PERFORMING IRISHNESS: OPPORTUNITY AND IDENTITY WITHIN THE PUBLIC THEATRE SCENES OF LONDON AND DUBLIN, 1660-1800

by

Róisín Byrne

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Department of History

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Head of Department:

Prof Terence Dooley

Supervisor of Research:

Prof Marian Lyons

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Summary

The early modern theatres of London were far from merely being an aspect of 'English' culture, as the city was gradually emerging as the centre of an empire, which encompassed Ireland. Members of Ireland's colonial elite, as well as the increasingly affluent bourgeois, looked to London for cultural inspiration. As English power in Ireland was consolidated, cultural movement and exchange between the two cities intensified. This encouraged dialogues of politics, society and culture. From the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 to the Act of Union in 1800, Dublin became increasingly peripheral in Britain's expanding empire. While engaging in an Enlightenment process of 'improvement', Dublin increasingly modelled itself on London's image. London's dominant cultural position drew growing numbers of those intent upon making their name in theatre. Their departure from Ireland, however, did not necessarily signal an end to their impact on its theatres. Many returned to lead the Irish theatre scene, following the example set by London. Actors, writers and managers regularly crossed over and back between Dublin and London. Many of these pioneered influential new styles, techniques and forms, to which the canon of 'English' theatre is indebted. Rather than focusing on the literary or dramatic achievements of Irish individuals in London, this study will examine the wider historical significance of their cultural production. The question of Irish identity within an expanding public sphere is central to the study, most especially in analysing the opportunities and limitations that Irish theatrical personnel encountered in London and Dublin. The thesis aims to shed light on the cultural negotiation at play in the theatres, between a mentality of 'Irishness' and the creation of an imperial and national 'British' identity, as well as that of the idealized 'Enlightened' individual. The central objective of the project is to examine how conflicting ideas of 'Irish' identity were constructed, performed, and consequently shaped, by Irish actors and playwrights, both on and off the stage, while comparing the development of theatre within the public spheres of London and Dublin.

Dedication

For my Dad, Peter Byrne (1962-2018)

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List of Abbreviations

Anon.	anonymous author
c.	circa
Copyright Act	*An act for the encouragement of learning, by vesting the copies of printed books in the authors or purchasers of such copies, during the times therein mentioned* (1710)
d.	died
DIB	*Dictionary of Irish Biography*, ed. James McGuire and James Quinn (9 vols, Cambridge and Dublin, 2009)
Disorderly Houses Act	*An act for the better preventing thefts and robberies, and for regulating places of publick entertainment, and punishing persons keeping disorderly houses* (1751)
Dublin Stage Act	*An act for regulating the stage in the city and county of Dublin* (1786)
ed.	editor
Licensing Act	*An act to explain and amend so much of an act made in the twelfth year of the reign of Queen Anne, entitled, An act for reducing the laws relating to rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and vagrants into one Act of Parliament; and for the more effectual punishing such rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and vagrants, and sending them whither they ought to be sent, as relates to the common players of interludes* (1737)
Licensing of the Press Act	*An act for preventing the frequent abuses in printing seditious treasonable and unlicensed books and pamphlets and for regulating of printing and printing presses* (1662)
n.d.	no date
NLI	National Library of Ireland
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Colin Matthew and Brian Harrison (60 vols, Oxford, 2004)
Press Act	*An act to secure the liberty of the press by preventing abuses arising from the publication of traitorous, seditious, false and slanderous libels* (1784)
Theatrical Representations Act	*An act to enable justices of the peace to license theatrical representations occasionally under the restrictions therein contained, as amended by the House of Peers* (1788)

Introduction

'some necessary question': an introduction to set the stages of London and Dublin, 1660-1800[1]

This thesis will trace the development of the London and Dublin theatre scenes alongside one another. It is hoped that such a comparative approach will answer questions about the relationship between the public spheres of London and Dublin. The project will examine the extent to which they developed in tandem with, in emulation of, and in reaction to, each other. The secondary aim is to assess the extent to which Irish theatrical figures were driving, or reacting to, these developments. The extent to which Irish identity politics influenced performances of Enlightenment culture, both on and off stage, is also discussed.

The thesis takes 1660 as its start date because the restoration of the monarchy signals a new era in theatrical culture. This culture privileges the urban centres of London and Dublin, as royal patents for public theatres are issued only to these two cities. The study will trace the development of these theatre scenes as they increasingly become drawn into an emerging bourgeoisie public sphere. The thesis takes the close of the eighteenth century as its endpoint, as the Act of Union of 1800 drastically alters the relationship between London and Dublin; thus, ushering in an alternate era of theatrical culture.

Key Research Questions:

• To what extent did theatre provide a platform for Enlightenment processes in London and Dublin? Additionally, who or what acted as the driving force for these processes of socio-cultural change?

• How did contemporary socio-political relations between England and Ireland affect the reception of Irish individuals, performances and productions in the theatres of London and Dublin?

• To what extent would 'Irishness' become a limited form of 'Britishness', and how were these identities reconciled and/or navigated by actors and playwrights with Gaelic, as well as Anglo-Irish backgrounds?

[1] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2, in Edmond Malone (ed.), *The plays and poems of William Shakspeare, in sixteen volumes. Collated verbatim with the most authentick copies, and revised: with the corrections and illustrations of various commentators; to which are added, an essay on the chronological order of his plays; an essay relative to Shakspeare and Jonson; a dissertation on the three parts of King Henry VI. An historical account of the English stage, and notes*, xiv (London, 1794), pp 280-86.

• To what extent, and for what purpose, did Irish theatrical personnel engage in performances of Enlightenment identities in the public spheres of London and Dublin?

• How important was an individual's professional socio-economic status, in relation to their national socio-cultural identity, in determining their standing within the theatre scene and the wider public sphere? Additionally, could theatre provide opportunities for Irish individuals to alter their standing within the public spheres of London and Dublin?

Conceptual Framework

The development of the theatre scenes of London and Dublin will be examined within the context of Jurgen Habermas's public sphere model.[2] As such, the theatre will be viewed as an institution of the public sphere. Michael Warner's extended understanding of Habermas's sphere as a series of interconnected publics will be adopted to allow for greater nuance in examining the relationships between the publics of London and Dublin.[3] James Hamrick's definition of the public sphere as 'a condition of discursive openness, regardless of medium' will be applied to the study.[4] The thesis intends to forward the scholarship by looking simultaneously at print, orality and action as media for cultural discourse and identity performance. In this way, the study will examine the culture of Enlightenment, in which the performance of civility was expressed through speech, mannerisms and dress, as well as print.

This performance of Enlightenment culture will be analysed in conjunction with an emerging national 'Irish' identity and the thesis will attempt to demonstrate the extent to which these identities were interlinked during the period. The discussion of Enlightenment culture throughout much of this study will inevitably draw on Michael Brown's seminal study.[5] Brown traces a broad narrative of the development of public discourse and debate throughout the Irish Enlightenment. He argues that there was a distinct Irish branch of the European Enlightenment grounded in the confessional divide among the Irish populace. The broad nature of this study does not allow for any particular aspect of Irish Enlightenment culture to be examined thoroughly. As such, despite recurring mentions of theatrical activity throughout the book, Brown's look at the position of theatre within the Irish Enlightenment is minimal. This thesis narrows its focus to concentrate on the influence and impact of the theatre on Enlightenment

[2] Jurgen Habermas (trans. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence), *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (Cambridge, 1991).
[3] Michael Warner, 'Publics and counterpublics', *Public Culture*, xiv (2002), pp 49-90.
[4] James Hamrick, 'From Gaeltacht to Grub Street: the eighteenth-century public sphere in a four nations context' (PhD thesis: University of Notre Dame, 2012).
[5] Michael Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment* (London, 2016).

public discourse. Furthermore, while Brown's study is predominantly that of male discourse, this thesis seeks to examine the contribution of female theatre practitioners to Enlightenment culture, as well as the impact of female spectatorship on the development of public taste. Brown's delineation of an Irish Enlightenment into three separate phases (religious, social and political) will be utilised to demonstrate the progress of an Irish Enlightenment within the theatre scenes. This thematic chronology is embedded in the structure of the thesis: the religious Enlightenment is traced through chapters one and two, the social Enlightenment through chapters three to five, and the political Enlightenment through chapters six and seven. The cultural significance of the theatre will be shown to culminate during the social phase of Enlightenment.

Although the project aims to encompass Gaelic and Catholic influence on and involvement in these publics, the concentration will remain largely on the Anglophone sphere. The central focus of the study is on the official public theatre scenes in both London and Dublin, both of which were places of Anglophone culture. Despite this, the project will draw on scholarship by Lesa Ní Mhunghaile and Kevin Whelan to demonstrate the increasingly acknowledged voices of these counter-publics within the Anglophone sphere.[6] However, this project will look beyond textual culture to show the extent to which Gaelic and Catholic Irish were interacting with the theatre scenes, and thus, involved in the public sphere. In this context, processes of anglicisation, Enlightenment and nationalisation, in London as well as Dublin, will be looked at through the evolution of theatrical culture. To this end, the thesis will attempt to trace the evolution of a *mentalité* of Irishness within the Anglophone public sphere. This *mentalité* will be shown to be intimately linked with a growing sense of 'otherness', as Irish figures, of all socio-cultural backgrounds, struggled to determine their position in relation their English counterparts. The thesis aims to draw the connection between an evolving Irish *mentalité* within the Anglophone public sphere, and the social performance of Enlightenment eloquence.

The thesis will build on Paul Goring's assessment of the Enlightenment performance of 'bodily eloquence' by examining Irish use of, and contribution to, an 'inscribed system of gestures and expressions' that developed to constitute the 'performance of modern politeness'.[7] Goring

[6] Lesa Ní Mhunghaile, 'Bilingualism, print culture in Irish and the public sphere, 1700-*c.*1830', in James Kelly and Ciarán Mac Murchaidh (eds.), *Irish and English: essays on the Irish linguistic and cultural frontier, 1600-1900* (Dublin, 2012), pp 218-42; Kevin Whelan, 'An underground gentry? Catholic middlemen in eighteenth century Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, x (1995), pp 7-68; idem, *The tree of liberty: radicalism, Catholicism, and the construction of Irish identity, 1760-1830* (Cork, 1996); Kevin Whelan and Thomas Power (eds), *Endurance and emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1990).
[7] Paul Goring, *The rhetoric of sensibility in eighteenth-century culture* (Cambridge, 2005), p ix, p. 5.

asserts that the performance of Enlightenment eloquence held 'significant cultural authority' during the period of study.[8] Thus, the social performance of Enlightenment culture could enable the agency of an individual within the public sphere. Anthony Giddens defines agency as the ability to act intentionally with 'transformative capacity'.[9] The thesis will be concerned with the evolving agency of Irish theatrical figures within the public spheres of London and Dublin.

This study will trace the evolution of theatrical structures from the Restoration down to the end of the eighteenth century. Of particular interest are the fluctuating structures determining the position and purpose of the theatre within the public sphere. These include structural changes to theatrical customs, legislation, property and patronage systems. As such, structure will be regarded as 'a process, not as a steady state'.[10] Additionally, the thesis intends to examine how Irish individuals utilized their agency within the public sphere, in order to navigate and influence the changing structures of the theatre scenes in London and Dublin.

Although Habermas's study is very much one of bourgeoisie development, this project will not limit its focus to one class within the social order; rather it will examine the interaction and competition between the traditional courtly milieu and an increasingly affluent and influential bourgeoisie within the theatre scenes of London and Dublin. Additionally, the often-overlooked presence of a lower class of servants and labourers within the theatres will be considered. It is hoped that this will allow for a more nuanced view of theatrical culture, especially given the reality of theatrical authority. Throughout the period, theatrical authority remained primarily in the hands of the regal court in London, and its viceregal counterpart in Dublin. The project aims to examine challenges to that authority. The evolving position and purpose of the theatre as an institution of the public sphere will be traced in the context of ongoing tension between court and city authorities for control over the theatre scenes. The thesis will examine how these governing authorities faced the increasing power of bourgeoisie public opinion. Public opinion will be considered as an important aspect of socio-political discourse, following the example of Martyn Powell and Kathleen Wilson.[11] Thus, the thesis rejects Gerard O'Brien's assertion that the consideration of public opinion, in both Britain and

[8] Ibid., p. 6.
[9] Anthony Giddens, *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration* (Cambridge, 1984), pp 10-15.
[10] William Sewell, *Logics of history: social theory and social transformation* (Chicago, 2005), p. 127.
[11] Martyn Powell, 'Managing the Dublin populace: the importance of public opinion in Anglo-Irish politics, 1750-1772', *Irish Studies Review*, (1996), XVI: pp 8-13; Kathleen Wilson, *The sense of the people: politics, culture, and imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1995).

Ireland, holds no importance to the historiography of the eighteenth century.[12] This rejection is made, not only in congruence with Powell's direct dismissal of such an argument, but also on the basis that even a negative response to public opinion on behalf of conservative political elites demonstrates its importance within the political sphere. As such, the issue of censorship and the struggle to control public discourse through theatrical licensing will be addressed thoroughly in the study.

The thesis will demonstrate the extent to which the censorship of drama and licensing of theatres was fundamentally concerned with the maintenance of social hierarchy and regulation of public order. The restoration of the theatres in 1662 was heralded by the advent of royal licensing, which censored drama by controlling the spaces where it could be performed. Under this system, the patrons of licensed theatres, namely the King of England, the Duke of York and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, enacted control over legitimate drama through royal prerogative. The breakdown of statutory censorship over the print industry in 1695 led to a proliferation of politicised theatrical drama in London. This theatrical liberty was curbed by Walpole's government in 1737 with the introduction of the Licensing Act, which 'effectively muzzled the English stage'.[13] Every dramatic text was now required to pass the inspection of the Lord Chamberlain before being staged for a paying public audience. The Licensing Act made performance the only cultural medium censored under British law, 'placing it in a uniquely exposed position in society'.[14] The managers of London's theatre royals welcomed this strict regulation, as it reestablished their duopoly over the city's theatre scene and thus, heightened their positions and profits. In 1751, the Disorderly Houses Act was introduced in response to the changing demographics of London. This Act allowed city magistrates to license performances of illegitimate drama outside the confines of the theatre-royals under certain conditions. It was infused with the rhetoric of the culture of improvement and promoted theatre as an agent for social change. It physically extended London's theatrical sphere but stratified access to legitimate drama along class lines. The Dublin Stage Act of 1786 was introduced in response to a breakdown of public order in the city. It was greatly significant in that it was the first piece of statutory censorship for regulating the stage passed in Ireland. It was a very comprehensive piece of legislation which reestablished the monopoly of the theatre-royal over theatrical performance in Dublin. The Act did not, however, apply to the nascent theatres of

[12] Gerard O'Brien, 'The unimportance of public opinion in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland', *Eighteenth-century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, (1993), VIII: pp 115-27.
[13] David Thomas, 'The 1737 Licensing Act and its impact', in Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the Georgian theatre 1737-1832* (Oxford, 2013), pp 91-106, p. 96.
[14] David Thomas, 'The 1737 Licensing Act and its impact', p. 98.

the Irish provincial circuit. In 1788, the Theatrical Representations Act allowed for the local licensing of theatres outside London. This legitimised Britain's provincial theatre circuit and served to decentralise theatrical authority from London. The examination of the legislation under which the theatres laboured will allow for analysis of the agency of Irish figures operating within and in opposition to those legal structures.

The project will build on work by David Worrall and W.N. Osborough by exploring the legal relationship between the theatre scenes of London and Dublin.[15] The examination of the impact of legislation on theatrical culture, through the imposition of licensing and censorship, should also allow questions to be answered regarding the extent to which the court could maintain control over institutions of the public sphere. The thesis will identify periods of tension between the court and the public, and will investigate how this tension was expressed within the theatres. In this respect, the culture of riot will be explored through detailed analysis of particular disturbances within the theatre scenes of London and Dublin. This aspect of the project draws on the work of Helen Burke and Richard Gorrie.[16] Burke's materialist approach to Irish theatre is primarily concerned with social order and class struggle. The work is divided into a series of riotous case studies, all of which are astutely analysed within their wider socio-political context. Burke's particular focus on class struggles and identity politics within the theatre scene will be echoed in this thesis. Additionally, her methodological approach to analysis will be adopted, focusing on the intricacies of a specific event or individual before expanding the perspective to uncover the broader implications. While Burke's focus remains on Dublin, this thesis features additional comparative analysis to demonstrate the extent to which riotous events were connected across the theatre scenes of London and Dublin.

Considerable attention will be focused on tracing the interrelated processes of commercialisation and professionalisation within the theatre scenes of London and Dublin. This will anticipate discussion about the continuously contested issue of taste and the much-debated question of who ought to be determining it. The issue of taste was complicated by the commercialisation of culture during the period of study. As such, the thesis will assess the extent to which the traditional delineation between high and low art was blurred by the emergence of a 'popular' commercialised culture. Social status is also an important theme

[15] David Worrall, *Theatric revolution: drama, censorship and romantic period subcultures 1773-1832* (Oxford, 2006); W.N. Osborough, *The Irish stage: a legal history* (Dublin, 2015).
[16] Helen Burke, *Riotous performances: the struggle for hegemony in the Irish theatre, 1712-1785* (Notre Dame, 2003); Richard Gorrie, 'Gentle riots? Theatre riots in London, 1730-1780' (PhD thesis: University of Guelph, 2000).

running through the project. The thesis aims to investigate the opportunities for social mobility available to Irish individuals across the public spheres of London and Dublin, and will gauge the extent to which the theatre could operate as a platform for such opportunities.

Historiographical Review

Theatre historiography has, in the past decade, been the subject of several publications enquiring into what is meant by the continued use of the term 'theatre history'.[17] That acknowledgement of the significance of the term shows the extent to which theatre has been considered and studied as a separate category of historical research, largely removed from mainstream studies of socio-political change. This separatist approach has been followed from the beginning of theatre history, which occurred during the early modern period.

Theatre history has its origins in the 1660s.[18] By the mid-eighteenth century, however, it became common to attach a tract detailing the history of the London stage to biographies or memoirs of contemporary theatrical figures. The purpose of these histories was often to showcase the importance of the individual figure written about, as a means of detailing their contribution to the development of polite society. Notable among these early histories, were the publications of Thomas Betterton and Colley Cibber.[19] Such historical publications were much less common in the case of the Dublin stage, with a notable exception being Benjamin Victor's 1761 publication *The history of the theatres of London and Dublin, from the year 1730 to the present time*. Most of these publications were concerned with creating a narrative of historical progression which accounted for how the theatre scenes had come to represent the epitome of polite society by the mid-eighteenth century. Victor's narrative is significant in this respect, as his dual focus on London and Dublin placed the development of both theatre scenes along parallel trajectories; this was the only theatre history of this period to do so.

In the nineteenth century, theatre history became a branch of literary history. This placed greater emphasis on playwrights as significant figures within the historical narrative, pushing actors, managers and other theatre practitioners largely to the side-lines. Detailed, though often

[17] Charlotte Canning and Thomas Postlewait (eds), *Representing the past: essays in performance historiography* (Iowa, 2010); Richard Schoch, *Writing the history of the British stage, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 2016); Claire Cochrane and Jo Robinson (eds), *Theatre history and historiography: ethics, evidence and truth* (Basingstoke, 2016).
[18] Richard Schoch, *Writing the history of the British stage, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 2.
[19] Thomas Betterton, *The history of the English stage, from the restauration to the present time. Including the lives, characters and amours of the most eminent actors and actresses. With instructions for public speaking; wherein the action and utterance of the bar, stage and pulpit are distinctly considered. By Mr Thomas Betterton. Adorned with cuts* (London, 1741); Colley Cibber, *An apology for the life of Mr Colley Cibber, comedian, and late patentee of the theatre-royal. With an historical view of the stage during his own time* (London, 1740).

anecdotal, biographies of authors and playwrights were common. Interest grew in delineating between literary eras and genres, determining whether an author belonged to the Restoration, Enlightenment or Romantic periods of drama. In Britain, a distinctly nationalist approach to this literary history was adopted and is best exemplified by the establishment of the *Dictionary of National Biography* in 1885. A landmark series of publications titled the *English Men of Letters*, fixed perceptions on the eighteenth century's contribution to the English literary canon, with posterity favouring playwrights whose Irish identities were too easily obscured, namely Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan.[20]

At the turn of the twentieth century, focus shifted slightly from literary personalities to the recreation of the dramatic event itself. The historian's emphasis was on the retrieval, collation and ordering of archival sources. This led to the publication of directories of theatrical companies and calendars of performances, mostly pertaining to London.[21] These histories were less concerned with constructing narratives, instead adopting a framework of 'scientific objectivity' in recording the past.[22]

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Anglophone sphere of Irish socio-cultural history was pitted against that of Daniel Corkery's *Hidden Ireland*, a nationalist perspective that painted Ireland's eighteenth-century theatre scene as a strictly colonial enterprise.[23] This work was monumental in Irish historiography as it shifted the narrative of Irish history away from the Anglo-Irish political sphere and its print culture, thus giving voice to Gaelic Irish society. In doing so, however, Corkery erected a supposedly impermeable socio-cultural barrier between Gaelic and Anglo-Irish societies within Ireland.

It was the mid-twentieth century before the eighteenth-century Irish theatre scene became a subject of serious historical study, the most significant publication being Esther Sheldon's detailed history of the career of Thomas Sheridan as Dublin theatre-manager. Sheldon provided a generally well-rounded biography of the theatrical figure, as well as a calendar of performances for Smock Alley during the years of his management.[24] The work demonstrated the vibrancy of Dublin's theatrical scene in the mid-eighteenth century and was the first, since

[20] William Black, *Goldsmith* (London, 1878); Margaret Oliphant, *Sheridan* (London, 1883).
[21] Gerald Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline stage: dramatic companies and players, in two volumes* (Oxford, 1941).
[22] Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the twentieth century: from scientific objectivity to the postmodern challenge* (Middletown, 2005).
[23] Daniel Corkery, *The hidden Ireland: a study of Gaelic Munster in the eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1924).
[24] Esther Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley, recording his life as actor and theatre manager in both Dublin and London; and including a Smock-Alley calendar for the years of his management* (Princeton, 1967).

Benjamin Victor's 1761 publication, to consider the parallel development of the London and Dublin theatre scenes; its central commitment as a biographical work, however, somewhat limited its scope in this regard. The same decade saw the publication of William Smith Clark's seminal work on the eighteenth-century development of Irish theatre outside of Dublin.[25]

As the twentieth century progressed, historical scholarship became increasingly influenced by the emerging discipline of social science. This led to an interest in detailed micro-studies, while the adoption of Marxist frameworks promoted social perspectives over the traditional political narratives of history.[26] German philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas published a pioneering study in 1962, which provided a comprehensive, albeit abstract, framework for the historiography of the eighteenth century. This framework became more widely adopted after 1989 when Habermas's text was translated into English as *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*.[27] Habermas promoted the idea that a public sphere emerged out of discourse prompted by the preceding development of a literary sphere. Although Habermas himself only makes passing mention of the theatre, his emphasis on the literary development of society increased the importance attached to theatre history.

The 1990s saw a number of significant shifts occur in relation to British and Irish historiography as a revisionist perspective allowed for the adoption of new historiographic frameworks. Originally published in 1989, Hugh Kearney's *The British Isles: a history of four nations* provided a new framework for historiography which accounted for the development of competing national ideologies within the context of an expanding English imperial project.[28] Although this work acknowledged the influential impact of emergent national cultures throughout the British Isles, it struggled to shake off the Anglocentrism of the traditional narrative. Kearney's 'four nations' conceptual framework did, however, suggest that there was an interconnected sphere of discourse that stretched across the British Isles. This, in turn, led to questions about whether Ireland could fit into Habermas's public sphere model, which had been largely adopted within British historiography.

The 1990s also saw the emergence of an interdisciplinary approach to Irish history, known as 'Irish studies' but although this was a revisionist perspective, it retained a relatively nationalist

[25] William Smith Clark, *The Irish stage in the county towns, 1720s to 1800* (Oxford, 1965).
[26] Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the twentieth century: from scientific objectivity to the postmodern challenge* (Middletown, 2005).
[27] Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*.
[28] Kearney, *The British Isles*.

framework. Notably, the interest in Irish studies led to the establishment of the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, which sought to rival its British counterpart and reclaim the Irish identity of significant historical figures. The interest in Irish studies led to two key revisionist histories of Irish theatre: Christopher Morash's *A history of Irish theatre, 1601-2000* and Helen Burke's *Riotous performances: the struggle for hegemony in the Irish theatre, 1712-1785*. Morash's examination of the eighteenth-century theatre scene is relatively brief as a result of the expanse of his study.[29] Burke's work adds depth and detail to that narrative as she considers the development of the Dublin theatre scene within the context of evolving socio-political and socio-cultural discourse.[30] It should be noted that while neither Morash nor Burke make explicit use of the public sphere model, their works do not discredit it.

Much of the revisionism of the Irish studies discipline was concerned with debates about the extent to which Corkery's socio-cultural dichotomy could be maintained in the case of eighteenth-century Irish society. Joep Leerssen claimed that Gaelic Ireland was too fragmented to constitute a public along the lines of the Habermasian model.[31] In doing so, he maintained the binary of Irish historiography that Corkery had established. This argument had been pre-emptively refuted by Kevin Whelan, who posited that eighteenth century Anglo-Irish society was permeated by a Gaelic 'underground gentry'.[32] Whelan recognised that this emergent Gaelic bourgeoisie was disadvantaged by the Penal Laws, but he also demonstrated how they gradually became more visible and influential within Ireland's Anglophone public sphere. Toby Barnard has complimented Whelan's view by tracing a process of 'gentrification' through which figures of Gaelic and Catholic backgrounds could participate in an Irish public sphere.[33] Vincent Morley recently upheld Corkery's dichotomy of Irish society, claiming Corkery had painted an 'accurate picture of the popular mind' in eighteenth-century Ireland.[34]

Jurgen Habermas's traditional public sphere model assumed the shape of a singular sphere of discourse; a narrow outlook that has received considerable criticism. At the turn of the millennium, Michael Warner's 'Publics and Counterpublics' extended the Habermasian model by suggesting that the public sphere is merely the totality of discourse that occurs within and between a network of overlapping and interacting publics.[35] This more nuanced model allows

[29] Christopher Morash, *A history of Irish theatre, 1601-2000* (Cambridge, 2002).
[30] Burke, *Riotous performances*.
[31] Joep Leerssen, *Hidden Ireland, public sphere* (Galway, 2002), p. 37.
[32] Whelan, 'An underground gentry?'; idem, *The tree of liberty*.
[33] Toby Barnard, 'The gentrification of eighteenth-century Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/Iris an dá chultúr*, xii (1997), pp 137-55.
[34] Morley, *The popular mind*, p. 7.
[35] Michael Warner, 'Publics and counterpublics', *Public Culture*, xiv (2002), pp 49-90.

for economic, social, and cultural divisions between members of the same political state. It also acknowledges their engagement with each other which 'by virtue of being addressed' in turn validates their shared position within the larger public totality.[36] While the Habermasian model is based on a national framework, with eighteenth-century Britain presented as the 'model case' for development, Warner's extension of the theory allows it to be better utilised in colonial and transnational contexts.[37] This extension of the public sphere model enhances its applicability to the context of eighteenth-century Ireland.

In his doctoral study of the eighteenth-century British Isles, 'From Gaeltacht to Grub Street: the eighteenth-century public sphere in a four nations context', James Hamrick successfully integrates Kearney's four nations framework with that of Habermas's public sphere. Hamrick challenges the tendency within public sphere historiography to associate the framework exclusively with the development of print culture; he does this by incorporating multi-lingual manuscript sources within his assessment of public discourse.[38] Despite this, Hamrick's focus remains firmly on the textual culture of the public sphere. This emphasis on textual culture within Irish historiography is highlighted by some excellent major publications concerning print literature in early modern Ireland, such as Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield's edited volume on *The Irish book in English, 1550-1800* and Toby Barnard's *Brought to book: print in Ireland, 1680-1784*.[39]

Recent publications concerning the court culture of the Restoration era include frequent references to theatre culture as the two were intimately connected in both London and Dublin at that time. Matthew Jenkinson's *Culture and politics at the court of Charles II, 1660-1685* and Jane Ohlmeyer's *Making Ireland English: the Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century* both take a broad perspective in assessing the courtly aristocratic culture of the period.[40] Patrick Tuite's *Theatre of crisis: the performance of power in the kingdom of Ireland, 1662-1692* is an extensive study that locates the Dublin theatre within the context of an emerging set of public

[36] Ibid., p. 50.
[37] Jurgen Habermas, 'The model case of British development' in idem, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, pp 57-66.
[38] Hamrick, 'From Gaeltacht to Grub Street'.
[39] Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: print, reading and social change in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2005); Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (eds), *The Oxford history of the Irish book, volume iii: the Irish book in English, 1550-1800* (Oxford, 2006); Toby Barnard, *Brought to book: print in Ireland, 1680-1784* (Dublin, 2017).
[40] Matthew Jenkinson, *Culture and politics at the court of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Woodbridge, 2010); Jane Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: the Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century* (London, 2012).

institutions in the late seventeenth century.[41] Catie Gill's edited volume, *Theatre and culture in early modern England, 1650-1737: from Leviathan to Licensing Act*, is an equally substantial work that traces the development of London theatre from the interregnum period into the early eighteenth century.[42]

The relationship between culture and social order has increasingly been the subject of scholarly research. This is more so the case for London than Dublin, however, especially in relation to the study of social mobility. The emergence of a distinctly English bourgeoisie culture has been the subject of some major publications, including Paul Langford's *A polite and commercial people: England 1727-1783* and John Brewer's *The pleasures of the imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century*.[43] Tracing a corresponding Irish bourgeoisie culture has proved more challenging; Patrick Tuite, Martyn Powell and Padhraig Higgins all touch on the issue but remain primarily concerned with alternate themes of political development.[44] Thomas Power and Kevin Whelan's *Endurance and emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the eighteenth century* and Toby Barnard's *New anatomy of Ireland: the Irish Protestants, 1649-1770* both look at Irish class structures and social mobility more directly, though they take religious perspectives which rigidly divides society and reduces the resulting picture.[45]

Theatre historiography has increasingly been concerned with tracing the pervasiveness of performance culture in the eighteenth-century public sphere, even outside of theatrical spaces themselves. Theatre history's recent focus on public culture has led to a reassessment of theatre and drama's role in the Enlightenment era. Most of the significant publications addressing this issue have, however, been primarily concerned with the London theatre scene. In the case of Dublin, Burke touches on this performative aspect of eighteenth-century public culture but does not give it any sustained consideration or make use of Enlightenment terminology.[46] Padhraig Higgins's *A nation of politicians: gender, patriotism, and political culture in late eighteenth-century Ireland* examines the performative aspect of political culture but barely

[41] Patrick Tuite, *Theatre of crisis: the performance of power in the kingdom of Ireland, 1662-1692* (Cranbury, 2010).
[42] Catie Gill (ed.), *Theatre and culture in early modern England, 1650-1737: from Leviathan to Licensing Act* (London, 2017).
[43] Paul Langford, *A polite and commercial people: England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1998); John Brewer, *The pleasures of the imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century* (London, 1997).
[44] Tuite, *Theatre of crisis*; Martyn Powell, *The politics of consumption in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2015); Padhraig Higgins, *A nation of politicians: gender, patriotism, and political culture in late eighteenth-century Ireland* (Madison, 2010).
[45] Thomas Power and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Endurance and emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1990); Toby Barnard, *New anatomy of Ireland: the Irish Protestants, 1649-1770* (Yale, 2004).
[46] Burke, *Riotous performances*.

touches on theatre itself.[47] In contrast, Martyn Powell frequently refers to Dublin's theatrical scene in *The politics of consumption in eighteenth-century Ireland*, though his focus remains on political aspects of theatrical events.[48]

Other aspects of eighteenth-century culture have also received considerable attention in recent decades. Research on associational culture has proved particularly fruitful. Padhraig Higgins devotes a good portion of his study to discussion of the Volunteer movement in Irish performative culture, while James Kelly and Martyn Powell's edited volume *Clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Ireland* offers a thorough examination of the shape and reach of associational culture.[49] In the case of London, much of the research concerning the city's associational culture is centred around the figure of Samuel Johnson, as evident in Leo Damrosch's *The Club: Johnson, Boswell, and the friends who shaped an age*.[50] Scholarship concerning Irish musical culture during the period has been somewhat fragmented. Despite this, Barra Boydell and Leith Davis have both looked at the commercialisation of Irish musical culture and how it contributed to the construction of a nationalised Irish identity.[51] The social, cultural and political construction of national identities has been the central concern of several significant publications. Linda Colley has made a compelling argument for the forging of a British national identity during the period.[52] In the case of Ireland, several works trace the emergence of a nationalised Irish identity from various perspectives, though Joep Leerssen's *Mere Irish and fíor-Ghael: studies in the idea of Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the nineteenth century* is the most intimately connected with theatrical culture.[53]

The question of whether Ireland can be said to have undergone a process of Enlightenment over the course of the eighteenth century has been hotly debated within Irish historiography. Kevin Whelan was one of the first scholars to tentatively point towards the historical process of an Irish Enlightenment.[54] Stephen Conway located the development of Irish society in its

[47] Higgins, *A nation of politicians*.
[48] Powell, *The politics of consumption*.
[49] Higgins, *A nation of politicians*; James Kelly and Martyn Powell (eds), *Clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2010).
[50] Leo Damrosch, *The club: Johnson, Boswell, and the friends who shaped an age* (Yale, 2019).
[51] Barra Boydell, "Whatever has a foreign tone / we like much better than our own': Irish music and Anglo-Irish identity in the eighteenth century', in Mark Fitzgerald and John O'Flynn (eds), *Music and identity in Ireland and beyond* (Farnham, 2014), pp 19-38; Leith Davis, *Music, postcolonialism and gender: the construction of Irish national identity, 1724-1874* (Notre Dame, 2006).
[52] Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (Yale, 2005).
[53] Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and fíor-Ghael: studies in the idea of Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the nineteenth century* (Cork, 1996).
[54] Whelan, *The tree of liberty.*

European context in *Britain, Ireland, and continental Europe in the eighteenth century: similarities, connections, identities*.[55] It was 2016, however, before Michael Brown's seminal work *The Irish Enlightenment* addressed the question directly and thoroughly.[56]

The reassessment of British theatre culture within an Enlightenment context led to the realisation that 'Many of the eighteenth-century actors who starred on the London stage were either born in Ireland or of Irish ancestry'.[57] As a result, recent scholarship has been concerned with revaluating the contribution of Irish figures to both London's theatre scene and to the development of the British Enlightenment. Much of this work has been published in the form of revised biographical works, such as Michael Griffin's *Enlightenment in ruins: the geographies of Oliver Goldsmith* and Ian Newman and David O'Shaughnessy's *Charles Macklin and the theatres of London*.[58]

Perhaps the most significant publication, however, has been David O'Shaughnessy's Ireland, enlightenment, and the English stage, 1740-1820. O'Shaughnessy posits that Irish theatrical activity in London can be 'usefully categorised as a regional strand of the Irish Enlightenment'.[59] As such, he highlights the extent to which Irish theatrical practitioners employ the medium as an 'agent' of enlightenment. In accordance with O'Shaughnessy's argument, this thesis locates London-Irish theatrical activity within Brown's thematic chronology of the Irish enlightenment. O'Shaughnessy emphasises the opportunity that theatre provided 'for the Irish to demonstrate their capacity for civility'.[60] This concern with the performance of gentility will be a central theme of this thesis. O'Shaughnessy's work, however, is a little fragmented given the form of the edited collection. In addition, the work does not extend its study to the Restoration and early enlightenment eras, despite the considerable presence of Irish individuals in London's theatre scene prior to 1740. Thus, notwithstanding the increased attention to the contribution of Irish figures to enlightenment culture, to date, no work has explicitly addressed the relationship between the London and Dublin theatre scenes, and by extension their public spheres, during the period 1660 to 1800. This thesis proposes to

[55] Stephen Conway, *Britain, Ireland, and continental Europe in the eighteenth century: similarities, connections, identities* (Oxford, 2011).
[56] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*.
[57] Norman Poser, *The birth of modern theatre: rivalry, riots, and romance in the age of Garrick* (London, 2019), p. 40.
[58] Michael Griffin, *Enlightenment in ruins: the geographies of Oliver Goldsmith* (Plymouth, 2013); Ian Newman and David O'Shaughnessy (eds), *Charles Macklin and the theatres of London* (Liverpool, 2022).
[59] David O'Shaughnessy (ed.), *Ireland, Enlightenment and the English stage, 1740-1820* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 4
[60] O'Shaughnessy (ed.), *Ireland, Enlightenment and the English stage*, p. 16.

address this significant lacuna in the scholarship. The majority of this study is concerned with the London theatre scene, with the notable exception of three chapters: those by Michael Burden, Robert Jones and Colleen Taylor.[61] These authors each delve into a particular case study to illustrate the symbiotic relationship between the theatre scenes of London and Dublin, but no solid line of enquiry is carried throughout the section. This thesis proposes to scrutinise the fluctuating nature of the cultural relationship of London and Dublin by tracing the developments of their theatre scenes in tandem.

Primary Source Materials

Primary research for this thesis will focus mainly on print sources, as it is precisely their public nature that this project is concerned with. That said, the research draws on a wide variety of print sources from across the period to assess the development of public discourse around issues of Enlightenment, Irishness and theatre. Irish contributions to such discourse will be given priority within the research, both in the case of London and Dublin publications.

The literary content of plays will be consulted less than might be expected of a thesis concerned with the theatre. This is a result of the focus being given primarily to the discourse associated with the theatrical space and its practitioners. In general, the thesis will draw on author prefaces to plays, more than the actual dialogue. That said, there are sections of the thesis that will draw heavily on dramatic material. Particular attention will be given to Irish-authored plays that contain Irish characters, such as the dramatic works of George Farquhar (1677-1707) and John O'Keeffe (1747-1833).

The form of primary source used most extensively in this thesis is the pamphlet. The specific nature of the pamphlet's content lends itself to pointed discussion on topics related to the theatre. This is especially true during periods of theatrical conflict, when pamphlet debates erupt between different actors, managers, critics and spectators. The thesis will analyse pamphlet literature to investigate public and professional engagement with instances of explosive discourse centred around conflicts within the theatre scenes. Perhaps the most famous theatrical pamphlet of the period of study is Jeremy Collier's scathing *A short view of the immorality and profaneness of the English stage, together with the sense of antiquity upon this argument* (1698).[62] This will be examined along with other contemporary material in order

[61] 'Symbiotic stages: Dublin and London', in O'Shaughnessy (ed.), *Ireland, Enlightenment and the English stage*, pp 99-163.
[62] Jeremy Collier, *A short view of the immorality and profaneness of the English stage, together with the sense of antiquity upon this argument* (London, 1698).

to contextualise the discourse. Pamphlet debates around several theatrical disputes will be comparatively analysed to trace the development of theatrical discourse within the public sphere. Of particular note are the pamphlets composed by theatrical managers, in response to tumultuous events as early instances of efforts in public relations, for example, Thomas Sheridan's *A vindication of the conduct of the late manager of the theatre-royal. Humbly addressed to the publick* (1754).[63]

A variety of periodical publications, from London and Dublin will be examined to demonstrate the pervasiveness of theatrical matters in public discourse. London publications to be assessed include the *Spectator* (1711-14), the *Prompter* (1734-36), the *Critical Review* (1756-1817) and the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731-1907). In the case of Dublin, the *Intelligencer* (1728-29), the *Playhouse* (1749), and the *Hibernian Magazine* (1771-1811) will be consulted.

Newspaper publications from London and Dublin will be analysed to assess how theatrical occurrences were recorded and discussed in the mass media. They will also be examined, in conjunction with pamphlets and other periodical material, to explore how theatrical managers used print media as a business tool for conducting public relations. These sources are, however, inherently biased. Additionally, the print run for many publications was not long. The *London Gazette* is an exception to this rule, as it was the London Stationer Company's medium for the dissemination of official public announcements. Its publications ran right through the period of study, being in print from 1665 to the present, though its position as a literary organ of the government leaves it little room for lively public discourse. Many newspapers and their journalists were sponsored by government funding during the period and as a result, the agenda of partisan political parties permeates these publications. This is especially true from the mid-eighteenth century when party politics became institutionally engrained in the public spheres of both London and Dublin. In London, the *Public Advertiser* and the *Evening Post* were sympathetic to the Tory party agenda. By contrast, the *Public Ledger* and *Morning Chronicle* were oppositional papers, with whiggish sympathies. Interestingly, the *Public Ledger* had several Irish editors, including the playwrights Leonard McNally (1752-1820) and Hugh Kelly (1739-77). It is important to note that the London theatres were also generally politically divided in this period; Covent Garden housed Tory sympathies while Drury Lane hosted the oppositional Whiggish crowd. Similarly, in Dublin Smock Alley theatre was sympathetic to Tory politics, while Crow Street developed as its Whiggish counterpart. Dublin's newspapers

[63] Thomas Sheridan, *A vindication of the conduct of the late manager of the theatre-royal. Humbly addressed to the publick* (Dublin, 1754).

were also politically divided in this period; the *Dublin Journal* supported the government, while the *Freeman's Journal* was an oppositional paper. The latter's allegiance shifted slightly, however, after the establishment of Irish press censorship in 1784. This censorship was introduced after the rapid expansion of radical opposition papers, such as the *Volunteer's Journal*. The thesis intends to assess the development of connections between the press and the theatres. It was important, while conducting this research, to be mindful that the reporting and reviewing of theatrical events was often extremely biased as a result of the politicised nature of the press in both London and Dublin.

Legislation is another major primary source for this study, especially in the exploration of authority and structure within the theatrical scenes of London and Dublin. Legislative material is often referred to in the historiography, but few scholars treat it as source material for their research. This thesis will analyse the legal texts themselves to ascertain the reach of law as an authoritative structure within the theatre scenes. Beyond the original letters patent granted in 1662 to establish three theatre-royals across the British Isles, the most influential piece of theatrical legislation was the Licensing Act (1737).[64] This act was not, however, passed in the Irish parliament and led to a legal disparity between the theatre scenes of London and Dublin. The thesis will also analyse the Dublin Stage Act (1786), the first piece of theatrical legislation passed in the Irish parliament independent of London, in great detail.[65] The intention is to compare the legal structures of both theatre scenes and examine the extent that their differing regulatory systems impacted their corresponding development.

In addition to legislation, a number of publications relating to legal cases concerning the theatres and their practitioners will be examined. These range from publications supporting actor strikes, such as *Advertisement concerning the poor actors, who under pretence of hard usage from the patentees, are about to desert their service* (1709), to those reporting on court proceedings, such as *The genuine arguments of the council, with the opinion of the court of King's bench, on the causes shewn, why an information should not be exhibited against John Stephen James, Joseph Clarke, esqrs. Ralph Aldus, attorney at law, William Augustus Miles, James Sparks, and Thomas Leigh; for a riotous conspiracy, founded in private premeditated malice, to deprive Charles Macklin, one of the comedians, belonging to the theatre royal in*

[64] *An act to explain and amend so much of an act made in the twelfth year of the reign of Queen Anne, entitled, An act for reducing the laws relating to rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and vagrants into one Act of Parliament; and for the more effectual punishing such rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and vagrants, and sending them whither they ought to be sent, as relates to the common players of interludes* (London, 1737).
[65] *An act for regulating the stage in the city and county of Dublin* (Dublin, 1786).

Covent Garden, of his livelihood (1774).[66] The intention is that such publications will demonstrate how the courts ruled on theatrical disputes and give an indication of how much public attention these disputes garnered. As well as legislation that directly governed the theatres, this study will consider legislation that regulated the print industry in order to assess the legal relationship between the public media of the stage and the press. Of particular note is the Licensing of the Press Act (1662) and the Dublin Press Bill (1784).[67] Again, publications reporting on legal cases that linked the theatre and press will be examined, for example: *The trial of John Magee, for printing and publishing a slanderous and defamatory libel, against Richard Daly, esq*.[68]

Personal sources will also be used, although the main focus will be on those composed for public consumption. The thesis will occasionally draw on epistolary material, when appropriate, in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the individual behind the curtains. Of particular note is the letter collection of Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74), which has been collated into an edited collection by Michael Griffin and David O'Shaughnessy.[69] A select number of published diaries will be consulted, such as that of Samuel Pepys (1633-1703).[70] Of course, the blurred line between the private and public nature of these sources will need to be borne in mind. Many of the theatrical figures in this study were celebrities to their contemporaries. As such, there are a myriad of primary publications, including memoirs and biographies that reveal aspects of their personal and professional lives to the public. Many of these were compiled after their subject's death, but published by contemporary figures. Thus, the line between biography and memoir is not always clear, as certain publications are a mix of both forms. For example, the *Authentic memoirs: or, the life and character of that most celebrated comedian, Mr. Robert Wilks* (1732) and the *Memoirs of the life of the right*

[66] Zachery Baggs, *Advertisement concerning the poor actors, who under pretence of hard usage from the patentees, are about to desert their service* (London, 1709); *The genuine arguments of the council, with the opinion of the court of King's bench, on the causes shewn, why an information should not be exhibited against John Stephen James, Joseph Clarke, esqrs. Ralph Aldus, attorney at law, William Augustus Miles, James Sparks, and Thomas Leigh; for a riotous conspiracy, founded in private premeditated malice, to deprive Charles Macklin, one of the comedians, belonging to the theatre royal in Covent Garden, of his livelihood* (London, 1774).

[67] *An act for preventing the frequent abuses in printing seditious treasonable and unlicensed books and pamphlets and for regulating of printing and printing presses* (London, 1662); *To secure the liberty of the press by preventing abuses arising from the publication of traitorous, seditious, false and slanderous libels* (Dublin, 1784).

[68] Anon, *The trial of John Magee, for printing and publishing a slanderous and defamatory libel, against Richard Daly, esq.* (Dublin, 1790).

[69] Michael Griffin and David O'Shaughnessy (eds), *The letters of Oliver Goldsmith* (Cambridge, 2018).

[70] Samuel Pepys, in Stuart Sim (ed.), *The concise Pepys: with an introduction by Stuart Sim* (Ware, 1997).

honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1825).[71] Others are autobiographical works, authored by theatrical figures such as George Ann Bellamy (1731-88) and Colley Cibber (1671-1757).[72]

Didactic material will be analysed to assess the position of theatre within such instructive discourse. This material is categorised more by content than form, and includes essays, treatises, books, articles, pamphlets and lectures. One of the most insightful sources for stagecraft in this period is John Hill's *The actor: a treatise on the art of playing* (1750).[73] Essay material to be consulted includes David Hume's *Three essays, moral and political: never before published* (1748), as well as Thomas Sheridan's *British Education, or the source of the disorders of Great Britain. Being an essay towards proving that the immorality, ignorance, and false taste, which so generally prevail, are the natural and necessary consequences of the present defective system of education. With an attempt to show, that a revival of the art of speaking, and the study of our own language, might contribute, in a great measure, to the cure of those evils* (1756).[74] Lectures include the published texts of John Lawson's *Lectures concerning oratory* (1759) and Thomas Sheridan's *Oration* (1757).[75] It is hoped that these sources will reveal the didactic potential and purpose of the theatre as a public site for socio-cultural instruction.

Structure

This study is structured chronologically and comprises seven chapters. The individual chapters are delineated thematically and will trace the major developments in theatrical practice and culture across the period. Each chapter is further divided into sections which provide snapshot case studies that exemplify the central theme of the chapter and showcase the comparative development of the London and Dublin theatre scenes. Certain case studies will closely analyse

[71] Daniel O'Bryan, *Authentic memoirs: or, the life and character of that most celebrated comedian, Mr. Robert Wilks, who died on Wednesday the 27th of September 1732, in his grand climacterical year. To which is added an elegy on his death* (London, 1732); Thomas Moore, *Memoirs of the life of the right honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Cambridge, 1825).
[72] George Ann Bellamy, *An apology for the life of George Ann Bellamy , late of Covent Garden theatre. Written by herself. To the second volume, of which is annexed, her original letter to John Calcraft* (Dublin, 1785); Cibber, *An apology for the life.*
[73] John Hill, *The actor: a treatise on the art of playing* (London, 1750).
[74] David Hume, *Three essays, moral and political: never before published* (London, 1748); Thomas Sheridan, *British Education, or the source of the disorders of Great Britain. Being an essay towards proving that the immorality, ignorance, and false taste, which so generally prevail, are the natural and necessary consequences of the present defective system of education. With an attempt to show, that a revival of the art of speaking, and the study of our own language, might contribute, in a great measure, to the cure of those evils* (London, 1756).
[75] John Lawson, *Lectures concerning oratory. Delivered in Trinity College, Dublin, by John Lawson, D.D. Lecturer in oratory and history, on the foundation of Erasmus Smith, esquire* (Dublin and London, 1759); Thomas Sheridan, *Oration, pronounced before a numerous body of the nobility and gentry, assembled at the musick-hall in Fishamble-Street, on Tuesday the 6th of this instant December, and now first published at their unanimous desire* (Dublin, 1757).

particular theatrical events, while others will examine pivotal moments in the careers of Irish theatrical practitioners. The intention is to allow for detailed examination of significant moments and influential figures in the theatres of London and Dublin while maintaining the broad scope of the study.

Chapter One establishes the state of theatrical activity in London and Dublin at the outset of the period. To this end, the position of theatre within the public sphere will be examined in the context of the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. The opening section will concentrate on the Restoration process in London. It will focus on how theatre was used to mediate the relationship between the court and the city, with a comparative view of the management strategies employed by the two patent holders. The second section will trace the restoration of Dublin's theatre scene and examine its standing as a cultural space that functioned alongside the city's court of claims. The immense influence of the Lord Lieutenant's engaged patronage of Smock Alley theatre will be highlighted. The third section will seek to trace the impact of political divisiveness on the stability of the theatres-royal in both London and Dublin. Here, attention will focus on the manner in which political partisanship was dramatically expressed in the late seventeenth century. The final section will outline a series of legal disputes that erupted within the London theatre scene at the turn of the eighteenth century. By the conclusion of this chapter, the pattern of theatrical movement between the London and Dublin will be shown to have reversed, with significant Irish involvement in the management of London's trend-setting theatres.

Chapter Two will trace the development of the stage-Irishman during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The chapter seeks to establish how Irish playwrights and actors influenced the perception and portrayal of Irish identity on stage. The first section will examine the ethnic caricature of Teague in Robert Howard's *The Committee* (1663) to reveal the position of the stage-Irishman in the direct aftermath of the Restoration. The impact of the Popish Plot (1678-81) on the portrayal of Irish identity in London's theatre scene will also be highlighted. The second section will focus on the career of Irish playwright George Farquhar (1678-1707), whose representation of Anglo-Irish identity shattered the homogenous nature of the stage-Irish trope. Farquhar's characterisation will be presented within the theatrical context of shifting class dynamics within London's theatre scene, as the conservative taste of the bourgeoisie encouraged the development of a sentimental form of comedy in the initial decades of the eighteenth century. The third section will focus on the emerging genre of ballad opera and its debt to Irish folk music during the late 1720s. The section will explore the Irish influence

on London's most successful ballad operas written by Englishman John Gay (1685-1732) and Irishman Charles Coffey (*c.*1700-45), and consequently, their influence on the development of comedic taste in Dublin. The final section of the chapter will examine Irish actor-manager Thomas Sheridan's (1719-88) attempt to subvert the stage-Irish trope by concentrating dramatic action on the reception the character receives in London. The section will also reveal Sheridan's gentrification of the Gaelic stage-Irishman through a process of cultural adaptation.

Chapter Three will analyse social mobility within the public sphere during the 1730s and 1740s. This issue will be examined in the context of Enlightenment discourse concerning the social performance of gentility. The chapter will open with an exploration of the elocution movement as a significant factor in the professionalisation of the London theatre scene at the turn of the eighteenth century. The focus will then shift to Dublin, where Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788) will be seen emerging as a central figure shaping the theatre's position within the city's public sphere. Sheridan's contribution to Ireland's discourse of 'improvement' will be addressed within the socio-political context of the mid-eighteenth century. The chapter will present an in-depth examination of a debate known as the Gentlemen's Quarrel (1747), which erupted from a series of riots at Dublin's Smock Alley theatre. This contextualised analysis of the debate concerning gentility will unveil the divisions within Dublin's Anglo-Irish socio-cultural sphere. The chapter will close with a return to London's theatre scene, and a discussion of the Irish actor-orators involved in teaching the performance of gentility. Mounting criticism of this performative culture will also be examined, as a new 'natural' style of performance emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The chapter aims to highlight the intimate connection between oratory, elocution, and acting during the first half of the eighteenth century.

Chapter Four will discuss Irish influences on the development of a 'naturalised' acting style within the Shakespearean genre during the 1740s and 1750s. It will begin with a discussion of the development of natural philosophy, particularly in relation to human variation. Emphasis will be placed on the concept of 'liberty' within a British context, as the mid-century discourse on national character will be examined. The section will finish with a short discussion of the aesthetic discourse that developed within that of natural philosophy from the 1720s, and its impact on artistic ideals and principles. The second section of the chapter will seek to determine how these developments in social, cultural and political discourse influenced the emerging trend for 'naturalised' acting in the London theatre from the 1740s. The crucial contribution made by Irish actor Charles Macklin (*c.*1699-1797) to the rise of this 'natural' style of performance will be assessed. The third section will explore the elevation of Shakespeare

within the English literary canon and his emergence as an exemplar of 'national' character. This will be followed by a discussion of the rivalled careers of Irish actor Spranger Barry (1719-77), and the eighteenth century's most celebrated actor David Garrick (1717-79). Their portrayal of Shakespearean characters will be contrasted, giving specific attention to the representation of racial and national identity in productions of *Othello*. The final section will switch the chapter's focus from London to Dublin, as the rise of Shakespearean bardolatry will be examined within an Irish context.

Chapter Five will examine the shifting position of theatre within the public sphere in the 1750s and early 1760s, at the apex of the transition from social to political Enlightenment. Attention will be drawn to the role of the theatre manager in driving the commercialisation of theatrical culture and the violent opposition changes to customary practice could incite. The theatre's idealised role as an impartial space for public discourse will be discussed as struggles within the social order escalated with the politicisation of the populace. The growth of patriot politics in both Britain and Ireland will be shown to foster an increasing sense of 'nationalised' identity, as patriotic rhetoric fuelled cultural discourse. The chapter will first establish the extent to which the sociological model of the public sphere applied to the Irish situation in the mid-eighteenth century. The position of the theatre within the public sphere will then be analysed as will the concept of popular protest. Attention will then turn to examining the socio-political context of two sets of theatre riots, the first occurring at Dublin's Smock Alley theatre in 1754, and the second at London's Drury Lane theatre in the following year. Both of these events had their origins in the growth in support for parliamentary opposition and thrust the theatre directly into the contentious realm of political discourse. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of a series of riots at both of London's patent theatres in 1763.

Chapter Six will trace the changing conditions of authorship from the 1760s to the 1780s, a phase of fluctuation between the Enlightenment and Romantic periods. The practical elements of the profession of writing will be examined within the context of changing practices in the theatre scenes. The chapter will open by tracing structural developments in the literary spheres of London and Dublin, while considering the impact of commercialisation and professionalisation on playwrights. It will also discuss the issue of taste and the development of literary criticism. The chapter will then consider the work of Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74), analysing the early stages of his literary career alongside that of Hugh Kelly (1739-77). Goldsmith's literary legacy will also be briefly examined, as a rare example of an author who lived up to the ideal of impartiality within the public sphere. The third section will explore how

Charles Macklin (*c.*1699-1797), with the aid of Irish lawyer and playwright Arthur Murphy (1727-1805), challenged the legal status of literary property by attempting to claim copyright over performance. The focus will then briefly switch to Dublin's literary sphere, in an attempt to account for the dearth of literary activity during the period, while also examining an unusual burst of dramatic writing in the early 1770s. The final section will concentrate on the early literary career of Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), and examine how the anonymity of the public audience made the author retreat into the closed oratorical environment of politics.

Chapter Seven will explore how the breakdown of social order prompted debates around the issue of stage regulation and theatrical authority during the final two decades of the eighteenth century. It will also reveal the manner in which the radicalisation of Irish political opinion was performed culturally within the theatre scenes of both cities. The aim of this chapter is to observe how political enlightenment, and reactions to it, were culturally manifested in the contested space of the public theatre scene. The chapter will open with a discussion of how the expansion and radicalisation of Dublin's theatrical sphere was countered by unprecedented regulatory measures, in reaction to the breakdown of social order in the city. The second section will concentrate on the pastoral comedies of Irish playwright John O'Keeffe (1747-1833) as he moved between the theatre scenes of Dublin and London in the 1780s. It will also show how he represented an intersection of the literary, social, and political spheres between London and Dublin in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. The third section will discuss a pamphlet debate that erupted in 1787, following the opening of the Royalty Theatre in London, which acted against stringent theatrical regulations that had protected the court's control over the theatre sphere since 1737. It will also reflect on the social status of actors and the political potency of what David Worrall has termed 'theatrical vocalization', by examining Richard Brinsley Sheridan's (1751-1816) management of Drury Lane theatre.[76] The final section of the chapter will look at how radicalised and polarised political culture was performed by spectators within the Dublin theatre scene, despite the legal regulations imposed on the city's stages. The outbreak of regular rioting within the theatres during the 1790s will be considered in its political context.

[76] David Worrall, *The politics of romantic theatricality, 1787-1832: the road to the stage* (New York, 2007), p. 12.

Chapter 1

'to set on some quantity': management and movement between the theatres of London and Dublin, 1660-*c.*1710[1]

This chapter discusses the state of theatrical activity in London and Dublin at the outset of the period under study. To this end, the position of theatre within the public sphere will be examined in the context of the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Following a discussion on the restoration process in London, attention will focus on how theatre was used to mediate the relationship between court and city, with a comparative analysis of the management strategies employed by the two patent holders. The restoration of Dublin's theatre scene will then be examined with particular emphasis on its standing as a cultural space that functioned alongside the city's court of claims. Here, the immense influence of the Lord Lieutenant's engaged patronage of Smock Alley theatre will be highlighted. Attention then turns to tracing the impact of political divisiveness on the stability of the theatres-royal in both London and Dublin, demonstrating the way in which political partisanship was dramatically expressed in the late seventeenth century. A series of legal disputes that erupted within the London theatre scene at the turn of the eighteenth century are then examined. As this chapter demonstrates, by the conclusion of the first decade of the eighteenth century the pattern of theatrical movement between London and Dublin had reversed, with significant Irish involvement in the management of London's trend-setting theatres.

'court even the coursest of the people into goodnesse': restoring the theatres and courting the public[2]

After a decade of continental exile, the Stuart court returned to the city of London on 29 May 1660. The majority of the city's population welcomed the restoration 'on social as well as political grounds'.[3] The monarch had to assert authority over the political nation, but he and his court also sought to impose their presence within the burgeoning public sphere. Over the previous century, increased commercial activity and royal antagonism had distanced many of the city's public spaces from direct royal control. After the Elizabethan period, there had been 'a withdrawal of polite society from the popular culture in which it used to participate'.[4] As a

[1] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2 in Edmond Malone (ed.), *The plays and poems of William Shakespeare*, pp 280-86.
[2] William Davenant, *A proposition for the advancement of morality, by a new way of entertainment of the people* (London, 1654), p. 20.
[3] J. R. Jones, *Country and court: England, 1658-1714* (London, 1978), p. 71.
[4] Alexander Leggatt, *Jacobean public theatre* (London, 1992), p. 32.

result, the courts of both James I and Charles I had fostered an ostentatious, but private, cultural sphere which remained largely separate from that of the city's public. Charles II, however, purposefully used the opportunity of re-penetrating the political sphere to enter and dominate the public one too.

Matthew Jenkinson has demonstrated how the official celebrations surrounding Charles II's coronation, which took place in April of 1661, were characterised by an acute awareness of lingering tension between the city's municipal authorities and the king's restored court.[5] As was customary for monarchical coronations, the city authorities largely financed the public pageantry through the streets.[6] For this, John Ogilby (1600-76) was selected to design the entertainments. Ogilby had been Master of the Revels in Ireland prior to the interregnum, but spent most of the intervening years translating classical literature.[7] He designed four triumphal arches, erected at different parts of the city, which provided a backdrop for short dramatic entertainments during the king's procession. These entertainments were highly allegorical, intended to illustrate the king's illustrious character and position to the public, but also provide a moral lesson to the monarch on the desired virtues of a ruler. The stylised form of these dramatic interludes had a similar purpose to the masques staged in the pre-interregnum courts. One of the triumphal arches depicted 'a Citizen of *London*', after the classical fashion, who sought the protection of a benevolent monarch, the allegory calling for a Hobbesian social contract to be honoured between the monarch and his subjects.[8] This depiction of the citizen's fealty to the monarch, foreshadowed the king's calculated move into London's public sphere. The move to court the public is very evident in the manner in which the city's theatres were restored.

The extent to which the reopening of London's public theatres may be considered a 'restoration' is debatable. The city's public theatre scene had only been in existence since 1567, when the first fixed space for continuous theatrical activity was established.[9] Players, on all levels of society, traditionally only performed at festivals and celebrations. During the intervening periods, members of court companies would go strolling on a provincial circuit,

[5] Matthew Jenkinson, *Culture and politics at the court of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Woodbridge, 2010), p. 23.
[6] Ibid., p. 50.
[7] Terry Clavin, 'Ogilby, John', *DIB*, https://dib.cambridge.org/viewFullScreen.do?filename=/app/dib/production/content/html/9780521633314_7103.htm [accessed 3 Mar. 2021].
[8] John Ogilby, *The relation of his majesty's entertainment passing through the city of London, to his coronation: with description of the triumphal arches, and solemnity* (London, 1661), p. 20.
[9] Douglas Bruster, 'The birth of an industry', in Jane Milling and Peter Thomson (eds.), *The Cambridge history of British theatre: volume 1, origins to 1660* (Cambridge, 2004), pp 224-42, p. 225.

presenting their rehearsals of court entertainments to the public. In an attempt to profit from the commercialisation of society, however, court companies began to petition for a permanent London venue where they could perform for a popular audience in close proximity to their patrons. The establishment of these theatres from the 1560s caused considerable conflict between court and city authorities, as they vied for control over the public space.[10] Custom dictated that the players themselves were servants of the court, their noble patrons providing them with liveries. Their activity within a fixed commercial space, however, was separate from the court and subject to London's public authorities. Theatre companies often attempted to avoid regulation by settling just outside the perimeter of the city's jurisdiction, though this never quelled the conflict. Charles's concerted drive to court the public by establishing an imposing presence upon the commercial theatre space in London largely prevented a resumption of that conflict.

The restoration of London's public theatres was characterised by the granting of two royal patents, one to Thomas Killigrew (1612-83) and the other to William Davenant (1606-68). Killigrew was being rewarded for his loyalty, having followed the king into exile, while Davenant was rewarded for his perseverance, having continued theatrical activity during the interregnum. Killigrew enjoyed the patronage of the monarch himself, with his players restoring the King's Company, while Davenant formed the Duke's Company under the patronage of the duke of York. Initially, Killigrew possessed the obvious advantage as he could claim continuity with the pre-interregnum King's Company. This continuity was immensely important for securing dramatic rights, as plays were considered the property of whichever company had been granted license to perform them.[11] As a result, Killigrew could instantly lay claim to the exclusive right of his company to perform the best of the pre-interregnum repertoire, including the works of Jonson, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher. The duke of York, however, was a new theatrical patron; thus, Davenant had no claim upon the repertoire apart from those works he had written himself. He resorted to petitioning the king for a fairer division of plays and was granted rights to a small portion of Killigrew's set. The prominence of Shakespearean works among this portion has drawn much scholarly attention. Gary Taylor claims that Killigrew's willingness to part with these plays suggests that they were not highly

[10] M. C. Bradbrook, *The rise of the common player: a study of actor and society in Shakespeare's England* (London, 1964), p. 46.
[11] Joseph Donohue, 'Introduction: the theatre from 1660 to 1800' in idem (ed.), *The Cambridge history of the British theatre: volume 2, 1660 to 1895* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 7.

regarded at the time.[12] However, it seems more likely that Davenant requested rights to Shakespeare's work in particular. He had a personal connection to the bard, who was a friend of his father and he claimed to have been Shakespeare's godson, though this is debatable.[13] Undoubtedly this helped Davenant's petition to secure the rights to Shakespeare's plays.

