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Stereotypes as political resistance: the Irish police court columns, c.1820-1845

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ABSTRACT

Police court columns were a popular and flourishing representation of the courtroom in the early nineteenth-century British and Irish press. Despite this, they have been little used by historians, perhaps due to their often humorous and comic depictions of the courtroom. This article re-evaluates the Irish police court columns as a site of debate around Irish national identity at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It argues that these representations were not only sophisticated, but allowed the Irish to reformulate the stereotype of the stage Irishman. Moreover, as representations that captured behaviours of individuals within the courtroom, they provided an opportunity for a broad swathe of the community to engage in broader debates around the nature of Irishness and Irish political rights.

KEYWORDS

Ireland; stereotypes; newspapers; court; political rights; nationalism.

An Irish cause always creates a sensation in a police-office. The magistrates smile at each other, the reporter cuts his pencil and arranges his note-book, and the clerk covers the lower part of his face with his hand, to conceal the expression that plays around his mouth. Biddy's curtsy – a genuine Irish dip – and her opening speech, which she commenced by wishing their honours a merry Christmas and plenty of them, and that they might have the power of doing good to the end of their days, and never meet with ingratitude for that same, was the only absurdity connected with her deposition.¹

An Irishman walks into a ~~bar~~ court. The very phrase, closely resembling the starting line to numerous jokes, is loaded with comic intent. The 'room' pauses, readying themselves for hilarity. The magistrates share knowing smiles; the clerk disguises his smirk, and the reporter prepares himself to record what happens next. As fellow actors in the ensuing drama, they prepare the stage for the lead role to perform his or her piece. Biddy was somewhat of a disappointment. The 'absurdity' of the behaviour of the Irish, as well as range of other British characters, when they appeared before the British and Irish police courts had been a popular form of literary entertainment for decades by 1841.² Following the popularity of the London police court columns that had appeared in the capital's press from the late eighteenth century, the genre had become a staple of the metropolitan and provincial press. Local papers provided columns on their local courts, and across both Britain and Ireland, the national press reprinted the best of these tales from other regions, providing them with a national audience.³ Whilst some accounts were not dissimilar from reportage of the numerous other courts found across Britain and Ireland during the period, the best and most reprinted of the police court

columns were those that focused on ‘larger than life’ characters, and rendered them in ‘comic’ form.

Typically, such reports described the behaviour of individuals, usually but not always from the lower orders, when they disrupted the orderly proceeding of the courtroom through their antics and verbal wit. Such people were often marked by their ethnic or regional identity (Irish, Scots, or regional English such as Cockney), their words rendered phonetically to emphasise their distinctive accents in comparison to that of the other actors in the court whose speech was depicted in standard English. Irish language speakers were also often rendered into a phonetic Irish-English accent, despite the fact this clearly did not reflect reality. Whilst the entertainment value of such columns appears to have been in the ‘otherness’ of the characters represented, their distinctive and entertaining behaviour situated against the rest of the people within the court space and the expected decorum associated with the court, such characterisation often strongly resembled caricature and stereotypes of such groups in the wider media, such as ‘Paddy’, ‘Hodge’, and ‘Sambo’ in the US.⁴ Police court representations, both then and now, sat uneasily between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ – both depicting ‘real’ events but stylising the characters, sometimes to the doubt of their humanity.

Whilst there is a sizeable and growing historiography on the representation of courtrooms and particularly criminal proceedings,⁵ as well as a number of studies on stereotyping and caricatures in the press during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,⁶ these popular columns have received surprisingly little attention by historians, perhaps because they do not fall neatly into either category. This article explores the representation of men in the police courts in the Irish press between c.1820 (when such reports started to take off in Ireland) and 1845 (when they were at their height and before the dramatic social changes of the mid-century after the Famine). The article begins by contextualising these complex representations and locating them in relation to the well-studied phenomenon of the

‘Stage Irishman’, who often bore striking resemblance to the men who appeared in the Irish police courts. It continues with a theoretical discussion of the purpose of the national stereotype and its uses in identity creation by groups and individuals, before giving particular consideration to humorous stereotypes. Returning to the police court, it culminates with a close reading of one police court report – relating to the case of Jemmy Maguire in 1829 – that is used to work through the nature of such representations and their capacity to use and subvert humorous stereotypes around Irishness. The purpose of this final commentary is not to argue for Jemmy’s typicality – indeed a performance of eccentricity marks many of the representations of men and women in the police courts – but to demonstrate how such representations acted as key sites to explore Irish identity in the popular media and, in doing so, allowed the lower courts to provide a space for the men and women who used them to contribute to a discussion of what it meant to be Irish. It does not argue that the manner of reporting on Ireland’s police courts or their use by the public are unique in a British context, but it does suggest the ways in which they could be used within national contexts to contest and explore questions of regional and national identity.

