 4 Janice Melland, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries 1880-1914* (Dublin, 2007), 50-57.

- 5 See Catherine Morris, 'Alice Milligan: Republican Tableaux and the Revival', *Field Day Review* 6 (2010), 133–65, for a discussion of the visual style of the Irish Industries Association village at the World's Fair; and Rains, *Commodity Culture and Social Class in Dublin 1850–1916*, 155–58, for a discussion of its similarities to the displays at charity bazaars in Dublin during this era.
- 6 See David Brett, *The Construction of Heritage* (Cork, 1996), 82–83.
- 7 Paul Greenhalgh, 'Art, Politics and Society at the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908', *Art History*, 8, 4 (1985), 434–52.
- 8 Greenhalgh, 'Art, Politics and Society at the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908', 444. Government Buildings on Merrion Square in Dublin, designed by Aston Webb and completed in 1911, is one of the few examples of Edwardian baroque constructed in Ireland.
- 9 Dumas, ed., *Franco-British Exhibition Illustrated Review*, 288.
- 10 Rains, *Commodity Culture and Social Class in Dublin 1850–1916*, 196.

and the 1915 Panama–Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco.

Ballymaclinton would not have been considered historically or culturally significant at the time, even by most of its own organizers. The primary purpose for its main sponsors was commercial gain, and its form and content were designed to achieve that. However, Ballymaclinton was extremely successful, attracting two million visitors in 1908; it returned for several other exhibitions held on the same site in the years before the First World War. It therefore seems likely that it had a greater impact than its organizers could have hoped for. It was, for example, the subject of high quality colour postcards produced in such large numbers that Ballymaclinton would have been one of the most widespread images of Ireland during the first decade of the twentieth century. Scholarly discussions of this phenomenon have always tended to treat it as a display of 'colonial primitivism' for metropolitan imperial audiences.⁶ However, as a simple representation of Irish 'backwardness' to British visitors, Ballymaclinton contained several striking anomalies, which make that reading of it difficult to sustain. The contradictions in its representation of Irishness arise from considering it in isolation; they are not internal to it as such. It needs to be considered in the context of other popular discourses of the time, and in relation to other sections of the Franco-British Exhibition.

Ballymaclinton and the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition

Held to celebrate the *entente cordiale* of 1904 between Britain and France, the Franco-British Exhibition was organized and run by entrepreneur Imre Kiralfy. He went on to mount several other exhibitions at the same Shepherd's Bush venue over the succeeding years; they included the Imperial International Exhibition of 1909 and the Coronation Exhibition of 1911, at both of which an Irish village was included.⁷ Among the principal exhibition buildings

showcasing various aspects of British and French culture and commerce, were the Court of Honour, the Palace of Women's Work and the Machinery Hall, as well as galleries of officially sanctioned British and French art. As was common for exhibition buildings, these were plaster façades on steel frames; they were also vast and elaborate displays of imperial wealth and power. The Court of Honour, for example, a complex of pavilions, terraces and boating lakes, was a pastiche of Mughal architecture clearly intended to reflect the centrality of India to British imperial prestige. The other British buildings were examples of 'Edwardian baroque' architecture, described by Paul Greenhalgh as 'not a European baroque ... but a hybrid descendant of Wren, Hawksmoor and Vanbrugh, keeping the tone as English as was possible'. This was the style seen in many large scale public buildings constructed during this era.⁸

The Ballymaclinton village had several sponsors and organizers, and the exhibit as a whole was an amalgam of those sponsors' differing agendas. It was primarily constructed as an advertising device for McClinton's Soap, which was based in Donaghmore, County Tyrone. One of the cottages at Ballymaclinton was a replica of the workers' housing constructed by McClinton's in Donaghmore, a four-room cottage with a half-acre of garden and a rent of four shillings a week.⁹ By 1908, McClinton's was an established international 'luxury' brand, with products such as Colleen Shampoo, Sheila Soap and Hibernia Shaving Cream. McClinton's was a luxury brand because its soap products were made using plant ash and vegetable oils, rather than the harsher animal fats. McClinton's had contributed a small display of 'model cottages' to the 1907 Irish International Exhibition in Dublin; the Ballymaclinton village in London the following year was a dramatic expansion of this display.¹⁰ However, Ballymaclinton had other sponsors besides McClinton's Soap. It also housed a tuberculosis prevention

exhibition organized by the Women's National Health Association (under Lady Aberdeen's leadership), intended to promote greater awareness of the causes, prevention and treatment of the disease. All of the proceeds of Ballymaclinton went to the Irish Tuberculosis Fund; fund-raising of this kind was common at various public venues and functions.¹¹

The involvement of a commercial manufacturer and a public health charity in itself made Ballymaclinton unusual within the international circuit of 'native villages'. Irish villages at international exhibitions had historically tended to be funded and managed as semi-official displays, typically by organizations such as the Irish Industries Association, which aimed to promote Irish industries and products on the international market. In contrast, African and Far Eastern villages were usually entirely commercial sideshow exhibits organized by impresarios, who ran them as entertainments.¹² Ballymaclinton therefore differed from both the sideshow and semi-official villages in its aim of promoting both a specific product and public health.