Armed with their repertoires, the two managers turned to converted tennis courts as their theatrical venues. With his more varied set of plays and more illustrious patron, Killigrew quickly populated his company with the most prominent actors from the pre-interregnum theatre scene. These included Michael Mohun (*c.*1616-84), Charles Hart (1625-83) and John Lacy (*c.*1615-81). They began operating a theatre at Vere Street in Lincoln-Inn's Fields. Killigrew pursued a management strategy focused on literal restoration: staging old plays, with old actors, in the old style. Davenant, on the other hand, had a more innovative streak. He understood that a company's success could rest with a star performer; so while Killigrew hastened to populate his company with as many experienced actors as possible, Davenant concentrated on securing Thomas Betterton (1635-1710) as his lead player. This tactic was successful, likely aided by the heightened taste for heroic drama during the period.[14]

While Killigrew held the initial advantage by appealing to the restoration's narrative of continuity, Davenant drew on his familiarity with London's theatre scene. Davenant had worked with the architect Indigo Jones (1573-1652) on staging masques in the Stuart court at the final years before the interregnum. During the Civil War, he briefly served as a messenger for the royalist side before being imprisoned in the Tower of London. After his release in 1654, Davenant wrote *A proposition for the advancement of morality, by a new way of entertainment of the people*. In this pamphlet, he made a case for the usefulness of public entertainment as a means to 'court even the coursest of the people into goodnesse'.[15] Mindful of the Parliamentarian audience at which his proposition was aimed, Davenant avoided theatre-specific terminology, as the staging of plays had been banned by act of parliament in 1642: 'Public Stage Plays shall cease'.[16] He also highlighted how public entertainment could be used as a propaganda tool in promoting support for the state's war with Spain.[17] This was a smart

[12] Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: a cultural history from the restoration to the present* (London, 1989), p. 11.
[13] Mary Edmond, 'Davenant [D'Avenant], Sir William', *ODNB,* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7197 [accessed 12 Mar. 2021].
[14] Frances Kavenik, *The restoration repertory theatre: 1659-1668* (Chicago, 1977), p. 26.
[15] Davenant, *A proposition for the advancement of morality*, p. 20.
[16] Martin Butler, 'The condition of the theatres in 1642' in Milling and Thomson (eds), *The Cambridge history of British theatre: volume 1, origins to 1660*, pp 439-54, p. 439.
[17] Davenant, *A proposition for the advancement of* morality, pp 30-31.

move; in 1656, Davenant was granted permission to host an entertainment at his own property. The forced closure of the theatres in 1642 fractured the traditional delineation of form and genre; this allowed Davenant to blend and adapt various styles of entertainment. Steven Watkins has pointed to the centrality of music in these entertainments, suggesting this may have been an attempt to appeal to the Cromwellian regime's relatively favourable stance on music as a cultural practice, in comparison with dance and drama.[18] A spy was reportedly sent to view Davenant's entertainment, though he must have passed the test, as he was given permission to move into the public space of the old Cockpit theatre, which was located just outside the jurisdiction of the city of London.[19] Here, he staged several productions with strong anti-Spanish themes. When the restoration of the monarchy was imminent, Davenant professed his allegiance with another publication: *A Panegyrick to his excellency, the Lord Generall Monck* (1659). Although this rapid switching of sides may have left his political allegiance in doubt, by 1660 Davenant was certainly the most qualified man for the position of theatre-manager in London. After he was appointed, he returned to staging plays, but he also adopted what he had learnt from the blended entertainments of the interregnum period. As a result, Davenant incorporated the elaborate moveable scenery of the court masque, along with music and dance entre-acts, into his restoration productions. These innovations proved immensely successful; despite being his rival's patron, Charles II attended a production by the Duke's Company before that of the King's Company.[20] Davenant clearly managed to overcome the challenges of his initial disadvantaged position to run a commercially successful theatre.

A theatrical innovation that Killigrew is usually credited with is the first employment of an actress on the English stage. Margaret Hughes (*c.*1645-1719) has been identified as the first actress to appear in public, being employed at Vere Street from as early as December of 1660.[21] This advance may at first appear out of character for Killigrew, but when considered in the context of the court culture to which the manager pandered, it is unexceptional. Indeed, within the private theatrical space of the court, it was established practice for women to perform in plays and masques. Both Queen Anne and Queen Henrietta Maria had been enthusiastic patrons of, and active participants in, such entertainments.[22] In fact, the first known record of the

[18] Steven Watkins, 'The protectorate playhouse: William Davenant's cockpit in the 1650s', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, xxxvii (2019), pp 89-109, p. 91.
[19] Edmond, 'Davenant [D'Avenant], Sir William', *ODNB*.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Melissa Merchant, "The woman newly come, called Pegg': an historiographical examination of Margaret Hughes as the Vere Street Desdemona', *The Seventeenth Century*, xxxv (2020), pp 651-65, p. 652.
[22] David Lindley, 'The Stuart masque and its makers'in Milling and Thomson (eds), *The Cambridge history of British theatre: volume 1, origins to 1660*, pp 383-406, p. 387.

English word 'actress' being used appears in an account of Queen Henrietta Maria's first appearance in a court play in 1626.[23] The emergence of the commercial stage actress during this period appears as a result of the extension of court culture into the public sphere. Killigrew's willingness to place women on his stage is not, therefore, that surprising. Davenant quickly followed the lead of the King's Company and employed actresses within his troupe too.[24] In the official theatre patents issued in 1662, the Crown gave explicit permission for the presence of women on London's public stages: 'We likewise permit and give leave that all the women's parts to be acted in either of the said two companies for the time to come, may be performed by women'.[25] Killigrew's intimate connections with the court allowed several of his actresses, including Margaret Hughes and the infamous Nell Gwyn (1650-87), to forge financially beneficial relationships with the nobility. Meanwhile, the four actresses Davenant employed were reportedly housed in private lodgings at the company's expense, for the purpose of protecting their virtue.[26] Mary Saunderson (1637-1712) was the leading actress in the Duke's Company. She and Betterton made an immensely popular duo on Davenant's stage, especially after the two married in 1662.[27]

Despite his long tenure as theatre-manager, Killigrew was careless in managing money, and frequently landed his company in debt. He also lacked experience in commercial enterprise and delegated much of his business management to his lead players.[28] By contrast, Davenant was an astute manager who had experience negotiating between commercial profit and aristocratic patronage. For the duration of his management, his finances were largely under the capable control of his second wife Henrietta Maria du Tremblay (d.1691), which allowed him to remain in the good graces of his company.[29] As such, Davenant managed a commercially successful theatre. David Roberts has criticised the tendency of theatre historians to dismiss Killigrew's management as mercenary and unartistic.[30] This is all too easily done when compared with Davenant's approach. What is most relevant in the context of this study is that the two managers represent opposite interests in the 'mixed economy of seventeenth-century

[23] Benjamin Rudyerd (1626), quoted in Elizabeth Howe, *The first English actresses: women and drama, 1660-1700* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 21.
[24] Howe, *The first English actresses*, p. 24.
[25] Merchant, "The woman newly come, called Pegg', p. 653.
[26] Howe, *The first English* actresses, p. 24.
[27] Edmond, 'Davenant [D'Avenant], Sir William', *ODNB*.
[28] J. P. Vander Motten, 'Killigrew, Thomas', *ODNB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15538 [accessed 10 Mar. 2021].
[29] Edmond, 'Davenant [D'Avenant], Sir William',*ODNB*.
[30] David Roberts, 'Thomas Killigrew, theatre manager' in Philip Major (ed.), *Thomas Killigrew and the seventeenth-century English stage: new perspectives* (London, 2013), pp 62-90.

theatre'.[31] Whereas Davenant successfully popularised restoration theatre as a commercial form of culture, Killigrew continued to endow drama with its traditional courtly purpose. This can be seen in his employment of playwrights, such as John Dryden (1631-1700) and William Wycherley (1641-1716).[32] While Davenant concentrated his energies and finances on star players and ornate scenery, Killigrew commissioned new plays to be written and performed as offerings to the king and his court.

Traditionally, drama was a form of artistic gift, a symbolic act of fealty to a patron or superior. Within court culture, these offerings were generally considered an acceptable way of communicating criticism and instruction, as well as loyalty and praise, to social superiors.[33] The commercialisation of drama, however, upset this traditional purpose. When dramatic works, which remained a common format for criticism, were presented to a commercial public rather than a patron's private audience, their message became satirical rather than instructive. This was especially the case with published drama, which was even more open to reprimand than performance, and much more likely to forego censorship.[34] That perhaps explains the continued interest in circulating work through manuscript form within elite circles, as they continued to present their traditional offerings away from the open criticism of the public sphere.

With the official restoration of the theatres in 1662, censorship of theatre, in both performance and print, was revived along with the office that held singular control over it. Thomas Killigrew was named Master of the Revels in 1660, though with the popular repertoire replete with old plays and translations of French and Italian works, there was little to censor. Only ten plays are known to have been banned from the public stage between 1660 and 1678, but it was common to have lines altered or removed.[35] Thus, the Crown's control over the public theatre was manifest largely in the restoration of the old repertoire of plays, which created a 'profoundly conservative culture of repetition and continuity'.[36]

Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant approached their management of London's restored theatre scene from opposite ends of both the economic and cultural spectrum. While Killigrew

[31] Roberts, 'Thomas Killigrew, theatre manager', p. 64.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Janette Dillon, 'Theatre and controversy, 1603-1642' in Milling and Thomson (eds), *The Cambridge history of British theatre: volume 1, origins to 1660*, pp 364-82, p. 376.
[34] John Feather, 'Controlling the press in restoration England', *Publishing History*, lxxiv (2014), pp 7-48, p. 11.
[35] Emma Depledge, 'Authorship and alteration: Shakespeare on the exclusion crisis stage and page, 1678-1682' in Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (eds.), *Medieval and early modern authorship* (Zurich, 2011), pp 199-214, p. 207.
[36] Donohue, 'Introduction: the theatre from 1660 to 1800', p. 12.

essentially ran a traditional courtly theatre that had been lauded as a public space, Davenant adapted his experience with both commercial and court theatre to maximise the success of his modern enterprise. Killigrew's frequent descent into debt left him reliant on the king's favour and patronage. Davenant, by contrast, managed to negotiate between the necessity for patronage under the patent system and his ambitious and innovative approach to popular entertainment.

'So much of Royalty his Presence bore': restoring the Dublin theatres and performing claims of honour[37]

In Ireland, public institutions such as the theatre could be used to promote a culture of political unity under the Crown. It was for this purpose that Dublin's first official public theatre was established by Lord Lieutenant Wentworth in the 1630s. Wentworth had arrived in Ireland with the singular goal of centralising all authority around the English monarch. He was a frequenter of London's theatres and sought to establish a similar public space in Dublin to promote his agenda.[38] Wentworth left the undertaking of this task in the capable hands of John Ogilby (1600-76). Ogilby was of Scottish birth but had spent much of his youth at the English court, where his involvement in masques earned him a reputation as a talented dancer.[39] However, an injury soon led him to retire from performance in favour of becoming a dance-master. It was in this capacity that Ogilby entered the service of Wentworth, who brought him to Dublin as a member of his household. Under Ogilby's management and Wentworth's patronage, a playhouse was erected at Werburgh Street, close by Dublin Castle. There is some uncertainty concerning the exact date of the theatre's opening, but it is generally estimated to have commenced business in 1636.[40] The timing was fortuitous, as an outbreak of plague forced the closure of London's theatres in that year, which allowed Ogilby to entice some of its leading practitioners to Dublin.[41] The most influential of these was English playwright James Shirley (1596-1666), who wrote several plays specifically for a Dublin audience. These included the celebrated *St Patrick for Ireland* (1640), which drew on motifs from medieval pageantry and Gaelic folk drama, in an attempt to entice more of the city's public to engage

[37] Nahum Tate, *A pastoral in memory of his grace the illustrious duke of Ormond, deceased July the 21st 1688* (London, 1688), p. 10.
[38] Dougal Shaw, 'Thomas Wentworth and monarchical ritual in early modern Ireland', *The Historical Journal*, xiix (2006), pp 331-55, p. 351.
[39] Terry Clavin, 'Ogilby, John', *DIB*, https://dib.cambridge.org/viewFullScreen.do?filename=/app/dib/production/content/html/9780521633314_7103.htm [accessed 3 Mar. 2021].
[40] Alan Fletcher, *Drama, performance, and polity in pre-Cromwellian Ireland* (Cork, 2000), pp 262-63.
[41] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 4.

with the new theatre.[42] The venture was not successful, however, as Wentworth was very unpopular in Ireland. The theatre's struggle to find a supportive audience is suggested by the published prologue to Shirley's *St Patrick for Ireland*: 'For some have their opinions so displeas'd/ They come not with a purpose to be pleas'd'.[43] Werburgh Street theatre closed at the outbreak of the 1641 rebellion, with Shirley and Ogilby returning to England. There, they both spent the interregnum engaged in the expanding print trade.[44]

The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 was joyfully lauded as the 'fair beginnings of Decencie and Order' in Ireland.[45] The absence of the king from Dublin, however, made it difficult to give cohesive expression to royalist loyalty within the city's public sphere. This is evident in the somewhat disjointed nature of the coronation celebrations that took place in 1661. While the celebrations in London were centred around the king's person and his procession through the city, the Dublin event lacked a focal point. Instead, the city's corporation chose a number of topographical points and paraded between them. The most noteworthy of these was the gate to Dublin Castle, which the city's citizens marched through to 'take possession' of the kingdom's political institutions on behalf of Charles II.[46] The seemingly open state of the courtly space of Dublin Castle mirrored the hopes of many within the Irish public sphere who wished to be admitted to the noble institution. It was these contested claims to nobility and aspirations to court position that would cause the most conflict within Dublin's public sphere during the Restoration period.

Brendan Kane has written of how Gaelic Irish lords increasingly aligned their sense of honour with that which characterised continental cultures. He notes how this transition in elite culture may be traced through the linguistic change in seventeenth-century Gaelic writing, whereby the word 'eineach' was replaced with 'onóir', denoting the shift away from the traditional legalistic view of personal honour to a 'complex of attitudes and behaviors that regulated social' order.[47] This performative understanding of personal honour was compatible with English noble culture, especially during the Restoration period, when the fashions of continental courts were emulated after the return from exile. This convergence between English

[42] James Shirley, *St Patrick for Ireland, the first part* (London, 1640).
[43] Shirley, 'Prologue', in *St Patrick for Ireland,* p i.
[44] Clavin, 'Ogilby, John', *DIB.*
[45] James Butler, *The speech of his grace, James, duke of Ormond, lord lieutenant of Ireland. To both houses of parliament, on Saturday the 27 of September, 1662. Upon his graces giving the royal assent to several acts of parliament* (London, 1662), p. 7.
[46] Usher, 'Court and city in restoration Dublin', p. 15.
[47] Brendan Kane, 'Making the Irish European: Gaelic honor politics and its Continental contexts', *Renaissance Quarterly*, lxi, 4 (2008), pp 1139-66, p. 1148.

and Gaelic understandings of elite culture within Ireland was coupled with an increased acceptance of political reality among the Gaelic lords, as they acknowledged the 'need to acclimatize to a British political agenda' in the wake of the War of the Three Kingdoms.[48] Although Gaelic lords were dispossessed of much of their land holdings, they maintained their elite status within the Gaelic socio-political sphere. At the same time, there were many new settlers in Ireland, who had acquired land and title through an 'inflation of honours'.[49] This cohort were largely from commercial and military backgrounds, with little claim to lineage and prestige, which undermined the traditional demarcations of nobility. Upon the restoration of the monarchy, therefore, the very concept of nobility was in a fractured state in Ireland. Claims to elite status were highly contested, with all factions eager to perform their honour in the hopes of securing their position under the Act of Settlement. Although deeply divided along ethnic and religious lines, all claimants were eager to express their loyalty and service to the Crown. This royalist affiliation was a tangible point of commonality among the fractured nobility, and could be used to centralise all honour and nobility around the restored monarch.

The appointment of James Butler, first duke of Ormond (1610-88) to the position of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, provided Dublin's public sphere with the surrogate royal presence it needed to create social cohesion among the divided factions of Irish society: 'So much of Royalty his Presence bore'.[50] Lawyer and historian Sir John Temple (1600-77) wrote of how he found Ormond's appointment reassuring and hoped he could bring about 'the peace and settlement of this poor distracted kingdom'.[51] Ormond not only centralised honour around his presence, he also managed to bridge the gap between the two socio-political spheres at play within Irish society. The Butler family's position as Old English nobles meant that Ormond had a dual Irish-English identity that he could draw on and utilise to his advantage.[52] Despite having connections to the Gaelic socio-political sphere, however, Ormond only ever explicitly encouraged anglicised culture within the Irish public sphere. This was most notable in his practices as a patron, when he employed 'representational strategies' to reorder Irish society.[53]

[48] Allan Macinnes, 'Gaelic culture in the seventeenth century: polarization and assimilation' in Steven Ellis and Sarah Barber (eds.), *Conquest and union: fashioning a British state 1485-1725* (New York, 1995), pp 162-94, p. 162.
[49] Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*, p. 2.
[50] Tate, *A pastoral in memory of his* grace, p. 10.
[51] Usher, 'Court and city in restoration Dublin', p. 18.
[52] G. E. Aylmer, 'The first duke of Ormond as patron and administrator' in Toby Barnard and Jane Fenlon (eds), *The dukes of Ormond, 1610-1745* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp 115-36, p. 116.
[53] Usher, 'Court and city in restoration Dublin', p. 18.

In 1662 King Charles II granted three royal patents for the establishment of Crown-licenced theatres, two in London and one in Dublin. William Davenant attempted to have the Irish patent granted to him, but John Ogilby successfully petitioned to have it and the position of Master of the Revels in Ireland restored to him.[54] Under Ormond's enthusiastic patronage, Ogilby set about building a new playhouse; this he did just a short distance from Dublin Castle, on Smock Alley. While both Killigrew and Davenant were mounting productions in converted tennis courts, the Smock Alley theatre was purpose-built for performance. As a result, Dublin's Theatre-Royal was more modern and elaborate than its London counterparts. Its stage was topped with a proscenium arch, an architectural feature that symbolised royalist allegiance.[55] Apart from this imposing feature, the stage was largely bare and lacked the ornate scenery and effects popular on the London stage. The theatre mounted its opening production on 18 October 1662, with John Fletcher's popular pre-interregnum play *Wit without money*.

Unlike in London, where the theatre was a commercially viable institution regardless of its courtly connections, the Dublin public theatre was heavily reliant on the active and engaged patronage of the Lord Lieutenant. As with the pageantry of public celebrations in Dublin, Ormond's presence provided the theatre scene with a focal point for the ritualised performance of honour, loyalty and service. Consequently, the Dublin theatre scene 'functioned much like the court of claims' during the initial decade of the Restoration.[56] Drama was offered as a symbolic act of fealty, in the hopes that such a performance of loyalty would ensure the settlement of claims to land and title. As a result, Dublin playwrights wrote for their patrons rather than the public.

This was true of the much-celebrated production of Katherine Philips's *Pompey*, which debuted at Smock Alley in 1663. Alhough married to a Welsh parliamentarian, London-born Philips (1632-64) was a renowned woman of letters who expressed her own royalist principles through her writing. Her husband's adventuring claim to land in Ireland led her to Dublin in 1662, where she actively participated in the literary circle that had emerged around Dublin Castle.[57] Not coincidentally, this literary circle included Sir Edward Dering (1625-84), who was Chairman of the Land Settlement Commission.[58] Philips translated and adapted *Le Mort de Pompey* (1644) by French playwright Pierre Corneille (1606-84). The opening lines of her

[54] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 12.
[55] Ibid., p. 13.
[56] Tuite, *Theatre of crisis*, p. 84.
[57] Andrew Carpenter, *Verse in English from Tudor and Stuart Ireland* (Cork, 2003), p. 361.
[58] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 22.

prologue suggest the motive behind this significant undertaking: 'The mighty Rivals, whose destructive Rage/ Did the whole World in Civil Armes engage/ Are now agreed, and make it both their Choice/ To have their Fates determin'd by your Voice'.[59] The play was circulated in manuscript form within the court, before the earl of Orrery insisted on its being performed publically. Philips acquiesced to her patron's wish to have the play produced at Smock Alley, but was allegedly mortified at the immodesty of having her work presented to the public.[60] In addition to providing the Dublin theatre with its first new play of the Restoration period, Philips was the first female playwright to have her work produced by a public theatre company. Her reservations in relation to this new departure, however, speak to the conservative culture of the women in Ormond's court, as they remained wary of being seen to involve themselves in the public sphere. This is further evidenced by the lattices placed around the ladies' boxes at Smock Alley, which shielded genteel female spectators from view of the audience; no such measures for privacy were taken in either of the London playhouses.[61] Philips's triumph was loudly toasted by the Lord Lieutenant, who hosted a banquet in her honour following the opening night of the play. This led to the illicit publication of her play along with a collection of her poetry in both London and Dublin, though the playwright herself never gave permission for her work to be sold to the public.[62]

The division among Ireland's elite was characterised by the personal animosity between the kingdom's two leading literary and theatrical patrons, the duke of Ormond and the earl of Orrery.[63] Roger Boyle, first Earl of Orrery (1621-79) had served the Cromwellian regime for most of the Civil War, but switched sides out of political expediency just before the Restoration. King Charles II invited Orrery to publicly display his loyalty to the Crown by writing a play in his honour; *Altemera* (1663) was presented first to a Dublin audience, before being revised and retitled *The Generall* (1664), for presentation before the king in London.[64] A tremendous success, it inspired the vogue for the genre of heroic tragedy on the Restoration stage.[65] Mita Choudhury suggests that Orrery's writings were a 'reflection' of his loyalty, but

[59] Katherine Philips, 'Prologue' in *Pompey, a tragedy. Acted with great applause* (London, 1663), p. iv.
[60] Marta Straznicky, 'Restoration women playwrights and the limits of professionalism', *English Literary History*, lxiv, 3 (1997), pp 703-22, p. 716.
[61] Tuite, *Theatre of crisis*, p. 91.
[62] Straznicky, 'Restoration women playwrights and the limits of professionalism', p. 717.
[63] Tuite, *Theatre of crisis*, p. 84.
[64] John Cronin, 'A play supposedly fitter for the fire than for the stage: the fiction of Roger Boyle, first earl of Orrery and the re-casting of history' in Coleman Dennehy (ed.), *Restoration Ireland: always settling and never settled* (Aldershot, 2008), pp 69-84, p. 70.
[65] Desmond Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama 1600-1900: the rise and fall of ascendancy theatre* (Dublin, 2008), p. 35.

when viewed in their Dublin rather than London context, it seems more likely that they functioned as an *assertion* of his position.[66]

The Dublin theatre's function as a cultural 'court of claims' caused it to flourish quickly in the aftermath of the Restoration. Several new plays were presented as acts of fealty to the Crown during the 1660s. Some, such as those written by Philips and Orrery, enjoyed success on London's stages too. However, after the initial flurry of bids for land and title settled, the creativity of Dublin's theatre scene faded. Ogilby reverted to relying heavily on a stock repertoire of old plays, especially those by William Shakespeare.[67] Although Smock Alley had originally been running ahead of its London counterparts, the situation reversed quickly, so that by the 1670s Dublin became largely reliant on London's lead.

'for he has restore us to our own Country and Religshion': royal crises and the instability of the public theatre scenes[68]

Smock Alley was dependent on the engaged patronage of the court, which had a stifling impact on the development of the Dublin theatre scene when vice-regal power changed hands. Although Ormond's policy of toleration was supposed to encourage royalist loyalty, it allowed the counter-reformation to gather strength among the Catholic population of Ireland. This, along with Ormond's restoration of several Catholic claims to land and title, was disconcerting to many of Ireland's Protestants.[69] As a result, Ormond was faced with increasing opposition, until he was removed from office in 1669. He was initially succeeded by his son, who was quickly replaced by John Robartes (1606-85), an English puritan, who 'stopped the public players, as well as other vicious persons' from performing in the city.[70] His tenure was also short-lived, however, and Smock Alley reopened in 1672. In that year, an adaption of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* was produced under the enthusiastic patronage of Lord Lieutenant Essex. During the opening performance, however, the upper gallery of the theatre collapsed; nearly killing Essex and his family. As Jonson's play features a puritan character who is openly mocked on stage, the puritans and Presbyterians of Ireland lauded the event as an instance of

[66] Mita Choudhury 'Orrery and the London stage: a loyalist's contribution to the restoration allegorical drama', *Studia Neophilologica*, lxii (1990), pp 43-51, p. 46.
[67] Tuite, 'Plays staged at Smock Alley theatre, 1662-1692' in idem, *Theatre of crisis*, pp 197-99.
[68] Anon, *A sermon preach'd by a reverend father, in the Jesuits chappel at the King's-Inn Dublin, on St Patrick's day* (Dublin, 1788).
[69] Tuite, *Theatre of crisis*, p. 107.
[70] J. T. Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin, in three volumes (with a general index)*, (Dublin, 1861), ii, p. 68.

divine intervention: 'Such providences have a language if men would hear'.[71] The necessary repair work shut the theatre down again.

The instability of Dublin's theatre scene during the 1670s led to Ogilby's exit from it. Since the interregnum, he had remained engaged in London's print industry.[72] The publication of plays flourished during periods without public performance; thus, drama retained its popularity as a format for the literary expression of political loyalties and agendas, regardless of the media through which it reached its audience.[73] The repeated closure of Smock Alley allowed Ogilby to invest more time in his other occupation; consequently, he appointed managers to run the playhouse in his absence. In 1675 Ogilby officially signed over the theatre patent to the London-born actor-manager Joseph Ashbury (1638-1720).[74] Ashbury, desperate to improve the state of the dwindling Smock Alley company, sought the patronage of Ormond. The jilted Lord Lieutenant, who had accepted a post as Chancellor of Oxford University, invited the Smock Alley company to tour there in 1677.[75] The Dublin troupe had previously enjoyed Ormond's year-long patronage, when they would retire to Kilkenny with him for the summer season.[76] Their appearance at Oxford was the first time that the Dublin players performed outside Ireland, demonstrating their continued reliance on Ormond's support. In 1681 Ormond organised another tour for the Smock Alley troupe; this time, they went to Edinburgh where they performed before Prince James and Princess Anne. While there, Ashbury reportedly gave Anne instruction in acting and oratory.[77] Ashbury would manage the Dublin theatre scene for over forty years, and it was under his tutelage that many Irish-born actors started their illustrious careers.

The duke of Ormond was restored to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland in 1678 and retained the position throughout the divisive period of the Popish Plot and ensuing Exclusion Crisis (1678-81). At that time, when there was a vogue in London for anti-Catholic plays, which relied on the rhetoric of an 'easily defined other', the Dublin theatre continued to promote anglicised culture but avoided being publicly polemical on the issue of religion.[78] Ashbury exercised caution with his repertoire; plays that were considered a danger to public order were performed

[71] Patrick Adair, *A true narrative of the rise and progress of the Presbyterian church in Ireland* (1670), p. 303.
[72] Clavin, 'Ogilby, John', *DIB.*
[73] Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama,* p. 43.
[74] Linde Lunney, 'Ashbury, Joseph', *DIB,* www.dib.ie/biography/ashbury-joseph-a0241 [accessed 7 May 2021].
[75] Helen Burke, 'The Irish joke, migrant networks, and the London Irish in the 1680s', *Eighteenth-Century Life,* xxxix (2015), pp 41-65, p. 42.
[76] Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama,* p. 40.
[77] Lunney, 'Ashbury, Joseph', *DIB.*
[78] Elizabeth Clarke, 'Re-reading the exclusion crisis', *The Seventeenth Century,* xxi (2006), pp 141-59, p. 143.

in private settings rather than on the public stage.[79] A cautious approach was also taken by managers of the London theatres, who could explicitly express Tory sympathies, as they were under the control and censorship of the court. Whiggish sentiments, however, had to be performed in a more subtle way. Emma Depledge suggests that the sudden increase in Shakespearean adaptations during this period belies the shrewd attempts made to avoid censorship within the public theatres.[80] By stressing their debt to Shakespeare, Whig-sympathising playwrights could address the situation on stage through adaptation of the bard's text without incurring sole responsibility for authorship. Additionally, in choosing the English-born Shakespeare's works, Whig-sympathising playwrights were rejecting the courtly taste for French drama. Conversely, Odai Johnson has shown how Whig playwrights also found alternative spaces to mount dramatic productions that articulated their political agenda. Johnson compellingly argues that London's Pope-burning pageants served as 'an expansion of the theatrical marketplace', where opposition politics could be dramatically expressed in 'open performances of civic pageantry'.[81] Whereas in London, it was performed openly in the streets, in Dublin, Whig drama took place within private household settings. This contrast between public and private performance outside the walls of the patent theatres offers a revealing insight into the cities' opposing popular politics in the 1680s.

The court's intimate relationship with the theatre throughout the Exclusion Crisis had negative ramifications for London's theatre scene. The relative unpopularity of the Tory position among the city's public, led both the King's and Duke's companies into financial ruin: 'the Audiences too of both Houses then falling off'.[82] The solution was for the two troupes to pool their resources and merge into one as the United Company in 1682. This removed commercial competition from London's theatrical market. Consequently, London's theatre scene stagnated as the United Company's monopoly greatly reduced the demand for new dramatic works.[83] In Ireland, the ascent of Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnell (*c.*1630-91) to the Lord Lieutenancy in 1687 had a similarly negative impact on the Dublin theatre scene as he and his court did not provide supportive patronage. As an influential Catholic lord, Tyrconnell had been implicated

[79] Tuite, *Theatre of crisis*, p. 111.
[80] Emma Depledge, 'Authorship and alteration: Shakespeare on the exclusion crisis stage and page, 1678-1682' in Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (eds.), *Medieval and early modern authorship* (Zurich, 2011), pp 199-214, p. 207.
[81] Odai Johnson, 'Pope-burning pageants: performing the exclusion crisis', *Theatre Survey*, xxxvii (1996), pp 35-57, p. 38.
[82] Cibber, *An apology for the life*, p. 58.
[83] Derek Hughes, 'Theatre, politics and morality' in O'Donohue (ed.), *The Cambridge history of British theatre*, p. 101.

in the Popish Plot, but fled to France before he could be arrested.[84] After James II came to the throne in 1685, Tyrconnell reinstated Catholics within the Irish administration which greatly unsettled the minority Protestant elite. A further crisis emerged when the English parliament deposed James in favour of William of Orange in the Glorious Revolution (1688). A pamphlet entitled *The present dangerous condition of the Protestants in Ireland*, published in Dublin, London and Edinburgh attested to the fear that Tyrconnell's support of James's claim struck among Ireland's Protestant population.[85] As this fear led most of the Irish court, the majority of whom were Protestant, to desert Dublin, Smock Alley which relied on the engaged support of the court was left bereft of patrons.[86] Consequently, at the onset of the ensuing War of the Two Kings (1688-91), Ashbury decided to close the theatre.

After a brief interlude, the Dublin theatre scene reopened in 1691, when Ashbury mounted a production of Shakespeare's *Othello* to mark the Williamite victory. This did not occur at Smock Alley, however; the performance was instead mounted at Dublin Castle where the symbolic staging of victory was more politically potent. The city's public theatre company had dispersed with Smock Alley's closure in 1688, so Ashbury hastily recruited a troupe from about the Castle to perform in the production.[87] The manager played the villain, while his wife, Anne Darling, was in the role of Desdemona. The principal character was played by the debut-performer Robert Wilks (*c.*1665-1732). Wilks was a native of Dublin and employed as a clerk for the Williamite army.[88] His performance met with great applause, which 'warm'd him to so strong an Inclination for the Stage' that he resolved to become a professional actor.[89] When Ashbury reopened Smock Alley in 1692, it was with a production of Wilks's *Othello*.

Although it was an old favourite with the Dublin audience, Ashbury's selection of *Othello* to mark the Williamite victory was not inconsequential. Patrick Tuite has highlighted Othello's allegorical value in having 'represented an Old English Jacobite or their Catholic monarch'.[90] Shakespeare presents Othello's character as an 'easily defined other', in the same way that the

[84] Henry Carey, *The history of the damnable popish plot, in its various branches and progress* (London, 1680), p. 175.
[85] Anon., *The present dangerous condition of the Protestants in Ireland: with a new order of Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconil concerning the export of passengers and goods: in a letter from Dublin* (Dublin, London, Edinburgh, 1688).
[86] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 19.
[87] Anne Plumptre, 'Some particulars of the rise and progress of the Irish stage', in *Narrative of a residence in Ireland during the summer of 1814, and that of 1815* (London, 1817), pp 56-71, p. 64.
[88] Patrick Geoghegan, 'Wilks, Robert', *DIB*, www.dib.ie/biography/wilks-robert-a9040 [accessed 14 June 2021].
[89] Cibber, *An apology for the life*, p. 136.
[90] Tuite, *Theatre of crisis*, p. 117.

Catholic gentry were broadly presented across English media during the 1680s.[91] Othello has assimilated to civilised culture and advanced along the social scale through his performance of conformity; although he pledges allegiance to the reigning political regime, his culture remains foreign to his peers and his nature is viewed as unrefined and dangerous. It is likely that the performing officers and soldiers wore their own uniforms during the production, thereby communicating the moral of the play within the contemporary context. Tuite draws attention to the fact that both the Jacobite and Williamite armies wore red military coats, which would have blurred the distinction between the two sides and made Othello's infiltration of, and assimilation to, civilized society appear plausible on stage.[92] Nevertheless the character remains too naturally 'othered', so that he must not be trusted in collaboration or negotiation. Thus, the performance of *Othello* in the context of the Williamite victory, signalled the imminent penalisation of those Irish who continued to 'other' themselves from socio-cultural conformity.

'to give them Liberty of Acting': theatrical disputes and Irish movement to London[93]

The United Company, established in 1682, was originally under the management of Thomas Davenant (d.1697), who inherited the patent from his father. Davenant, however, fell into debt by 1690 and sold his patent. After some changing of hands, the largest share of the patent was held by English lawyer Christopher Rich (1657-1714). Rich viewed the theatre company as a purely economic pursuit and left creative control in the hands of the established actor-manager Thomas Betterton.[94] However, Rich's commercial outlook interfered with Betterton's concerns for the upkeep of custom, with tension mounting between the two as a result. In addition, Rich tried to reduce the high salaries of star performers, including that of Betterton and his leading lady Elizabeth Barry. In an attempt 'to set young against old', Rich hoped to replace the old favourites with younger actors who would accept lower salaries in exchange for the spotlight.[95] Highly offended by Rich's capitalist behaviour, Betterton appealed to the Lord Chamberlain with 'The Petition of the Players', which outlined the actors' complaints.[96] Betterton was granted a license to start his own acting company and embarked on this venture at a premises at Lincoln-Inn Fields. This put an end to the United Company's monopoly on drama in London

[91] Clarke, 'Re-reading the exclusion crisis', p. 143; Burke, 'The Irish joke', pp 41-65.
[92] Tuite, *Theatre of crisis*, p. 127.
[93] *Female Tatler*, 12 Sept. 1709.
[94] Elisabeth Heard, 'The London theatre world in the 1690s', *Experimentation on the English stage, 1695-1708: the career of George Farquhar* (London, 2008), pp 11-23, p. 18.
[95] David Roberts, *Thomas Betterton: the greatest actor of the restoration stage* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 153.
[96] David Roberts, 'The 1695 actors' rebellion: new light on old patentees', *Notes and Queries* (2007), pp 439-40.

and turned the city's theatre scene into a competitive commercial market. Rich and his fellow shareholders in Drury Lane attempted to close down this rival theatre, by claiming that the playhouse was a disturbance in the largely residential area of Lincoln-Inn Fields. This closure was overturned in court, however, as it was found that 'the prosecution is carried on by the patentees of the old playhouse, and not by the inhabitants of the place'.[97] Rich's Drury Lane was the better equipped theatre space, but Betterton 'drew into his Party most of the valuable Actors' from the disbanded United Company.[98] As a result, the two companies were fairly evenly matched and engaged in a competitive battle for patrons which served to reinvigorate the London theatre scene.

The lack of competition prior to the break-up of the United Company in 1695 meant that London's theatre scene was heavily reliant on star performers. The repertory of plays remained largely stagnant as the managers had little cause to be convinced to pay playwrights for new scripts.[99] Instead, theatrical activity relied on the reinterpretation of old favourite parts. The success of Robert Wilks at Smock Alley brought him to the attention of Thomas Betterton, and he came to London to spend the 1693 season at Drury Lane. Ashbury persuaded him to return to Dublin for the following season, with the promise of a higher salary.[100] Wilks remained at Smock Alley throughout the London theatre scene's tumultuous period in the mid-1690s. As commercial competition flared between Drury Lane and Lincoln-Inn Fields, however, Wilks was again invited to London in 1698. He was an accomplished and popular performer, an asset that Rich wanted in his company. Rich sent his managerial partner, Wexford-born impresario Owen Swiney (1676-1754), to Dublin to recruit the actor.[101] At the time, however, Wilks was Ashbury's greatest asset and crucial to the vitality of Dublin's theatre scene. As a result, Ashbury convinced the Lord Lieutenant to order the retention of Wilks in Dublin, but the sought-after actor managed to escape before Castle troops could apprehend him.[102]

By the time Wilks settled in London, several prominent Irish actors who had been recruited between the two companies, including William Bowen (1666-1718)**,** Richard Estcourt (1668-

[97] Anon., *A report of all the cases determined by Sir John Holt from 1688 to 1710, during which time he was lord chief justice of England: containing many cases never before printed, taken from an original manuscript of Thomas Farresly, late of the middle-temple; also several cases in chancery and the exchequer-chamber* (London, 1738), p. 538.
[98] Cibber, *An apology for the life*, p. 110.
[99] Robert Hume, 'The economics of culture in London, 1660-1740', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, lxix (2006), pp 487-533, p. 502.
[100] Geoghegan, 'Wilks, Robert', *DIB*.
[101] Edmund Curll, *The life of that eminent comedian, Robert Wilks, esq.* (London, 1733), p. 5.
[102] Tuite, *Theatre of crisis*, p. 67.

1712) and Thomas Doggett (*c*.1670-1721). It was in the 1690s that the recruitment pattern changed between the two cities, as London began enticing an increasing number of actors and playwrights who had started their careers at Smock Alley to its stages. The commercial competition offered by the break-up of the United Company was crucial in opening employment opportunities for ambitious and talented Irish theatre practitioners. Several of these Irishmen, including Wilks and Swiney, would become central figures involved in the legal disputes that defined London's theatre scene during the first decade of the eighteenth century.

In 1705, English architect and dramatist John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) took over as patent-holder of the Lincoln-Inn Fields company from an aging Thomas Betterton. Since the rival Drury Lane remained a superior theatrical space, Vanbrugh designed and funded the building of a new theatre for his company at Haymarket. As part of his ambitious plans for his new role in London's theatre scene, Vanbrugh tried to convince Rich to re-establish the United Company under his management. This company, Vanbrugh hoped, would perform both traditional drama and the Italian operas which were in vogue among the elite.[103] Rich, however, was unwilling to unify the companies under Vanbrugh's proposed conditions. Vanbrugh then changed tactics and sought a genre split, which would ensure that the two companies would not have to compete over rights to the repertoire. This proposal led to several disputes between the opposing patent-holders, until the Lord Chamberlain intervened and legalised a formal genre split in 1705: the Haymarket company was granted licence to perform operas and musical pieces only, while Drury Lane retained the licence for the staging of 'legitimate drama'.[104] This effectively restored the United Company anyway, though under the authority of Rich, as all actors had to sign contracts with Drury Lane to partake in dramatic performance.

Vanbrugh, having incurred debts during the legal proceedings, leased his theatre to Owen Swiney. By 1708 Swiney had become 'entire possessor of the Opera' in London. In reaction, Vanbrugh commented that many believed he could 'manage it better than anybody'.[105] Meanwhile, old tensions arose within the Drury Lane company as actors struggled under Rich's tyrannical authority. In late 1707 army officer and Tory politician Henry Brett (d.1724) became a shareholder at Drury Lane. Possessed of 'valuable Qualities to balance or soften'

[103] Hume, 'The economics of culture in London', p. 507.
[104] Felicia Hardison Londre, *The history of world theatre: from the English restoration to the present* (New York, 1999), p. 71.
[105] Elizabeth Gibson, 'Owen Swiney and the Italian opera in London', *The Musical Times*, cxxv (1984), pp 82-6, p. 82.

disagreements within the company, he served as a buffer between the actors and Rich.[106] In 1708 Brett contracted three of the company's leading players to take on managerial roles in an attempt to restore peace to daily proceedings at the theatre. These actor-managers were English actor-dramatist Colley Cibber (1671-1757), and two Smock Alley recruits, Richard Estcourt and Robert Wilks. Rich did not appreciate Brett undermining his authority and with a shrewd underhand, he forced Brett to relinquish his shares in the company. Having lost their advocate among the shareholders, the actors began plotting sedition against Rich.[107] The actors' greatest upset came when Rich interfered with the custom of benefit performances. These worked on a rotation system, whereby a single member of the production received all the box office profits from that night's performance. It was through this custom that star actors, who drew the largest crowds, made most of their money. Rich imposed a high tax on benefit profits to line his own pockets. The first benefit performance of the 1709 season was in honour of Wilks. On that occasion, Rich did not impose the tax upon his profits, probably in an attempt to keep the influential actor-manager on-side. However, the issue arose when the second benefit performance, that in honour of English actress Anne Oldfield (1683-1730), occurred two weeks later. Oldfield was taxed on a third of her profits, with the contract vaguely stating that the money was 'for use of the patent'.[108] She promptly made a formal complaint to the Lord Chamberlain's office but when Rich was called to explain his financial dealings, he managed to 'insist upon them as lawful'.[109] Oldfield, a very popular player, withdrew from the company mid-season as a result of her frustration with Rich. Unphased, Rich continued to levy the tax on benefit performances and the Lord Chamberlain continued to receive formal complaints about his 'violation of custom'.[110] Eventually, on 30 April 1709, the Lord Chamberlain ordered Rich to stop imposing the tax, but Rich refused to do so, claiming that he was acting legally under the terms of the patent he held. Disconcerted by the deteriorating situation, many of the company's leading actors withdrew and entered discussions with Owen Swiney about establishing a troupe at the Haymarket.[111]

[106] Cibber, *An apology for the life*, p. 213.
[107] Zachary Baggs, *Advertisement concerning the poor actors, who under pretence of hard usage from the patentees, are about to desert their service* (London, 1709).
[108] Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, 'The silencing of Drury Lane in 1709', *Theatre Journal*, xxxii (1980), pp 427-47, p. 433.
[109] Cibber, *An apology for the life*, p. 235.
[110] Milhous and Hume, 'The silencing of Drury Lane', p. 435.
[111] Cibber, *An apology for the life*, p. 189.

By 6 June 1709 the Lord Chamberlain had clearly chosen a side in the disagreements and imposed an 'Order of Silence' upon Drury Lane.[112] This order halted all theatrical activity at the theatre, but only really served to damage the income of the junior actors who survived on the profits of London's summer season, while the lead performers went on tour. As a result, on 8 July 1709, the Lord Chamberlain granted the Haymarket theatre permission to establish an acting company with a licence to perform drama. This, in turn, ratified the contracts that Owen Swiney had already drawn up with Rich's deserters. There were further complaints, however, when Swiney and his managerial partner Thomas Doggett, decided not to mount a summer season for the benefit of junior actors. Instead, their focus was on acquiring the legitimate employment of Drury Lane's stars, including Cibber and Wilks. The majority of Drury Lane's actors had not been invited to sign contracts with the Haymarket managers, so they complained to the Lord Chamberlain that they had no opportunities for employment as long as the Order of Silence remained in place. On 6 September 1709, with the matter still unresolved, Rich attempted to mount a season at Drury Lane but was forcefully stopped as the 'Lord Chamberlain did not think fit to give them Liberty of Acting without owning his Authority'.[113] The despondent actors had resorted to petitioning the queen directly, while the Lord Chamberlain's attention was taken by Tory politician and minor Drury Lane shareholder William Collier (*c.*1687-1758). Collier was in contact with ambitious actor Barton Booth (1681-1733), with whom he plotted to take advantage of the convoluted situation. Although of English birth, Booth started his career in the late 1690s at Smock Alley; there, he had advanced to lead roles relatively quickly, as Dublin's principal actors began leaving for London.[114] On 21 November 1709, Collier was successfully granted a licence to establish a new troupe but with a strict clause that he was 'not to suffer Mr Rich' in any capacity within the company.[115] Although Collier had not been granted explicit permission to use Drury Lane's premises, its actors rushed to sign contracts under the new licence and quickly set to mounting a season there. Management, however, soon became problematic within the new company as Collier had no experience in the daily running of a theatre and Drury Lane's old actor-managers were still under contract with Swiney at the Haymarket. At this point, the loudest complaints came from the Haymarket's operatic performers, many of whom were displeased at having their workload and salaries reduced as a result of sharing their stage with Swiney's acting troupe.

[112] Milhous and Hume, 'The silencing of Drury Lane', p. 435.
[113] *Female Tatler*, 12 Sept. 1709.
[114] Mark Batty, 'Booth, Barton', *DIB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2872 [accessed 27 June 2021].
[115] Milhous and Hume, 'The silencing of Drury Lane', p. 441.

Collier's management issues continued at Drury Lane, which weakened the state of the company to the extent that Rich managed to come back on the scene and impose his authority upon the theatre. This 'Crisis of Theatrical Liberty' provoked a riot at Drury Lane, prompting the despondent Lord Chamberlain to resign from his position; he was replaced by the duke of Shrewsbury.[116] The riot was not an isolated incident, however, as it occurred during the tumultuous period of the Sacheverell Riots (1710) which were both politically and religiously motivated.

Both theatres remained largely inactive over the following summer until eventually a solution was formally reached in November of that year. Shrewsbury reinstated the genre split of 1708; the Haymarket was to operate exclusively as an opera house, while Drury Lane was again granted a monopoly on the performance of drama. This time, however, it was the actor-managers who profited most, as Colley Cibber, Thomas Doggett and Robert Wilks became the shareholders of Drury Lane. This marked a departure in the custom of management, as the principal actors now held the licence and property among themselves. The Haymarket was left under the authority of Swiney, until he relinquished his position to William Collier in 1713.[117] Apart from the new legal arrangement for the actor-managers, the London theatre scene was restored largely to the state it had been in at the outset of the disputes; the genre split and united company had been restored, which ensured that the two companies would not be in competition for performers or repertoire. On the face of it, the only major change was the removal of Christopher Rich from the theatre scene, though his son would later become an influential manager in the 1720s.

There was a further consequence of the disputes which is too often unacknowledged; by the close of the first decade of the eighteenth century, the London theatre scene was largely under Irish management. While Wexford-born Owen Swiney led London's fashionable opera scene until 1713, two-thirds of the triumvirate in charge of Drury Lane consisted of Dublin-born actor-managers Thomas Doggett and Robert Wilks. Doggett was eventually replaced in 1714, but it was by another of Smock Alley's prodigies Barton Booth.[118] The management links established between Drury Lane and Smock Alley throughout this tumultuous period, led to increased movement between the two theatres. Irish-born actors and dramatists, such as Theophilus Keene (1680-1718) and William Congreve (1670-1729), found success in

[116] Cibber, *An apology for the life*, p. 250.
[117] Gibson, 'Owen Swiney and the Italian opera in London', p. 82.
[118] Richard Schoch, *Writing the history of British stage: 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 232.

London's theatres through these migrant networks.[119] With both companies holding dramatic monopolies in their respective cities, their only viable competition in the cultural market came from each other. This appears to have had significant impacts on how actors gained sustainable income, as the relative lack of commercial competition lowered theatrical salaries.[120] Some actors, such as Colley Cibber, turned to the 'Necessity of Writing' plays in order to supplement their income.[121] Others, however, took to touring outside their theatre in the off-peak summer season. A pattern emerged in the 1720s, whereby the Drury Lane actors often gave a summer season at Smock Alley; this, in turn, led to the considerable expansion of the regional theatre circuit in Ireland, as Dublin's players went on tour during the summer season too.[122] However, that had the negative effect of reducing the standing of the Smock Alley company on two accounts. The first was that the larger population of London allowed for greater audience numbers, which could sustain more actors at a higher rate of pay; this inevitably drew Dublin's most promising actors and playwrights to London's theatre scene during the fashionable winter season. Secondly, having been delighted by London's star performers during the summer season, the Dublin audience grew to hold the Smock Alley troupe 'in utter Disesteem on the Comparison'.[123] The Dublin theatre scene remained in this reduced state until Thomas Sheridan (1719-88) became actor-manager of Smock Alley in 1745, when he set about reforming its practices and improving its standing for nearly two decades.

Conclusion

When the London and Dublin theatre scenes were restored in the 1660s, their culture and practice was largely dictated by their intimate connections with the regal and vice-regal courts. Dublin's theatre scene was dependant on active courtly patronage and struggled during periods of political instability as a result. By contrast, the presence of a theatrical duopoly in London allowed for competition which fuelled the early stages of a commercialisation process within its theatres. However, tensions emerged between those who encouraged the traditional courtly customs of the theatre and those who favoured the adoption of more mercantile practices. This tension over the position and purpose of the theatre within the public sphere fuelled debates, disputes and disturbances throughout the eighteenth century. The contentious question of how

[119] Patrick Tuite, *Theatre of crisis: the performance of power in the kingdom of Ireland, 1662-1692* (Cranbury, 2010), p. 65; Helen Burke, 'The Irish joke, migrant networks, and the London Irish in the 1680s', *Eighteenth-Century Life,* xxxix (2015), pp 41-65, p. 60.
[120] Hume, 'The economics of culture in London', p. 505.
[121] Cibber, *An apology for the life,* p. 154.
[122] William Smith Clark, *The Irish stage in the county towns, 1720 to 1800* (Oxford, 1965).
[123] Thomas Sheridan, *An appeal to the public: containing an account of the rise, progress, and establishment of the first regular theatre in Dublin: with the causes of its decline and ruin* (Dublin, 1771), p. 18.

much control the court should exert over a public space that was run through private enterprise was recurrent, and will be examined more closely in later chapters.

Chapter 2

'ambition in the fool': the advent of Irish comedy and the evolution of the stage-Irishman, 1663-1743[1]

From the 1690s there was a discernible change in how Irish identity was portrayed on the London stage. This change was accompanied by the advent of Irish-authored comedic drama. This chapter traces the development of the stage-Irishman during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Drawing on the comedic material of Irish playwrights in particular, focus is on those who engaged with the evolution of the stage-Irish caricature. The chapter explores how Irish playwrights and actors influenced the perception and portrayal of Irish identity on stage. At the same time, the chapter examines the development of comedic taste in London and Dublin in the early eighteenth century, investigating the impact of a growing bourgeoisie milieu within the theatre scenes.

Whereas Restoration-era tragedy was thought to portray the ideal, comedy's role was to reflect on reality, with the audience invited to laugh at the shortcomings of their own society.[2] It is striking, however, that Dublin's theatre scene in the Restoration period was defined by an 'almost complete absence' of new comedic material.[3] For two decades following the re-opening of Smock Alley theatre in 1662, the repertoire relied heavily on tragic drama despite the trend for comedy in London. Desmond Slowey attributes this dearth of Irish comedy to the insecurity of the court and its members' position in Ireland.[4] With the violently divisive and politically unstable period of the 1640s and 1650s still within living memory, the continued minority status of Ireland's ruling Protestant elite did not provide comfortable scope for comic self-reflection.

The lack of original comedy in the Dublin theatre meant that Irish characters were largely portrayed in the context of tragedy. Despite the relatively positive portrayal of Irishness in the London theatre scene during the first two decades following the Restoration, the stage-Irishman's Irish identity was shrouded in ambiguity. While the 'wild Irishman' caricature of the pre-interregnum theatre was clearly a character whose Irishness was defined by his ethnicity, from the 1660s onwards 'the strictly racialist element in English prejudice was

[1] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2 in Malone (ed.), *The plays and poems of William Shakespeare*, pp 280-86.
[2] Donohue, 'Introduction: the theatre from 1660 to 1800' in idem (ed.), *The Cambridge history of British theatre*, p. 10.
[3] Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama*, p. 27.
[4] Ibid.

becoming diluted'.[5] Now, the audience came to recognise the stage-Irish character's identity through a set of conventional 'comic vices'.[6] These vices served to 'other' the Irishman from the English characters alongside whom he was presented on stage. F. H. Buckley asserts that such comedic material is reliant on a sense of 'superiority', whereby it is essential that the audience 'do not share in the vice, for we could not laugh if we did'.[7] These comic conventions generalised the portrayal of 'Irishness' on the London stage from the 1660s. In a context in which the stage-Irishman became a homogenous character, the ruling elite in Dublin could not clearly distinguish themselves from the figure of satire. Irish comedic playwrights, therefore, had to go to London in order to have their plays produced on stage. In doing so, they could interact with the evolving representation of Irishness on stage in the seventeenth century. Some Irish playwrights would 'participate enthusiastically in their own denigration', while others sought to subvert the homogenous caricature by offering their own alternatives to the stage-Irish repertoire.[8] Thus, the advent of Irish comedy is the history of the Irish learning to laugh at themselves.

This discussion begins by examining the position of the stage-Irishman immediately after the Restoration. The ethnic caricature of Teague in Robert Howard's *The Committee* (1663) is analysed to reveal the position of the stage-Irishman at the start of the period. The impact of the Popish Plot (1678-81) on the portrayal of Irish identity in London's theatre scene is also assessed. The focus then shifts to the career of Irish playwright George Farquhar (1678-1707), whose representation of Anglo-Irish identity shattered the homogenous nature of the stage-Irish trope. Farquhar's characterisation is presented within the theatrical context of shifting class dynamics within London's theatre scene, as the conservative taste of the bourgeoisie encouraged the development of a sentimental form of comedy during the early decades of the eighteenth century. In discussing the emerging genre of ballad opera and its debt to Irish traditional music during the late 1720s, the Irish influence on London's most successful ballad operas written by Englishman John Gay (1685-1732) and Irishman Charles Coffey (*c.*1700-45), and consequently, their influence on the development of comedic taste in Dublin is assessed. Attention then focuses on Irish actor-manager Thomas Sheridan's (1719-88) attempt to subvert the stage-Irish trope by concentrating the dramatic action on the reception the

[5] David Hayton, 'From barbarian to burlesque: English images of the Irish *c.*1660-1750', *Irish Economic and Social History*, xv (1988), pp 5-31, p. 8.
[6] F. H. Buckley, *The morality of laughter* (Ann Arbor, 2005), p. 4.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Geoffrey Hughes, *An encyclopaedia of swearing: the social history of oaths, profanity, foul language and ethnic slurs in the English-speaking world* (New York, 2006), p. 256.

character receives in London. Sheridan's gentrification of the Gaelic stage-Irishman through a process of cultural adaptation will also be discussed. By the 1740s, the stage-Irishman will have been gentrified into a romanticised caricature, most readily identified by his speech.

'that odd composition of fidelity, and blunders': Teague and the taming of the wild Irishman caricature[9]

In Restoration comedy the hero, usually a rakish English libertine, is presented as a 'glittering wit'.[10] This wit is used by the rake to 'dazzle and to shock' both the other characters on stage and audience members.[11] The more expressive the rake's wit, the more amusing was his character. The stage-Irishman of this period, however, represents the opposite end of comedy; while the rake's comic value rested in his directness, that of the stage-Irishman lay in his ignorance. The most influential stage-Irishman of the Restoration period was Teague, in English-born Robert Howard's *The Committee* (1663). When Howard's Teague is first introduced onstage, he is reduced to a destitute version of the pre-interregnum wild Irishman caricature. He is unarmed, clothed in a ragged mantle, appearing ignorant and jovial; all traits of the pre-interregnum 'wild Irishman', a character whose identity was defined by his ethnicity.[12] Following the Restoration, however, this Irishman finds himself on the right side of the current political regime. As J. O. Bartley accurately points out, the Gaelic Irishman 'naturally finds a niche' in Howard's royalist play.[13] This political affiliation allowed for the Restoration stage-Irishman's threatening status to be reduced. Instead, his wildness became foolishly endearing.

Teague's political affiliation with the royalist cause is characterised through personal loyalty to a master and the hierarchical social order he represents. In his opening scene, Teague laments the loss of his servile position within that social order due to the death of his former master. His faithful grief is displayed through the act of keening: 'I did howl over him, and I ask'd why he would leave poor *Teg*'.[14] The play's royalist rake, Colonel Careless, is so moved by Teague's show of loyalty to his old comrade that he benevolently offers to reinstate him as a servant within his own household. From then on, Teague makes a show of blindly doing as his

[9] Charles Howard, *Historical anecdotes of some of the Howard family, by the honourable Charles Howard esq.* (London, 1769), p. 111.
[10] Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama*, p. 25.
[11] Simon Callow, *Acting in restoration comedy* (New York, 1991), p. 12.
[12] Hayton, 'From barbarian to burlesque', p. 8.
[13] J. O. Bartley, *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney: being an historical study of the earliest Irish, Welsh and Scottish characters in English plays* (Cork, 1954), p. 104.
[14] Robert Howard, *The committee; or, the faithful Irishman* (London, 1735 edition), p. 14.

master bids. He repeatedly makes great errors, however, as his simple-minded determination gets him into trouble. The only task that he does successfully complete is to eliminate the threat of one of the roundhead characters by getting him drunk. Paddy Lyons has demonstrated how early Restoration comedy was imbued with a Hobbesian outlook that led to an 'egalitarianism of discourse between masters and servants' on stage.[15] This allowed Teague to speak freely before his master, so that much of the play's comedy is delivered through dialogue rather than action. There is a similar dynamic between the male and female characters in Restoration comedy, as the heroines often meet the shocking dialogue of the English rake with a direct wit of their own. Simon Callow, however, has made the shrewd observation that, unlike the rake who is free to follow through on his word, the heroine's 'freedom is only verbal'.[16] She may play the game and spar with her words, but she is not at liberty to act on them without losing her position. Lyons, in speaking of servant-master relationships in Restoration comedy, points to the 'sophistication' of the servant to intervene on their master's behalf, often helping to resolve the plot.[17] Significantly, however, this does not apply to Teague. Despite his being Colonel Careless' servant, the stage-Irishman does not have the 'sophistication' to act as a successful intermediary between the characters. Instead, his lack of social finesse leads him to blunder his way through the plot, unaware of the impact his actions have on its outcome.

The stage-Irishman of this period lacks purpose; even his comedic qualities are not intentional and Teague himself is too often unaware of the amusement he provides. When he is given a clear task in Howard's play, Teague relapses into the more violent iteration of Irish caricature, the wild Irishman. Like Shakespeare's wild Irishman in *Henry V* (1599), who proclaims that 'tis shame to stand still' when 'there is Throats to be cut', Teague becomes enthusiastically violent once he is presented with a target.[18] While by the Restoration period the Catholic Irishman could appear in the guise of a faithful servant, David Hayton has shown how the memory of violence from the 1641 Rebellion lingered in the stage-Irishman, as Restoration playwrights 'did not forget the savage in the shadows'.[19] With his dispossessed position and lack of purpose, Teague's capacity for violence is tamed but not erased.

[15] Paddy Lyons, 'What do the servants know?', in Gill (ed.), *Theatre and culture in early modern England*, pp 11-32, p. 16.
[16] Simon Callow, *Acting in restoration comedy*, p. 11.
[17] Lyons, 'What do the servants know?', p. 21.
[18] William Shakespeare, 'Henry V' extract in Tony Crowley (ed.), *The politics of language in Ireland 1366-1922: a sourcebook* (London, 2000), pp 49-51, p. 51.
[19] Hayton, 'From barbarian to burlesque', p. 7.

Robert Howard's grandson wrote about how Teague's character was based on an Irish servant to the Howard family: 'Sir Robert took the first hint of that odd composition of fidelity, and blunders, which he has so humourously worked up in the character of Teague' from his encounter with an Irish servant.[20] To a certain extent the interregnum allowed playwrights to adopt a more realistic approach to characterisation unfettered by the expectation of established theatrical custom. Teague's position as a vagrant servant is rooted in the significant migration of poor Irish into England during the Cromwellian period. Helen Burke is highly critical of what she terms the 'process of historic erasure' started by Howard's characterisation of the Irish migrant.[21] By this she means the colonial activity that likely led Teague to leave Ireland and arrive at the play in his destitute state is completely ignored. These colonial migrants from Ireland generally went into domestic service or manual labour jobs in England. Toby Barnard has demonstrated how many of these labourers migrated on a seasonal basis, rather than settling into a permanent position.[22] Barnard also points to the fact that many of these Irish migrants could not effectively communicate through English, as suggested by the high demand for Irish-speaking priests in London's Catholic parishes as late as the 1740s. One such Irish priest, Fr Thomas Mahon, recounted how he had been highly sought after to serve the parish of Lincoln-Inn Fields as the previous priest could not hear the confessions of his predominantly Irish-speaking congregation: 'I declare on certain times of the year I hear ten (thereabouts) Irish for one English confession'.[23] Teague's place within this London Irish milieu is attested by his desire to work in service or labour, while his attitude towards middle class professions is indicative of the poor migrant Irishman's static social standing: 'an Irishman scorns a trade'.[24] Throughout the play, he remains loyal to the strictly hierarchical system in which his position is fixed at the bottom tier of society.

