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The
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ART & DESIGN

Faculty of Design
Department of Fashion and Textiles

“Tested on Virgins?”

A study of Men's Clothing, Appearance and
Involvement with the Fashion system in
Post War Ireland

by
Gareth John Moloney

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Figure 1: "Tested on Virgins" Campaign Poster, Gt. Strand St., Dublin 1
 "For Cosmetics-For Toiletries-For You-For Him". Contemporary Fashion marketing strategies would have us believe that contemporary male attention to appearance and attire is not only new and innovative, but previously unexplored territory

1998

Introduction:

Men's appearance has always been dictated to by a fashion system, through the promotion of an acceptable vision of what is a correct masculine appearance. In the past, it would seem that such dictates have not pushed men's bodies into the realm of public property to the same extent that they have women's. However in the past two decades both male and female appearances have begun to share the common ground of public property on a far more equal basis than in the past. If there has always been a fashion system for both men and women, that historically has led to different outcomes and implications for each sex, then today the difference seems to be that men are engaging and being encompassed into a fashion system that until recently was considered primarily a 'female' one.

The fashion system has since the nineteenth century been given a primarily female focus. Any 'male' fashion system, or engagement with fashion, was perceived as existing outside of the 'real' fashion system. If there has ever been a truly separate 'male' fashion system is questionable. I think men were educated and informed differently in how to engage with fashion. Now the way men engage with a fashion system has changed as has the potential for men to do so. A consequence of this has been to push men's appearance and bodies into the public domain at an unprecedented level. Evidence of this is all around us in an increased array of men's clothing and grooming options and increasing numbers of men's fashion and lifestyle magazines and advertisements for such products that are directly addressed at men.

It could be argued that this change in engagement is reflected in the '*Tested on Virgins*' billboard advertisement (Fig.1). The ad is promoting a range of grooming products with the following line, "for cosmetics-for toiletries-for you-for him".

Such an ad is promoting a number of assumptions and implications. Apart from the immediate attempt to grab your attention with the sexual referencing of virginity, the notion that men can be sexual virgins, is there not the implication that men are '*virgins*' when it comes to attention to their appearance? This marketing approach epitomises the current attitude the fashion system has towards men.

It is telling men that they can bravely go where no man has gone before, into the world of fashion, cosmetics and grooming. By implication it is suggesting that the history of men's dress and appearance is one of utility and function. The combination of these factors, strike me, as encouraging men, if not dictating to them, to engage with the world of fashion. Furthermore, it seems that marketing and advertising aim to create an anxiety among men, if they are not part of a 'modern' fashion system, to question if not, why not?

This thesis aims to explore the fashion system as a concept and how it works. Also to explore the perceived marginalisation of men's fashion through the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and to examine men's subsequent and supposedly 'new' involvement with it. Originally I had planned to try and document the popular addressing of men's clothing and appearance through Irish Post-war magazines. During the course of my research however, I found that magazines had relatively little material on men and their appearance in them. Magazines held in the National Library, were either of a social documentary nature, for example *Irish-Tatler*, *Creation Magazine*, *Irish Bystander*, or in the case of *Woman's Way* or *Woman's Own*, were directly aimed at women. Such magazines contained only an occasional article on men's clothing or grooming. These articles generally, seem to have appeared in issues in the months prior to Christmas.

The original research plan was also to incorporate the two new Irish magazines *Himself* and *Patrick*, both specifically aimed at Irish males. The arrival of these magazines, combined with such advertising as the "Tested on Virgins" campaign, were to reflect the 'increased' level of involvement of Irish males with the fashion

system. However despite the appearance of these magazines and such marketing strategies, I became convinced that this male involvement with his grooming, attire or appearance was neither, 'new' or 'increased'. This thesis argues that magazines in Ireland were not the main routes for the dispersal of fashion information for men and aims to document post-war masculinity in Ireland, through different avenue's. Because today, magazines are viewed as one of the main ways to spread fashion information, there is a temptation to assume that in the past no fashion information for men was communicated since the records don't exist and therefore by implication that men were not interested in fashion.

The thesis explores alternatives to magazines ie: the customer; retailer and barber, in post-war Ireland, and the part they played in the popular addressing of men's appearance and attire. For such purposes, I interviewed a relative; a shopkeeper and a gents barber. I have, therefore, focused on Ireland in the immediate post-war period rather than tracing a history of men's appearance's. This research is not in any way definitive, but hopefully it illustrates and highlights that men in Ireland were informed about fashion in a number of different ways.

Chapter One

THE FASHION SYSTEM

In discussing the existence of a 'fashion system', it is important to place it within a broader cultural context. The fashion system would appear to be part of a greater cultural mix, which towards the end of the twentieth century also combines various other elements. 'Lifestyle' assertions can now be made through the type of car you drive, the countries you holiday in, or the interior of your home as well as the physical appearance you have. If, in the past, one's appearance and attire were really the primary ways of communicating one's social standing or status, then today, they form only part of one's ability to do so effectively. This is not to say that one's attire or appearance have lost their ability to communicate such things, or even that they have become less important, but in forming and portraying one's social identity or status today, a much wider variety of products and systems of consumption have become available.

The fashion system itself, not unlike the motor, music or film industries, is a coalition of innovation, technology, style, and marketing. These systems can be seen as contributing to the ways in which people satisfy their desire to belong to a particular social or environmental grouping. Each system in their own way forms a cultural badge or marker for the individual within a certain budget. They can satisfy a person's aspirations to belong to a particular social grouping. Such systems also provide a position that the individual may choose to stand away from. The fashion-system is part of this 'identikit' approach to culture.

The 'fashion system' as a term is referring to both the manufacturing industry and, in tandem, the mechanics of promoting, marketing and ultimately, selling of the products produced by the fashion industry. It can also be taken as embracing other associated industries, cosmetics and skin-care, accessories and various 'lifestyle' aspirations such as the interior of your home, the car you drive, the weight you are and the physical appearance you have. In embodying such lifestyle assertions, the fashion system it is not only reflecting a desire for change and innovation, ("the latest thing"), but is also acting as an accepted social marker, reflecting a

desire to conform. The fashion system has been in existence for a long time, but must be viewed in terms of this thesis as a more modern phenomenon. Developments in industrialisation and of a free-market society, have led to the advent of mass-production and promotion of goods. This has been a particularly nineteenth and twentieth century phenomenon. Historically people have always sought to indicate differences in social status, rank and personality through dress and attire. As societies have developed and grown; so too have the technologies for producing and promoting an increasing variety of clothing and adornment. Thus the various meanings attached to and taken from these objects, have also increased in number, significance and complexity.

In the industrial and mass manufacturing era, the fashion system has mainly worked in a hierarchical way, with fashions emanating from couture houses down to street level. Tastes and trends have filtered down from haute couture, through ready-to-wear, down to the 'high-street'. The development of the fashion system must also be viewed against changes in modern culture. Today, traditional and historical agents of social control and order (the Family unit, the Church, Authority) have been substantially eroded. Society would appear to be increasingly organised, not so much by social institutions, but around consumption activities. This in turn has led to the increasing symbolic significance of goods and their logos for example, in constructing various individual or group identities. Social divisions, by extension, are being constructed increasingly through the significance of lack of ability to consume.

The twentieth century has been defined and characterised as the age of mass-production and mass-consumption. Such phrases have come to be seen as defining certainly, western society since 1900. Thus such notions as 'mass-society' have become associated with the clothing and attitudes to dress and identity of this century. Most of the changes in men and women's attire have come about due to technological advances, from the sewing machine, to the materials used in clothing. This has had a number of effects. It has facilitated the production and consumption of more comfortable, cheaper and attractive items to a larger proportion of the population. There has been a constant advance towards increased casualness and informality the use of softer

materials and the advent of casual trousers, jeans and sweater's, revolutionising what we can choose to wear.

It is within this that we find the core of any difficulty in discussing, (let alone understanding) fashion. Since everybody is engaged with it, everyone can, has, and is entitled to have an opinion on it. Thus one interpretation is as valid as the next. Christopher Breward in the introduction to *The Culture of Fashion* (1996) makes reference to R.B. St.George's book *Material Life in America 1600-1860* (1988, Pg.30)

"The simple act of criticising someone's clothes; the reaction is much more intense than that aroused by comparable criticism of a house, a car or a television set. Criticism of clothing is taken more personally, suggesting a high correlation between clothing and personal identity and values"(Pg.1)

When we dress ourselves, what are our motives? Do we dress to appear fashionable or stylish? Or do we dress to cover our bodies? Are we using clothing as fashion, or clothing as function. So clothing, dress and fashion are all different constructions that can be put on arrangements of garments. 'Clothing' refers to 'types' of garments, their fabric content, and by extension their function (to cover, provide warmth etc). 'Dress' then refers, more specifically, to how I choose to 'arrange' and 'wear' particular garments about my person. This would also cover any subsequent forms of personal decoration and adornment. 'Fashion' infers a desired, socially approved 'mode' of dressing or dress. Fashion is also seen as an industry and is seen as being, especially in today's world, dependent on mass production and marketing to succeed. Fashion has been viewed differently by several influential authors, eg: Veblen, who in his book *The Theory of The Leisure Class* (1925), argues that fashion is synonymous with the capitalist system and "as capitalism expands, so does the desire, by the middle classes to maintain its status through a 'conspicuous consumption' " (Pg.167)

