'Come and Daunce with Me in Irlande': Tourism, Dance and Globalisation

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The title of this chapter 'Come and Daunce with Me in Irlande', is a line from a 14th-century anonymous Irish poem and popularised more recently by president-elect Mary Robinson in her inaugural speech of 1990. It neatly encapsulates the long association between tourism and dance in Irish culture. In following the trajectory of this invitation we might want to sketch in some key moments. We could include how dance became a marker of ethnic/national identity for the Irish diaspora, (see Cullinane, 1997) and how their descendants returned to Ireland as tourists and per-formers in the World championships decades and generations later. We might also want to point to the professional theatrical performances of Irish dance for tourists such as those of Siamsa Tíre and the dance acts in hotel shows and cabarets over the last decades. In a contemporary context, we might want to depict the increasing popularity of dance generally (both performance and participative) as part of a selection of 'fun' things to see and do in a 'festival culture' (see Peillon, 2000). With reference to 'tradi-tional' dance specifically, we might explore the role played by summer schools and weekend set-dance workshops catering for tourists. And we might want to highlight the way in which the success of *Riverdance* has enhanced the visibility of step-dance as a marker of Irish culture for tourists and has resulted in an increased provision of dance for tourist entertain-ment.

It is easy to understand why dance has been central to both tourist imagery and practice. Dance fits easily into the 'tourist package' since it is regarded as a traditional and unique expression of the host culture, facili-tating relaxation and fun (and learning new skills in a fun way in the case of participative dance), and providing an opportunity for involvement,

however fleeting, with local culture. The increasing popularity of 'traditional' dance as part of the tourist experience is not peculiar to Ireland and can be seen as part of a wider process of the globalisation of ethnic dance cultures. Just as *Riverdance* initially attained a global reach through the Eurovision Song Contest, flamenco reached a worldwide audience during the opening ceremony of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and subsequently led to an increased interest on the part of tourists in experiencing this aspect of Spanish culture (see Malefyt, 1998).The purpose of this chapter is to address some issues in the relationship which has developed between tourism, dance and globalisation through empirical research on a dance show catering for tourists in Dublin city.

Dance, Tourism, and Globalisation

Current debates on cultural performance and change are centrally informed by the related concepts of 'globalisation' and 'authenticity'. These debates are complex and extensive and here I merely want to draw attention to the general thrust of the arguments. To caricature slightly, at one end of a continuum are those who welcome the mixing and interchange of 'traditional' cultural forms and practices. They see cultural hybridity as a genuine attempt to further the development of multiculturalism. Others welcome cultural hybridity as a form of consumer pluralism. At the other end of the continuum are those who adopt a negative approach to mixing cultural forms and practices because they argue that global capitalism controls cultural production, that local and indigenous cultures are transformed for dissemination in the global marketplace and that these cultural products and performances are impoverished or eroded in the process. Concepts such as McDonaldisation, McDisneyisation and wall-to-wall Dallas have become catch-phrases for the standardisation which is perceived to be a consequence of cultural flows – a standardisation which is regarded as a prerequisite for success on the global market. The latter type of position is generally associated with Marxist and neo-Marxist schools of thought and with critiques of culture in late capitalism. These are powerful but partial arguments.

While acknowledging that the critical approach to globalisation sketched here exhibits diversity, I would like to raise three problems with it. The distinction drawn between the local and the global as hermetically sealed units is over-emphasised (an argument which is also made in this volume by Kneafsey, and Quinn). The claims regarding cultural impoverishment are usually made on the basis of an analysis of the political economy of production often emphasising the aspects of ownership/ control. All too often cultural production is treated in mechanistic terms

and does not take into account the crucial element of human agency in the production of a cultural performance.