Although Teague's Irish identity was key to his characterisation, the role was originally portrayed by English actors, usually from provincial backgrounds. John Lacy (*c.*1615-81), a Yorkshire-born actor with a 'propensity for dialect parts', was the first to play Teague.[25] He was active in London's pre-interregnum theatre scene and an established performer by the Restoration period. Lacy made use of his own regional identity, as his Yorkshire dialect was

[20] Howard, *Historical anecdotes,* p. 111.
[21] Helen Burke, 'Teague and the ethnicization of labor in early modern British culture', *The Eighteenth Century*, xlvi, 3 (2005), pp 237-44, p. 239.
[22] Toby Barnard, 'The Irish in London and 'the London Irish', ca. 1660-1780', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, xxxix (2015), pp 14-40, p. 30.
[23]Ibid.
[24] Howard, *The committee*, p. 14.
[25] Julie Sanders, 'Lacy, John', *ODNB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15856 [accessed 23 Sept. 2020].

noted by Ben Jonson (1572-1637) for several of his comic roles.[26] He also portrayed Sawney, the Scottish counterpart to Teague, in a popular adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*.[27] Lacy's familiarity with Irish mannerisms and speech patterns is difficult to determine. He was known to have trained under the tuition of dance-master John Ogilby (1600-76) who managed Dublin's first public theatre.[28] It is, however, impossible to surmise whether his portrayal of Teague relied on the comic conventions of the pre-interregnum theatrical tradition, or if he took a new approach to dialect acting. Regardless, contemporary critics, such as Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), attributed the success of Howard's play to Lacy's performance: 'a merry but indifferent play, only Lacey's part, an Irish footman, is beyond imagination'.[29] Moreover, the extent to which the play's longevity on the London stage was owing to Lacy's original success is somewhat attested by the addition made to the work's title when it was republished in 1735 as *The committee; or, the faithful Irishman*.[30]

Another English actor to specialise in dialect parts who portrayed an important stage-Irishman was Anthony Leigh (d.1692). Interestingly, Leigh was also from a provincial background and noted for his own Northern English dialect.[31] He portrayed several dialect parts throughout his career, including the popular stage-Welshman Jinkin, in Edward Ravencroft's *Dame Dobson* (1683).[32] English actor-manager and playwright Colley Cibber (1671-1757) noted that Leigh was 'not so strict an Observer of Nature', suggesting that his comic style was reliant on the heightened performance of stock vices.[33] He is known to have portrayed Howard's Teague in an Oxford production, when he reportedly left King James II 'highly displeas'd' with his exaggerated caricature.[34] Leigh portrayed another significant Teague character in Thomas Shadwell's *Teague O'Divelly; or the Irish Priest* (1681). Shadwell's Teague was created in reaction to the Popish Plot (1678-81) and embodied the fear of Irish Catholics that ran rampant in London at the time. Whereas Howard's Teague had been loyal to a fault, unsurprisingly Shadwell's stage-Irishman was conniving and untrustworthy. Dorothy Turner has emphasised

[26] Gerald Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline stage: dramatic companies and players*, ii (Oxford, 1941), 495.
[27] Ronald Vince, 'Lacy, John' in Dennis Kennedy (ed.), *The companion to theatre and performance* (Oxford, 2010), pp 331-2.
[28] Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline stage*, p. 496.
[29] Samuel Pepys, 12 June 1663, in Stuart Sim (ed.), *The concise Pepys: with an introduction by Stuart Sim* (Ware, 1997), p. 221.
[30] Howard, *The committee*.
[31] Deborah Payne Fisk, 'Leigh, Anthony', *ODNB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16374 [accessed 23 Sept. 2020].
[32] Alan Bliss, *Spoken English in Ireland 1600-1740: twenty-seven representative texts assembled and analysed* (Dublin, 1979), p. 176.
[33] Cibber, *An apology for the life*, p. 98.
[34] Fisk, 'Leigh, Anthony', *ODNB*.

that while plotting and intrigue were characteristic of Restoration drama, the tone of plays became more polemical following the political crisis.[35] From the 1680s until the turn of the eighteenth century, the plotting Irish priest became a staple comedic character on the London stage, though his Irish identity appears to have been of secondary consequence to his subversive position as Papist plotter.[36]

In the immediate aftermath of the Popish Plot, a proliferation of print material ridiculed Irish Catholics.[37] One particular publication, a joke book entitled *Bogg-witticisms: or, Dear Joy's Common-Places* (1682), was extremely influential in shaping how the Irish were portrayed on stage. This book comprised a collection of comic anecdotes that derided the supposedly 'natural Stupidity or Simplicity' of the Irish in London.[38] Its preface, narrated by the character of Teague, introduces the publication as 'shome stories consharning mee shalfe, and Bryan, and halfe a doshen more of ush'.[39] The joke book's popularity is indicated by its numerous reprints, under the altered title of *Teague-land Jests* in the two decades following its initial publication.[40] Its author presents 'blundering' as an exclusively Irish vice.[41] Blundering is defined as 'a comic contradiction between two of its component parts of which the speaker is unaware'.[42] In fact, while this was a common attribute of the stage-Irishman before 1682, it was not limited to characters identified as Irish; rather it was a device employed generally for low comedic effect. By the 1690s, however, that had changed and blundering became a joke exclusive to the stage-Irishman, known as the 'Irish bull'. Through this comic device, the speech of the stage-Irishman was not only a signifier of his identity but also a 'medium of the humour' that the caricature came to rely on.[43]

By the end of the seventeenth century, as ethnic signifiers became less prominent marks of Irishness on stage, the most recognisable characteristic of the stage-Irishman was his speech. The Irish-English dialect used in most Restoration plays appears to have been indicative, at

[35] Dorothy Turner, 'Restoration drama in the public sphere: propaganda, the playhouse, and published drama', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research*, xii (1997), pp 18-39.
[36] Bartley, *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney*, p. 105.
[37] Adam Morton, 'Popery, politics, and play: visual culture in succession crisis England', *The Seventeenth Century*, xxxi, 4 (2016), pp 411-49.
[38] 'To the reader' in *Bogg-witticisms: or, dear joy's commonplaces, being a compleat collection of the most profound puns, learned bulls, elaborate quibbles, and wise sayings of some of the natives of Teague-land* (London, 1682), pp 4-7, p. 4.
[39] Anon., 'The preface, by Teague' in *Bogg-witticisms: or, dear joy's commonplaces*, p. 13.
[40] Deana Rankin, "Shet fourd vor general nouddificaushion': relocating the Irish joke, 1678-1690', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, xvi (2001), pp 47-72, p. 59.
[41] Anon., 'To the reader' in *Bogg-witticisms: or, dear joy's commonplaces*, p. 5.
[42] Brian Earls, 'Bulls, blunders and bloothers: an examination of the Irish bull', *Béaloideas*, lvi (1988), pp 1-92, p. 1.
[43] Rankin, "Shet fourd vor general nouddificaushion", p. 57.

least to a certain extent, of the speech patterns of English speakers in late seventeenth century Ireland. Raymond Hickey has shown how dramatic texts indicate that the Anglo-Irish continued to use several lingual features of Middle English long after they had vanished in England itself. This includes the retention of 'unshifted' vowel pronunciation, whereby commonly used words such as 'Christ' became 'Chreest' in an Irish dialect.[44] This outdated English was interspersed with several vocabular and grammatical features of the Gaelic Irish language. When accent and pronunciation were added to the mix, Irish-English became a distinct dialect that was easily recognisable on stage. It was during this period that the word 'brogue' came to denote the strong accent of English-speaking Irishmen. The first instance of use of the term 'brogue' in this oratorical context was in James Farewell's play *The Irish Hudibras* (1689).[45] Significantly, this brogue was portrayed as a feature of the homogenous stage-Irishman and, therefore, considered a characteristic of the Anglo-Irish as much as those with Gaelic backgrounds.

Despite the negative portrayal of Irishness that flourished in print culture during the Popish Plot and War of the Two Kings (1688-91), Robert Howard's Teague remained one of the most popular characters on the London stage. Indeed, the character became so synonymous with Irish identity that 'Teague' became a commonly used slang term for an Irishman.[46] Although Teague was clearly from a Gaelic and Catholic socio-cultural background, his identity was treated as a homogenous portrayal of Irishness on stage. Teague's character epitomised the most dominant representation of Irish identity in late seventeenth century England, which combined Gaelic and Anglo-Irish identities in the public imagination. Following the Williamite victory in 1691, the Anglo-Irish grew increasingly anxious to stratify the portrayal of Irishness on stage, so as to draw clear distinctions between their identity and that of the Teagues. Despite this, Howard's *The Committee* remained part of the London theatre's regular repertoire throughout the eighteenth century. However, the post-Restoration stage-Irish tradition established by Teague's character would be revisited and challenged on several occasions over that century as Irish playwrights attempted to shift the generation of laughter away from derogatory comic vices that were considered exclusively Irish.

[44] Raymond Hickey, 'Irish English in early modern drama: the birth of a linguistic stereotype' in idem (ed.), *Varieties of English in writing: the written word as linguistic evidence* (Amsterdam, 2010), pp 121-138, p. 127.
[45] Bliss, *Spoken English in Ireland*, p. 269.
[46] Ibid., p. 266.

‘to refine my understanding’: George Farquhar and the stratification of the stage-Irishman[47]

Following the Glorious Revolution (1688), the vitality of London’s theatre scene became less dependent on the custom and taste of the aristocracy. Instead, a conservative bourgeoisie audience came to exercise growing influence over the theatre’s development.[48] This conservative milieu began to protest against the licentious comedies that had been favoured by the aristocracy since the restoration of the theatres. The most impactful of these protests came in the form of an infamous pamphlet entitled *A short view of the immorality and profaneness of the English stage* (1698). The author, theologian Jeremy Collier (1650-1726), reprimanded playwrights for their immorality in ‘making their top characters libertines, and giving them success in their debauchery’.[49] It was within this charged theatrical context that Derry-born playwright George Farquhar (1678-1707) rose to prominence as London’s leading comic writer at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Farquhar left Trinity College in 1694 to pursue a career as an actor at Smock Alley theatre. While there, he took on major roles such as Othello which, as we have seen, were central to the Dublin repertoire. However, he enjoyed little success in these roles and was relegated to supporting parts.[50] Following an accident in which Farquhar fatally wounded a fellow actor with a prop, he departed from the stage. According to the memoirs of Irish actor-manager Robert Wilks, it was he who persuaded Farquhar to ‘set out’ for London.[51] Wilks remained a close friend of Farquhar’s throughout his life.[52] Wilks’s memoirs suggest that Farquhar had already begun writing for the stage while in Dublin, but he knew that his comedic style would not be suited to the city’s taste: ‘he would not meet with Encouragement in *Ireland*, adequate to his Merit’.[53] Despite the fact that it appeared in the same year as Collier’s pamphlet was published, Farquhar’s first play *Love and a Bottle* (1698) made no explicit attempt to rise to

[47] William Philips, *St Stephen’s Green; or, the generous lovers. A comedy, as it is acted at the theatre-royal in Dublin* (Dublin, 1700), p. 42.
[48] Bruce McConachie, ‘Theatre and performance in print cultures, 1500-1900’ in Gary Jay Williams (ed.), *Theatre histories: an introduction* (New York, 2010), pp 169-298, p. 236.
[49] Jeremy Collier, *A short view of the immorality and profaneness of the English stage, together with the sense of antiquity upon this argument* (London, 1698), p. 2.
[50] Christopher Murray, ‘Farquhar, George’, *DIB*, https://dib.cambridge.org/viewFullScreen.do?filename=/app/dib/production/content/html/9780521633314_3005.htm [accessed 29 Sept. 2020].
[51] Daniel O’Bryan, *Authentic memoirs: or, the life and character of that most celebrated comedian, Mr. Robert Wilks, who died on Wednesday the 27th of September 1732, in his grand climacterical year. To which is added an elegy on his death* (London, 1732), p. 14.
[52] Matthew Kinservik, ‘Farquhar, George’ in Kennedy (ed.), *The companion to theatre and performance*, pp 198-9.
[53] O’Bryan, *Authentic memoirs*, p. 13.

Collier's call for plays that 'recommend virtue and discountenance vice'.[54] It did, however, introduce the London audience to a new type of stage-Irishman and stage-Irishwoman.

Love and a Bottle is thought to be semi-autobiographical as its plot follows the arrival of Roebuck, an 'Irish Gentleman, of a wild roving temper', in London.[55] Roebuck is first ridiculed for his Irish identity and refused entry into polite society. This rejection is characterised through the English heroine's refusal to meet with Roebuck as a potential suitor, as news of his Irish identity repulses her: 'Oh horrible! An Irish-man! A mere wolf-dog, I protest'.[56] Throughout the play, Roebuck endeavours to prove his capacity to be equal in oratory and wit to the heroine's English suitors. Here, Farquhar had created London's first stage-Anglo-Irishman. The playwright attempted to shatter the homogenous portrayal of Irishness by having Roebuck mediate his identity between his Irish origins and English social values. To accentuate the contrast between this Anglo-Irish character and the established stage-Irish trope, Farquhar has Roebuck shadowed by a Catholic Irish character throughout the first half of the play. Trudge was Roebuck's mistress back in Ireland; having borne his illegitimate child, she follows him to London. As this stage-Irishwoman's name suggests, she is presented as a burden on Roebuck's back, one he must shake off in order to fully devote himself to his pursuit of the virtuous English heroine.

The publication of *Love and a Bottle* lists 'Mr Williams' as the original actor to portray Farquhar's Roebuck.[57] This is likely to have been English actor Joseph Williams (*c.*1663-1707). Not much is known of Williams's performance style, though the parts he did play suggest that he excelled in comedic roles.[58] Unlike the actors who played Teague, however, Williams did not appear to specialise in dialect acting; neither was he from a provincial background. His selection therefore was a marked digression from the established practice of assigning Irish characters to actors who specialised in dialect parts. This casting choice highlights the stratification of the stage-Irishman that Farquhar's play introduced to the London stage; while the Gaelic stage-Irishman was relegated to the low comedy of a dialect part, the new stage-Anglo-Irishman represented the genteel nature of sentimental comedy. This, in turn, reflected the extent to which Irish ideas of gentility and civility were connected to the expression of an anglicised identity. The character of Trudge was portrayed by 'Mrs Mills',

[54] Collier, *A short view of the immorality*, p. 1.
[55] George Farquhar, 'Drammatis Personae' in *Love and a bottle: a comedy, as it is acted at the theatre-royal in Drury-Lane by his majesty's servants* (London, 1699).
[56] Farquhar, *Love and a bottle*, p. 4.
[57] Farquhar, 'Drammatis Personae', in *Love and a bottle*.
[58] Judith Milhous, 'Williams, Joseph', *ODNB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29527 [accessed 26 Nov. 2020].

likely Margaret Mills (d.1717), whose origins and upbringing are unknown.[59] She was a regular member of the Drury Lane company and married to actor John Mills (d.1736).[60] Although it is unlikely that the actress was Irish, an often overlooked feature of the play may explain her suitability for the part.

At the same time that the bourgeoisie were becoming more influential in the theatre scene, theatre also became a more accessible entertainment to those of the lower classes. This was a result of a commercial decision made by manager Christopher Rich (1657-1714) to expand the gallery seating area and offer lower price tickets to fill it.[61] This move was, in part, made in an attempt to cover the financial losses the theatre suffered owing to a lack of enthusiastic royal patronage under King William III (r.1689-1702). At the turn of the eighteenth century, the lack of interest of the Crown and its administration led to several actors being arrested for vagrancy without the permission of the Lord Chamberlain.[62] Such arrests should have been illegal, as actors were sworn servants of the king's household. The arrests, and the Crown's failure to prevent them, signalled 'the changing status of the theatrical institution' from a sphere of aristocratic privilege to a commercialised industry.[63] As a result, Drury Lane and its rival theatre Lincoln-Inn Fields vied to attract larger crowds from the lower ranks of London society. One method used to entice the lower classes was the insertion of popular songs and ballads into plays. *Love and a Bottle* was no exception to this new practice, as the play concludes with 'an *Irish* entertainment of three men and three women, dress'd after the *Fingallion* fashion'.[64] In 1715 London's premier music publisher John Walsh (*c.*1665-1736) printed *A Collection of the Choicest Songs and Dialogues Composed by the Most Eminent Masters of the Age*, which included three pieces purported to have been performed within Farquhar's play.[65] One of these songs, titled 'On Sunday after Mass', was allegedly sung by Mrs Mills in the character of Trudge. The song is a bawdy ballad about 'Dormett and his lass' who sneak off into the woods to be alone together after church: 'He ask'd for a pouge / she call'd him a rouge / and struck

[59] Farquhar, 'Drammatis Personae' in *Love and a bottle*.
[60] Mark Batty, 'Mills, John', *ODNB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18772 [accessed 2 Nov. 2020].
[61] Gillian Russell, "Keeping place': servants, theatre and sociability in mid-eighteenth century Britain', *The Eighteenth Century*, xlii (2001), pp 21-42, p. 22.
[62] Jane Milling, "Abominable, impious, prophane, lewd, immoral': prosecuting the actors in early eighteenth-century London', *Theatre Notebook*, lxi, 3 (2007), pp 1-8, p. 2.
[63] Ibid., p. 1.
[64] Farquhar, *Love and a bottle*, p. 64.
[65] Shirley Strum Kenny, 'Songs in 'Love and a Bottle", *The Scriblerian and the Kit-Cats*, xvii (1984), pp 1-7, p. 1.

him with her brouge'.[66] Interestingly, the lyrics contain several words from the Irish language, such as 'pouge' (meaning 'kiss') and 'brouge' (meaning 'shoe'). It is unclear whether the lyrics were written especially for use in *Love and a Bottle*, or if the song was already in popular circulation. The fact that the song was never included in the publication of the play suggests that the playwright was unlikely to have been the lyricist. Walsh does indicate that the tune of the song was 'set by Mr Leveridge'.[67] Richard Leveridge (1670-1758) was a member of the London operatic company for which Henry Purcell (1659-95) was composer, but turned composer for the theatre himself after Purcell's death.[68] The theatre's newly commercialised position within the public sphere intensified the competition between London's two patent theatres. According to Shirley Strum Kenny, the insertion of songs within late Restoration comedies was a business strategy adopted by theatre managers 'in their attempts to steal audiences from each other'.[69] The inclusion of music arranged by Leveridge, a renowned singer within London's theatre scene by 1696, would likely have enticed spectators into Drury Lane to see Farquhar's first play.

By the end of the seventeenth century it was common practice for established playwrights to write parts with specific actors in mind. Farquhar's strongest professional relationship was with Irish actor and theatre manager Robert Wilks. Wilks had been a soldier in the Williamite army during the War of the Two Kings but turned professional actor after his tremendous success in the previously discussed performance of *Othello*, staged at Dublin Castle to mark the victory.[70] He moved to London in the season following the success of his friend's first play. Farquhar wrote his most popular character, Sir Harry Wildair, with Wilks in mind for the part. *The Constant Couple* was staged in Drury Lane theatre in 1699, running for an impressive fifty-three nights.[71] Despite Wilks's own Irish identity, Wildair was an English rake character, the kind that was commonplace within Restoration comedy. Significantly, Kenny has shown that Wildair was imbued with a more sentimental attitude than the typical rake character of the

[66] 'On Sunday after mass' in John Walsh (ed.), *A Collection of the Choicest Songs and Dialogues Composed by the Most Eminent Masters of the Age* (London, 1715), extract in Strum Kenny, 'Songs in 'Love and a Bottle", p. 3.
[67] Walsh (ed.), *A Collection of the Choicest Songs* in Strum Kenny, 'Songs in 'Love and a Bottle", p. 5.
[68] Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, 'Leveridge, Richard', *ODNB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16536 [accessed 18 Oct. 2020].
[69] Shirley Strum Kenny, 'Songs in 'Love and a Bottle", p. 6.
[70] Patrick Geoghegan, 'Wilks, Robert', *DIB*, https://dib.cambridge.org/viewFullScreen.do?filename=/app/dib/production/content/html/9780521633314_9040.htm [accessed 2nd Oct 2020].
[71] Kinservik, 'Farquhar, George'.

period.[72] This sentimentalism was demonstrated through the character's sexual relations. Wildair was similar to previous rake characters in his supposedly insatiable sexual appetite, as his attention turns from one female character to another throughout the play. Where Wildair departed from tradition, however, is that he never appears to be successful in any of his conquests until his marriage to the virtuous Angelica at the end: 'My love is heightened by a glad devotion; and virtue rarefies the bliss to feast the purer mind'.[73] In this way, Wildair's sexual relationships mirror those of the female characters in Restoration comedy, as he never actually follows through on his lustful intentions and manages to enter marriage with his virtue intact. This feminisation of Wildair's character allowed it to become a popular 'breeches role' later in the century, when Irish actresses Margaret Woffington (1720-60) and Dorothea Jordan (1761-1816) would both find success in the part.[74] Despite Wildair's continued use of the wit and rhetoric of a licentious rake, the fact that the character does not commit any immoral action shows Farquhar's awareness of the changing attitudes towards comedy in London's theatre scene, even if his artistic response was initially tentative.

In 1702 Wilks played another of Farquhar's parts in *The Twin Rivals*. Throughout the play, his character, Hermes Wouldbe, competes with his twin for an inheritance claim. The second twin, Benjamin Wouldbe, was played by English actor-manager and playwright Colley Cibber (1671-1757). Despite the popularity of Drury Lane's principal actors and the position of Farquhar as London's leading comic dramatist after the success of *The Constant Couple*, *The Twin Rivals* was not well received by the audience. This had less to do with any fault in the play itself, than with the agenda Farquhar was pushing behind it.

The Twin Rivals was Farquhar's overt response to the mounting criticism that Collier's pamphlet had incited against the aristocratic taste that the theatre continued to promote. The publication of the play which occurred soon after its short run on stage was accompanied by Farquhar's *Discourse upon comedy* (1702). In the *Discourse*, the playwright directly addressed the concerns of Jeremy Collier and the conservative bourgeoisie section of the audience that he represented. Farquhar acquiesced to Collier's argument for a more sentimental form of drama, as he acknowledged the didactic potential of the theatre in instructing the moral character of society. He also exposed the 'Paradox of Poetry' which he had to contend with as

[72] Shirley Strum Kenny, 'Farquhar, Wilks, and Wildair: or, the metamorphosis of the 'fine gentleman'', *Philological Quarterly*, lvii (1978), pp 46-65, p. 50.
[73] George Farquhar, *The constant couple: or, a trip to the jubilee* (London, 1700), p. 31.
[74] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 37.

a playwright, whereby his work had to simultaneously please the refined artistic taste of the critics, and achieve commercial success by appealing to the popular taste of the masses.[75]

The *Twin Rivals* was an experiment in sentimental drama, wherein Farquhar drew on common tropes present in the licentious Restoration comedies that Collier had condemned, in order to show the potential of the dramatic tradition to promote virtue: 'I have therefore in this piece endeavoured to show that an English comedy may answer the strictness of poetical justice'.[76] One such dramatic tradition chosen, was that of the stage-Irishman, as Farquhar presented his own version of Howard's Teague character. Farquhar's Teague held a similar servile position within the hero's household, but significantly he was given the new comic device of the 'Irish bull' that became popular in the joke books of the 1690s.[77] Farquhar's use of this derogatory device may have been prompted by his need for comedic material to replace the licentious lines usually spoken by the rakish hero. Regardless of the intent, his use of the bull in Teague's dialogue is highly significant, as it was the first instance of the device being employed on stage. Farquhar's Teague was also an important departure for the stage-Irishman in that it was the first known instance of an Irish character being performed by an Irish actor on the London stage.[78] Little is known of the actor, William Bowen, other than his Irish identity. It is likely that he started his career at Smock Alley before moving to London, perhaps having already crossed paths with Farquhar in Dublin. By 1706 Bowen had sent a petition to the Lord Lieutenant to be considered for the post of theatre manager at Smock Alley.[79] This suggests that he maintained his contacts and position within Dublin's theatre scene and that he was an actor of some repute to have been considered for the managerial role. Despite Farquhar's innovative use of the stage-Irishman, among other Restoration tropes, the *Twin Rivals* failed to impress the London audience. Farquhar once again cited the 'Paradox of Poetry' at play in the increasingly socially-diverse theatrical sphere, as he lamented that a 'play without a beau, cully, cuckold, or coquette is as poor an entertainment to some palates, as their Sunday's dinner without beef and pudding'.[80] In the end, despite his attempt to showcase the moral potential of

[75] George Farquhar, 'A discourse upon comedy, in reference to the English stage', in Farquhar, *Love and business: in a collection of occassionary verse and epistolary prose, not hitherto published* (London, 1702), pp 112-59, p. 122.
[76] George Farquhar, 'Preface', *The twin rivals, a comedy. Acted at the theatre-royal, by her majesty's servants* (London, 1703), p. 26.
[77] Brian Earls, 'Bulls, blunders and bloothers: an examination of the Irish bull', *Béaloideas*, lvi (1988), pp 1-92, p. 7.
[78] Bliss, *Spoken English in Ireland*, p. 175.
[79] Anon, *Petition of William Bowen, actor, for the play-house in Ireland on the death of Mr Joseph Ashbury to whom it was granted in 1683* (1706), NLI, Portland Mss.
[80] Farquhar, 'The preface to the Twin Rivals', in Myers (ed.), *George Farquhar*, p. 82.

the comic tradition to appeal to the polite taste of the bourgeoisie critics, Farquhar's sentimentalised drama failed to achieve popular success. Moreover, that failure left Farquhar in debt.[81] In a move that ironically mirrored the fortune-hunting behaviour of his stage-Irishmen, the playwright married an heiress in 1703. This marriage, though a solution to his money problems, was unhappy and in the following year, Farquhar returned to Dublin without his wife.

While the London theatre scene was engaged with competition between popular and polite tastes at the turn of the eighteenth century, the commercialisation of Dublin's theatre scene lagged behind London's development. However, this delay did not necessarily leave Dublin trailing behind London, as the culturally conservative attitude of the Irish administration had kept the theatre in a relative state of courtly politeness.[82] Significantly, while it had shunned comic playwrights during the Restoration period, Dublin's conservative culture was not completely at odds with the emerging bourgeoisie taste for sentimental drama. Furthermore, the nascent Patriot movement encouraged the Anglo-Irish to assert their liberty from London's grasp and this found cultural expression through the patronage of playwrights who wrote exclusively for Dublin's theatre-royal, in an attempt to establish a 'distinctive Irish theatre repertoire'.[83] One such playwright was William Philips (d.1734), whose *St Stephen's Green* (1699) was the first comedy of the decade to be set in Dublin rather than London. In the published dedication, Philips noted that his patron cautioned him to observe the 'Fury against the Stage' and to write a play that would encourage virtue accordingly.[84] This reveals that despite their conservative culture, the Anglo-Irish were mindful of the condemnation that theatre was receiving in London and eager to show that their theatre scene was not afflicted by a similar 'Corruption of Manners'.[85] In his comedy, Philips condemned the Anglo-Irish gentry for their neglect of Dublin society in favour of fashionable London. This condemnation is primarily achieved through the character of Vainly, who declares: 'I am forced to go to England once a year, to refine my understanding'.[86] This supposed refinement is ridiculed throughout the play, as Philips endeavours to show that polite and moral society is more readily found in

[81] Christopher Murray, 'Farquhar, George', *DIB*, https://dib.cambridge.org/viewFullScreen.do?filename=/app/dib/production/content/html/9780521633314_3005.htm [accessed 11 Nov. 2020].
[82] Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama*, p. 51.
[83] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 41.
[84] William Philips, 'Epistle Dedicatory' in *St Stephen's Green; or, the generous lovers. A comedy, as it is acted at the theatre-royal in Dublin* (Dublin, 1700), p. ii.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., p. 42.

Dublin. Although they approach the topic of gentlemanly taste from different perspectives, the Patriot movement's ideals of equal liberty and status between the parliaments of London and Dublin can be seen to have permeated the characterisation of both Philips's and Farquhar's plays. This Patriotic fervour, which appears as a rejection of London's fashionable trends in *St Stephen's Green*, is characterised by Farquhar as the ability of an Anglo-Irishman to prove himself of equal standing and civility to his English counterpart.

Upon his return to Ireland, Farquhar joined the army and served as a recruiting officer. The close connection between the army and the theatre allowed Farquhar to oversee the production of his plays at Smock Alley. In 1704 he even appeared on stage himself, playing Sir Harry Wildair for his benefit performance.[87] Farquhar was physically unsuited to the role of the dashing hero, so it is likely that his appearance in the part was consciously novel to entice a larger crowd to donate to the playwright's benefit performance. By 1705 he had withdrawn from military service and returned to London. His time in Dublin was not unfruitful, however, as he acquired the patronage of the duke of Ormond who was serving as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.[88] Ormond's agreement to continue his patronage of Farquhar, despite his return to London's theatre scene, suggests that he was eager to claim the playwright's success as an *Irish* achievement.

Drawing on his brief military career, Farquhar made a triumphant return to the London theatre with *The Recruiting Officer* (1705). Following this, he continued with military settings in *The Beaux Stratagem* (1706). In this play, two Anglo-Irish gentlemen, Aimwell and Archer, are on a typical fortune-hunting mission to woo English heiresses. Unlike in his previous comedies, however, the heroines openly pursue the affections of their Irish suitors.[89] Their sparring dialogue provides comedy, though their wit is sanitized with metaphor and innuendo to appease polite taste. The play's military sub-plot sees Aimwell and Archer come in contact with Foigard, a Catholic Irish priest, who attempts to go unnoticed by his compatriots by pretending to be French. They quickly discover Foigard's true identity, however, recognising him as a native Irishman by his brogue. At the accusation of this disguise, Foigard enquires: 'And is my Tongue all your Evidensh, Joy?'. To this, Aimwell simply replies: 'That's enough'.[90] To conclude the plot, Farquhar has Foigard abandon his support for the Jacobite cause in favour

[87] Christopher Murray, 'Farquhar, George', *DIB*.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Elisabeth Heard, 'Successful experimentation: *the recruiting officer* and *the beaux stratagem*', *Drama Criticism*, xxxviii (2008), pp 1-19, p. 6.
[90] George Farquhar, *The beaux stratagem, a comedy* (London, 1710), p. 76.

of joining forces with Aimwell and Archer.[91] This is the first instance, in all of Farquhar's work, where Gaelic Irish and Anglo-Irish characters become political allies. Helen Burke shows that this strategic alliance tentatively marks the first appearance of a 'convert' stage-Irishman, whereby Anglo-Irish 'assimilationist strategies' are employed by the native Irishman.[92] The actors who portrayed Aimwell and Archer were John Mills and Robert Wilks, while Bowen again took the dialect part as Foigard.[93] Unfortunately, Farquhar did not live to reap the rewards of the play's great success, as he died before his benefit night occurred.

Paddy Lyons views Farquhar as a 'transitional' playwright whose work not only sits on the cusp of the change of theatrical taste from licentious to sentimental comedy, but also from Hobbesian to Lockean philosophy in drama.[94] At the same time, Farquhar's work demonstrates a significant 'transitional' phase in the depiction of Irish identity on stage. He shattered the homogenous portrayal of Irishness by stratifying the stage-Irish trope. Through the selective deployment of comic vices, such as the brogue and bull, Farquhar drew clear distinctions between Gaelic Irish and Anglo-Irish identities. In doing so, he created a new stage-Irish caricature, generally referred to as the 'fortune-hunting' trope.[95] Unveiling contrasts between appearance and reality is a central theme throughout Farquhar's work, particularly in the case of his Irish characters. His representation of Irish identity was endorsed by Dublin as well as London audiences, as his plays remained a fixture of the popular repertoires of both cities. Significantly, in Dublin's theatre scene, Farquhar was a staple of the repertoire throughout the eighteenth century.[96] This continued stage presence popularised the stratified stage-Irish identities that Farquhar had created, though the binary would become increasingly challenged as more Irish playwrights sought to contribute to the stage-Irish tradition.

'amuse the Town with something of *Irish* Birth': the commercialisation of Irish folk music and the popularity of ballad opera[97]

The commercialisation of culture, in print as well as theatre, saw the meeting and mixing of high and low forms of artistic production and practice. As a result, the line between popular

[91] Ibid., p. 318.
[92] Helen Burke, 'Crossing acts: Irish drama from George Farquhar to Thomas Sheridan' in Julia Wright (ed.), *A companion to Irish literature*, I (Oxford, 2010), pp 148-62, p. 152.
[93] 'Drammatis personae' in Farquhar, *The beaux stratagem*, pp 5-6.
[94] Lyons, 'What do the servants know?', p. 25.
[95] Bartley, *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney*, p. 124.
[96] John Greene and Gladys Clark, *The Dublin stage, 1720-45: a calendar of plays, entertainments and afterpieces* (London, 1993); John Greene, *Theatre in Dublin, 1745-1820: a calendar of performances*, i-iv (Plymouth, 2011).
[97] Charles Coffey, 'The preface to the reader' in *The beggar's wedding; a new opera. As it is acted at the theatre in Dublin, with great applause* (Dublin, 1729), p. ii.

and polite culture became increasingly discussed and defined over the course of the eighteenth century. Some writers, such as Irishman Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), made a career out of crossing the cultural divide. Despite his polite position as a candidate for the deanship of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Swift first rose to prominence within London's literary sphere by adopting the persona of a lowly Grub-street writer.[98] His anonymously published *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) was so full of vulgar themes and cant language that it became an infamous sensation. Swift's *Tale*-teller represented the mixed culture of the commercial sphere, as he makes no distinction between high and low forms of art, instead 'mixing folktale motifs … with learned discourse'.[99] The *Tale* was originally published alongside *The Battle of the Books,* in which Swift characterised the contemporary debate between high and low cultural forms. In the *Battle,* Swift concluded that while it held no prestige, the lowly produce of Grub-street held more power among the populace.[100] The acknowledgement of this power was a crucial turning point in Swift's career, as he realised that the vulgar motifs of popular commercial media could be used and manipulated for political advantage.

The emerging Patriot movements, in both London and Dublin, were particularly good at saturating commercial culture with their political agenda. Following the Anglo-Scottish Union (1707) there was considerable interest in establishing a collective 'national' culture that could be recognised and celebrated as following a distinctly 'British' artistic tradition.[101] Most elements of high culture, however, had their origins in the classical and aristocratic traditions of the continent; so instead, attention turned to the native art of folk traditions. It was argued that such traditions drew on nature rather than learning; their appeal, therefore, was universal: 'for the generality of our Audiences are far more capable of a Pleasure of Sense than of a Delight of Reason'.[102] The ballad, as an art form, held universal appeal and was particularly malleable to political agendas. Although the ballad tradition was rooted in the low culture of the vulgar orders of society, it had been popularised by the commercial sphere and reached a

[98] Ann Cline Kelly, *Jonathan Swift and popular culture: myth, media, and the man* (New York, 2002), p. 29.
[99] Ibid., p. 27.
[100] Jonathan Swift, *A tale of a tub: written for the universal improvement of mankind. To which is added, an account of a battle between the ancient and modern books in St James's library* (Dublin, 1705).
[101] Lee Robert Blackstone, 'The aural and moral idylls of "Englishness" and folk music', *Symbolic Interaction*, xl, 4 (2017), pp 561-80, p. 562.
[102] John Dennis, *An essay on the operas after the Italian manner which are about to be establish'd on the English stage: with some reflections on the damage which they may bring to the publick* (London, 1706), p. 5.

socially-diverse audience.[103] Thus, it could not only bridge the gap between high and low culture, but also between oral and print practices.[104]

Like with Farquhar's 'Paradox of Poetry', however, the promoted native tradition had to appeal to both refined artistic taste and achieve popular commercial success. As a result, there were often considerable adaptions made to pieces taken from the folk tradition before they were published. In the case of ballads, lyrics were rewritten to give the population a sanitised and moralising art form that was purged of its vulgarity.[105] This adaptive process was just as liberally applied to the publication of the folk music to which the lyrics were set. Irish folk music entered the commercial sphere through theatre from at least as early as the 1690s, though the earliest printed collection of music that was celebrated as being distinctly Irish was not published until 1724.[106] Sean Donnelly makes the astute observation that despite the 1724 Neal collection being published in Dublin, each of its forty-nine tunes had already been separately printed in London. This reveals the continued anxiety of the Anglo-Irish audience, who waited until they were 'safe in the knowledge that London had approved' of their native taste.[107] The Neal collection followed the London convention for adaptation and the tunes, though of Irish origin and name, were rearranged to replicate the Italian baroque style that remained the epitome of refined taste.[108] The discriminating Anglo-Irish interest in the musical compositions of Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738) may be explained by the harper's ability to fluently combine the two 'musical dialects' at play in Irish society.[109]

The most effective way in which the London theatre scene adapted to its new socially-diverse audience was through the emerging genre of the ballad opera. Whereas songs had been increasingly prevalent additions to late Restoration comedies, such as those shown to have appeared in productions of Farquhar's *Love and a Bottle*, the ballad opera was written with music specifically placed as an integral part of the plot progression. The musical airs produced in the ballad opera were set to popular folk tunes, though often given new lyrics. To appease

[103] Frank Harrison, 'Music, poetry and polity in the age of Swift', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, i (1986), pp 37-63, p. 51.
[104] Julie Henigan, 'Print and oral culture in the eighteenth-century Irish ballad', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, xli (2012), pp 161-83, p. 161.
[105] Margaret Hunt, 'Cultures of women' in eadem (ed.), *Women in eighteenth century Europe* (London, 2009), pp 251-86, p. 251.
[106] John Neal and William Neal, *Collection of the most celebrated Irish tunes proper for the violin, German flute or hautboy* (Dublin, 1724).
[107] Sean Donnelly, 'The famousest man in the world for the Irish harp', *Dublin Historical Record*, lvii (2004), pp 38-49, p. 38.
[108] Boydell, "Whatever has a foreign tone", p. 28.
[109] Harrison, 'Music, poetry and polity in the age of Swift', p. 62.

the conservative taste of the bourgeoisie, the ballad opera was given a sentimental plot-line that provided the audience with a moral lesson through the administering of 'poetical justice' on stage.[110] At the same time, however, popular folk tunes were selected to appeal to the taste of the lower classes present within the newly expanded audience. The impact that ballad opera had on the development of musical taste in both London and Dublin cannot be overstated. The frequent inclusion of Irish folk tunes in London's leading ballad operas would not only make them a staple feature of the popular musical repertoire, but also provide a positive portrayal of native Irish culture on the stages of both London and Dublin.

The most influential ballad opera was John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) which had an unprecedented run on the stage. Gay was a close friend of Dean Swift's and the two spent several years discussing the mixing of high and low forms of art, language and learning brought forth by the commercialisation of culture.[111] *The Beggar's Opera* was the result of these discussions, and many of the themes and techniques used by Swift can be seen in Gay's work. Of particular note is the use of cant language - a dialect of English that was notorious for its connections to the nation's criminal underworld. Janet Sorensen illustrates how, like Swift had done in his infamous *Tale*, Gay's characters use a 'disorientating mixture of respectable and cant languages' to satirize the 'breakdowns of distinctions between high and low, right and wrong'.[112] This breakdown is further satirised in the play's conclusion when, in the epilogue, the character of the player steps forward to correct the playwright on how the opera's resolution is 'manifestly wrong, for an Opera must end happily'.[113] The playwright (through the persona of the ambiguous 'beggar' character) concedes to this appeal and orders for the play's gangster, Macheath, to be released from his sentence. This interrupts the 'poetical justice' that the sentimental comedies of the period thrived on.[114] The player, however, asserts that such justice must be dispensed with, in order 'to comply with the Taste of the Town'.[115] In the opera's final lines, the playwright claims that the work would have 'carried a most excellent Moral' if it were not for the commercial necessity to appeal to popular taste.[116] This moral, revealed in the

[110] Steve Newman, *Ballad collection, lyric and the canon: the call of the popular from the restoration to the new criticism* (Philadelphia, 2007), p. 16.
[111] Uwe Boker, Ines Detmers and Anna-Christina Giovanopoulos, *The Beggar's Opera, 1728-2004: adaptations and re-writings* (New York, 2006), p. 9.
[112] Janet Sorensen, *Strange vernaculars: how eighteenth century slang, cant, provincial languages and nautical jargon became English* (Princeton, 2017), p. 86.
[113] John Gay, *The beggar's opera: as it is acted at the theatre-royal in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Written by Mr Gay* (London, 1728), p. 70.
[114] Newman, *Ballad collection, lyric and the canon*, p. 16.
[115] Gay, *The beggar's opera*, p. 70.
[116] Ibid.

closing line, demonstrates the innovative approach Gay took: ‘’Twould have shown that the lower Sort of People have their Vices in a degree as well as the Rich’.[117] Early sentimental comedy, such as that written by Dublin-born playwright and critic Richard Steele (*c.*1672-1729), focused its moral instruction on the vices of the gentry or the fortune-hunting bourgeoisie. *The Beggar’s Opera*, however, in making its primary characters of lower rank, extended the theatre’s didactic potential to provide moral lessons for *all* the social orders.

Jonathan Swift’s praise for *The Beggar’s Opera* reveals that Gay, in keeping with the ‘vulgar’ taste of the lower rank characters portrayed on stage, did not follow the theatrical trend for adapting popular folk tunes to appeal to ‘that unnatural taste for Italian music’ prevalent within polite society.[118] John Gay had spent a short time under the tutelage of George Frederick Handel (1685-1759), who was London’s premiere operatic librettist.[119] Handel was renowned for his rejection of many stylistic conventions of Italian operatic composition and, it would appear, encouraged Gay to do the same. Gay worked with Richard Leveridge on the musical aspects of the *The Beggar’s Opera*. Leveridge had spent at least one season at the turn of the eighteenth century employed as a composer at Smock Alley theatre in Dublin.[120] The alley itself, on which the theatre sat, was known to be frequented by ballad singers, including the prominent ballad-writer and performer John Hicks.[121] Leveridge likely took note of tunes and melodies from the popular repertoire in Dublin, working them into his arrangements when he returned to London. This appears to have been the case with several of the tunes he arranged for use in Gay’s ballad opera.[122]

The Beggar’s Opera was such a phenomenal success that a production was mounted at Smock Alley theatre in the same season it debuted in London. Again, Gay’s ballad opera achieved unprecedented success on the stage. The satire underpinning Gay’s work attracted some disapproval from the conservative milieu, which prompted Swift to justify the popularity of his friend’s work in *The Intelligencer*. Swift argued that such satire fulfilled a didactic and moralising role as it was born of ‘a public spirit, prompting men of genius and virtue to mend the world as far as they are able’.[123] He also claimed that it was not wrong for polite people to

[117] Ibid.
[118] Jonathan Swift, ‘A vindication of Mr Gay and the Beggar’s Opera’ in *The Intelligencer*, 25 Mar. 1728.
[119] Calhoun Winton, *John Gay and the London theatre* (Lexington, 1993), p. 41.
[120] Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, ‘Leveridge, Richard’, *ODNB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16536 [accessed 11 Dec. 2020].
[121] Julie Henigan, ‘Print and oral culture in the eighteenth-century Irish ballad’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, xli (2012), pp 161-83, p. 162.
[122] William Barclay, ‘An index of tunes in the ballad operas’, *The Musical Antiquary*, ii (1910), pp 1-17.
[123] Swift, ‘A vindication of Mr Gay and the Beggar’s Opera’.

be entertained by vulgar comic vices, as 'this taste of humour is purely natural'.[124] This natural amusement, according to Swift, arises from the fact that the joker is 'ignorant of the gift they possess'.[125] Swift suggests that the comic vices associated with the lower orders are similar to those of the stage-Irishman whereby the audience's chief amusement arises from their perceived superiority over the comic figure who remains ignorant of the amusement they provide.

The popularity of *The Beggar's Opera* was so great that ballad opera became the leading genre of new comedic material in both London and Dublin.[126] In Dublin, it appears to have even contributed to the expansion of the commercial theatre scene, as new theatres and music halls emerged in the 1730s, providing competition to Smock Alley's hegemony.[127] Furthermore, Gay's immense success prompted other playwrights to imitate his work and meet the demand for this new comic genre. One such playwright, who fed off Gay's popularity with considerable success, was Dublin-born Charles Coffey (1700-45). He was a hack writer who engaged in the kind of commercialised literary endeavours that Swift had mocked in his *A Tale of a Tub*. Coffey wrote his first ballad opera, *The Beggar's Wedding*, for the Dublin stage in 1729. He cited a patriotic agenda in the publication of the work, claiming that although it was an imitation of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, he had sought to 'amuse the Town with something of *Irish* Birth'.[128] To uphold the Irishness of the piece, Coffey took 'particular care to collect the most delightful Tunes' from the popular repertoire of folk music.[129]

Despite the huge success of Gay's ballad opera in Dublin, Coffey's imitation was not favoured. After this failure, Coffey took his play to London where he shortened it into an afterpiece with the help of actor-manager Colley Cibber (1671-1757).[130] The afterpiece catered to lower class tastes, as concession tickets were offered for late entry to the theatre after the working day. It was in this revised form that *The Beggar's Wedding* achieved success in London, and subsequently in Dublin also. In fact, its success was so great that one of the play's primary ballads, an Irish song called 'Ellen a Roon', became one of the most celebrated songs in the

[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Berta Joncus, 'Ballad opera: commercial song in Enlightenment garb' in Robert Gordon and Olaf Gubin (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the British musical* (Oxford, 2018), pp 31-50, p. 47.
[127] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 45.
[128] Charles Coffey, 'The preface to the reader' in *The beggar's wedding; a new opera. As it is acted at the theatre in Dublin, with great applause* (Dublin, 1729), p. ii.
[129] Ibid., p. v.
[130] Frances Clarke and Sinéad Sturgeon, 'Coffey, Charles', *DIB*, https://dib.cambridge.org/viewFullScreen.do?filename=/app/dib/production/content/html/9780521633314_1792.htm [accessed 22 Jan. 2021].

century's ballad repertoire.[131] The song's Irish origins were fully acknowledged and it became a sort of patriotic anthem for the Anglo-Irish, akin to the status of 'Rule Brittania' among the English, which was itself a song popularised through ballad opera. Coffey continued to write ballad operas while in London and in 1731 he co-authored a new work with English Grub-Street writer John Mottley (1692-1750).[132] This piece, entitled *The Devil to Pay*, became the most frequently performed afterpiece in London's theatre scene throughout the eighteenth century.

The popularity of ballad opera placed greater emphasis on the vocal abilities of actors. As the ballad was considered to be a natural art, its performer was not to be formally trained in the refined operatic style: 'admire Nature in her Simplicity and Nakedness'.[133] This increased emphasis on natural ability allowed for actors of lower rank to rise up the social order through their theatrical careers. This was especially true for female performers as folk music was considered a particularly feminine aspect of culture: 'it be soft and effeminate'.[134] Felicity Nussbaum has demonstrated how actress Catherine 'Kitty' Clive (1711-85) expertly controlled her theatrical image to advance in her career and social standing.[135] Clive was born in England, though of Irish parentage.[136] She used her Irish connections to her benefit, however, as she rose to fame through the ballad opera and became especially associated with the works of Charles Coffey. Clive played the lead role of Nell in *The Devil to Pay* (1731) and her success led her to be offered the coveted part of Polly in the continuous productions of *The Beggar's Opera* from 1732.[137] Clive played both of these roles so often throughout her career that they were considered her dramatic property in London's theatre scene.[138] Her connection with Coffey's work was further highlighted by the immense popularity of 'Ellen a Roon' which she sang either within his plays or as an interval act in others. In 1741 Clive came to perform for a season in Dublin and it was reported that she had learned an Irish-language verse to include in the ballad for the entertainment of her Irish audience.[139] Clive utilised her Irish connections to

[131] Coffey anglicises the Irish title 'Eíbhlín a rún' to 'Ellen a Roon', though the song often appears as 'Aileen Aroon' also; Boydell, "Whatever has a foreign tone", p. 32.
[132] Yvonne Noble, 'Charles Coffey and John Mottley: an odd couple in Grub Street', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research*, xvi (2001), pp 1-12, p. 1.
[133] *The Spectator*, 7 June 1711.
[134] Dennis, *An essay on the operas after the Italian manner*, p. 5.
[135] Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival queens: actresses, performance and the eighteenth-century British theatre* (Philadelphia, 2010), pp 151-88.
[136] K. A. Crouch, 'Clive [née Raftor], Catherine [Kitty]', *ODNB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5694 [accessed 14 Jan. 2021].
[137] Ibid.
[138] Nussbaum, *Rival queens*, pp 151-88.
[139] Boydell, "Whatever has a foreign tone", p. 32.

claim dramatic property over the century's most popular ballad, thus securing her professional standing and popular success. Another actress of obscure birth to rise to fame through the ballad opera was Margaret 'Peg' Woffington. Born in Dublin in 1720, Woffington was a member of a children's acting troupe, known as the Lilliputians, who performed at a booth on George's Street.[140] Woffington caught the attention of Dublin's theatrical scene through her performance of Polly in the booth's production of *The Beggar's Opera*. She and her Lilliputian co-star Isaac Sparks (1719-76) were both recruited into the Smock Alley troupe.[141] Like Clive, Woffington gained position within the theatre as a result of her perceived natural abilities, rather than on the merit of any skilful training. Woffington was good friends with Charles Coffey and played Clive's role of Nell in the Dublin production of *The Devil to Pay*.[142] Although Woffington's career was launched through the success of ballad opera, it was Kitty Clive who actively used the celebrity status she achieved through the genre's popularity to alter the perception of female performers. Nussbaum shows that Clive manipulated her public image through an 'interiority effect', whereby she aligned her on-stage and off-stage personas and became a paragon of female virtue and national character.[143] Thus, Clive drove the professionalisation of the actress on the London stage during the 1730s and 1740s.

The immense popularity of the ballad opera during the second quarter of the eighteenth century had a significant impact on the development of both London and Dublin theatre scenes. The genre effectively married high and low forms of culture to create a popular entertainment for the socially diverse audience of the commercialised theatre scene. Furthermore, it claimed to assert national character through the promotion of native artistic traditions and natural talent. The debt that ballad opera owed to Irish folk music was not overlooked, as performers such as Clive drew attention to their Irish connections to use the genre to enhance their careers. Joep Leerssen asserts that music was the 'one unquestionably positive national Irish trait' portrayed on the eighteenth-century stage.[144] This is true in the sense that even as the stage-Irishman was increasingly anglicised under the guise of gentrification, his natural taste in music was highlighted as a positive aspect of his national character. Leerssen makes the further claim that this trait was positively portrayed as a result of its being 'a-political'.[145] This was not the case,

[140] Philip Highfill, Kalman Burnim and Edward Langhaus, *A biographical dictionary of actors, actresses, musicians, dancers, managers and other stage personnel in London, 1660-1800,* xiv (Chicago, 1991), p. 208.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Clarke and Sturgeon, 'Coffey, Charles', *DIB.*
[143] Nussbaum, *Rival queens,* p. 152.
[144] Leerssen, *Mere Irish and fíor-Ghael,* p. 129.
[145] Ibid.

however, as the ballad was used to encourage patriotic pride in native art as well as being a vehicle for political satire. The political potency of the ballad opera is evident from the harsh blow that it received in the aftermath of the Licensing Act's establishment in 1737.[146] The genre was the most effected by the new censorship laws, indicating its particular reputation for political sedition.

'don't you see by my dress that I am a shentleman?': Thomas Sheridan and the cultural adaptation of the stage-Irish gentleman[147]

George Farquhar's approach to presenting Irish identity on stage was to draw clear distinctions between Gaelic and Anglo-Irish characters, even if their agendas eventually united to serve the plot. One of the most pronounced ways in which Farquhar had drawn these distinctions was with the use of verbal bulls and brogues to differentiate the Gaelic Irishman from his eloquent Anglo-Irish counterpart. The immense popularity of the ballad opera had a positive influence on the perception of Irish folk culture, as it was adapted for popular and polite taste within the theatre scenes of both London and Dublin. This intercultural dialogue and exchange allowed for distinctions between Gaelic and Anglo-Irish cultural identity to become slightly less pronounced; at the very least, it showed the potential for those of Gaelic backgrounds to adapt to Anglo-Irish socio-cultural practice. The acknowledgement of this potential for socio-cultural adaptation, in turn, influenced the development of the stage-Irishman. From the 1730s onwards, the stage-Irishman was increasingly depicted as being of Gaelic heritage, as indicated by the 'O' and 'Mac' prefixes more regularly attached to their names.[148] This indicates the increased visibility of those of Gaelic backgrounds within the Anglo-Irish and wider British public spheres. The marking of their identity through the use of Gaelic prefixes, however, shows that they were still perceived as members of a provincial counter-public. While these stage-Irishmen were of Gaelic extraction, they began to appear in the guise of the anglicised gentleman, their gentility performed through a process of cultural adaptation in an attempt to better their socio-economic standing. This anglicised performance put these stage-Irishmen alongside their Anglo-Irish counterparts within the fortune-hunting trope. The first playwright to depict this form of culturally-adaptive stage-Irishman was Thomas Sheridan (1719-88). Born in Dublin to a father of educational repute, Sheridan appears to have grown up under the

[146] Berta Joncus, 'Ballad opera: commercial song in Enlightenment garb' in Robert Gordon and Olaf Gubin (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the British musical* (Oxford, 2018), pp 31-50, p. 47.
[147] Thomas Sheridan, *The brave Irishman* (Dublin, 1754), p. 4.
[148] Bartley, *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney*, p. 118.

tutorship of his godfather Jonathan Swift.[149] From 1733-5 he was sent to school at Westminster, an institution which placed great emphasis on oratory and rhetoric during this period.[150] This London education was a mark of bourgeoisie prestige among the Anglo-Irish, giving him a gentleman's education. Despite being raised within an Anglo-Irish milieu, the family had Gaelic and Jacobite roots in County Cavan.[151] Sheridan's place within Dublin's bourgeoisie sphere was already, therefore, proof of the potential for socio-cultural adaptation within Irish society.

It was during his formative years in London that Sheridan developed a passion for theatre. One of the most successful plays of the two-year period he spent there was *The Cornish Squire* (1734) by historian and hack-writer James Ralph (1705-62).[152] This play starred Donegal-born dialect actor Charles Macklin (*c.*1690-1797) in its lead role and likely showed Sheridan the extent to which farcical comedy had appealed to popular taste and achieved commercial success in London. When he returned to Ireland, to study at Trinity College, Sheridan immersed himself in Dublin's theatrical scene. He set about writing his own farcical comedy, *The Brave Irishman*, which unusually placed the stage-Irish Captain O'Blunder as the central character. There is some debate concerning the dating of the play's inception since it was Sheridan's one dramatic work which he revised several times. The earliest version of the play only exists in manuscript form and is generally dated to 1737. This version was titled *The Honest Irishman* and may have been acted at Dublin's Aungier-Street theatre, though it was advertised anonymously as 'written by a gentleman of Trinity College Dublin'.[153] It was 1743 before *The Brave Irishman* appeared at Smock Alley theatre with its author acknowledged. It received its first London performance at Goodman's Fields in 1746. Despite its popularity, particularly with Dublin and Edinburgh audiences, the play was not published until 1754. This was because Sheridan himself never authorised a publication of the play, so it was 'collected by some persons from memory, and frequently performed; but never, as Mr. Sheridan used to declare, with his consent'.[154] The reason behind his reluctance to publish the play is unknown, though

[149] Thomas Sheridan, *The life of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Swift: Dean of St Patrick's, Dublin* (London, 1784), p. 386.
[150] Esther Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley: recording his life as actor and theatre manager in both Dublin and London; and including a Smock-Alley calendar for the years of his management* (Princeton, 1967), p. 13.
[151] Andrew Carpenter, 'Sheridan, Thomas (1687-1738)', *DIB*, https://dib.cambridge.org/viewFullScreen.do?filename=/app/dib/production/content/html/9780521633314_8046.htm [accessed 16 Feb. 2021].
[152] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 12.
[153] Ibid., p. 26.
[154] Anon., *The thespian dictionary; or, dramatic biography of the eighteenth century; containing sketches of the lives, productions, &c. of all the principal managers, dramatists, composers, commentators, actors, and*

according to the custom of the mid-eighteenth century theatre, Sheridan would have forfeited the stage rights to his work had he authorised its publication.

The influence of Farquhar's *Love and a Bottle* on Sheridan's play is easily observed in how the latter introduces his stage-Irishman. Sheridan's English heroine, Lucy, discovers that an Irish suitor has arrived in London to court her. At first mention of him, Lucy declares: 'I hear he's a strange animal of a brute'.[155] This directly echoes the image Farquhar's heroine was struck with, at learning of Roebuck's Irish identity.[156] Lucy, however, quickly has her mind changed when her maid Betty contradicts her view: 'I am told they are as gentle as doves to our sex, with as much politeness and sincerity as if born to our own country'.[157] This positive appraisal of the Irish suitor was not simply Sheridan taking poetic license to subvert the fortune-hunting stage-Irish trope; Irish beaus had acquired a reputation among the heiresses of England for wooing 'not [with] their Merit, but their Address'.[158] On stage, the manner of this address increasingly consisted of poetry or song. O'Blunder partakes in the popular taste for Irish ballads and is made to sing for Lucy.[159] The Englishman, Mr Cheatwell, soon enters the scene and tells of his intention to drive O'Blunder 'back to his native bogs', so that he may be free of his rival for Lucy's hand.[160] Lucy protests against this plan of action, revealing her curiosity to meet the Irishman: 'pray let's have a sight of the creature'.[161] Cheatwell attempts to dissuade her from meeting with his rival by describing the Irishman's strange appearance. This does not deter Lucy's curiosity, however, but rather heightens it: 'He must be worth seeing, truly'.[162] In this way, Sheridan reveals that it is the Irishman's exoticism that first appeals to the heroine.

The idea that O'Blunder is exotic in appearance is further developed by his own entrance on stage, upon which a mob 'stare and laugh at him'.[163] O'Blunder takes offence to this behaviour and asserts his standing: 'you shons of whores, don't you see by my dress that I am a shentleman?'.[164] Here, as Swift and Gay had done, Sheridan satirises society through juxtaposition, whereby O'Blunder uses vulgar language while asserting his position within

actresses, of the United Kingdom: interspersed with several original anecdotes; and forming a concise history of the English stage (London, 1805), p. 383.
[155] Sheridan, *The brave Irishman*, p. 2.
[156] Farquhar, *Love and a bottle*, p. 4.
[157] Sheridan, *The brave Irishman*, p. 2.
[158] 'Epistle from a society of young ladies to the English bachelors and widowers', *The English register* (1742), extract in Bartley, *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney*, pp 124-25.
[159] Leerssen, *Mere Irish and fíor-Ghael*, p. 108.
[160] Sheridan, *The brave Irishman*, p. 2.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Sheridan, *The brave Irishman*, p. 3.
[163] Ibid., p. 4.
[164] Ibid.

polite society. Sconce, a friend of Cheatwell's, manages to identify O'Blunder as an Irish gentleman immediately by the way he dresses, but goes on to enquire after which part of England he is from. O'Blunder's answer, 'The devil a part of England am I from, my dear; I am an Irishman', reveals that he is of Gaelic rather than Anglo-Irish extraction.[165] Sconce, understanding this revelation, replies that he 'should not suspect that; you have not the least bit of the brogue about you'.[166] With this comment, Sheridan exposes the reliance on speech as an identifying factor of the Irishman, and most especially those with Gaelic backgrounds. O'Blunder, however, deflects this derogatory comment by making a joke that relies on the opposing English and Irish meanings of the word 'brogue': 'Brogue! No, my dear; I always wear shoes'.[167] Raymond Hickey has shown how Captain O'Blunder's Irish-English dialect is somewhat removed from the stage-Irish characters that proceeded him.[168] This suggests that Sheridan, with his keen interest in language, did not simply replicate the stock phrases that had come to be associated with the stage-Irishman; instead, it would appear that he attempted to accurately record the Irish-English dialect as it was spoken by the 1730s. Despite not giving his stage-Irishman the conventional exaggerated accent, Sheridan did exploit the comic device of the Irish bull. However, O'Blunder appears to be comically self-aware, rather than ignorant of the amusement his blunders provide.

The uncertainty surrounding the first production of *The Brave Irishman*, or *The Honest Irishman* in its earliest form, makes it difficult to confidently name the actor who first portrayed Captain O'Blunder. In his memoirs, Irish playwright John O'Keeffe (1747-1833) claims that Sheridan originally wrote the play with Isaac Sparks in mind for the lead role.[169] Following his success in ballad opera, Sparks became the leading comic actor in Dublin's theatre scene, known under the moniker of 'Lord Chief Justice Joker'.[170] Esther Sheldon has shown, however, that his name does not appear in advertisements of the play until 1749.[171] It is the ambiguous actor John Morris who is repeatedly listed in the part from its 1743 production at Smock Alley, until Sparks took over the role with great success.[172] There is no actor connected with the 1737 production of *The Honest Irishman*, however, so Sparks may indeed have played the role first.

[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Hickey, 'Irish English in early modern drama', p. 130.
[169] John O'Keeffe, *Recollections of the life of John O'Keeffe, written by himself*, (London, 1826), II: 357.
[170] Highfill, Burnim and Langhaus, *A biographical dictionary*, p. 206.
[171] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 25.
[172] Bliss, *Spoken English in Ireland*, p. 74.

Joep Leerssen claims that *The Brave Irishman* marks the start of the 'deliberate amelioration' of the stage-Irishman.[173] It could be argued that Farquhar's approach to the portrayal of Irish identity on stage was where this subversion originated, but he stratified Irish characters along a divisive binary of Gaelic and Anglo-Irish identity in order to exclusively ameliorate the perception of the latter. In making O'Blunder a gentleman of Gaelic background, Sheridan shattered the binary that Farquhar had created. At the same time, Sheridan revealed that the key to this breakdown was performative; O'Blunder is accepted by polite society as a result of his speech and dress. These traits are easily acquired through a process of cultural adaptation, showing that the Gaelic Irishman may successfully perform gentility within Anglo-Irish society.

Conclusion

The evolution of the stage-Irishman was a major development in the history of theatre in London and Dublin during the period 1600 to 1800, and it underwent a series of significant changes that reflected shifting identity politics from 1660 to 1745. The recognition of Irishness on stage was achieved through the use of stock comic vices to denote the character's national identity. In the direct aftermath of the Restoration, Howard's Teague emerged as a tamed version of the wild Irishman caricature. Teague's primary comic vice was his ignorance, though his capacity for violence was not forgotten. The tension caused by the Popish Plot and War of the Two Kings led to a proliferation of print material which ridiculed the dialect speech patterns of native Irish in England. The resulting lingual comic vices of the Irish bull and brogue were first employed on stage by Irish playwright George Farquhar. He used language to stratify the homogenous stage-Irish identity, creating a socio-cultural binary between the portrayal of Gaelic and Anglo-Irish characters. The patriotic endorsement of folk music traditions helped to bridge the gap between high and low art forms, allowing the ballad opera to appeal to all tastes. The debt that this immensely popular genre owed to the Irish folk tradition allowed for a positive portrayal of native culture. However, the stage-Irish binary established by Farquhar gradually broke down as the century progressed. Sheridan's stage-Irishman underwent a process of cultural adaptation, so that he simultaneously represented both Gaelic and Anglo-Irish identities. In this way, Sheridan characterised the success of social enlightenment whereby social status could be acquired through the performance of polite culture. The Irish-English dialect, and the manner in which it was spoken, remained the most distinctive feature of Irish

[173] Leerssen, *Mere Irish and fíor-Ghael*, p. 116.

identity both on and off the stage. As a result, oratory became a significant aspect of the Irish social enlightenment.

Chapter 3

'as I pronounced it to you': actor-orators, the culture of improvement and performance of gentility, *c.*1710-*c.*1760[1]

British culture in the eighteenth century was primarily characterised by an evolving and varied discourse concerning 'gentility' - the display of social superiority through polite and respectable behaviour, which depended on the conditioning of the body. The body, therefore, was imbued with a heightened social currency, as an individual's sociability relied on the body's ability to perform gentility.[2] The performative nature of this cultural movement was recognised by its proponents which, in turn, made actors exemplars of gentility. The actor consequently assumed a new role in society. The acting profession was no longer considered to be that of the morally dubious player, but instead, became that of the ideal gentleman. Paul Goring's assertion that an actor in performance was 'teaching one of the means by which men could lay claim to a gentlemanly status' suggests that social status was increasingly defined through socio-cultural, rather than socio-economic, identity.[3] The means by which one could ascend the 'cultural' scale, however, remained inextricably linked to economic standing. This is best exemplified by the 'grand tour' phenomenon of the eighteenth century, when aspiring gentlemen would embark on an expensive cultural education around Europe. Those of lesser means, however, could seek cultural (and by extension social) 'improvement' by watching gentility in performance. The performance of gentility seems to have had its roots in the strong rhetoric of the Protestant pulpit since religious sermons, an important aspect of print culture, functioned as a platform for the moral improvement of the public. This was particularly the case during the seventeenth-century, when religious rhetoric dominated the public sphere in Britain.[4] As the public sphere widened at the turn of the eighteenth century, the rhetoric of 'improvement' was applied to the social scene of the rising bourgeois. While the seventeenth century enlightenment had been concerned with moral improvement, the movements of the eighteenth century focused on social improvement. The impact of this development was to shift the attention of reform movements away from the church, to concentrate instead on the development of a largely secular public sphere, in which 'behaviour, not belief, was the crucial

[1] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2 in Malone (ed.), *The plays and poems of William Shakespeare*, pp 280-86.
[2] Goring, *The rhetoric of sensibility*, p. 19.
[3] Ibid., p. 10.
[4] Peter Lake and Steve Pincus, 'Rethinking the public sphere in early modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, xlv, no. 2 (2006), pp 270-92, p. 276.

criteria deciding inclusion'.[5] From the 1730s social performance became a vehicle for social mobility, and theatre was consequently imbued with an elevated status within the public sphere.

This chapter explores the issue of social mobility within the public sphere during the 1730s and 1740s in the context of Enlightenment discourse concerning the social performance of gentility. It discusses the elocution movement as a significant factor in the professionalisation of the actor in London's theatre scene at the turn of the eighteenth century. Focus then shifts to Dublin, where Thomas Sheridan emerges as a central figure in shaping the theatre's position within the city's public sphere. Sheridan's contribution to Ireland's discourse of 'improvement' is examined within the socio-political context of the mid-eighteenth century. A debate known as the Gentlemen's Quarrel (1747), which erupted from a series of riots at Dublin's Smock Alley theatre, is closely analysed to unveil the divisions within Dublin's Anglo-Irish socio-cultural sphere. Attention again returns to London's theatre scene to discuss Irish actor-orators involved in teaching the performance of gentility. The mounting criticism towards this performative culture is also examined as a new 'natural' style of performance emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The chapter aims to highlight the intimate connection between oratory, elocution, and acting in the first half of the eighteenth century. By the 1750s theatre will hold a distinguished position within the public spheres of London and Dublin, as an agent for social enlightenment.