However, Ballymaclinton contained another exhibit that made it even more removed from typical 'native villages'. One of the larger buildings housed an exhibition of paintings by Irish and Irish-descended contemporary artists, assembled and hung by Hugh Lane, the founder of Dublin's Municipal Gallery of Modern Art. Ballymaclinton was therefore the first touring exhibition of his new gallery, which had opened in January of that year.¹³ The exhibition consisted of sixty-four paintings by, among others, Walter Osborne, Nathaniel Hone the Younger, George Russell (*Æ*), John Lavery and William Orpen, as well as Jack Yeats, Sarah Purser and Cecilia Harrison. Lane had organized this display, according to his Preface to the exhibition's catalogue, because

so many of the leaders of the various movements connected with British Art are themselves Irishmen or of Irish

parentage. It is mainly with the object of demonstrating that fact that I have collected and arranged the present Exhibition. I feel that judgement will recognise, in the works shown here, a distinctive temperament ... of a recognised Irish school of painting.¹⁴

A visitor to Ballymaclinton in 1908, therefore, might make a tour of the village that included an inspection of the model Irish thatched cottages and their resident colleens, demonstrations of traditional crafts such as lace-making, followed by a visit to the tuberculosis prevention exhibition. They might then purchase some luxury soap (packaged in miniature cardboard cottages, which were in 'perfect reproduction' of President McKinley's cottage) and also view paintings by Jack Yeats and George Russell.¹⁵

The potential meanings for contemporary audiences of a visit to Ballymaclinton are therefore multiple and apparently contradictory. On the one hand, it could clearly be read as an example of 'colonial primitivism' for metropolitan English audiences, in which Irish life — as exemplified by thatched cottages, donkeys and traditional crafts — was to be understood as backward and pre-modern. Certainly there may have been a particular appeal and reassurance in Ballymaclinton's representation of an idyllic Irish village of contented workers and cottage industries during the ongoing clamour over Home Rule, and also in a representation of 'colleens' cheerfully pursuing traditional occupations during the campaigns for female suffrage.¹⁶ However, as Annie E. Coombes has pointed out, Irish (and Scottish) villages such as Ballymaclinton represented their cultures and peoples in ways fundamentally different from the African villages' representation of their native inhabitants. In particular, she has pointed out that in guidebook references to these villages,

11 *Lady of the House* (August 1908), 6.

12 Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 38–71; and Rains, *Commodity Culture and Social Class in Dublin 1850–1916*, 194–95.

13 *Irish Times*, 20 January 1908.

14 Hugh Lane, *Irish Art Gallery, Ballymaclinton, Franco-British Exhibition* (London, 1908), 5.

15 *Lady of the House* (July 1908), 2.

16 Barbara O'Connor, 'Colleens and Comely Maidens: Representing and Performing Irish Femininity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in Eoin Flannery and Michael Griffin, eds., *Ireland in Focus: Film, Photography and Popular Culture* (Syracuse, NY, 2009) 144–65, 151.

Souvenir postcard for 1908 Franco-British Exhibition. Verso reads: 'Ballymaclinton (McClinton's town) erected by the makers of McClinton's Soap. The Irish Colleens use this soap, note their beautiful complexions'.



17 Annie E. Coombes, 'Ethnography and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities', in Susan Hiller, ed., *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (London, 1991), 151-79, 171-72.

The predominance of adjectives such as 'healthy', 'beautiful' and 'industrious' together with descriptions of the Irish and Scottish living quarters as 'spacious', compare favourably with the constantly repeated assurances that the Africans are in fact much cleaner than they look. Similarly, while the guidebooks are full of references to the ancient traditions of the Irish and the Scots, the Africans are accredited with no such history or tradition.¹⁷

Indeed, in the instance of Ballymaclinton at the 1908 exhibition, Coombes's argument could be extended further. Not only did Ballymaclinton foreground Irish 'history and culture' in the icons of the Blarney Stone and round tower, it also displayed the Irish ancestral cottage of President McKinley, who had been fatally shot in 1901, while attending, of all things, the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. An even greater difference from the African 'native villages' is that Ballymaclinton also stressed Irish modernity and commerce, in the form of luxury products, such as Donegal Carpets as well as McClinton's Soap itself. The village's post office also indicated that it

had a modern communications system, and one of the postcards, showing the post office and 'Colleens Clamouring for their Letters' (however unintentionally) implied that the village workers were literate.

And if Ballymaclinton was notably different from African villages in its heavy emphasis upon history and culture, then the modern (or modernist) paintings in Lane's art gallery must have made it even harder for visitors to see the village as a display of Irish 'backwardness'. There appears to have been no comment in any of the press coverage on the anomalous juxtaposition of thatched cottages and handmade crafts with paintings such as George Russell's *The Waders* (1904). Lane's art exhibit is simply listed as one of the many attractions.

The internal contradictions of this representation of Ireland to an English audience are actually emphasized by the fact that they do not appear to have been noticed at the time. But a look at the cultural context of those English audiences does suggest ways of reading Ballymaclinton, by which any sense of conflict between its conventional form and surprising content can appear in a more subdued light.

**Kissing the Blarney Stone, Ballymaclinton
(M'Clinton's Town, erected by the makers of M'Clinton's Soap)
Franco-British Exhibition**



Souvenir postcard for 1908 Franco-British Exhibition. Verso reads: 'Ballymaclinton (McClinton's town) erected by the makers of McClinton's Soap. The Irish Colleens use this soap, note their beautiful complexions. Kiss the Blarney Stone and be Witty, use McClinton's Soap and be Pretty.'

Model Villages in Edwardian England

The 'model' village of Ballymaclinton would have had associations for English audiences in the early twentieth century, other than those of colonial tourism. The very concept of a model village has even now, and certainly had then, a dual meaning — on the one hand, it was a model

because it was a replica or inauthentic copy, while on the other hand, it was a model because it was an ideal or idealized design. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in England saw a widespread fascination with, and commitment to, the idea of model or new towns.¹⁸ Almost all of these were designed to alleviate the social, medical and economic problems

18 Simon Dentith, 'From William Morris to the Morris Minor: An Alternative Suburban History', in Roger Webster, ed., *Expanding Suburbia: Reviewing Suburban Narratives* (London, 2000), 15–30.

- 19 Elizabeth Outka, *Consuming Tradition: Modernity, Modernism, and the Commodified Authentic* (Oxford, 2009), 25–52.
- 20 Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000–1887* (New York, 1888); and William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890; London, 1994).

of a highly industrialized and urbanized society. A number of different models of ‘ideal’ living were circulating in popular discourse by the time Ballymaclinton opened, some of them deriving from wholly opposed ideological positions, but all of them sharing a readiness to reify aspects of traditional village life. So, when evaluating their likely response to the village, we would need to know how familiar visitors to Ballymaclinton would have been with these models and ideals.