Colin McDowell in his book *The Designer Scam* (1994); argues that "We have to be persuaded that fashionable clothes are better - and better for us - than non-fashionable clothes", he continues that such an approach, "is at the heart of the world-wide fashion industry, [and] has

altered our buying habits so radically, that we believe that luxuries are in fact necessities". (Pg. 1). The fashion system will always try to exploit uncertainties within a person's self-esteem. The will or desire to express and reflect social status, through dress is not a particularly new one. Historically matters concerning social position, worldly achievement and attainment, and of course wealth, have all been addressed and expressed, (although not exclusively) through clothing and dress, as Veblen asserts:

"Expenditure on dress has this advantage over other methods, that our apparel is always in evidence and affords an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at first glance." (Pg.167)

Equally it must be noted that clothing, or more correctly, the wearer of clothing can play up or down their social position, or wealth through their clothing. Fred Davis in his book *Fashion Culture and Identity* (1992) cites the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and their court life, which served as a veritable 'seed-bed' for an "institutionalised fashion sensibility in the west [...]. For many a fashionable person of the time especially in attendance at some ceremonial occasion, it was almost literally a case of wearing one's wealth on one's back." (Pg.58). Indeed he cites the enactment of Sumptuary Laws at the end of the 14th century as showing the degree to which this had become the case, and thus 'European dress had lent itself to widening class distinctions for centuries' (Pg.59). In a modern context, today's society cannot be broken down as easily and the interpretation of dress has become more and more uncertain.

The portrayal of fashion history has been presented in as having a hierarchical nature, that fashion and fashionable taste 'trickles down' through the social classes. Fashion through its assimilation by the lower social ranks is diluted, and thus its original ability to assert and register social status distinctions is reduced. This in turn sets the stage for a whole new fashion cycle to begin. (Veblen, 1925).

However in a more socially diverse and pluralistic society, the application of a class-driven

fashion cycle is made more difficult. It is also important to point out that not everyone will necessarily seek to emulate what is perceived as being better, more fashionable, and more expensive. One can choose to position oneself outside or against such a cycle. This positioning of being against or 'anti-fashion', can itself be appreciated, and become fashionable. The advent of 'grunge' dressing in the early nineties for example, illustrates that a rejection of the label-drenched late eighties itself became a fashionable way to dress oneself in the early nineties. Today fashionable direction in dress is just as likely to 'bubble-up' from street-level as 'trickle-down' from 'couture' level.

The fashion system today works in a cyclical way. The industry works to a schedule of a new collection every six months. Designers have to shape and put together a new, currently fashionable attitude to clothing and appearance on an increasingly cyclical basis. This increase in production, has had a direct impact on our engagement with and consumption of fashion, and has been presented by the fashion system as

“...,a crucial element in personal happiness and fulfilment. What had for centuries been the preserve of the rich and privileged, what had been kept as exclusive and unattainable by a closed coterie, was suddenly up for grabs” (McDowell 1994, Pg.1)

If at this moment we can assume that consumerism, in conceptual and practical terms has acquired an increased significance, then it is fair to assume that people in western society are spending an increased amount of time consuming. Such activities have gained an added significance in the formulation and expression of individual and group identities. If today, society appears to be more complex, and cannot be broken down along class or social-hierarchical lines as readily, this is not to say that such divisions do not still exist. The fashion system continues to promote and articulate, more intensely than before, the difference between the 'have's' and the 'have-not's'. Joanne Finkelstein in *'The Fashioned Self'* (1991) reflects upon this point, and that there has been a constant perpetuation of the myth that appearances mean something, such appearances reflect one's character or personality. Thus the 'self' has become “a mass-produced, market product; buy this in order to be that” (Pg.172).

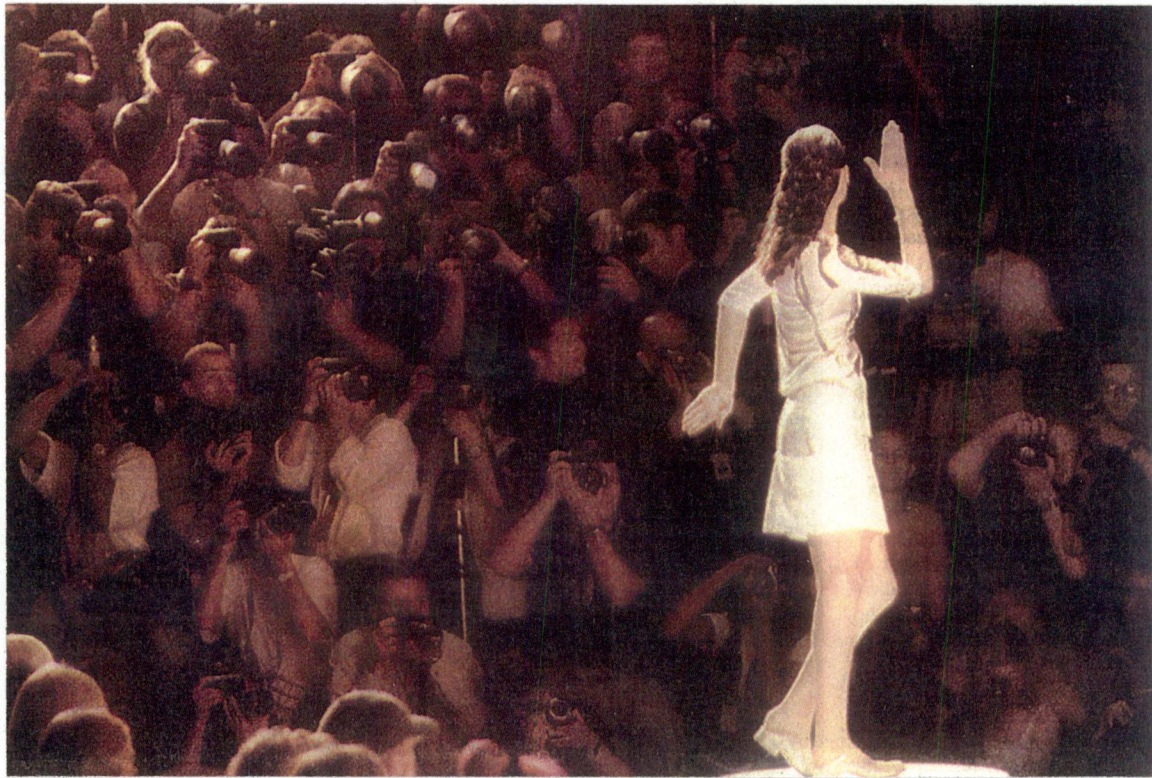


Figure 2: "They Shoot Models Don't They?" Red or Dead spring-summer collection 1999, shown during London Fashion Week 1998. Fashion as Media Event.

Despite such a marketing strategy, built on notions of individuality, and the assumption that society is becoming increasingly socially diverse, it would seem that the reality is the opposite. It would seem that today there is no great difference in people's appearance across borders, especially in the developed world. Labels such as Hilfiger , Calvin Klein , Armani , Dolce and Gabbana , Ralph Lauren are known globally, sought after and bought. So despite notions of dressing the individual, a smaller number of brands are dressing and increasing proportion of the world population.

The media such as magazines, newspapers, television and film, through which changes in fashion are now primarily communicated (fig. 2), have enabled an almost worldwide dissemination of fashion information at a moment's notice. As Breward notes,

“..the Hollywood film and fashion magazine have through their ‘dream peddling’ not only allowed for a wide dissemination of fashion information [but have also created] broader opportunities for the stimulation of a more homogenous public imagination (1996 Pg.183)

So by the late twentieth-century, the garment-manufacturing system has established a pattern and mechanics of marketing that is commonly called ‘The Fashion System’. This system has also brought other consumer choices like cars, holiday's, fitness and home interiors within its sphere. The whole system aims at establishing, as truth, that you are what you consume, and that your success is linked and judged by your ability to consume not only lavishly but fashionably.