'there is not one qualification set down, which is not absolutely necessary to do justice to art': the elocution movement and the professionalisation of the London theatre scene[6]

From the 1690s the late stages of the moral enlightenment invested theatre, or rather drama, with a renewed social currency. Following the restoration of the theatres in 1660 drama became associated with cultural expression of the royalist socio-political agenda.[7] The drama of the later seventeenth century, however, assumed rhetorical value for the emerging elocution movement, which seems first to have been an instrument of the moral enlightenment. Many of its objectives focused on improving religious preaching, as demonstrated by the fact that most of the early elocutionists were either writing to instruct the clergy, or were themselves members

[5] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 12.
[6] Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr Thomas Betterton, the late eminent tragedian. Wherein the action and utterance of the stage, bar, and pulpit, are distinctly consider'd. With the judgement of the late ingenious Monsieur de St. Evremond, upon the Italian and French music and operas, in a letter to the Duke of Buckingham. To which is added 'The Amorous Widow, or the Wanton Wife'. A comedy, written by Mr Betterton. Now first printed from the original copy* (London, 1710), p. 4.
[7] Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama*, p. 31.

of the clergy.[8] The movement had its roots in the Renaissance interest in classical rhetoric, which gave rise to the translation and publication of influential works such as Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, Cicero's *De Oratoria*, and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.[9] These works focused on improving style and form to achieve effective speech in public. Classical rhetoric was, however, primarily concerned with the *text* of a speech rather than its delivery. It was not until the mid-seventeenth century that a discourse concerning the effective delivery *in speech* gradually emerged and became the inspiration for the British elocution movement from the 1690s onwards.

The growth of print was crucial in making the theatre a firm fixture within this elocution movement. The steady increase in the publishing of plays over the course of the seventeenth century attests to the growing market of dramatic readers in England. From the early 1690s reading plays seems to have been advocated by elocutionists, as illustrated by a widely circulated pamphlet entitled *Advice to a Parson; or, the true art of preaching*, which was published anonymously in 1691.[10] It linked the moral improvement of the public to a preacher's ability to communicate effectively with his audience through oratory. Even at this early stage in the elocution movement, the pamphleteer makes several references to the theatre and claims that a player may acquire distinction through the skill of eloquence: 'These helps set off an Actor on the Stage'.[11] The author of the pamphlet also advises that dramatic works ought to be read to 'refine' the skill of oratory: '*Waller* I top, on *Dryden* I refine, Whose clever Style, more properly is mine; More than *Ben Johnson*, does to me belong, To make a Grammar for the English Tongue'.[12] By the turn of the eighteenth century, public interest in the reading of plays was so strong that London printers began to produce individual playbooks, generally in quarto or octavo form, which could be sold at a much lower price than the large dramatic folios of the mid-seventeenth century.[13] These playbooks were increasingly sold in the theatres themselves, drawing the print and performance industries ever closer.

As the elocutionary movement began adopting the playbook as a practice text for public speaking, the actor seems to have become a practitioner of the movement; performance increasingly became imbued with professional qualities such as oratory and elocution. This

[8] Goring, *The rhetoric of sensibility*, p. 11.
[9] Warren Guthrie, 'The elocution movement in England', *Speech Monographs*, xviii (1951), pp. 17-30, p. 17.
[10] Goring, *The rhetoric of sensibility*, p. 10.
[11] Anon., *Advice to a Parson; or, the true art of preaching* (London, 1691), p. 3.
[12] Ibid., p. 2.
[13] Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the book, 1480-1880: print, text and performance in Europe* (Oxford, 2000), p. 53.

professionalisation of the theatre industry served to reinforce the artistic status of the actor and proposed a corresponding socio-cultural standing for the vocation. This was first illustrated by the author and critic Charles Gildon's (1665-1724) work *The Life of Mr Thomas Betterton, the late eminent tragedian. Wherein the action and utterance of the stage, bar, and pulpit are distinctly consider'd* (1710). Ostensibly a biography of renowned English actor Thomas Betterton, the longest section of the work comprises Gildon's own treatise on the application of oratory and elocution for the actor, lawyer, and preacher. Although Gildon claims to be 'the first, who in English has attempted this subject', Wilbur Samuel Howell has shown that much of the treatise was, in fact, borrowed from the 1702 English translation of a French text by Michel Le Faucheur (1585-1657).[14] Nevertheless, Gildon does appear to be the first English author to apply the principles of oratory and elocution to the stage. Gildon draws upon Betterton's illustrious career to support his argument regarding the actor's artistic skill, as he presents Betterton as 'a Man so excellent in an Art which is now expiring'.[15] Gildon attributes the 'expiring' state of dramatic art not only to the dominance of farcical comedy on stage, but also to the lack of propriety observed by actors and actresses off-stage. Professionalisation is, therefore, advocated by the author as 'there is not one qualification set down, which is not absolutely necessary to do justice to art, in judgement and performance'.[16] The purpose of Gildon's treatise was to provide a set of rules by which one could claim 'qualification' in oratory and elocution. This had the effect of placing the professional qualities of an actor on the same level as that of a preacher or lawyer.

The theatre, during the first decades of the eighteenth century, had increasingly harsh critics. In advocating for the professionalisation of the actor, Gildon sought to counter published claims that 'the Business of a Player is profane, wicked, lewd and immodest'.[17] Acknowledging that the standing of the dramatic art form was compromised by the often negative reputations of actors within the public imagination, Gildon called for actors and actresses to take the 'greatest and most nice care of their reputation imaginable for on that their authority with the people depends'.[18] Within the public sphere the theatre should, according to Gildon, be a showcase of an ideal society where the 'moral lessons, which the stage presents, may make the

[14] Gildon, *Life of Mr Thomas Betterton,* p. vi; Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Eighteenth-century British logic and rhetoric* (Princeton, 1971), p. 182.
[15] Gildon, *Life of Mr Thomas Betterton,* p. 2.
[16] Ibid., p. 4.
[17] William Law, *The absolute unlawfulness of the stage entertainment fully demonstrated* (London, 1726 edition), p. 11.
[18] Gildon, *Life of Mr Thomas Betterton,* p. 20.

greatest impressions on the minds of the audience'.[19] Thus, the professionalisation of the actor through the qualification of oratory raised the standing of the London theatres from the 1710s so that they became agents of social enlightenment. The centrality of theatre within the public sphere during this period is indicated by the editor of the highly influential *Spectator* periodical, who justifies his ability to 'contribute to the Diversion or Improvement' of the public by claiming he is 'very well known … in the Theatres both of Drury-Lane and the Hay-market'.[20] In Dublin, however, this process of professionalisation was significantly delayed until the 1730s, largely due to the Irish financial crises of the 1720s which deferred the commercialisation and gentrification of Dublin's theatre scene.

'uniformity amidst variety': the improvement of Dublin's public sphere and the British elocution movement[21]

As the eighteenth century progressed, the 'elite' cultural spheres of Europe gradually widened to become places of public discourse. This public sphere increasingly became the domain of the middle class, who patronised a 'civic culture characterized by public service and sociable pleasures set in increasingly sophisticated places'.[22] In line with this trend, the Irish middle class, like their English counterparts, began to engage in a process of cultural refinement, finding cultural expression for their socio-economic status through the performance of gentility. However, whereas in Europe this emerging social trend is considered part of the Enlightenment movement, in Irish historiography it is often referred to as the process of 'anglicisation'. Although the cultural 'gentrification' of the Irish middle class undeniably made urban society in Ireland more akin to that of England, the process was largely driven by those *within* Irish society. In part, it seems to have been a response to the losses suffered by Dublin's 'elite' cultural sphere, as London became a more alluring social destination for the gentry from the 1710s.[23]

In the wake of economic depression during the 1720s greater levels of absenteeism among Ireland's landed gentry allowed the professional middle class to expand their influence over Dublin's public sphere. In order to refine the public sphere in the Irish capital, however, there was a need for greater patronage of the arts. The first edition of the *Dublin Journal* in 1729

[19] Ibid., p. 18.
[20] *The Spectator*, 2 Mar. 1711.
[21] Francis Hutcheson, *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) quoted in Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 179.
[22] Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland*, p. 258.
[23] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 163.

complained: 'that wanting suitable Encouragement at home, Men of Genius and Education, born in this Kingdom, are forced out of it to a more kindly Soil, for making a Fortune by their Abilities'.[24] In 1731 another article in the *Dublin Journal* criticised the city's 'want of a well regulated theatre'.[25] The article also claimed that it was the lack of such a refined cultural space that encouraged the Irish nobility and gentry to travel 'abroad to procure these public diversions'.[26] As the Irish economy improved, and the middle class had disposable income once again, there was a significant increase in the patronage of Dublin's public spaces. The 1730s and 1740s saw a surge in the building of music halls, dance halls, and theatres.[27] This development was accompanied by a discourse of improvement which was, at first, concerned with political economy: 'to promote so general a Good to his Country, as the Trade and Commerce of it'.[28] By the 1730s moral improvement of the public was advised as a means to stimulate economic improvement: 'True virtue implanted and settled in the Minds of them all'.[29] Dublin-born author and dramatist Samuel Madden (1686-1765) wrote about the necessity to 'obtain an act of parliament to allow premiums and proper encouragements' for the growth of the economy.[30] What is striking about Madden's 1738 work is his repeated use of the term 'nation' when referring to Ireland. On the one hand, therefore, the Enlightenment can be seen to have restored a sense of patriotism to the Anglo-Irish, as they actively engaged in 'improving' Irish society. At the same time, however, they seem to have considered their ability to perform gentility and civility as a means of expressing their continued political aspirations to enjoy equal status to their English counterparts. This is suggested by the development of a discourse of aesthetics in Irish culture, which promoted 'the national capacity to exercise restraint in behaviour'.[31] In his influential 1725 work, *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) defined beauty as 'uniformity amidst variety'.[32] This concept became characteristic of the Irish enlightenment movement in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, as the Anglo-Irish developed an ideology of

[24] James Arbuckle (ed.), *A collection of letters and essays on several subjects, lately published in the Dublin Journal*, i (London, 1729), 3.
[25] David Fleming, 'Diversions of the people: sociability among the orders of early eighteenth-century Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, xvii (2002), pp 99-111, p. 104.
[26] Ibid., p. 104.
[27] Colm Lennon, 'Dublin: Part II, 1610 to 1756', *Irish Historic Towns Atlas*, no. 19 (Dublin, 2008), p. 35.
[28] Arthur Dobbs, *An essay on the trade and improvement of Ireland* (Dublin, 1729), p. 3.
[29] Edward Synge, *Honesty the best policy: an essay concerning the true way of rendering a nation happy, and its government firm and lasting* (London, 1737), reprint in idem, *The works of the most reverend Dr Edward Synge, Lord Archbishop of Tuam in Ireland. In three volumes*, iii (London, 1738), 491-512, 494.
[30] Samuel Madden, *Reflections and resolutions proper for the gentlemen of Ireland* (Dublin, 1816 edition), p. 119.
[31] Hutcheson, *Inquiry* quoted in Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 179.
[32] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 179.

'uniformity', whereby they demonstrated their civility through the performance of gentility. This cultural anglicisation of the Irish public sphere was yet another attempt to express their claim of equal status with their English counterparts. In the words of Dublin theatre manager Benjamin Victor, it was 'Time to assert your Liberties, and prove yourselves as free-born Subjects as your Brethren of *England*'.[33]

This process of cultural anglicisation among the Anglo-Irish was largely dominated by improvement through oratory and elocution. The theatre's position within this discourse of cultural refinement is suggested by the simultaneous development of the performance and print industries in Ireland from the 1720s.[34] As previously demonstrated in the context of London, the connection between performance and print within the public sphere was essential in positioning the theatre within the elocutionary movement. Ireland's status as a separate kingdom from Britain meant that the increasingly legal regulation of the London theatre scene, and the professional relationships of those working in it, did not necessarily apply to the Dublin theatre. The Licensing Act of 1737, though a hindrance to the theatres of London, was never passed by the Irish parliament.[35] As a result, the printing of plays in Dublin was less regulated than in London, and dramatic texts could be circulated without the consent of the playwright. Although this legislation likely made London a preferred destination for dramatists, the comparative lack of censorship in Dublin allowed the print industry to flourish. According to Morash, the large volume of plays printed in mid-eighteenth-century Dublin indicates 'that some people read plays *instead* of seeing them in a theatre'.[36] Viewed within the context of the emerging elocution movement in Ireland from the 1730s onwards, the printing of plays for the singular purpose of being read, demonstrates the heightened educational value of the printed play text.

As the eighteenth century progressed, 'improvement' increasingly became the object of polite society across the British Isles. From the 1690s social improvement had been primarily concerned with the cultivation of polite manners, which were considered as 'a people's moral

[33] Benjamin Victor, *The history of the theatres of London and Dublin, from the year 1730 to the present time. To which is added an annual register of all the plays, &c. performed at the theatres-royal in London, from the year 1712. With occasional notes and anecdotes, by Mr Victor, late one of the managers of the theatre-royal in Dublin. In two volumes*, i (London, 1761), 108.
[34] Barnard, *Brought to book*, p. 251.
[35] Christopher Morash, 'Theatre and print, 1550-1800' in Raymond Gillespie, and Andrew Hadfield (eds), *The Oxford history of the Irish book, volume iii: the Irish book in English, 1550-1800* (Oxford, 2006), pp 319-34, p. 325.
[36] Ibid., p. 323.

traits as these were expressed in the people's way of life or customary habits'.[37] As morality was the supposed basis of politeness, many early endeavours at the improvement of manners occurred within the orbit of the Established Church. This was true both of England and Ireland, where the charity school movement sought to cultivate 'sound religious and moral principles, including submission to political authority and social deference'.[38] By the 1730s, however, such confessional approaches to educational enlightenment had waned. Instead, the English language had become the focus of many seeking to improve society.

By the third decade of the eighteenth century the increasingly affluent middle class of England were distressed by their nation's lack of artistic genius in comparison to their continental counterparts. This 'artistic backwardness', many came to conclude, was the result of the English nation's neglect of their own vernacular tongue in favour of classical and modern European languages, such as Latin and French.[39] A myriad of attacks on the outdated system of education, with its emphasis on classical learning, were published throughout the eighteenth century. Within this wider reflection on the status of the English language, the Anglo-Irish adopted a very particular interest, namely in the importance they attached to cultural refinement through vernacular language improvement. Their heightened interest may have been a reaction against the renewed interest in the Irish language and its literature among Anglo-Irish scholars during the early decades of the eighteenth century. This is illustrated by the appointment in 1710 of Benjamin Pratt (*c*.1669-1721) as lecturer in the Gaelic language at Trinity College, where the position had been vacant since the Williamite Wars.[40] In Ireland, therefore, the Anglo-Irish may have viewed both Irish scholarship and classical rhetoric as hindrances to English vernacular education. In 1712 a letter from Jonathan Swift to the High Treasurer of Great Britain was published in London in which Swift tried to convince the latter that 'nothing would be of greater Use towards the Improvement of Knowledge and Politeness, than some effectual Method for *Correcting, Enlarging* and *Ascertaining* our Language'.[41] Although Swift did not suggest any 'effectual Method', he did make some passing references to the importance of eloquence and oratory in establishing the standing of a language. During the 1730s Irish churchman and philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753) published a series of rhetorical

[37] Lawrence Klein, 'Liberty, manners, and politeness in early eighteenth-century England', *The Historical Journal*, xxxii, no. 3 (1989), pp 583-605, p. 590.
[38] Langford, *A polite and commercial people*, p. 133.
[39] Ibid., p. 306.
[40] Vivian Mercier, *The Irish comic tradition* (Oxford, 1962), p. 191.
[41] Jonathan Swift, *Dr Swift's letter to the Lord High Treasurer; a proposal for correcting, improving and ascertaining the English tongue; in a letter to the Most Honourable Robert Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain* (London, 1712), p. 6.

questions concerning the improvement of society in Ireland. Discussing subjects such as morality, economy and politics, Berkeley posed the question: 'And whether half the Learning and Study of these kingdoms is not useless, for want of a proper Delivery and Pronunciation being taught in our Schools and Colleges?'[42] Elocution was, therefore, a central concern within Ireland's culture of improvement.

Dublin-born actor and theatre-manager Thomas Sheridan emerged as the most prominent Irish elocutionist from the 1740s. Having made his name in the theatres of both Dublin and London during the 1730s and 1740s, Sheridan returned to Dublin in 1745 and devoted his time to improving the city's theatre scene and public sphere in line with developments in London. As a recognised actor-orator, he was invited to speak at a music hall assembly in Dublin, where he spoke about the 'want of proper Places to finish the Education of a Gentleman'.[43] The later published version of his oration in London details his proposal for a school of eloquence in Dublin, which would qualify students 'in all the Accomplishments of a Gentleman to make a Figure in polite Life, and to assist him in acquiring a just Taste in the liberal Arts, founded upon Skill'.[44] Sheridan claimed that his own mastery of elocution was 'founded upon Skill' he acquired through acting. As Charles Gildon had previously envisioned the instructive potential of theatre, Sheridan also hoped his Smock Alley playhouse would provide 'constant good Models and Examples in all the different species of Eloquence'.[45]

Sheridan's heightened concern over the pronunciation of English in Ireland appears to have been motivated by the provincial socio-cultural identity increasingly thrust upon the Anglo-Irish by their English compatriots since the 1690s. This was best articulated in 1728 by Jonathan Swift, then Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin and author of several works that earned him the reputation of a vociferous Irish patriot: in a letter addressed to Lord Peterborough in 1726, he complained 'that all persons born in Ireland are called and treated as Irishmen, although their fathers and grandfathers were born in England'.[46] Michael Brown claims that the improvement of oratory and elocution was 'a distinctly Irish approach to the issue of politeness', though Sheridan seemed more preoccupied with the generally provincial aspect of Irish identity, than with the vocal trace of Irishness in particular.[47] This is evident in

[42] George Berkeley, *A miscellany, containing several tracts on various subjects* (London, 1752), p. 141.
[43] Howell, *Eighteenth-century British logic and rhetoric*, p. 218.
[44] Sheridan, *Oration*, p. 25.
[45] Ibid., p. 24.
[46] Jonathan Swift, *Letter to Lord Peterborough*, 28 Apr 1726 quoted in Thomas Bartlett, 'The fall and rise of the Irish nation: the Catholic question, 1690-1830' in D. George Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan (eds), *Political thought in Ireland since the seventeenth century* (London, 1993), pp 36-72, p. 36.
[47] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 171.

his ambition for his proposed school of oratory to attract 'the Interest of the Gentlemen of *Scotland* and *Wales*', as well as 'Numbers from *America*, and the *British* Colonies Abroad'.[48] It is significant that some of the most zealous proponents of the elocution movement in the mid-eighteenth century, and especially those involved in standardising pronunciation and speech patterns, were from 'provincial' British backgrounds. In a short discussion of Scottish and Irish involvement in reforming the English tongue, Paul Langford suggests that their interest was fuelled by a desire to 'achieve cultural assimilation'.[49] However, such anglicisation among the provincial bourgeois was not necessarily, however, a strictly colonial process. Lawrence Klein has demonstrated the intimate connection that English contemporaries drew between social manners and political liberty: 'Liberty cannot be preserved, if the manners of the People are corrupted'.[50] As a result, the Anglo-Irish interest in the improvement of manners through the performance of gentility may be interpreted as politically, as much as socially, motivated.

'no less than a violent dispute about the honour of an actor': Thomas Sheridan, the Kelly Riots and Gentlemen's Quarrel of 1747[51]

Thomas Sheridan spent much of his time as actor-manager attempting to reform theatre practice in Dublin; by extension he sought to raise the standing of theatre within the city's public sphere. Under his management, the vitality of the Dublin theatre scene was restored to a level it had not enjoyed since the Restoration period. Sheridan's management was, however, obstructed by several outbursts of rioting against the practices of the theatre. As manager of Dublin's theatre-royal, Sheridan became a publicly acknowledged symbol of anglicised culture. Consequently, at times of heightened socio-political tensions, Smock Alley and its manager became targets of rioting and pamphlet warfare. Sheridan's management of Smock Alley began in the year 1745, at the height of Jacobite tensions across the British Isles. Jacobitism had found support among those Anglo-Irish who opposed what they regarded as the increasingly colonial nature of the relationship between Dublin and London, among them essayist and dramatist Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), son of an Anglican curate.[52] Jacobitism among the Anglo-Irish was, therefore, as much a result of disaffection from the colonial regime of Westminster as it was an assertion of religious affiliation, or support for restoration of the Stuart dynasty. Although 1745 was

[48] Sheridan, *Oration*, pp 14-15.
[49] Langford, *A polite and commercial people*, p. 306.
[50] Klein, 'Liberty, manners, and politeness', p. 591.
[51] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 87.
[52] Griffin, *Enlightenment in ruins*, p. 17.

characterised by the inaction of Irish Jacobites in Ireland on a military front, the disaffected faction within Dublin society set about venting their frustrations on cultural monuments of the English administration, Smock Alley included.

In a study of cultural identities across the British Isles during the period 1685-1789, Murray Pittock claims that Jacobite culture, particularly among the gentry, was characterised by an 'essential conservatism' which encouraged them to retain 'strong traditional contacts with folkways'.[53] In Dublin, demonstrations of discontent with the administration often involved elements of folk drama. The satirical motifs of traditional theatrical culture were applied to, and sometimes inflicted upon, cultural monuments that represented the power of the political establishment in Ireland. The monument most frequently targeted by Jacobite satirists was the statue of King William III, which stood in College Green. From 1701 the Glorious Revolution was celebrated annually by the citizens of Dublin paying 'homage to the King's statue'.[54] The symbolic importance of the statue made it a target of abuse as the 'spirit of Jacobitism' reportedly incited students of Trinity College to 'inflict repeated indignities' upon the monument.[55] The most common of these 'indignities' was the practice of setting 'a straw figure astride behind that of the King'.[56] Here, students with Jacobite sympathies drew on the dramatic tradition within Gaelic culture. In Dublin, placing a straw figure upon the king's statue was an intimation of a popular Gaelic folk drama, generally known as *Sir Sopin, the knight of straw*. According to a study carried out in 1788 by Irish antiquarian Joseph Walker (*c.*1762-1810), the drama revolved around two central characters; a lavishly clothed Gaelic chieftain 'who always takes his title from the Irish family of most consequence in the neighbourhood', and an English lord known as 'Sir Sopin' who is 'dressed in straw'.[57] The central theme of Irish folk drama is 'death and revival', reflecting the play's traditional place as a theatrical spectacle performed at wakes.[58] This was also the thematic custom among Gaelic communities in Scotland, though the use of straw costume to depict the chieftain's adversary was peculiar to Ireland.[59] Although there are regional differences in the narrative of the play, the basic plot sees Sir Sopin inflict a grievous wound on the Gaelic chieftain, before a doctor or saint appears to miraculously cure

[53] Murray Pittock, *Inventing and resisting Britain: cultural identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685-1789* (New York, 1997), p. 110.
[54] Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin*, ii, 42.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Alan Gailey, *Irish folk drama* (Cork, 1969), p. 95.
[58] Ibid., p. 68.
[59] Michael Newton, 'Folk drama in Gaelic Scotland' in Ian Brown (ed.), *The Edinburgh companion to Scottish drama* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp 41-46, p. 44.

the fallen chieftain so that he can overcome his adversary. The appeal of such a revival narrative to Jacobite supporters is, therefore, evident in the repeated placing of a straw figure, likely representative of the satirical Sir Sopin character, upon the statue of William III in College Green. The statue appears to have been almost continuously abused in this way, so that by 1765 it was removed and placed 'on a stone pedestal of greater elevation'.[60] This satirical practice indicates the extent to which the cultural custom of the Gaelic folk drama retained currency, even within the Anglo-Irish sphere at Trinity College. Thus, at a time when Sheridan was endeavouring to elevate the role and reputation of his reformed and respectable theatre within Anglo-Irish society, the performance of folk drama retained its place within the traditional public sphere of rural and urban communities.

In 1747 the satirical straw figure of Sir Sopin was again evoked to inflict a cultural blow on a symbol of anglicised society during the Kelly Riots. This time, however, it was Sheridan who was the target of attack as protest moved from the streets to the theatre. At a Smock Alley performance of *Aesop* on 19 January, a drunken Galway gentleman named Kelly, made his way backstage where he began to abuse two actresses 'with the most nauseous bawdy and ill language'.[61] Hearing of the disturbance, Sheridan stopped the play in which he was performing in the title role and had the gentleman removed from the green room. Once returned to the pit, Kelly threw an orange at Sheridan and began a heated dispute with the actor-manager. Significantly, during the altercation Sheridan reportedly declared: 'I am as good a gentleman as you are'.[62] The theatre's deputy-manager Benjamin Victor (*c.*1700-78) claimed that reports of the incident had, in fact, misquoted the actor-manager as saying: 'I am as good a gentleman as any in the House'.[63] This one line, which brought the issue of gentility to the fore, sparked the ensuing pamphlet debate known as the Gentlemen's Quarrel.

The question of gentility, and who could claim it, was a debate that enthralled Dublin's society in 1747. In writing about Jonathan Swift's relationship with the Gaelic Irish satiric tradition, Vivian Mercier suggests that the gentry of *both* Gaelic and Anglo-Irish lineage 'share an attitude, a sense of power and prestige'.[64] This shared attitude is evident between Sheridan and Kelly, the tension between them arising from their different interpretations of what qualities afforded them their common prize of 'power and prestige'. In the pamphlet debate, those who

[60] Gilbert, *A history of the City of Dublin*, ii, 45.
[61] Thomas Copeland (ed.), *The correspondence of Edmund Burke, volume i: April 1744 to June 1768* (Chicago, 1958), 82-84.
[62] Burke, *Riotous performances*, p. 117.
[63] Victor, *The history of the theatres of London and Dublin*, i, 98.
[64] Mercier, *The Irish comic tradition*, p. 191.

took the side of Kelly were defending the traditional view that gentility was derived from lineage.[65] Supporters of Sheridan, on the other hand, sought to legitimise the actor-manager's status as a gentleman by emphasising his polite manners and contribution to improvement of the Dublin theatre: in this context, he was praised for 'his Ambition [which] has been to cultivate good Manners and Decency, and [for] his Labours and good Example [which] have hitherto been attended with good Success'.[66] Sheridan's education was also the subject of much discussion and the vital question was posed as to whether learning could qualify one to be a gentleman. Both Sheridan and Kelly had graduated from Trinity College and, therefore, had equal claim to a genteel education. Sheridan also had Gaelic Irish lineage from Cavan, although he had been raised in a thoroughly Anglo-Irish milieu in Dublin.[67] At the heart of the dispute was, therefore, the contested social status of those, like Sheridan, working in the increasingly professional theatre scene. In a letter to London theatre manager Colley Cibber in 1747, Benjamin Victor asserted that the Dublin riots were 'no less than a violent dispute about the honour of an actor'.[68]

Sheridan himself took part in the pamphlet debate, attempting to vindicate his position within the public sphere. In the first of three pamphlets, he set about proving his claim to gentility while in the latter two, he recounted the events from his perspective.[69] In the initial publication Sheridan asked the gentlemen of Ireland to 'seriously consider' his position within their society.[70] This position, he reminded them, was not that of a mere player, but rather the prestigious role of manager of the kingdom's theatre-royal: 'An Office immediately under the Sanction of his Majesty, which alone should entitle him to the Treatment of a Gentleman'.[71] Sheridan then argued that a gentleman may 'acquire that title by being in a genteel Profession'.[72] Here, he attested to the professionalisation of the Dublin theatre scene, albeit several decades later than in London. For Sheridan, proof of Dublin's delayed professionalisation process was evident in the high esteem with which an actor-manager's position was 'look'd upon in *London*'.[73] Sheridan's own claims to lineage and education

[65] Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama*, p. 131.
[66] Victor, *The history of the theatres of London and Dublin*, i, 103.
[67] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 5.
[68] Ibid., p. 87.
[69] Ibid., p. 96.
[70] Thomas Sheridan, *A faithful narrative of what happen'd at the theatre: on Monday the 19th instant, which gave rise to the following Disturbance there, with some Observations upon it, humbly submitted to the Consideration of the Publick* (Dublin, 1747), p. 8.
[71] Ibid., p. 8.
[72] Ibid., p. 11.
[73] Ibid., p. 4.

allowed him to adopt a somewhat conciliatory stance on the status of actors. He concluded: 'tho' the Profession of an Actor, does not entitle a Man to the Name of a Gentleman, yet neither can it take it from him if he had it before'.[74]

Helen Burke is rightly critical of Ester Sheldon's discussion of the Kelly Riots on the grounds that Sheldon's emphasis is solely on the debate about gentility. Burke takes a broader view and locates the concern about social status that underpinned the Gentleman's Quarrel within the wider socio-political context of unresolved tensions between Irish Jacobite sympathisers and supporters of the English administration. Burke highlights how 'the government and its supporters [including the theatre-royal] waged an intense ideological war against the Catholic community and its gentry during this period'.[75] Despite the centrality of the riots and ensuing debate to the understanding of theatre's position within Dublin's public sphere during this mid-century period, Christopher Morash disappointingly affords the debacle minimal attention. In contrast, Desmond Slowey engages in a more detailed discussion of the riots, showing them to be highly significant in deepening simmering divisions within Dublin society: 'the Kelly incident was a stone that dislodged an avalanche, because it polarised the two factions in the country and set them at loggerheads – two ideas of a Gentleman, and two visions of Hibernia'.[76] While Sheldon's discussion concentrates solely on the issue of gentility, Burke's focus is on the wider socio-political context; however, Slowey's engagement with the riots and debate is more rounded as it incorporates both arguments.

The Kelly riots and ensuing Gentlemen's Quarrel exposed several tensions in Irish society. The first stemmed from contests around status, and what qualified one to be considered a gentleman. The Kelly faction advocated the traditional view that a claim to gentility lay in lineage, whereas Sheridan's supporters stressed the value of education and polite manners. Of course, this debate was not unique to Irish society; increased bourgeois influence over the public sphere meant that 'everywhere ideas of nobility and gentility as defined by lineage warred against those which stressed merit, service and conduct'.[77] The second source of tension within Dublin society was the unresolved socio-political grievances following the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1745. With no military action in Ireland, these were largely left unresolved.[78] In this highly charged atmosphere, Sheridan's insult to the Galway gentleman

[74] Ibid., p. 13.
[75] Burke, *Riotous performances,* p. 120.
[76] Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama,* p. 131.
[77] Toby Barnard, 'The gentrification of eighteenth-century Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr,* xii (1997), pp 137-55, p. 149.
[78] Burke, *Riotous performances,* p. 119.

was seized upon by disaffected elements within Dublin society to incite insurgence against Smock Alley theatre as a bastion of anglicised culture in Ireland.

After the initial disturbance on 19 January and fuelled by the pamphlet war between the rival factions, a series of riots and disputes erupted in the Dublin theatre during the following four weeks, until both Smock Alley and its rival theatre in Capel Street were officially closed by the Lord Lieutenant.[79] One of the most violent disturbances occurred on 21 January when Kelly and a group of his supporters went to the theatre in search of Sheridan. The actor-manager, however, had been advised not to take to the stage that evening and was not present. On discovering this, the men staged a riot, stuffed Sheridan's costume with straw and killed him 'in effigy'.[80] Here again, the satirical motif of *Sir Sopin, the knight of straw* was evoked to demonstrate the revival and resurgence of the old conservative elite. Clearly, Sheridan, as manager of Dublin's theatre-royal, was seen as representative of Ireland's new colonial elite.

Sheridan and Kelly both took each other to court over the physical and social insults to which they had been subjected. The case attracted much attention in Dublin and many reportedly placed 'Wagers on the Events of these Trials'.[81] In several respects, the dramatic court proceedings continued the dispute over language and gentility. Sheridan put his talents and skills as an actor-orator to use on the stand while Kelly's lawyer, Peter Daly (n.d.), took the opportunity to assert *his* patriotism in opposition to Sheridan's anglicising regime. Irish writer and singer John Carteret Pilkington (1730-63) reported that the 'Hibernian' lawyer 'who values himself on speaking with the accent of his native country', exaggerated the lilting tone of his unstandardized pronunciation, saying: 'I undershtand tish Mr. Sheridan the actor: well, I have heard of gentlemen shaylors and gentlemen taylors, but it's the firsht I heard of gentlemen actors'.[82] To this, Sheridan bowed to the jury and retorted: 'Sir, I hope you see one now'.[83] This instance was the ultimate performance of gentility, as Sheridan managed to convince his audience (the jury) of his exemplary manners and corresponding right to social status. Although Sheridan won the case for his standing as a gentleman, Daly's rejection of an anglicising elocution movement signalled a significant shift in the socio-political agenda of the Anglo-Irish. Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, the disaffected faction of Anglo-Irish society exchanged their Jacobitism for nationalism, and Edmund Burke (1729-97) made

[79] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 94.
[80] Burke, *Riotous performances*, p. 135.
[81] Victor, *The history of the theatres of London and Dublin*, i, 124.
[82] John Carteret Pilkington, *The Real Story of John Carteret Pilkington. Written by himself*. (London, 1760), p. 172.
[83] Conrad Brunstrom, *Thomas Sheridan's career and influence: an actor in earnest* (Lewisburg, 2011), p. 32.

his name as a skilled orator who valued his native accent.[84] Burke exemplified this shift since his days as a student when in 1747, he participated in the Gentlemen's Quarrel by writing an account of the initial incident in which he applauded Sheridan's victory, concluding that 'So ended this affair in which justice took place'.[85]

'as the Stage takes nothing now from Life, the Tables may be turned and Life take every Thing from the Stage': actor-orators as an expert elite of cultural refinement[86]

Following another outbreak of rioting in Smock Alley theatre in 1756, Sheridan left Dublin without having established his proposed school of oratory. These riots were prompted by the rising tension between the increasingly opposed cultures of imperialism and nationalism in Dublin's public sphere, as concern gradually shifted from issues of social to political enlightenment.[87] In the same year that Sheridan quit Dublin, he published *British Education, or the source of the disorders of Great Britain*.[88] He argued for reforming the education of gentlemen through emphasis on the improvement of oratory and elocution. Significantly, however, Sheridan now made notably less reference to the role of the theatre as an instructive diversion than he had done in the oration he gave in Dublin. Instead, he highlighted the *pulpit* rather than the *stage* as the place where the 'exactness of speech, would be diffused thro' the whole people'.[89] The reason for Sheridan's shift of emphasis onto the church is unclear. The work was published in London, where Sheridan may have expected his readership to be more socially unified around the Established Church than his Dublin audience was likely to be. Another possibility is that having retired from his position as actor-manager, Sheridan may have lost interest in promoting the playhouse as an instructive diversion since it no longer benefitted his commercial interests. Regardless of his motives, the publication of *British Education, or the source of the disorders of Great Britain* set Sheridan firmly at the forefront of the elocution movement across Britain. His achievement is evident in his extensive lecture tour throughout the British Isles during 1762, although it is significant that he travelled to Belfast but not to Dublin.[90] In Edinburgh, his lectures met with resounding success, inspiring

[84] Paddy Bullard, *Edmund Burke and the art of rhetoric* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 23.
[85] Copeland (ed.), *The correspondence of Edmund Burke*, pp 82-4.
[86] John Hill (1759) quoted in Goring, *The rhetoric of sensibility*, p. 34.
[87] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, pp 13-14.
[88] Thomas Sheridan, *British Education, or the source of the disorders of Great Britain. Being an essay towards proving that the immorality, ignorance, and false taste, which so generally prevail, are the natural and necessary consequences of the present defective system of education. With an attempt to show, that a revival of the art of speaking, and the study of our own language, might contribute, in a great measure, to the cure of those evils* (London, 1756).
[89] Sheridan, *British Education*, p. 247.
[90] Howell, *Eighteenth-century British logic and rhetoric*, p. 233.

the foundation of a 'Society for promoting the reading and speaking of the English language in Scotland' by those who had attended.[91] There also, Sheridan became acquainted with prominent writer and lawyer James Boswell (1740-95), who was so impressed with the actor-orator's gentility that he employed him as a private tutor for a short time. In a journal entry, dated 28 November 1756, Boswell commended Sheridan as 'a man of great genius' who 'understands propriety of speech better than anybody'.[92]

Although Sheridan enjoyed a highly successful career as a renowned orator and elocutionist, he was not the only actor to become a tutor of gentility in mid-eighteenth-century England. On the contrary, actors became immensely sought-after tutors for imparting the expression and performance of politeness. An early example was Thomas Betterton, who instructed Sir John Perceval, earl of Egmont, in 'those Parts of Oratory which consist of Emphasis and Action' in the early years of the eighteenth century.[93] The actor's standing as an exemplar of gentility received a significant boost when the prince of Wales hired two of London's most prominent actors as tutors to his children.[94] These were the celebrated Englishman David Garrick (1717-79) and Irish-born James Quin (1693-1766). In a diary entry, dated 20 April 1778, a society lady recalls visiting both the duchess of Leeds and the prince of Wales during her childhood, and reading Milton 'sometimes to Mr Garrick who used often to be there and Mr Quin'.[95]

The commercial opportunity offered by the elevated status of actor-orators within the public sphere was seized by entrepreneurial Donegal-born actor and playwright Charles Macklin (*c*.1699-1797). Significantly, Macklin was the only prominent actor-orator with a distinctively Gaelic Irish cultural background in the mid-eighteenth century. He was originally named Cathal McLoughlin 'which seeming somewhat uncouth to the pronunciation of an English tongue, he, on his coming upon the stage, anglicized it'.[96] His successful career demonstrates how an effective performance of anglicised gentility could allow a provincial figure to acquire social and professional standing within the London metropolis. David O'Shaughnessy locates

[91] Ibid., p. 234.
[92] Edward Milne (ed.), *Boswell's Edinburgh journals, 1767-1786* (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 22.
[93] David Roberts, 'Social status and the actor: the case of Thomas Betterton', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, xxx, no. 2 (2010), pp 173-85, p. 179.
[94] Elspeth Jajdelska, "The very defective and erroneous method': reading instruction and social identity in elite eighteenth-century learners', *Oxford Review of Education*, xxxvi, no. 2 (2010), pp 141-56, p. 151.
[95] Katherine, Balderston (ed.), *Thraliana, the diary of Mrs Hester Lynch Thrale (later Mrs Piozzi), 1776-1809: Volume i, 1776-1784* (Oxford, 1942), 286.
[96] David Erskine Baker, *Biographia dramatica, or a companion to the playhouse: containing historical and critical memoirs, and original anecdotes, of British and Irish dramatic writers, from the commencement of our theatrical exhibitions; amongst them are some of the most celebrated actors. Also, an alphabetical account of their works, the dates when printed, and occasional observations on their merits. Together with an introductory view of the rise and progress of the British stage*, i (Dublin, 1782), 292.

Macklin at the centre of a London-Irish theatrical milieu 'unified by a common objective of producing a counter-narrative of Irish civility to centuries of prejudice regarding Irish barbarism'.[97] To this end, Macklin opened a coffee-house and school of oratory in London named 'The British Inquisition' in 1753. There, he gave lectures on various subjects including 'The Art and Duty of an Actor'.[98]

Stephen Ellis notes how in 'its self-representations in the newspapers, Macklin's coffeehouse was not coded as Irish'.[99] This is hardly surprising, considering the particular Irish interest in the oratory movement was largely related to the desire to be viewed as equally enlightened to their English counterparts. As such, coding the business as Irish would have undermined its central ambition. Helen Burkes details how Macklin's Irishness was 'invoked' in the critical, theatrical and satirical responses to his enterprise.[100] The actor-orator's contribution to the British Enlightenment and its public sphere was mocked on account of the 'otherness' associated with his Irish identity. Burke points to the fact that Macklin's ability to enlighten the British public was even mocked by fellow Irishmen who, like Farquhar did with his stratified stage-Irishness, made the point of ridiculing the actor-orator's lack of formal education and Gaelic background in order to advertise their own superiority within the socio-cultural hierarchy. One such satiric response, published in 1755, drew on the pervasive stereotype of the blundering and nonsensical Irish. In doing so, the author reminds his readers of Macklin's success in stage-Irish roles to ridicule his ability to teach the British public about rhetoric and oratory: 'Yet, alas! So lavish are you in these laughter-stiring arguments, that I fear all *Ireland* will be exhausted by your profusion. Think what it is to rouze a Nation into Arms against you, and deprive your fellow-countrymen of that happy privilege, of meaning one Thing when they say another'.[101]

Despite the short-lived success of his coffee-house venture, Macklin was 'considered as an excellent tutor in the theatrical arts' and trained some of the eighteenth century's principal

[97] O'Shaughnessy, 'Introduction', in *idem.*, *Ireland, Enlightenment and the English stage*, pp 1-28, p. 23.
[98] James Kirkman, *Memoirs of the life of Charles Macklin, esq. Principally compiled from his own papers and memorandums: which contain his criticisms on characters and anecdotes of Betterton, Booth, Wilks, Cibber, Barry, Mossop, Sheridan, Foote, Quin, and most of his contemporaries; together with his valuable observations on the drama, on the science of acting, and on various other subjects: the whole forming a comprehensive but succinct history of the stage; which includes a period of one hundred years*, i (London, 1799), 359-66.
[99] Markman Ellis, 'Macklin's coffeehouse: public sociability in mid-eighteenth-century London', in Ian Newman and David O'Shaughnessy (eds), *Charles Macklin and the theatres of London* (Liverpool, 2022), pp 215-42, p. 237.
[100] Helen Burke, 'Macklin's talking 'Wrongheads': the British Inquisition and the public sphere', in Newman and O'Shaughnessy (eds), *Charles Macklin*, pp 243-64, p. 260.
[101] Anon., *An epistle from Tully in the shades to orator Macklin in Covent Garden* (London, 1755), p. 18.

performers.[102] A young Garrick had allegedly been 'often advised' by Macklin, after seeing the actor's naturalised performance of Shakespeare's Shylock.[103] Garrick, in turn, soon championed the new 'natural' performance style and achieved celebrity status. The rise of a 'natural' style also penetrated the elocution movement, where the overtly performative nature of gentility attracted critics.

The increasingly popular practice of employing actors to instruct the gentry in polite behaviours and manners, exposed the overtly performative nature of gentility. For it was the actor-orator who was considered a member of the socio-cultural 'expert elite', rather than the aspiring gentleman who was receiving instruction.[104] More and more frequently from the 1750s the social status of a gentleman was publicly expressed 'through manners rather than lineage'.[105] This performative aspect of gentility meant that social standing was often assumed on the basis of polite and mannerly expression: as Langford observes 'the appearance of a gentleman was seemingly sufficient to make him one'.[106] In 1759 writer and acting theorist John Hill (*c*.1714-75) claimed that society was imitating performance 'as the Stage takes nothing now from Life, the Tables may be turned and Life take every Thing from the Stage'.[107] Thus, actors had become exemplars of gentility, as the dramatic performance was imbued with the ideals of polite behaviour. That polite performance could, in turn, be imitated by those who wished to present themselves to London society as gentlemen. Paul Goring has shown, however, that actor-orators were 'focused primarily upon the training of male bodies' as actors within the public sphere.[108] In contrast, female bodies were only encouraged to perform gentility in relation to spectatorship, as their performance was considered reactionary to that of the male body.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, a schism emerged within the British discourse of improvement. On one side were those who claimed that social enlightenment could be achieved through the public reformation of manners; on the other were those who believed the answer lay in the private cultivation of taste.[109] Thomas Sheridan appears to have remained steadfast in his promotion of the public reformation of manners and social performance of gentility. One of his main opponents was Hugh Blair (1718-1800), a Scottish minister and

[102] Baker, *Biographia dramatica, or a companion to the playhouse*, p. 293.
[103] Appleton, *Charles Macklin: an actor's life*, p. 57.
[104] Jajdelska, "The very defective and erroneous method", p. 151.
[105] Roberts, 'Social status and the actor', p. 174.
[106] Langford, *A polite and commercial people*, p. 66.
[107] Hill, quoted in Goring, *The rhetoric of sensibility*, p. 34.
[108] Goring, *The rhetoric of sensibility*, p. 9.
[109] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 172.

elocutionist. Although like Sheridan, Blair also advocated for the development of English language education, he emphasised the practice of silent reading for the refinement of individual taste and prioritised writing over speech as an effective form of communication.[110] This tension was motivated by concern over whether cultural enlightenment could be achieved through the cultivation of the private or public sphere. While Dottie Broaddus has shown Blair's approach to improvement to have been particularly elitist, Sheridan apparently favoured a more generalised form of social improvement.[111] Despite the different approaches advanced by theorists, improvement of the public and private spheres appears to have been harmonised in practice; the same gentleman could engage in private written correspondence and attend public oral assemblies. The schism, therefore, may be said to have impacted the intellectual discourse of improvement and politeness much more than its practical application in society.

In London, the passing of the Disorderly Houses Act (1751) attests to the elevated position of theatre during the social enlightenment. Despite its usual absence from London theatre historiography, Roger Scales argues that the act 'set the tone for theatre legislation and governmental attitudes for the next one and a half centuries'.[112] This was the first law to regulate against anti-social behaviour through the *licensing* of public spaces rather than forcing their closure. This illustrates the transition in how theatre was viewed in London's public sphere between the 1690s and 1750s: theatre went from being condemned as a den of immorality to being encouraged as an agent for social improvement. The Disorderly Houses Act was particularly aimed at London's lower classes and was part of a series of new measures that attempted to pacify and gentrify that element of the public.[113] Power over the licensing of these theatres was given to local magistrates, signalling the first legal move away from court control of the theatre scene in London. A socio-cultural hierarchy was maintained, however, through the enforcement of a genre split whereby the 'legitimate' theatre-royals maintained their privileged right to perform spoken drama, while the new 'illegitimate' theatres were only licensed to produce pantomimes and musical entertainments. Significantly, this stratified London's theatrical culture and ensured that the powerful and gentrified performance of speech was contained within the court-censored bourgeoisie theatre-royals. This, in turn, signifies the

[110] M. Wade Mahon, 'The rhetorical value of reading aloud in Thomas Sheridan's theory of elocution', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, xxxi, no. 4 (2001), pp 67-88, p. 70.
[111] Dottie Broaddus, 'Authoring elitism: Francis Hutcheson and Hugh Blair in Scotland and America', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, xxiv, no. 3 (1994), pp 39-52, p. 40.
[112] Roger Scales, 'The battle of the stages: the conflict between the theatre and the institutions of government and religion in England, 1660-1890' (PhD thesis: City University of London, 2002), p. 138.
[113] Rosalind Crove, *The making of the modern police, 1780-1914: policing entertainment* (Abingdon, 2016), p. 395.

immense importance bestowed on speech and theatre within London's public sphere from the 1750s.

From the mid-century there was a growing emphasis placed on 'nature' within the discourse of improvement, which allowed for the value of lineage and breeding to be renewed in determining social status throughout the British Isles. The elocution movement was increasingly viewed as a 'system of deceit and pretence', which enabled all manner of men to claim the status of gentleman.[114] In Dublin, the value of rhetoric and elocution was defended by John Lawson (1712-59), professor of oratory and history at Trinity College. In a series of his lectures published in 1758, he asserted that eloquence 'became at length a source of beauty'.[115] Returning to Francis Hutcheson's 1725 definition of beauty as 'uniformity amidst variety', the elocution movement in Ireland was recognised as providing a means of achieving anglicised uniformity. That eloquence would, in turn, facilitate the performance of gentility. In London, the expression of such polite manners could allow one to attain the social standing of a gentleman. Whether the performance would support Anglo-Irish claims to English liberties was less certain. The extent to which the Anglo-Irish concerned themselves with the development of the English language, however, indicates the pivotal role of the elocution movement, and by extension the theatre, within the anglicisation process of the 1730s and 1740s. In London, actors such as Charles Macklin and especially David Garrick, would become renowned for their performances in the new 'natural' style.[116] This suggests that despite the increased scepticism surrounding the performative aspect of gentility, actor-orators could retain their socio-cultural status as exemplars of gentility by embodying 'natural' virtue: 'Shall their Profession e'er provoke Disdain, Who stand the foremost in the moral Train'.[117]

Conclusion

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, the discourse of improvement was driven by the preferences of an increasingly influential bourgeois, who advanced the social enlightenment of the public spheres in both London and Dublin. From the 1690s the emerging elocution movement imbued drama with a heightened educational value and consequently, contributed significantly to the professionalisation of the theatre scene, first in London from

[114] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 172.
[115] John Lawson, *Lectures concerning oratory. Delivered in Trinity College, Dublin, by John Lawson, D.D. Lecturer in oratory and history, on the foundation of Erasmus Smith, esquire* (Dublin and London, 1759), p. 6.
[116] Alan Downer, 'Nature to advantage dressed: eighteenth-century acting', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, lviii, no. 4 (1943), pp 1002-37, p. 1012.
[117] Robert Lloyd, *The actor: a poetical epistle to Bonnell Thornton, esq.* (London, 1760), p. 18.

the 1710s and later in Dublin from the 1740s. The strong advocation of vernacular English education served to strengthen the actor-orator's professional status, as they became recognised by the bourgeoisie as an 'expert elite' of cultural refinement.[118] The expression of gentility, in turn, became increasingly performative as polite and respectable behaviour was acknowledged as a means to achieve socio-cultural status. In Dublin, the Anglo-Irish grew more and more frustrated by their imbalanced socio-political relationship with their English counterparts. Their desire to improve their socio-political standing motivated a process of anglicisation within the Anglo-Irish socio-cultural sphere. Smock Alley theatre's prominent position within Dublin's public sphere made the playhouse the scene of many contentious debates within Anglo-Irish society. Coinciding with Thomas Sheridan's management of Smock Alley from 1745 to 1756 Dublin progressed from a discourse of social Enlightenment to political Enlightenment. This was reflected in a shift in the subject of contentious theatre debates from social status in 1747 to political patriotism by 1756.[119] The impact of this political enlightenment on theatre culture in both Dublin and London is the subject of the next chapter.

[118] Jajdelska, "The very defective and erroneous method", p. 151.
[119] Burke, *Riotous performances*.

Chapter 4

'overstep not the modesty of nature': Shakespearean actors and the rise of the natural style, *c.*1740-54[1]

The development of eighteenth-century natural philosophy significantly impacted both the socio-cultural discourse of national characters and the aesthetic discourse of theatre. From the 1740s London theatres witnessed the revolutionary emergence of a 'naturalised' performance style. At the same time, William Shakespeare's status within the dramatic canon was elevated to present him as an exemplar of British national character whose art was led by 'the light of Nature'.[2] Significantly, there were many Irish writers and actors at the forefront of these developments and they are the subject of this chapter.

The discussion starts by tracing the evolution of natural philosophy from the 1720s, with particular emphasis on how the theatrical relationship between actor and spectator was understood. The development of 'naturalised' acting is then examine solely within the Shakespearean genre, as the new style was most rigorously applied to that genre, while the consistent reinvention of Shakespeare's characters allows for easier comparison with earlier performance styles. Donegal-born actor Charles Macklin made a crucial contribution to the rise of this natural style of performance and so his unique role is assessed. The emergence of bardolatry, or the veneration of Shakespeare as an exemplar of national character, is then discussed in the context of a British patriotic agenda. This is followed by an examination of the rivalled careers of Dublin-born actor Spranger Barry (1719-77) and the eighteenth-century's most celebrated actor David Garrick. Their appeals to nature on the London stage will be analysed, with particular attention paid to their contrasted representations of Othello's 'otherness'. Finally, the impact of an emerging 'Hibernian' patriotism will be assessed by discussing the contribution of Irish writers to bardolatry. Additionally, the influence of the London theatre's Shakespearean stars on the improvement and expansion of the Irish theatre scene will be examined. By the early 1750s Shakespeare was dominating the stages of London and Dublin, with his elevated status enhancing that of the theatre within the public sphere.

[1] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2, in Edmond Malone (ed.), *The plays and poems of William Shakspeare*, pp 280-286.
[2] Arthur Murphy, 'Shakespeare vindicated, in a letter to Voltaire' in *Gray's-Inn Journal* (1753-4), reprint in Brian Vickers, *William Shakespeare: the critical heritage, volume 4, 1753-1765* (London, 1996), 84-109, 94.

‘the various Pleasures which Human Nature is capable of receiving’: natural philosophy and the aesthetics of performance[3]

The romantic movement is often considered a reactionary trend that developed in opposition to Enlightenment values. From the 1720s, however, a discourse of aesthetics evolved within that of Enlightenment natural philosophy which increasingly placed greater emphasis on sensibility than reason. This aesthetic discourse, therefore, anticipated the romantic movement from the early eighteenth century by presenting passion as the driving force of human nature. Among others, this discourse of aesthetics was heavily influenced by Irish philosophers such as Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) and Edmund Burke (1729-97).

Francis Hutcheson’s *Inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue* (1725) was a seminal contribution to the emerging aesthetic discourse. Hutcheson pointed to the fact that up to 1725, most philosophical works concerning human nature had focused on man’s faculty for reason while he sets out to investigate ‘the various Pleasures which Human Nature is capable of receiving’.[4] He claimed that an individual’s pleasurable experiences were reliant on an innate ‘moral sense’ of beauty, an argument that sparked a lively discourse of aesthetics which would lay the groundwork for the romantic philosophy of the late eighteenth century.[5]

In his *A treatise of human nature* (1738) Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) identified several ‘moral causes’ of variation among human cultures, such as the structure and principles of government, the economic distribution of wealth, and the diplomatic relations a nation had with its neighbours. According to Hume, it was these moral differences that accounted for a nation’s peculiar set of manners. The liberty the English enjoyed as a result of their moderate society supposedly allowed ‘every one to display the Manners, which are peculiar to him. Hence’, Hume continued, ‘the *English*, of any People in the Universe, have the least of a national Character; unless this very Singularity be made their national Character’.[6] Hume refuted the idea that this national character could be the result of the physical climate ‘since all these Causes take Place in their neighbouring Kingdom of *Scotland*, without having the same Effect’.[7] His assessment of the problem in exporting liberty to provincial areas of Britain may also be applied to the Irish situation in the mid-eighteenth century. Taken as the

[3] Francis Hutcheson, *An inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue, in two treatises* (London, 1738), p. 10.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., p. 14.
[6] David Hume, ‘Of national characters’ in *Three essays, moral and political: never before published* (London, 1748), pp 1-28, p. 16.
[7] Ibid., p. 16.

defining feature of the English national character, the issue of liberty was of immense interest in the 'construction of a new, civic ideal of Britishness'.[8] James Livesey suggests that attempts to form a sense of national cohesion in the wake of the Anglo-Scottish Union (1707) were most keenly supported by those in provincial areas of the new nation.[9] This would appear to be true of both Ireland and Scotland, as the form of national cohesion promoted was one based on that principle of liberty, whereby the particular manners and customs of Irish and Scottish society would be left to flourish under a moderate and tolerant political regime.

The performance of racial identities was heavily influenced by imperialist discourse concerning human variety. French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc (1707-88) developed the influential theory of degeneration, whereby all human races were considered to have devolved from God's original creation, the ideal and natural state of man. Leclerc suggested that this degeneration of mankind was the result of various climactic conditions, which shaped the physical and moral self: 'that the climate is the principle cause of the varieties of mankind'.[10] Although this theory suggested that there was a racial hierarchy, it also meant that 'nature' was not a fixed mode of being, and that people's position within this natural order could change. Crucially, the theory also presented nature as an ideal - the original natural mode of being that man should strive to return to.

Irish-born travel writer and translator Thomas Nugent (*c.*1700-72) published his *Critical reflections on poetry, painting and music. With an enquiry into the rise and progress of the theatrical entertainments of the ancients* in 1748. Nugent upheld French philosopher Jean-Baptiste Dubos's theory that an actor produced 'a mechanic compassion' to emotionally affect an audience.[11] Dubos's *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture* (1719) was one of the first works to apply the developments in Enlightenment philosophy to the aesthetic theory of practical art. Nugent's work was partly a translation of this earlier treatise, but the Irish writer went further by dedicating a considerable portion of his work to a discussion of theatre. Daniel Larlham has demonstrated how Dubos's theory of naturalised performance 'derives not from a conscious comparison of copy with original' but rather that it is only necessary for the actor's

[8] James Livesey, *Civil society and empire: Ireland and Scotland in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world* (London, 2009), p. 159.
[9] Ibid., p. 155.
[10] Georges-Louis Leclerc, 'A natural history, general and particular', extract printed in Emmanuel Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment: a reader* (Oxford, 1997), pp 15-28, p. 22.
[11] Thomas Nugent, *Critical reflections on poetry, painting and music. With an enquiry into the rise and progress of the theatrical entertainments of the ancients* (London, 1748), i, 94.

portrayal of passion to '*move through us*, as audience members, in a way that *feels truthful*'.[12] The natural element of a performance would, therefore, rest entirely on the actor's ability to emotionally sensitise their audience. In Nugent's opinion, however, this level of audience reception relied on accurate representations, as then 'the imitation all together is so extremely probable, that it makes almost as great an impression on the spectators, as the event itself could probably have produced'.[13]

One of the leading English artists of the mid-eighteenth century, Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), wrote a series of discourses on art. Much of the material from this series had been given as lectures at the Royal Academy from the 1750s, though it was not published until 1778. 'Discourse XIII' carried the subtitle 'In what manner Poetry, Painting, Acting, Gardening, and Architecture depart from Nature' and attempted to demonstrate how certain art forms depend on a sort of metaphysical experience of nature to elicit feeling and sentiment from their audience. Reynolds claimed that theatre was one of these art forms, indicating audiences 'allowed deviations from nature arise from the necessity which there is, that everything should be raised and enlarged beyond its natural state; that the full effect may come home to the spectator, which otherwise would be lost in the comparatively extensive space of the Theatre'.[14] The staged atmosphere, therefore, did not necessarily detract from the naturalness of the performance, as long as the audience were imaginative enough to have 'a habit of allowing for those necessary deviations from nature which the Art requires'.[15]

'the first actor who ever reduced the profession to a science': Charles Macklin and the application of natural philosophy to dramatic art on the London stage[16]

Throughout the eighteenth century actors alternated their emphasis between 'nature' and 'art', with different styles exemplified by various leading figures during the period. By 1740 art and artifice appeared to dominate the London theatres. The use of marked vocal tones and physical gestures gave tragic actors a particularly stoic presence on stage.[17] This 'artistic' style of acting was exemplified by the Irish actor James Quin who was considered the best tragedian on the

[12] Daniel Larlham, 'The felt truth of mimetic experience: motions of the soul and the kinetics of passion in the eighteenth-century theatre', *The Eighteenth Century*, liii (2012), pp 432-519, p. 444.
[13] Nugent, *Critical reflections on poetry, painting and music*, p. 351.
[14] Joshua Reynolds, 'Discourse XIII', in Helen Zimmern (ed.), *Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses* (London, 2014), p. 224.
[15] Ibid., p. 223.
[16] Joseph Haslewood, *The secret history of the green-room: containing authentic and entertaining memoirs of the actors and actresses in the three Theatres Royal* (London, 1795), i, 68.
[17] Downer, 'Nature to advantage dressed', p. 1007.

London stage since the death of renowned English actor Thomas Betterton.[18] The imitation of nature was, in Quin's heyday in the 1730s, generally considered to be the preserve of comedic actors whose close mimicry was prevalent in satiric material.[19] A revolutionary performance by Donegal-born Charles Macklin in 1741 would, however, instigate a radical shift in the application of artistic theory to dramatic practice. Nature and art would no longer be considered opposing forces to be separated into their respected genres of comedy and tragedy; instead, the accurate representation and impassioned affecting of nature would be seen as art itself.

The developments within the discourse of art did not impact practice within the London theatre industry until a change in legislation allowed Macklin to capitalise on the shift in aesthetic taste. The passing of the Licensing Act (1737) made every new playscript subject to censorship prior to performance. This new law was the first of its kind and proved so unpopular with the theatre-going public of London that rioting on opening nights and the 'hissing [of] permitted plays' became frequent.[20] In a shrewd attempt to avoid censorship, and by extension avoid the disdain of the public for censored material, the manager of Drury Lane theatre Charles Fleetwood (d.1747), began to reintroduce forgotten works by established authors into his company's repertoire. During the season of 1739-40, the Drury Lane company staged two old Shakespeare plays to mediocre success. The first was *As You Like It* which had not been staged in London since the turn of the eighteenth century and the second was *Twelfth Night* which had not been performed since the interregnum.[21] Macklin was a member of the Drury Lane company and had spent several years building a reputation for himself as a comedic actor. By the 1740-41 season, his authoritative character and years of stage experience had earned him the position of deputy manager under Fleetwood.[22] In that season the revival of another of Shakespeare's plays, *The Merchant of Venice*, was proposed. It is unclear whether the proposal and subsequent casting came from Fleetwood or Macklin himself. What is clear is that the play, along with *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, was considered by most to be a comedy.

Prior to 1741 *The Merchant of Venice* had not once been staged in its original form following the restoration of the theatres in 1660.[23] A heavily-adapted version of the play by George Granville (1666-1735) had, however, been in popular use since its debut in 1701. Interestingly,

[18] Felicity Nussbaum, 'Straddling: London-Irish actresses in performance' in O'Shaughnessy (ed.), *Ireland, Enlightenment and the English stage,* pp 31-56, p. 51.
[19] Downer, 'Nature to advantage dressed', p. 1005.
[20] Appleton, *Charles Macklin*, p. 40.
[21] Ibid., p. 43.
[22] Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford, 2000), p. 240.
[23] John Gross, *Shylock: four hundred years in the life of a legend* (London, 1992), p. 91.

the highly successful debut performance of Granville's play also featured an Irishman in the role of Shylock. Dublin-born actor and theatre-manager Thomas Doggett portrayed Shylock, in accordance with Granville's script, as a figure of low comedy.[24] English actor and theatre-manager Colley Cibber wrote of his contemporary's acting style in his memoirs, claiming that Doggett had been 'the strictest observer of nature'.[25] In 1709 the first edition of Shakespeare's works to include critical commentaries of the plays was published. English dramatist Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718) gave an analysis of *The Merchant of Venice*, wherein he asserted that 'though we have seen that play received and acted as a comedy, and the part of the Jew performed by an excellent comedian, yet I cannot but think it was designed tragically by the author'.[26] Doggett himself allegedly believed that comedy was superior to tragedy as a form of dramatic art 'because it was nearer to Nature'.[27] It is, therefore, insufficient to simply attribute Charles Macklin's later success in the part to his 'natural' style without interrogating the changing meaning of the term 'nature' and its evolving application in the context of dramatic art.