And, finally, the concept of culture is regarded for the most part as content rather than process-based. In relation to the latter point, I find Friedman's (1995) work on globalisation instructive in that he argues, convincingly, in my view, that to adequately understand globalising processes we must approach the concept of culture not as a vessel in an essentialist way but as a process in which social actors are forging new patterns and identification within the 'space of modernity'. Indeed in the following extract he uses the hypothetical example of dance cultures to illustrate the problems which arise when culture is perceived in an essentialist way:

> If Brooklyn-born Polynesian dancers represent the Hawaiian Hula to tourists by putting on a Tahitian fire dance on a Waikiki stage (though this no longer occurs in today's world of monitored authenticity), this need not be understood as postmodern chaos. On the contrary, it is surely one of the constants of global cultural history. It is only chaotic for the culture expert whose identification of origins is disturbed by the global processes of changing identities, a disturbance that is, consequently, translated into a de-authentification of other people's 'actually existing' cultures. The problem can only arise on the basis of the notion of culture as essence or substance. (Friedman, 1995: 85)

Research on tourist dance tends to reflect the general positions on globalisation as outlined here. For example, Malefyt (1998) in his analysis of Spanish flamenco, argues that performances for tourists have concentrated on display and objective commodification for its publics and he sees it as contrasting with the tradition of 'private' flamenco clubs where a more authentic version is performed. He supports his arguments with similar findings from other sources who claim that commercialised flamenco has become more spectacular, in line with tourist entertainment expectations, and less rooted in the meanings of the local community. A similar point is made by Travelou (2000) in the context of tourist entertainment in nighttime Athens. She argues that the dance performances are based on and include spectacular elements for tourist entertainment rather than being part of any authentic dance tradition. Parallel arguments are advanced in relation to touring objects / commodities. Sherlock (1999: 205), for instance, in analysing *Riverdance: The Show*, cautions against the effects of commodification:

> While audiences may be responding to resonances of homeland and nostalgic memories of community, the feeling of cultural belonging can provide sinister as well as positive connotations. These can be

related to both faces of nationalistic belonging. Riverdance may be shown to provide a sense of a new cultural identity for Ireland, but it should not be forgotten that as a cultural commodity it is serving the interests of capitalist profit-making.

However, other writers take an opposite view. For example O'Toole (1997) regards *Riverdance* as the exemplar of the liberation of Irish dance. He sees it as a unique expression of a national sense of self-confidence and pride which enables·us to play with traditional cultural forms and re-assemble them in innovative and imaginative ways. He contrasts the spectacular and exciting new style of Irish dance favourably with the competitive dancing of the era of the 'feiseanna'[1] which had preceded it and which was characterised, in O'Toole's view, by a rigidity and lack of imagination emanating from a cultural climate of narrow nationalism and puritanism.

While the critical comment on dance tourism tends to emphasise either the positive or negative end of the globalisation continuum, some writers acknowledge the complexities·involved in specific cultural milieu. Each case, therefore, must be judged on its own merits and any understanding of globalisation should be a matter for empirical investigation rather than a foregone conclusion. As Malefyt (1998: 71) notes in this regard:

> [T] ourism can act negatively to co-opt local festivals of their historic meaning and 'commoditize' them for general consumption (Greenwood 1972, 1989) . . . and it can also raise local self-consciousness by bringing to the community the idea of otherness, creating a new conception of community (Nogues Pedregal, 1996). In these varied ways tourism can be viewed as destructive or as invigorating the local cultural system.

Tourism, Dance and Authenticity

The concepts of globalisation and authenticity have generally been intertwined in cultural debates to the extent that a binary opposition is often constructed between local / traditional cultures which are seen to be authentic and global cultures which are seen to be dis-embedded from the local and consequently inauthentic.

The concept of authenticity has been germane to debates on cultural tourism. MacCannell (1976, 1989), one of the first writers to theorise the concept in relation to tourism, has claimed that authenticity is the cornerstone for understanding contemporary tourism since the primary motivation for tourism in western societies is precisely a search for the authentic in an increasingly inauthentic world. This quest is usually

pursued by seeking out 'simple' places and people and 'traditional' ways of life. However, according to MacCannell, while people seek they do not often find. He utilises Goffman's distinction between 'frontstage' and 'backstage' regions to develop the idea of 'staged authenticity' by which he means that what is usually on offer to tourists is a 'frontstage' (inauthentic) disguised to look like a 'backstage' (authentic).