The comic Irishman at court

Mr Peter Gaffney, already so favourably known to the public as the tailor who was taken up some months ago for dancing the Polka at midnight in the middle of Sackville-street, was brought before the magistrates of this office yesterday charged with having misconducted himself in the public streets ... [Constable] 184B stepped into the witness-box with the dignity of a Roman senator, and was proceeding to state the particular when he was interrupted by

Mr Gaffney, who insisted that before he uttered another word he should take the spy-glass from his eye (laughter).

184B (squinting ineffably at the prisoner)—I'll never take down my spy-glass, Sir. It took me nearly twenty minutes to fasten it in my eye, and I'm not going to undo it now to please you or any other tailor.

Mr Gaffney (with great indignation)—Your worship, I appeal to *you* for protection. Is this the 19th century, or is not?

Magistrate—There is a general impression abroad to that effect, Mr Gaffney.

Mr Gaffney—Well then, your worship, I ask you whether it is to be tolerated in the 19th century that the lives and liberties of free citizens of a free state are to be jeopardised at the instance of any man who has the audacity to come into a court of justice with a piece of window-glass sticking in his eye (loud laughter)? If he does not desist squinting through that circular piece of window-glass I demand as of right to be discharged forthwith (laughter).

Magistrate— On what grounds may I ask, Mr Gaffney?

Mr. Gaffney— On the ground that my prosecutor is clearly *non compus* (laughter).⁷

The magistracy system, where local landowners and notables provided the first line of governance by offering limited summary justice, dealing with local disputes, and authorising the transferral of criminal cases into the more formal assize courts, had a long history in Ireland, as elsewhere in the UK.⁸ Traditionally made up of the Protestant landed gentry and other notables, the early nineteenth century saw the increasing professionalisation and formalisation of the role of the magistrate, and by the 1820s, they typically sat in formal petty sessions on a regular basis. They were accompanied by a growing number of 'police courts' that performed the same functions in urban centres.⁹ Professionalisation brought with it

‘resident magistrates’, paid positions designed to ensure consistent coverage and application of justice, particularly in urban centres such as Dublin. These men were more likely to be of the professional classes but remained largely Protestant; even after reform only ten per cent were Catholic by 1834.¹⁰

The magistrate’s role within colonial structures is a topic of considerable discussion. On the one hand, they were generally members of a Protestant elite enforcing law and order; on the other, they were often proudly independent of Dublin Castle and could find themselves in conflict with the administration. Many of them viewed themselves as part of the communities they governed and much resistance to resident magistrates reflected the continued investment in locality and community that was represented by this system of local government.¹¹ Magistrates were supported by the development of a professional police force from 1814. Like resident magistrates and also similarly to the ‘new police’ on the British mainland, police officers were not received enthusiastically by all. They were mainly from the lower orders and there was some effort (as well as political discussion) about ensuring Catholic representation, so that in 1824 it was estimated that there were 1,825 Protestants and 825 Catholics in the police. As the political campaigner, Richard Shiel commented, given the social group that was recruited from, this was still not reflective of the Catholic majority in the wider population.¹²

The expansion of the lower courts provided an opportunity for the wider public and the press to attend, and occurred during a period when the local press was expanding and looking for copy.¹³ From the early 1820s, many local papers began to provide coverage of these courts. These columns often appeared weekly, or as often as the court sat, creating a sense of familiarity with the central characters that appeared within them, including the magistrates, police, lawyers and those who committed regular anti-social behaviour. They included petty sessions and police courts from across Ireland, including Dublin, Belfast,

Killarney, Galway, Carlow, Cork, and Ballina, and amounted to hundreds of accounts over the next few decades. This article is based upon a larger study of such reports from fourteen different provincial papers across Ireland between 1820 and 1845.¹⁴ The accessibility of these courts, both to individuals who could attend and through their representation in the press, ensured they became a central part of community life in Ireland and a focal point for negotiating the nature of frontline governance.¹⁵

Stylistically influenced by the longer-running London Police Court columns as well as some of the more humorous Old Bailey tales, these accounts often focused on particularly amusing, tragic or gruesome, but usually banal, stories designed to entertain the reader.¹⁶ They were often deliberately designed to be humorous, employing a comic mode that provided a high level of consistency of these representations across different regions. The story of Peter Gaffney above only became more ridiculous when the court learned he had been arrested for standing on his head reciting the speech ‘I am Norval’ from the play *Douglas*. But funnier still was the extended banter between Gaffney and 184B that took up almost two columns in local paper. Other reports introduce similarly ridiculous and humorous encounters between the public and the court. 184B himself was ‘a character’, willing to engage in ridiculous arguments in court with the men he arrested:

The middle-aged Tinker [in court after his arrest by 184B]– What did I say to you?

184B– You asked me when I had been in Parnell-place last; when I had seen *herself* last [184B’s love life was a topic of much discussion in court]; how Mr Gaffney was; and a thousand other impertinent questions, all ending in asking me for the loan of a half-crown (laughter).

Magistrate–did you lend it to him? ...

184B– Silence, tinker, or I’ll strike terror into your kettle-mending soul (laughter).

The middle-aged Tinker– You’re not the size (laughter).

I84B– I’ll pulverise you, my boy, ...