As has been highlighted, 'naturalised' performance in mid-eighteenth-century theatre not only attempted to imitate life to a degree of dramatic realism; it also aimed to elicit from its audience a 'natural' emotional response to the scene. Peter Thomson claims that Macklin's performance of Shylock 'radically shifted audience perceptions'.[28] Unfortunately, Thomson does little to qualify this statement beyond commenting on Macklin's influence on the play's genre owing to his performance having 'made the role available to tragedians'.[29] This change in audience expectation follows the shift in aesthetic philosophy towards a more impassioned view of nature which had, since the 1720s, increasingly placed value in sentimentality over reason. Macklin's performance may, therefore, be seen to have reflected a change in audience perceptions of theatre, as the public began to develop a taste for a more sentimental and 'romantic' experience. At the same time, however, Macklin is considered 'the first actor who ever reduced the profession to a science'.[30] Here, again, the intersection of late Enlightenment and early Romantic philosophy is evident since Macklin employed methods of observation and

[24] Ibid.
[25] Cibber, *An apology for the life*, p. 252.
[26] Nicholas Rowe, extract in Gross, *Shylock*, p. 94.
[27] Theodore Cook, 'Thomas Doggett, deceased, a famous comedian', *The Monthly Review*, iv, no. 10 (1901), pp 146-60, p. 152.
[28] Peter Thomson, 'The comic actor and Shakespeare' in Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton (eds), *The Cambridge companion to Shakespeare on stage* (Cambridge, 2002), pp 137-50, p. 146.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Haslewood, *The secret history of the green-room*, p. 68.

accurate imitation in order to give a 'natural' performance which, in turn, moved the impassioned 'nature' of his audience. The 'natural' element of Macklin's approach to the role of Shylock may, therefore, primarily be seen in his use of the scientific method to prepare for the role: he reportedly made daily observations of the interactions of London's Jewish population at the Exchange, and read classical historian Flavius Josephus's *The History of the Jews*.[31] Macklin also discovered the distinguishing garment of Venetian Jews to have been a red cap, which he added to his costume in place of the false nose which had been 'standard equipment' for comedic actors in the part.[32] Added to this preparation for the role was Macklin's meticulous study and practice of natural modes of speech and movement in accordance with the character's evolving moods and motives throughout the play: 'He who in Earnest studies o'er his Part, Will find true Nature cling about his heart'.[33] Although this realism is likely to have been heightened beyond 'natural' behaviour on stage, the performance still appeared to elicit a 'natural' response to the tragedy from the audience: 'that Shylock is a most disgraceful picture of human nature'.[34]

In addition to his particular acting style and technique, the audience reaction to Macklin's Shylock was undoubtedly influenced by the actor's own public reputation. Macklin had been found guilty of the manslaughter of fellow actor Thomas Hallom (*d.* 1735) in a trial that garnered significant public attention. The fit of temper that led Macklin to commit the violent crime eerily echoed the kind of behaviour associated with the stage-Irish characters, such as Howard's Teague, that Macklin regularly portrayed in the early years of his career. As such, Macklin's capacity for violence was likely connected to his Irish identity in the minds of the London public. His portrayal of Shylock would, therefore, have carried extra weight as the actor himself was tainted with the stain of a 'wild Irish' temperament. Michael Ragussis demonstrates how Macklin 'both escaped and compounded the dilemma of his Irishness' through his success in performances of ethnic 'others' on the London stage.[35] Thus, the savagery and 'otherness' associated with his Irish identity would have enhanced that of Shylock's Jewish liminality on stage and made his performance appear all the more 'natural' to the audience. His sensational success in this part made Macklin realise that to traverse his

[31] Toby Lelyveld, *Shylock on the stage* (Abingdon, 1961), p. 8.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Robert Lloyd, *The actor: a poetical epistle to Bonnell Thornton, esq.* (London, 1760), p. 13.
[34] Kirkman, *Memoirs of the life*, p. 260.
[35] Michael Ragussis, 'Jews and other "outlandish Englishmen': ethnic performance and the invention of British identity under the Georges', *Critical Inquiry*, xxvi, 4 (2000), pp 773-97, p. 786.

Irish identity within the imaginations of the London public 'would be contingent upon personal metamorphosis'.[36]

It is difficult to determine what motivated Macklin to adopt such an unprecedented approach to the role. What may be discerned, however, is that Macklin is likely to have been attuned to contemporaneous developments in natural science and philosophy. As part of London's regular theatrical community, he was known to frequent the Bedford coffee-house in Covent Garden. This coffee-house had three booths continually reserved; the first for those engaged in quick wit and competitive punning, 'another for debate on natural sciences' and 'a third exclusively for actors'.[37] According to Ian Kelly, one of comedian Samuel Foote's (1720-77) most recent biographers, the conversation of 'eminent natural philosopher' John Theophilus Desaguliers (1683-1744) was in such demand at the coffee-house that he began to give lectures in the upstairs room from 1741.[38] It was there that Macklin himself began teaching acting lessons following his immense success on the stage in the same year.

In an unpublished treatise entitled *The Science of Acting,* Macklin intended to communicate his artistic theory of natural performance. The manuscript draft of his work was, unfortunately, lost in a ship wreck in 1772, leaving its elderly author with no treatise to leave to posterity.[39] Over the years, Macklin's biographers have attempted to determine the content of his lost treatise. The first of these was James Kirkman, whose work was published just two years after the actor's death. He claims to have been instructed by Macklin himself to make use of his papers to 'write an history recommended by truth and fidelity'.[40] In this history, Kirkman provides extracts of several lectures given by Macklin at his Covent Garden coffee-house 'The British Inquisition', which opened in 1753. In one of these extracts for a lecture entitled 'The Art and Duty of an Actor', Macklin wrote about the necessity to acquire a 'philosophical knowledge of the Passions' in order to truthfully perform human nature on stage.[41] In a separate lecture entitled 'On Acting', Macklin noted that 'Truth in Art, Science, Religion, or Politics, is known to but very few, and none but those very few will take pains to search for Truth'.[42] This suggests that Macklin did not believe the imitation of nature should be left to an actor's own

[36] Paul Goring, "John Bull, pit, box, and gallery, said No!': Charles Macklin and the limits of ethnic resistance on the eighteenth-century London stage', *Representations*, lxxix, 1 (2002), pp 61-81, p. 67.
[37] Ian Kelly, *Mr Foote's other leg* (London, 2012), p. 15.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Barbara Mackey, 'The lost acting treatise of Charles Macklin', *Meeting Papers of the Central States Communication Association* (Chicago, 1998), p. 3.
[40] Kirkman, *Memoirs of the life*, p. 3.
[41] Ibid., p. 363.
[42] Ibid., p. 366.

innate sense of truth, but rather that nature had to be closely studied and observed in order to be accurately portrayed. A more recent biographer, William Appleton dedicates a chapter to the subject of his treatise, although the focus quickly shifts from attempting to uncover the content of Macklin's theoretical work to a discussion of his practical teaching methods. Commenting on Macklin's philosophy, Appleton states 'Clearly the actor had to act rather than behave'.[43] Here, Appleton evokes the dictum of Joshua Reynolds's treatise that 'everything should be raised and enlarged beyond its natural state' on the stage.[44]

Following the success of Macklin's naturalised performance, English actor David Garrick approached the title role of Shakespeare's *Richard III* in a similar style.[45] This performance in October 1741 also met with thunderous applause, and propelled Garrick into the spotlight of London's theatrical community. Accounts of Garrick's preparation for the role claim that the younger actor was mentored by Macklin prior to this debut in a leading role. Along with Garrick, Macklin also instructed the writer Samuel Foote (1720-77), who would later become a prominent comedic actor and theatre critic.[46] While Macklin apparently instigated the new trend for naturalism in the theatre, it was his pupil, Garrick, who would become the eighteenth-century theatre's leading celebrity. Perhaps Macklin's greatest contribution to theatre was not, therefore, simply his radical new approach to performance, but his ability and enthusiasm as a teacher to directly pass on his theory and practice to those actors who would dominate the London stage for the remainder of the eighteenth century.

Macklin's ability as a teacher is most clearly demonstrated by assessing the influence he exerted over the successful theatrical career of his daughter. Maria Macklin (1733-81) was raised under her father's wing and furnished with the polite accomplishments of a genteel lady of society by being educated in music, dance and modern languages. In a letter to David Garrick, her father described Maria as being of 'a peaceable timid nature'.[47] In 1742, she made her Drury Lane debut at the tender age of nine but was soon 'withdrawn from the stage for more instruction'.[48] This was to become a pattern in the early stage of her career, as she only

[43] Appleton, *Charles Macklin*, p. 155.
[44] Reynolds, 'Discourse XIII' in Zimmern (ed.), *Reynolds' discourses*, p. 224.
[45] Fiona Ritchie, 'Shakespeare and the Restoration and eighteenth-century stage', in Mark Burnett, Adrian Streete and Ramona Wray (eds.), *Edinburgh companion to Shakespeare and the arts* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp 282-296, p. 287.
[46] Kelly, *Mr Foote's other leg*, p. 90.
[47] James Boaden (ed.), *The private correspondence of David Garrick, with the most celebrated persons of his time, now first published from the originals, and illustrated with notes. And a new biographical memoir of Garrick* (London, 1831), I, p. 237.
[48] Philip Highfill, Kalman Burnim, and Edward Langhans, *A biographical dictionary of actors, actresses, musicians, dancers, managers & other stage personnel in London, 1660-1800*, x (Carbondale, 1973), pp 31-2.

made appearances in minor roles on the London stage before being periodically removed to the provincial circuit to further practice her craft. Her first significant critical success came in 1751 when she played the titular role in Nicholas Rowe's *Jane Shore* alongside star actress and singer Susanna Cibber (1714-66) and Irish actor Spranger Barry. A critic in the *Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette* exclaimed: 'Great as I had declared my expectations for Miss Macklin, she surpassed them'.[49] Maria was compared to Susanna Cibber often during her career, which highlights the importance of her musical education as a contributor to her success on the stage. The ability to sing was a primary asset in the professional arsenal of an actress, though it was highly gendered: 'sweetness of voice is one of the common accomplishments of women; and we are ready to quarrel with nature for having cheated us of our right, when we hear harsh sounds proceed from delicate lips'.[50] Maria's musical abilities earned her the role of Polly in *The Beggar's Opera*, the popularity of which made it a profitable line to hold in her repertoire.[51] Maria's early career was dominated by her father, as she received his instruction and worked alongside him at the Drury Lane theatre company. In 1761, Macklin temporarily left for Dublin which allowed Maria to gain some independence in her professional life.[52] Her father cautioned her against debasing her genteel reputation for the sake of novelty: 'I hope you will scorn to offer the public a piece merely to fill you galleries or your houses'.[53] When Maria moved from Drury Lane to Covent Garden, however, she found success in several breeches roles. Of her performance in Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*, one critic praised: 'I do not remember to have seen any Actress wear the Breeches with so good a Grace; entirely adjusted in her Carriage, and elegantly fashioned in her whole Person, she treads the Stage with the jaunty Air of a pretty Fellow'.[54] Felicity Nussbaum has shown how Maria, and her fellow Irish actresses Margaret Woffington, Catherine Clive and George Anne Bellamy, employed their Irish identity 'and its alignment with gender elasticity' to find success in breeches roles on the London stage.[55] Maria's career remained, however, linked with that of her father as they regularly performed at each other's benefit nights and often appeared onstage together. Maria played Portia to her father's famous Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, as well as portraying

[49] *Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, 30 Oct. 1751.
[50] John Hill, *The actor: a treatise on the art of playing* (London, 1750), p. 131.
[51] George Winchester Stone, *The London stage, 1660-1800: a calendar of plays, entertainments and afterpieces. Together with casts, box-receipts and contemporary comment. Compiled from the playbills, newspapers and theatrical diaries of the period. Part 4: 1747-1776*, ii (Carbondale, 1965).
[52] Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, *A biographical dictionary*, p. 35.
[53] Kirkman, *Memoirs of the life of Charles Macklin*, p. 455.
[54] *Gray's Inn Journal*, 16 Feb. 1754.
[55] Felicity Nussbaum, 'Straddling: London-Irish actresses in performance', in David O'Shaughnessy (ed.), *Ireland, Enlightenment and the English stage, 1740-1820* (Cambridge, 2019), pp 31-56, p. 56.

the heroine Charlotte in Macklin's successful comedy *Love a la Mode*.[56] Her father's domineering influence in the success of her career is indicated by her entry in the *Theatrical Biography* (1772), which begins: 'Perhaps this lady is the only instance of a person's being regularly bred to the theatre'.[57] As such, Maria's theatrical success was largely celebrated as a reflection of that of her father.

Another of Charles Macklin's students, John Hill (*c.*1717-75) went on to make a significant contribution to the development of acting theory and aesthetic philosophy through his work *The Actor: a treatise on the art of playing* (1750). James Harriman-Smith has highlighted Hill's important contribution to 'a remarkable chain of Anglo-French transmission' that developed theatrical philosophy.[58] As with Dubos, this new chain of philosophical discourse began with a French work. Pierre Rémond de Saint-Albine's *Le Comédien* was published in Paris in 1747. Saint-Albine built on Dubos's earlier theory of motive sentimentality, suggesting that it was necessary for the actor to genuinely stir his own passions on the stage in order for his audience to be naturally stimulated by the truth of the performance: 'on the stage one only expresses a passion imperfectly if one does not feel it effectively'.[59] Hill, like Nugent, believed that 'an exact imitation of nature' was necessary to mechanically produce the desired passion for a scene.[60] Hill interspersed his treatise with observations on various leading actors of the London stage at the time, including Macklin and two of his most successful students, Garrick and Dublin-born actor, Spranger Barry. Despite the extensive mentions of both Macklin and Barry throughout Hill's work, the French translation of the treatise, which was undertaken by Antoine-Fabio Sticotti, was entitled *Garrick, ou les acteurs anglaise* (1769).[61] Sticotti's editing of Hill's treatise served to emphasise Garrick's role within the rise of a 'naturalised' style on the London stage, marking the start of Macklin's liminality within the historiography of the movement.

'Mr. Garrick commanded most applause – Mr. Barry most tears': national bardolatry and Spranger Barry as David Garrick's 'natural' rival[62]

[56] Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, *A biographical dictionary*, pp 32-6.
[57] *Theatrical biography: or, memoirs of the principal performers of the three theatres royal*, ii (London, 1772), p. 8.
[58] James Harriman-Smith, '*Comédien* – Actor – *Paradoxe*: the Anglo-French sources of Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien*', *Theatre Journal*, lxvii, no. 1 (2015), pp 83-96, p. 84.
[59] Sainte-Albine, quoted in Larlham, 'The felt truth of mimetic experience', p. 445.
[60] Hill, *The actor*, p. 236.
[61] Harriman-Smith, 'Comédien – Actor – Paradoxe', p. 83.
[62] Francis Gentleman, *The dramatic censor; or, critical companion*, i (London, 1770), 190.

As has been mentioned, following the Act of Union (1707) there was a conscious effort made to cultivate a collective 'national' culture by many within the British Isles.[63] A significant aspect of this 'nationalist' fervour was the elevation of Shakespeare to the status of 'national' poet and natural philosopher. Through this process, Shakespeare became the exemplar of national character, as his works were seen to be replete with the fundamental qualities of Britishness: 'liberty, genius and feeling'.[64] Between 1745 and 1760 the number of Shakespearean performances per season nearly tripled in the Dublin theatre scene.[65] In London, the amount of Shakespearean performances per season remained relatively steady, though high, during the same period.[66] Samuel Johnson, in the preface to his 1765 edition of Shakespeare's plays, claimed that the playwright's liberal philosophy was evident in his ability to display equal strength in both comedy and tragedy, while he was not able to 'recollect among the *Greeks* or *Romans* a single writer who attempted both'.[67] Furthermore, Johnson proposed that Shakespeare should be considered as Britain's 'ancient', equal in status to classical writers such as Homer: 'Perhaps it would not be easy to find any author, except *Homer*, who invented so much as *Shakespeare*, who so much advanced the studies which he cultivated, or effused so much novelty upon his age or country'.[68] This elevation, however, required a defence of Shakespeare's supposed lack of learning, as demonstrated by his dismissal of the formal structure and order of the drama. Instead, it was repeatedly asserted that Shakespeare's genius came directly from nature. Roscommon-born playwright and theatre-critic Arthur Murphy (1727-1805), in an open response to Voltaire's criticism of Shakespeare's disregard for the formal rules of drama, proposed that the playwright 'had no written precepts, and he wanted none: the light of Nature was his guide'.[69] Throughout this period various British and Irish writers sought to account for the continued dismissal of Shakespeare's genius by many of their French contemporaries. In 1748 Anglican clergyman and academic, Peter Whalley (1722-91) attempted to account for this difference in 'national' taste by suggesting that 'the dramatic

[63] Livesey, *Civil society and empire*, p. 155.
[64] Jean Marsden, *The re-imagined text: Shakespeare, adaptation and eighteenth-century literary theory* (Lexington, 1995), p. 111.
[65] John Greene, *Theatre in Dublin, 1745-1820: a calendar of performances*, i (Plymouth, 2011).
[66] Arthur Scouten, *The London stage, 1660-1800; a calendar of plays, entertainments & afterpieces, together with casts, box-receipts and contemporary comment. Compiled from the playbills, newspapers and theatrical diaries of the period. Part 3: 1729-1747*, ii (Carbondale, 1965); George Winchester Stone, *The London stage, 1660-1800; a calendar of plays, entertainments & afterpieces, together with casts, box-receipts and contemporary comment. Compiled from the playbills, newspapers and theatrical diaries of the period. Part 4: 1747-1776*, i-ii (Carbondale, 1965).
[67] Samuel Johnson, *Mr. Johnson's preface to his edition of Shakespear's plays* (London, 1765), p. 14.
[68] Ibid., pp 42-43.
[69] Murphy, 'Shakespeare vindicated' in Vickers, *Shakespeare: the critical heritage*, p. 94.

poetry of this country is like our constitution, built upon the bold basis of liberty'.[70] By contrast, liberty was considered an alien concept to the French, whose society and art was seen as dependant on a strictly regulated system of order. Shakespeare, therefore, became the exemplar of British national character with his works considered 'a kind of established religion in poetry'.[71]

In numerous discussions of the presentation of 'natural' passions in his texts, the play *Othello* was often used to demonstrate his unique ability to develop 'natural' characters. Samuel Johnson hailed *Othello* as 'the vigorous and vivacious offspring of observation impregnated by genius'.[72] Others argued that in *Othello*, Shakespeare achieved the sublime, in accordance with Edmund Burke's definition, since the play was considered 'a real spectacle of a wise and worthy Man made mad by Jealousy, and becoming a wild, ungovernable, brutal and blood-thirsty Monster; and yet accompanied with Circumstances that deservedly excite Compassion'.[73] Jean Marsden suggests that the idea of the sublime allowed for engagement with 'domesticating aspects of Shakespeare that had previously been seen as barbaric'.[74] The development of Enlightenment aesthetic philosophy discussed earlier in this chapter may, therefore, be seen to have allowed Othello's character to be civilised in order to appeal to the refined taste and sensibility of a mid-eighteenth-century audience.

In light of these considerations, it is significant that the most popular actor to play Othello in eighteenth-century London was Dublin-born actor Spranger Barry, who performed in the role seventy-three times throughout his career. Barry 'made his first appearance in *Othello*' at Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin in 1744, two seasons before he arrived in London.[75] He made his London debut in the following year, which again had him placed in the title role of *Othello*. The immense success of Barry's performance put him on a par with London's other new star,

[70] Peter Whalley, *An enquiry into the learning of Shakespeare, with remarks on several passages of his plays* (London, 1748), p. 31.
[71] Murphy, 'Shakespeare vindicated' in Vickers, *Shakespeare: the critical heritage*, p. 93.
[72] Johnson, *Mr. Johnson's preface*, p. 35.
[73] Anon., 'An Enquiry into the Nature of the Passions, and the Manner in which they are represented by the Tragick Poets, particularly with respect to Jealousy; including some Observations on Shakespeare's *Othello*', *The Museum*, no. 38 (1747) in Brian Vickers (ed.), *William Shakespeare: the critical heritage, volume 3, 1733-1752* (London, 1996), 206-11, 210.
[74] Marsden, *The re-imagined text*, p. 115.
[75] Anon., *Theatrical biography: or, memoirs of the principal performers of the three theatres royal* (London, 1772), p. 61.

Garrick. Indeed, it was noted by many of Garrick's contemporaries that throughout his career, Barry was his only serious rival in Shakespearean roles.[76]

Garrick's ability to display passion on stage was matched by Barry's capacity to elicit it from the audience. This was illustrated by a female spectator who had witnessed both actors portray Romeo in the same season. She declared: "Had I been Juliet to Garrick's Romeo – so ardent and impassioned was he, I should have expected he would have *come up* to me in the balcony; but had I been Juliet to Barry's Romeo – so tender, so eloquent, and so seductive was he, I should certainly have *gone down* to him!".[77] After twelve nights Barry's production of *Romeo and Juliet* yielded to Garrick's, as Drury Lane held one final performance before the close of the theatrical season. Both the critics and public, however, remained divided over which actor best performed the role. This rivalry was aided by the fact that the leading ladies were also considered to be evenly matched. Garrick's Juliet was performed by Irish actress George Anne Bellamy, while English actress Susannah Cibber played the role opposite Barry. Bellamy's memoirs recount an occasion when an audience member interrupted Garrick's performance to call out in favour of Barry's portrayal: 'Barry is Romeo in the other house, to be sure!'.[78] Irish actor and theatre critic Francis Gentleman (1728-84) gave equal commendation to both Romeos in his review, claiming that 'Mr. Garrick commanded most applause – Mr. Barry most tears'.[79] While Garrick was lauded as a skilled professional to be admired by gentlemen, Barry's successful career was largely owing to his romantic appeal to female spectators: 'Barry has tones, which instantly impart, an aking sense of pleasure to the heart'.[80]

In the mid-1740s both Barry and Garrick took to the stage in the title role of Shakespeare's *Othello*. The two 'natural' actors sought to meet the challenge of portraying the character in very different ways. Garrick, in his usual manner, attempted to endow his performance with authenticity. He primarily made use of costume, dressing Othello in garments appropriate to his Moorish identity: 'Garrick once took it into his head to play Othello, and in a *Moorish* dress'.[81] This did not meet with great success, as Garrick was accused of alienating the

[76] Frances Clarke, and Sinéad Sturgeon, 'Barry, Spranger', *DIB*, https://dib-cambridge-org.jproxy.nuim.ie/quicksearch.do;jsessionid=59B00C9B86D64BDFBFC1D57475E9F747 [accessed 2 Nov. 2019].
[77] Marsden, *The re-imagined text*, p. 91.
[78] Anon., *Memoirs of George Anne Bellamy, including all her intrigues; with genuine anecdotes of all her public and private connections. By a gentleman of Covent-Garden theatre* (London, 1785), p. 73.
[79] Gentleman, *The dramatic censor*, p. 190.
[80] Hugh Kelly, *Thepsis: or, a critical examination into the merits of all the principal performers belonging to Drury-Lane theatre* (London, 1766), p. 33.
[81] George Anne Bellamy, *An apology for the life of George Anne Bellamy, late of Covent Garden theatre. Written by herself, in five volumes*, i (London, 1786), 63.

protagonist from the audience. In presenting Othello in this manner, the character's image on stage became predominantly defined by his *racial* identity. Many Shakespearean scholars, such as Edward Pechter, have argued that early modern audiences 'should seem very strange to us in not being preoccupied with the protagonist's race'.[82] Garrick's 'natural' style of acting, however, relied on an authenticity in production that brought the issue of Othello's racial identity to the fore. This was not well received, as the Drury Lane production only played for three performances.[83] Hearing of Garrick's attempt at Othello, veteran Irish-born actor James Quin reportedly exclaimed: 'the little man could not appear as the *Moor*, he must rather look like Desdemona's *little black boy* that attends her tea-kettle'.[84] This comment highlights the importance invested in Othello's body on stage as, for the drama to unfold realistically, the actor had to command a powerfully seductive presence while portraying an 'othered' identity.

In defence of his contested portrayal of Othello, Garrick stated that the character's racial identity was crucial to the tragic outcome of the play. He suggested that while Shakespeare had written of jealousy within white men on several occasions, their refined 'nature' meant that 'their jealousy had limits and was not so terrible'.[85] In contrast, Garrick claimed that Shakespeare had chosen to write Othello as a black man, as it allowed him to display jealous 'passion in all its violence'.[86] The issue in such a claim was, however, that mid-eighteenth-century critics believed that in order for a writer to illustrate passion effectively, they had to rely on their own 'natural' instincts: 'To give the passions fire, *Nature* must strike the flint'.[87] This was articulated by Garrick's close friend, Samuel Johnson, who asserted that Shakespeare 'needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there'.[88] In this context, therefore, Garrick's sentiments would suggest that Shakespeare himself was capable of such terrible rage and violence. Not surprisingly, this was considered an inappropriate interpretation of the national poet's nature.

[82] Edward Pechter, '*Othello* in theatrical and critical history' in *Othello and interpretive traditions* (Iowa, 1999), pp 11-29, p. 22.
[83] Robin Runia, 'Whitening the Moor of Venice in late eighteenth century performance', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research*, xxiii, 2 (2008), pp 43-61, p. 47.
[84] Bellamy, *An apology for the life*, p. 64.
[85] Runia, 'Whitening the Moor of Venice', p. 47.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Charles Churchill, *The rosciad, a poem* (London, 1750), p. 12.
[88] Johnson, *Mr. Johnson's preface*, p. 71.

By 1746 Garrick had abandoned the role as the public clearly favoured Barry's interpretation of the character, which was hailed by Samuel Foote as 'masterly and affecting'.[89] Barry apparently managed to elicit sympathy from his audience by presenting Othello as a British figure, dressed in a military uniform appropriate to his rank within the nation's army. This *anglicisation* of Othello was also the practice of Quin who, like Barry, returned to the part repeatedly throughout his career. Quin, however, was a member of the 'old school' of actors, who relied heavily on delayed stoic gestures and 'the solemn pause', before declaring his lines 'like the loud cannon's war'.[90] In his portrayal of Othello, Quin reportedly made a dramatic entrance: 'coming on in white gloves' which he then pulled off so that 'the black hands became more realized'.[91] The significance of this gesture is heightened by the realisation that Othello's violent nature is later performed through his bare-handed strangling of the innocent Desdemona. In his portrayal, Barry combined Othello's performance of British civility with an intense animation of the character's passions through his expressive eyes: 'when wild *Othello* rolls the furious eye, give passion to the edge of rapture'.[92] This tactic appears to have been heightened by his use of blackface, as Barry's Othello addressed the audience through 'white eyes in a black face'.[93] A passage of John Hill's *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing* (1750) suggests that the anglicisation of 'exotic' characters was commonplace on the London stage by the mid-eighteenth century. However, Hill is highly critical of this practice, stating 'that even the best of our actors […] will be censur'd for turning heroes of the most distant parts of the earth into very *Englishmen*'.[94] In this way, Barry's Othello was civilised to appeal to the sympathetic passions of the London audience.

Barry's Othello was further 'whitened' by several crucial adaptions made to Shakespeare's text. These changes included the omission of much of the derogatory language used by Iago when referring to Othello's racial identity and his inter-racial union with Desdemona. The infamous lines spoken by Iago in *Act I Scene I* to Desdemona's father were removed, along with many other explicit references to Othello and Desdemona's sexual relationship.[95] In addition, at the closing of the play, Desdemona's strangled body was left untouched by

[89] Samuel Foote, *A treatise on the passions, so far as they regard the stage; with a critical enquiry into the theatrical merit of Mr. Garrick, Mr. Quin, and Mr. Barry. The first considered in the part of Lear, the two last opposed in Othello* (London, 1747) p. 31.
[90] Churchill, *The rosciad*, p. 22.
[91] Gentleman, *The dramatic censor*, p. 152.
[92] Churchill, *The rosciad*, p. 16.
[93] Runia, 'Whitening the Moor', p. 48.
[94] Hill, *The actor*, p. 268.
[95] Runia, 'Whitening the Moor', p. 53.

Othello's bloody form. Lying on the clean white sheets of her marriage bed, which was reportedly placed at centre-stage like an altar, Desdemona's death appears as a sacrifice.[96] The tragic ending of the play, however, is reserved for Othello himself, as he draws the attention away from Desdemona in his final speech. An anonymous review published in 1751 demonstrates the success of Barry's performance in eliciting sympathy for his character: 'The torments which the Moor suffers are so exquisitely drawn as to render him as much an object of compassion, even in the barbarous action of murdering *Desdemona,* as the innocent person herself who falls under his hands'.[97]

Contemporary responses to Barry's performance also hailed the importance of his pleasing physical appearance as 'a good apology for Desdemona's attachment' to Othello.[98] As with his portrayal of Romeo, Barry's physical attractiveness and seductive presence were considered important in naturally evoking a passionate response from both the female characters on stage and those in the audience: 'Behold where B[A]R[R]Y draws admiring eyes!'.[99] A memoir dedicated to the actor in the *Theatrical Biography* of 1772 claimed that with Barry in the principal role, 'mere *colour* could not be a barrier to affection'.[100] As a result, Desdemona's taste was not compromised by her falling for a black man. At the same time, Barry was free to appeal to the sympathy and sentimentality of his audience without the implication of any perceived racial barrier in the expression of 'the genuine movements of nature and passion'.[101] Additionally, Barry's Irishness likely impacted the positive reception to his portrayal of Othello, as his own 'otherness' reflected that of the character. As such, Barry easily embodied the liminality and consequent cultural adaptation of Othello: 'No Actor pleases that is not *possess'd*'.[102] In the context of mid-eighteenth-century ideas about nature and art, the play's unveiling of the hero's violent nature would have been enhanced by the actor's Irish identity. In this way, Barry's natural form, perceived as both beautiful and 'other' accounts for his particular success in the role of Othello.

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[96] Arthur Sprague, *Shakespeare and the actors: the stage business in his plays, 1660-1905* (Cambridge, 1945), p. 211.
[97] 'Remarks on the Tragedy of Othello', *The New Universal Magazine* (1751) in Vickers (ed.), *William Shakespeare: the critical heritage, volume 3, 1733-1752* (London, 1996), 439-42, 440.
[98] Gentleman, *The dramatic censor*, p. 150.
[99] Charles Churchill, *The rosciad, by C. Churchill. The eighth edition, with large additions* (London, 1763), p. 42.
[100] Anon., *Theatrical biography*, p. 61.
[101] David Hume, *The history of Great Britain*, i (1754), extract in Brian Vickers (ed.), *William Shakespeare: the critical heritage, volume 4, 1753-1765* (London, 1996), 171-4, 171.
[102] Robert Lloyd, *The actor: a poetical epistle to Bonnell Thornton, esq.* (London, 1760), p. 4.

'because it talks old English': Irish bardolatry and the Anglo-Irish aspiration of liberty[103]

As British nationalism was taking shape in the wake of the Anglo-Scottish Union, so too was a distinctive idea of 'nation' beginning to take root in Ireland. This national fervour was largely a phenomenon contained within the parameters of the Anglo-Irish socio-cultural sphere. 'Hibernian' and British nationalism shared common foundations, with 'liberty' upheld as the primary ideal.[104] By the 1740s 'Hibernian' nationalists were concerned with their aspiration for 'liberty' under the Hanoverian Crown, as a separate yet equal kingdom. Attempts were made to exercise this 'liberty' in cultural terms by improving Dublin's public sphere to align more closely with the enlightened tastes of London. The theatre scene, under the monopolised management of Thomas Sheridan from 1745, would be central to the performance of this 'Hibernian' patriotism.

As a result of the connections drawn between liberty and nature, many Irish writers joined their English counterparts in subscribing to the elevation of Shakespeare's status within the literary and theatrical canon. One of the most prominent Shakespeare critics of the eighteenth century was the previously mentioned Arthur Murphy, a lawyer, playwright and critic based in London.[105] A close friend of Dr Johnson's, he wrote a variety of pieces concerning Shakespeare in the 1750s. Discussing the development of nationalism in Britain, Shakespearean scholar Kathryn Prince addresses the growing tension between English and French writers concerning the English playwright's exceptionalism.[106] Significantly, while citing Voltaire's infamous degradation of Shakespeare's increasingly affluent place within the English literary canon she references Murphy's rebuke. Murphy was one of Shakespeare's most ardent supporters, and was prolific in his responses to those, such as Voltaire, who challenged the bard's premiere place, as he professed 'With us islanders Shakespeare is a kind of established religion in poetry'.[107] Prince analyses Murphy's writings to display the nationalist dedication that underpinned bardolatry; yet, like most Shakespearean scholars, she ignores Murphy's Irish identity. This, however, is important as although Murphy engaged in an Anglo-Irish socio-cultural sphere, he was in fact of Gaelic lineage. Born in Roscommon, he was a Catholic and had been educated in France.[108] Murphy's avid support of Shakespeare's position as the

[103] Oliver Goldsmith, *An enquiry into the present state of polite learning in Europe* (London, 1759), p. 170.
[104] S. J. Connolly, *Divided kingdom: Ireland, 1630-1800* (Oxford, 2008), p. 211.
[105] Clarke and Kleinman, 'Murphy, Arthur', *DIB*.
[106] Kathryn Prince, 'Shakespeare and English nationalism' in Fiona Ritchie and Peter Sabor (eds.), *Shakespeare in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 2012), pp 277-98, p. 277.
[107] Murphy, 'Shakespeare vindicated' in Vickers (ed.), *Shakespeare: the critical heritage*, p. 93.
[108] Clarke and Kleinman, 'Murphy, Arthur', *DIB*.

'national' poet is indicative of 'Hibernian' patriotism in the mid-eighteenth century as anglicised modes of cultural expression were employed to demonstrate Irish civility and their corresponding claim to liberty.[109]

Although Murphy was the most renowned Irish writer to engage in British bardolatry, he was not the only one. John Boyle (1707-62), the fifth earl of Orrery and Cork, also responded to Voltaire's accusation that 'the English are Shakespeare mad'.[110] His retort was simple: 'We are Methodists in regard to Shakespeare'.[111] The use of religious language by both Murphy and Boyle captures the esteem in which they held Shakespeare. At the same time they defended the bard's place as 'national' poet - a patriotic sentiment Murphy and Boyle not only supported, but propagated through their writings. Murphy and Boyle were both members of Dr Johnson's literary circle, though their bardolatry attracted criticism from another of Johnson's Irish friends. In his *An enquiry into the present state of polite learning in Europe* (1759), Oliver Goldsmith dismissed bardolatry as an applause that 'proceeds merely from the sound of a name and an empty veneration for antiquity'.[112] Although he acknowledged Shakespeare's works were of some literary merit, he was sharply critical of the extent to which the bard dominated the theatre scene in the mid-century. Playwrights like Goldsmith looked on as demand for new works had waned while Shakespearean revivals presented in the natural style, along with musical and pantomime adaptations, became increasing central to the repertoire: 'Old pieces are revived and scarce any new ones admitted'.[113] A sardonic comment made by Goldsmith in dismissing bardolatry attests to the appeal of Shakespeare's elevation among Irish writers. Chastising the 'taste' for a Shakespearean production, Goldsmith claimed that 'The piece pleases our critics, because it talks old English'.[114] Although writing within London's context and, therefore, likely to have been referencing Shakespeare's language and style, Goldsmith's comment is revealing as it highlights the 'old English' identity of many Irish figures involved in the development of Shakespearean criticism, among them Francis Gentleman, Samuel Derrick, Macnamara Morgan and Thomas Wilkes.[115] The engagement of the 'old English' in

[109] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 179.
[110] John Boyle, 'Earl of Orrery, Shakespeare's irregularities defended' (1759) in Vickers (ed.), *William Shakespeare: the critical heritage, volume 4, 1753-1765*, 353-355, 353.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Goldsmith, *An enquiry*, p. 168.
[113] Ibid., p. 167.
[114] Ibid., p. 170.
[115] Brian Vickers (ed.), *William Shakespeare: the critical heritage, volume 4, 1753-1765* (London, 1996).

the elevation of Shakespeare correlated with Anglo-Irish political aspirations for 'liberty' to be granted and extended to those Irish with claims to English heritage.[116]

While Irish writers made these significant contributions to the development of Shakespearean criticism and its place in the literary canon, the sole manager of the Irish theatre was engaged in attempts to elevate Dublin's theatre scene. Thomas Sheridan sought to vindicate his 'improvement' agenda as manager, by declaring himself driven by the patriotic desire to acquire 'that divine Principle impressed upon our Natures, without which Mankind are degraded below Brutes; without the Enjoyment of which no rational Pleasure or Happiness could subsist in this World – LIBERTY'.[117] Conrad Brunstrom asserts that Sheridan's 'Hibernian' patriotism was demonstrated by 'extending opportunity and extending participation' in the British public sphere, in the hope that 'the range of choices available within Irish political and cultural life' might extend accordingly.[118] Sheridan, as the actor-manager of Dublin's monopolised theatre scene from 1745, capitalised on his prominent contacts from the London stage to draw Dublin's theatre-royal firmly into the fashionable fold of bardolatry. In his first year as actor-manager, Sheridan invited David Garrick to perform in the 1745-6 season at Smock Alley. Although Sheridan had reportedly not left London on good terms with Garrick, the English actor agreed to come to Dublin for the winter season.[119] It was not only Garrick who joined the Smock Alley company, as Sheridan also managed to secure the employment of Spranger Barry. Garrick had been in Dublin on one previous occasion in the 1742 season, when he was introduced to Margaret 'Peg' Woffington. Having begun a relationship, the pair made for London together at the close of that season. Garrick and Woffington lived together in a house with Charles Macklin and his family before their tumultuous relationship ended the following year.[120] In 1743 Garrick became embroiled in an actor strike against the practices of theatre manager, Charles Fleetwood (d.1745).[121] Although Garrick was victorious in gaining more fixed-pay rates for the actors, he lost the favour and friendship of Charles Macklin in the process. The dispute between Garrick and Macklin led to rioting in the theatres towards the

[116] Connolly, *Divided kingdom*, p. 211.
[117] Thomas Sheridan, *An appeal to the public: containing an account of the rise, progress, and establishment of the first regular theatre in Dublin: with the causes of it's decline and ruin* (Dublin, 1771), p. 35.
[118] Conrad Brunstrom, *Thomas Sheridan's career and influence: an actor in earnest* (Lewisburg, 2011), p. 90.
[119] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 59.
[120] Norman Poser, *The birth of modern theatre: rivalry, riots, and romance in the age of Garrick* (London, 2019), p. 17.
[121] Anon., *The dramatic congress. A short state of the stage under the present management. Concluding with a dialogue as it lately passed between the illustrious Bash as of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and the chiefs of the revolted players* (London, 1743).

close of that season.[122] It is likely, therefore, that Garrick's decision to come to Dublin was driven by a need for a personal getaway from the drama of London's spotlight for a season. While both Woffington and Macklin remained in London, Garrick and Barry joined Sheridan at Smock Alley. In Dublin, however, it was not Barry who challenged Garrick for lead roles but Sheridan himself.

With the exceptional circumstance of having two of London's three principal 'natural' actors employed at Smock Alley for the 1745-6 winter season, it is unsurprising that the 'poet of nature' featured heavily in the repertoire.[123] Of a total of seventy performances between the 30 October 1745 and 2 June 1746, almost a third of the plays were by Shakespeare.[124] The season was unusually long, likely owing to the number of lead performers present, whose combined wide repertoire could keep audiences interested and entertained for an extended period. During the 1740s Dublin's theatre-royal also benefitted from the enthusiastic patronage of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The earl of Chesterfield was heavily invested in the 'improvement' of Dublin's public sphere and the promotion of a 'Hibernian' patriotism.[125] He also attended performances on several occasions during the season; such appearances were themselves spectacles of patriotic performance. It was customary for the theatre manager, a position 'immediately under the Sanction of his Majesty', to greet the Lord Lieutenant with candles and personally usher him to his box.[126] At Garrick's benefit performance, Chesterfield was greeted by both Sheridan and Garrick upon his entrance into the playhouse. While Sheridan received an honourable salutation, writer and bookseller Thomas Davies (1713-85) reported that Chesterfield 'did not even return the salute of the other'.[127] The cold reception signalled that Chesterfield did not consider Garrick to be of equal status to Sheridan since it was the custom and honour of the theatre manager, not an actor, to escort the Lord Lieutenant. Esther Sheldon, however, draws attention to another comment made by Davies: 'his lordship, when in Ireland, had a mind to convince the people of that kingdom, that his heart was intirely Irish'.[128] This intimates that Chesterfield may have been aware of the cultural patriotism at play in Sheridan's approach to management of the Irish theatre-royal. Although the presence of such prestigious

[122] Poser, *The birth of modern theatre*, p. 34.
[123] Johnson, *Mr. Johnson's preface*, p. 112.
[124] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, pp 313-8.
[125] Ibid., p. 67.
[126] Thomas Sheridan, *A faithful narrative of what happen'd at the theatre: on Monday the 19th instant, which gave rise to the following disturbance there, with some observations upon it, humbly submitted to the consideration of the publick* (Dublin,1747), p. 8.
[127] Thomas Davies, *Dramatic miscellanies: consisting of critical observations on several plays of Shakespeare* (London, 1785), p. 391.
[128] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 68.

London actors provided Dublin with a flurry of theatrical excitement, the cost of their contracts meant that Sheridan's scheme was unsustainable and he determined that the Dublin stage had to become profitable independent of London, 'without which there could be no Liberty'.[129]

The prominent position of so many Irish figures within London's theatre sphere provided opportunities for successful actors to return to Dublin's theatre scene and engage in its 'improvement' in an effort to align with the development of taste in London. After his immense success in London throughout the 1740s and 1750s, Spranger Barry returned to Dublin in 1758 to expand the city's theatre scene. Crow Street theatre provided Dublin with its first rival stage since Sheridan's takeover in 1745: 'finally [he] routed Marshall Sheridan, many years commander in chief of the Hibernian troops'.[130] Hearing of Barry's scheme and anticipating the loss he would suffer if it were successful, Sheridan offered Barry employment as the principal actor at Smock Alley theatre in 1757. This offer, Sheridan assured the 'idolized' London actor, would lead to his takeover of the management of Dublin's theatre-royal in the following season.[131] After consideration, Barry decided to forge ahead with his original plan to open a new theatre in Crow Street, independent of Sheridan's monopoly. As an actor-manager, like Sheridan, Barry appeared in many of the principal roles upon his own stage. The parts Barry owed his London success to, namely Romeo and Othello, became staples of his Crow Street repertoire.[132] Following Sheridan's retirement from Dublin and the management of its theatres in 1758, the Master of the Revels 'transferred the Theatre Royal patent at Dublin from the Smock Alley Theatre to the Crow Street Theatre'.[133] For the first time since the Restoration, Ireland's theatre-royal was not housed at Smock Alley.

The expansion of Dublin's theatre scene in the late 1750s was accompanied by the development of fixed regional theatre scenes throughout Ireland. Ireland's regional circuit had developed in the 1730s, when Dublin-based acting companies would perform in available public spaces during the summer months.[134] While Dublin's actors were touring Irish towns such as Kilkenny, Limerick and Waterford, London's actors gave a summer season in Dublin's playhouses. This system had, however, been dismantled by Thomas Sheridan before his retirement in 1758. He claimed that the touring practice of London's troupes was detrimental

[129] Sheridan, *An appeal to the public*, p. 37.
[130] Anon., *Theatrical biography*, p. 64.
[131] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 226.
[132] 'Shakespeare's plays in Dublin, 1660-1904', *University of Galway*, https://www.nuigalway.ie/drama/shakespeare/ [accessed 6 Dec. 2019].
[133] Smith Clark, *The Irish stage in the county towns*, p. 80.
[134] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 44.

to the standing of the Irish theatre scene, as the Dublin public 'after having seen so much better Actors, they hold those of the established Company in utter Disesteem on the Comparison'.[135] Dublin theatres, therefore, no longer presented a summer season which decentralised Irish theatrical activity and strengthened Ireland's provincial theatre circuit. Regional Irish towns began to establish their own fixed theatre companies with purpose-built theatres. In 1759 Spranger Barry opened Ireland's second theatre-royal in Cork.[136] In its first season, six Shakespearean pieces were presented, including performances of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello,* which both starred Barry.[137] The success of this regional enterprise may be gleaned from the Methodist preacher, John Wesley (1703-91), who reported that 'evening congregations this week were smaller than usual, as the gentry were engaged in a more important affair. A company of players were in town'.[138] The theatre-royal at Cork had an independent company but, thanks to Barry's contacts, also managed to attract actors from Dublin and London looking for summer employment. In 1762 Barry 'lured the distinguished Charles Macklin from England' to perform on Cork's stage.[139] The loss of Dublin as a summer destination for London's actors may also have contributed to the development of Scotland's theatre scene, where a patent for a theatre-royal was first granted to Edinburgh in 1769.[140] Charles Macklin performed at Edinburgh's theatre-royal on several occasions in the 1770s, presenting his renowned portrayals of Shylock and Macbeth.[141] The development of Ireland's regional theatre scene was a result of measures taken by Sheridan in his effort to raise the status of Dublin's theatre-royal by 'putting it on an equal, or superior footing to those of *London*'.[142] The summer seasons in Dublin abandoned, the city's theatres were no longer part of London's regional circuit. Opportunity arose for London's regional theatre scene to expand across the county towns of Ireland. Dublin's theatres, however, were left competing with London, as their annual takings became entirely dependent on the winter season.

As Sheridan had warned throughout his career as actor-manager, Dublin's population could not support a thriving theatre scene if there was too much competition.[143] After Barry's Crow

[135] Sheridan, *An appeal to the public,* p. 18.
[136] Smith Clark, *The Irish stage in the county towns*, p. 80.
[137] Ibid., p. 83.
[138] Ibid., p. 84.
[139] Ibid., p. 88.
[140] Judith Bailey Slagle, 'The rise and fall of the new Edinburgh theatre royal, 1767-1859: archival documents and performance history', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research,* xxx, i (2015), pp 5-29, p. 6.
[141] Paul Goring, 'Theatrical riots and conspiracies in London and Edinburgh: Charles Macklin, James Fennell and the rights of actors and audiences', *The Review of English Studies,* lxvi (2015), pp 122-45, p. 123.
[142] Sheridan, *An appeal to the public,* p. 20.
[143] Sheridan, *An appeal to the public.*

Street playhouse was raised to the status of theatre-royal, Smock Alley gradually went into decline and was closed in 1790. An anonymous publication speaking on behalf of Crow Street theatre lamented the loss of its sister Smock Alley. The epistle included several eulogies to the actors that graced Smock Alley's stage, including Sheridan, Barry, Macklin, Woffington and Garrick: ''Tis nature, strong nature, that whisper obey, / And bids you the tender memorial convey'.[144] The epistle closed with an assurance made by the Crow Street theatre that the labours of those venerated actors of Smock Alley would be remembered, as 'Here *Shakespear,* unfading, shall bloom in his bays, / And draw from the eye the best tribute of praise'.[145]

Conclusion

The development of natural philosophy and an accompanying aesthetic discourse regarding its application to art placed new emphasis on the display of passion in theatrical performance. The 'natural' style that subsequently emerged was not only concerned with the portrayal of passion on stage, but also eliciting a passionate response from the audience. The Anglo-French rivalry of the mid-eighteenth century also led to the presentation of art in a 'national' context. To counter the French regard for rules and rationality in art, patriots across the British Isles engaged in bardolatry – the elevation of Shakespeare within the literary canon to the status of 'national' poet. Britain's national character and, therefore, Shakespeare's representation of it, relied on an ideology of 'liberty'. This ideology spoke to the aspirations of the Anglo-Irish for political and economic freedom and equality under the Hanoverian Crown. Within this wider context, Dublin's theatre scene underwent a process of improvement, spearheaded by Sheridan, which sought to allow the 'Hibernian' nation's theatre to stand on a separate yet equal footing to its counterparts in London. The prominence of Irish figures in the development of both natural acting and bardolatry is striking. Understanding the particularly significant contributions made by Irish figures including Macklin, Barry and Murphy leads one to question the narrative that Shakespeare's canonical promotion was only an expression of a distinctly English nationalism. Although many of the Irish figures engaged in the presentation of Shakespeare as representative of 'nature' and 'nation' did so with a 'Hibernian' patriotic agenda, their writings and performances ultimately served to strengthen the anglicised canon of theatrical representation.

[144] Anon., *The mirror; a panegyrical, satirical, and thespian epistle in rhyme, from the theatre in Crow-Street, to the theatre in Smock-Alley* (Dublin, 1790), p. 9.
[145] Ibid., p. 29.

Chapter 5

‘in the very torrent, tempest’: theatrical riots and the expansion of the public sphere, 1754-63[1]

This chapter examines the changing position of the theatre within the public sphere during the 1750s and early 1760s, through analysis of a series of riots at London and Dublin theatre-royals. Attention is drawn towards the role of the theatre-manager in driving the commercialisation of theatrical culture and responding to the violent opposition changes to customary practice could incite. The theatre’s idealised role as an impartial space for public discourse is examined, as struggles within the social order were heightened by the politicisation of the populace. The growth of Patriot politics in both Britain and Ireland is seen to foster an increasing sense of ‘nationalised’ identity, as patriotic rhetoric fuelled cultural discourse.

As the eighteenth century progressed into its latter half, the cultural spaces fostered by the social enlightenment became increasingly politicised as the public became an institution of society. An ideology of liberty prevailed, with increased investment from members of a rapidly widening public sphere. Unlike the closed arenas of law and politics, the theatre was an open space within the public sphere that granted access to anyone capable of paying into it. As such, theatrical spectatorship became an assertion of public presence for all social orders. This strained the traditional relationship between the theatre and the court, as theatre-managers increasingly struggled to accommodate for the tastes and expectations of all their patrons. Furthermore, the theatre became a site for popular protest which led managers to turn to the medium of print as a public relations policy.

The chapter first establishes the extent to which the sociological model of the public sphere applied to the Irish situation in the mid-eighteenth century. The position of the theatre within the public sphere, together with the concept of popular protest, is examined. The chapter then examines the socio-political context of two sets of theatre riots, the first occurring at Dublin’s Smock Alley theatre in 1754 and the second at London’s Drury Lane theatre in the following year. As the chapter shows, both events were instigated by the growth in support for parliamentary opposition and thrust the theatre directly into the contentious realm of political discourse. The chapter concludes by discussing a series of riots at both of London’s patent theatres in 1763. The centrality of Irishman Thaddeus Fitzpatrick (n.d.) in the unfolding of

[1] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2 in Malone (ed.), *The plays and poems of William Shakespeare*, pp 280-86.

these disturbances will be explored. By the mid-1760s the theatre scenes of London and Dublin were becoming increasingly fractious spaces within the public sphere, with audiences violently divided over issues of politics, economics and taste.

'a contrariety of opinions between men of the same nation': public sovereignty and the theatrical marketplace[2]

During the course of the eighteenth century, a shift occurred in Western politics, in which the public became an institution of Enlightened society. Jurgen Habermas, in his pioneering study on the formation of a bourgeois public sphere, asserts that this institution's emergence within the political realm is preceded by the development of a literary public sphere.[3] This literary public sphere is inclusive of anyone who engages with it. Access to the political public is, however, limited to those individuals with a legally recognised status as an autonomous owner of private property. In this way, according to Habermas, an actualised civil society has a 'sphere of private people come together as a public'.[4] The public sphere in its totality, however, is a 'space of discourse organised by nothing other than discourse itself'.[5] This discourse takes the form of rational-critical debate between enlightened individuals within the literary public sphere. If this literary public reaches a general consensus through their shared discourse, which is recognised and addressed by those within the political sphere, then public opinion becomes a force capable of undermining the traditional institutions of state power.[6] It is in this actualised form, when public opinion becomes an organ within the political realm, that the public sphere itself becomes an institution of the state.

During the period under review, public discourse predominantly took place through the medium of print, which was considered to operate as an impartial literary space where public opinion could be formed, discussed and disseminated by anyone who could access it.[7] Disaffected parties began to mobilise public opinion as a rhetoric pertaining to the interests of 'the people' grew to 'justify a variety of political positions and strategies'.[8] This was especially true of the patriot parties which emerged out of parliamentary opposition in Britain and Ireland during the 1720s. A strong rhetoric of 'commercial grievance' was employed by the patriots to

[2] Richard Power, *A comparative state of the two rejected money bills, in 1692 and 1769. With some observations on Poynings Act, and the Explanatory Statute of Philip and Mary. By a barrister* (Dublin, 1770), p. 4.
[3] Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, p. 56.
[4] Ibid, p. 27.
[5] Michael Warner, 'Publics and counterpublics', p. 50.
[6] Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, p. 52.
[7] Pasi Ihalainen, *Agents of the people: democracy and popular sovereignty in British and Swedish parliamentary and public debates, 1734-1800* (Leiden, 2010), p. 62.
[8] Wilson, *The sense of the people*, p. 19.

align the political ambition for greater public sovereignty with the interests of the middle classes.[9] By the 1750s, therefore, patriotism had become the voice of the disaffected within the political nation.

Habermas's traditional public sphere model assumes the shape of a singular sphere of discourse; that narrow outlook has drawn considerable criticism. Michael Warner's 'Publics and Counterpublics' extends the Habermasian model by suggesting that the public sphere is merely the totality of discourse that occurs within and between a network of overlapping and interacting publics.[10] This more nuanced model allows for economic, social, and cultural divisions between members of the same political state. It also acknowledges their engagement with each other which 'by virtue of being addressed', in turn, validates their shared position within the larger public totality.[11] While the Habermasian model is based on a national framework, with eighteenth-century Britain presented as the 'model case' for development, Warner's extended version of the theory makes it better suited to colonial contexts.[12] In Ireland, it is clear that a hierarchy exists between these interconnected publics, with the one closest to being recognised as *the* public within the political realm emerging as the dominant group within the larger literary sphere.

In eighteenth-century Ireland, there were several divisions between the various groups within the literary public sphere. The most significant were the sectarian and lingual lines that separated members of the dominant public from the various counterpublics at play.[13] The dominant public consisted of those members of the Protestant nation who, though a minority population, were recognised as *the* public within the political realm. In a way, the Protestant nation was itself a counterpublic within the larger British social sphere. As has been highlighted, from the 1720s there was a mounting sense of disillusionment regarding the unstable political relationship between Ireland and her 'sister kingdom' Britain, as the Protestant nation grew weary of the 'culture of trust' on which it pinned its hopes of being granted liberty with its interests protected under the English constitution.[14] Beyond the confined parameters of the Protestant nation, however, lay a Catholic 'underground gentry'

[9] Stephen Small, *Political thought in Ireland, 1776-1798: republicanism, patriotism, and radicalism* (Oxford, 2002), p. 16.
[10] Warner, 'Publics and counterpublics'.
[11] Ibid., p. 50.
[12] Jurgen Habermas, 'The model case of British development' in idem, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, pp 57-66.
[13] James Hamrick, 'The public sphere and eighteenth-century Ireland', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, xviii (2014), pp 87-100, p. 88.
[14] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 307.

and a Gaelic middle class.[15] Both of these groups acted as increasingly visible counterpublics within Ireland's literary public sphere. This was especially true from 1745, following the removal of Jacobite politics as an outlet for political ambition among Ireland's counterpublics.[16] By the 1750s disaffection with the political regime had become a point of commonality among the middle class within the wider Irish public sphere. The shared discourse that ensued as a result intensified interaction between the factions of the literary public sphere and led Ireland into a phase of political enlightenment.

There has been considerable debate during the past two decades regarding the extent to which Gaelic Ireland may be said to have engaged in a public sphere. Joep Leerssen asserts that Gaelic Ireland was too fragmented to constitute a public along the lines of the Habermasian model.[17] This argument has been refuted by many who point to the rise of a Gaelic middleclass who, although politically disadvantaged under the penal laws, were increasingly active and visible within the public sphere of Anglo-Ireland. It will be argued here, therefore, that Gaelic Ireland came to constitute a counterpublic within the Irish public sphere. This, however, required engaging in an anglicised mode of discourse in order to be acknowledged as civilised members of public society. In his discussion of how counterpublics operate within a larger public totality while maintaining a distinctive identity, Warner refers to 'poetic modes' adopted to address different groups through the print medium.[18] This applies to the Irish public sphere also, albeit to an exceptional extent. Gaelic Irish members of the public not only had to cross the linguistic barrier of Irish to English; they also had to adopt a socio-political rhetoric inherited from England. This was done with increasing ease and frequency over the course of the eighteenth century and found cultural expression through the diverse genres of poetry, history and drama. Lesa Ní Mhunghaile has shown the extent of literary bilingualism among the middle class of Gaelic Ireland, which is indicative of at least a passive and peripheral position within the Irish public sphere.[19] It has also been shown that Gaelic Irish poetry, which was almost exclusively produced for a Gaelic audience, contains a myriad of references to Anglo-Irish print culture.[20] Translation went in both directions, as works of Gaelic scholarship were published for

[15] Whelan, 'An underground gentry?', pp 7-68.
[16] Leerssen, *Mere Irish and fíor-Ghael*, p. 331.
[17] Leerssen, *Hidden Ireland, public sphere*, p. 37.
[18] Warner, 'Publics and counterpublics', p. 82.
[19] Lesa Ní Mhunghaile, 'Bilingualism, print culture in Irish and the public sphere, 1700-*c.*1830', in James Kelly and Ciarán Mac Murchaidh (eds), *Irish and English: essays on the Irish linguistic and cultural frontier, 1600-1900* (Dublin, 2012), pp 218-42.
[20] Hamrick, 'From Gaeltacht to Grub Street', p. 30.

circulation among an Anglo-Irish audience.[21] This literary presence coupled with the establishment of the Catholic Committee in 1757 which gave political voice to those labouring under the penal laws, indicates the extent to which the Gaelic counterpublic were becoming active participants in the Irish, and by extension British, public spheres.

It is difficult to determine the position of the theatre within the Habermasian public sphere during the eighteenth century as it simultaneously operated as a physical space that functioned as an institution of the state, while also engaging in the broader discourse of the literary sphere through its print culture. In its latter capacity, the theatre's ability to function as a space for political agitation was formally recognised in that, from the 1690s, it was the only cultural medium that was subject to state censorship.[22] This prevented it from participating freely as an organ of the bourgeoisie literary sphere, which maintained an ideology of liberty. That said, however, the theatre had begun to gravitate into the new liberal public sphere from the 1690s and that shift gradually continued into the eighteenth century. A crucial move in this direction occurred at the turn of the century when the patent theatres of London came under privatised commercial management.[23] At the same time, the lucrative opportunity presented by the expanding print industry further facilitated the commercialised liberty of the stage.[24] However, the Crown continued to intervene in its patented theatres as demonstrated by the Licensing Act (1737). As a result, by mid-century the theatre was positioned between the old public sphere of Crown pageantry and the new bourgeois version of enlightened gentility. Caught between these two ideals of public spectacle, the theatres of both London and Dublin became the epicentre of several violent clashes that sprang primarily from the changing relationships between the social orders.

By the 1750s the theatre was a space in which all social orders met to engage in shared cultural discourse. Paul Goring has shown how a theatrical event operated as an exchange between the representative performance on stage and the 'performance of response' as enacted by the audience.[25] While Goring's discussion is focused on the appropriate points at which to publicly enact a practiced sensibility, the outbreak of rioting was also a common 'performance of response' in mid-century theatre. The theatrical riot was one of several forms of popular protest

[21] James Kelly, 'Irish Protestants and the Irish language in the eighteenth century', in Kelly and Mac Murchaidh (eds), *Irish and English*, pp 189-217.
[22] Christopher Balme, *The theatrical public sphere* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 26.
[23] Joseph Donohue, 'Chronology' in idem (ed.), *The Cambridge history of British theatre*, p. 27.
[24] Bruce McConachie, 'Theatre and performance in print cultures, 1500-1900', in Phillip Zarrilli (ed.), *Theatre histories: an introduction* (New York, 2010), pp 169-298.
[25] Goring, *The rhetoric of sensibility*, p. 142.

that occurred in public spaces which struggled to transition from the old customary public sphere to the new bourgeois one. The concept of riot has been thoroughly explored in the context of the food market. Like theatre, the food market became increasingly drawn into the commercial economy over the course of the eighteenth century. As a result, there was a growth in distrust of middlemen who were seen to be monopolising control over the product and dictating changes to the traditional terms of exchange. Riots and protests ensued as dissatisfied crowds attempted to engage in 'the process of reasserting common 'rights' and 'customary practice" in the marketplace.[26] Popular protests in mid-century theatre were similarly motivated by outrage over monopolised control of the cultural product and changes to the customary terms of exchange. In this way, it is useful to adopt Heather McPherson's view of the theatre as a 'cultural marketplace'.[27] The managers, primarily Thomas Sheridan and David Garrick during the period in question, operated as marketplace middlemen since they attempted to balance their traditional position as servants of the court with their new professionalised standing within the bourgeois literary sphere. Both actively promoted the professionalisation of the actor and theatre-manager but remained tied to courtly duties by the royal patents under which their theatres operated. This balancing act was difficult to maintain, and the theatrical public could become incensed to protest if the manager was seen to be leaning too far in favour of either side.

In London, as the public sphere expanded and the theatre scene became increasingly populated by the bourgeoisie, a struggle for control over the space arose between the social orders. In general, there were three ranks of people present within the mid-century audience; the nobility in their boxes, the bourgeoisie in the pit, and the lower class up in the gallery.[28] The gallery was a place of contention throughout the eighteenth century, as it traditionally housed the servants of the gentry for free and admitted others on half price tickets just before the conclusion of the main-piece of the evening's programme. The latter custom had only been established during the 1690s, when the entrepreneurial manager of Covent Garden, Christopher Rich had introduced the concession as a means of enticing more paying customers.[29] During the first half of the eighteenth century, there were several unsuccessful attempts by managers

[26] Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth (eds), *Markets, market culture and popular protest in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland* (Liverpool, 1996), p. 18.
[27] Heather McPherson, 'Theatrical riots and cultural politics in eighteenth-century London', *The Eighteenth Century*, xliii (2002), pp 236-52, p. 240.
[28] Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire of virtue: the imperial project and Hanoverian culture *c.*1720-1785' in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An imperial state at war: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), pp 128-64, p. 136.
[29] Richard Gorrie, 'Gentle riots? Theatre riots in London, 1730-1780' (PhD thesis: University of Guelph, 2000), p. 153.

to remove the custom of admitting servants for free. The issue sparked a number of riots in London during the 1720s and 30s, as servants and footmen forced their way into gallery seats.[30] The commercialisation of the theatre, therefore, remained incomplete by the 1750s.

To attract a larger audience, and make a greater profit, theatre managers increasingly engaged in commercial practices such as public advertising in newspapers.[31] Theatre-royals also began offering a wider variety of performances targeting both high and low forms of culture. The inclusion of the low comedy genre of pantomime met with a harsh response from theatre critics, who 'bemoaned the debasement of the stage'.[32] However, the genre was a commercial success through its appeal to the tastes of the lower classes, so frugal managers continued to produce the lucrative entertainments. As the London population grew over the century, however, theatre managers had to find commercially viable responses to 'the problem of bigness'.[33] On the one hand, the theatre was run as a private commercial enterprise, but it was still required to hold a royal patent in order to operate as a legitimate business. The influential role of the theatre-manager in maintaining an impartial balance between the socio-political factions of the audience was recognised by the public: 'those Managers of Playhouses, who are honoured with so weighty a Trust, as the uncontroulable Direction of our monopolized Diversions'.[34] Thus, tensions occasionally erupted as the manager became identified as the monopolising figure of power and the target of opposition in public opinion.

'the Fire of Discord': the Patriot riots at Smock Alley (1754)[35]

The Patriot riots of 1754 signal the shift from social to political enlightenment within the Dublin theatre scene. The riots were primarily motivated by the conflict between the Parliamentary supporters of the Crown administration and their patriot opposition, over the extent to which the Dublin parliament should be allowed to govern its own affairs independently of London. This political issue spilled into Dublin's theatre-royal when the

[30] Russell, 'Keeping place'.
[31] Arthur Scouten, *The London stage, 1660-1800; a calendar of plays, entertainments & afterpieces, together with casts, box-receipts and contemporary comment. Compiled from the playbills, newspapers and theatrical diaries of the period. Part 3: 1729-1747* (Carbondale, 1965) I, p. cix.
[32] Scouten, *The London stage. Part 3*, I, p. lxxxvi.
[33] Charles Beecher Hogan, *The London stage, 1660-1800; a calendar of plays, entertainments & afterpieces, together with casts, box-receipts and contemporary comment. Compiled from the playbills, newspapers and theatrical diaries of the period. Part 5: 1776-1800* (Carbondale, 1965), I, p. xix.
[34] Theophilus Cibber, *Cibber's two dissertations on the theatres. With an appendix, in three parts. The whole containing a general view of the stage, from the earliest times, to the present: with many curious anecdotes relative to the English theatres, never before published; and remarks on the laws concerning the theatres* (London, 1756), p. 22.
[35] Thomas Sheridan, *A vindication of the conduct of the late manager of the theatre-royal. Humbly addressed to the publick* (Dublin, 1754), p. 17.

manager was accused of turning against public opinion in order to keep favour with the court.[36] The theatrical space was, therefore, mirroring developments within the parliament on College Green, where the debate between court and country had been shut down by order of the monarch.