While MacCannell's foundational work on authenticity has contributed much to debates on tourism, it has been critiqued on a number of counts. Of interest in the current context is the critique of his historicist and object-oriented approach to the concept. Wang (1999: 9) pinpoints the problems with such a perspective as follows:

> Traditionally 'authenticity' from a historicist perspective, it is usually assumed that authentiticy is equated to an origin in time. This then implies that subsequent alteration, creativity, transformation and emerging attributes are inauthentic in terms of this origin. However, the problem is that there is no absolute point of origin, nor is anything static; rather change is constant.

Wang suggests that we should re-evaluate authenticity as it relates to tourism and goes on to offer the concept of 'experiential authenticity' which she sees as operating in the following way:

> tourism involves a bodily experience of personal authenticity. In tourism, sensual pleasure, feelings and other bodily impulses are to a relatively large extent released and consumed and the bodily desires (for natural amenities, sexual freedom, and spontaneity are gratified intensively). In short, all these aspects of tourism constitute an ontological manifesto for personal authenticity.

Given the importance of the body in 'experiential authenticity', one common way in which it can be experienced is through participating in dance performance.

The importance of the body in tourism generally, and of dance in particular, is also addressed by Jokinen and Veijola (1994: 133), in the context of their plea for embodying studies of tourism, and in their related critique of the 'tourist gaze':

> Isn't it rather the tourist body that breaks with established routines and practices? We do gaze at dance performances and museums at home don't we? But instead, hardly ever engage ourselves in singing and dancing together; very rarely at home do we share the feeling of being together in this big, wild incomprehensible world, whose words and

gestures don't say anything. Here we know it in our conscious bodies that are temporarily united in an utterly physical ritual.

While Wang (1999) and Jokinen and Veijola (1997) bring the body back into the equation, their emphasis is on the experience of the tourist. Of particular interest in the current context is the way in which this sense of bodily engagement is further developed by Daniel (1996) to include the dialectical relationship between the experiences of the tourists who participate in the dance and the dancers themselves. Based on her ethno-choreological work in Cuba and Haiti she (Daniel, 1996: 789) refers to the ways in which dance can transform the tourists' world by temporarily enabling them to escape the quotidian:

> As performing dancers, tourists access the magical world of liminality which offers spiritual and aesthetic nourishment. Tourism in moments of dance performance, opens the door to a liminal world that gives relief from day-to-day, ordinary tensions, and, for Cuban dancers and dancing tourists particularly, permits indulgence in near-ecstatic experiences.

It is worth noting that these ecstatic experiences are linked to tourists participation in the dance rather than being simply spectators. I will return to this point later in the discussion.
While acknowledging that dance performances are to some extent commodified like other cultural and artistic forms and products, Daniel (1996: 782) claims that they are also unique in that

> [D]espite shifts in scale and context, dance performance for tourists remains 'authentic' and creative. Possible explanations for this include the manner in which 'authentic' and 'creative' are defined, the unique properties of dance as expressive behavior, and the particular politico-economic situation of differing tourism settings.

She goes on to develop a definition of 'authenticity' as follows:

> Authenticity prevails when the individual is affected / touched so that she / he feels that the 'real' world and the 'real' self are consonant. It is here that touristic dance performance runs parallel to living history projects in that it relies heavily on the desire for 'authentic' experiences of the performer to satisfy the tourist's desire for 'the authentic' (Daniel, 1996: 783).