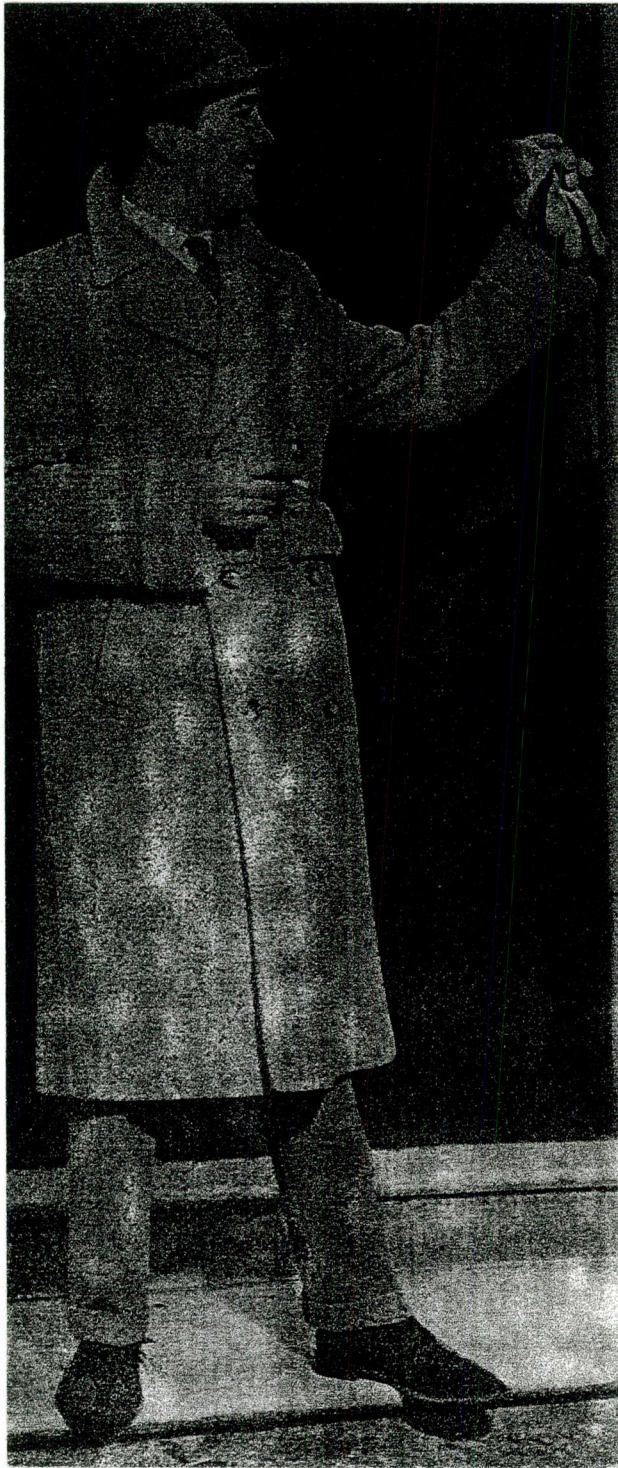


Figure 3: Photograph at top left.

"Here is a 'man's man's' coat for the tall, strong, silent type, yet right in line with fashion's dictates". *Creation Magazine*, November 1960.



Figure 4: Photograph at top right.

"'Doctor, Lawyer, Merchant-Chief' -the well-dressed man about town."

Chapter Two

THE PERCEIVED MARGINALISATION OF MENS FASHION

In this chapter I wish to explore the perceived marginalisation of men's fashion and men's subsequent involvement with it. Jennifer Craik in *The Face of Fashion* (1994) explores such ideas in her chapter 'Fashioning Masculinity'. She considers that, "most studies of contemporary fashion emphasise female fashion and marginalise attention to male dress", and as a result of this process women were assigned gradually, "the role of the fashionable gender of the species". For her the subsequent rhetoric of men's fashion, takes its queue from a set of denials that include the following propositions:

"...that there is no men's fashion; that men dress for fit and comfort, rather than for style; that men who dress up are peculiar one way or the other; that men do not notice clothes, and that most men have not been duped into the endless pursuit of seasonal fads. In other words there is a tendency to underplay if not deny the phenomenon of men's fashion"(Pg.176)

Tim Edwards in *Men in the Mirror* (1997) feels that the study of men's fashion remains marginal if you compare it to investigations of women's fashion. He asserts that this can be explained as a result of a historical focus on haute couture, and its presentation as the 'Ultimate of Fashion'. This is despite the fact that the menswear sector of the fashion / clothing market must constitute a major one. Certainly, this is mirrored today in Ireland, by the increasing number of retailers who offer or specialise in menswear. Christopher Breward in *The Culture of Fashion* (1996) also feels that men's dress has been overlooked. In his chapter 'The Hidden Consumer - Men and Fashion in the Nineteenth Century', Breward notes that,

"Menswear has been subsumed by the assumption that a discourse of separate spheres, whilst constructing display and dress as inately feminine pursuits, enforced a model of masculinity in which over interest in clothing and appearance automatically implied a tendency towards unmanliness and effeminacy" (Pg.170-71).

Such notions are also reflected in a magazine article, which appeared in *Creation Magazine* in November 1960(Fig.3-7). It is an article on menswear, entitled *Shopping for Men (Fashion*



Figure 5 - 7.
Creation Magazine November 1960

Figure 7:
“The season is on us! Get your man in the
swing of the gay evenings ahead and
dance the whole night through!”

and Himself), appearing in a life-style magazine. The article asserts that it is really women who do the bulk of sartorial-shopping for men and in doing so, the article, is effectively removing men from the act of shopping.

“Out of the forty-odd (and many of them very odd) ties on your husband’s (or son’s or father’s) tie racks, how many did he purchase himself? And did that man in your life actually plunk down the cash on the counter for those sickly, gaudily coloured socks he wears so obstinately, so pridefully, despite your repeated objections? [...] Ask the manager of any “men’s clothing” shop just who buys most of his commodities-socks to ties, sweater’s, even underwear, and of course, shirts- women, whether girlfriends, mothers, aunts, sisters or wives (not to forget daughters) are the heaviest purchasers of “men’s wear”!” *Creation Magazine* (Oct.1960, Pg.53)

Such an assertion, that women shop and men only do so occasionally, echoes Breward’s view that any over- interest in shopping, fashion or appearance by men, threw their masculinity into question. “so its up to you, girls, to a great extent, how well-turned out the guy in your life usually appears” (Pg.53). The masculinity of the potential male consumer is assured and asserted in the articles description of the featured outfits, “Here is a “man’s man’s” coat for the tall, strong silent type, yet right in line with fashion’s dictates”(fig.3), as is his successful lifestyle, ““Doctor, lawyer, merchant-chief...”- the well-dressed man about town...”(fig.4, pg.54).

Fred Davis, in *Fashion, Culture and Identity* (1992), argues that since the industrial revolution, males increasingly came under the visual constraints of a serious and sombre work ethic. With the decline of the European Aristocracy and corresponding ascendancy of the bourgeois values of hard work, sobriety and respectability eventually became what the bourgeois wanted to reflect in what they wore. This echoes Craik (1994),

“In industrialising Europe, men became consumed by employment which could secure status and power. In a conscious move, men disassociated themselves with the idleness and extravagance of aristocratic codes of dress and behaviour. Men dressed to confirm their involvement in the new industrial order”(Pg.179).

It was the adult middle-class male who came to serve as the visual embodiment of this ethos, i.e. to be seen as rejecting the ‘corrupt’ aristocratic association with opulence and leisure. Male

dress became more simple, and sombre. This is not to say that women's dress remained unaffected, but changes in female attire, and in the attitude that women should be concerned with their appearance and attire were not so radical as Quentin Bell explains, in *On Human Finery* (1930).

"The exhibition of wealth in men no longer depended upon a demonstration of futility; this change was made possible by the emergence of a wealthy manufacturing class. The women of this class, having no employment and being entrusted with the business of vicarious consumption, continued to follow the sartorial laws already in existence. (Pg.92-93)

Thus by the mid- nineteenth century, clear and well-bounded gender distinctions had been established.

"While men competed in the tough world of politics and economics, women were allocated the role of decorating and complementing the public status of men through their clothes and demeanour" (Craik 1994, Pg.179).

These issues are also raised in the *Creation* magazine article with the assertion that "His sartorial splendour depends on your taste." (Pg.53)

The restricted character of men's dress codes derived primarily from the centrality accorded to his work, career and occupational success, as opposed to his attire, for his identity. J.C. Flugel, in *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930), strengthened this concept to one with a more austere identity; the '*Great Masculine Renunciation*', i.e. the shift in menswear from the decorative and elaborate to the simple and austere. However as Breward asserts, we must try and explore the actual ways in which men consumed fashion. For Breward, it has proved difficult to chart masculine shopping habits and attitudes, especially since fashion magazines specifically aimed at a general male readership were not published until the 1920's. A fact certainly reflected here in Ireland.

The National Library of Ireland does not hold any archival fashion material or magazines

specifically relating to men's fashions, due to the non-existence of such magazines until quite recently. One could argue that the absence of a magazine targeted at men is evidence of the removal of the Irish male from the fashion system. So could it be that it is only in the 1980's and 1990's that Irish men have abandoned their lack of interest in clothes. Have they suddenly, "awakened from a fashionless stupor and rediscovered clothes" (Craik 1994 Pg.178). Any examination of earlier centuries and generations throws this into question,

"...not only is there a history of men's fashion, but codes of wearing and sanctions for ignoring or subverting those codes have, if anything been stronger for men than for women". (Craik 1994 Pg.198)

Breward points to trade journals such as *'Trade & Cutter'* as reflecting evidence of a broad range of styles in men's attire in the nineteenth century for example. However they give little information on consumption patterns. So while it is true to say that men have taken part in some form of fashion system for quite some time,

"the lack of concrete material, and the overriding attention paid to feminine consumption became something that women undertook on behalf of men" (Breward 1996, Pg.170-171)

The editorial in *Creation* magazine goes further and suggests that not only did women do much of the shopping for men but that men were positively useless in a shopping environment,

"Secretly he will be grateful to you for your assistance in his choice. Most men dread "shopping" and making the decision as between this colour and that, this material and that. They are easily led astray by sharp salesmen: they can't stand up to a glib talker and say: "That's not what I wanted." *Creation Magazine* (Oct.1960, Pg.56)

So, it would seem that it may be possible to identify cycles in men's fashions, which have run parallel to those in women's fashions. But that "arguably, from the nineteenth century, men's fashions have offered fewer choices at any one moment [and that as a consequence] acted to impose conformity on those adhering to fashion", (Craik 1994, Pg.178). What has commonly been perceived as the 'norm' in men's clothing - the lack of fashion, and the lack of interest by

men in it, is highly questionable. It may be true to say that men's clothing in Europe has become plainer since the Eighteenth century, it does not mean that men's fashion, or codes for dressing disappeared. Rather as Craik or Breward would point out, they have become more subtle and internalised (Craik 1994,Pg.183). Men's dress has still been subject to a fashion cycle, be it in terms of the style, cut, colour or fabric- choice, favoured garments and ways of wearing such garment's. Men's wear was far from and is not a static thing.