Despite Sheridan's legal victory at the conclusion of the Gentlemen's Quarrel in 1747, the manager continued to be targeted for criticism by a vocal group of opponents over the following decade. One of the most frequent accusations made against Sheridan was that his promotion of anglicised culture was infecting the Dublin populace with an 'English prejudice' which caused Irishmen to give 'senseless Encouragement' to foreign taste and manners.[37] Sheridan's overt political affiliations did not help his situation. As well as holding an office (Master of the Revels) directly under the supervision of the Lord Lieutenant, in 1749 Sheridan founded Dublin's Beefsteake Club. Despite being a social club housed at the theatre, its membership was known to comprise a cohort of peers.[38] Although it was actually actress Peg Woffington who presided over the club, Sheridan remained the main target of attack. Increasingly, he was labelled as 'King Tom', a tyrannical ruler of a monopolised public theatre scene: 'Now for some years unrival'd and alone, / Has *Irish* TOM usurp'd the stage's throne'.[39] In Sheridan's own writings, he described the theatre as a model for the nation.[40] Under his management, however, Dublin's theatre scene was monopolised and anglicised – a vision of the Irish nation that many contested.

In January 1754 the prorogation of the Irish parliament prompted supporters of the Patriot party to seek a theatrical expression for their disapproval of the Crown's immunity to parliamentary opposition. At a Smock Alley performance of an English adaption of Voltaire's *Mahomet, the imposter*, members of the audience interrupted the play to demand that one of the speeches be repeated. The speech was that of Alcanor, one of the play's subsidiary characters, who speaks out against Mahomet's tyranny: 'To bear him with Impunity amongst Us, / Is Treason to ourselves'.[41] The actor portraying Alcanor, West Digges (1720-86), complied with the request for an encore of his lines. Throughout the remainder of the play, the audience reportedly paid

[36] Chris Mounsey, 'Thomas Sheridan and the second Smock Alley riot, 1754', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, iv (2000), pp 65-77, p. 68.
[37] Edmund Burke, *The Reformer*, 28 Jan. 1748 in Paul Langford, Thomas McLoughlin and James Boulton (eds), *The writings and speeches of Edmund Burke, volume i: the early writings* (Oxford, 1997), 65-128, 67.
[38] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 198.
[39] Beaumont Brenan, *The stage: or coronation of king Tom. A satyr* (Dublin, 1753), p. 1.
[40] Sheridan, *Oration*, pp 24-5.
[41] Voltaire (trans. by James Miller and John Hoadly), *Mahomet, the imposter* (1744) quoted in Anon., *A grand debate between court and country. At the theatre-royal in Smock-Alley* (Dublin, 1754), p. 7.

little attention to the main performers (Sheridan and Woffington), but the 'Friends of Liberty clapped every Spirited Speech which came from the Patriot Mouth of Alcanor'.[42] The sentiment expressed in these lines, it would appear, was enough to appease the public's appetite for performances of a more nationalistic taste, despite the playwright being French.

After Sheridan received many requests to stage the play a second night, it was performed again two weeks later. Later he claimed that he was initially hesitant to repeat the performance but that it became clear that 'the Play was desired' by the public.[43] This time, however, Sheridan cautioned his company to maintain a 'strict neutrality' in the face of a politicised audience.[44] The manager's desire for 'neutrality' reveals his ambition to elevate the standing of the theatre within Dublin's public sphere, a literary space where cultural exchange operated on a principle of impartiality.[45] This advice, however, had disastrous consequences as when the same request was made of Digges to repeat his lines, he refused to do so. The audience immediately began to shout for the manager to appear on stage, suspecting that Sheridan had censored his actors' behaviour on account of supposed political affiliations with the Crown administration.[46] Sheridan, however, failed to appear before the public, instead fleeing the theatre.[47] After waiting almost an hour for the manager to return to the stage, during which time both Digges and Woffington tried and failed to calm the audience, a gentleman reportedly rose and called out in favour of the king's position in the parliamentary dispute and a riot ensued.[48]

This incident not only signalled the end of Sheridan's management of Dublin's theatre scene, it also highlights the extent to which the Dublin public had become politically charged along the polarised lines of the debate between the 'court' and 'country' parties.[49] The 'court' party consisted of the loyalist supporters of the Castle administration while the 'country' faction developed into their radical patriot opposition. Despite the Irish parliament being pushed into an increasingly subordinate position to Westminster since the 1720s, the Castle faction maintained its performance of loyalty and civility in the hope of gaining 'the common Privileges and Rights of a *British* Subject'.[50] The opposition, however, gradually began to

[42] Anon., *A grand debate*, p. 6.
[43] Sheridan, *A vindication of the conduct*, p. 12.
[44] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 202.
[45] Rainer Godel, 'The rise of controversies and the function of impartiality in the early eighteenth century' in Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger (eds), *The emergence of impartiality* (Boston, 2013), pp 247-64.
[46] Sheridan, *A vindication of the conduct*, p. 13.
[47] Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, p. 204.
[48] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 63.
[49] Anon., *A grand debate*.
[50] Sheridan, *An appeal to the public*, p. 43.

promote a vision of Ireland as a nation distinct from that of either England or Britain. It is hard to pinpoint Sheridan's own political allegiance in this debate, as he was careful to keep his 'private sentiments' separate from his public role.[51]

In keeping with his politically neutral conduct in the face of violent opposition, Sheridan elected to use print to address the public in the aftermath of the riot. This was a departure from the expected custom, whereby an actor-manager would appear before the audience to beg forgiveness for offending the court.[52] By the 1750s, as has been highlighted, the audience was more socially diverse and Sheridan chose to explain his conduct through print, a medium with which the practices of the bourgeoisie class that opposed him so violently were extremely familiar. He had used the medium of print very successfully in the aftermath of the Kelly riots of 1747, but crucially in that instance, he had also appeared on stage to address the audience. With the publication of his *Vindication*, Sheridan claimed his 'Right of Appeal to the Publick', which he hoped they would 'judge impartially'.[53] In remaining impartial himself, while trying to meet the demands of the two socio-political factions, Sheridan ended up alienating himself from both sides. On the one hand, he pursued a trajectory for the theatre which sought to improve its position, moving from the 'slavery' of court servitude into a professional commercial enterprise within the bourgeoisie public sphere.[54] At the same time, however, he was subject to the license of a theatre-royal in which he was expected to provide customary entertainment for the gentry.[55] In the end, Sheridan failed to maintain the balance between the old and new practices of his public role. Thus, the publication in which he vindicated his conduct during the Patriot riots also effectively announced his dejected decision to retire from his position as manager of Dublin's Smock Alley theatre: 'The great Scheme of his Life is defeated by one Blow, and the Fruits of eight years indefatigable Pains blasted in one Night'.[56] As such, the shifting position of the theatre within the mid-century public sphere, paired with shifting demographics within the audience, made the task of managing Dublin's theatre-royal too difficult for Sheridan to deal with.

[51] Sheridan, *A vindication of the conduct,* p. 4.
[52] Russell, 'Keeping place', p. 27.
[53] Sheridan, *A vindication of the conduct,* p. 17, 19.
[54] Ibid., p. 8.
[55] Russell, 'Keeping place', p. 27.
[56] Sheridan, *A vindication of the conduct,* p. 21.

‘the Battle and the Dance’: the *Chinese Festival* riots at Drury Lane (1755)[57]

In the year following Sheridan’s departure from theatre management in Dublin, the actor-manager of London’s Drury Lane theatre also failed to mediate between the opposing social orders in his audience. The so-called Chinese Festival riots of 1755 were ostensibly motivated by patriotic fervour as tensions mounted between Britain and France in the lead-up to the Seven Years War (1756-63). A closer look, however, reveals how national politics ignited a simmering clash in taste between the gentry and the middle classes, as the social orders fought over who should be catered to in the public space of the theatre.

David Garrick, having acquired the patent of Drury Lane in 1747, had adopted a very similar approach to his managerial role as Sheridan in that he made considerable efforts to reform theatrical customs in order to move the theatre more firmly into the literary sphere of the bourgeoisie.[58] Like Sheridan, Garrick was also tied to honouring the traditions and tastes of the gentry. This, it appears, he was often happy to do. As seen in Chapter Four, it was as a Shakespearean actor that he had become an exemplar of national character. In taking on the role of manager, however, Garrick came under fire for promoting foreign tastes through the staging of plays that were popular on the Continent. While Sheridan was branded ‘King Tom’, Garrick’s critics routinely invoked the actor-manager’s French lineage by addressing him as ‘Monsieur Garique’ in print.[59] It was in 1755, when in an attempt to compete with the rising popularity of opera, Garrick planned to stage a French dance spectacle called *The Chinese Festival*, he found himself firmly at odds with public opinion.

Garrick’s plan to stage a dance spectacle as an afterpiece had become public knowledge before the entertainment was officially announced or advertised. It was rumoured that the manager was to employ a troupe of sixty French dancers at the theatre-royal. According to Benjamin Victor, the London newspapers falsely reported that the manager ‘had sent over not only for *French* Dancers, but *French* Dresses also, and even for *French* Carpenters and Manufacturers’.[60] Garrick was, therefore, seen to be promoting not only French tastes but also French industry and commerce. Judith Milhous has estimated that by the 1750s, dancers accounted for approximately twenty to twenty-five percent of the average performer budget at

[57] Anon., *The nowiad: an heroic poem. In one great now superior to an age prior* (London, 1755), p. 3.
[58] John Pruitt, ‘David Garrick’s invisible nemesis’, *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research*, xxiii (2008), pp 2-18, p. 3.
[59] *London Evening Post* (1749), extract in Gorrie, ‘Gentle riots?’, pp 226-7.
[60] Victor, *The history of the theatres of London and Dublin*, pp 132-3.

Drury Lane.[61] Garrick's intention to employ a professional dancing troupe along with the sought-after Swiss director and choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre, led him to invest the very considerable sum of £2,000 in this foreign entertainment.[62] While the spectacle was being planned and rehearsed over a year, political tensions mounted between Britain and her old enemy France. The anticipated outbreak of war stirred patriotic spirit among the public.[63] According to Linda Colley, this besieged sense of nationalism acted as a unifying force across Britain and, in turn, served to subordinate other socio-political tensions.[64] The case of the *Chinese Festival* riots, however, suggests that the heightened sense of patriotism in fact fuelled such tensions, causing them to erupt in public riots in the theatre.

On 8 November 1755 the formal spectacle was finally ready to be staged as an afterpiece to Shadwell's *The Fair Quaker of Deal*. There had been shouts of 'No French dancers' at the conclusion of the performance on the previous day, so Garrick knew to expect trouble.[65] In anticipation of a riotous crowd, he organised for the *Chinese Festival* to be presented as a command performance, with the king present for its debut. It was an unusual move for a manager to request the court to command a play from him. Even more unusual was the fact that the entertainment in question was only the afterpiece of the programme. On the opening night of the spectacle, the audience was somewhat placated by the king's presence, though there were reports of hissing throughout the spectacle.[66] The monarch and his retinue returned to the theatre for the second performance also; however, the crowd was not so subdued on this occasion. Before the mainpiece began, there were shouts for the orchestra to play patriotic tunes such as 'Rule Britannia' and 'Britain strike home'.[67] As the afterpiece was beginning, the 'leader of the loyal party' reportedly addressed the theatre from the gallery: 'O Britons! O my countrymen! Ye will certainly not suffer these foreign dogs to amuse us, Our destruction is at hand. These sixty dancers are come over with a design to undermine our Constitution'.[68] The result seemed to be a great uproar of voices, with the nobility calling for the spectacle to begin while the rest of the audience shouted for the manager to appear and answer their complaint.

[61] Judith Milhous, 'The economics of theatrical dance in eighteenth-century London', *Theatre Journal*, lv (2003), pp 481-508, p. 492.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Stephen Conway, 'War and national identity in the mid-eighteenth-century British Isles', *The English Historical Review*, cxvi (2001), pp 863-93, p. 863.
[64] Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 2008), p. 18.
[65] Heather McPherson, 'Theatrical riots and cultural politics in eighteenth-century London', *The Eighteenth Century*, xliii (2002), pp 236-52, p. 238.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Anon., *The dancers damn'd; or, the devil to pay at the old house* (London, 1755), p. 4.
[68] Ibid., p. 5.

The king reportedly turned his back to the stage to signal his displeasure at the conduct of his public, a move which further aggravated the tensions between the social orders.[69] Having seen the king insulted, 'the young Men of Quality, who did not chuse to be interrupted in any Diversion that had the royal Licence', proceeded to enter the gallery and attempted to force the patriots to leave.[70] Eventually, Garrick appeared on stage in an attempt to quell the conflict, though many in the audience would not fall silent enough to hear his plea for a compromised peace. As there appeared to be an equal amount of shouts both in favour and against the staging of the spectacle, the manager declared that the *Chinese Festival* would be staged three nights in the week for the nobility, while he assured the rioters that their tastes would be catered for on the other nights.[71] This compromise reveals the extent to which the theatrical audience of the mid-eighteenth century were divided over the issue of taste along class lines. It also shows how the Crown's dominance over the theatrical space was being directly contested, as the rioters made their demands to the manager while paying little heed to the king's presence.

When the dance spectacle was again performed several days later, this time with the royal box empty, a full-scale riot ensued. Garrick chose to go ahead with the *Chinese Festival*'s performance without advertising what entertainment the gallery could expect to enjoy in its place.[72] In so doing, the manager was seen to be favouring the court and their tastes over those of the public at large. In this decision to present an afterpiece in line with the tastes of the gentry, Garrick committed a double offence in the eyes of the public. Not only was he seen to be encouraging the nobility's veneration of foreign culture, he was also replacing the customary comedic afterpiece with a formal dance entertainment. Since the 1720s pantomime had been the most popular form of afterpiece as it amused the lower ranks of the audience, who entered the theatre on half price tickets towards the end of the mainpiece.[73] Garrick's predecessor, Charles Fleetwood, had defended his staging of pantomimes when complaints were made that the theatre-royal was encouraging 'vulgar' tastes: 'as the playhouse may be considered as the general mart of pleasure, it is only from the variety of entertainment, the different tastes of the publick can be supplied'.[74] Garrick had dismissed this variety, as he replaced the section of the evening's programme usually reserved to please the tastes of the lower ranks. In an anonymous

[69] McPherson, 'Theatrical riots and cultural politics', p. 238.
[70] Victor, *The history of the theatres of London and Dublin*, p. 209.
[71] McPherson, 'Theatrical riots and cultural politics', p. 239.
[72] Ibid.
[73] John O'Brien, 'Harlequin Britain: eighteenth-century pantomime and the cultural location of entertainment', *Theatre Journal*, l (1998), pp 489-510, p. 490.
[74] Charles Fleetwood (1744), extract in Gorrie, 'Gentle riots?', pp 151-2.

pamphlet that was heavily critical of Garrick's conduct during the controversy, Shakespeare's ghost appears to the manager in a manner similar the visitation scene in Hamlet. The ghost accuses Garrick of neglecting the national genius who had raised him 'from nothing to high glory'.[75] Garrick responds with the defence that, as a manager, he was merely pandering to the poor taste of the nobility: 'Whose appetites are quite deprav'd, By foreign foppery enslav'd'.[76] The piece ends with the ghost reprimanding Garrick for compromising the national stage 'to pleasure those that profit you', before the manager promises to restore the theatre's honour by staging a piece by the national bard.[77] This apprehension over Garrick's willingness to compromise national pride in favour of gaining a commercial profit, especially considering he had become a national treasure through his championship of the Shakespearean genre, gave the manager a reputation for being an untrustworthy market middleman.[78] This was an image of Garrick that would be returned to as he continued to alter theatrical custom in order to progress the theatre's standing within the bourgeoisie public sphere.

'set by the public Voice': the Half Price riots at Drury Lane and Covent Garden (1763)[79]

The so-called Half Price riots of 1763 were ostensibly motivated by the change in pricing of theatre tickets as a result of theatrical commercialisation, but their less-cited alternative title, the Fitzgiggio riots, tells a different story. The change in admittance to the theatre and the resulting implications for the actor-audience relationship marked a significant shift in the position of the theatre within the public sphere. This unpopular change to established theatrical practice provided the opportunity for spurned Irishman Thaddeus Fitzpatrick to stir public opinion against Garrick in an act of personal revenge. The riots, which occurred on two occasions in January and February of 1763, were unusual in that they took place in both of London's patent theatres, indicating the extent to which the issue of ticket prices could incense the public.

Within the new bourgeois ideal, the relationship between the theatre practitioner and audience member was primarily a commercial one, whereby a transaction occurred between equal parties on the basis of a professional service rendered in return for financial compensation.[80] This

[75] Anon., *The visitation: or, an interview between the ghost of Shakespeare and David Garrick, esq.* (London, 1755), p. 7.
[76] Ibid., p. 9.
[77] Ibid., p. 11.
[78] John Pruitt, 'David Garrick's invisible nemesis', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research*, xxiii (2008), pp 2-18, p. 3.
[79] Gorrie, 'Gentle riots?', p. 126.
[80] Pruitt, 'David Garrick's invisible nemesis', p. 3.

challenged the traditional custom of exchange in which, the theatre practitioner was viewed as a servant of the court who was rewarded for having performed a duty. By contrast, in the commercial relationship, the price of seating was subject to market fluctuations depending on the demand for and quality of the product. Furthermore, the price was also subject to public opinion as it was believed by many that 'the value of Wit, like the value of all other Commodities, should be set by the public Voice'.[81] Consequently, as Garrick continued to stage more elaborate performances in an attempt to compete with the attraction of opera, his ticket prices rose accordingly. When he decided to abolish the practice of letting people into the gallery seats on a half-price ticket after the third act of the main-piece, the new pricing policy was met with a surge of popular protest.

The Half Price riots were clearly an orchestrated event in which a well-known Irishman played a leading part. Kilkenny-born Thaddeus Fitzpatrick distributed a handbill imploring the public to 'assemble at the playhouses and demand, with decency and temper, an explanation of [the] grievance'.[82] Fitzpatrick's motive was likely personal: he had an established enmity with Garrick before they became embroiled in this dispute over ticket pricing. Both frequenters of the Bedford coffee-house, the two appear to have had a clash of personality and morality before they took their personal animosity to print.[83] Not much is known about Fitzpatrick beyond the public ridicule he encountered in the press and his animosity towards Garrick. Two of his personal letters appeared in a contemporary biography of Arthur Murphy, in which Charles Macklin and Peg Woffington are mentioned among his acquaintances.[84] As such, it can be gleaned that he was a known figure within the Irish milieu of London's theatre-royals during the 1750s and 1760s.

Fitzpatrick was reportedly a loud effeminate character, who was frequently ridiculed as both an Irishman and a fop. In 1760 he published *An enquiry into the real merit of a certain popular performer*, in which he was highly critical of Garrick's career on the stage.[85] For his part, Garrick did not take the attack on his acting abilities graciously. Instead, he wrote a parody called *The Fribberliad* (1761) in which he ridiculed Fitzpatrick's flamboyant nature in the guise of his character Fitzgig, whom he slandered for being 'of that wriggling, fribbling race, the

[81] Gorrie, 'Gentle riots?', p. 126.
[82] Anon., *An historical and succinct account of the late riots at the theatres of Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden. Interspersed with the principal letters and advertisements that have been published on each side of the question* (London, 1763), p. 14.
[83] Gorrie, 'Gentle riots?', p. 154.
[84] Jesse Foot, *The life of Arthur Murphy, esq.* (London, 1811).
[85] Thaddeus Fitzpatrick, *An enquiry into the real merit of a certain popular performer* (London, 1760).

curse of nature and disgrace'.[86] Garrick's use of the term 'fribble' in relation to Fitzpatrick was no inconsequential matter. Declan Kavanagh highlights the severity of the term 'fribble' in comparison to the more widely used and vague 'fop'.[87] The term appeared in Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) with a definition quoted from a 1712 edition of *The Spectator*: 'A Fribbler is one who professes Rapture and Admiration for the Woman to whom he addresses, and dreads nothing so much as her Consent'.[88] Garrick's use of the word in relation to Fitzpatrick was a clear accusation of homosexuality, which was a capital offence during the period. His Irish identity likely increased the credibility of such claims among the public, as his 'otherness' made him more vulnerable to accusations of sexual ambiguity and immorality.[89] Fitzpatrick was further derided by English critic Charles Churchill (1732-64) in the eighth edition of his widely-read *Rosciad* poems. Churchill was notorious for naming the subjects of his criticism but in a cruel departure from his standard practice he refused to name Fitzpatrick in his work, claiming the poetic muse would not 'with such a Trifler's name her pages blot; known be the Character, the Thing forgot'.[90] The denunciation was not left with an ambiguous subject, however, as Churchill made explicit reference to Garrick's *Fribbleriad* in the verses. Fitzpatrick, therefore, had good reason to bear ill-will towards Garrick. The manager's ceasing of the customary half-price entrance to Drury Lane theatre provided the perfect opportunity for Fitzpatrick to strike against Garrick's reputation and standing within London's public sphere: 'Long Railing in his Bosom pent, His Passion thus, at last, found Vent'.[91]

Although personal revenge appears to have been the primary factor in Fitzpatrick's initial decision to stir protest against the manager's new pricing policy, it was primarily the financial issue and its social consequences that incited the public at large to protest. On 25 January 1763 Fitzpatrick circulated a handbill among the coffee-houses of London which called on the public to denounce Garrick's new commercial scheme. He claimed that his use of a handbill was a result of Garrick's immense influence over the press: 'the channel of the news-papers, is cut

[86] David Garrick, *The Fribberliad* (1761), p. 5.
[87] Declan Kavanagh, 'Queering eighteenth-century Irish writing: yahoo, fribble and freke' in Moyra Haslitt (ed.), *Irish literature in transition, 1700-1780* (Cambridge, 2020), pp 244-62, p. 252.
[88] Samuel Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language, in which the words are deduced from their originals and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers. To which are prefixed, a history of the language and an English grammar. By Samuel Johnson, A. M., in two volumes*, i (London, 1755), 900; *The Spectator*, 30 Jan. 1712, p. 3.
[89] Michele Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity: national identity and language in the eighteenth century* (London, 1996), p. 6.
[90] Churchill, *The rosciad, the eighth edition*, p. 9.
[91] Anon., *Fitzgig, or the modern quixote, a tale: relative to the late disturbances, at Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden theatres* (London, 1763), p. 6.

off, thro' the influence of *one of the theatrical managers*; who has found means to lay that restraint upon the liberty of the press'.[92] Later reports of the incident suggest that Fitzpatrick's motivations were known to have been removed from the issue of pricing, but that he used that cause to arrive at the theatre 'strengthened by a hired party of *waiters* from *taverns, footmen, orange-sellers*, and, in short, the *lowest, poorest desperate rabble*, that could be found'.[93]

At the Drury Lane performance that evening, Fitzpatrick reportedly rose from the gallery to insist that the manager come out before the audience: 'I call on you in the name of the public to answer for your *rascally* impositions'.[94] The play was stopped, and Garrick was sent for. Upon the manager's appearance, Fitzpatrick addressed him in a judicial manner as he was instructed to 'speak to the house'.[95] Garrick attempted a defence of his commercial conduct, though the crowd did not cease their shouting to hear it. The manager then asked to be afforded time to consult his business partner James Lacy (1696-1774) and formulate an appropriate response to the displeasure brought on by his new pricing policy. The following day Garrick submitted a tentative response through the *Public Advertiser*, in which he promised that 'a full and satisfactory answer will be published accordingly'.[96] He claimed that, upon review, he had not gone beyond what he was 'fully authorised' to do in his capacity as manager of a liberal enterprise.[97] In the same paper there was an advertisement printed for an upcoming production at Drury Lane. The advertisement clearly indicated that the theatre would not be offering half price tickets.[98] Additionally, Garrick's full answer to the calls against him was not forthcoming, as one female spectator reported: 'I have watched the daily papers ever since the disturbance at Drury-Lane Theatre, in hopes of seeing advertised, what Mr. Garrick had promised us'.[99] Thus, the crowd were incensed to reappear at the theatre again to riot. On this occasion, Garrick acquiesced and agreed to reinstate the customary concession tickets: 'and the audience expressed their triumph in the manner they usually express their applause'.[100]

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[92] 'An account of a late disturbance at the play-houses', *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1763, p. 31.
[93] Anon., *Theatrical disquisitions: or a review of the late riot at Drury Lane theatre, on the 25th and 26th of January, with an impartial examen of the profession and professors of the drama; and, a short appendix relative to the more flagrant disturbance committed at Covent-Garden theatre, on Thursday the 24th of February. By a lady* (London, 1763), p. 34.
[94] Anon., *An historical and succinct account*, p. 11.
[95] Ibid.
[96] *Public Advertiser*, 26 Jan. 1763.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Anon., *An historical and succinct account*, p. 16.
[99] Anon., *Theatrical disquisitions*, p. 1.
[100] 'An account of a late disturbance at the play-houses', p. 32.

Nearly a month later, on the 23 February, a second incident occurred. Fitzpatrick once again distributed a handbill to summon the public against a change in pricing policy. This time, however, the target was London's other patent theatre, Covent Garden, which was under the management of John Beard (1716-91). In this handbill, Fitzpatrick made the case that public sovereignty had already been established at Drury Lane, but that the manager of Covent Garden had to yet be shown 'that a point once determined by the tribunal of the public, must and shall forever remain a law, subject to no alteration, but by their own authority'.[101] It was noted by the press that very few women attended the theatre that night, suggesting that violence was expected, as it was custom to have the ladies 'ushered out' at the onset of a riot.[102] From the opening of the play, the audience shouted for Beard to appear. When he did not, a riot broke out. The manager sued several members of the audience for damages inflicted on the theatre but soon dropped the charges, when it became clear 'that they had a precedent' set by Garrick's submission to the public which would not work in Beard's favour in court.[103] Beard, therefore, published a formal apology to the public in pamphlet form before Covent Garden reopened.[104]

Thaddeus Fitzpatrick was not the only Irishman at the centre of the Half Price riots controversy. One of Drury Lane's lead actors who was on-stage when the riot ensued, was John Moody (*c.*1727–1812). Moody was a Cork-born comedian, who had made his name excelling in various stage-Irish roles, some of which had been written especially for him.[105] Seeing that certain rioters had intended to set the playhouse alight, he apprehended them before the fire could spread from the curtains. Just as Garrick was called on stage to account for his conduct before the public, so too was Moody. He reportedly adopted 'the tone of a low-bred Irishman' in an attempt to summon the image of the servile stage-Irish characters he was famous for portraying.[106] He made the mistake of sarcastically apologising for saving the lives of those who were dissatisfied with his conduct. This was not received well, especially by Fitzpatrick, who likely took offence at his use of a stage-Irish persona.[107] A request was made of Moody to get on his knees and beg forgiveness before the public. In response, the actor simply left the stage which further aggravated the audience: 'the audience insisting he go on one knee, he went

[101] Thaddeus Fitzpatrick, *A dialogue in the green-room upon a disturbance in the pit* (London, 1763).
[102] Gorrie, 'Gentle riots?', p. 164.
[103] 'A second theatrical disturbance', *London Magazine*, Feb 1763, p. 57.
[104] John Beard, *The case concerning the late disturbance at Covent-Garden theatre, fairly stated and submitted to the sense of the public in general* (London, 1763).
[105] Frances Clarke, 'Moody (Cochran), John', *DIB*, https://dib-cambridge-org.jproxy.nuim.ie/quicksearch.do [accessed 24 May 2020].
[106] Russell, 'Keeping place', p. 28.
[107] Clarke, 'Moody (Cochran), John', *DIB*.

off'.[108] In the end, Garrick appeased the crowd by agreeing not to let Moody perform until he had submitted a genuine apology: 'that while Mr *Moody* laboured under the displeasure of the audience, he should not appear on the stage'.[109] This he did a week later, coming onto the stage to address the audience before participating in the performance.

Conclusion

The managers of both the London and Dublin theatre scenes were, by the mid-century, struggling to meet the expectations and tastes of socially diverse audiences. On the one hand, the theatre was a commercial enterprise relying on public patrons to fill the pit and gallery seats. At the same time, however, the managers of theatre-royals laboured under a patent system of courtly privilege. Thus, the theatre-manager was required to strike a balance between being a servant of the court and a professional before the public. Theatre-managers increasingly used the medium of print to conduct public relations, especially in the wake of public protest against their conduct during theatrical disputes. Leslie Ritchie has examined the extent to which Garrick became involved in supplying and proofing content for the *Public Advertiser* from 1756 onwards. She concludes that the manager was eager to exert control 'over the ways in which this paper mentioned his name'.[110] By the 1750s patriotic sentiment was becoming increasingly widespread among theatre audiences, which reflected the expansion of the public sphere and consequent politicisation of the general populace.

In London, the *Chinese Festival* riots and the Half Price riots reveal a simmering undercurrent of tension between the social orders. Whereas the 1755 dispute had primarily revolved around the issue of taste, the protests of 1763 were incited by the question of admittance to the theatre. The successful abolishment of the half price entry custom would have removed the lower ranks from their position within the public space. Through popular protest, the public maintained the balance between the social orders when the managers failed to do so. As a result, the theatre retained many traditions and customs, despite engaging in an ongoing process of professionalisation and commercialisation. Thus, the public itself kept the theatre from becoming completely absorbed into the expanding public sphere of an exclusively bourgeoisie culture.

[108] 'An account of a late disturbance at the play-houses', p. 32.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Leslie Ritchie, *David Garrick and the mediation of celebrity* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 48.

Chapter 6

'the word to the action': playwrights and professional authorship in the literary sphere, *c.*1760-77[1]

This chapter traces the changing conditions of playwrighting and the professionalisation of authorship during the 1760s and 1770s. These decades sat at the apex between the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, which signalled a change in taste within the theatre scenes of London and Dublin.[2] The chapter highlights tightening links between London's theatres and the periodical press as literary and theatrical criticism developed, while also demonstrating the importance of reputation in finding success as a playwright. Additionally, it discusses a growing trend for authors to reject print culture as an anonymous public readership was not trusted to uphold the idealised quality of impartiality. The dearth of professional playwrights in Dublin will be addressed, as well as an unusual burst of politically incensed dramatic activity in the early 1770s. The crucial impact of laws regulating print and the stage on the profitability of playwrighting is highlighted.

The chapter opens by tracing developments in the literary spheres of London and Dublin, while considering the impact of censorship, commercialisation and professionalisation on playwrights. The issue of taste and the development of literary criticism is also examined. The chapter then considers the early literary career of Longford-born Oliver Goldsmith in connection with that of Kerry-born Hugh Kelly (1739-77), to assess how they progressed from journalistic hacks to polite playwrights. Goldsmith's literary legacy is also briefly considered, as a rare example of an author who lived up to the ideal of impartiality within the public sphere. The chapter then demonstrates how Donegal-born Charles Macklin, with the aid of Roscommon-born Arthur Murphy, challenged the legal status of literary property by attempting to claim copyright over performance. The chapter then moves its focus to Dublin's literary sphere, in an attempt to account for the dearth of literary activity during the period, while also examining an unusual burst of dramatic writing in the early 1770s. Finally, the early literary career of Richard Brinsley Sheridan is considered, examining how the anonymity of the public audience made the author retreat into the closed oratorical environment of politics. By the late 1770s there was a growing distrust of print culture and the lack of qualification needed to access it, as impartiality became a quality increasingly associated with gentility.

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[1] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2 in Malone (ed.), *The plays and poems of William Shakespeare*, pp 280-86.
[2] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 305.

‘giving Toleration to all sorts of Readers to indulge themselves uncensored’: the development of the literary sphere and the professionalisation of authorship[3]

The rapid expansion of the print industry in England during the seventeenth century led to a gradual breakdown of the traditional status of authorship. The relationship between writers and printers became increasingly regulated after the London Stationers Company were granted a licensed monopoly over the city’s publishers in 1662.[4] This license worked in a similar manner to that established to regulate the theatre scene in the same year; both patent systems sought to censor the output of product by controlling the means of production (presses and stages). However, the change in political regime following the Glorious Revolution (1688) led to a lapse in the regulation of this licensing system, until the legislation expired in 1695.[5] Not surprisingly, the London print industry exploded in the absence of licensing or censorship, so that by the turn of the eighteenth century the literary sphere was a highly competitive marketplace. This was also true of the Dublin print industry, as the lack of legislation allowed for its market to copy and imitate works that enjoyed success in London’s literary sphere.[6] The plagiaristic nature of the Irish literary marketplace gave it ‘an unsavoury reputation’ which contrasted with the relative gentility of London booksellers.[7]

In reaction to their loss of monopoly, the London Stationers Company petitioned for the reinstatement of licensing. The Copyright Act was introduced in 1710 as an attempt to restore order to the literary marketplace. This act was, however, more concerned with the issue of addressing the abstract notion of literary property than with the material regulation of production. It stated that literary property lay exclusively with the author, but that copyright to that property could be leased to booksellers. There was, however, a twenty-eight-year limit placed on a bookseller’s exclusive copyright of any work. Despite this statutory limitation, perpetual copyright over literary property remained customary through the print industry’s support of common law practice. The courts tended to back the interests of booksellers on the basis of common law whenever legal disputes arose.[8] Julie Stone Peters has suggested that the

[3] Philip Skelton, *The candid reader: or, a modest, yet unanswerable apology for all the books that ever were, or possibly can be wrote* (Dublin, 1744), pp 13-14.
[4] Mark Rose, ‘The public sphere and the emergence of copyright: areopagitica, the stationers company, and the statute of Anne’, in Ronan Deazley, Martin Kretschmer and Lionel Bently (eds), *Privilege and property: essays on the history of copyright* (Cambridge, 2010), pp 67-88, p. 83.
[5] Ibid., p. 82.
[6] John Brewer, *The pleasures of the imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century* (London, 1997), p. 137.
[7] Barnard, *Brought to book*, p. 347.
[8] Megan MacGarvie and Peter Moses, *Copyright and the profitability of authorship: evidence from payments to writers in the romantic period* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 5.

legal favour granted to booksellers was born out of the fact that authorship was traditionally funded by a patronage system, which financially supported the writer.[9] This may have been true enough of the early eighteenth century, but the dependence on traditional patronage systems was continually 'in decline' over the course of the century.[10]

The breakdown of Crown censorship in 1695 had greatly impacted London's theatre scene, as it blended into the unregulated milieu of the literary sphere. This allowed the city authorities to take control of theatrical licensing, which led to the establishment of several new theatre spaces that competed with the two theatre-royals. The acting companies at these new theatres did not have any claim to the stock repertoire of plays. As such, the demand for new dramatic material 'rocketed'.[11] This proved significant in precipitating a change in the traditional conditions of playwrighting. It had become custom, since the restoration of the theatres, for new productions to be penned by either gentlemen writers of the court, or theatre practitioners themselves. The former wrote for pleasure or to promote a political agenda, while the latter usually came to playwrighting in the advanced stages of their acting or managing career. The expansion of the theatre scene outside of the traditional courtly coterie, however, allowed for writers of more diverse backgrounds to submit their work for dramatic production. These writers, often termed 'hacks', were working for profit.[12] This had the effect of drawing the theatre scene into the mercenary fold of the commercialised literary sphere. Thus, the prestige associated with dramatic writing began to diminish from the first decade of the eighteenth century.

That commercial opportunity presented to playwrights by the expansion of the theatre scene was, however, short-lived in London. In 1737 the Crown regained its control over the theatre scene through the Licensing Act.[13] The significance of this legislation cannot be overstated. It restored the duopoly held by the city's two theatre-royals. That had the effect of reducing commercial competition but it also encouraged an enduring rivalry between the two patented companies. Perhaps more significantly, however, the Licensing Act also imposed censorship on dramatic writing that was to be performed before the public. This was in large part in reaction to the scathing political satires that had been regularly presented through ballad opera,

[9] Stone Peters, *Theatre of the book*, p. 222.
[10] Dustin Griffin, 'Authorship' in Jack Lynch (ed.), *Samuel Johnson in context* (Cambridge, 2012), pp 118-126, p. 122.
[11] Derek Hughes, *The theatre of Aphra Behn* (New York, 2001), p. 175.
[12] Bob Clarke, *From Grub Street to Fleet Street: an illustrated history of English newspapers to 1899* (London, 2017), p. 3.
[13] David Thomas, David Carlton and Anne Etienne, *Theatre censorship: from Walpole to Wilson* (Oxford, 2007), p. 27.

which had become the most popular genre on the unregulated stage.[14] Importantly, as a consequence, the theatre scene became the only forum within the literary sphere to be subjected to official censorship throughout the eighteenth century. This had a devasting impact on those who aspired to professional playwrighting; on the one hand, their opportunities for paid production were drastically reduced with the closure of several unpatented theatres, while on the other, the enactment of dramatic censorship led to an enthusiastic revival of the stock repertoire of old plays. Thus, as seen in Chapter Four, it was in this context that Shakespeare became elevated to the position of national bard. This effectively stalled the professionalisation of the playwright in London, even while the actor held professional status, as writers were forced to pursue more profitable branches of the literary sphere.

At the same time as the short-lived expansion of the London theatre scene provided opportunities for playwrights in London, the emergence of a competitive market had the opposite effect in Dublin. In the wake of Thomas Sheridan's departure from Dublin's theatre management in the late 1750s, the monopoly he had held since 1745 collapsed. This was in part owing to the chronic absenteeism of Ireland's most illustrious patrons, the Lord Lieutenants, from this mid-century period.[15] Regardless of its primacy within Dublin's public sphere, Smock Alley encountered considerable competition from the performance spaces of Aungier Street, Fishamble Street, and Crow Street from the mid-eighteenth century. The opening of a theatre on Capel Street in the 1770s only exacerbated the situation further.[16] In contrast with London's theatre scene which thrived on such commercial competition, Dublin did not have a large enough theatre-going population to economically sustain its vitality. As a result, the theatre scene in Dublin essentially began operating on a subscription basis, with various patrons and societies requesting performances of specific works. Although this reliance on the stock repertoire sustained several theatre companies, there were no commissions for new plays.[17] As such, breaking Sheridan's monopoly had a negative impact on Dublin's theatre scene, just as the manager had predicted it would.[18] Additionally, the Dublin theatre scene suffered from a lack of legislation guarding the interests of its practitioners. Neither the Copyright Act (1710) nor the Licensing Act (1737) were passed by the Irish parliament and, thus, such legislation did not apply in Dublin.[19] Crucially, this lack of legislation had the effect

[14] Joncus, 'Ballad opera: commercial song in Enlightenment garb', p. 47.
[15] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, pp 216-7.
[16] W. N. Osborough, *The Irish stage: a legal history* (Dublin, 2015), p. 26.
[17] Barnard, *Brought to book*, p. 252.
[18] Sheridan, *An humble appeal to the publick* (Dublin, 1758).
[19] Osborough, *The Irish stage*.

of further discouraging playwrights from working in the city, as there was no legal requirement, or even precedent, for printers to recognise an author's property rights over their work. This, coupled with the economic struggle associated with the competitive theatrical marketplace, led to the exodus of Irish playwrights from Dublin to London throughout the eighteenth century.

Despite the stagnation of opportunity for writers within the theatre scenes of both London and Dublin, the commercialisation of the literary sphere brought about a gradual 'shift in the understanding of authorship' over the course of the eighteenth century.[20] Adam Rounce claims that this 'shift' is most visible around the turn of the decade leading into the 1760s, when writers engaged in explicit discussion of the changing status and conditions of their trade. This chapter, therefore, takes this period as its starting point. It shows, however, that the professionalisation of the author was not a smooth process. The rapid expansion of the periodical marketplace may have offered opportunity, but it also heightened the risk of obscurity for hopefuls attempting to establish themselves within the literary sphere. In that context, Manushag Powell has shown how periodicals 'invented a space for their authors to think out loud about what it meant to be a professional writer'.[21] Both journalists and playwrights were tainted by a perception of vulgarity, as their works were considered 'too available to the masses' to be truly refined.[22] By contrast, poetry was traditionally considered a noble pursuit, with its celebrated authors afforded a correspondingly elevated status.[23] This division of high and low art forms was pervasive throughout the eighteenth century. Some writers, as we have seen with Jonathan Swift in Chapter Two, managed to use the juxtaposition to their advantage, gaining literary reputation by jarringly crossing the boundaries between literary forms through the use of literary personas. The adoption of a literary persona allowed writers of various backgrounds to professionalise their authorial voice by appearing 'interested in but separate from their societies'.[24] In this way, liminality afforded a claim to impartiality, which was increasingly expounded as 'a methodological or disciplinary ideal' within the literary sphere.[25]

[20] Adam Rounce, 'Young, Goldsmith, Johnson, and the idea of the author in 1759', *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, cclxxv (2013), pp 1-8, p. 1.
[21] Manushag Powell, *Performing authorship in eighteenth-century English periodicals* (Lewisburg, 2012), p. 3.
[22] Ibid, p. 9.
[23] Stephen Dobranski, 'The birth of the author: the origins of early modern printed authority' in Stephen Donovan, Danuta Fjellestad and Rolf Lunden (eds), *Authority matters: rethinking the theory and practice of authorship* (New York, 2008), pp 23-46, p. 24.
[24] Powell, *Performing authorship*, p. 11.
[25] Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger, 'Introduction: instances of impartiality' in Murphy and Traninger (eds), *The emergence of impartiality* (Leiden, 2014), pp 1-32, p. 26.

John Brewer suggests that the anonymity of periodical writing created a 'republic of authors', wherein any polite individual was at 'full liberty' to submit their work for publication.[26] In this way, the rapid expansion of the periodical industry from the 1730s onwards allowed a growing group of professional writers to live off their words. Not surprisingly, this professional group was considerably smaller in Dublin's literary sphere and many of its periodical publications drew heavily from material produced in London.[27] Despite the economic means that the periodical press could provide, however, the more traditional literary forms retained their prestige within the literary sphere. As a result, the periodical press could be used as a gateway for ambitious writers to establish a reputation before moving to literary forms of higher status.

One of the most controversial aspects of the literary sphere in the eighteenth century pertained to the issue of taste, and perhaps more importantly, the question of who was qualified to judge it. The flourishing of the literary market in the early eighteenth century was accompanied by a corresponding development of literary criticism. James Engell has argued that criticism shaped the literary sphere to such an extent that he deems it 'the most significant 'new' mode of writing' in the modern period.[28] Although their judgement retained its significance, the nobility's taste was increasingly countered by that of a growing literary public. The opinion of this public was predominantly formed through the published reports of debates and discussions that occurred in coffee-houses, assembly halls, club meetings and theatres. However, as the century progressed, anonymous critical publications became more frequent and more influential. The most significant critical publication in eighteenth-century London was *The Monthly Review*. This periodical was established by the bookseller Ralph Griffiths (*c*.1720-1803) and was the first English publication exclusively dedicated to the review and criticism of literature. Griffiths was known to be the editor, but his writing staff remained anonymous. These anonymous writers projected a critical authority which allowed them to manipulate public opinion in favour of certain works. As this chapter demonstrates, there were a number of Irish writers in London to the fore of this debate on taste. Arthur Murphy was initially critical of Griffiths's periodical, as he deemed it unseemly for a group of anonymous hacks to be determining public taste.[29] Griffiths appears to have swayed Murphy towards his cause, however, as he later became a reviewer himself.

[26] Brewer, *The pleasures of the imagination*, p. 142.
[27] Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, p. 224.
[28] James Engell, *Forming the critical mind: Dryden to Coleridge* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 2.
[29] Norma Clarke, *Brothers of the quill: Oliver Goldsmith in Grub Street* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 44.

The tendency for Irish presses to copy from London publications led to a heightened dependence on London for the determination of Irish taste. Irish clergyman and writer Philip Skelton (1707-87) authored an influential pamphlet which was first published in Dublin and later in London during the 1740s. He satirically dedicated the work to 'The World', as his purpose was 'to vindicate Thy Taste against the impudent Attempts of a few, who would impose their Own upon Thee'.[30] Skelton explained how he was moved to write in favour of 'giving Toleration to all sorts of Readers to indulge themselves uncensured' after seeing a published condemnation of 'some extraordinary Performances' which he had himself admired.[31] The theatre, in both London and Dublin, was also subject to criticism through anonymous publication. This had the impact of gradually drawing theatre away from the oratorical sphere in which it flourished and moving it further into the commercialised arms of the print industry.

Despite its increased intimacy with the print industry, the London theatre scene was a closed literary space, with few playwrights granted access to its stages. In an influential pamphlet entitled *The case of authors by profession or trade, stated* (1758), American-born hack writer James Ralph (1705-62) expressed his frustration at his inability to gain access to the stage over the course of his writing career. He cited the immense control that the London theatre managers had over the repertoire, claiming that they were 'the sole Pivot on which the whole Machine is both to move and rest'.[32] Ralph also suggested that the written word was considered less refined than that which was eloquently spoken, which attests to the continued success of the elocution movement.[33] Echoing Charles Gildon's (1665-1724) advocacy for the professionalisation of acting in his formative 1710 pamphlet, Ralph posited that for authors to achieve a professional status, the importance of 'the Pen as a tool' had to be acknowledged along with recognition that 'this Art requires Abilities and Accomplishments'.[34]

Although a gradual process, the professionalisation of the author meant that by the 1770s successful writing could become a way of performing gentility within the public sphere. Theatre, however, remained a unique space within the public sphere, as writing produced for performance linked print and oral practices. This complicated the status of playwrights, as the reception of their work depended on the performance of actors and the opinion of critics, rather

[30] Skelton, *The candid reader*, p. iii.
[31] Ibid., pp 13-14.
[32] James Ralph, *The case of authors by profession or trade, stated. With regard to booksellers, the stage and the public. No matter by whom* (London, 1758), p. 25.
[33] Ibid., p. 11.
[34] Gildon, *The Life of Mr Thomas Betterton*; Ralph, *The case of authors*, p. 3.

than solely on 'the real Weight and Value of the Work, independent of all other Considerations'.[35]

'our modern writers find themselves at a loss': the commercial literary sphere and professional authorship: Oliver Goldsmith and Hugh Kelly[36]

In late January of 1768 the debuts of two Irish playwrights were mounted in London's theatre-royals: Oliver Goldsmith's *The Good Natur'd Man* was staged at Covent Garden while Hugh Kelly's *False Delicacy* was produced at Drury Lane. In both cases, the opportunity to become a professional playwright had come through the literary reputations they garnered in the early stages of their writing careers.

By 1756 Goldsmith had settled in London, where he failed to establish a medical practice. London's medical market was reportedly 'flooded with amateur practitioners and quacks', which made it difficult to establish a legitimate practice and extract a decent income from the medical profession.[37] Goldsmith was encouraged to engage in the literary sphere as an alternative form of income by his friend James Grainger. Grainger was a Scottish doctor, who had turned professional writer himself after failing to establish a medical practice in London.[38] He introduced Goldsmith to literary magazine editor Ralph Griffiths. Goldsmith's sharp and cynical wit caught Griffiths's attention and he invited him to submit pieces for publication to his *Monthly Review*. In this capacity, Goldsmith became a practiced theatre critic who often reviewed plays by fellow Irish writers, such as those of Arthur Murphy.[39]

In addition to his anonymous reviews, Goldsmith attempted to fund a medical placement with the East India Company by freelancing to other magazines on the side. His first major work was an essay entitled *An enquiry into the present state of polite learning in Europe* (1758). This work was modelled on Ralph's *Case of Authors* and advocated for the professionalisation of the trade.[40] In discussing the ever-present issue of taste, Goldsmith urged authors to 'Write what you think, regardless of the critics'.[41] The moderate success of this piece allowed Goldsmith to become a regular contributor to a number of popular journals. The most

[35] Ralph, *The case of authors*, p. 7.
[36] Oliver Goldsmith, *An essay on the theatre; or, a comparison between sentimental and laughing* comedy (London, 1773), p. 1.
[37] Clarke, *Brothers of the quill*, p. 124.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Oliver Goldsmith, 'The orphan of China, a tragedy; as it is performed at the theatre-royal in Drury Lane', *Monthly Review*, June 1759.
[40] Robert Kenny, 'Ralph's *Case of Authors*: its influence on Goldsmith and Isaac D'Israeli', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, lii (1937), pp 104-13, p. 104.
[41] Goldsmith, *An enquiry*, p. 147.

significant of these periodical contributions was his 'Letters from a Chinese Philosopher', which were published anonymously in the *Public Ledger* between 1760 and 1761. They were subsequently compiled under the title of *Citizen of the World* and published as a single work in 1762. As his 'Chinese Letters' were composed in the early stages of his career, Goldsmith was especially fond of criticising the struggle of the professional writer to gain reputation within the literary public sphere. He bemoaned his lack of literary connections, revealing the difficulty experienced by the isolated writer in the endeavour to establish their position within the public sphere. Goldsmith also exposed the continued reliance on a form of patronage whereby 'great men' are looked to for praise and approval of new works, even in the commercial literary market: 'Immediately the praise is carried off by five flatterers, to be dispersed at twelve different coffee-houses, from whence it circulates, still improving as it proceeds'.[42] Goldsmith was highly critical of the gentry's influence over taste within the public sphere. He claimed that they favoured those who could afford to trifle with words for amusement, while the professional writer 'is treated like a fiddler, whose music, though liked, is not much praised, because he lives by it'.[43]

In 1761 Goldsmith did manage to meet the approval of one of London's influential literary figures, Samuel Johnson.[44] Johnson himself had acquired his literary reputation through the periodical press and enjoyed influential status within the public sphere. In 1764 Johnson and painter Joshua Reynolds established 'the Club' for dining and discussion.[45] Their membership soon included two managers of London's theatre-royals, David Garrick and George Colman (1732-94). Significantly, Goldsmith was also a founding member of the group, which provided him with the literary network he had craved.

Despite the popularity of his periodical work, Goldsmith's real literary breakthrough came in 1764 with the publication of his poem *The Traveller*. Ironically, its success lay in its appeal to the 'great men' that Goldsmith had ridiculed in his 'Chinese Letters' as having 'pretensions to delicacy and taste'.[46] Poetry was still considered a form of high art and a noble literary pursuit; as such, professional writers could garner genteel reputation through recognition of their success in that genre. Importantly for Goldsmith's reputation, *The Traveller* gained the praise

[42] Oliver Goldsmith, 'Letter LVII', *The citizen of the world; or letters from a Chinese philosopher, residing in London, to his friends in the east* (London, 1793), p. 237.
[43] Ibid, p. 238.
[44] Robert Mahony, 'Goldsmith, Oliver', *DIB*, https://www.dib.ie/biography/goldsmith-oliver-a3516 [accessed 18 Oct. 2021].
[45] Leo Damrosch, *The club: Johnson, Boswell, and the friends who shaped an age* (London, 2019).
[46] Goldsmith, 'Letter XXXIV', *The citizen of the world*, p. 137.

of the earl of Northumberland who was serving as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.[47] Yet the author, despite expectation, did not seek financial patronage from his aristocratic admirer. Instead, Goldsmith chose to 'have no dependence on the promises of great men'.[48] This stance speaks to the writer's confidence in the growing commercial vitality of the literary sphere and his mounting reputation within it.

Having declined a stable income through political patronage, Goldsmith began to live in the manner of a gentleman which soon left him in debt. It appears that it was financial desperation that led Goldsmith to write his first piece for the theatre in 1768. Goldsmith had initially taken advantage of his friendship with Garrick and given him a draft of his debut play, *The Good Natur'd Man*. However, after he received criticism and suggested edits from the Drury Lane manager, Goldsmith submitted his work to Colman at Covent Garden. In a letter thanking Colman for his acceptance of the play, Goldsmith belied his desperation for it to be performed quickly so that he might enjoy the financial return: 'I am very much obliged to you, both for your kind partiality in my favour, and your tenderness in shortening the interval of my expectation'.[49] The play debuted on 29 January 1768 to modest success; its ten-night run earned the playwright around £400 and its publication a week later gave him an additional £50 from the bookseller.[50] In the preface to the published version of *The Good Natur'd Man*, Goldsmith revealed he was 'strongly possessed in favour of the poets of the last age, and strove to imitate them'.[51] James Evans has shown how Goldsmith drew heavily on Farquhar's genteel comedies in his dramatic writing and that this sentimentalism contributed to Goldsmith's appeal as a playwright.[52] In addition, Farquhar's plays had remained as stock main-pieces in London and Dublin theatre repertoires, which allowed Goldsmith to profit from their continued popularity.

Although considered a lucrative debut by the standards of the time, *The Good Natur'd Man*'s success was tempered by Hugh Kelly's simultaneous, and more successful, debut production of *False Delicacy*.[53] Kelly had gained a reputation as a hack writer by being a compelling political polemicist for hire 'from which arose not only some profit, but much promise of his

[47] Dustin Griffin, *Patriotism and poetry in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 244.
[48] Clarke, *Brothers of the quill*, p. 5.
[49] Oliver Goldsmith, 'To George Colman, London, 19 July 1767' in Michael Griffin and David O'Shaughnessy (eds), *The letters of Oliver Goldsmith* (Cambridge, 2018), pp 69-71, p. 70.
[50] Griffin and O'Shaughnessy (eds), *The letters of Oliver Goldsmith*, p. 70.
[51] Oliver Goldsmith, 'Preface' to *The Good Natured Man. A Comedy* (London, 1792 edition), p. ii.
[52] James Evans, 'Adapting the stratagem: Goldsmith's *She stoops to conquer*', *Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, xxviii (2015), pp 34-8.
[53] Patrick Geoghegan, 'Kelly, Hugh', *DIB*, https://www.dib.ie/biography/kelly-hugh-a4447 [accessed 3 Mar. 2022].

future success and reputation'.[54] Additionally, recognised as a professional author within the literary sphere, Kelly enjoyed the advantage of 'being entitled to mix with persons in a station somewhat more elevated than that of his former companions'.[55] By then a profitable and relatively polite literary profession, playwrighting represented a significant advance in Kelly's career. Although Karl Schweizer is critical of assertions that Kelly 'considered himself a dramatist, first and foremost, with journalism of secondary importance', such claims reflect the more genteel status associated with playwrighting compared to hack writing during the period.[56]

To attract the attention of Garrick, and thus gain access to the stage, the writer penned a satirical piece of poetry in the guise of theatrical criticism. An article assessing Kelly's work in *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* identified this endeavour as the making of his career, asserting that it 'raised the author to the notice of the public'.[57] The verses of *Thespis* (1766) carried a heavy bias in favour of Garrick's management, while ridiculing several of London's star performers: 'Long in the annals of theatric fame, Has truth grac'd GARRICK with a foremost name'.[58] Kelly stung fellow Irishman Spranger Barry by claiming he 'cramm'd his moon-ey'd idiot on the town'.[59] Rather than retaliate against the aspiring playwright in some way, the enraged actors were reportedly told they 'better let it alone' as Garrick, 'in considering his own interest', thought it prudent to establish a convivial relationship with 'a rising flatterer of his merits' within the press.[60]

Robert Bataille has detailed the 'symbiotic nature' of Kelly's relationship with Garrick following his introduction to theatre criticism.[61] In his position as editor of the *Public Ledger*, Kelly positively critiqued the performances of the Drury Lane company and supported the position of Garrick as manager. Consequently, Kelly gained Garrick's favour which granted him entrance to the relatively closed space of London's theatre scene. Garrick, in his role as manager of a theatre-royal, could open routes to courtly or political patronage. In this way, the theatre-royal acted as a bridge between the court and the literary sphere. However, this

[54] 'Memoirs of the life and writings of Hugh Kelly, esquire', *Westminster Magazine*, Mar. 1777.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Karl Schweizer, 'Hugh Kelly's early journalism: a vital connective', *Notes and Queries*, lxi (2014), pp 433-6, p. 433.
[57] 'Anecdotes of Hugh Kelly', *Walker's Hibernian Magazine*, Jan. 1797.
[58] Hugh Kelly, *Thepsis: or, a critical examination into the merits of all the principal performers belonging to Drury-Lane theatre* (London, 1766), p. 5.
[59] Ibid., p. 9.
[60] 'Anecdotes of Hugh Kelly'.
[61] Robert Bataille, 'The Kelly-Garrick connection and the politics of theatre journalism', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research*, iv (1989), pp 39-48, p. 43.

symbiotic relationship attracted criticism from rivals in both the literary sphere and theatre scene, as the pair were accused of monopolising public opinion in favour of their own interests.

When Kelly left the *Public Ledger* in 1772, the new editor purposefully instituted a column dedicated to 'Theatre Intelligence' and took care to advertise that it would be written 'by a society of gentlemen, independent of managerial influence'.[62] This epigram became increasingly prevalent in theatrical criticism from the 1770s.[63] Kelly's entry into the theatre scene through the strategic use of polemical rhetoric and biased criticism was more representative of the professional playwright's literary experience during this period than Goldsmith's. Arthur Murphy also gained access to the theatre scene through his periodical writing.[64] However, they all appear to have been attracted to playwrighting for the financial return, which though not guaranteed, could be considerable.

Profit continued to be Goldsmith's main motivation when writing for the theatre, as the second time he tried to have a play produced, he again appeared to be in serious debt. Goldsmith appealed to Colman to stage his play at Covent Garden so that 'I can readily satisfy my Creditor that way'.[65] When he received no immediate answer to his request, Goldsmith turned to Garrick in desperation and sent him a copy of his new play. Hearing that he may lose the play to Drury Lane, Colman quickly agreed to mount a production at Covent Garden.[66] *She Stoops to Conquer* debuted at Covent Garden theatre on 15 March 1773 to great success. Goldsmith's clever courting of both of London's theatre-managers allowed him to profit from the competitive nature of their market rivalry. His foray into poetry, however, was crucial in establishing his reputation as a man of polite learning and taste. The genre likely opened the theatre scene to him as a viable literary pursuit. This is indicated by the fact that Goldsmith was accredited as the author of his first play; most playwrights remained anonymous for debut performances unless they were 'a Lord or a classic'.[67]

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[62] *Public Ledger*, 20 Mar. 1772.
[63] Anon., *The theatrical review; or, new companion to the playhouse: containing a critical and historical account of every tragedy, comedy, opera, farce etc. exhibited at the theatres during the last season; with remarks on the actors who performed the principal characters. The whole interspersed with occasional reflections on dramatic poetry in general; the characters of the best English dramatic authors; and observations on the conduct of the managers. Calculated for the entertainment and instruction of every lover of theatrical amusements. By a society of gentlemen, independent of managerial influence* (London, 1773).
[64] Arthur Murphy, *The Gray's-Inn journal. By Mr Murphy* (Dublin, 1756).
[65] Oliver Goldsmith, 'To George Colman, London, January 1773' in Griffin and O'Shaughnessy (eds), *The letters of Oliver Goldsmith*, pp 111-2, p. 112.
[66] Oliver Goldsmith, 'To David Garrick, London, early February 1773' in Griffin and O'Shaughnessy (eds), *The letters of Oliver Goldsmith*, pp 112-3.
[67] Robert Hume, 'Before the bard: "Shakespeare" in early eighteenth-century London', *English Literary History*, lxiv (1997), pp 41-75, p. 44.

Many of Goldsmith's biographers, especially those interested in exploring the writer's Irish identity, have attempted to determine his political position. Goldsmith himself, however, was always careful to remain as impartial to political zeal as possible. In the guise of literary critic, he had cautioned an Irish writer for revealing too much of his identity and agenda in his work during the 1760s.[68] Goldsmith drew on the idealistic view of the public sphere as an impartial forum and attempted to position himself as a liberal writer within that space. This gives his work a sense of liminal detachment that was rare for the period. That very stance may, however, have been the key to his long-running success, as impartiality became a feature of the performance of gentility in the later part of the eighteenth century. This can be seen in the way Arthur Murphy heavily revised his earlier political writing when compiling his collected works for publication in 1786. He retrospectively attempted to use his liminal position as an Irishman to professionalise his authorial voice with impartiality: 'Of the political papers which fell from my pen many years ago, I hope no trace is left'.[69] In contrast to Murphy's retrospectively liminal literary persona, Goldsmith had utilised his Irishness for objectivity throughout his career, which appears to have aided his literary reputation. This he did through the employment of a literary persona, whereby he used an 'othered' voice to comment on British society from a liminal position. Goldsmith chose an oriental literary persona in the early days of his career; he capitalised on the mid-century vogue for 'chinoiserie' in his 'Letters from a Chinese philosopher' (1760-61).

Goldsmith's literary status remained, however, at odds with his reputation among company in London. He was condemned by members of the Club for lacking skill in 'the arts of conversation', and his invitations depended upon the amusement he provided to those who enjoyed 'the triumph of refuting his paradoxes'.[70] In this way, Goldsmith was painted in the manner of a stage-Irishman, whose jovial blundering presence never failed to entertain his supposedly superior peers. It is telling that Goldsmith's adoption of an impartial literary persona was enough to make him a man of letters within the literary sphere, but his Irish identity and lack of eloquence eventually negatively impacted his standing. The author himself appeared to have worried over his tarnished reputation, as upon his deathbed, he requested that

[68] Clarke, *Brothers of the quill*, p. 45.
[69] Arthur Murphy (1786) quoted in Conrad Brunstrom and Declan Kavanagh, 'Arthur Murphy and Florida peat: 'The Gray's Inn Journal' and versions of the a-political', *Eighteenth-century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, xxvii (2012), pp 123-41, p. 125.
[70] Joshua Reynolds, 'Sir Joshua Reynolds on the total genius of Goldsmith in a sketch of his character' (1776), in G.S. Rousseau (ed.), *Oliver Goldsmith: the critical heritage* (London, 1974), pp 172-9, p. 174.

his friend, English antiquarian Thomas Percy (1729-11) write his official biography.[71] Percy did complete this task, but the work was not published until 1801, when it was too late to repair the damage done by the many tributes published directly after Goldsmith's passing in 1774. As a result, the author's celebrated literary output was attributed to 'an internal feeling' that 'came when he took up the pen and quitted him when he laid it down'.[72]

'having no other Professions to live by': the actress as professional playwright: Elizabeth Griffith (1727-93) and Catherine 'Kitty' Clive[73]

While Clive had initially found fame through her sweetness of voice in the 1730s, her feminine reputation came under public scrutiny during the 1740s. This was largely propagated by her struggles with theatre managers over issues of pay as well as disputes with other actresses.[74] The publishing of her *Case of Mrs Clive* (1744) and the public debate around it, led to her acquiring a reputation for having the 'deadliest temper' and 'boldest front'.[75] This affected her repertoire on stage as she began relying on less genteel comedic roles over the course of her career.

In response, Clive embraced her talent for theatrical versatility by writing comic pieces tailored for her own performance. In 1750, she debuted *The rehearsal* as a comic sketch for her benefit night at Drury Lane. When she submitted the piece for publication three years later, she exclaimed her surprise that it had 'met with so much Indulgence from the audience'.[76] In 1763, Clive wrote another comic afterpiece to attract an audience to her benefit night. *Sketch of a fine lady's return from a rout* featured Clive in the part of an Anglo-Irish lady anxious to impress her gentility upon polite English society. The comedy centred around her failure to do so, on account of her gambling addiction and coarse manner: 'Ha ha ha! So get the money ready'.[77] This piece was later adapted into an afterpiece called *The faithful Irishwoman* (1765), in which Clive switched roles to play the stage-Irishwoman Mrs O'Connor who makes a point of defending Irish manners and speech: 'When you say the Brogue; there's no such thing at all among the genteel Irish'.[78] Despite the applause she received from audiences, however, her

[71] Rousseau, *Oliver Goldsmith: the critical heritage*, p. 237.
[72] Reynolds, 'Sir Joshua Reynolds on the total genius of Goldsmith' in Rousseau (ed.), *Oliver Goldsmith: the critical heritage*, p. 178.
[73] Catherine Clive, *The case of Mrs Clive* (London, 1744), p. 17.
[74] Berta Joncus, *Kitty Clive, or the fair songster* (Woodbridge, 2019), pp 331-2.
[75] Kelly, *Thespis*, p. 33.
[76] Catherine Clive, *The rehearsal: or, bays in petticoats. A comedy in two acts. As it is performed at the theatre royal in Drury-Lane. Written by Mrs. Clive. The music composed by Dr. Boyce* (London, 1753), p. 1.
[77] Catherine Clive, *Sketch of a fine lady's return from a rout* (1763).
[78] Catherine Clive, *The faithful Irishwoman* (1765).

uncouth comedic style was often derided by critics who deemed her taste too vulgar for a female author. Clive fell foul of Churchill's *Rosciad* and Kelly's *Thespis*; the latter of whom denounced her comic farce as 'A coarse wrote scene of turbulence and noise'.[79] Felicity Nussbaum implies that it was Clive's Irish identity that allowed her to successfully transition into the male-dominated genres of farcical comedy and burlesque in the later stages of her career.[80] Thus, with these profitable pieces, Clive shrewdly used her tarnished reputation, comic talent, and Irish identity to create a niche for herself that accounts for the longevity of her career on the London stage.