She argues for both authenticity and creativity on the part of the performers themselves. 'What happens to the performer is often deemed

critical in determining "authenticity"' (p. 785). And to ascertain whether it is an authentic performance one must turn attention to the performer:

> the performer is often the critical item, the indicator of authenticity. What happens to the performer in the process of or as a result of a performance is often deemed critical in determining 'authenticity'. In fact both within or outside of the tourism setting, authenticity that is located within the performer's dancing is a critical criterion in judging and evaluating dance performance. Beyond this setting, on the concert stage, this criterion is noted by critics in terms of 'the performer's commitment to the dance', in terms of the 'transformation' that occurs in performance, or in terms of the effect experienced by the audience due to the intensity of the dance. (pp. 785–6)

The foregrounding of the dancers' experience which was called for in previous discussions of globalisation and authenticity, is also reflected in other writings in performance and tourism studies. In the context of the former, Schieffelin (1998: 198) claims that 'the burden of success or failure in a cultural performance is usually laid on the central actors, but the real location of this problem (and of the meaning of the terms 'actor', 'spectator', 'participant' is the relationship between the central performers and others in the situation'. He continues, to suggest that 'it is important to make the relationship between the participants and other in performative events a central subject of ethnographic investigation'(p. 204). Brown (1996: 44) makes a similar argument in relation to tourism research and suggests that the proper focus of study is not the tourist, nor indeed the host but the relation between them. While the current research does not include the response of tourists in this setting, it goes some way to achieving these objectives by concentrating on the dancers experience and the meanings of the dance for them, including their relationship with their audience.

Performance and Authenticity in the Irish Context

It is to this relationship that I now turn. I chose to examine dance performance in Fitzsimon's pub in the Temple Bar area of Dublin city. The show which had been running for approximately five years, at the time of the research took place on week nights, Monday through Thursday, on Saturday and Sunday afternoon, and on Sunday evening. I interviewed a number of the regular dancers about their experience of dancing in this venue. The research took place during the months of July and August (high tourist season) of 2000 and the discussion here is based predominantly on interviews and group discussions with eight dancers, seven female and one male aged between 16 and 23 years.[2] I also observed the performances

and spent time in the 'backstage' region where performers met before the show and to which they retired during their break. I had a number of informal discussions with the entertainment manager for the dancers and also with other dancers and one of the musicians. The formal interviews included questions on: the trajectory of the dancers' career; comparison of performance contexts, motivations for dancing in Fitzsimons, dance repertoire and basis of selection; favourite and least liked parts of the dance routine; and perceptions of, and interaction with, audience.

Performance and Identity

Comparing performance settings

I was curious about how the dancers experienced the performance setting of Fitzsimons as compared with others. One of the most immediately obvious things to emerge from the interviews was the dancers' enthusiasm about performing in the pub context. Generally, they compared the current context to the competitive context of the 'feiseanna'. Although all of them had been centrally involved in 'feiseanna' (and some still are), in their estimation, the latter compared unfavourably with dancing in Fitzsimons. The former appeared to be a source of considerable stress and anxiety, whereas the latter performance environment was perceived to be conducive to their own enjoyment which included audience appreciation as the following accounts testify:

> There used to be only competitions. At 'feises'[3] you are being judged, people waiting for you to make a mistake. (Cathy)

> There's a rush . . . exhilarating . . . I thrive on it. It has helped so much in confidence . . . It's completely different from 'feiseanna' where you are judged. Here you are being complimented. (Jill)

> The 'feises' are full of politics and the adjudicators have their favourites, whereas [dancing in Fitzsimons] is a great bit of 'craic'.[4] (Rachel)

Empowerment, confidence and pride

I tried to get a sense of how dancers felt during the performance[5] and found that performing helped to give them a very positive sense of self. They have all been dancing from a very early age (3-4 years in most cases) and are all highly skilled. This means that they do not have to concentrate on the steps but even if they do make a mistake it will go unnoticed by the audience. In addition, part of the pleasure of performing is the knowledge that they have a skill which is relatively rare and which cannot be easily acquired. Indeed, it appeared that part of their sense of pride came from this distinction between themselves and the audience. As Nathalie com-