Several major English industrialists, such as Titus Salt, George Cadbury and William Lever had, by 1900, developed planned villages designed to improve the living conditions of their workers. Port Sunlight, Lever’s village outside Liverpool for his soap workers, had been planned since 1887, and was fully functional by 1900. Cadbury’s equivalent community for the workers in his chocolate factory, Bournville Village outside Birmingham, was also established by 1900.¹⁹ These paternalistic developments were of course available to only a tiny proportion of English (or Irish) industrial workers, but they received a great deal of publicity. They provided copy in advertising the products of their developers, a particular feature of the marketing of Cadbury’s Cocoa.

Planned communities, designed to provide more spacious, sanitary and pleasant accommodation for workers, could have taken any number of architectural forms, but it is significant that the individual buildings and overall layout of both Port Sunlight and Bournville Village were based on specifically rural designs that embodied an idealized image of traditional English villages, with half-timbered buildings, village greens and house styles evocative of bygone eras.

By 1903, these workers’ communities (funded and run by the companies which employed them) had been supplemented by England’s first ‘garden city’ at Letchworth in Hertfordshire. Largely planned by the garden-city advocate Ebenezer Howard, whose book on the topic, *Garden Cities*

of To-Morrow, had been published a year earlier, Letchworth was owned by a limited company, which was intended to allow the community to be self-supporting. Unlike the workers’ villages, Letchworth and most of the other garden cities that followed it had definite, if often problematic, connections to the utopianism of writers such as Edward Bellamy and William Morris.²⁰ Like Port Sunlight and Bournville Village, Letchworth was also developed to function as a modern version of a traditional English village, complete with rustic cottages.

Thus, by the time of Ballymaclinton’s first appearance in 1908, the English public was quite familiar with the concept of a newly built ‘traditional’ village in which people actually lived and worked. Furthermore, images and replicas of an idealized rural lifestyle were by then in mass circulation. In 1897 *Country Life* magazine was founded by Edward Hudson. Although it was devoted to coverage of a range of upper-class country pursuits such as hunting and horse racing, it also, from the first issue, featured lavishly illustrated articles on country houses and estates. Its tone and editorial style reflected the values of the landed gentry and rural élites who featured on its pages, but its appeal was considerably wider than that, and it functioned as an idealized depiction of quintessentially ‘English’ lifestyles for readers who were far removed by both geography and class from life on a country estate. The articles about individual houses, and the accompanying illustrations, both reflected and reinforced a popular fascination with historic homes and furnishings. In particular, they linked these houses and belongings to inheritance, family continuity and an apparently inherent connection between land, homes and a sense of deeply rooted identity. These were economic and social realities beyond the horizon of most of their urban middle-class readers. The appeal of the ‘immemorial’ lifestyle of the English countryside was so great that, according

to one of the magazine's former editors, it 'caused at least one officer in the First World War to have *Country Life* sent out to the trenches as a symbol of what he was fighting for'.²¹ Other forms of mass media, particularly advertising, also exploited the image of the peaceful and idyllic village. The workers' villages of Cadbury's Cocoa and Sunlight Soap were both heavily promoted; one Cadbury's advert of 1911 claimed its product was manufactured at its 'factory in a garden'.²²

Of course, most readers of *Country Life*, or purchasers of Cadbury's Cocoa, could not realistically aspire to live in the country at all. They were, in the main, urban and suburban dwellers whose livelihoods depended upon their remaining close to urban centres. However, by the early twentieth century, the possibility of buying some of the 'authentic' qualities of traditional English life had become available to many of these consumers. By the turn of the century, the popular enthusiasm for antiques had begun in England. Most major department stores had antiques departments, and the more adventurous collectors were frequenting open-air markets and country-house sales. After several decades of enthusiasm for the mass-produced furniture, glassware and ceramics of the Industrial Revolution, this was a significant change in popular taste. The new-found appeal of antiques was partly nostalgia for a past era, but also the prestige they offered as possibly inherited rather than bought items.²³

Suburban architecture, too, began to display many of the stylistic qualities (in mass-produced and relatively low-cost form) of the model villages and garden cities. In 1905, Letchworth Garden City had hosted a Cheap Cottages Exhibition, at which builders, architects and enthusiastic amateurs built 'model' examples of supposedly affordable labourers' cottages: the stated purpose of the exhibition was to provide rural homes that could be constructed for £150 or less, and rented for under £8 per year.²⁴ Some of these

exhibition cottages were indeed eventually to be constructed as rural labourers' housing. But contemporary commentary suggested that many of them were more suitable as weekend cottages for the urban middle classes, which increased in popularity in the first decade of the twentieth century as a featured item of the property market. Advertisements for 'country cottages' and 'country houses', available for sale or rent to urban dwellers with a wide range of incomes, regularly appeared in newspapers and magazines.²⁵ For those who could not afford the rural dwelling, suburban houses in the style of 'traditional' English cottages offered an alternative. At the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition itself, for example, one of the displays was of a design for a 'Country Cottage' by Oetzmann and Co., a large London company that offered to build the cottage for £200 and furnish it for 45 guineas. By the time of the 1910 Japan-British Exhibition at Shepherd's Bush, Oetzmann and Co. was displaying this and another home design, called a 'Black and White Cottage', which was a replica, half-timbered, 'Elizabethan'-style house. Both of these models were clearly designed as suburban homes, rather than as 'real' country cottages.