Driven by economic necessity, Elizabeth Griffith embarked on her literary career with a clear focus on supporting her family. The daughter of Dublin theatre-manager Thomas Griffith (1680-1744), she had a brief career as an actress at Smock Alley before her financial circumstances drove her to seek a more lucrative profession. Coming to London after her husband's failed business venture in the linen industry, Griffith first sought to capitalise on the growing demand for romantic literature with the publication of *A series of genuine letters between Henry and Frances* (1757).[81] The success of this publication spurred her to write poetry before attempting to write a play for the stage.

Griffith's first play *The platonic wife* was staged at Drury Lane in 1764. Praise for the play was, however, largely directed at Clive who starred in the piece. While Clive's prologue and epilogue were widely praised and published, the playwright herself received some harsh criticism. The predominant complaint was her 'want of knowledge of the business of the stage', though her gender was repeatedly commented on: 'this unfortunate production of a female pen'.[82] Undeterred, Griffith had a second play produced; this time at Covent Garden. *The double mistake* (1766) enjoyed a short success, with a more palatable response from critics: 'Although we find no great novelty of character or sentiment in this play; yet we could not but be pleased with it in the perusal, as the town in general were at its frequent representations'.[83] The profits from these early ventures enabled Griffiths to purchase a permanent residence for her family in London.[84]

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[79] Kelly, *Thespis*, p. 34.
[80] Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival queens: actresses, performance and the eighteenth-century British theatre* (Philadelphia, 2010), p. 178.
[81] Frances Clarke, 'Griffith, Elizabeth', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, https://www.dib.ie/biography/griffith-elizabeth-a3646 [accessed 16 Dec. 2023].
[82] David O'Shaughnessy, 'The platonic wife (1765) LA 244', *The Censorship of British Theatre, 1737-1843*, https://tobeomitted.tcd.ie/LA244.html [accessed 6 Jan. 2024].
[83] *Monthly Review, or Literary Journal* (Jan. 1766).
[84] Clarke, *DIB*.

Despite having proven herself as a playwright of some merit, Griffith faced numerous challenges in getting her plays staged by David Garrick at Drury Lane in the late 1760s. This is evident through her extensive correspondence with Garrick in which she anxiously implores him to support her work. She repeatedly stresses her financial situation: 'a narrow income, an aged mother, a family to support who have ever lived decently, and debts contracted by providing for a beloved and deserving son! From these painful circumstances it is in your power to relieve me, by saying that you will be kind enough to assist me in bringing on a play'.[85] Her rush to see the profit of a production, however, appears to irk Garrick as he cautions her: 'I am sure Mrs. Griffith would not wish, for her own sake as well as mine, to produce a performance too hastily upon Drury-lane Theatre. I will beg leave to say, that Mrs. Griffith is bound to be careful, and very careful, of her next theatrical production'.[86] Eventually, in 1769, an adaptation of a French play proved fruitful for Griffith. *The school for rakes* was successfully produced at Drury Lane, with Clive again taking a lead role. The prologue hinted at where the author's takings would be going: 'O lend your aid; protect my babe and me'.[87] This success was followed by her *A wife in the right* at Covent Garden in 1772, and then *The Times* at Drury Lane in 1779.

The domestic comedy of Griffith's plays reflected her own views on gender relations. In 1782, she published *Essays addressed to young married women* which advocated for pious and industrious domesticity: 'In whatever point of view she may be placed, as Daughter, Wife, Mother, Sister, or Friend, the governing principle of her life, the love of God, will operate on her conduct in the relative duties of her station'.[88] Griffith's outlook was in stark contrast to that of Clive, whose own plays showcased her willingness to cross the traditional gender boundaries of comic genre within the theatre scene. While Griffith's turned to playwrighting as an anxious daughter, wife, and mother desperate to support her family, Clive sought to enjoy the rewards of her merit. Clive argued that, as a professional, she 'has a right, from her character and service on the stage, to expect some kind of respect'.[89] The dramatic works of Kitty Clive and Elizabeth Griffith serve as testament to the resilience and creativity of female authors in a

[85] James Boaden (ed.), *The private correspondence of David Garrick, with the most celebrated persons of his time, now first published from the originals, and illustrated with notes. And a new biographical memoir of Garrick* (London, 1831), I, p. 386.
[86] Boaden (ed.), *The private correspondence of David Garrick*, I, p. 269.
[87] Elizabeth Griffith, 'Prologue', *The school for rakes, a comedy* (London, 1769).
[88] Elizabeth Giffith, *Essays addressed to young married women* (London, 1782), p. 20.
[89] Boaden (ed.), *The private correspondence of David Garrick*, I, p. 203.

predominantly male-dominated theatrical landscape. Despite facing criticism and adversity, both women navigated the complexities of their time to leave their imprint on the stage.

'deprive him of his bread': challenging the legality of literary property: Charles Macklin[90]

While Goldsmith's career was cut short by his premature death in 1774, Charles Macklin was then still active on the stage despite having been born in the previous century. Although his career was punctuated by riots and disputes, he maintained enormous popularity through the immense success of a few select parts. One of these parts Macklin had written for himself; Archy MacSarcasm in *Love a la Mode* (1759). The play was written as a comic afterpiece, designed by Macklin to accompany his main performances in lead Shakespearean roles. The actor's tempestuous nature made it difficult for him to achieve or enjoy stability through professional relationships in his career. Instead, Macklin relied on the continued popularity of his distinctive performance style in favourite parts that he frequently returned to. In his advanced age, Macklin's dominance in certain Shakespearean roles was contested by younger actors. As a result, the only productions in which Macklin could guarantee his continued employment were those of his own plays. This guarantee lay in the simple fact that only Macklin himself held a full copy of the script. Despite its popularity on stage, or perhaps because of it, Macklin had not authorised the publication of *Love a la Mode*. Instead, whenever it was to be performed, he gave the other actors copies of only their lines and the prompt line that preceded it.[91] In keeping with this practice, Macklin ensured that if a theatre manager wanted to produce his highly popular play, then he had to be consulted and hired to perform his designated role. It was only by withholding it from publication that he managed to maintain his singular interpretation of the play's performance. Jane Wessel has highlighted how 'ownership' over performance in this period was 'governed primarily by custom rather than law'.[92] In the early 1770s, however, Macklin would legally challenge the status of literary property in the English courts in what was an unprecedented attempt to ensure an exclusive

[90] Anon., *The genuine arguments of the council, with the opinion of the court of King's bench, on the cause shewn, why an information should not be exhibited against John Stephen James, Joseph Clarke, esqrs. Ralph Aldus, attorney at law, William Augustus Miles, James Sparks, and Thomas Leigh; for a riotous conspiracy, founded in private premeditated malice, to deprive Charles Macklin, one of the comedians, belonging to the theatre royal in Covent Garden, of his livelihood* (London, 1774), p. 42.
[91] David Worrall, 'Charles Macklin and Arthur Murphy: theatre, law and an eighteenth-century London Irish diaspora', *Law and Humanities*, xiv (2020), pp 1-18, p. 12.
[92] Jane Wessel, *Owning performance, performing ownership: literary property and the eighteenth-century British stage* (Ann Arbor, 2022), p. 22.

right to the production of a play, by extending the legal understanding of artistic property to recognise live performance.

In 1773 Macklin returned to London after falling out with the Crow Street theatre company in Dublin.[93] Over the previous decades of his career, he had disagreements with actor-managers Thomas Sheridan, Spranger Barry and David Garrick. He appealed to the manager of Covent Garden, with whom he appeared to have no quarrel, to establish a contract. The manager, George Colman, was hesitant to grant Macklin too many roles and liberties within his company despite the actor's popularity and experience. Colman was likely wary of Macklin's turbulent history of collaboration but, with a note of desperation, Macklin convinced the manager to engage him within the company. This engagement, however, came with stipulations that Macklin did not approve of.[94] As a result, the actor went into rehearsals without having signed a formal contract with the manager. Although employed, this lack of formality placed Macklin in a vulnerable position within the company, especially as the issue of parts was addressed. Macklin's advanced age, coupled with his previous absence from the London theatre scene, meant that many of the parts he previously held had passed into the repertoire of younger actors. As such, in return for allowing Colman use of his script for *Love a la Mode*, Macklin proposed to attempt several Shakespearean characters for the first time.[95] The first to be presented was Macbeth. Despite the public's anticipation to see the veteran actor perform in a new role, the opening performances in November 1773 were met with harsh criticism in anonymously published reviews. Enraged by these negative reviews, on 18 November Macklin reportedly took to the stage before the third performance with a stack of newspapers in hand.[96] He made the mistake of accusing specific audience members of having penned the criticism 'without sufficient proof', before proceeding to appeal directly to the audience for their judgement of his performance.[97] The ensuing disagreement among the audience, over the appropriateness of his conduct, led to a riot within the theatre.[98] The manager, George Colman, came upon the stage to hear, and quickly acquiesce, to the demand for Macklin to be dismissed from the theatre.[99] The actor subsequently took a group of rioters to court on the charge of conspiracy to riot and won, on the judgement that the rioters's demand would wilfully 'deprive him of his

[93] Appleton, *Charles Macklin*, p. 167.
[94] Ibid., p. 169.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Anon. *The genuine arguments of the council*, p. 10.
[97] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1773.
[98] Kristina Straub, 'The newspaper 'trial' of Charles Macklin's *Macbeth* and the theatre as juridical public sphere', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, xxvii (2015), pp 395-418, p. 395.
[99] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1773.

bread'.[100] It was not entirely unusual for actors to take rioters to court in this period, although it was generally the manager that resorted to a legal suit for compensation. This was especially true of those working at a theatre-royal; they were still licensed under the king's patent and, therefore, legally considered Crown servants. It appears, however, that Colman took no active part in supporting Macklin through his legal trial. This incident shows the instability of Macklin's career, as even after achieving such success on the London stage, he could be driven from it so quickly.

Macklin's rigorous endeavours to keep control of his own dramatic works provided a vital source of reliable income in his career. The popularity of *Love a la Mode*, however, threatened that source of stability, as the play was produced without the author's consent increasingly frequently throughout the 1760s. These productions appear to have worked off scripts that were hastily, and likely erroneously, copied during Macklin's performances of the play. Most of these pirated productions took place on the provincial theatre circuit, including a performance in Dublin's Smock Alley theatre in 1762.[101] The transitory nature of Macklin's career, however, meant that he was familiar with the provincial circuit and those that worked on it, in both Britain and Ireland. As a result, Macklin often privately settled these piracy cases with managers who he found to be producing his play.[102] A considerable portion of the play was even published in *The Court Miscellany*, for which Macklin sued the editor and author Samuel Richardson (1689-1761).[103] A legal ruling in 1769, however, offered Macklin the opportunity to make a legal case for his ownership over the performance of his plays.

The decline of traditional patronage systems from the mid-century meant that there was an increasing number of professional writers, such as Goldsmith, who were economically reliant on the sale of their published works. This economic dependence served to 'encourage the ideology of 'possessive authorship" within the literary sphere of London, whereby the perpetual ownership of intellectual property was the exclusive right of its creator.[104] The outcome of the Millar versus Taylor copyright case of 1769 endorsed this ideology of

[100] Anon., *The genuine arguments of the council*, p. 42.
[101] Jane Wessel, 'Possessing parts and owning plays: Charles Macklin and the prehistory of dramatic literary property', *Theatre Survey*, lvi (2015), pp 268-89, p. 281.
[102] Ibid., pp 280-281.
[103] Manushag Powell, 'Macklin in the theatre, the courts and the news' in Newman and O'Shaughnessy (eds), *Charles Macklin and the theatres of London*, pp 73-90, p. 81.
[104] Joanna Kostylo, 'From gunpowder to print: the common origins of copyright and patent' in Deazley, Kretschmer and Bently (eds), *Privilege and property*, pp 21-50, p. 46.

authorship. Thus, the possession of literary property was perpetually in the hands of the writer rather than the bookseller under British law.

The performance aspect of drama complicated the legal relationship between authors and copyright in the theatrical context. An aspiring playwright was likely to approach a theatre before a bookseller with a new work.[105] This was because performance was viewed in a similar manner to publication: once a play was produced on stage, and therefore presented to the public, the exclusive right to performance of the piece was lost. This meant that the playwright did not need to be paid, or even give consent, for a theatre to produce their work on stage.[106] By contrast, if the playwright sought a contract with a theatre first, then they would be paid by the manager for the company's use of the script. If the playwright then proceeded to seek a publisher for their work, as was common practice, they would receive an additional payment from the bookseller. In this way, the successful staging of a play generated public interest in the author's published work, which could increase their profits.[107] Macklin appears to have prioritised his role as actor over that of author since he valued production over publication rights. It is important to note, however, that the rules governing property over performances in the theatre scene were wholly reliant upon custom. By contrast, there was legitimate legislation protecting property within the print industry. The ruling in the Millar versus Taylor case gave credence to copyright law in print, by claiming that the author maintained an exclusive right to their intellectual property regardless of who held the copyright to physical production. In the theatrical context, this ruling could be utilised to favour the custom of performance property, whereby an actor could lay claim to the possession of a part on the precedence of their previous success in the role.

David Worrall has shown how Macklin's frequent brushes with the law over the course of his career, led him to develop and maintain a professional relationship with Roscommon-born lawyer, critic and playwright Arthur Murphy.[108] Murphy had gained reputation within the literary sphere through his drama and political periodical writing. His published support for the Whig administration led to him receiving patronage in the form of a legal appointment; employment offers were a common form of patronage at the time.[109] By 1770 Murphy had been involved in several cases related to the print industry. Crucially, the lawyer had been on

[105] Griffin, 'Authorship' in Lynch (ed.), *Samuel Johnson in context*, p. 122.
[106] Wessel, 'Possessing parts and owning plays', p. 269.
[107] Stone Peters, *Theatre of the book*, p. 53.
[108] Worrall, 'Charles Macklin and Arthur Murphy', pp 1-18.
[109] Kleinman and Clarke, 'Murphy, Arthur', *DIB*.

the defence counsel for the Millar versus Taylor copyright case in 1769. This case was won on the argument that even if the copyright to physical production was sold to printers, an 'incorporeal right' to the intellectual property remained with the author.[110] The legal recognition of incorporeal property allowed Macklin and Murphy to make a case for the actor-playwright's exclusive ownership over performance rights to his play, regardless of its publication status.

Macklin and Murphy made their argument for the actor-playwrights perpetual intellectual property on two occasions: the Macklin versus Richardson case of 1770 and the Macklin versus Whitley case of 1771.[111] Both of these cases were filed against provincial theatre managers who had produced *Love a la Mode* from pirated scripts.[112] Macklin, with Murphy's legal defence, won both cases. The favourable rulings appear to have rested in the playwright's withholding of his work from publication. As such, the court effectively ruled that public performance was not equal to publication and, therefore, Macklin retained the exclusive right to license productions of his play. Macklin's victory in these cases set a new precedent which led many playwrights to withhold their dramas from publication in order to maintain the property rights to performance.[113]

The debate over the exact definition of literary property, and the extent to which it could be commodified, continued in the wake of Macklin's victories. In 1774 the Donaldson versus Becket case ruled in favour of the author's incorporeal right to his literary property over that purchased by their bookseller.[114] The previous cases concerning literary property appear to have gained Murphy a reputation for successfully presenting this issue in court, as he was again part of the legal counsel for the Donaldson versus Beckett case. During the case he was required to speak before the House of Commons and House of Lords, which was 'an object of great magnitude' in Murphy's career.[115] The *Gentleman's Magazine* concluded that the case 'shewed that there was a property beyond the materials, the paper and print'.[116] The issue that the 1774 ruling appeared to clear up was whether the custom of common law or the rule of legislated law should be given precedence within the literary sphere. The court ruled against common law in favour of upholding the Copyright Act of 1710, so that a bookseller or printer could not

[110] Worrall, 'Charles Macklin and Arthur Murphy', p. 10.
[111] Foot, *The life of Arthur Murphy*, p. 354.
[112] Worrall, 'Charles Macklin and Arthur Murphy', p. 9.
[113] Wessel, 'Possessing parts and owning plays', p. 269.
[114] Rose, 'The public sphere and the emergence of copyright' in Deazley, Kretschmer and Bently (eds), *Privilege and property*, p. 85.
[115] Foot, *The life of Arthur Murphy*, p. 356.
[116] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1774.

legally claim perpetual copyright over literary property.[117] This benefited published authors but did little for the interests of playwrights, as practice within the theatre scene was still largely governed by custom. This did not change until the establishment of the Copyright Act of 1814, which recognised performance art as a form of legal property.[118] Macklin only surrendered his complete copy of *Love a la Mode* to publication after he retired from the stage in 1791, as he then had 'no further use for it'.[119] Macklin had become infirm by the 1790s and Murphy organised the publication as 'a scheme humanely projected for the relief' of his friend.[120]

'Virtue only qualifies us for Liberty': Patriotic rhetoric and historical sensibility in the Irish literary sphere: Francis Dobbs (1750-1811) and Gorges Edmond Howard (1715-86)[121]

The Irish literary sphere went through a process of expansion and commercialisation along the same lines as that of London. However, Dublin's literary market was less independent, as much of its expansion relied on the increased imitation and circulation of works that had met success in London. Works penned specifically for the Irish literary market tended to be of short-term, local interest. This appears to have also been true of the theatrical marketplace, as dramatic taste was dictated by the London audiences. As well as its lack of independence, the Irish literary sphere was also incredibly fragmented. The lingual and sectarian divide between the official public sphere and the counter-public was ever present, though increasingly blurred and crossed over the course of the century. This was especially true of the period following the establishment of the Catholic Committee in 1756, as Ireland's largest counter-public began to involve itself in the political sphere. While Irish writers in London were increasingly claiming impartiality towards the latter part of the century, the antagonistic rhetoric of patriotism prompted literary activity in Dublin and its theatre scene.

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[117] Anon, *The cases of the appellants and respondents in the cause of literary property, before the house of lords: wherein the decree of lord chancellor Apsley was reversed, 26 Feb 1774. With the genuine arguments of the council, the opinions of the judges, and the speeches of the lords, who distinguished themselves on that occasion* (London, 1774).
[118] MacGarvie and Moses, *Copyright and the profitability of authorship*, p. 3.
[119] Arthur Murphy, *Proposals for publishing by subscription the man of the world, a comedy, in five acts; and, love a la mode, a comedy, in two acts, written by Mr. Charles Macklin. Dedicated, with permission, to the right honourable earl camden. The work to be printed under the inspection of Arthur Murphy, Esq.* (London, 1791), p. 2.
[120] Foot, *The life of Arthur Murphy*, p. 396.
[121] Gorges Edmond Howard, *A collection of apothegms and maxims for the good conduct of life. Selected from the most eminent authors, with some newly formed and digested under proper heads* (London, 1767), p. 186.

Marshall Brown suggests that the literature of the pre-romantic era was imbued with a pervasive 'historical sensibility'.[122] Historical tracts were of particular interest in the Irish literary sphere, as the Patriot opposition's reliance on William Molyneaux's argument for legislative autonomy rested on establishing 'a chain of precedent and entitlement extending into the medieval past'.[123] In continental Europe, Patriot and Republican movements traced the Germanic roots of the parliamentary tradition and 'invoked a shining iconography from the pre-feudal or pre-Roman past'.[124] The intended purpose of this was to give parliamentary systems credence without being dependent on the monarchical and imperial traditions inherited from Europe's Roman era. In Ireland, however, Germanic roots could only be claimed through a narrative of English inheritance. The ensuing antiquarian debate, therefore, concerned whether the Parliamentary tradition had been enforced on Irish subjects through conquest, or adopted by Irish citizens through consent.[125] Over the course of this debate, Ireland was increasingly presented as a distinct nation with its own set of ancient 'first principles' that should be returned to.[126]

Despite being politically disavowed from a position within the 'Protestant nation', Gaelic Irish Catholics became increasingly visible within Dublin's public sphere from the 1750s.[127] The Anglo-Irish interest in the revision of Ireland's history allowed scholars of Gaelic Irish heritage to engage themselves with the reconstruction of a national narrative. The most influential Gaelic Irish historian of this period was Charles O'Conor (1710-91), whose *Dissertations on the ancient history of Ireland* was first published in 1753. O'Conor represented the success of the Irish social enlightenment, as his gentility and education afforded him access to areas of Dublin's public sphere that were dominated by Protestants.[128] Unlike the Gaelic scholars who preceded him, O'Conor wrote with an anglicised audience in mind while making a strong case for Gaelic civility. Although he drew on Geoffrey Keating's and Roderic O'Flaherty's narratives of ancient Irish history, O'Conor chose to write in English and adopted the rhetoric

[122] Marshall Brown, *Turning points: essays in the history of cultural expressions* (Stanford, 1997), p. 195.
[123] S. J. Connolly, 'Precedent and principle: the Patriots and their critics' in idem (ed.), *Political ideas in eighteenth century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000), pp 130-58, p. 135.
[124] Joep Leersen, 'Anglo-Irish patriotism and its European context: notes towards a reassessment', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, iii (1988), pp 7-24, p. 20.
[125] Jacqueline Hill, 'The language and symbolism of conquest in Ireland, *c.*1790-1850', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xviii (2008), pp 165-86, p. 167.
[126] Small, *Political thought in Ireland*, p. 17.
[127] Leerssen, *Mere Irish and fíor-Ghael*, p. 331.
[128] Luke Gibbons, "A foot in both camps': Charles O'Conor, print culture and the counter-public sphere', in Gibbons and Kieran O'Conor (eds.), *Charles O'Conor of Ballinagare, 1710-91: life and works* (Dublin, 2015), pp 116-32, p. 116.

of the Patriot party to frame Gaelic society as an ideal that the Anglo-Irish could revere.[129] Throughout his *Dissertations*, O'Conor made a case for liberty as a first principle of an ancient Irish constitution, which was upheld by a balance of power through a monarchical tradition of inheritance and election. He even went as far as to claim that 'the History of *Ireland* may be denominated [as] that of *Liberty* itself', or rather 'the ABUSE of it'.[130] O'Conor's use of the patriotic rhetoric present in the vindication of an Irish constitution corrupted by colonial rule, appealed to the grievances of his Anglo-Irish audience and prompted Protestant investment in Ireland's pre-colonial past.[131]

Anglo-Irish interest in Gaelic Ireland was further stimulated by a romantic framing of the past, which threatened the enlightened image of ancient Ireland that O'Conor had presented. Scottish poet James Macpherson (1736-96) published his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* in 1760. The poems, he claimed, were by a third century Gaelic bard named Ossian whose works had been preserved through the oral tradition of the Scottish Highlands. Macpherson's publication was met with enthusiastic attention across Europe, as the interest in the historic roots of nations had sparked romantic reverence for native cultural traditions. Ossian was declared as the 'northern Homer' and became the model for non-classical ancient genius.[132] In this way, Clare O'Halloran has shown how Ossian became a muse for 'the production of a native literature' in the cultural construction of nationalism.[133] As a result, Ossian was now for poetry what Shakespeare had become for the opposition of classical form in drama. Scottish antiquarian John Pinkerton (1758-1826) declared that despite disagreement over philosophical history, a patriot 'shall always admire a Homer, an Ossian, or a Shakespeare'.[134]

As soon as Macpherson's works were published, questions arose concerning their historical authenticity. One of these questions, which principally occupied the Irish response to the poetry, was whether Ossian was Scotland's 'ancient genius' or whether his work had been forged from the Fianna cycle of Irish folklore. To refute the Irish claim, Macpherson's

[129] John Wrynn, 'Charles O'Conor as a 'philosophical historian" in Gibbons and O'Conor (eds), *Charles O'Conor of Ballinagare*, p. 73.
[130] Charles O'Conor, *Dissertations on the antient history of Ireland: wherein an account is given of the origine, government, letters, sciences, religion, manners and customs, of the antient inhabitants* (Dublin, 1753), p. 23.
[131] Thomas McLoughlin, *Contesting Ireland: Irish voices against England in the eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1999), pp 156-60.
[132] Maureen McLane and Laura Slatkin, 'British romantic Homer: oral tradition, primitive poetry, and the emergence of comparative poetics in Britain, 1760-1830', *English Literary History*, lxxviii (2011), pp 687-714, p. 695.
[133] Clare O'Halloran, 'Irish re-creations of the Gaelic past: the challenge of Macpherson's Ossian', *Past and Present*, cxxiv (1989), pp 69-95, p. 71.
[134] John Pinkerton, 'On the oral tradition of poetry' in *Scotish tragic ballads* (London, 1781), p. 18.

subsequent Ossian epics *Fingal* (1762) and *Temora* (1763) included a historical essay which asserted Scotland as the motherland of Gaelic culture with Ireland as its subsidiary colony.[135] It was on this distortion of Gaelic history that Charles O'Conor concentrated his energy in the essay he attached to the second edition of his *Dissertations* in 1766.[136] While O'Conor's response to the Ossian controversy was one of the most authoritative to come from Ireland, it was not representative of the general Irish position on the issue of the alleged ancient genius. O'Conor's aristocratic background influenced his opinion of the literary merit of the original folktales themselves, as he dismissed the oral tradition as 'mere amusements for the vulgar'.[137] This view was not shared by many of his compatriots who invested in promoting the Irish identity of this ancient genius. Limerick-based surgeon Sylvester O'Halloran (1728-1807) was prompted to engage in antiquarianism by the Ossian controversy. Although he is often considered to be O'Conor's heir within the Irish historical tradition, the two historians maintained a fundamental disagreement over their outlook towards the Gaelic past and its promotion. While O'Conor upheld an ideal of civilised Enlightenment, O'Halloran appealed to the emerging trend for romantic heroism. As a result, O'Halloran, who was more representative of the Catholic middle class, did not refute the sentimental and essentially primitive view of Gaelic society that the Ossian poems endorsed. Instead, O'Halloran revealed in his correspondence with O'Conor that he was primarily concerned with 'the proving them Irish'.[138] Cork-born artist James Barry (1741-1806) was an avid propagator of Gaelic culture's equal status with that of ancient classicism and became a renowned illustrator of the Irish historical subject. In a series of murals completed for the Royal Society entitled *The progress of human culture* (1777-84), the final painting depicted the climax of human achievement.[139] While the foreground of the painting was populated by natural philosophers, in the background sat a line of esteemed poets. Barry placed 'our ancient bard Ossian' at the centre of this line, next to Shakespeare and Molière.[140] Thus, as Shakespeare had been promoted as the 'national bard' of anglicised culture, Ossian rose to represent the ancient genius of Gaelic society. This

[135] James Macpherson, *The works of Ossian, the son of Fingal. In two volumes. Translated from the Galic language by James Macpherson* (London, 1765).
[136] Charles O'Conor, *Dissertations on the history of Ireland. To which is subjoined, a dissertation on the Irish colonies established in Britain. With some remarks on Mr. Mac Pherson's translation of FINGAL and TEMORA* (Dublin, 1766).
[137] Charles O'Conor quoted in O'Halloran, 'Irish re-creations of the Gaelic past', p. 77.
[138] Sylvester O'Halloran in a letter to Charles O'Conor (1765), extract in O'Halloran, 'Irish re-creations of the Gaelic past', p. 79.
[139] William Pressly, 'Barry's murals at the royal society of arts' in Tom Dunne (ed.), *James Barry, 1741-1806: the great historical painter* (Cork, 2005), pp 46-56, p. 55.
[140] Fintan Cullen, *Visual politics: the representation of Ireland, 1750-1930* (Cork, 1997), p. 36.

representation, however, continued to promote a primitive view of Irish identity, albeit in the positive guise of romanticism.

The glories of Ireland's past were also depicted on the stage, as playwrights utilised the interest in historical narrative to promote political agendas. David O'Shaughnessy has highlighted the role of the history play as 'a potent political genre' through which Irish playwrights could engage in the staging of Irish reason and civility.[141] Two such playwrights, from opposite ends of the Irish political spectrum, were Gorges Edmond Howard (1715–86) and Francis Dobbs (1750-1811). While Howard was a legal secretary for the Castle administration, Dobbs was a member of the Patriot party and the Volunteer movement.[142] Despite this apparent division, both writers appealed to an idealised Irish past, wherein all members of society came together to defend the nation's liberty. While not representative of most within the Protestant nation, both Dobbs and Howard contested the penal legislation against Catholics, but for different reasons. Dobbs was a radical reformer who drew on the late Enlightenment concept of inalienable rights and promoted an Irish national identity 'that shall unite all orders and descriptions of men'.[143] Howard, on the other hand, invested in the sentimental view of Gaelic Ireland promoted by the romantic movement, and believed that such 'Virtue only qualifies us for liberty'.[144]

Dobbs's *The Patriot King, or Irish Chief* was staged in 1773 and printed in the following year, while Howard's *The Siege of Tamor, a tragedy* was printed in 1773 and first staged in 1774. The title of Dobbs's play invokes the work of English politician Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751) whose *Idea of a Patriot King* (1740) was highly influential in the development of Patriot political philosophy. Bolingbroke's treatise presented a utopian ideal of national government 'more to be wished than to be hoped' for.[145] He asserted the primary position of the monarchy but outlined the necessity for it to rule 'tempered with Aristocracy or Democracy'.[146] David Armitage has demonstrated how Bolingbroke's lack of specificity in exactly how the monarchy's power should be kept in check 'allowed for flexibility in its application' to the

[141] David O'Shaughnessy, 'Civility, patriotism and performance: Cato and the Irish history play', in idem (ed.), *Ireland, Enlightenment and the English stage, 1740-1820* (Cambridge, 2019), pp 167-88, p. 169.
[142] Christopher Wheatley, *'Beneath Ierne's banners': Irish Protestant drama of the restoration and eighteenth century* (Notre Dame, 1999), p. 102.
[143] Francis Dobbs, *The true principles of government, applied to the Irish constitution, in a code of laws. Humbly submitted to the king, lords, and commons of Ireland, for their adoption, in lieu of the many thousand volumes, which now contain the laws of the land* (Dublin, 1783), p. 4.
[144] Howard, *A collection of apothegms*, p. 186.
[145] Henry St John (Viscount Bolingbroke), *The idea of a patriot king: with respect to the constitution of Great Britain. By a person of quality* (London, 1740), p. 7.
[146] Ibid., p. 26.

political situations of various nations.[147] In Ireland, supporters of the Castle administration could assert that Dublin's vice-regal court filled the role of an impartial tempering legislator, while the Patriot party claimed only an autonomous parliament could do so. In the same year that Bolingbroke's *Patriot King* was first printed, a play was written and staged for the intended recipient of the political philosophy. This recipient was Frederick Lewis the Prince of Wales (1707-51) who had received tutelage from actor-orators James Quin and David Garrick, and was an enthusiastic patron of the English theatre.[148] Staged in 1740, the play presented Alfred the Great as a patriot king who heroically defended the English nation against the onslaught of Danish invasion. The play contributed to the formation of a British national identity as its rallying song 'Rule Britannia' became a popular national anthem.[149] It was along the lines of this nationalist narrative that both Francis Dobbs and Gorges Edmond Howard based their historical plays in the 1770s. These plays depicted the heroic morals of Gaelic Irish kings in their resistance to Danish invasion, though the writers' divergent opinions on what constituted as heroic provides insight into their opposing political philosophies.

In Howard's drama, King Malsechlin's victory over the 'foreign plunderers' is owed to the romantic hero Niall, who betrays his father's cause in favour of Malsechlin's because he has fallen in love with the king's daughter.[150] Although the Gaelic king is victorious, the play's conclusion concentrates on Malsechlin's blessing of a marriage between Niall and his daughter: 'Take – take thy wish, and with her take as freely'.[151] The opposite, however, is true of Dobbs's play. King Ceallachan wins the hand of his enemy's sister in his victory of the Danes, but the marriage is secondary to the focus of the play's conclusion. Dobbs takes care to present Ceallachan as a benevolent king, who does not seek to humiliate his enemies by stripping them of their rights and dignity after conquest: 'Elated with success, oppress them not; Nor basely give an insult to the fall'n'.[152] Thus, Howard leaves his audience with a message promoting unity under the rule of a paternalistic monarch, while Dobbs rallies his audience in defence of

[147] David Armitage, 'A patriot for whom? The afterlives of Bolingbroke's Patriot King', *Journal of British Studies*, xxxvi (1997), pp 397-418, p. 418.
[148] Matthew Kilburn, 'Frederick Lewis, prince of Wales', *ODNB*, https://www-oxforddnb-com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10140?rskey=yLQkq7&result=9 [accessed 19 Apr. 2020].
[149] Oliver Cox, 'Frederick, prince of Wales, and the first performance of 'Rule Britannia!'', *The Historical Journal*, lvi (2013), pp 931-54, p. 932.
[150] Gorges Edmond Howard, *The siege of Tamor. A tragedy* (Dublin, 1773), p. 65.
[151] Ibid., p. 72.
[152] Francis Dobbs, *The patriot king; or Irish chief. A tragedy. Performed at the theatre in Smock-Alley, Dublin* (Dublin, 1774), p. 78.

their rights and freedoms: 'Ye gen'rous Youths, this godlike hero view, His virtues copy, to his worth prove true'.[153]

The popular success of Dobbs's *Patriot King* is attested by the appearance of both its prologue and epilogue in *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* after it was produced at Smock Alley.[154] Additionally, in the advertisement for the printed edition of the play, Dobbs claimed that he had submitted it for publication because its performance met with great applause at Smock Alley theatre. Despite its Dublin success, Dobbs revealed that the play had been rejected by the managers of London's theatre-royals**:** 'the Public have, however, sometimes differed from the opinion even of a Mr Garrick or a Mr Colman'.[155] In contrast, Howard's *Siege of Tamor* was printed at the author's expense before being produced on the stage. Howard's success is more difficult to discern as he was a retained author within the viceregal court of Lord Lieutenant Townsend; consequently, his living was not dependent on commercial success. He did receive the praise of Charles Macklin who delivered his positive review of the play to Howard by letter, which was subsequently published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Macklin particularly praised the paternalistic nature of the tragic hero: 'the patriot and the father, the dearest relations in life'.[156] Despite this instance of positive reception upon being read in London, Toby Barnard posits that Howard's courtly patronage damaged his reputation within the Irish literary sphere.[157] Barnard highlights the unusual nature of Townsend's sustained patronage towards Howard since the Lord Lieutenants were 'regarded as unreliable supporters' of the Irish literary sphere in the second half of the eighteenth century.[158] Howard found a particularly harsh critic in fellow Castle-supporter Robert Jephson (1737-1803). A writer from Cork, Jephson denounced Howard as a mercenary whose use of patriotic rhetoric was for his own betterment rather than that of the nation: 'He writes, he hobbles, bows and leers, To gain a seat among the peers'.[159] As such, Jephson claimed Howard did not possess a true patriotic spirit: 'That powerful and sublime passion, by depriving man in some measure of his natural feelings, prompts him to love his country independently of himself'.[160] Howard's answer to

[153] Ibid., p. 79.
[154] *Walker's Hibernian Magazine*, Apr 1773.
[155] Francis Dobbs, 'Advertisement', *The patriot king*, p. 8.
[156] Charles Macklin, 'Original letter from Mr Macklin to Gorges Edmond Howard, esq.' (dated Feb. 1773), in *Gentleman's Magazine*, Aug 1788.
[157] Toby Barnard, 'The lord lieutenancy and cultural and literary patronage, *c.*1660-1780' in Peter Gray and Olwen Purdue (eds), *The Irish lord lieutenancy: c. 1541-1922* (Dublin, 2012), pp 97-113, p. 102.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Robert Jephson, *An epistle to Gorges Edmond Howard, esq. With notes explanatory, critical, and historical, by George Faulkner, esq. and alderman* (Dublin, 1771), p. 30.
[160] 'Anecdotes of patriotism', *Freeman's Journal*, 1 Nov. 1774.

Jephson's accusations suggested that the latter had 'the taste of the town' in his favour.[161] This is further supported by the Freeman's Journal satirical attitude towards Howard's courtly patronage: 'Let HOWARD try to prop a sinking cause'.[162] Thus, political affiliation had a significant impact on the reputations and reception of Irish authors within the Irish literary sphere and the Dublin theatre scene during the period.

The Dobbs and Howard plays constitute an unusual burst of creativity within the Dublin theatre scene at that time. This is likely because both playwrights were politically, rather than financially, motivated to write. As a result, they were not bound by the practical limitations of the Dublin theatrical marketplace. Most of Dublin's playwrights were actors looking to subsidise their income with short-lived productions. Even the enthusiastic patronage of a Lord Lieutenant did little for playwrights, despite the guarantee of a full theatre, as plays from the established canon were always requested at command performances.[163] As a result, the mere four pages Christopher Morash dedicates to the 1770s talk mostly of the Irish reception of works written by Irish playwrights for a London audience.[164] Desmond Slowey's study of the decade tellingly concentrates its energy on Howard and Dobbs.[165] It should be noted, however, that the lack of legislation allowed for the continued performance of ballad opera, which remained popular on Dublin stages despite its restriction in London. It was in this genre that Dublin-born actor John O'Keeffe (1747-1833) first emerged as a playwright in Dublin's theatre scene, though he quickly moved to London to write afterpieces, farces and comic operas for its more profitable audiences. In posthumously compiling his memoir, O'Keeffe's daughter wrote that in Dublin the financial 'rewards of literature were not at all commensurate with its social success'.[166] The lack of significant financial reward dissuaded writers, especially playwrights, from working in the city. The burst of dramatic activity in the early 1770s, therefore, indicates the extent to which Dublin's literary sphere could be incited by patriotic fervour during this period.

[161] Gorges Edmond Howard, *A candid appeal to the public, on the subject of a late epistle* (Dublin, 1771), p. 1.
[162] *Freeman's Journal*, 19 Mar 1772.
[163] Barnard, 'The lord lieutenancy and cultural and literary patronage' in Gray and Purdue (eds), *The Irish lord lieutenancy*, p. 106.
[164] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, pp 54-7.
[165] Slowey, *The radicalization of Irish drama*, pp 134-7.
[166] Adelaide O'Keeffe, 'Memoir' in *O'Keeffe's legacy to his daughter: being the poetical works of the late John O'Keeffe, esq., the dramatic author* (London, 1834), pp 17-42, p. 18.

'found nowhere but in the sympathetic feelings of the impartial and well-informed spectator': literary reputation and the oratorical public sphere: Richard Brinsley Sheridan[167]

Despite his strained relationship with his father, Richard Brinsley Sheridan appears to have supported the elocution movement that Thomas Sheridan had so heavily invested in throughout his career which spanned the 1740s to the 1770s. This movement continued to passionately promote speech as 'a higher and truer form of communication than writing'.[168] As has been shown, Thomas Sheridan believed that theatre ought to be considered the epitome of the public sphere. When Richard Brinsley Sheridan entered London's theatre scene in 1775, he appears to have held the same belief. Frank Donoghue has brilliantly illustrated how Sheridan's (hereafter referring to the son rather than the father) theatrical career was marred by an 'anxiety of audience', which made him wary of the theatre's growing intimacy with the print industry.[169] This anxiety arose from Sheridan's view of the commercialised literary sphere as an oppressive marketplace, in which writers experienced the 'loss of authorial control' over the reception and interpretation of their words.[170]

The most significant factor in Sheridan's garnering a literary reputation as well as his entry into polite society was the elopement scandal of his youth. In 1770 Sheridan joined the rest of his family in Bath, where his father had relocated them in the wake of his mother's death. While there, Sheridan secretly courted teenaged singer and socialite Elizabeth Linley (1754-92). Keen to get away from Linley's aggressive pursuer, Thomas Mathews, the two eloped to France in 1772 where they were married by a Catholic priest.[171] Likely embarrassed by his son's romantic escapade, Thomas Sheridan pursued the young couple and demanded their return to Bath. In England, however, their marriage was not legally valid as they were underage and they, therefore, required their parents' consent to marry. Mathews returned to his pursuit for Linley's legitimate hand, which led to a duel between the two suiters. Sheridan won on the first occasion, but Mathews's published accusation against Sheridan's gentility in the *Bath Chronicler* led to a second confrontation: 'He was informed that Mr Mathews had used his name

[167] Adam Smith, *The theory of moral sentiments; or, an essay towards an analysis of the principles by which men naturally judge concerning the conduct and character, first of their neighbours, and afterwards, of themselves. To which is added, a dissertation on the origin of languages* (London, 1759; 1853 edition), p. 429.
[168] Conrad Brunstrom, 'Thomas Sheridan and the evil ends of writing', *New Hibernia Review*, iii (1999), pp 130-42, p. 130.
[169] Frank Donoghue, 'Avoiding the 'cooler tribunal of the study': Richard Brinsley Sheridan's writer's block and late eighteenth-century print culture', *English Literary History*, lxviii (2001), pp 831-56, p. 852.
[170] Ibid., p. 831.
[171] Fintan O'Toole, *A traitor's kiss: the life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (London, 1997), p. 55.

disrespectfully'.[172] Accounts of this second duel were widely circulated in print, mostly owing to Linley's charming reputation: 'they had often called her a *siren*'.[173] Sheridan was vindicated in his claim to gentility by his willingness to risk his life in protection of that honour. James Kelly has noted the resurgence of duelling culture during the Romantic period, as the impassioned defence of one's honour again became favourable.[174] In this way, the published reports not only secured Sheridan's status as a gentleman but also earned him the reputation of a romantic hero. After the very public scandal of these events, Sheridan and Linley were legitimately married but received little financial support in setting up their household. Despite the economic potential of Linley's singing career, Sheridan requested that she withdraw from public performance to further protect his reputation. Instead, Sheridan took to the London literary scene and hastily began writing, out of economic necessity.

Sheridan's first self-authored introduction to the literary sphere was made through the theatre scene. *The Rivals* debuted at Covent Garden theatre in January of 1775. In a letter composed while the play was in rehearsal, Sheridan wrote about how he envisioned his dramatic piece to be 'the profitable affair' out of the various literary endeavours he claimed to be pursuing.[175] Joep Leerssen has suggested that tales of duelling were more to the taste of the gentry than the middle classes in London during this period.[176] This would have made Sheridan familiar to Goldsmith's class of 'great men', the arbiters of taste, before his first attempts to enter the literary sphere as a playwright. As such, he may have anticipated a ready audience for his first work.

The debut performance of *The Rivals* did not, however, meet the approval of the audience, and was 'generally disliked' for several reasons.[177] One criticism was that the play was deemed too long, especially for a comedic piece. Significantly, the main complaint was regarding the portrayal of the Irish character, Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Mr Lee (n.d.) was cast in the role of Sheridan's stage-Irishman, but the actor's drunken state during the performance was interpreted as an offensive portrayal of Irishness by the audience. This resulted in harsh commentary in the published reviews, as an anonymous critic in the *Morning Post* claimed to never have seen 'so villainous a portrait of an Irish Gentleman, permitted so openly to insult

[172] 'Anecdotes of the maid of Bath', *The London Chronicle*, Oct. 1772.
[173] Ibid.
[174] James Kelly, *'That damn'd thing called honour': duelling in Ireland, 1570-1860* (Cork, 1995), p. 95.
[175] Richard Brinsley Sheridan, 'Letter to Mr Linley, dated Nov 17th 1774' in Thomas Moore, *Memoirs of the life of the right honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, i (Cambridge, 1825), 121-4, 122.
[176] Leerssen, *Mere Irish and fíor-Ghael*, p. 144.
[177] Richard Brinsley Sheridan, 'Preface', *The rivals, a comedy, as it is acted at the theatre royal in Covent Garden* (Dublin, 1802 edition), pp 7-12, p. 10.

the country upon the boards of an English theatre'.[178] At this published criticism, Sheridan felt compelled to defend himself from 'the charge of intending any national reflection in the character'.[179] In a letter to the *Public Advertiser*, Sheridan appealed to the paper 'to preserve a strict Regard to Impartiality'.[180]

In response to the disapproval of the audience, Sheridan withdrew the play from performance in order to 'remove these imperfections'.[181] The revised version of the play featured Laurence Clinch (d.1812) instead of Lee in the role of O'Trigger. On this occasion, it was met with thunderous applause. By the time news of its success circulated, however, the theatre season had finished. This proved fortunate for Sheridan as he was able to secure payment for its continued performance in the following season. Seeking to cash in on all the potential of his success, he also submitted the play for publication. The popularity of the revised piece secured Sheridan's position as a playwright within the literary sphere. His experience with the print industry, however, appears to have negatively coloured his outlook on the literary sphere. Sheridan's second play *A School for Scandal* debuted to 'tumultuous' applause in 1777, yet the playwright declined to publish the work.[182]

Richard Brinsley Sheridan's earlier works bore the imprint of his mother's literary endeavours. Frances Sheridan (1724-66) left Ireland following her husband's withdrawal from the management of Smock Alley in 1758.[183] It was during this time that her literary focus transitioned from novels, notably her acclaimed *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), to the realm of playwriting. During the 1760s, her plays *The Discovery* (1763) and *The Dupe* (1764) found their place on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre. In her published memoirs, Sheridan's daughter Alicia Le Fanu (1753-1817) fondly recalls the 'humorous competition' between mother and son, when both had a play being produced in the same season. In 1775, when Richard Brinsley Sheridan's Duenna was enjoying a long run at Covent Garden, Garrick had the amusing idea of reviving The Discovery to attract audiences back to Drury Lane by the 'setting up of the mother against the son'.[184]

[178] *Morning Post*, 21 Jan. 1775.
[179] Sheridan, 'Preface', *The rivals*, p. 11.
[180] Cecil Price (ed.), *The letters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Oxford, 1966), I, p. 6.
[181] Ibid., p. 7.
[182] O'Toole, *A traitor's kiss*, p. 120.
[183] Jessica March, 'Sheridan, Frances (nee Chamberlaine), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, https://www.dib.ie/biography/sheridan-frances-nee-chamberlaine-a8037 [accessed 14 Sept. 2023].
[184] Alicia Le Fanu, *Memoirs of the life and writings of Mrs. Frances Sheridan. With remarks upon a late life of the right hon. R. B. Sheridan* (London, 1824), p. 224.

Frank Donohue has emphasised how Sheridan inherited his father's idealistic view of theatre as a living oratorical space, in contrast to the dead sphere of the print marketplace. The anonymity of the theatre's critics, however, caused the playwright to experience an 'anxiety of audience' for the rest of his career.[185] This anxiety appears to have been connected to the issue of taste and who should determine it within the public sphere. In his seminal work *The theory of moral sentiments*, Scottish philosopher Adam Smith (*c.*1723-90) posited that a 'precise and distinct measure' of merit 'can be found nowhere but in the sympathetic feelings of the impartial and well-informed spectator'.[186] As such, it was only an impartial spectator who should be considered as 'the great judge and arbiter' of taste within literary and political spheres.[187] The gentry increasingly thought that the anonymity afforded by the commercial literary sphere allowed too many partial and biased judges to influence public opinion.[188] As such, following his second theatrical success in 1777, Sheridan withdrew from the literary sphere for an extended period. Instead, he used the polite reputation he had acquired through the literary sphere and theatre scene, to move into the more contained oratorical environment of parliament.[189] Despite the increasingly politicised nature of the populace, Westminster's political sphere itself remained a space reserved for gentlemen. Thus, Sheridan's entrance into that political sphere, despite his Irishness, shows the success of the social Enlightenment that his father had so enthusiastically promoted. In this way, Sheridan's career encapsulated the progress from social to political Enlightenment in the 1770s, as he used the literary sphere to secure the status and reputation of a gentleman to gain admittance to the political sphere.

He only returned to playwrighting once again in 1799, when he penned an adaptation of a history play called *Pizarro*. David O'Shaughnessy's assessment of the Irish dramatist's use of the history play as 'a potent political genre' that allowed them to perform patriotic agendas while they 'announce themselves as serious participants in political debate', can be applied to Sheridan's *Pizarro*.[190] Extracts of Sheridan's triumphant anti-colonial speeches from the highly politicised trial of Warren Hastings appeared in the play.[191] Significantly, despite the trial having concluded in 1795, Sheridan only wrote the play in the aftermath of the Irish Rebellion

[185] Donoghue, 'Avoiding the 'cooler tribunal of the study", p. 852.
[186] Smith, *The theory of moral sentiments*, p. 429.
[187] Ibid., p. 385.
[188] Brunstrom and Kavanagh, 'Arthur Murphy and Florida Peat', p. 130.
[189] Donoghue, 'Avoiding the 'cooler tribunal of the study", p. 833.
[190] David O'Shaughnessy, 'Civility, patriotism and performance: *Cato* and the Irish history play', in *edem.*, *Ireland, Enlightenment and the English stage, 1740-1820* (Cambridge, 2019), pp 167-88, p. 169, p. 186.
[191] Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Pizarro; a tragedy, in five acts; as performed at the theatre royal in Drury Lane: taken from the German drama of Kotzebue; and adapted to the English stage* (London, 1799).

(1798). This suggests that Sheridan wished to use his anti-colonialist speeches from the trial as a means to subversively react to the Irish situation, which is supported by Fintan O'Toole's argument that *Pizarro* 'at its heart was an audacious defence of treason'.[192] Sheridan spared little expense to furnish the play's elaborate scenes and anticipated the profits it would bring in return.[193] Indeed, the play met with instant success and was quickly published. Sheridan did not provide a preface detailing his reasoning for publishing the play despite his previous anxiety relating to the print industry; perhaps he wished to capitalise on the moment before its political potency dissolved. Julie Stone Peters makes the compelling suggestion that Sheridan had come to rely on a 'broad identification of theatricality with publicness'.[194] O'Toole claims that Sheridan's use of his own public speeches in *Pizarro* served to allegorically position him as 'the real hero of the play whose primary purpose was to re-establish his own fame'.[195] In contrast, however, David Francis Taylor argues that rather than celebrating his oratorical fame, Sheridan uses *Pizarro* to despair over the 'powerlessness of the orator in his attempt to inscribe accountability within the apparatus of colonialism'.[196] The production's emphasis on the goriness of the play's torture scenes appear to have greatly overshadowed the memorability of the speeches in the response of the audience, which suggests that Taylor's assessment of *Pizarro*'s purpose is more accurate. At the same time, however, its great success did reestablish Sheridan's fame within the public sphere.

Conclusion

The commercialisation of London's theatre scene brought it into closer contact with the print industry from the 1690s. This gave many playwrights the opportunity to increase their audience and earnings, which in turn expanded drama's reach beyond its traditional courtly sphere. Some authors such as Oliver Goldsmith and Hugh Kelly used this commercial connection to their benefit. From the 1760s, however, a growing number of playwrights such as Charles Macklin and Richard Brinsley Sheridan were highly critical of it. The difficulty that prospective playwrights experienced in getting their plays produced on stage meant that professional authors who did find success in the theatre scene of this period were part of a small coterie. This, in turn, elevated their status within the public sphere. By the mid-1770s, the theatre sat at

[192] O'Toole, *A traitor's kiss*, p. 351.
[193] Cecil Price (ed.), *The letters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Oxford, 1966), II, p. 113.
[194] Julie Stone Peters, 'Theatricality, legalism and the scenography of suffering: the trial of Warren Hastings and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's Pizarro', *Law & Literature*, xviii (2013), pp 15-45, p. 21.
[195] O'Toole, *A traitor's kiss*, p. 351.
[196] David Francis Taylor, *Theatres of opposition: empire, revolution, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 126.

the apex between the literary and oratorical modes of the public sphere in both London and Dublin. This made it a contested space of communication, which court authorities would increasingly attempt to close off from public influence in the following decade.

Oliver Goldsmith's reputation suffered as a result of his failure to perform polite sociability through the oratorical mode of gentility. In writing, however, he was unique in his ability to embody the ideal of the impartial spectator within the public sphere throughout the course of his literary career. His Irish identity appears to have aided in his literary success, as he used his liminal position within London society to professionalise his authorial voice. Authorship underwent a process of professionalisation in London from the 1760s, which led to a series of literary property cases in the 1770s. The eloquently spoken word, however, appears to have retained its status as the primary signifier of gentility. This may have been due to the lack of anonymity associated with the oratorical sphere. The increased politicisation of the populace through the mass medium of print caused the conservative political milieu to retreat from the commercial public sphere into more closed spaces of controlled communication from the 1770s. As has been highlighted, several Irish literary figures used their status as a professional author to transition into these closed oratorical spheres. Arthur Murphy and Hugh Kelly joined the legal profession, while Edmund Burke and Richard Brinsley Sheridan gained influential positions within the British parliament. Their success attests to the socio-cultural currency of professionalised authorship when accompanied with an eloquent performance of gentility in London's public sphere. Irish playwrights faced several challenges in relation to legislation, commercial competition and public taste which made London a more appealing destination for literary pursuits than Dublin. In the early 1770s, however, the Dublin theatre scene witnessed an unusual burst of politically incensed dramatic production. The plays of Gorges Edmond Howard and Francis Dobbs were both infused with Patriotic rhetoric to appeal to the taste of a politicised public but their contrasting Enlightenment and Romantic interpretations of Irish history reveal the emerging schism between radical and conservative politics within the Dublin public sphere.

Chapter 7

'the very age and body of the time': the radicalisation and regulation of the public theatre scene, *c.*1779-1800[1]

As the eighteenth century progressed into its final decades, the theatre remained a uniquely contested space within the public sphere; it was an oratorical institution in which all social orders met to share in the same socio-cultural discourse. As such, there was a 'long-established association between theatre audiences and the body politic'.[2] However, the radicalisation of public opinion within that body politic threatened the breakdown of social order. In an attempt to manage this spiralling situation, the conservative political milieu began to consider legislative measures to regain control over public institutions. This chapter explores how the breakdown of social order prompted debates around the issue of stage regulation and theatrical authority in Dublin and London. It also examines the manner in which the radicalisation of Irish political opinion was performed culturally within the theatre scenes of both London and Dublin. The aim of this chapter is to observe how political enlightenment, and reactions to it, were culturally manifested in the contested space of the public theatre scene.

The chapter begins by examining how the expansion and radicalisation of Dublin's theatrical sphere was countered by unprecedented regulatory measures, in reaction to the breakdown of social order in the city. The context in which the Dublin Stage Act of 1786 was established is analysed. The focus then shifts to Dublin-born playwright John O'Keeffe as he moved between the theatre scenes of Dublin and London in the 1780s. O'Keeffe's career and works are afforded particular attention since he represented an intersection of the literary, social, and political spheres between London and Dublin during the last two decades of the eighteenth century. A pamphlet debate that erupted in 1787 following the opening of the Royalty Theatre in London and generated remonstrations against stringent theatrical regulations that had protected the court's control over the theatre sphere since 1737 is then discussed. The social status of actors and the political potency of what David Worrall has termed 'theatrical vocalization', is analysed through an examination of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's management of Drury Lane theatre.[3] The performance of radicalised and polarised political culture by spectators within the Dublin theatre scene during the 1790s, despite the legal regulations imposed on the city's

[1] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2 in Malone (ed.), *The plays and poems of William Shakespeare*, pp 280-86.
[2] Betsy Bolton, *Women, nationalism, and the romantic stage: theatre and politics in Britain, 1780-1800* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 11.
[3] Worrall, *The politics of romantic theatricality*, p. 12.

stages, is then discussed. Finally, the outbreak of regular rioting within the theatres during the 1790s is considered in its political context. By the close of the eighteenth century, despite increased regulation and stratification, public audiences were using theatre as a forum for the performance of political identities.

'the long smothered indignation of the public, seemed collected to a point': the breakdown of social order and reactionary regulation of the stage in 1780s Dublin[4]

By the close of the 1770s the problem of theatrical competition had reduced Dublin's Crow-Street theatre to such a destitute position that the actors were often left unpaid. Striking against this lack of remuneration, the troupe reportedly refused to perform on the night of a command performance, which forced the Lord Lieutenant to leave the theatre.[5] Furthermore, when finances ran low it appears that musicians were often cut from performances in attempts to reduce production costs. The *Freeman's Journal* reported such an instance in November 1779, when a Smock Alley audience became bored by the 'gloomy mortification of sitting to the end of the night's performance without music' and 'expressed their resentment by hisses, groans, throwing bottles, benches, candles, and stones upon the stage'.[6] Disaffection grew to the point that the actor-manager of Crow-Street theatre was forced to earn 'the approval of the audience' by climbing down from the stage between acts to play the violin in the deserted orchestra pit.[7] Dublin's theatre scene was somewhat revitalised, however, following the establishment of the Volunteer movement in 1778. Padhraig Higgins has noted the general theatricality of the movement's presence within the public sphere, as well as the Volunteers' astute manipulation of crowd sentiment to garner support.[8] The Dublin Volunteer corps took particular care to assert their authority within the city's theatre scene, where they were known to perform at benefit nights and issue command performances. Gillian Russell has demonstrated how ingrained theatricality was in the cultural life of the British military; as such, the interest and involvement of the Volunteers in the Irish theatre scene is unsurprising.[9] At the height of tensions over the Free Trade debate in 1779, William Fitzgerald the second duke of Leinster (1749-1804), entered the theatre-royal with a procession of Volunteers that escorted him to his box in the customary manner of the Lord Lieutenant. This move was reportedly 'regarded as a deliberate

[4] *Volunteer's Journal*, 12 July 1784.
[5] Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin*, ii, 203.
[6] 'To the committee for conducting the free press', *Freeman's Journal*, 30 Nov. 1779.
[7] Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin*, ii, 205.
[8] Higgins, *A nation of politicians*, p. 106.
[9] Gillian Russell, *The theatres of war: performance, politics and society, 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1995).

attempt to upstage the viceroy' as 'local notables' such as the duke of Leinster became key patrons of Dublin's theatre-royals during the 1770s and 1780s.[10]

In its unregulated state, the court retained the authority to grant patents for theatre-royals while the city corporation claimed the right to license stages within its municipal jurisdiction. As such, by 1779, Dublin had four licensed theatre spaces: Crow Street and Smock Alley were playhouses operating under royal patents, while Capel Street and Fishamble Street were guild halls that held city licenses to provide public entertainments. The lack of regulation meant that all these stages were at liberty to provide similar productions, which put them in direct and unsustainable competition. The obvious solution was to reinstate a theatrical monopoly, such as that held by Thomas Sheridan in the mid-century period, to eliminate financial competition and allow a single collective company to thrive. This did not come about, however, and as W.N. Osborough has shown, Dublin's court and corporation authorities were in constant competition for control over the theatre scene during the eighteenth century.[11] Thus, the crux of the issue with regulation was the question of who would be granted the authority to control the public institution if it were monopolised.

In December 1779 Robert Jephson and George Colman (1762-1836) attempted to establish a theatrical monopoly in Dublin by presenting a parliamentary act 'For regulating the stage in the city and county of Dublin'.[12] The issue was debated in parliament to the extent that a committee was 'appointed to enquire into the state and management of the Theatres'.[13] However, notwithstanding the financial challenge posed by theatrical competition in Dublin, the depressed state of the theatre scene was dismissively 'attributed to the *distresses* of the *times*' as Ireland had fallen into economic recession.[14] At the same time, raising this bill in parliament had prompted several petitions against its enactment from the current theatrical shareholders, the city corporation and the 'citizens of Dublin', who reportedly 'declared [it] would be highly derogatory to the rights and privileges of the city'.[15] The proposed bill sought to place a theatrical monopoly in the hands of Jephson and Colman, both of whom appear to have supported the Castle administration: the former figure was a courtly playwright and the latter was a theatre-manager from London. A correspondent to the *Hibernian Journal* raged

[10] Powell, *The politics of consumption*, p. 106; Barnard, 'The lord lieutenancy and cultural and literary patronage' in Gray and Purdue (eds), *The Irish lord lieutenancy*, p. 103.
[11] Osborough, *The Irish stage*, p. 49.
[12] 'For regulating the stage in the city and county of Dublin' (1779), *Irish Legislation Database*, https://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display_bill&id=3760 [accessed 30 June 2022].
[13] 'Parliamentary intelligence: house of commons', *Freeman's Journal*, 7 Dec. 1779.
[14] 'To the committee for conducting the free press', *Freeman's Journal*, 4 Dec 1779.
[15] Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin*, ii, 201-2.

against giving exclusive control of the city's theatre scene to an Englishman and 'an upstart minion of the Castle, who has wriggled himself into Parliament by the Spaniel Arts of Adulation'.[16] The same correspondent went on to claim that granting such a bill would be unpatriotic and show the 'measure of tyranny' present in a kingdom that was pushing for parliamentary independence on the one hand, and censoring its public stages on the other.[17] The numerous petitions made against the bill appear to have been the reason it was not enacted. The issue of theatre regulation, however, would soon be revisited as the breakdown of social order accelerated in the wake of the granting of parliamentary independence in 1782.

As indicated by the displeasure audiences demonstrated at its absence, music was an integral part of Dublin's theatrical culture, but it was also a highly politicised aspect of performances. In July 1784, music was used as a form of theatrical protest when the Dublin public sought to make its displeasure known to the political elite about the increased presence of British militia in the city after the conclusion of the American War of Independence (1775-83). The *Volunteer's Journal* reported that 'Upon the arrival of the lord lieutenant at the theatre, nothing could equal the confusion which arose throughout every part of the house, the long smothered indignation of the public, seemed collected to a point'.[18] When the curtain rose, a crowd in the gallery 'cried out for the volunteer's march, which on his Excellency's entrance was played accordingly'.[19] As the drama began, there was such an eruption of noise that the Smock Alley manager appeared on stage to present himself as 'the servant of the public' in an attempt to calm the audience, but once he left the stage, a 'theatrical tumult' erupted.[20] The crowd became incensed to 'the extremest lengths of brutality and outrage' to the point that the Lord Lieutenant fled the theatre under their pursuit, with 'the former music attending him to the castle'.[21]

This incident did not occur in isolation, as Jim Smyth has detailed how 'Dublin during 1784 witnessed a near-continuous sequence of street disorders'.[22] These 'disorders' were often violent in nature; reports of them caused English painter Joshua Reynolds to cancel a trip to Dublin, after English actress Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) fled the city 'in a terrible fright'.[23] The violence was taken a step too far, however, when the *Volunteer's Journal* made explicit

[16] *Hibernian Journal*, 17 Nov. 1779.
[17] Ibid.
[18] *Volunteer's Journal*, 12 July 1784.
[19] *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1784.
[20] Ibid; *Freeman's Journal*, 10 July 1784.
[21] *Freeman's Journal*, 10 July 1784; *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1784.
[22] Jim Smyth, *The men of no property: Irish radicals and popular politics in the late eighteenth century* (London, 1992), p. 135.
[23] 'Reynolds to Rutland', 24 Sept. 1784, extract in Smyth, *The men of no property*, p. 135.

threats against named members of the political elite on 5 April 1784. The Irish parliament, now able to take swift action as a result of their legislative independence, enacted a Press Bill: 'To secure the liberty of the press by preventing abuses arising from the publication of traitorous, seditious, false and slanderous libels'.[24] The ensuing arrest of printers led the *Freeman's Journal* to switch from its long-established position as an opposition paper to one that supported the government agenda.[25] This regulation of the press was viewed as an unfavourable measure of censorship against public opinion: 'the precedent of tampering with what should be held so sacred as the liberty of the press, is sufficient reason, why every man who values the constitution of this country, should in the first instance, oppose a bill of such a pernicious principle'.[26] Within this context, the insistence of the theatre audience in singing the 'Volunteer's March' in the presence of the Lord Lieutenant, can be viewed as an act of protest against the enactment of the Press Bill which had specifically targeted printers of the *Volunteer's Journal*. It is telling, however, that the Dublin public waited until the summer season, when the offending parliament was no longer in session, to express their displeasure within the theatre scene. The unregulated London press reported the incident alongside news of the radicalised political sphere, with the *Gentleman's Magazine* declaring: 'Dublin is at present the theatre of riot and licentious delinquency'.[27]

The Dublin theatre scene continued to reflect the taste of the politicised Dublin crowd when in December 1784, Robert Owenson (1744-1812) acquired the music hall at Fishamble Street and opened it as the City Theatre.[28] Owenson was a Catholic of Gaelic background from Mayo; his management of an institute of the public sphere indicates the level to which political culture had radicalised in the period. The actor-manager had become renowned for his 'singing of Irish songs, being master of the Irish language, as also a perfect musician', which made him especially popular with 'the admirers of our national melody'.[29] In addition to the experience of a position in Dublin's Crow Street troupe, he appears to have briefly performed on London stages, as well as those of the expanding provincial Irish circuit.[30] One of his most favoured parts was that of the Gaelic servant Teague, in Robert Howard's *The Committee* (1663), which

[24] 'To secure the liberty of the press by preventing abuses arising from the publication of traitorous, seditious, false and slanderous libels' (1784), *Irish Legislation Database*, https://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display_bill&id=3868 [accessed 30 June 2022].
[25] Brian Inglis, *The freedom of the press in Ireland, 1784-1841* (London, 1975), p. 22.
[26] 'To the right honourable John Foster', *Volunteer's Journal*, 12 Apr. 1784.
[27] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Aug. 1784.
[28] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 67.
[29] Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin*, ii, 203.
[30] Smith Clark, *The Irish stage in the county towns*, p. 11.

he regularly embellished 'with an Irish planxty' on his benefit nights.[31] When Owenson opened his Dublin theatre, he made Irish music a dominant feature of his repertoire, while at the same time attempting to claim an Irish dramatic canon by producing only the plays of Irish playwrights, even if most of the said plays had been written for a London audience. The opening night saw a performance of Hugh Kelly's *The school for wives*, which was preceded by a planned rendition of the 'Volunteer's March'; the Dublin Volunteers were patrons of the theatre and attended in uniform.[32] Despite this patronage, Owenson's theatre ran into financial difficulty, likely as a result of the manager's appeal to the taste of gallery audiences, rather than the gentry in expensive boxes who would keep the company employed through the custom of command performances. The City Theatre was a radical cultural project within the Dublin public sphere, but new legislation designed to halt such enterprises forced its closure in 1786.