mented 'they [the audience] can't do it'. Cathy said that because Irish dancing takes years of practice you can always differentiate between Irish dancers and modern dancers who have learned some Irish dances for a particular show. Jill talked about the current craze for 'Riverdancing' classes in America and how Americans think they can gain proficiency very quickly because it looks so effortless in *Riverdance: The Show*. With some pride she also recounted an anecdote of a tourist who happened to be a professional dancer and who asked Jill to show her some foot/ankle movement at the interval. The dancer thought that she would be able to pick it up very quickly. After 20 minutes trying, she still could not do it. Mark thought that some people don't realise that Irish dancing takes so much time and practice and when parents do not see any great improvements, they take their children out of classes.'These comments make it clear that the dancers were fully aware of the time, effort and discipline that their levels of skill entail and consequently they feel that there is a greater appreciation on the part of the audience.

Dancers talked about how an appreciative audience imbues them with a sense of enthusiasm, confidence and pride:

> When the crowd are really into it I get a great buzz. You might be tired starting but once you start dancing you get into the buzz. (Cathy)

> I feel proud, really positive . . . even more so when doing it as a group . . . It's a team effort . . . they break up [i.e. do individual steps] and then all four together . . . The timing is perfect. There's an adrenalin rush. (Jill)

> When you get a good crowd you dance well. You go home feeling good. (Nathalie)

> All those people are watching you and it makes you feel special. If the crowd has energy it gives you more energy and the show is more enjoyable. It is great to see them enjoying it. (Mark)

> The audience has a lot to do with the way you feel. (Jill)

> How you feel depends on the crowd. If you get a good response you dance well. (Rachel)

Jill, in talking about evenings when she was present at the show but not dancing, said that she could feel a knot in her stomach because she wanted 'to be on that stage'. She indicated that this was a common feeling among 'the girls'. Nathalie said that on nights when she is not dancing but watching the show, she feels really proud of the other dancers.

It is clear from the dancers' comments that the audience played a major role in affecting the mood of the performance. My initial assumption had

been that since the audience members do not participate in the dancing that there would not be such a synergy between them. However, this does not appear to be the case and seems to contradict the suggestion that physical participation in the dance is a prerequisite for a feeling of 'existential authenticity'. Indeed, it could well be that the relative physical restraint required by the audience enhances rather than quenches the desire for movement.[6]

The dancers were keenly aware of their audience and adept at differentiating between 'good' and 'bad' audiences. They thought that audiences were generally appreciative regardless of ethnic origin or prior knowledge of Irish dance. They estimated that many of the tourists are American but there are also tourists from Britain, Japan and mainland Europe. The Americans were perceived to be most interested in Irish dance as judged by the way they approached the dancers to ask questions after the performance. Nathalie said that they were the most interested in learning about Irish dance because many of them were here tracing their Irish roots. While they assumed that many of these visitors would have seen *Riverdance* or its equivalent, they felt that they would not need an intimate knowledge of Irish dance to enjoy it. Indeed, the lack of knowledge on the audiences' part, as we saw earlier, was a source of pleasure for the dancers.

The unappreciative or 'dead crowds' were mainly visitors for stag weekends and football fans. The dancers make a distinction between the afternoon gigs on Saturday and Sunday where one was most likely to get the 'dead' crowd' and the night-time slots when they were most likely to get the 'good crowd'.[7] In addition to the type of audience which the night performances attracted, Jill drew attention to another factor which made dancing at night more enjoyable: 'The evening has more energy, when it gets darker, then the lights go up. It becomes more of a show. Maybe its a power thing', she mused.

The spatial geography of the pub also seemed to assist in generating a good rapport with the audience. The stage, though elevated from floor level, was small and gave the impression of intimacy. The space in front of the stage was uncluttered with furniture and allowed people to stand close to it so that there was a physical proximity between performers and audience. Jill gave some idea of the way in which this setting created a chemistry between performers and audience by comparing it favourably to her experience of dancing in a pub in Montreal. In Fitzsimons, because the audience members nearest to the stage were standing rather than sitting, they appeared to be more enthusiastic. She also claimed that the elevated stage allowed more people to see the footwork. And dancing to live music, she felt, added considerably to the atmosphere of energy and excitement.