Figure 8: *Lockheed* Staff photograph, Shannon Airport, Co. Clare. (Oct.1948). Beneath the apparent smart sartorial image of suit, shirt and tie, lay an infinite scope for clothing options and arrangement of garments.

CHAPTER 3

MEN'S CLOTHING; APPEARANCE AND INVOLVEMENT WITH THE FASHION SYSTEM:

Initially this chapter was to be entitled '*Post war Masculinity – The man in the grey flannel suit*'. This title was reflecting my own and what I believe to be the generally held presumption, that men and their attire in the post war period was one of grey dullness. It would seem that such assumptions stem from the presentation of current menswear fashion trends, as being most innovative, exciting and directional and that everything that went before pales in comparison. However during the course of my research, a different picture began to emerge.

It appears to me that there was an incredibly sophisticated masculinity both in terms of appearance and attention to detail, in operation in Ireland, as elsewhere, in the post-war period. An initial viewing of the sartorial elements of the time, i.e. suit, shirt and tie, could lead to a tendency to overlook various details and subtleties. The apparent confinement of menswear to the suit contrasted sharply with developments in women's fashions. If men were confined to grey, black or navy suits, there was much more to offer in terms of function and details. This is illustrated by the '*Lockheed*' staff photograph, of 1948 for example (fig.8). This picture illustrates a group of men who, it would appear, share a mutual and common interest in their appearance and attire. The picture also illustrates that beneath the apparent smart sartorial image of suit, shirt and tie lay an infinite scope for not only clothing options, but arrangements of garments. Be it a coat with a fur collar (first row, second from right), leather coats or jackets (first row, fourth from right or first row, standing eighth from right), to a cropped 'boxy' jacket (extreme left).

I decided to approach the subject of piecing together a picture of men's appearance and attire in Post-war Ireland by looking at a consumer, at a retailer and also to take a look at men's grooming and how the subject of men's dress and appearance was dealt with in Irish magazines. For the customer, I interviewed my Grandmother; to explore how my Grandfather dressed, shopped and maintained his chosen appearance, (He is in the '*Lockheed*' photograph, first row, extreme right of fig.8). I then interviewed a small menswear retailer, in business



Figure 9: My Grandfather, Mr. Patrick Durack.
Portrait Photograph, circa 1934.

since 1936, to try and see how retailers operated at the time and what they sold. I also felt that grooming was another area of importance, and needed to be looked at. This led me to interview a barber, who manages a business, which started trading in 1946.

These three interviews, have been arranged separately, since it would be difficult and confusing to try and weave their collective histories into one coherent, free-flowing narrative. However, it is hoped that all three will reflect and give some insight into the post war period in Ireland, and how men went about assembling and looking after their appearance and will be enlightening as to how the fashion system, of the day operated and communicated its information.

SECTION ONE : A CONSUMER HISTORY

My grandfather, Patrick Durack was born in 1913 in Scarriff, Co.Clare (fig.9). He came from a large farming family of fifteen children. In 1945 he started working in Shannon Airport for *Lockheed* (fig.8),an aircraft manufacturing company. *Lockheed* also operated Trans-Atlantic flights from Shannon. My grandfather worked in the administration and servicing of the company's aircraft. He married my grandmother, Sadie Skeeahan, from Sixmilebridge Co. Clare in 1948 and honeymooned in Salthill Galway (fig.10).In October 1948 Lockheed pulled out of Shannon and re-located back to the United States. My grandparents then moved to Maynooth Co. Kildare, where my grandfather had found employment as a foreman on Carton Estate.It was here that he was to work for the next forty years. As my grandmother commented,my grandfather came from "an intelligent family, versatile in anything they did" a family who could "turn their hand to anything and make a go of it". Despite economic hardship in the immediate post-war period they managed to raise and educate three daughters and two sons, all of whom are qualified teachers.

The Second World War started in 1939. Suddenly, life for most Europeans (my grandmother included) became simpler and plainer due to a shortage of foodstuffs and raw materials for manufactured goods. Rationing was introduced and regulations governing the purchase of



Figure 10: Mr. & Mrs. Durack. Honeymoon photograph, Salthill, Co. Galway, June 1948.

clothing and fabrics were introduced across Europe by 1941. Ireland, similar to her closest economic partner, the United Kingdom, suffered badly. Almost overnight the distribution routes for raw materials were cut off, all merchant ships were requisitioned by the protagonists for their war efforts. The Irish Government of the period established Irish Shipping to import essential supplies and raw materials, Ireland not having a merchant navy of any significance at that time. Despite Ireland's 'Neutral' status, rationing was introduced and maintained until the mid 1950's.

“...growing shortages in terms of textiles and labour, together with deteriorating living conditions...relegated issues of appearance to a low priority”, *Culture of Fashion* (1996 Pg.189).

Although Breward is specifically referring to the British situation, we can assume that the situation in Ireland was not dissimilar. My grandmother, Mrs Sadie Durack, is of the opinion that during the war, people had to deal with day to day survival, but this did not diminish the desire to “keep up their appearance as best they could”. A sort of sartorial surgery, in order to prolong the life expectancy of worn clothing, is referred to by Farid Chenoune, in *A History of Men's Fashion* (1993).

“.. in the soul of every woman there lies an unrecognised antique and used-clothing dealer”, (quoting *L'homme* of May 1943 Pg.204).

Indeed, harsh economic and social conditions, if anything, made people more resourceful and ingenious, in terms of repairing, adapting and altering garments they already possessed. After the war, it became more important to present oneself well in public. In an era of harsh economic realities, according to my grandmother, “to show that one had prospects”, became very important, especially for men. This echoes Breward,

“whilst the role of breadwinner’ was central to the construction of family roles and an ethic of self-denial in terms of personal luxury, the importance of ‘keeping up appearances’ dictated a close attention to and approximation of respectability from both sexes. Inventing a veneer of respectable fashionability with a minimum of financial outlay.”(*Culture of Fashion* 1996 Pg.216).



Figure 11: Mr. Durack, (work attire) Carton Estate, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, circa 1972.

According to my grandmother, and as we can see from the photographs of my grandfather (fig.8-12), "he was always neat and well presented, and was very precise about his clothes". He apparently liked "good clothes", and had "a strong appreciation for quality of materials". He was "a man possessed by an innate neatness". It is interesting to see this reflected in the photographs. His attire and way of putting his appearance together remained relatively constant throughout his life. Note the sartorial similarity between his attire on his honeymoon (fig.10) in 1948 and the much later photograph from July 1980(fig.12). There is a similar arrangement of suit, shirt and tie, common to both pictures. It is also interesting that he managed to keep a very similar appearance when working. If we look at the older men's attire of shirt, trousers, knitted-waistcoat, braces and hat, is contrasting sharply with the younger man's outfit, of casual, striped tee-shirt and casual trousers or jeans (fig.11).

There was a strict hierarchy in a man's wardrobe, reflected in my grandfather's system whereby upon purchase of a new suit, his previous 'best suit' became the 'second best suit'. According to my grandmother clothes were worn 'till the flesh came through them'. Whilst working on the farm, second best jackets and pullovers were worn with thicker more hard wearing trousers, which were more durable than suit-trousers. These 'working trousers' were bought as separates (fig. 11).The 'best suit' was kept for church on Sunday and for social engagements such as dances, communions and confirmations .The second-best suit was worn, to the best of my grandmothers recollections, primarily "to town, or to meet doctors, teachers and the like". My grandfather shaved everyday, and paid particular attention to his grooming. Even whilst working he was very particular about maintaining "a neat and proper appearance". (fig.11)

My grandparents met at local dances, with my grandfather looking "sharp and well dressed". He apparently was a good dancer, very fond of music and always kept up with the latest dance trends. There were different types of dances one could attend. These included very formal 'paying dances', such as the Limerick or Ennis Boat Club dances, which were Black-tie occasions. Less formal local dances required the wearing of "best suits" only.



Figure 12: Mr. Durack and friend, Lucan, Co. Dublin, June 1980.

After the war clothing was still hard to come by. Most men, as my grandmother recalls were still wearing some variation of the Oxford bags (see fig.8&10). Separate jackets, suit-coats or 'crombie'-coats were worn over these (fig.8), since it was easier to assemble your wardrobe around existing garment purchases than to purchase an entire suit. This is not to say that whole suits were not purchased, but economic shortages did affect people's purchasing habits, especially when the average price of a suit in the post war period was anything from £5 to £10.

In the post war period, according to my grandmother's recollections, waistcoats were not especially popular, with long sleeved pullovers were the preferred choice. As we can see from the photographs this choice of garment was also a constant item of clothing for my grandfather, (fig.11&12). Braces, according to my grandmother, were the most common method of holding trousers in position, with very few belts in use, or available in the immediate post-war years.