The parliament session of 1785-6 was primarily concerned with the issue of social order and the question of how to maintain it in favour of the political elite. Much of the discussion concerned a drastically reformative Police Bill; in the same session, however, a bill was again presented 'For regulating the stage in the city and county of Dublin'.[33] Not surprisingly, the strongest opposition to the bill came from Dublin Corporation; they petitioned against its enactment by defending the Lord Mayor's established right to license entertainments within the city, while also arguing that it would be 'dangerous to put such a power in the hands of the Crown, as it might at will grant or disannul patents and thereby keep managers under its controul'.[34] These arguments had, however, been anticipated after the debate of 1779 prompted by Jephson and Colman's attempt to establish a theatrical monopoly in Dublin, and the bill was enacted relatively quickly. The Dublin Stage Act of 1786 was more comprehensive than the English Licensing Act of 1737, as it extended regulation to all theatrical genres rather than just spoken drama:

> no person or persons shall, for hire, gain, or any kind of reward whatsoever or however, act, represent, or perform, or cause to be acted, represented, or performed, any interlude, tragedy, comedy, prelude, opera, burletta, play, farce, pantomime, or any part or parts therein, on any stage, or in any theatre, house, booth, tent, or other place within the said city of Dublin.[35]

[31] Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin*, ii, 203.
[32] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 67.
[33] 'For regulating the stage in the city and county of Dublin' (1786), *Irish Legislation Database*, https://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display_bill&id=3992 [accessed 19 June 2022].
[34] Osborough, *The Irish stage*, pp 52-4, p. 53.
[35] 'An act for regulating the stage in the city and county of Dublin' (1786), printed in Anon., *Statutes passed in the parliaments held in Ireland: 1786-1788* (London, 1798), pp 240-2, p. 241.

The question of why the act concentrated on Dublin rather than regulating stages throughout Ireland may be answered by Jim Smyth's observation that the city's public sphere was a space in which 'the crowd came face-to-face with the ruling elite'.[36] While Osborough has noted that public comment on the act was 'relatively sparse', he does not draw the connection to the earlier Press Bill, which had effectively debilitated the opposition press.[37] This regulatory measure demonstrates the state of politicisation of the Dublin theatre scene during this period, as parliament sought to contain the radicalised institution of public opinion through the censorship of the cultural media that influenced it most; first the press, and then the stage.

When the Dublin theatrical monopoly was restored, it was placed in the hands of the Smock Alley manager Richard Daly (1758-1813). An Anglican from Galway, Daly had trained as an actor in London under the tutelage of Charles Macklin.[38] Like Owenson, Daly also had experience managing theatre companies along the provincial Irish circuit. In the wake of the 1784 riot, he began courting favour with the Castle administration in the hope of securing his theatre patent; at that time parliament had just made an unprecedented move to censor the press, which likely caused the theatre manager to doubt the continued liberty of the stage. At the passing of the Stage Act of 1786, Daly was rewarded with the title of Master of the Revels, along with an exclusive theatre-royal patent for Smock Alley, though he soon moved his company to the vacated Crow Street playhouse.[39] Although experienced and well-connected, Daly was not popular with the Dublin public; in 1789 he brought the proprietor of the *Dublin Evening Post* to court for publishing slanderous comments against his character.[40] Thus, Daly not only managed to make the Stage Act work in his favour, he also made active use of the Press Bill to secure his monopolised hold over Dublin's regulated theatre scene. Although the Dublin theatre scene had been legally regulated for the first time since the Restoration, the spectators would continue to perform their political affiliations through violence and music.

[36] Smyth, *The men of no property*, p. 138.
[37] Osborough, *The Irish stage*, p. 59.
[38] Patrick Geoghegan, 'Daly, Richard', *DIB*, https://www.dib.ie/biography/daly-richard-a2387 [accessed 4 July 2022].
[39] Ibid.
[40] Anon., *The trial of John Magee, for printing and publishing a slanderous and defamatory libel, against Richard Daly, esq.* (Dublin, 1790).

‘made up of Irish characters and customs’: John O’Keeffe and the social staging of Irishness in 1780s London[41]

Dublin-born Catholic John O’Keeffe was a touring actor who regularly moved along Ireland’s theatre circuit from the 1760s.[42] During the tumultuous theatre season of 1779, he played at Dublin’s Crow Street theatre alongside Owenson.[43] O’Keeffe’s most notable role was that of Tony Lumpkin in Oliver Goldsmith’s *She stoops to conquer*. The actor sought to capitalise on this success by writing an accompanying afterpiece in which he would perform the titular character. This suggests that, as was the case with Macklin, O’Keeffe was primarily concerned with his acting career when he first became a playwright. O’Keeffe cleverly adapted his *Tony Lumpkin* comedies in accordance with local humour and taste for audiences of the Dublin and Cork theatre scenes during the early 1770s. Helen Burke has highlighted how such ‘locally inflected pieces allowed O’Keeffe to bring native artists and traditional Irish culture onto the stage’.[44] This local inflection is indicative of an emerging performance of cultural nationalism on the Irish stage, as the vogue for pastoral comedy ‘celebrated the customary, the regional, the particularist, at the expense of the new, the cosmopolitan, the universal’.[45] In a similar manner to how Goldsmith drew on the fashionable drama of his Irish predecessor George Farquhar, O’Keeffe used Goldsmith’s popular playwrighting to his advantage. This tactic appears to have been rewarded, as O’Keeffe was invited to London’s theatre scene by Haymarket manager George Colman.[46] In 1778 the actor-playwright produced a further adaptation of his *Tony Lumpkin* afterpiece for Colman’s summer season. The prologue for a later production of *Tony Lumpkin* at the prestigious Covent Garden theatre, however, begged the polite winter audience not to take the farce seriously: ‘If there’s a critic here, who hates what’s LOW, We humbly beg the gentleman would go’.[47] The play’s closing dialogue reinforces O’Keeffe’s appeal to the base entertainment of low comedy: ‘Laughter! and what’s pleasanter than a laugh? By jingo, a laugh is all I wanted’.[48] As his standing in London’s public

[41] O’Keeffe, *Recollections*, p. 49.
[42] Bridget Hourican and Patrick Geoghegan, ‘O’Keeffe (O’Keefe), John’, *DIB*, https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006823.v1 [accessed 5 Aug. 2022].
[43] *Freemans Journal*, 18 Dec. 1779.
[44] Burke, *Riotous performances*, p. 262.
[45] Whelan, *The tree of liberty*, p. 61.
[46] David O’Shaughnessy, “Rip’ning buds in Freedom’s field’: staging Irish improvement in the 1780s’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, xxxviii (2015), pp 541-54, p. 545.
[47] ‘Prologue. Written by George Colman. Spoken by Mr Palmer’ in John O’Keeffe, *Tony Lumpkin in town: a farce* (London, 1780), p. iii.
[48] O’Keeffe, *Tony Lumpkin in town*, p. 37.

sphere grew during the 1780s, however, O'Keeffe's drama became less trivial and began to offer comedic commentary on the performance of Irish political culture.

O'Keeffe's pastoral comedy *The Shamrock; or revels on Saint Patrick's day* (1783) was 'made up of Irish characters and customs, pipers, and fairies, foot-ball players, and gay hurlers'.[49] Helen Burke has shown that these elements of Gaelic entertainment (whether music, sport or folklore) were interpreted as spectacles of 'eccentricity' by the London audience.[50] This interpretation of the afterpiece as a novelty act dismissed its commentary on the contemporary Irish political situation. *The Shamrock* was advertised as being rehearsed at London's Covent Garden theatre 'For the first Time of Representation' in March 1783.[51] In that same month, the Illustrious Order of Saint Patrick was established in Dublin as an exclusive courtly celebration of Irish parliamentary independence. On reporting the public parade planned for the Order's installation, the *Freeman's Journal* described the spectacle as 'an attempt to attract the public curiosity, by laudably everting their attention to the primitive glory and splendour of this nation'.[52] O'Keeffe claims that *The Shamrock* was written 'from a wish of contributing my small share of honours to the installation of the Order of St. Patrick'.[53] Despite this dedication, the play's dialogue mocks the planned spectacle; when the peasant chorus asks the protagonist 'what kind of a thing' is to be celebrated, he limply replies: 'Why, the Installation is – is – just as if there was to be an Installation'.[54] O'Shaughnessy astutely highlights the fact that this is the only line of the play spoken by 'All' the chorus.[55] This is suggestive of an anxiety surrounding social order and what position the elite order will hold within Ireland's newly independent political sphere.

The Shamrock received the approval of the London public, but O'Keeffe seemed to understand that a play enjoyed for its supposed novelty could only hold audiences for a limited period. As such, for the theatrical season following its debut, the playwright engaged in a considerable rewrite of *The Shamrock*, to create *The Poor Soldier* (1783). This adaptation replaced the whimsical pastoral scenes of the earlier play with a political and military context.[56] In *The Poor*

[49] O'Keeffe, *Recollections*, p. 49.
[50] Helen Burke, 'Worlding the village: John O'Keeffe's 'Excentric' pastorals', in O'Shaughnessy (ed.), *Ireland, enlightenment, and the English stage*, pp 226-48, p. 226.
[51] *Freeman's Journal*, 25 Mar. 1783.
[52] *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Mar. 1783.
[53] O'Keeffe, *Recollections*, p. 49.
[54] John O'Keeffe, *The Shamrock; or revels on Saint Patrick's day* (London, 1783) extract in O'Shaughnessy, "Rip'ning buds in Freedom's field", p. 547.
[55] Ibid.
[56] John O'Keeffe, *The poor soldier, a comic opera. As it is acted at the theatres royal, London and Dublin* (London, 1797).

Soldier, the Irish protagonist was 'an honest yet suitably deferential Irish soldier' who made a performance of his loyalty to his English superior.[57] This characterisation of Irishness fit the description of a recognisable stage-Irish figure and proved popular with the London audience. Despite extensive changes to the plays characterisation and setting, the musical aspect of O'Keeffe's original drama remained largely unchanged. O'Keeffe claims that at the close of *The Shamrock*, the Covent Garden manager 'regretted that the fine Irish airs of Carolan, which I had selected, and which had been taken down from my voice by the composer, (airs never before heard by an English public,) should be lost'.[58] The debt the original play had to these airs is attested by the publication, not of the play, but of its music after the close of its debut season.[59] The prominent iconography of O'Carolan as an exemplar of Irish national character during the late eighteenth century denotes the start of O'Keeffe's literary engagement with political radicalism and cultural nationalism in an Irish context.

O'Keeffe's interest in the Irish public sphere is attested by his active involvement in it, while working in the theatre scenes of both Dublin and London. As a Catholic, the playwright was denied entry into the official sphere of politics, but institutions of the social Enlightenment and its associational culture offered opportunity for mobility and status within the public sphere. In Dublin, O'Keeffe had joined the ranks of the Volunteer Corps and participated in their dramatic spectacles of public politicisation during the late 1770s.[60] He also belonged to the same Dublin masonic lodge as fellow Irish actor-playwright Charles Macklin.[61] In London, he maintained his connections with Macklin who, in the advanced stages of a successful career, positioned himself at the centre of a growing Irish theatrical network in London. Recent scholarship by Craig Bailey and David O'Shaughnessy has shown how much of this networking happened through the Benevolent Society of Saint Patrick. O'Shaughnessy has argued that this society was established 'as a polite but firm patriotic riposte' to the instillation of the Illustrious Order of St Patrick.[62]

The Benevolent Society of Saint Patrick (BSSP) was established in 1783 as a charitable organisation to alleviate the suffering of poor Irish living in London. Its membership aimed to be inclusive of all Irish citizens, regardless of class, religious affiliation or political

[57] O'Shaughnessy, "Rip'ning buds in Freedom's field", p. 548.
[58] O'Keeffe, *Recollections*, p. 70.
[59] Anon., *Songs, duetts, trios etc. in the new musical entertainment called the shamrock; or, St Patrick's day. As performed at the theatre-royal, Covent Garden* (London, 1783).
[60] *Freemans Journal*, 18 Dec. 1779.
[61] O'Keeffe, *Recollections*, p. 282.
[62] O'Shaughnessy, "Rip'ning buds in Freedom's field", p. 542.

persuasion.[63] This strict non-partisan stance likely made it difficult for the society to operate through traditional charitable institutions like churches, and instead, it sought to attract members through its social network with the elite and celebrities of the London-Irish community.[64] Not having a connection to a particular religious community meant that the BSSP could not perform the public spectacle of marching between supporting institutional buildings, as was general charitable practice.[65] Instead, Irish charitable performance drew on diasporic connections to the public spectacle of popular entertainment in the city. As such, the society's membership grew to include a network of Irish actors, singers, and playwrights. O'Keeffe points to the literary and dramatic coterie he socialised with through BSSP events in his memoirs: 'At his hospitable table I have at different times met Macklin, Counseller Mac Nally, my good friend Mr. O'Bryen, Captain (and Counseller, for he was both) Robinson (who being a Dublin man, sung very good Irish songs,) Dr. Kennedy, of Great Queen-street and many other literary characters'.[66] Macklin was at the heart of this network, serving as a governor of the charity from 1784 until his death in 1797.[67] Just as Samuel Johnson was known to support Goldsmith's productions, Macklin offered patronage to O'Keeffe through public promotion on opening nights of new plays: 'Macklin was in the pit the first night, and at the dropping of the curtain' he proclaimed his approval for the audience about him to hear.[68] This indicates the extent to which Macklin's theatrical career afforded him opportunities for social mobility, as he became an arbiter of taste within London's public sphere.

In 1787 the BSSP was afforded royal patronage which not only increased its funding but also added an extra 'layer of respectability to the society', thus encouraging the elite to partake in its social events.[69] Additionally, the society encouraged a culture of impartiality which was a mark of gentility by the 1770s. O'Shaughnessy has shown how Irish-born political satirist Dennis O'Bryen (*c.*1755-1832) became a playwright in order to capitalise on the elite connections he established through the BSSP.[70] Active involvement in the society became an aspect of the performance of gentility within the London-Irish community: 'it could not *make*

[63] Anon., *The rules and regulations on the institution of the benevolent society of St Patrick* (London, 1785).
[64] Craig Bailey, 'From innovation to emulation: London's benevolent society of St Patrick, 1783-1800', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/Iris an dá chultúr*, xxvii (2012), pp 162-84, p. 164.
[65] Sarah Lloyd, 'Pleasing spectacles and elegant dinners: conviviality, benevolence, and charity anniversaries in eighteenth-century London', *Journal of British Studies*, xli (2002), pp 23-57.
[66] O'Keeffe, *Recollections*, pp 83-4.
[67] Bailey, 'From innovation to emulation', p. 176.
[68] O'Keeffe, *Recollections*, pp 4-5.
[69] Bailey, 'From innovation to emulation', p. 173.
[70] David O'Shaughnessy, 'Making a play for patronage: Dennis O'Bryen's *A friend in need is a friend indeed* (1783)', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, xxxix (2015), pp 183-211.

one a gentleman, but it did offer the possibility of demonstrating to those that mattered that one could behave *like* a gentleman'.[71] Irish statesman Edmund Burke attracted criticism for his lack of participation in the society.[72] Irish playwright and theatre-manager Richard Brinsley Sheridan, however, had his character questioned in the London newspapers when he donated a large sum to the charity despite his theatre-royal being in debt.[73] Despite being celebrated for his political position, Sheridan's theatrical management was routinely criticised by the London public. In his memoirs, actor John Philip Kemble (1757-1823) noted how Sheridan's desk housed 'piles of long forgotten tragedies and comedies, which he had promised to consider, and never opened'.[74] However, Kemble also reveals that any social connection to the manager would have been advantageous: 'Sheridan's habit was to keep his visitors distributed variously, according to their rank and intimacy with him'.[75] The social network of the BSSP may have provided this vital 'intimacy' for hopeful Irish playwrights looking to get their work staged at Drury Lane.

The early stage of O'Keeffe's playwriting career indicates how the taste for local inflection in Irish theatres was translated to novelty for London audiences. Over the course of his London career, however, O'Keeffe's dramas developed to comment on the evolving Irish political situation during the 1780s. O'Keeffe was involved in associational culture in both cities, through which he maintained a network of prominent Irish theatrical figures. The BSSP offered opportunities for the social performance of Irishness within the London public sphere, while it presented the opportunity for its Irish members to perform gentility through sociability, charity and impartiality.

'the citizens shall first see what they recommend': the legality of the Royalty Theatre and the stratification of the London theatre scene[76]

The Licensing Act of 1737 restored the duopoly of the theatre-royals (Covent Garden and Drury Lane) within London's theatre-scene. This regulatory move worked to curb oppositional theatre enterprises for several decades. The introduction of the Disorderly Houses Act (1751), however, expanded the theatre scene again as London's population grew rapidly. Additionally,

[71] O'Shaughnessy, "Rip'ning buds in Freedom's field", p. 543.
[72] Bailey, 'From innovation to emulation', p. 180.
[73] *The Times*, 24 Mar. 1789.
[74] John Philip Kemble and James Boaden (ed.), *Memoirs of the life of John Philip Kemble, esq: including a history of the stage, from the time of Garrick to the present period*, i (New York, 1825), 116.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Isaac Jackson, *Royal and royalty theatres. Letter to Phillips Glover, esq. of Wispington, in Lincolnshire* (London, 1787), p. 45.

in 1766 English comedian and playwright Samuel Foote (1720-77) secured a license for the performance of spoken drama at his Haymarket Theatre, but was only permitted to mount productions during the less fashionable summer season.[77] In the same decade, a new dramatic genre emerged, known as burletta, which was not accounted for in the Licensing Act and, therefore, managed to subvert it; allowing illegitimate theatres to flourish throughout the city. By the 1780s burletta was 'a primary feature of the period's stage drama', in both the legitimate patented theatres and their new illegitimate competitors.[78] The divide between legitimate and illegitimate theatre served to stratify London's growing theatre-going public along class lines, so that 'for most people spoken drama was the preserve of an elite', while lower class audiences could only afford access to musical or miming entertainments.[79] The auditory aspect of these productions was of prime importance, as it was through the deliberate use of music and silence that illegitimate theatres avoided penalisation under the Licensing Act, which only legislated against spoken drama. It is this reality that drew David Worrall to suggest that the principal target of English theatrical regulation was not plays or playhouses, but rather, 'theatrical vocalization'.[80] This assertion, in turn, suggests that it was the actor, and their use of voice on stage, that was of prime legal importance. This led to an effective 'privatization of dramatic speech' in London, despite the fact that the city's public theatre scene was expanding.[81] The opening of a new theatre in 1787, however, would challenge the theatre-royals duopoly over dramatic speech and prompt public debate over issues of genre, class, professionalisation, and politics within the theatre scene. Among this debate was the voice of Dublin-born newspaper editor and dramatist Isaac Jackman (*c.*1740-1831) who wrote in support of the Royalty Theatre's challenge to theatrical censorship.

The Royalty Theatre was established by English actor John Palmer (1744-98) in June 1787. Situated on Well Street in the east end of London, its location was of major importance, as the newly erected playhouse was miles from the traditional theatre scene in the west end of the city. This new theatre had been built by subscription, as the local magistrates sought to provide a refined and civilised form of entertainment for the inhabitants of the growing working-class

[77] Anon., *Considerations upon how far the present winter and summer theatres can be affected by the application to parliament for an act to enable his majesty to license, as a playhouse for the summer season, the royalty theatre, in well-street, in the liberty of the tower hamlets* (London, 1794), p. 11.
[78] Worrall, *The politics of romantic theatricality*, p. 11.
[79] Ibid., p. 5.
[80] Ibid., p. 12.
[81] David Worrall, *Theatric revolution: drama, censorship and romantic period subcultures, 1773-1832* (Oxford, 2006), p. 9.

area.[82] These magistrates, through a legal loophole, also facilitated the granting of a city licence for musical and pantomime performances. From the announcement of its opening, Palmer's Royalty Theatre came under fire from court authorities and the managers of the patented theatre-royals. George Colman, manager of the summer Haymarket theatre, published a pamphlet expressing his opposition to Palmer's enterprise and the plebeian audience it would attract.[83] This pamphlet was answered by several others, who rallied to defend the Royalty Theatre and its position in London's east end.

Palmer's theatrical enterprise had enraged the court and the royal patent holders on two grounds. First, he had privately sought his theatre licence from local magistrates who were not accustomed to theatrical regulation: 'His having secured the consent of the Magistrates, (who by the bye are the very people whose subscriptions built the house)'.[84] Palmer reportedly declared that he would 'not apply for an act of parliament through any other medium than the city of London, and the citizens shall first see what they recommend'.[85] This was an overt political statement in favour of the city corporation's authority over that of the court within the public theatre scene. The second offence was his bold attempt to avoid persecution by having dramatic performances staged as charity events: 'The first night of opening he performed the play of *As you like it*, for a charity, but not for *hire, gain, or reward*; so that of course he did not offend against any law now in being for regulation of our stage'.[86] The charities selected were those that served local concerns, which was a deliberate marketing tool employed to ingratiate the theatre with the local inhabitants of the area and attract patrons to support its continuance. Palmer's choice of *As you like it* was also likely to have been deliberate, as the theatre-royals closely guarded their exclusive right to stage the highly politicised 'national drama' of Shakespeare.[87] In a similar manner to how the Volunteer Corps had taken to the Dublin stage in uniform, Palmer welcomed local clubs and societies onto his east London stage. Unlike the high-brow societies and military corps that graced the stages of west London's theatre-royals, the Royalty Theatre played host to artisan and trade groups, which reflected the milieu of its plebeian audience.[88] The spectacle of procession and parading was increasingly becoming a feature of late eighteenth century theatre, as the politicised public sought to have

[82] George Colman, *A very plain state of the case, or the Royalty Theatre versus the Theatres Royal. Respectfully inscribed to the right honourable the Earl of Salisbury, Lord Chamberlain of England* (London, 1787), p. 4.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., p. 4.
[85] Jackson, *Royal and royalty theatres*, p. 45.
[86] Ibid., p. 22.
[87] Worrall, *The politics of romantic theatricality*, p. 6.
[88] Worrall, *Theatric revolution*, p. 89.

their presence seen on the nation's stages; the regulated state of public speech undoubtedly increased the significance of the visual aspect of this political presence. A French visitor to a London Jacobin society's meeting in the 1790s commented on his surprise at the good dress of the radicalised English working class compared to that of their French role models; this shows the extent to which the performance of gentility pervaded the British political enlightenment on all levels of society.[89]

In assessing the ideological significance of class relations and radicalism in the late eighteenth century, David Nicholls points to the English citizens' concern with 'preserving the old system of moral economy rather than at providing a new and alternative critique of political economy'.[90] This emphasis on moral economy can be seen in the arguments made in favour of the Royalty Theatre's offering of spoken drama to east London's plebeian population; the enterprise was framed as an institution for social and cultural refinement by its supporters: 'Look but a Moment, my Lord, on the happy Effect it would have on the lower Order of the Community; those who now resort to the Alehouse, and drink till they disgrace Human Nature, would then spend their Shilling at the Theatre, and sit like rational Beings, at a Performance, suited to their natural Dignity, and calculated to impress their Understandings'.[91]

The attention given to the theatre's moral economy also led to discussion of the invented line between a professional actor and a performing vagabond. This line was legally determined by whether an actor was performing under a royal patent; if an individual were to perform 'without authority by virtue of letters patent from His Majesty' they 'shall be deemed to be a rogue and a vagabond … and shall be liable and subject to all such penalties and punishments'.[92] Traditionally, as this study has shown, actors were servants of the court and could not be arrested by public authorities without permission of the monarch or Master of the Revels. An often-unacknowledged consequence of the Licencing Act of 1737, however, is that it forged this tradition into law and expanded it by explicitly calling for the arrest of any non-liveried actor. In July 1787, while Palmer was embroiled in legal debates with the proprietors of the

[89] Janet Polasky, *Revolutions without boarders: the call to liberty in the Atlantic world* (New Haven, 2015), p. 125.
[90] David Nicholls, 'The English middle class and the ideological significance of radicalism, 1760-1886', *Journal of British Studies*, xxiv (1985), pp 415-33, p. 417.
[91] Peter Pindar, 'To Lord Sidney', *The plotting managers, a poetical satirical interlude: to which is prefixed a letter to Lord Sidney, on his recommending the suppression of the Royalty-Theatre* (London, 1787), p. viii.
[92] *An act to explain and amend so much of an act made in the twelfth year of the reign of Queen Anne, entitled, An act for reducing the laws relating to rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and vagrants into one Act of Parliament; and for the more effectual punishing such rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and vagrants, and sending them whither they ought to be sent, as relates to the common players of interludes* (London, 1737): reprinted in John Raithby (ed.), *Statutes at large*, v (London, 1811), pp. 266-68.

theatre-royals, several of the Royalty Theatre's actors 'were taken into custody, on a warrant granted by a magistrate, as persons offending against this law, and were committed to the house of correction for a specific time'.[93] By the 1780s there were many actors working in London outside of the protection of royal patents who performed burletta and pantomime at the city's illegitimate theatres. Dublin-born dramatist Isaac Jackman took the opportunity of the debate concerning the Royalty Theatre, to publish his views on 'the *disgraceful, cruel, unjust, and impolitic* tendency of the several acts of parliament that respect the professional character of an actor'.[94] He exposed the injustice of the Licensing Act, by pointing out that 'at the same moment, that an actor on the stage in Covent Garden is a *gentlemen*, and on the stage in Wellclose square is a sturdy beggar, a rogue'.[95] This demonstrates that the professionalisation and gentrification of actors was dependent on where in the city they were performing, with the theatre scene becoming increasingly stratified along class lines as it expanded.

This stratification was made all the more pronounced by the management strategies adopted by those running the theatre-royals. Particularly significant among these was Richard Brinsley Sheridan, patent holder of Drury Lane theatre from 1776. His astute use of 'theatrical vocalisation' subsequently gained him entry into the British parliament in 1780.[96] Sheridan was considered to be a radical politician, who pronounced his support for revolutionary principles of social mobility. David Francis Taylor has shown how Sheridan's politics influenced his theatrical management, so that by the 1790s, Drury Lane had become 'the site of a dangerously mobilized audience'.[97] Despite this, he refused to support the Royalty Theatre's attempts to secure a patent to present spoken drama before the politically radicalised plebeian audience of east London.[98] Sheridan was a 'politician-performer', whose public career was defined by his words rather than his actions.[99] During the debate concerning the Royalty Theatre, Jackman called on Sheridan to use his political position to act on behalf of his theatrical fellows: 'Come forward, Mr. SHERIDAN, and move for a repeal of those laws that have stampt your old friends with the detested appellations of *vagrant* and *vagabond*'.[100] He failed, however, to attempt any radical change to the social order of London's theatre scene: 'These observations

[93] Jackman, *Royal and royalty theatres*, p. 17.
[94] Ibid., p. 51.
[95] Ibid., p. 54.
[96] Worrall, *The politics of romantic theatricality*, p. 12.
[97] David Francis Taylor, *Theatres of opposition: empire, revolution, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Oxford, 2012), p. 157.
[98] Anon., *Considerations upon how far the present winter and summer theatres can be affected*, pp 5-7.
[99] Jack DeRochi and Daniel Ennis, *Richard Brinsley Sheridan: the impresario in political and cultural context* (Lewisburg, 2012), p. 3.
[100] Jackman, *Royal and royalty theatres*, p. 55.

methinks, Sir, ought to have weight with Mr. Sheridan; but I despair of his assistance, for, notwithstanding the public know he is equal to any thing, it is as generally known he minds nothing'.[101] By contrast, the most significant change he made to the London theatre scene over the course of his management was rather conservative in its approach to social order and class relations; Sheridan oversaw the redesign and expansion of seating in Drury Lane. Much of this seating was, however, that of high-priced tickets; the manager wished to attract the gentry and bourgeoisie classes by staging elaborate and expensive spectacle performances in order to compete with the fashionable and refined opera houses. Thus, Sheridan attempted to use his position as manager to make Drury Lane a more exclusive venue. He wished for it to be a theatrical space that the plebeian inhabitants of London's east end simply could not afford entry into.

In 1788 a significant piece of theatrical legislation was passed which profoundly impacted Britain's theatre scene. The Theatrical Representations Act enabled local magistrates to provide limited licenses for productions of legitimate drama in their provincial theatre scenes without having to appeal directly to the court for a royal patent.[102] The passing of this act attests to the growth in provincial theatre in Britain, but it only allowed spoken drama to be performed under very restrictive conditions. As such, London's theatre-royals maintained their privileged hold over legitimate drama under the continued patent system. In 1794 the new manager of the Royalty Theatre David Steel (n.d.), applied for a royal patent to allow the theatre to perform legitimate drama during the summer season. An anonymous pamphlet in support of this endeavour argued against the stale argument that the presentation of legitimate drama before a plebeian audience should be restricted:

> The establishment of well-regulated theatres in an immense metropolis is admitted to be one of the engines of a sound policy; and the object of that policy is surely best promoted by placing them so apart, as with convenience to exhibit the picture of regular manners, to inculcate the lessons of virtue, and debase the acts of vice.[103]

In a series of letters to Sheridan, all of which went unanswered, Steel argued against the continued opposition that the performer-politician and his fellow-manager at Covent Garden maintained against the Royalty Theatre nearly a decade after its opening:

> You have very candidly told me, that opposition to our prayer is *self-defence* in you, because it is the settled opinion of yourself and others interested in the two winter

[101] Ibid., p. 55.
[102] 'Short statement of a BILL, intitled an act to enable justices of the peace to license THEATRICAL REPRESENTATIONS occasionally under the restrictions therein contained, as amended by the house of peers', *London Times*, 3 June 1788.
[103] Anon., *Considerations upon how far the present winter and summer theatres can be affected*, p. 4.

> Theatres, that, if once your monopoly is broken through, your property would sink in value at least one-third.[104]

Supporters of the Royalty Theatre managed to use this opposition to their advantage, as they appealed to their radicalised patrons and audience 'to mobilize the politics of their position' and popularize their predicament in the larger political context.[105] This was facilitated by the presence of a print shop within the theatre premises which distributed works that satirised the theatre-royals and the gentry and bourgeoisie that frequented them.[106] After an extended period of petitioning, the Royalty Theatre was eventually granted a limited license for legitimate drama, but the venue remained a target for class-related debate into the nineteenth century. The contrasting stances taken by Jackman and Sheridan in the debate concerning the Royalty Theatre reflects the divided state of Irish political opinion at the time, as the Dublin theatre scene would soon follow London in debating class and governance during the 1790s.

'calling out for disloyal tunes': radicalised spectatorship and reactionary political performance in Dublin's regulated theatre scene during the 1790s[107]

Following the Dublin Stage Act of 1786, the city's theatre scene was legally regulated so that, despite popular political opinion, only loyalist counter-revolutionary drama was being produced. The Dublin audience, however, was becoming increasingly polarised along the lines of radicalised politics. As such, the loyalist faction of the audience endorsed the drama produced and often came to blows with the radical faction, who also sought to assert their presence in the theatre space. The Dublin theatre scene of the 1790s, therefore, witnessed a struggle for cultural dominance among the politically divided audience. The fractious state of spectatorship within the Dublin theatre scene was not helped by the state of the theatre itself; the theatre-royal manager Richard Daly was not liked by any faction, which led to a deterioration of his enterprise despite the advantageous monopoly he held over drama within the city. London-born comedian, Jacob Decastro (1758-1824) noted that as soon as an alternative amusement emerged, Daly's theatre was empty: 'In consequence of his bad managerial conduct, the nobility totally deserted him, as well as the public'.[108] For a short period, some of the gentry resorted to operating their own amateur theatre at Fishamble Street,

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[104] 'Mr Steel to Mr Sheridan, dated 8 March 1794' in Anon., *Considerations upon how far the present winter and summer theatres can be affected*, pp 5-7, p. 5.
[105] David Worrall, *Theatric revolution*, p. 86.
[106] Anon., *The catch club: a collection of all the songs, catches, glees, duets etc. As sung by Mr Bannister, Mr Leon, Master Braham, Mr Arrowsmith, Mr Chapman, Mr Gaudry etc. At the Royalty Theatre, goodman's fields: to which is added, Hippesley's Drunken-Man, as altered and spoken by Mr Lee Lewes* (London, 1787).
[107] *Freeman's Journal*, 11 Dec. 1792.
[108] Jacob Decastro and R. Humphreys (eds), *The memoirs of J. Decastro, comedian* (London, 1824), p. 53.

though they did not hold a license and thus could not charge for tickets.[109] A much more popular alternative arrived in 1789, however, when the city's first circus opened near the site of Ireland's first theatre at Werburgh Street. This performance space would soon become a theatrical venue to rival Daly's theatre-royal and, as the public became more radicalised at the prospect of revolution, it became a focal point for politicised performance.

When Englishman Philip Astley (1742-1814) left the British army after a celebrated cavalry career, he set himself up as an equestrian showman before the London public. He built an amphitheatre to house his performance enterprise and soon added pantomimes and novelty acts to his repertoire. These acts were ultra-loyalist in nature and worked as a recruiting tool for the London regiments.[110] As his London amphitheatre grew in popularity, Astley came under fire from the managers of the city's patent theatres, who drew attention to his lack of license to produce any form of theatrical entertainment. Astley was rescued from this legal dilemma by social connections he had forged with members of the Irish peerage while in service with the cavalry. Eager to bring such loyalist army-recruiting entertainments before the Irish public, Astley was encouraged to set up a similar enterprise in Dublin; his friends among the gentry organised the grant of a theatrical license to him and provided patronage for the theatre space he was to manage.[111] Richard Daly, who was accustomed to having the law on his side, took legal action against Astley for encroaching on his monopoly but eventually lost the case.[112] As a result, the monopoly established by the Dublin Stage Act in 1786 was broken only three years later. The Dublin theatre scene remained regulated under the terms of the act but there was now, once again, a competitive theatrical market in Dublin.

Astley's Royal Amphitheatre opened on Dublin's Peter Street in 1789. Initially, its offering of pantomimes, spectacles, and farces were dismissed as lowly entertainment: 'the mummeries of the *cold-catching* booth'.[113] By the mid-1790s, however, the amphitheatre was regularly frequented by the gentry and the entertainments were lauded as being so respectable 'suffice it to say, they are such, that would do credit to an Opera house'.[114] Like in London, the entertainments on offer at the amphitheatre promoted a clear loyalist agenda; the Dublin audience's reactionary performance to these productions, however, was politically divided.

[109] Ibid., p. 52.
[110] Helen Burke, 'Jacobin revolutionary theatre and the early circus: Astley's Dublin amphitheatre in the 1790s', *Theatre Research International*, xxxi (2006), pp 1-16, p. 3.
[111] Decastro and Humphreys (eds), *The memoirs of J. Decastro*, p. 51.
[112] Ibid., p. 64.
[113] *Freeman's Journal*, 5 Dec 1789.
[114] *Freeman's Journal*, 7 Dec 1797.

In its first season, Astley's amphitheatre provided the Dublin public with a staged spectacle of the French Revolution called *Paris in an Uproar; or, the destruction of the Bastille* (1789). This production had first been mounted in Astley's London amphitheatre, which he continued to run during the summer season. In London, Astley's loyalist spectacle was generally well received and his venue reportedly 'fills every night'.[115] Reports suggest that it was Astley's impressive scenes that drew the London crowds, as little note is taken of his political intention. This was not the case for the Royalty Theatre's staging of the revolution, however, as the radicalised East London audience were presented with pantomime performances that used music and silence to convey a subversive political message in 'an accessible and popular form'.[116] In Dublin, Astley used loyalist framing devises while staging depictions of the French Revolution but as Helen Burke has shown, these productions were misinterpreted by the Dublin public. Whereas in London, Astley's framing of the French Revolution as a narrative of French tyranny in opposition to English liberty, was met with a warm response, in Dublin this message of liberty was too easily interpreted by the radicalised audience as a call for Irish liberty from Britain.[117] Opposition papers in Dublin praised the production, claiming 'it furnishes the warmest lesson of liberality and patriotism'.[118] Encouraged by such accounts, the radicalised lower classes of Dublin began flocking to Astley's amphitheatre, which somewhat lowered its reputation as a respectable theatrical venue.[119] The convergence of all social orders in Astley's amphitheatre, as well as the Crow Street theatre-royal, led to frequent outbreaks of rioting in the 1790s.

The political potency of music was amplified within the contentious space of the Dublin theatre scene during that decade. This was a result of the traditional control that audiences exerted over that aspect of theatrical productions since it was common for audiences to shout requests to the orchestra between acts. English playwright Charles Dibdin (1745-1814) noted that 'It is the custom with Irish audiences to express their opinions, political or otherwise, very strongly during intervals between the acts of a piece'.[120] The reality of a politically divided Dublin audience was, therefore, most keenly felt in these moments when musical requests were made. Songbooks were being used as radicalising tools on both sides of the political spectrum, which

[115] *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 17 Oct. 1789.
[116] Worrall, *Theatric revolution*, p. 98.
[117] Burke, 'Jacobin revolutionary theatre and the early circus', p. 6.
[118] *Hibernian Journal*, 30 Nov. 1789.
[119] *Freeman's Journal*, 29 Dec. 1789.
[120] Charles Dibdin, *Professional and literary memoirs of Charles Dibdin the younger, dramatist and upward of thirty years manager of minor theatres* (*c.*1814) in Burke, 'Jacobin revolutionary theatre and the early circus', p. 7.

undoubtedly furthered the significance of song within the theatre scene. Maura Cronin has asserted that Ireland's urban populations 'proved more receptive to such musical evangelism', as the middle and artisan classes were specifically targeted by propaganda measures that sought to draw on a sense of cultural nationalism.[121]

In 1792 the gallery of Crow Street theatre erupted into riot when the loyalist faction within the audience grew incensed at 'the seditious conduct of some low incendiaries in the upper gallery, for some few nights past, calling out for disloyal tunes'.[122] The *Freeman's Journal* reported that the loyalist faction responded with an 'unusual and unexpected effusion of loyalty, expressed by reiterated demands for the anthem of 'God save the King".[123] The musicians reportedly refused to play the tune for fear of violent retaliation from the opposing faction. Calls for the anthem 'continued so determined' to the point that eventually 'the whole company of comedians came forward, and without delay, sung the wished for anthem'.[124] The government-supporting *Freeman's Journal*, however, glossed over the threat posed by the loyalist faction and instead extolled their standing and virtue: 'They were not the acclamations of a rabble or low persons hired to obstruct or destroy public amusement, but of men of fortune – of property – of respectable citizens'.[125]

Kevin Whelan notes that 'Failure to join in the chorus of a popular radical song was a sure sign of disaffection from the popular cause'.[126] In the regulated and court-patronised space of the theatre-royal, the popular cause proved to be that of the loyalist faction. Whereas in 1792, such a visceral display of loyalty was reported as 'unusual and unexpected', riots concerning spectator engagement with performances of 'God save the King' became more frequent as the decade progressed.[127] This was true of the provincial theatre circuit as well as the Dublin theatre scene.[128] Throughout the 1790s, there were 'regular riots' at Crow Street theatre, though some were prompted by the misconduct of Daly rather than political tensions.[129] A female member of the Irish gentry was surprised, however, when a riot did *not* break out in the theatre-royal in 1793, after United Irishman Lord Edward Fitzgerald 'stood up in his box and hissed' at the

[121] Maura Cronin, 'Broadside literature and popular political opinion in Munster, 1800-1820' in John Kirk, Michael Brown and Andrew Noble (eds), *Cultures of radicalism in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2015), pp 145-58, p. 150.
[122] *Freeman's Journal*, 11 Dec. 1792.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Whelan, *The tree of liberty*, p. 72.
[127] *Freeman's Journal*, 11 Dec. 1792.
[128] Whelan, *The tree of liberty*, p. 72.
[129] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 75.

proclamation of anti-French sentiments by one of the actors: 'you would have thought they would have tore the house down'.[130]

Kevin Whelan describes how, by the mid-1790s, the United Irishmen 'understood how to organise politics as theatre' and, interestingly, some of this theatre included the decapitation of certain statues around Dublin in a performance of politics that echoed that of Irish Jacobite supporters during the 1740s.[131] In 1795 the United Irishmen published a popular songbook titled *Paddy's Resource* in response to the popularity of counter-revolutionary ballads and loyalist anthems.[132] These loyalist tunes were increasingly being requested at Astley's Peter Street amphitheatre, where a significant cohort of the audience were thought to be Orangemen. In 1797 Astley began staging several musical spectacles that dramatized the French failure to land at Bantry Bay and provide military assistance to the cause of the United Irishmen.[133] The sharp increase in political tensions following this event resulted in increasingly vitriolic responses from the Dublin audiences. In December 1797 another riot broke out in the theatre-royal when political radicals within the audience refused to remove their hats out of respect for a rendition of 'God save the King', and the loyalist faction took to forcibly removing the offending items themselves.[134] Later that month a violent riot erupted at Astley's amphitheatre when United Irishmen 'jumped into the orchestra and smashed all the instruments' to stop the playing of the popular loyalist ballad 'Croppies Lie Down'.[135] Unlike the previous riots, this was a planned event; it was immediately known that it was 'the United Irishmen who excited' the violence.[136] Astley must have been anticipating such an outbreak of violence in his theatre since he had fitted a 'High-Constable Box' for armed soldiers as a safety measure in the theatre's gallery.[137] This was not received well and the controlling measure was alluded to when the United Irishmen published their account of the event in *The Press*: 'We hope that the transactions of this night may be a lesson, if not to the manager, to his audience and that for his sake he may feel that he is the servant, not the master of the people'.[138] The *Dublin Evening Post* recognised that, despite the regulated state of the stage, it was much more difficult to

[130] 'Anne, Countess of Boden, to H. Skeffington', 21 Feb. 1793 in Whelan, *The tree of liberty*, p. 84.
[131] Whelan, *The tree of liberty*, p. 87.
[132] Anon, *Paddy's resource: being a select collection of original and modern patriotic songs, toasts and sentiments, compiled for the use of the people of Ireland* (Belfast, 1795).
[133] Burke, 'Jacobin revolutionary theatre and the early circus', p. 10.
[134] *The Press*, 14 Dec. 1797.
[135] Burke, 'Jacobin revolutionary theatre and the early circus', p. 13.
[136] *Dublin Evening Post*, 19 Dec. 1797.
[137] Dibdin, *Professional and literary memoirs* in Burke, 'Jacobin revolutionary theatre and the early circus', p. 10.
[138] *The Press*, 16 Dec. 1797.

regulate the spectators within the Dublin theatre scene: 'The necessary admission of all description of persons precludes the possibility of caution on the part of the Manager'.[139]

In March of 1798, the outbreak of the United Irish rebellion forced the closure of Dublin's theatre scene under martial law.[140] Astley returned permanently to his summer theatre in London, while Daly sold his theatre-royal patent to Frederick Jones (1759-1834), who had previously managed a music hall.[141] The Dublin theatre scene would not get back to business, however, until after the establishment of the Act of Union (1800). At that point, with the dissolution of the Irish parliament, the demographic of the Dublin audience and the institutional structure of the city's public sphere would change, heralding a new era of theatrical culture.

Conclusion

The last two decades of the eighteenth century saw the radicalisation and polarisation of political perspectives across all social orders in the London and Dublin public spheres. The move towards popular political radicalisation posed a threat to the traditional authority of the court within the theatrical scenes of both London and Dublin. Increased regulation was introduced in reaction to this threat, but its impact on the public's control over theatrical space was limited. In London, the genre gap allowed for the performance and promotion of revolutionary ideas through the subversive use of music, silence and spectacle on the stage. In Dublin, the unregulated state of spectatorship led to reactionary performances of cultural politics among divided Dublin audiences. Thus, while the stage was the focus of radical performance in London, it was primarily performed among the audience in Dublin. Despite the subversive tactics employed by theatrical practitioners and patrons to impose their presence within the public sphere's theatrical spaces, the increasing regulatory measures imposed on those spaces in both London and Dublin supports Jürgen Habermas's claim that the extent of liberty within the public sphere gradually diminished as the eighteenth century came to a close: 'Publicity loses its critical function in favor of a staged display'.[142]

[139] *Dublin Evening Post*, 19 Dec. 1797.
[140] Morash, *A history of Irish theatre*, p. 75.
[141] Patrick Geoghegan, 'Jones, Frederick Edward', *DIB*, https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.004324.v1 [accessed 23 Aug. 2022].
[142] Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, p. 206.

Conclusion

'then to be considered': a conclusion to drop the curtain on the London and Dublin theatre scenes, 1660-1800[1]

Over the course of this study, the position and purpose of the theatre has been shown to have shifted from being a place operating under courtly control and custom to a commercialised institution of the public sphere. This theatrical institution had a significant impact on the formation of another, more transient and less tangible, public institution; that of public opinion. It has been posited that the public sphere is best conceptualised as a network of communication and discourse between various publics and counter-publics, which included all those who interacted with it. As such, despite the fact that only a small fraction were politically acknowledged as being members of *the* public, the sphere's counter-publics increasingly contributed to the determination of public opinion. In this way, Dublin can be seen to have sat at the intersection of several public and counter-public networks within the Irish public sphere, which was itself expanding into an influential counter-public within the larger British context. London sat firmly at the centre of this public sphere, whether in an imperial or four-nations context, with its populace the most influential in shaping the institution of public opinion. The relationship between Dublin and London is, therefore, crucial to understanding how Irish public opinion formed from the interaction of various counter-publics, despite lingual and sectarian divides. This interaction led to the formation of a distinctive Irish public sphere which gradually developed to become culturally and politically nationalised. While previous scholarship has mostly concentrated on textual culture, this thesis has demonstrated the extent to which performance culture pervaded the bourgeoisie public sphere. Concentration on the development of the public theatre scenes of London and Dublin, has shown the significance of Irish presence within these institutions. The theatre scenes were used as a platform for the performance and negotiation of identity politics before the public, both on and off the stage. Over the course of the period, Irish theatre practitioners used this performative culture to gain standing and shape public opinion. The extent of Irish presence, participation and influence within the theatre scenes, and by extension the public sphere, has been found to be strikingly significant.

At the start of the period, upon the restoration of the theatre scenes in 1662, theatre functioned as a space in which the English court, and its Irish viceregal counterpart, could perform before

[1] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2 in Malone (ed.), *The plays and poems of William Shakespeare*, pp 280-86.

the public within a space it controlled. This control was maintained directly through legal licensing and censorship, but also indirectly, through the influence of patronage. During the political instability of the 1690s, the court lost its legal grip on the theatre scene, so that it moved further into the newly uncensored public sphere. The lapse of legal licensing allowed the theatre scene to expand outside its traditional courtly milieu, as new theatrical enterprises commercially competed for public patronage. This competitive environment fuelled a surge in dramatic innovation, as theatre began to reflect the tastes and opinions of the bourgeoisie at the turn of the eighteenth century. The political potency of this staged drama was uniquely recognised, when in 1737, the English court attempted to regain control of the theatre scene by reintroducing the legal necessity for a royal patent allowing for performance, as well as court censorship over which plays could be performed. This reduced the London theatre scene back to just two court-licensed theatres and crippled the production of new dramatic writing. This legal measure had not been extended to Dublin; despite the lack of censorship, however, the production of new dramatic material was stilted by a lack of financial stability in Dublin. As a result, Dublin's theatre scene fell out of step with that of London. Despite the court's reinstatement of its direct control over the London theatre scene, the influence of the bourgeoisie remained strong. The concern of this coterie for emerging enlightenment principles of politeness and sociability, gave the institution of the theatre a new purpose within the public sphere. It became a space for social reform and improvement, as its productions worked to cultivate public manners and taste. This cultural cultivation drew heavily on practices forged in the oratorical movement of the early eighteenth century. The social enlightenment's emphasis on the performance of gentility heightened the status of actors within the public sphere, as they became exemplars of polite speech and manners. The theatre scene was a public institution to which, unlike the political sphere, access could be easily bought. As such, it evolved into a space in which all social orders could meet to engage in socio-cultural identity politics. The significance of these negotiations cannot be overstated, as theatre was increasingly posed as a model for nation. Thus, theatre practitioners and their performances, became models for national character. From 1745, this was true of Dublin as well as London. The link between print and performance strengthened in the mid-century period, as the theatre scene became an increasingly contested space. Theatrical managers, in both London and Dublin, struggled to maintain balance between the opposing forces of courtly custom and public commercialisation. In moments of heightened socio-political tension, the theatre often became a scene of riot. At the height of the social enlightenment, from the 1740s to the 1760s, riots were often instigated by issues concerning the social order and increased mobility within it. The performative aspect

of social status increased the symbolic significance of the theatrical space within the public sphere during this period. The transition into political enlightenment during the 1770s, led to a slight shift in the theatre's position within the public sphere. As a space in which all social orders could meet, the theatre remained a scene for riot, but tensions were more directly centred around the political sphere. The theatre retained, however, its symbolic significance as a model for nation, although this model was increasingly opposed by a politicised populace. As tensions mounted in the 1780s, court authorities and conservative political elites, sought to reimpose their authority over the theatre scene by mounting further legal regulations and restrictions upon the stage. Although these measures limited the scope of theatrical production and representation, they did little to control theatrical audiences. As the century drew to a close, the theatre scene became politically, culturally and physically divided along class lines. The expansion of the theatre scenes allowed for the socio-economic stratification of audiences, while theatrical authority was decentralised to reflect the growing stability of provincial theatre scenes in Britain and Ireland.

From the early eighteenth century, artistic philosophy imposed a gender dynamic on stage communication; speech was masculine, and song was feminine. This mirrored the gender dynamic underpinning Enlightenment philosophy, whereby the masculine was reasonable and refined, with the feminine presented as its natural opposite. As such, the professionalisation of the actor relied on the qualification of refined oratory from the 1710s, while that of the actress was founded on the elevated status of natural beauty and talent from the 1730s. In the context of this gendered understanding, the blundering stage-Irishman's struggle with speech but propensity for song works to emasculate him. As such, the romanticised character provided diversion on stage without posing any real threat to the imperial social order. Although the stage-Irishman appeared charming to the female heroine, he naturally fell short in the face of the English gentleman's superior reason. Additionally, in an imperial context, the English gentleman was imbued with a paternalistic quality. Both the female heroine and the emasculated stage-Irishman were presented as his natural inferiors; characters that should trigger his sympathy and paternalism. The introduction of the Disorderly Houses Act (1751) applied the gendered dynamic between speech and song to stratify theatrical audiences and performance culture. By the mid-eighteenth century the changing demographics of London led the elite to take a paternalistic approach to the maintenance of social order. The Disorderly Houses Act sought to utilise the cultural medium of theatre as an agent for the moral and social improvement of London's growing lower classes. The most integral aspect of this regulation

was that these lower-class audiences were not granted license to perform legitimate drama. Instead, their access was restricted to theatrical entertainments that centred around song rather than speech. As such, although allowed access to a stage, the extent to which they could communicate from it was highly censored. The voice was only to be heard through the feminine medium of song while the masculine medium of speech remained largely the reserve of a superior milieu within the theatre-royals. Consequently, while theatre was employed as an agent for the improvement of the lower classes, the legal restriction on the performance of legitimate drama was used to stratify theatrical culture. Thus, the delineation between speech and song on the London stage was used to maintain a patriarchal, imperialist, and elitist social order.

During the restoration period, there was little Irish presence within London's theatre, with the notable exception of a few Anglo-Irish playwrights in the 1660s. The greatest Irish presence on the London stage between the 1660s and 1680s, appeared in the form of the stage-Irishman. This portrayal of Irish identity was demeaning and homogenous, only becoming nuanced in the 1690s, when Anglo-Irish presence within the London theatres grew significantly. The dramatic portrayal of Irishness can be seen to have been influenced by the sectarian ideals of the Irish religious enlightenment, as Protestant Irish playwrights took care to stratify the stage-Irish character along the lines of religious identity. By the first decade of the eighteenth century, legal disputes allowed a handful of experienced Irish theatre practitioners to gain immense influence over the London theatre scene, by becoming its managers. The resulting connections forged between the London and Dublin theatres, only led to regular recruitment from Smock Alley. By the 1730s there were considerable amounts of Irish actors, playwrights and managers influencing the development of the London theatre scene. From the 1740s there was a recognisable Gaelic Irish presence within the London theatre scene, although these figures underwent a process of socio-cultural anglicisation in order to get there. The most notable of these figures was Charles Macklin, whose extensive career within the London theatre scene would shape networks for many Irish theatre practitioners aspiring to successful careers in London. In the mid-century period, Irish influence over the London theatre scene was most strongly wielded over its most esteemed dramatic genre, Shakespearean tragedy. The immense celebrity of English actor-manager David Garrick was rivalled by Irish figures such as Charles Macklin, Spranger Barry, Thomas Sheridan and Margaret Woffington. The added standing acquired by actors in this period, as a result of a process of professionalisation and the performative nature of enlightenment culture, only served to heighten the influence of these

Irish figures. Regardless of their Irish backgrounds, the social enlightenment's emphasis on education in determining standing, allowed several Irish figures to become influential exemplars of gentility and arbiters of taste within London's public sphere. From the 1760s, as enlightened culture became increasingly politicised, Irish influence was most potent within the literary sphere. In that decade there were several Irish playwrights, of both Gaelic and Anglo-Irish backgrounds, who were directly involved in the political culture of London journalism. While Irish figures such as Arthur Murphy and Hugh Kelly used professional authorship to advance their social standing within London's theatre scene and public sphere, Irish playwright Oliver Goldsmith was unique in his ability to live up to the ideal of an impartial spectator within London's literary sphere. In the 1770s and 1780s there was a network of playwrights in London who were recognised as being distinctly Irish. Their presence and popularity was immense, but their influence over the development of the London theatre scene was not as strong. This was, in part, due to the increased stability of the provincial theatre circuit which meant that opinion and taste was not as thoroughly dictated by the London public. Irish theatre practitioners also had increased competition from actors and playwrights coming to London from these provincial theatre-royals, especially York and Edinburgh. In the last two decades of the eighteenth century, despite the continued presence of Irish actors within the London theatre scene, Irish playwrights held more influence. This was especially true of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who used his success as a playwright to become the manager of Drury Lane theatre. Through his theatrical and political positions, Sheridan held immense influence within the London theatre scene, and the public sphere at large. He did not, however, appear to use this influence to better the standing of fellow Irish figures within the London theatre scene. This is suggested by the fact that most Irish dramatists of this period had their plays produced in the rival theatres of Covent Garden or the Haymarket during the years of his management of Drury Lane, for example: Leonard McNally (1752-1820), Frederick Pilon (1750-1788), and Joseph Atkinson (1743-1818).[2]

The significance of Dublin's theatrical scene in the restoration period is proved simply by its existence; between 1660 and 1744 it was the only alternative scene to that of London within the restored Stuart kingdoms. As such, the connection between the theatres of London and Dublin was strong, with actors, managers and playwrights regularly moving between the two

[2] Charles Beecher Hogan, *The London stage, 1660-1800; a calendar of plays, entertainments & afterpieces, together with casts, box-receipts and contemporary comment. Compiled from the playbills, newspapers and theatrical diaries of the period. Part 5: 1776-1800* (Carbondale, 1965), I-III.

cities. In the 1660s, thanks to the enthusiastic patronage of the Duke of Ormond, Dublin's theatre scene briefly ran ahead of London. Smock Alley theatre was a new purpose-built performance space, while London's two patent playhouses had been hastily converted from tennis courts. This, along with the literary circle that grew up around the viceregal court, gave Dublin's theatre scene an illustriousness that easily rivalled London. Bouts of plague and the Great Fire of 1666, further contributed to making Dublin attractive to English theatre practitioners. Between the 1660s and 1680s, the Smock Alley company predominantly consisted of English actors who performed English plays. Despite this, Dublin had a distinct theatrical culture from that of London; they did not simply stage whatever had proved popular in London but were selective about what to perform before an Irish audience. The political upheaval of the 1690s brought significant changes to the London and Dublin theatres, as well as the relationship between them. In London, the Hanoverian court did not take as much interest in the theatre scene as the Stuarts had, so that when legal licensing was left to lapse, the theatres entered the commercial cultural market of the bourgeoisie public sphere. In Dublin, however, the intimate connection between Dublin castle and the theatre-royal resulted in several Irish-born Williamite soldiers being recruited into the Smock Alley company. As a result, the Dublin theatre scene maintained its close relationship with the viceregal court. Despite this patronage, London's larger population along with the drive of a commercially competitive market, meant that its theatres were much more lucrative. This shifted the pattern of recruitment between the London and Dublin theatre scenes, as London began attracting an increasing number of Irish-born actors to its stages. In this way, Smock Alley became almost like a training ground for actors, who then graduated to perform before the London audience. This greatly increased the presence and influence of Irish-born actors, playwrights and managers within London's theatre scene, but had the negative effect of reducing Dublin's standing in comparison. By the 1720s the Dublin and London theatres were so intimately connected that it became custom for the Drury Lane company to give a summer season at Smock Alley. This suggests that the London theatre-royals viewed their Dublin counterpart as a peripheral theatre scene. At the same time, however, the Smock Alley company began touring the county towns of Ireland, which made Dublin the centre of a growing theatrical sphere within Ireland itself. Between the 1690s and 1730s, London's theatre scene commercially expanded to include new theatrical enterprises that did not hold royal patents. A similar expansion occurred in Dublin in the 1720s and 1730s, but the city's comparatively small population struggled to sustain a competitive market. As a result, the standing of Dublin's theatre scene further diminished as London attracted Irish practitioners and patrons. In the same decades, however, the development of patriot politics

increased bourgeoisie interest in the institutions of the Irish public sphere, including the theatre scene. The development of a distinctly Irish patriotic ideology led to calls being made for the improvement of the Dublin theatre scene from the city's public. These calls were not answered, however, until the following decade. The London theatre scene's commercial expansion was halted in 1737, when the patent system and court censorship were reintroduced with the Licensing Act. This curtailed the playwrighting profession in London but led to the elevation of the status of actors. Although the Licensing Act was never legally introduced in Ireland, the Dublin theatre scene found itself in a similarly curtailed position when Irish-born actor Thomas Sheridan returned from the London stage to become manager of Smock Alley theatre in 1745. Sheridan quickly bought-out his rivals and effectively monopolised the Dublin theatre scene around his control over the theatre-royal. The date of this monopolisation, a year in which a Jacobite uprising was a very real threat in Ireland, may be the reason that Dublin's viceregal court lent its enthusiastic patronage to Sheridan's enterprise. Sheridan utilised enlightenment rhetoric of the culture of improvement to gain public support as he posited the Dublin theatre as a model for nation. Although this model had some distinctive Irish features, Sheridan used Smock Alley to promote a largely anglicised form of Irish identity through the cultivation of enlightened taste and manners. In this way, Dublin's theatre scene realigned with that of London in the late 1740s and 1750s. Between the 1740s and 1760s the provincial theatre circuits of both Britain and Ireland became increasingly affluent so that urban centres like York, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cork were granted licenses to build their own theatre-royals. In these decades, however, Sheridan's careful management of Smock Alley heightened the standing of the Dublin theatre scene, so that it was second only to London. During these decades, however, the managers of both the London and Dublin theatre scenes increasingly struggled with maintaining the power dynamic between the customary practices of the court and the commercialised nature of a public enterprise. As a result, both theatre scenes became stages for violent rioting over issues concerning the social order and national identity. These tensions pushed both the London and Dublin theatre scenes to forge greater connections with the print industry, as it increasingly became the medium through which theatre practitioners directly interacted with the public. At the turn of the 1760s Sheridan abandoned the management of the Dublin theatre scene and it became fractured when the Crow Street company was established to rival that of Smock Alley. The Crow Street theatre was also managed by an Irish actor returning from London and so, it too, largely emulated the theatrical culture of London. This continued the parallels in theatrical taste between London and Dublin, but the financial viability of Dublin's theatre scene was again reduced by a competitive market. By the 1770s Dublin had

become a peripheral theatre scene that struggled to offer financial stability to theatre practitioners. During the 1770s and 1780s there was a coterie of celebrated Irish playwrights, but their works were staged in Dublin only after finding success in London. Despite this, the politicisation of theatrical audiences along with romanticism's emphasis on the local inflections of cultural identity, led Dublin to develop a distinctively Irish sense of theatrical taste in the 1780s. That decade brought the introduction of more stringent regulations regarding authority within the theatre scene, in both London and Dublin. The Dublin Stage Act of 1786 was the first piece of theatrical legislation that applied to the Irish theatre scene since the establishment of the patent system in 1662. It was more comprehensive in its censorship than the Licensing Act of 1737, which still regulated the London theatre scene. The Dublin Stage Act's concentration on the theatre scene of the capitol tells of its uniquely contentious position within the Irish theatrical sphere. In contrast, the London theatre scene's legal standing was somewhat diminished by the establishment of the Theatrical Representations Act of 1788; it served to decentralise theatrical authority away from London, by allowing local magistrates to license performances in Britain's provincial theatres. As such, the growth of the British provincial circuit was legally recognised, while that of the Irish provincial circuit was not. This had the effect of lowering the legal standing of London's theatre scene within the British theatrical sphere, while the 1786 Stage Act had heightened the legal significance of Dublin's theatre scene within the Irish theatrical sphere. In the 1790s both the London and Dublin theatre scenes were highly regulated by court authorities. Despite this, the audiences were eager to use the theatre scenes to perform their political identities. In London, theatre practitioners managed to use the loopholes of the Licensing Act to mount productions that strategically used silence and sound to present subversive political ideology. The visual of politicised public spectacle could also be used on the regulated stage. By contrast, in Dublin, the stage was so tightly regulated that the performance of subversive political ideologies had be initiated by the audiences themselves. This was mostly achieved through music, meaning that the auditory aspect of theatre was the most important in both London and Dublin at the close of the eighteenth century. The forced closure of the Dublin theatre scene in 1798, and loss of Dublin court culture following the Act of Union, meant that London's theatre scene towered over that of its once-rival at the turn of the nineteenth century.

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