The middle-aged Tinker– ... I’ll meet you in deadly combat any where. *My* soldering iron against *your* baton any day, and ten to one for the tinker.¹⁷

And so this argument went on with each man becoming more extravagant in their insults and the court becoming convulsed in laughter. In the meantime, the only intervention by the bench was a humorous interlude designed to encourage the exchange. Amusing stories drew on excessive and ridiculous behaviour, and particularly long sections of combative or witty dialogue, to entertain the public. That these tales were funny was reinforced by the court’s laughter, which acted to signal the tone of the encounter to a reading public. As this example demonstrates, new reports acted inter-textually with old, with references to previously reported characters and events bleeding into the present.

Not much is known about the journalists who wrote these accounts, although it is likely they were locals who could regularly attend the courts. In Carlow, they were written in the 1830s by Thomas Carroll, esq, who was also editor (at different times) for two of the local newspapers.¹⁸ For small papers like his, it is likely that editors, and often editor-owners, would have performed this function to keep costs low. Larger papers tended to pay freelance journalists by the line for such reports, encouraging them to draw out these tales.¹⁹

The most detailed account of a journalist working in the police courts in the first half of the nineteenth century is perhaps that given in the autobiographical, *London Life at the Police Courts*, by the journalist W. H. Watts.²⁰ As a professional journalist in a major city, his career may not have been reflective of many reporters in Ireland, but he provided an insightful account into how journalists constructed these tales. Watt viewed his role as ‘dressing up’ the business of the court: ‘the “humorous” delineation of *real* life’.²¹ He

explicitly denied that this was done through exaggeration, but rather through careful use of language, punctuation and description. To illustrate, he compared two reports of a local councilman giving a speech of thanks for being elected.²² Whilst the ‘straight’ report only gave an account of what was said and then in a rather cursory form using the third person (‘he thanked them all round’), the ‘penny-liner’ added a description of the man’s emotional state (‘with evident emotion’), and interrupted the dialogue with responses from the audience (Cheers! Applause!). The dialogue itself was in the main as reported in the first text, although it was written in the first person (‘I thank you all round’), which required some changes to reflect the different grammatical requirements of first person speech, and it added some small embellishments that did not change the meaning but made the councilman sound more eloquent.

This, at least, *felt* more like ‘honest gains’ than ‘false taste’ due to the sensation of accessing a direct account of events that it provides the reader with.²³ As the 1829, *Glasgow Police Reports* noted ‘In publishing POLICE REPORTS, a strict adherence to Truth must be observed’.²⁴ It was no more or less ‘truthful’, with ‘serious’ reporting, particularly in the third person, as unlikely to capture the nuances of the performed human experience as other forms of writing.²⁵ For Watts, the decline of such accounts in the later nineteenth century was not due to more ‘honest’ reporting or different expectations from the news-reading audience, but rather as the ‘materials for humour are now more scanty than they were’, because ‘education, [the] spread of cheap knowledge, [and] the nearer approximation of the classes’ had ‘destroyed much of that rough individuality’ that marked the lower orders.²⁶ The humour of the police courts arose from the material it provided; the journalist was simply skilled at conveying events in a comic mode to the reader.

Like those that tourists often encountered on their journeys and described in their travel writings, the Irish depicted in the police court reports often uncannily resembled

national stereotypes, with their strong brogue, theatrical antics and verbal wit (just as these representations in turn fed into such larger stereotypes).²⁷ The comic or stage Irishman, as the nineteenth-century caricature of the fumbling but often sharp-tongued Irishman is referred to, sits at the heart of a debate around the nature of representations of the Irish in Britain and Empire more broadly and the implications of such representations for the Irish's political position as an ethnic group. At one extreme, Lewis Perry Curtis and Michael de Nie argue that the British press maligned the Irish, increasingly drawing on scientific ideas of race to place them beneath those of Anglo-Saxon descent on the racial ladder, and above those who were not white.²⁸ They point to popular prints, especially around the mid-century, that gave the Irish simian features, as well as the numerous reports that focused on the poverty, chaos and naivety of a group portrayed as unable to govern itself. Whilst not denying the existence of such images, historians such as Denis Paz and Edward Lengel argue that these were extreme examples of negative depictions of the Irish that can be found amongst a much larger number of more sympathetic portrayals.²⁹ They acknowledge that anti-Irish sentiment existed, but reject that the Irish were viewed as a different race, locating anti-Irish sentiment in their poverty, their Catholicism, and occasionally in their difference as *Irish* people. Most of this debate however focuses on portrayals of the Irish press in Britain, not in Ireland.

Discussions around the reception of the comic Irishman in Ireland have focused on responses to theatrical productions at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, where nationalistic audiences and playwrights started to reject what they read as simplistic and unflattering portrayals of Irishness.³⁰ Yet, increasingly historians recognise that this story is not straightforward. First, the comic Irishman – and it was usually but not always a man – was a staple of the stage in Ireland, as well as in Britain. Second, whilst Irish playwrights began to write their stage Irishmen with greater complexity than in previous generations, many actors playing these roles followed the older comic tradition in their portrayals and

many Irish audiences responded positively to these representations.³¹ Thirdly, studies of the stage Irishman in earlier decades and centuries are beginning to provide a history of a much more nuanced representational mode than has previously been appreciated.