So what was fuelling this maintenance of a 'neat and proper' fashion style, that my grandfather adhered to? It would seem that it was fuelled by a number of different influences, which combined, it could be suggested, formed the fashion system of the period. My grandfather's mother was apparently an exceptionally good dress-maker and knitter. Most men's mothers would have engaged in making or knitting clothes, to some extent or other and this could have made him and other men, conscious of materials and garment construction. It may also help to explain my grandfather's apparent preference for knitwear over waistcoats as seen in (fig.11&12). His father's first cousin worked in the men's department of *'Todd's of Limerick'*, a large department store, now part of the *Brown Thomas* group. This could have helped in keeping the family well abreast of the latest styles and trends. Certainly it was mentioned by my grandmother as being significant. His attending of dances would also have informed him of current style directions, and apparently, according to my grandmother, he regularly "admired people who were well-dressed". He was also a keen movie-goer and would travel long distances on his bike to see a particular movie in Ennis or Limerick. This would echo Breward's comments in Chapter 1 about the Hollywood film and its associated 'dream-peddling'. Farid Chenoune goes even further to explain the possible influence of the screen,

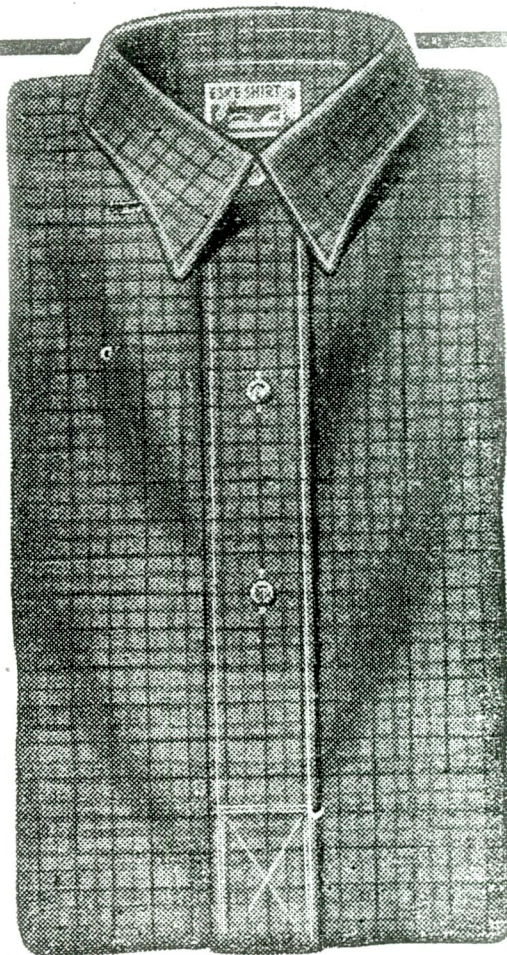
THIS is one Shirt he won't wear through in a hurry!



MADE TO STAND
ROUGH WEAR
AND
ENDLESS WASHING

Made to stand up to the punishment of even the toughest jobs this warm and extremely comfortable shirt is manufactured in extra durable material, double sewn for double strength. Ample freedom of movement is afforded in its design and it will stand any amount of washing. No man should be without ESKE. Available from leading Drapers and Outfitters in a variety of colours and materials.

Ask, too, about ESKE Boys' Shirts — and, of course, ESKE Dungarees, famous for their durability.



ESKE

DOUBLE SEWN
**WORK
SHIRTS**

Figure 13: Work-Shirt advertisement, Farmers Journal, 1957.

SPORTSWEAR

If the label reads



THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW



SPORTS TROUSERS

Terylene Bedford Cord Cavalry Twill
Terylene worsted or plain worsted
From

£3 - 15 - 0

SPORTS COATS

All wool tweeds. Button two
or three. All styles and shades.
From

£6 - 5 - 0



Yes There's a subtle difference in a man when he wears Burton sportswear and he knows it! Absolute comfort that lets him feel really fine, plus styling that makes him look his very best. Yes, precision of fit . . . greater wearing pleasure . . . superlative styling . . . all these and more are tailored into Burton sportswear. And remember this! Where costs are concerned Burton sportswear offers you more for your money than ever before. Yes, Sir, if the label reads "Burtons" that's all you need to know!

There's more for your money than ever before in

BURTONS

Hand-cut

TAILORING

Burtons—where better tailoring costs less

Figure 14: *Burtons* Tailoring advertisement, *Farmers Journal*, 1961.

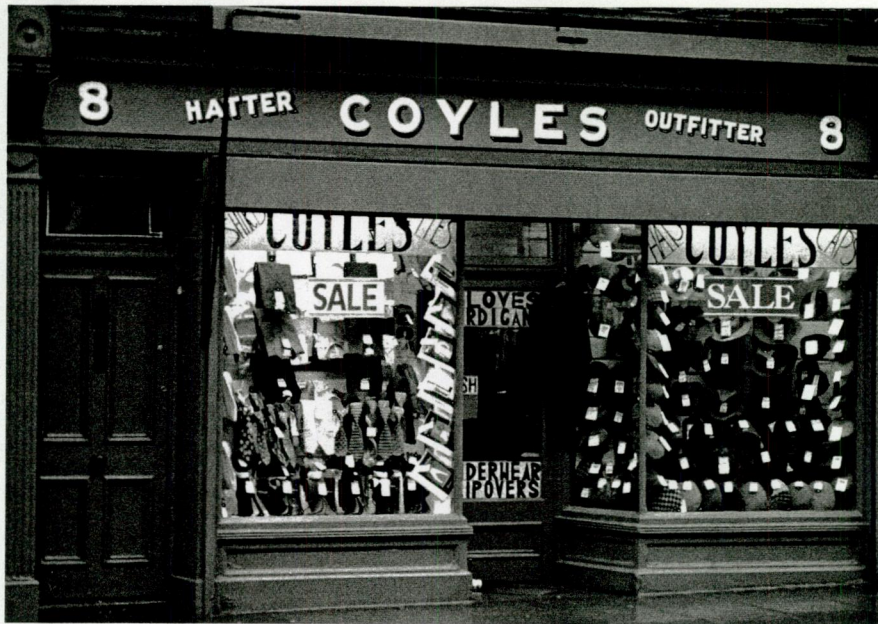


Figure 15: *Coyle's Gent's Outfitters*, 8 Aungier Street, Dublin 2.



Figure 16: *Coyle's Shop Window Display*.

“.... Actors dressed for the camera just as they did in everyday life. Unlike female stars who were confined to the care of fashion designers, male stars dressed themselves for the set, with the help of their tailors. Their contracts stipulated that, apart from certain instances when they had to rely on studio tailors, leading men were responsible for their own wardrobe. Masculine stylishness on the screen thereby had an authenticity and immediacy that made it easier for tens of millions of loyal spectators to assess, admire, compare, identify with and ultimately imitate role models”. (1993 Pg.186)

This quote also reflects some of the key - ways in which the fashion system for men operated at the time. Through tailors, tailor and client interaction, department stores and gents outfitters, fashion decisions, information and style direction primarily emanated. My grandfather would have found his fashion information within the department stores he shopped in. In Limerick such stores would have been ‘*Todds*’ and ‘*Glasgows*’ of Catherine Street. In Dublin he shopped in ‘*Burtons*’ and ‘*Boyers*’ primarily for suits. ‘*Clearys*’, on the other hand, was where he primarily bought his coats, hats and shirts. Hats were of particular importance at the time, and particularly to my grandfather, who became bald at an early age. My grandfather may also have received information from occasional articles about menswear that appeared in such magazines as *The Farmer’s Journal* (fig.13&14, 1957&1961).

SECTION 2: A RETAIL HISTORY

Mr. Bill Coyle has worked in his shop in Aungier Street, Dublin for the past fifty- four years, since 1945. A family business, it was set- up by his father in 1936. Mr. Coyle is by his own admission “not a tailor”. He operates as a “gent’s outfitter” and sees his profession as being firmly based in retail. However, apart from the generation of sales, it is the building up and maintenance of his customer base that has also become important to him. Indeed, this apparently ‘old-fashioned’ shop has been “deliberately kept so because of the customer base that has developed over the years.” (fig.16 &17).

He has a “thriving business” despite the degeneration of the George’s Street area, which was once a “Mecca for shopping in Dublin”. He supplies everything from heavy underwear, hats and ties, to having quite a sizeable school uniform trade, with about twenty contracts. He also



Figure 17: Interior of *Coyle's* gent's outfitters, illustrating the product offer, anything from hat's, cap's, scarves and gloves to shirts, ties, knitted-waistcoats and rainwear. Hat's are displayed in a large mahogany display cabinet, to the rear of the shop.





Figure 18: The Bowler Hat, sold primarily to the legal profession and undertakers.

supplies the legal profession in Dublin, Cork and Galway. This is an "exclusive trade" providing white-tunic separate-collar shirts, tabs, and both winged and cut-away collars.

To the best of his knowledge he is the only 'hatter' left in the city of Dublin. A hatter fits as opposed to makes hats. He can gauge a man's hat size when he walks in off the street. He sells a number of styles. The 'Bowler' hat (primarily to undertakers) (fig.18); the 'old-frame' hat (made famous by Sir Anthony Eden) (fig.19); the 'Fedora' hat (which takes its name from the 'Feds' in America) (fig.20). He also provided an interesting insight into the wearing of hats. People of 'country stock' (from beyond the Pale) wore their hats tilted to the left. This was referred to as the 'Kildare side'. People of pure Dublin or 'Saxon' lineage would wear their hats to the right (my grandfather, a countryman in fig.11&12, is wearing his hat tilted to the 'Kildare' side).