It is clear from the dancers' comments that dancing was a really enjoy-

able experience and that they were both committed to the dance and were transformed within it. This high level of experiential authenticity during performances was intrinsically connected to the enthusiastic audience response. It was also apparent that the pleasures of performing were not guaranteed but could vary according to context. Indeed, the fragility of 'experiential authenticity' was borne out by the dancers recounting of neutral or negative responses to their performance. They all stressed that these are the exception rather than the rule but they were very conscious of them when they did occur. Of interest in this context are the strategies the dancers used to regain this sense of 'experiential authenticity', both for themselves and the audience. While there were about 15 dances in their repertoire, they discussed the up-coming number at the end of each dance and could choose which one to perform next. They claimed to know which dances the audience liked best and least. Jill said that the crowd responded more to the hard shoe reels.[8] Nathalie, in commenting on her favourite parts of the dance routine, said she liked what she thought the audience liked best: 'The acapella dancing and the set where you are doing a swing. The crowd likes a quick beat. It's better when the crowd like it.' Alternatively, if they thought the crowd was 'really dead', they would not do a hornpipe because it was 'too slow'. And in the same situation they would probably include two set-dances rather than one because it was lively, fast and involved swinging with other dancers.

Spectacle, Power and Gender

The power of the 'male gaze' has been a central theme in discussions of women and public space generally and in relation to women and dance specifically (e.g. see Thomas, 1993). Mindful of this literature I had anticipated prior to fieldwork that the dance situation might lend itself to a sexual objectification of the female dancers in particular. In such a situation I estimated that 'experiential authenticity' in terms of a consonance between the 'real world' and the 'real self' would be compromised. This did not appear to be the case. While the dancers recognised an element of voyeurism (Jill said that 'when you are dancing you think the men are looking at your footwork but when you sit down after the dance they are still looking!') they are not unduly troubled by it and said that 'You don't let it get to you'. Gillian remarked that this kind of male attention is commonplace – 'You get the same thing on the street or in your car'. The dancers were not disturbed by this and appeared to handle these situations with a mixture of good sense and humour. Indeed, the incidents about troublesome or voyeuristic men were recounted to me as comic anecdotes and seemed to have become part of the repertoire of shared memories and

mythic stories, functioning to create a sense of security and belonging among the group. Anne, the dance manager, said that she looks out for the girls and that the bouncers also look out for 'trouble-makers in the audience'. Though not incident free, overall, one got the impression of a safe environment in which any potential objectification or harrassment of dancers was quickly defused.

I had also anticipated that experiential authenticity could be compromised by gender stereotyping within the dance performance. For instance, I have argued elsewhere (O'Connor, 1998) that *Riverdance: The Show* accentuated 'traditional' masculinity and femininity by various means. And, here again, I was curious as to the possibility of this gendering in terms of visual style and in terms of choreography. At the time of my research the dancers were predominantly young women but during the research period a male dancer joined the troupe. Sartorially, the style could be described as 'subdued *Riverdance*' in that the female dancers wore short black dresses in soft material (though any kind of black dress would suffice) and black tights. This certainly had the effect of emphasising both body contours and leg length. Mark, the male dancer, wore a plain black trousers and black shirt but was definitely not into what he referred to as 'macho image of the leather trousers and tight muscly tops' of the male dancers in *Riverdance*. It seemed to me that visually, the female dancers were more sexualised than the male.

However, in choreographic terms gendering was not in evidence. From observation it was clear that the stage was too small to allow for the expansive movements and gestures of a lead / 'star' dancer. Both male and female dancers did the same steps and routines. Mark corroborated these observations and elaborated when I asked whether being the sole male made a difference in this respect. He thought that while it is theoretically possible for the male to take the lead, that in practice it did not happen. He talked about dancing in another pub where he had the lead in one dance. But in other dances the female dancers would have had the lead. In Fitzsimons, however, they did more or less the same steps so there was no question of the male dancer dominating.