Whilst Maurice Bourgeois's description of the loquacious, drunken, pugnacious, red-haired stage Irishman has been a favourite shorthand amongst scholars for 'Teague' or 'Paddy' in any time or place, recent work has emphasised the changing nature of comic representations of the Irish since the sixteenth century to reflect the demands of contemporary audiences.³² In the early decades of the nineteenth century, as Jennifer Stiles shows, whilst the stage Irishman remained a comic character, prone to slips of the tongue, naïve misunderstandings and bouts of aggressiveness, he was also often represented as generous, kind-hearted, and even as a patriotic member of the British state.³³ Moreover, Irish audiences not only expected such roles to be played with skill, nuance and a decent Irish accent, but took pleasure, and perhaps pride, in such representations. Paddy was not just popular on the stage. William Carleton's depiction of similarly stereotypical Irishmen in his *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830) was very favourably received and reprinted multiple times over the decade after its publication.³⁴

The Irishman who appeared in the Irish police courts and was reported in Irish newspapers, therefore, was situated against a complex backdrop of representations of comic Irishmen – on the stage, in travel books, and in literature that drew on stereotypical Irish traits – but which were also popular and often associated with real people and actual behaviour. It is also likely that they were targeted at similar audiences within and beyond Ireland. Like elsewhere in Britain, theatre, literature and newspaper audiences were relatively diverse, capturing large parts of the middle and working classes, a distribution that was reinforced in this period through the circulating libraries, reading rooms and similar sociable spaces that were popping up across the country.³⁵ As court reports themselves evidence, both middle and

lower-class audiences demonstrated a familiarity with a wide-range of popular literature and engagement with public affairs. Barristers quoted literature that ranged from Shakespeare to Byron to Robert Burns in popular speeches that often sold widely after trial; witnesses of all classes quoted novels, poetry, the bible, and referred to topical events.³⁶

Stereotypes and power

As most of the work on stereotypes by historians and sociologists has arisen from an interest in how power is negotiated in a variety of contexts, much research has been on the negative uses of the stereotype as a method of ‘othering’ and marginalising or stigmatising particular groups, whilst reinforcing the hegemony of those producing them.³⁷ Such work has focused on representations produced by those outside of the stereotyped group. Instances of the latter participating in the making of their own stereotyped representations have tended to produce methodological headaches that are not easily resolved.³⁸ National stereotypes have caused particular problems in this regard. Often produced within nations as well as by their neighbours, national stereotypes are not always positive yet may be held to be true by the inhabitants, at times with a wry pride.³⁹ Moreover, whilst such stereotypes can be used against a nation’s inhabitants by outsiders and insiders, they have also played an important role in national identity formation, particularly in emerging or colonised nations.⁴⁰

New work in this area increasingly draws on the importance of social scripts to personal identity, where stereotypes can offer a normative guide for behaviour and the performance of identity. Far from shutting down individuality, social scripts provide a range of material that can be drawn on to allow people to express particular facets of selfhood.⁴¹ Such identity-making can have political import as Stuart Hall demonstrates in his work on the formation of Caribbean identities in postcolonial context.⁴² As Hall suggests, national

identities are produced out of engagement with the past, including past representations of particular groups, and their ability to act as a ‘cultural resource’.⁴³ This is not to say that stereotypes, or any other cultural resource, come to define the nation, but that they are one source amongst many that can be used, adapted and reformulated in the construction of national identity. Moreover, such reformulations can act as a form of political resistance to colonising powers, allowing a space for agency within colonial structures.⁴⁴

Humorous stereotypes, such as the stage Irishman, that are, at least in part, designed to evoke laughter are particularly interesting within this context. Much of the work on humour has explored its role within the power dynamics of social relationships. Jokes, funny stories and humorous representations are viewed as central to social order: reinforcing the boundaries of social groups by marking insiders and outsiders; acting to discipline individuals who step outside social boundaries, or providing a warning against doing so; providing a method of resistance by undermining traditional authority structures and giving agency to the marginalised.⁴⁵ Such research has tended to focus on humour that is cruel, limiting, dismissive, or competitive – where wit acts as resource in a battle over authority. More benignly, humour is also recognised for its healing capacity – the ability of certain types of humour to give an emotional release, to bring joy, and to alleviate stress, particularly in moments of heightened danger such as war. Such research has tended to focus on forms of humour that are more playful or silly, or, if political, that is used for in-group solidarity, rather than to overtly discipline outsiders.⁴⁶