Arts and Crafts in 'Merrie England'

In the same year as Ballymaclinton's first appearance at the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908, the *Daily Mail* staged the first Ideal Home Exhibition. This included a competition for 'ideal' homes in a variety of categories, rather like the Cheap Cottages Exhibition of three years earlier. Held at the Olympia, just across the city from the Franco-British Exhibition, the Ideal Home Exhibition was intended to boost revenue for the newspaper by encouraging builders and home furnishing suppliers to begin advertising and selling directly to consumers. It also relied for its popular appeal upon the increasingly commodified sense of Englishness as embodied in a

- 21 Cited in Alun Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, eds., *Englishness, Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London, 1986), 62-88, 78.
- 22 Outka, *Consuming Tradition*, 40.
- 23 Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven, CT, 2006), 145-69.
- 24 *The Book of the Cheap Cottages Exhibition* (London, 1905).
- 25 Outka, *Consuming Tradition*, 70.

Souvenir postcard for 1908
Franco-British Exhibition.



Visitors to the Franco-British Exhibition should not fail to visit the "Bovril Castle," opposite the Stadium; close to Garden Club.

- 26 Outka, *Consuming Tradition*, 85.
 27 *Franco-British Exhibition Official Souvenir* (London, 1908), n.p.
 28 Outka, *Consuming Tradition*, 87.
 29 Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', 70.

'traditional' English village architectural style.²⁶ Some of the overtly commercial ventures at the Franco-British Exhibition were also in this style. These included another soap manufacturer, Messrs. John Knight Ltd., which sold its soaps and perfumes to exhibition visitors from 'Primrose Cottage', a building of almost parodic rustic charm, complete with leaded mullion windows, gables and trailing ivy. The Bovril exhibit was a fortified manor house (complete with turrets) called 'Bovril Castle', which bore more than a passing resemblance to the fake Blarney Castle inside Ballymaclinton. Other buildings selling Cherry Blossom Shoe Polish and Schweppes mineral waters made prolific use of half-timbering. Elsewhere on the exhibition grounds there was an authentic Tudor house, which was 'most carefully removed from Ipswich to the Exhibition grounds and re-erected there. Inside a very choice collection of old English furniture may be seen.'²⁷ In 1910, the Ideal Home Exhibition's central attraction was an entire replica 'Tudor Village', 'with a village

green, old shops occupied by businesses that had existed for at least 100 years, a well, a maypole, a full street of picturesque gabled houses, and even a waterfall'.²⁸ At the 1911 Coronation Exhibition (at which Ballymaclinton appeared for the final time) there was also an English Tudor village, complete with the now-standard half-timbered cottages and staffed by young women operating spinning wheels.

The particular appeal of half-timbered 'Tudor' styles of English village houses as the exemplar of an idyllic rural life during this period is striking. It would certainly appear that the Tudor era was believed to embody certain inherently 'English' characteristics. As several critics have noted, this was a significant change from the previous fashion for the Gothic, in that it represented 'a move from the community of the medieval village based on the Church and the Latinate culture, internationalist in some sense and often associated with radicalism, to the more aggressive expansionist, sophisticated and, above all, English world of Elizabeth'.²⁹ As well as the commercial examples of antique furniture, Ideal Home Exhibitions and marketing of Cadbury's Cocoa, other 'high' cultural texts of this time also reflected the increasing fascination with a profoundly English rural past; novels such as Ford Madox Ford's *Fifth Queen* trilogy (1906–08), and H. Rider Haggard's non-fiction treatise on the decline of traditional country life, *Rural England* (1902), as well as the revival of English folk music and dance (including Morris dancing) through the work of Percy Grainger and Ralph Vaughan Williams. By 1920, this fascination with Elizabethan England was being parodied by E. F. Benson in *Queen Lucia*, the first of his popular 'Mapp and Lucia' novels. In this novel, Lucia and her husband have bought three Elizabethan cottages in a remote English village, converted them into a large comfortable house, and added 'a new wing ... which was, if anything, a shade more blatantly Elizabethan than the stem onto which it was grafted'. They also plant a



Souvenir postcard for 1908 Franco-British Exhibition.

'Shakespeare's Garden', featuring only plants mentioned in the playwright's works, donate a pair of stocks to the village green, and establish Ye Signe of Ye Daffodille press, where 'type was set up by hand'.³⁰

The early twentieth-century fashion for 'Merrie England' styles and revivals may have been a rejection of the Victorian preference for Gothic, but the two movements were nevertheless deeply connected by a shared suspicion of the social and economic changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, including above all else urbanization and mass production. All of the examples discussed above, from the garden city movement to the fashion for collecting antiques, were influenced to a greater or lesser extent by the work of John Ruskin, William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement. The Arts and Crafts Movement's rejection of mass production and the forms of repetitive labour associated with it led to the popular enthusiasm for hand-crafted goods, especially furniture and furnishings, for those who could afford them.³¹ In architecture, the Arts and Crafts Movement's influence was particularly relevant to the styles adopted by the developers of model villages, garden cities and even the suburban 'Tudorbethan'

house, which was characterized as 'not [an Englishman's] castle, it is his homely country cottage, his piece of old England, conveniently brought up to Croydon for him'.³² Successful architects such as Edwin Lutyens (who served as a judge of submitted housing designs at the first Ideal Home Exhibition in 1908) were strongly influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement's commitment to traditional materials, craftsmanship and techniques, and it is significant that most of his commissions were for country houses. His use of an eclectic mixture of historical styles, such as turrets, pantiling, mullioned windows, inglenooks, exposed beams and gables, all of which were taken to be fundamentally 'English' in origin, came to be known as the Domestic Revival, and clearly provided the inspiration for the less extravagant (and often mass-produced) styles of suburban Tudorbethan villas such as Oetzmann and Co.'s model cottages. Equally, Raymond Unwin, the principal architect of the first garden city at Letchworth, was directly influenced by Morris (whose Kelmscott Press is probably the main target of Benson's satirical Ye Signe of Ye Daffodille press in *Queen Lucia*).³³ The Arts and Crafts Movement itself had rejected urban life,