Mr.Coyle's ability to gauge a hat size by eye is an example of his facility for making judgements due to his vast retail experience and the subsequent intimate knowledge of his stock and its suitability for certain faces, frames etc. This he believes has helped him to generate repeat business down through the years. His personal touch and stock knowledge, its suitability for customers has led these same customers back to him; they trust and rely on his judgement. This epitomises the customer/client relationship that was a primary disseminator of fashion information in the 1930's and 40's. He has continued to sell hats for example (as long as he can be supplied with them) because of the ongoing demand for them. He feels that his custom has remained constant.

He believes that his level of stock knowledge, fitting knowledge and his overall personal touch has become all the more lacking in today's retail experience. Such abilities as being able to fit a hat correctly are dying out. This is despite the considerable volume of hats that he continues to sell in a time when hat wearing seems to have diminished. Total hat and cap sales for 1998, according to Mr. Coyle's estimates, amounted to the sizeable total of 73,000 units. It is probable that Mr. Coyle's knowledge and fitting skills enable him to sell hats in such quantities.



Figure 19: The Old-Frame Hat, made famous by Sir Anthony Eden.



Figure 20: The Fedora Hat, which takes its name from the 'Fed's' in America.

Mr. Coyle views retailing as a professional occupation. It is his belief that today it is not viewed as such. He also feels that the relationship between retailer and customer, in general, has changed. Retail units have grown bigger with smaller retail units having been "squeezed out". In the past you would travel from shop to shop according to your particular needs, and the shops particular products. Today people tend to shop in multi-purpose large retail centres and department stores. Large-scale retail outlets are not a particularly new phenomenon, but as Mr.Coyle points out retailers now have to try and appeal to customers and cater for "increasingly multiple shopping requirements".

In his estimation people tend not to look for or want the attention and assistance of the retailer or shop assistant "apart of course from taking their money for the purchase". He feels that today we, as consumers, generally don't want or trust retailers/shop assistants judgement or experienced advice. This could be in part explained by the fact that they may not be as experienced. According to him this has also had an impact on the level of experienced advice available from shop retailers. We as consumers are now getting our fashion information in a different way. We see an image in a magazine, on television etc, and decide that we want that 'look' (despite any issues of suitability) "and we want it now".

Mr. Coyle is critical of the way he sees the fashion system operating today. Men today he considers have become "victims of display". Products are presented in such a desirable way, as essential to the perception of successful living. This in turn can lead to concerns about suitability, wearability and correct fit being diminished. The improved economic climate is allowing us to consume more. My grandmother has also noted the changes in the way people buy. She remarked that, (admittedly in economically difficult times) in her day people bought one garment maybe to replace or augment their existing wardrobe. Nowadays people purchase, "complete entire outfits" or looks at any one time. She also noted that styles in menswear tended to last longer and not change as quickly as they do today.

"Style changing" as Mr. Coyle refers to it, has become the order of the day. As a retailer, he



Figure 21: Mr. Liam Finnegan at work, in the original 1940's shop interior.



Figure 22: Interior of *The Waldorf Adare barbers*, Westmoreland St., Dublin 2.

can't complain up to a point. It stimulates and broadens the manufacture of consumable products and the consumption of them. However, this he believes is a dangerous avenue to travel down. Style changes are not lasting for any significant length of time. Consumer choice and taste is becoming over-stimulated and ever changing. Retailers are being faced with an increasingly 'fickle' customer base, and manufacturers who are trying to cater for all these needs have to constantly change and adapt. In Mr. Coyle's mind "The public has become a fickle and hard task-master"

He, in many ways, feels lucky to have been able to continue dealing with a customer base that has remained "constant in their choice of attire". As Mr. Coyle sees it, the younger man of 20-35 years of age is stimulated into looking for newer, ever changing trends and alternative styles and modes of dress, which he may have previously ridiculed. So now menswear consumption operates at a number of levels. There are male customers, usually younger, opting for contemporary looks, and who more frequently purchase entire outfits. Then there is the older customer, more particular and selective, who seeks to add to their existing, not so quickly evolving wardrobe. Such divergence of consumption patterns and tastes between different age group's is not necessarily a new development. In Mr. Coyle's view it is the extent of these divergences in today's market that is the new development.

SECTION 3 : A GROOMING HISTORY

Mr. Liam Finnegan is the owner and chief barber of the *Waldorf Adare* barber's located in Westmoreland Street. This barber's has been in operation since 1946. It epitomises the attention to detail that men went into in keeping their appearance in the past. Services provided here include hair -cutting, hair singeing, hot towel shaves, 'frictions' or scalp massages, facials and mudpacks. American 'big-band' forties music was and continues to be played in the background, to compliment the original 1940's interior. In the past the customers would come

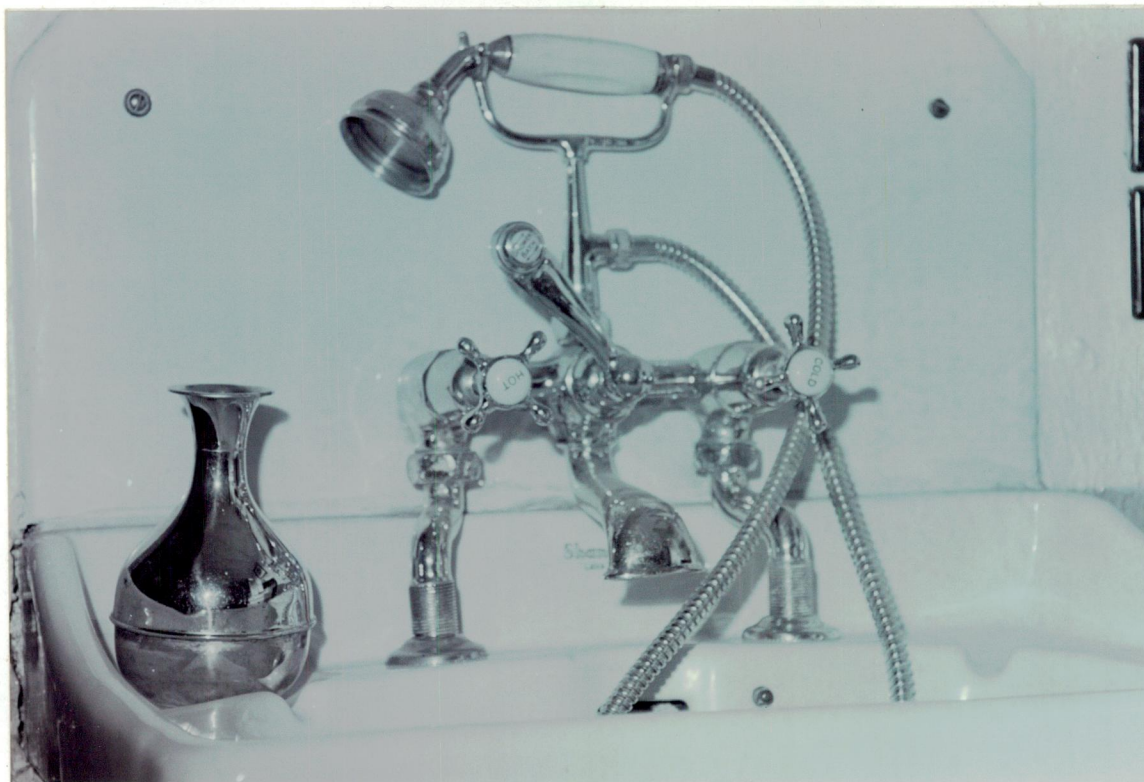


Figure 23: Original porcelain sinks, Chrome taps and bottles.

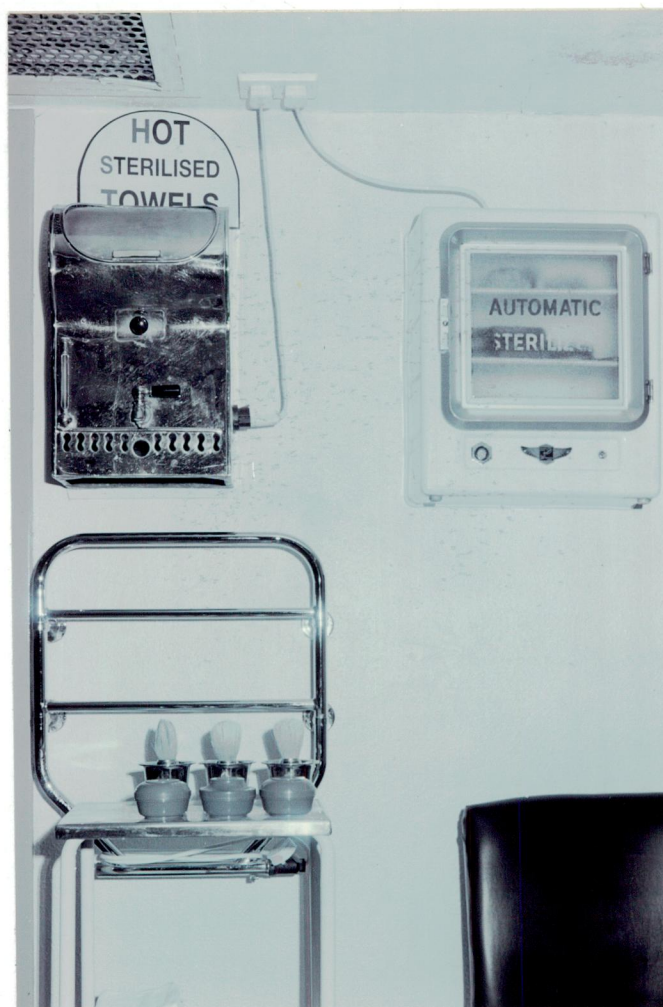


Figure 24: Chrome Hot-Towel unit, used to heat the towels before shaving. The towels are scented with eucalyptus oil.

in, be given a newspaper whilst they waited, and once in the chair their shoes were taken out to the back of the premises and shined.