Humorous stereotypes have tended, not unreasonably, to be located as a political act designed to undermine or limit the potential of the stereotyped group, and usually to reinforce the hegemony of those who create such representations. The ability of stereotyped groups to use this as a form of resistance has also been noticed. Whilst Stanley Elkin’s famously argued that the Sambo stereotype captured the basic qualities of African-American slaves in a

condition of slavery (arguing that slavery forced people into the child-like, passive behaviour the stereotype captured), many of his respondents argued that Sambo was a mask that could be used to pacify and manipulate slave-owners, and at times, be employed as a mode of resistance.⁴⁷ Paddy, as he appears in the Irish police court records, can be read as a reformulation of a stereotype for the purposes of resisting colonialism.⁴⁸ However, in some respects, the language of ‘reformulation’ is not entirely satisfactory. As explored above, whilst the stage Irishman, like all forms of Irish and British identity, was a product of the colonial relationship, it was one produced by the Irish as well as the British. It was a stereotype that served the purposes of both groups and could be used to multiple and complex ends. The stage Irishman was Irish – if still a stereotype – allowing the Irish to claim it as a form of identity in certain contexts and to use it not only to resist colonial impulses, but to assert a distinctive Irish identity.

Few representations of the police court columns were explicitly political; many, if not most, covered mundane events and everyday local law and order. It is notable that many were reprinted in newspapers across the political spectrum. Peter Gaffney’s first arrest, for dancing a polka on Sackville-street, was reprinted in at least nineteen papers and in Ireland, Scotland and England.⁴⁹ His second arrest after reciting ‘I am Norval’ upside down was reported in three liberal papers, *Freeman’s Journal*, *Weekly Freeman’s Journal* and *Kerry Examiner & Munster General Observer*.⁵⁰ Jemmy Maguire’s case, discussed below, appeared without variation in at least five newspapers, including the conservative *Saunders’s Newsletter* and *Belfast Newsletter*, the liberal *Dublin Evening Post* and *Drogheda Journal*, and further afield in London’s *Morning Advertiser*.⁵¹ However they appeared in an Irish provincial press that was very politically-engaged, tied to particular parties or positions and often sectarian, and could contribute to wider political discussion and disputes.⁵² This was particularly evident when cases that appeared before local courts related to wider political events or occurred

during periods of broader unrest, and local conflicts played out not only as legal argument but as contributions to political debate. For example, Carlow's magistrates used cases arising from the policing of urban space to make political arguments about governance in Ireland and to campaign for re-election in their roles as the local MPs.⁵³ Very occasionally, the representation of individuals during legal proceedings could be contested, with letters to the editor challenging how they (or a particular 'cause') were portrayed, or by persons returning to court to set the record straight. Mr J.A. Curran, for example, appeared before the Dublin magistrates as he 'wished to correct a misstatement with reference to him which appeared in the FREEMAN'S JOURNAL', and to affirm that he did not believe officer 184B was 'the most stupid man in the force', as reported. The *Freeman's Journal* duly reported this event.⁵⁴ Reportage of court proceedings could also act intertextually with other news reports to contribute to a particular political position or argument, so that the behaviour in court of Carlow's campaigning magistrates/MPs was complemented by discussions of their political positions in other parts of the paper.⁵⁵

Moreover, many of these columns were produced during the campaigns for Catholic emancipation and repeal of the union of Britain and Ireland, and at times of growing sectarian tensions and political unrest, providing space for discussion of Irish identity, politics and nationalism.⁵⁶ As Timothy Meagher Mulcahy, an 'attorney and solicitor of the high court', noted when he was sentenced for drunken assault in 1844 after the imprisonment of Irish nationalist Daniel O'Connell and his co-conspirators: 'it is fashionable at present to be under the lock of a gaoler (laughter). The great Dan is in his *quod*—his satellites are there also; the mind of Ireland is imprisoned—Barrett, of *The Pilot*—Gray, of the *Freeman*—Duffy, of *The Nation*—and Tom Steele himself with "my darling son", little John [O'Connell], are all caged (laughter). ... when Ireland's sons are confined, why not Timothy Meagher Mulcahy rub his nose to the bars? (laughter).'⁵⁷ Yet, even in cases where broader political life was not a topic

of a particular concern, as one of the key and long-running representations of Irishness in daily life, these reports became political in their contribution to the making of national identity.⁵⁸

Identifying Irishness in the police courts

The presence of the journalist within the court was not simply incidental. At a historical moment where freedom of the press was increasing in importance, magistrates tolerated reporters as part of the apparatus of justice.⁵⁹ Their presence was understood to actively shape the dynamics of the court. When Lord Langford appeared in the Dublin Henry-Street police court to charge his former servant with harassment and to answer the complaint by the latter over a lack of payment of wages, the journalist noted that he ‘frequently and in a very unbecoming way, interrupted the respectable professional gentleman’ acting as counsel for his servant. Part way through the proceedings, Lord Langford called ‘Stop Sir!–Are you aware there’s a reporter in the room–There’s a man here taking notes’. The reporter of the *Freeman’s Journal* replied: ‘There is a *gentleman* here taking notes–who knows how to conduct himself as becomes one–and whose situation is that of a *gentleman*’. The magistrate observed ‘I don’t care who is in the room. If there is a reporter present, he, of course, knows his duty... if people don’t say any thing that they are afraid or ashamed of, they need not dread a reporter’. The news report concluded that Lord Langford then ‘became very merciful, and signified his wish that the man should be discharged’.⁶⁰ The implication by the journalist as he wrote up this article was that his presence ensured the gentlemanly conduct of those in court, at least of those with a public reputation to protect.