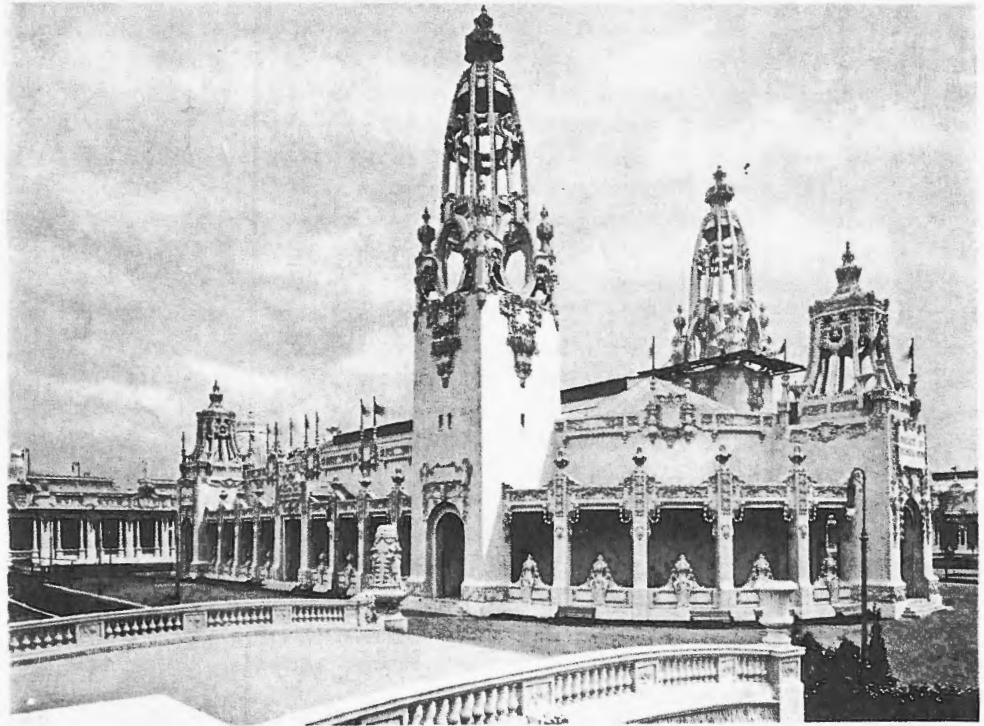
30 E. F. Benson, *Queen Lucia* (1920; Harmondsworth, 1991), 6–10.

31 Paul Greenhalgh, 'The History of Craft', in Peter Dormer, ed., *The Culture of Craft: Status and Future* (Manchester, 1997), 20–52, 33–36.

32 Duncan Simpson, cited in Greenhalgh, 'Art, Politics and Society at the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908', 446.

33 Dentith, 'From William Morris to the Morris Minor'.

The Palace of Women's Work.
Image from the Franco-British
Exhibition Official Souvenir
Catalogue, printed by Hudson
& Kearns, London, 1908.



- 34 Greenhalgh, 'Art, Politics and Society at the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908', 445.
- 35 Dentith, 'From William Morris to the Morris Minor', 19.
- 36 Morris, *News from Nowhere*.

and in many cases — such as Charles Ashbee's settlement at Chipping Campden and Eric Gill's community in Sussex — had pioneered rural artists' colonies. Domestic Revival architecture, with its emphasis upon historically 'English' forms, was therefore 'the perfect bedmate on the domestic front for the swaggering imperialism of Edwardian baroque being displayed on the international one'.³⁴ The appearance of Ballymaclinton, with its Irish version of Domestic Revival architecture, in immediate proximity to the exuberant displays of Edwardian baroque architecture in the main exhibition buildings at Shepherd's Bush, might therefore have been felt to be entirely coherent with its surroundings.

One of the most striking features of both the élite and popular enthusiasms for rural idylls, village life and country cottages is the range of diverse ideologies they represented. Ventures such as Letchworth (and indeed the garden city movement in general) were explicitly inspired by Morris's desire for radical social change. Although the reality of Letchworth, by the time it was completed,

tempered much of this radicalism, its initial plans had been visionary. They included community laundries and dining rooms and other plans designed to promote communal living and a change in social relations.³⁵ These would have been in line with Morris's socialist vision, as expressed in numerous publications, such as *News from Nowhere* (1890).³⁶

At the other end of the ideological spectrum, much of the enthusiasm for rural life was inspired by concerns about the 'degeneracy' of the working classes in English cities, anxieties intensified by the growing appeal of the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century. Although the term had been in use since the 1869 publication of *Hereditary Genius* by Frederick Galton, the Eugenics Education Society was founded in Britain in 1908. The effects of poor living conditions upon the health of the urban poor (among whom tuberculosis was common) had been a concern of social commentators for much of the late nineteenth century, but in the aftermath of the Boer War the effects of this problem upon the nation as a whole

became a particular focus. The problems that the British encountered in fighting the Boers were frequently attributed to a decline in the standard of army recruits. Such was the level of concern about the decline in 'national efficiency' that in 1904 the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration published a report on its research into working-class health and fitness for military service.³⁷ Although it also criticized aspects of rural life, the report predominantly blamed the urban environment for perceived declining standards of strength and stamina in working-class men and women. One of the most vigorous critics of British cities, Charles Masterman, emphasized imperial fears when, in his influential 1909 publication, *The Condition of England*, he asked:

Is the vitality of the race being burnt up in mine and furnace, in the huddled masses of the city? And is the future of a colonizing people to be jeopardized, not by the difficulties of over-lordship in the extremities of its domain, but by obscure changes in the opinion, the religion and the energies at the heart of the Empire?³⁸

The workers' villages of Port Sunlight and Bournville were essentially philanthropic, in that they were never financially self-supporting, but in both cases they were also designed to improve the businesses of their founders, notwithstanding the sincere benevolence of both Lever and Cadbury. That benevolence, however, was of a firmly paternalistic variety, and in many ways looked back to feudal social relations, rather than forward to the breaking down of class hierarchies envisaged by Morris. Many of the versions of rural idyll discussed here were motivated almost entirely by commercial considerations. Certainly, the *Daily Mail's* Ideal Home Exhibition was an unashamedly commercial venture, as were *Country Life* magazine and the products

and services of Oetzmann and Co., and the department stores selling antique furniture.