The *Riverdance* Factor

There is no doubt that the Fitzsimons show is heavily influenced by the spectacular global extravaganzas, *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*. According to Anne, the dance manager, the initial idea for the show itself was generated because of the success of *Riverdance* when she realised that all kinds of people could find Irish dance entertaining. It was also evident that the influence of the 'big shows' was also present in choreographic elements

such as the acapella dancing and in aspects of the visual style. Yet these features were not slavishly copied and it was evident that the pub context provided scope for individual improvisation and negotiation of personal styles and identities.

The dancers were conscious of the influence of *Riverdance* on their performance and saw this influence as positive overall. They commented on the fact that the new shows provided them with an opportunity for dancing which they would not otherwise have had, since the majority had given up competing in 'feiseanna' at 15 or 16 years of age and would not have had another expressive outlet since then. Jill, for example, said that she had quit Irish dancing when she was 16 but returned three years later because of the influence of *Riverdance*. She was attracted by the increased visibility of Irish dance and by the possibility of doing shows. Cathy, who had also stopped enjoying dancing and going to dance classes, decided to return again when she started dancing in Fitzsimons. Mark pointed to the fact that *Riverdance* has generated more shows so that it was now possible to have a career in dance and to travel. He regarded it as a reward after all the years of hard work. Many of the other dancers also mentioned the opportunity to travel which the globalisation of Irish dance presents and some expressed an ambition to join one of the well-known travelling shows.

In addition to increasing the popularity of Irish step dancing, *Riverdance* was also seen to alter its cultural status and trendiness. A number of dancers mentioned that, wheras previously they would have been reluctant to tell their school mates that they were Irish dancers for fear of being perceived as 'untrendy', they were now relaxed about doing so. As an example, Cathy said that in her school music class she now helped classmates to differentiate jig-time from reel-time by dancing the beat for them.

However, while the overall response to *Riverdance* was approving and enthusiastic the dancers were also critical of some developments which they associated with the 'big shows'. For instance, they contrasted their own relatively relaxed dance environment with the treatment of dancers and their responses in the latter. Nathalie reckoned the dancers were treated like a 'herd of cattle'. She spoke of her own experience of participating in a workshop for one of the shows, and of how the auditioning dancers were required to stand in line with number tags, and of how there were pools of water running down the walls due to condensation and gathering on the floor because of the lack of proper ventilation, and of how the overall experience was 'so degrading'. They told of how they had heard stories from friends who worked in the 'big shows' of extremely hard work with endless hours of rehearsal and problems of dehydration, blisters, sprained and broken bones and limbs. There were also stories of dancers being

kicked out for using cocaine, and of the increasing problem of anorexia and bulemia among dancers.

Conclusions

This chapter is an attempt to address the relationship between tourism and dance in the context of the increase in step-dance entertainment for tourists visiting Ireland. The concepts of globalisation and authenticity were used to address these issues. My general predisposition towards the tourist dance shows prior to conducting the research was towards a 'negative globalisation' interpretation given the proliferation of the *'Riverdance'* style in a number of entertainment venues. I had anticipated that I would find a substantially· commodifed, and standardised situation which worked to objectify the performers and some of the research questions (such as the presence of the 'male gaze') were constructed on the basis of my expectations. During the research process, however, what struck me most forcibly was the sheer vibrancy, excitement and energy of the show. My 'conversion' was due to the time spent observing and talking to the dancers and confirmed the importance of attempting to understand the meanings of the situation from the point of view of the dancers themselves.

But what exactly does this perspective based on the empirical research tell us about the relationship between tourism, dance and the issues of globalisation and 'authenticity' which I set out to address? With reference to globalisation, it was apparent from the research that the show was strongly influenced by *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance* in terms of style and choreographic elements but this did not seem to lead to a blanket standardisation or commodification. And while dancers welcomed the advent of the celebrity shows because they offered them a new status and opportunities, they were critical of the commodification of dancers which they saw as a feature of those shows.