Other men recognised the opportunities for publicity that such appearances enabled. Entertainers (like the singer Zozimus) used appearances before the magistrates to advertise

their ballads and wares for sale through the press; some viewed the court as space to display their literary or musical talents or to contribute to public debate.⁶¹ After being arrested for drunkenness, ‘The Minstrel Boy’ Michael Cummins appeared in over-sized and well-worn clothes before the Dublin magistrates. Cummins claimed his identity as a gentleman who had given up ‘friends, property and all and everything’ for his music, and offered to sing the contextually apt song *Maid of Llanwellyn*, causing great hilarity in the court. He then gave them a rendition of Thomas Moore’s *The Minstrel Boy*. The journalist headed his column ‘A scene in real life’, playing up the theatrical possibilities of the drama he conveyed.⁶² Regardless of the intention of those who appeared in court, as scenes that were converted into often widely-distributed literary representations by journalists, police court columns contributed to public discourse on the nature of Irish identity.

As a result, the co-opting of ‘larger-than-life’ Paddy-like characters by a number of people who came before the court and the decision of reporters to present them to the public is not insignificant, and raises questions as to what function the adoption and representation of such a character enabled. This is not to suggest that those who performed ‘Paddy’ for the court were insincere or simply acting a role (nor that these were fictions of imaginative journalists), but rather it is to recognise the performative dimension of all identity construction.⁶³ An examination of these theatrical performances raises questions as to the function of the Paddy stereotype as a model for identity construction within Irish society and, in turn, it helps to explicate the continued popularity of this stereotype for Irish audiences.

To demonstrate how people, and particularly men, used this model for Irishness, this article focuses on a detailed reading of a report of one particular case. It does so because to understand the social function of these performances of character requires them to be analysed as complex representations that speak simultaneously to multiple domains: from the identity of the individual, to courtroom dynamics, to contemporary politics and national

identity. These characters become ‘larger-than-life’ because of their ability to exceed the acceptable boundaries of conventional behaviour, but also because in doing so they are able to locate themselves in larger debates around identity. They are individuals who manage to speak both for themselves and for something larger at the same time. In this instance, the ‘something larger’ is Irishness and its social and religious divisions, and it is enabled due to the co-option of national stereotypes into these performances. The extent to which the latter is an effect of genre and the stylistic intervention of the journalist, is a more open question. A close reading of such texts requires an engagement with identities in which gender plays a key role. This may reflect that ‘Paddy’ is typically represented as a man and therefore gender is significant in such representations; it is also, in all likelihood, influenced by the importance of gender – and particularly manliness – to claims to political rights during this period which codified gender as significant to identity construction more broadly.⁶⁴

Jemmy Maguire’s manliness

On Thursday last, about one o’clock, Peace Constable Brady, in passing across Essex bridge, perceived a little fellow, who was not only blind of an eye, but blind drunk, surrounded by a number of females, and dancing upon two notes of the Governor and Company of the Bank of Ireland, for £1 each. The officer not understanding his motives for favouring the ladies and the public with this meridian saraband, procured some assistance, and brought him and his company to the Head Police-office, where he was lodged in the peace-officers’ room.⁶⁵ He declared, as well as he was able, that he had been to Mr Birkett’s in Britain-street, to sell fat; that he had drank part of the proceeds, and saw no reason why the officer should prevent him from dancing the toes out of his shoes on the remainder.

An Officer – What is your name?

Prisoner – Jemmy Maguire – I’m right fine; set me out of this, or I’ll smash into the Castle; I’m able to earn ten shillings a day.

Officer – Not by getting drunk.

Maguire – Why, you caubogue, I can work better drunk than sober. I’m right fine; you have made your fortune to-day; you set of sweeps, you were looking for robbers, and you chanced upon me. If I had that sword by my side (pointing to one which lay in the office,) you’d all swear that I had murdered somebody. Switch the primer is your go, and up I’d go, and then you’d pocket your £40 reward.⁶⁶ Here Maguire uttered a loud yell, and took a slight caper about the room.

One of the officers told him that he should remain quiet if he did not wish to be removed to a more disagreeable place.

Maguire— The d—l a more unpleasant place I could be in than where I am. You’ll never be broke after this job unless I break your head in Malahide, if I get you there.

...

Here Jones, one of the officers happening to pass through the room. Maguire surveyed him from top to toe, and swore, in a stage whisper, that he was a b—dy Brunswicker, and that the way to know a Brunswicker was by a particular cut of the whiskers, for which Jones is famous. But, said Maguire, why should such fellows cut down a nation in a Christian country – ‘The sons of owld *Iron* are *bould* and free,/ Flow’rs of the earth and a *jinn* of the *say*.’⁶⁷ That’s the song, you soul, and I can sing it right fine.

A stander-by observed, that the prisoner was the about the size of Mr Shiel.