If we look at the level of detail put into the interior of this shop, we can begin to appreciate the level of seriousness attached to men's grooming at the time. This was no makeshift amateur outfit. This was a serious business. The whole ritual surrounding being seated, having shoes shined and of course, whatever grooming is requested, attests to the fact that men were very fussy indeed about their appearance. If we look at the interior we have the original 'terrazza floor' (fig.21&22), and all of the original chrome taps (fig. 23), water bottles and cabinets. There is the original chrome hot-towel unit (fig.24) and ceramic sinks, along with leather chairs (fig.25). Each chair is equipped with its own brushes and leather straps for sharpening the razor blocks. To the rear of each chair is a stand to hang the original mirrors used to show the customers the rear of their hair heads when the cutting was finished (fig.21). Note too the display of original prints over the mirrors detailing hair and moustache styles (fig.26&27).

There is also a picture of the original staff from 1962, showing them in their *Waldorf Adare* overalls, giving them a very professional almost beautician-like appearance (fig.28). While Mr.Finnegan would believe that he does not have a particular customer profile a lot of 'important people' have and continue to walk through his doors. These would primarily have been businessmen, professionals and civil servants. Prices were competitive and the degree of service was commensurate with what clients were willing to pay. Haircuts started at one shilling; a shampoo one and sixpence and a shave one shilling.

A full treatment would consist of a haircut; shampoo; shave; facial massage; 'friction', which was the massaging of a spirit into the scalp to cool it off; face massage (using a vibrating machine to rub in the cream); hot towels (scented in the machine with eucalyptus oil) to remove face creams and finally finished with a finishing cream. Such treatments were particularly popular with businessmen who came in and returned to work 'spruced up'. Other optional services included facial toning and manicures. These treatments were portrayed during the

Figure 25: Original Leather Barber's chair, Bolted into the floor. There are seven of these in the shop, one for each of the original seven members of staff. Each chair is equipped with it's own brush, Towels and leather strap, for sharpening blades.

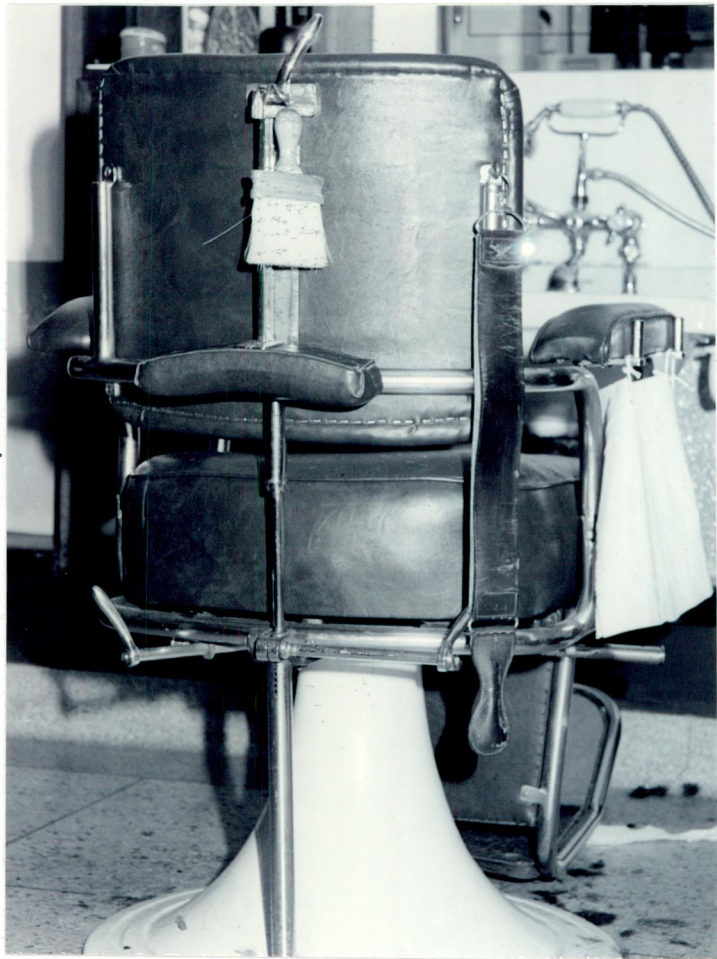


Figure 26: Grooming information being transmitted through the display of moustache and hairstyle illustrations.

forties, fifties and sixties, not as 'beauty' treatments but as "cures for hangovers, something to freshen him up after a night out".

As a result of shortages during and after the Second World-War, the staff would make their own hair oils, cologne, face-masks and scalp treatments, using their own formulas. Recipes included mud-pack's and anti-dandruff creams. There were originally seven barbers working here fulltime. When the original owner decided to sell the business the remaining six formed a co-op and bought it over. The current owner, Liam Finnegan, bought the business over in 1996. Each staff member was highly skilled, having attended a technical school for several years, where they trained not only in cutting techniques but also in the making of creams and other skills, such as massage techniques. This level of training was then reflected in the quality of the hair cut, with twenty minutes being the average cutting time; as it still is today. A 'short back and sides' was the standard style up to the 1960's. Men apparently would come in on a regular basis for a haircut, the average being every ten days. As Craik points out, (quoting Finkelstein),

"The emergence of consumerism and the growth of bureaucratic and civil society heralded other more accessible sources and conduits of fashion. Success in public life depended as much on the successful management of appearance as it did on economic clout." (1994 Pg.184).

When fashions changed during the 1960's regular haircutting began to fade away. Younger Men's hair began to tip the ears, became longer, creeping over the ears and by the 1970's not being cut at all. If hair was also being cut, it was cut with a scissors and not a clippers, with the hair being sculpted around the head and face. This is borne out by my grandmother's recollections of my grandfather's insistence on and cutting of his two son's hair on a regular basis. She recalls scene's of tearful son's as my grandfather chopped away furiously. The men from the immediate post-war period were horrified by this apparent 'lack of attention' to a neat and proper appearance. Of course my young uncle's were consciously adopting an alternative style rather than failing to maintain a neat and groomed appearance. However my grandfather

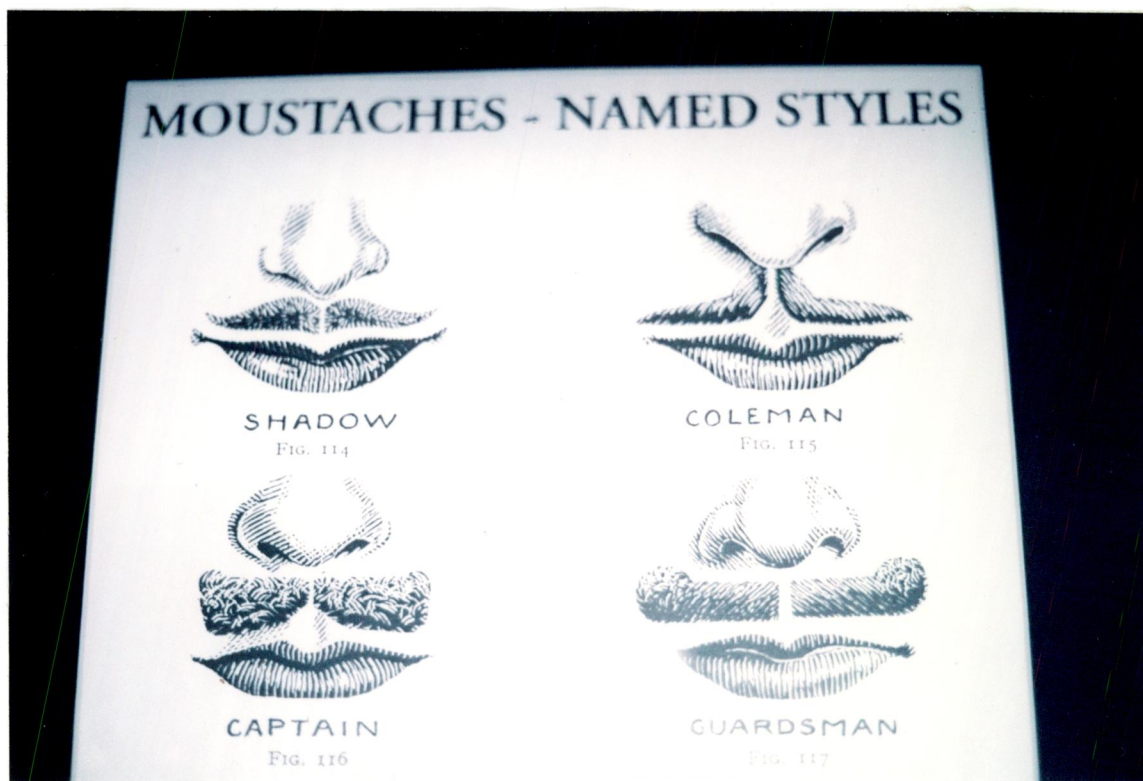


Figure 27: Grooming information being transmitted through the display of moustache and hairstyle illustrations.