The breadth of the appeal of the idealized village and cottage indicates that it answered a complex pattern of wish and desire. On the face of it, the dominant impulses were clearly nostalgic and conservative — a wish to return to an ahistoric golden past, in which the 'timelessness' of social and of architectural structures was a source of comfort. This movement sought to locate 'authentic' Englishness not only away from cities, but also away from the north of England (thatched roofs, for example, belong to the vernacular building tradition of southern England) and from association with trade. Martin Wiener, for example, has argued that this period saw a realignment of quintessential Englishness away from the 'workshop of the world' developed during the mid-nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution (and strongly associated with the north of England) and towards the 'green and pleasant land' of the unindustrialized south. While by the early twentieth century it was certainly the case that Britain was clearly facing considerable industrial competition, Wiener goes on to insist that 'this new way of seeing the nation was not merely an adjustment to new realities, but a reaction against the root values extolled by the image of the "workshop"'.³⁹ As G. K. Chesterton wrote in 1917, 'the ordinary Englishman [was] duped out of his old possessions, such as they were, and always in the name of progress ... They took away his maypole, and his original rural life and promised him instead the Golden Age of Peace and Commerce.'⁴⁰ Maypoles were, unsurprisingly, a regular feature of reconstructed English villages of the early twentieth century.

- 37 Andrew Lees, *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought 1820–1940* (Manchester, 1985), 140.
 38 Cited in Lees, *Cities Perceived*, 139.
 39 Martin J. Wiener, 'England is the Country: Modernization and the National Self-Image', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 3, 4 (1971), 198–211, 199.
 40 Cited in Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', 69.

- 41 Daniel Born, 'Private Gardens, Public Swamps: *Howards End* and the Revaluation of Liberal Guilt', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 25, 2 (1992), 141–59, 156.
- 42 Outka, *Consuming Tradition*, 4 (original emphasis).
- 43 Outka, *Consuming Tradition*, 69.
- 44 Andrew D. Radford, *The Lost Girls: Demeter-Persephone and the Literary Imagination* (London, 2007), 202.

Authenticity and Neo-nostalgia

Writing of E. M. Forster's *Howards End*, published in 1910, itself a narrative dominated by connections between houses and heritage, Daniel Born described the novel as 'the typical Edwardian gesture to the urban crises of the time: the pastoral escape hatch'.⁴¹ The 'pastoral escape hatch' phrase could also be ascribed to all the other examples discussed here — from the garden city movement to suburbanites reading *Country Life* magazine or visiting the Tudor Village at the 1910 Ideal Home Exhibition. As a reaction to urbanization, industrialization and, perhaps, a growing sense of imperial anxiety, the fetishization of village greens, half-timbered cottages and maypoles can be read as a profoundly conservative nostalgia.

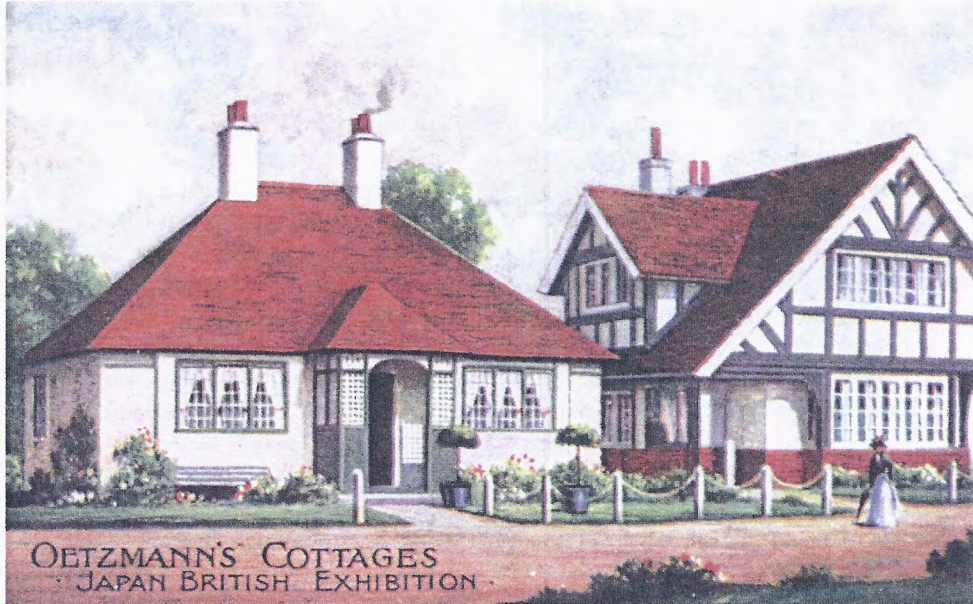
However, as Elizabeth Outka has convincingly argued, the term 'neo-nostalgia' is perhaps more useful in assessing all of these strategies of pastoral escape. What united all of them was certainly a search for authenticity, but one that occurred within the circuits of commodity exchange, for a public that was already well versed in the complex relationships between those commodities and concepts of authenticity. As Outka outlines:

What made these efforts so distinctive, and what contemporary critics have largely failed to recognize, is how the commercial origins were intrinsic to the allure of these objects and places. Their noncommercial aura made them appealing, their underlying commercial availability promised to make the simulation better than the original, for these new hybrids were accessible, controllable, and — in their ability to unite seemingly antithetical desires — tantalizingly modern. This noncommercial commerce was certainly a paradox, but the powerful underlying promise was that the intrinsic contradictions could be sustained rather

than resolved; indeed, the paradox *was* the appeal.⁴²

In particular, with regard to the Domestic Revival architecture of Lutyens and his commercial successors, the enthusiasm for antiques or antique reproductions, and the popularity of 'model' villages, Outka suggests that their principal allure for Edwardian consumers was their embodiment of a controlled and manipulated time. As she argues, such a manoeuvre could 'inscribe temporality on material objects and interior space and make time into a commodity'.⁴³ Lutyens's architectural designs for private homes are perhaps the clearest example of this, as he used an eclectic mixture of historical styles, as well as deliberate 'weathering' of materials to imply an organic expansion and alteration of the house over time, as would typically be the case with historic country houses.⁴⁴ Time therefore became inscribed into the fabric of a new building, allowing it to be offered as a successful negotiation between tradition and modernity. The commercial motive behind most of these ventures (including even Lutyens's most elite commissions, which were generally country houses for 'new' money made from trade, such as The Deanery in Berkshire, his house for *Country Life* founder Edward Hudson) was therefore vital to their popular success, rather than *being* a disguised or elided element.

How then can this Edwardian 'neo-nostalgia' provide a useful context in which to read the apparently contradictory text of the Ballymaclinton village and its representation of Irishness to a metropolitan English audience? Without denying the potential power of Ballymaclinton's colonial 'primitivism', the wider context of English audiences' experience of other kinds of fake villages, reification of traditional lifestyles and crafts, and a particular focus upon the restorative powers of rural life in the modern world must have increased both the attraction of Ballymaclinton



Souvenir postcard for 1910 Japan-British Exhibition.

and their readiness and capacity to read it. In particular, in a world in which fake English Tudor villages (complete with young women with spinning wheels) were a feature of popular entertainment in London, Ballymaclinton's fake Irish village of thatched cottages, a high cross and colleens riding donkeys would not necessarily have indicated Irish backwardness. Instead, it seems reasonable to assume that many English visitors would have regarded this idyllic representation of Irish village life as an extension of the English idylls they saw at the Ideal Home Exhibition, in Cadbury's Cocoa advertisements and in publicity for garden cities. This framework for contemporary understandings of Ballymaclinton also creates a greater sense of coherence for the apparently disparate organizations, businesses and themes of Ballymaclinton.

The Edwardian emphasis upon implanting the mark of passing time in the fabric of new constructions has a particular bearing upon a complete reconstruction such as Ballymaclinton. This would have been particularly evident in the reconstructed ancestral cottage of President McKinley, itself a complex amalgam of authenticity and construction.⁴⁵ If replica

high crosses and thatched cottages had history inscribed into their (new) fabric, Lane's exhibition of modern Irish paintings, displayed within and alongside these replicas, could have been seen by visitors as one more example among many of modernity and tradition existing together, rather than as a jarring contradiction. Lane's statement in the exhibition's programme note and in interviews to newspapers that he was exhibiting work by 'Irishmen or [those] of Irish parentage' in order to demonstrate 'a distinctive temperament' could further have been interpreted by visitors to the 1908 display as indicating that the modern art on display was a historical product of the tradition it came from — an emphasis upon inherited feeling and identity which would have been entirely comprehensible to early twentieth-century English audiences as well as being in accordance with the 'neo-nostalgia' of Ballymaclinton itself.⁴⁶

Thus, the actual 'cottage industries' demonstrating the wares of Donegal Carpets and Carrickmacross and Limerick lace for example, could quite clearly have been taken as examples of the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement; a reasonable interpretation, given that the Irish Industries

45 The McKinley ancestral cottage appears destined for this role as a purveyor of reconstructed authenticity, as it had earlier appeared at the Irish village in the 1904 St Louis World's Fair, and is now owned by the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh, County Tyrone, where it forms part of the 'Old World' village in the park.

46 Lane, *Irish Art Gallery, Ballymaclinton, Franco-British Exhibition*, 5. It is also worth noting that by 1913 William Lever had begun construction of an art gallery in Port Sunlight, designed to display his private collection for the educational and cultural improvement of his workers living in the settlement.

- 47 Nicola Gordon Bowe 'Two Early Twentieth-Century Irish Arts and Crafts Workshops in Context: An Túr Gloine and the Dun Emer Guild and Industries', *Journal of Design History*, 2, 2-3 (1989), 193-206; and Helland, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries 1880-1914*, 95.
- 48 Lees, *Cities Perceived*, 141.
- 49 Outka, *Consuming Tradition*, 49-50.
- 50 For discussions of the history of soap advertising, see Anne McClintock, 'Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising', in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *The Visual Culture Reader* (London, 1998), 506-18; and Juliann Sivulka, *Stronger than Dirt: A Cultural History of Advertising Personal Hygiene in America, 1875-1940* (Amherst, NY, 2001).

Association and similar organizations were indeed deeply influenced by the Arts and Crafts' philosophy of hand production, traditional use of materials, and the artistic and cultural importance of crafts in general. The transformation of traditional craft products into luxury commodities by the Irish Industries Association (through its sales of Irish fashion fabrics at London high society gatherings, for example) would also have been familiar to English audiences that had bought expensive Arts and Crafts products.⁴⁷

The healthiness and cleanliness of village life (a particularly strong theme within the rhetoric of both workers' villages and garden cities) in contrast to urban working-class housing was, as already noted, an important part of its appeal. At a social level there was a belief that rural life would reverse the physical 'degeneration' of the urban working classes caused by several generations of industrialization. This deeply held popular belief in the restorative powers of rural life places in context both the colleens working at Ballymaclinton and the display on tuberculosis prevention and cure by the Women's National Health Association. Tuberculosis was still one of the greatest public health concerns in both England and Ireland in the early twentieth century, and in England was particularly associated with overcrowded and poor quality urban housing; fresh air, good sanitation and nutritious food were the principal prescriptions for its avoidance.⁴⁸ Workers' villages such as Port Sunlight and Bournville were designed and built to help alleviate precisely this kind of disease — the placement of a tuberculosis prevention and treatment exhibition within the confines of an idealized replica village would therefore have appeared quite consistent with public understanding about the disease's prevention.