Shiel, said Maguire, why, you beast, he’s but a *shillicock* to me. But although he has a little body, he has a very large tongue.

Stranger – How do you like Dan O’Connell?

Maguire – Right fair – the worst word ever he said, always pleased me. Bring him up here, as I’m a *College reared* man, and I want to argue politics with him.

At this instant a very tall sweep was brought into the office, charged by Mr Crosbie, of Parliament-street, with breaking his windows. Maguire looked hard at him for a few minutes. – Are you Dan, says he? The sweep replied that his name was Peter. I knew d–n well, said Maguire, that you were not the Counsellor, although you are dressed in black. There’s another black fellow (pointing to Church, one of the officers, who was at that moment running a pocket comb through his raven hair.) Don’t make yourself too nice, or all the women in Dublin will be running after you. Church blushed, and did not reply.

Are you tired of me yet, said Maguire; because if you are, the easiest way is to let me go. I don’t care a fig about the King of England, but I can dance, drink, wrestle, or fight. Where’s that Brunswicker, till I give him one toss for the good of ould Ireland. Peace officer Lynch happened to enter at this moment, Maguire seized him by both hands, forced him through the movements of a most original *pas de deux*, and then complimented him with a hug, so long and oppressive, that Lynch became nearly as black in the face as the sweep, and it was found necessary to apply some burnet feathers to his nose before he could be revived.⁶⁸

When Maguire was finally taken in front of the magistrate, his behaviour was only marginally less outrageous. After Dublin’s Chief Magistrate, Alderman Frederick Darley, an architect and active Orangeman who was anti-Catholic emancipation, ordered that his money be returned, his wife objected vociferously and in anger Maguire tore up the notes and attempted to throw a bag of half crowns through the window. The magistrate then ordered the

money to be placed in safe-keeping until the next morning, when Maguire should have sobered up; in turn, Maguire replied, 'You wouldn't ask a man to breakfast'?

This amusing vignette set in a Dublin police office and the on-site courtroom appeared in papers across Ireland in late December 1828. 1828 was a propitious date for Catholic Ireland, which was still subject to stringent penal legislation that limited the role of Catholics in public life. Earlier in the year the Sacramental Test Act had removed the requirement that holders of civic government positions in England be members of the Anglican Church, immediately putting pressure on the British parliament to also emancipate Catholic Ireland. In July 1828, the leader of the long-running emancipation movement, the hugely popular Catholic lawyer Daniel O'Connell was elected to a seat in Westminster but could not take it up due to his faith. The inability of this entertaining, well-spoken and widely-respected political leader to take his seat raised the threat of potential uprising in Ireland, and by December, the political climate was such that Catholic emancipation felt tangible and those who supported it jubilantly awaited the inevitable.⁶⁹ The Roman Catholic Relief Act passed through parliament in March and received Royal Assent in April 1829.

Jemmy Maguire, the man who was arrested, was described as a 'little fellow', 'blind of an eye', and 'about the size of Mr Shiel'. Richard Shiel was a small-statured, well-known lawyer, playwright and campaigner for Catholic emancipation, who worked closely with Daniel O'Connell as part of the Catholic Association. Jemmy denied he was short, arguing that Shiel was but a 'shillicock' in comparison.⁷⁰ He was contrasted in the article with a 'very tall sweep', a 'black fellow' with 'raven hair', and Jones who appeared to be a Brunswicker, due to the 'cut of his whiskers'. A Brunswicker was a supporter of the Protestant Brunswick Clubs that campaigned against Catholic emancipation.⁷¹ Moustaches were associated with the yeomanry in Ireland and the UK during this period, and the Irish yeomanry with Protestantism and particularly anti-Catholic Orangeism.⁷² As such, there was understood to

be significant overlap in membership between Brunswickers, the yeomanry and the Orange lodge. Tensions between Brunswickers and members of the Catholic Association, and the more radical Catholic Ribbonmen, were particularly high during the second half of 1828 and the government considered disarming the yeomanry to stop bloodshed.⁷³ Physical appearance was clearly important to how these men identified each other, both in terms of political identity – with Maguire being contrasted with Shiel, and Jones with the Brunswickers – and also in terms of their manliness.

Maguire was quick to distance himself from the imputation of shortness, which is not surprising given that Irishmen prided themselves on their height and tended to be slightly taller than average when compared to the English and Welsh.⁷⁴ In contrast to Maguire, John Tobin who appeared in front of the Carlow Petty Session for riot was described as ‘a young able bodied fellow standing about six feet high and exhibiting the very prototype of Paddy Carey for “broad were his shoulders, four feet sq, his cheeks like thumping red potatoes!”’, tying height to attractiveness.⁷⁵ Paddy Carey was a popular song during the period whose Irish protagonist was ‘lov’d by all the ladies’, ‘Oh sweet Paddy! beautiful Paddy!’. Despite Maguire’s small stature, his performance in court was highly physical. He was arrested for dancing and whilst under arrest ‘caper[ed] about the room’, seized a police officer by the hands and forced him to dance, before finally hugging the officer so violently that he fainted. When in front of the magistrate, he dramatically tore up his money and attempted to throw coins across the room.