As regards authenticity, if we return to the two models of authenticity outlined earlier, it is clear that the Fitzsimons show is authentic in terms of the 'experiential' model but is not in terms of the 'object-oriented / historical' model. The findings clearly indicate that 'commitment to the dance' and 'transformation' on the part of the performers were present in the performance context. Dancing in Fitzsimons was a joyful and pleasurable experience providing an important expressive outlet and promoting a sense of self-confidence and pride. The dancers worked to build a good rapport with the audience and the audiences' response was a pre-requisite to their enjoyment. However, if I had adopted an exclusively object-oriented and historicist view of authenticity, the performance would have to be deemed inauthentic because it was obvious that many aspects of the

step-dancing performance style have changed and evolved over the years (see Brennan, 1994; Hall, 1997).

The picture emerging from the Fitzsimons case is that of the everyday context in which the dancers perform and the ways in which they constructed meanings around the performance. This approach enables us to see the dancers' performance in terms of identity construction and to see cultural performance in terms of social agency. To return to Friedman's (1995) terminology, we might see the dancers as ' forging new patterns of identification within the 'space of modernity'. The meanings associated with dance for them included, expressivity and performativity, freedom, travel, self-confidence, skill, pride, discipline – traits, accomplishments and activities which are positively valued within contemporary society. While the meanings and experience as identified by the dancers gave priority to the positive aspects, it is also possible, even plausible, to suggest that other, less positive, but commonplace, meanings were experienced by dancers but not manifest because they are less amenable to articulation either because they might not have been perceived as socially acceptable (e.g. narcissism) or were unconscious.

It is also important to acknowledge that the cultural meanings of the performance for the dancers themselves are not the only ones available and I would concur with Ward (1997: 14) when he states that 'a dance's meaning might be quite different to the feelings a dancer is experiencing'. Indeed, one might suggest that other meanings associated with the dance shows include: the valorisation of youth and beauty, ambition, competitiveness, success and desire for celebrity status – meanings which may be seen as either positive or negative.

To highlight the necessity of addressing experiential authenticity does not, in my view, obviate the need to retain an 'object-oriented' or historicist account. It is also important to ask questions about the specific ways in which the increasing popularity of theatrical / commercial shows are influencing Irish step-dance. For instance, if tourists prefer hard-shoe dances associated with rhythm, will it lead to a decline in the performance of soft-shoe dances? Or, similarly, if tourists prefer fast-tempo dances will it lead to a decrease in the slower?

Any comprehensive assessment of dance in tourist settings would entail an integration of the research presented here with work on the political economy of dance in tourist settings, with structural analysis of the dance, and with the experiences of the tourists themselves. What I have been arguing in this chapter is that attempts to understand cultural performances in the context of global cultural flows of commodities and people in the form of tourists, must take into account the role of the performers and, more specifically, the meanings which the dancers attach to their perfor-

mance. It is this aspect which has been the most neglected in discussions of tourist dance and globalisation to date.

Acknowledgements

Notes
1. Feiseanna is the name for the competitions which had been the dominant form of institutionalised exhibition of Irish step-dancing from the 1930s.
2. Since the dancers to whom I spoke were self-selecting it is necessary to bear in mind the possibility that those who were most willing to participate in the interview were the most enthusiastic about their experience.
3. Although the plural of the Irish word 'feis' is 'feiseanna', the word 'feises' is commonly used in English and the dancers themselves generally used the latter term.
4. The word 'craic' is generally used in the context of having fun in a convivial group atmosphere.
5. Some dancers found it difficult to have an extended conversation on this aspect of their performance: a difficulty commonly experienced in trying to communicate bodily feelings verbally.
6. It might be useful to think of this situation as analagous to the Lacanian 'mirror stage' of development in which the child thinks that his/her motor skills are more developed than they actually are thereby creating an illusion of perfect power.
7. They do not perform on either Friday or Saturday nights as the pub runs a disco on these nights.
8. All the numbers are hard-shoe dances apart from one soft-shoe reel. This is probably due to the influence of *Riverdance*.

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