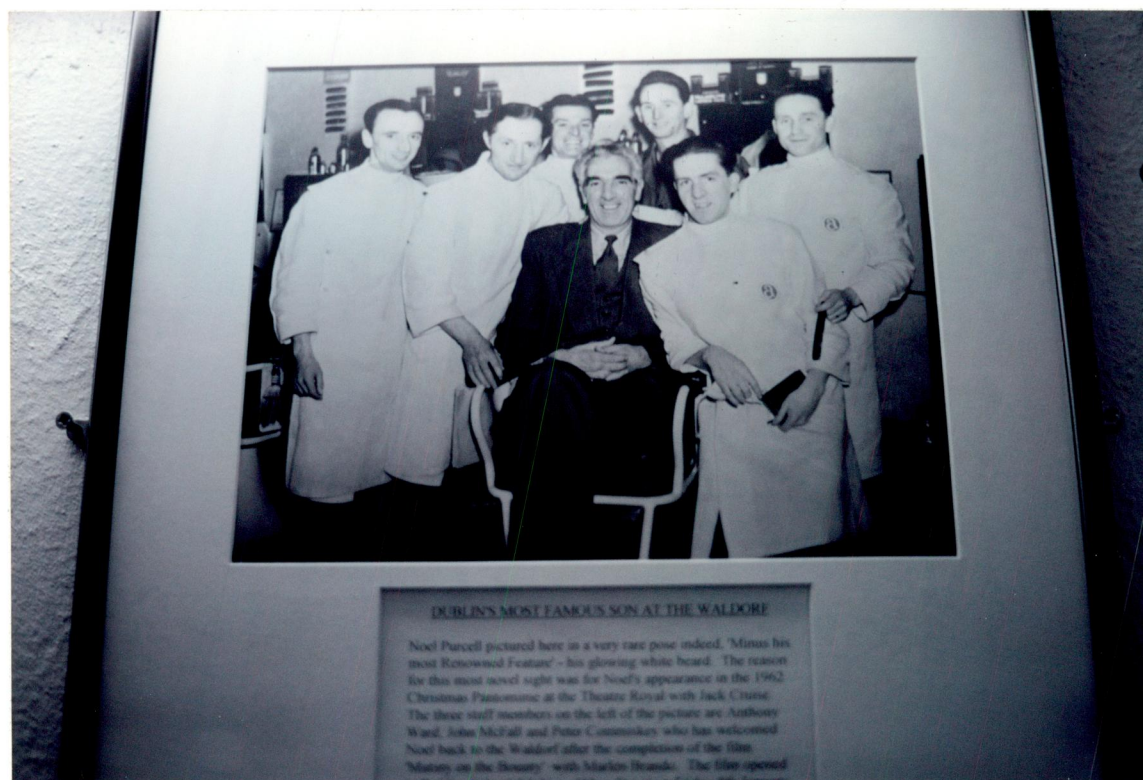


Figure 28: Waldorf Adare staff photograph with Actor Noel Purcell seated, 1962.

obviously didn't share this view. Mr Finnegan believes that the shop survived primarily because of its location, client base and the fact that it was run as a co-op, with an equal sharing of workload and profits. There was also a 'social club' aspect to the barbers. Unlike the unisex salons they kept their own customers, the place almost being "a sanctuary for men, a place where they could say what they liked and didn't have to worry about offending or cursing in front a woman".

The attention to detail in terms of the interior layout, planning and finishing of even the most basic elements, (bottles, ceramic bowls etc.), the high training and skill levels of the staff and of course, the level of maintenance that men sought for their appearances, points to the seriousness and attention that men in Ireland placed on grooming.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION "TESTED ON VIRGINS ?"

"Men's fashion has become a growth industry. The length of fashion cycles of men's clothes has reduced as seasonal collections have become the norm. While the clothes are still more conservative and less extreme than women's, that is still based on shirt; jacket; trousers and the suit, much greater variety of cut, colour and fabric has become possible". (Craik 1994 Pg.200)

The evolution of fashion change in men's clothing has moved into a frequency more commonly viewed and found within womenswear. The reconstruction of masculinity in the mode of fashion consumer has given rise to a number of implications. For some, like Mr. Coyle, such implications have centred on concerns of suitability of particular garments to particular bodies, the correctness of fit of such garments and the current quality of people's shopping experiences. The reorganising of the male as a fashion consumer has also put men's bodies increasingly into the public gaze. They have become objects or (in Mr. Coyle's opinion) 'victims' of display. "This radically undercuts the Victorian and post-Victorian idea of masculinity as the display of restraint in a disciplined body". (Craik 1994 Pg.200). The re-writing of such histories, the re-writing of male dress or grooming codes and behaviour, may stem from a number of sources. Craik referring to Finkelstein argues that,

"The more frivolous, casual look for men, and their overt concern with their bodies and their looks may reflect the changing status of men. No longer are they the sole representative of social power, or the primary worker dressed in 'business-like' clothes, but many men now share jobs or home duties, are students or, increasingly, are unemployed. Men's dress codes have been modified in accordance with these changed life circumstances." (1994 Pg.203)

Due to this change in social roles, men's socially respectable and even fashionable ways of dressing have changed also. There are a number of further implications. Clearly, if you, as a consumer, have the time, the money and the interest, the vast array of clothing options now open to you could be very exciting. What of those who are not so wealthy or have to work so much harder to make ends meet? Are they limited to only looking on in longing, or even excluded and looked down upon for their inability to enter this consumer market? There is a



Figure 29: *Himselves* Magazine front covers, 1998-1999.

contradictory tension in fashion, in its dual role – one as a medium of self-expression and the other, its role as a form of social control.

Originally, the lack of archival material in Irish post-war magazines could have been viewed as articulating the marginalisation of men's fashion in Ireland. However, if we reflect upon the histories contained in chapter three of this thesis, it would seem that men in post-war Ireland were involved in the promotion and maintaining of a sophisticated masculinity. This was quite separate from the public discourses that went on in magazines and newspapers concerning women's appearance.

The lack of a specifically Irish, men's magazine and only the occasional article in other publications must be viewed in the following way. Rather than being indicative of any marginalisation of men's fashion it indicates that men were informed in a number of different ways. These were primarily: social activities and social interactions, through tailors and barbers, department stores, shop assistants and the film and entertainment industry. The relatively recent publication of *Himself* (1998) or *Patrick* (1998) (fig.29), is not so much reflecting an increase in the numbers of Irish men wishing to be fashionable, but more so reflecting their *continuing* desire to be fashionable and their subsequent inclusion into a media format which had primarily been the preserve of female fashions and consumption.

It is difficult to try and ascertain how any one person receives their fashion information at any one time, assuming of course, that such information is of interest to them. It would seem that today the primary channels of such information are through the media: magazines, newspapers, television and the cinema. Other sources such as what we see worn on the streets or what we see being sold in shops also continue to inform people. Changes since the Second World War in how consumers, particularly men receive their fashion information has resulted in changes, not only in how they now engage with the fashion system, but also in how they make their consumer choices. Jennifer Craik refers to this (quoting Hart),

"The situation began to change in the 1960's once some designers decided to take an interest in men's clothes as 'fashion'. It was the start of a process that wrested male clothing design away from tailors, chain stores and wholesale manufacturers". (1994 Pg.192)

Traditional constructions of masculinity since the nineteenth-century were centred on such notions of hard work and production rather than consumption. The change in men's social position and the subsequent re-ordering of masculinity as consumer also highlights the growing acceptance and focus on consumerism itself as a part of a masculine identity. There is however, despite what the fashion system tries to tell us, nothing new in the male desire to be a well-groomed and fashionable consumer. The development in male engagement with evolving fashions, constitutes not only a greater degree of acceptance of it, but also a change in male attitudes as consumer. As Craik notes,

"Central to the new possibilities opened up by consumerism was (and is) the manipulation of appearances. People have greater access to clothes, a new awareness of fashion and fads and the possibility of buying 'a look' they required". (1994 Pg.184)

Such developments, in Irish male terms, are also reflected in the appearance of men's fashion magazines such as *Himself* or *Patrick*. The fashion system has developed, primarily through magazines, which now incorporate special features for men, or produce issues specially for men. They not only promote fashion, but a diverse range of other consumer products for the modern man.

So, although not new, more and more Irish men seem prepared to be seen to look in the mirror, buy skin-care products and wear a wider array of 'fashion-conscious', as opposed to 'well-dressed', clothing. It would seem that the fashion system, through its marketing, is seeking to tell us that this is the case and that this is new. However, as we have seen, such activities, if more obvious today, are not new concerns for Irish men. If we recall the "*Tested on Virgins*" advertisement campaign from the introduction (fig.1), we can ask how truly accurate is its implication of the idea that the contemporary man's attention to his appearance and attire, is the

most innovative, exciting, brave and truly directional that it ever has been? Clearly such implications are questionable. If anything it highlights how the fashion system, through its marketing, chooses to overlook, ignore or rewrite histories as it sees fit.

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