Further, the popularly understood connections between cleanliness and disease prevention would have made sense of placing a tuberculosis campaign within an exhibition, the principal purpose of which was to sell soap. Indeed, much about the style and presentation of Ballymaclinton and its

workers needs to be considered primarily within the history of soap-advertising and marketing. Its ability to create cleanliness and, by extension, good health, was always soap's principal selling point; this may well be one of the reasons why it plays such a central role in the development of commodity culture — its actual properties being particularly valued in an era of heavily industrialized cities and poor public health. Its transitive qualities, by which an atmosphere or even a lifestyle could (it was implied) be purchased along with the commodity itself, were skilfully constructed and communicated through advertisements for brands such as Pears and Sunlight; notably, as was mentioned above, Lever sometimes used Port Sunlight in advertisements for Sunlight Soap in order to emphasize the connection between his products and 'ideal' rural living.⁴⁹ The early sophistication of many soap advertisements may in part be attributed to the particular power of the transitive qualities easily associated with it in a society with good reason to worry about dirt.⁵⁰

McClinton's Soap was a smaller brand than Sunlight or Pears, but it was established firmly at the luxury end of the market, and placed considerable emphasis in its advertising on the fact that it was made 'traditionally', using expensive ingredients. The fact that its individual product lines included Colleen Shampoo, Sheila Soap and Hibernia Shaving Cream also indicates that it traded strongly on its Irish associations. The sturdy, rosy-cheeked good health of the colleens working at Ballymaclinton were, above all else, there to impart the qualities of healthy rural life to McClinton's Soap; the tag line that appeared on most of the village's postcards, 'the Irish colleens use this soap, note their beautiful complexions' simply emphasizing the point. And perhaps the single most important cottage in the village was the 'soap works', where visitors could both test and buy McClinton's Soap. By suggesting that its soap was actually manufactured in a thatched cottage, McClinton's was offering visitors the

opportunity, through their purchase of a bar of soap, to participate in idyllic village life. Ballymaclinton was therefore, in some respects, a publicly available version of Port Sunlight, with visitors given full access to a 'soap village' in a way never possible with a real settlement.

It was also, in many ways, a logical distortion of the garden city concept. The possibility of a garden city becoming a kind of amusement park for visitors, rather than a utopia for its residents, was clear even in the early twentieth century. In *John Bull's Other Island*, written in 1904, George Bernard Shaw uses a proposal to establish a garden city from the ruins of a bankrupted Irish estate as the framework for the play.⁵¹ The proposal is of course a fraud, designed to conceal an English property developer's plan to create a tourist attraction from the estate, with a hotel and golf course, rather than the 'Polytechnic, gymnasium ... cricket club' he originally promised. Landownership and its centrality to notions of idyllic living is an undercurrent of the play; when the Englishman and his disillusioned Irish partner first arrive in the village of Rosscullen, they are immediately inducted into the new class and political faultlines created by the Land Act of 1903. This radical redistribution of landownership in Ireland had created, Shaw suggests, a profoundly conservative social and political landscape very far removed from the utopian and socially progressive model proposed for garden cities such as Letchworth. As Declan Kiberd notes of this aspect of the play, Shaw identified in the Gaelic Revival a 'suspect new pastoralism', and 'the cultural movement in which this pastoralism prevailed seemed devoted less to a *revival* of Irish culture than to its mummification'.⁵² While the main focus of the play is Anglo-Irish relations in the early twentieth century, it can also be read as a cynical assessment of the garden city movement itself (returned to with greater emphasis by Shaw in *Major Barbara* in 1905) as being vulnerable to exploitation as commodified authenticity. In many respects,

Ballymaclinton (like its English equivalents at the Ideal Home Exhibition) can be read as a manifestation of Shaw's vision of the distorted garden city that will eventually be created at Rosscullen — an amusement park of pastoral life, knowingly consumed by its visitors as commodified 'neo-nostalgia'.

Conclusion

Other, more populist, commentators of the era also appeared to see some connection between the garden city movement, the advent of the Ideal Home Exhibition, and Irish issues. In October 1913, *Punch* magazine published a full-page cartoon entitled *The Ideal Home (Rule) Exhibition*.⁵³ At the centre of the cartoon is an Irish colleen, dressed in a romanticized version of peasant costume and bearing a striking resemblance to the colleens of Ballymaclinton. Behind her is an equally romanticized country cottage, and one more obviously descended from the early twentieth-century English fantasy of rural life — complete with half-timbering, leaded windows and a pantiled roof — than from Irish vernacular architecture. Ranged around the corners of the cartoon are depictions of 'The Dining Room', 'The Nursery' and 'The Kitchen', showing caricatures of Herbert Asquith, Edward Carson, John Redmond and Augustine Birrell in poses of domestic harmony, while a lion and pig doze together in the cottage yard. Published in the immediate aftermath of Carson's threat to establish a provisional government in Ulster if Home Rule was established, the cartoon displays an acute awareness of the sharper parallels between Irish politics and contemporary fascination with idyllic visions of rural life in either England or Ireland. It also suggests that these parallels may have been evident (however unconsciously) to visitors to Ballymaclinton in 1908.

- 51 George Bernard Shaw, *John Bull's Other Island*, in Dan Lawrence, ed., *The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw: Collected Plays with Their Prefaces* (London, 1970).
 52 Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 51 (emphasis in original).
 53 *Punch*, 15 October 1913, n.p.

Punch cartoon, 15 October 1913.