Maguire’s physical performance was designed to speak to his manliness. First, through forcing a man to dance and then hugging him until he fainted, he proved that his lack of height did not reflect physical weakness or lack. He was a strong man, who as he pointed out can ‘dance, drink, wrestle or fight’. The association between physical strength, aggression and manliness was long-running by the early nineteenth century, but dancing was also an

important marker of masculinity.⁷⁶ It demonstrated civilised self-control over bodily expression and movement, a polite education, and made men attractive to women and so spoke to their virility. Through leading the policeman in a dance, he also located himself as the ‘man’ to the policeman’s ‘woman’, which in the context of gender norms of the period reinforced his authority over the police.

Maguire’s use of physical space was part of a negotiation about the site of power in the court, operating on the underlying principle that the man who dominated the stage held the most authority. Physical movement, whether capering and dancing across the police office, or marching across territories, acted symbolically to claim a right to be in that space.⁷⁷ It contrasted with the containment suggested in being under arrest or locked away; the freedom of movement acted as a challenge to the court or police authority over their ability to control, disrupting the hierarchy of the legal system. Such movement was a form of carnivalesque play, turning upside down social order, even if only temporarily.⁷⁸ In the context of the court, such performances challenged expectations around appropriate and orderly behaviour, and due to the association between manliness and power, they acted to redistribute power by reinforcing the manliness of particularly exuberant performers, if only within the context of the moment. As such and especially when printed for a wider audience, it acted as a reminder of the limitations of governance over the individual and the group they represented, opening up alternative ways of imagining social relationships.

As suggested in Maguire’s own comment about Shiel that ‘although he has a little body, he has a very large tongue’, physical prowess was not the only way to display manliness in the space of the court. Perhaps the most prized attribute in an Irish courtroom was the ability to be witty, possibly due to the fact that verbal skills were the most appropriate and evident in that context. Cross-examinations in particular were often styled as a game of wits, with the barrister William Curran noting that he was required to ‘adopt every

artifice of humour and ridicule, as more effectual than seriousness or menace, to extract the truth and expose their [the lower order's] equivocations'.⁷⁹ Despite his drunkenness, Maguire demonstrated his verbal skills, showing wit, humour and, importantly, the ability to banter. After the magistrate decided he was too drunk to be given his money and asked him to return, saying 'Call on me in the morning', Maguire replied 'You wouldn't ask a man to breakfast' – a ridiculous and improbable likelihood in the circumstances, but a statement that was both funny and acted to destabilise social distinctions by implying Maguire was of a similar status to the judge.

This sort of banter was very common in courts, particularly between lawyers or between lawyers and witnesses on the stand. In the case of *Magarahan v Maguire*, Daniel O'Connell asked a witness:

I suppose you like scalteen [an alcoholic drink]? Why, yes, I like it very well.

How do you like it? Sometimes strong, sometimes weak.

When do you like it weak? After I have taken a good deal of it strong.⁸⁰

Banter in this context operated as a battle of wits and, interestingly, appears to have been understood to give glory to the victor, who had the final word. Outwitting your opponent in a battle of verbal sparring was a key feature of Irish trials and lawyers, like O'Connell, who were particularly good at doing it were respected, attracting large audiences who came to watch them perform.⁸¹ It even appears that such quick thinking was more highly prized than physical strength in demonstrating manliness in Irish culture.

Humour was also used in other ways. When the sweep was brought into the office, Maguire set up a scenario to allow himself to tell jokes, beginning by asking the sweep whether he was Dan. When told no, Maguire then made a fairly run-of-the-mill joke that 'you

were not the Counsellor, although you are dressed in black', playing on the fact that Daniel O'Connell was a lawyer – from which he earned his nickname 'the Counsellor' – who wore black legal robes, and the sweep was black due to his occupation. Maguire then continued on this theme by turning to the raven-haired police officer and teasing him for his vanity in combing his hair: 'Don't make yourself too nice, or all the women in Dublin will be running after you'. Maguire's ability to take a theme – in this case blackness – and tie it together across a number of scenarios was a highly prized form of humorous storytelling. His ability was reinforced by the narrative arc that he used for his joke, in which he took the story down one road, changed direction (in storytelling terms), and then came back to the original joke in another context. This sort of humour was also prized for being circumstance dependent. Maguire was not telling readily-prepared jokes, or if he was, as in the case of the Counsellor joke, he was telling them appropriately in response to contextual stimuli. Both of these things were viewed to demonstrate intelligence and quick-wit.

Finally, in teasing the raven-haired policeman and causing him to blush, Maguire shamed the police officer, challenging his manliness through references to his vanity. In doing so, he opposed a form of masculinity based on too much attention to appearance, and so effeminacy, but interestingly also associated with wooing women. This is an interesting tension, given that virility was so central to manliness during this period. The 'dandy', as the vain and effeminate man of the period was known, went too far in his pursuit of women, undermining his manliness and authority by subordinating himself to female desire.⁸² This conflicted with 'proper' social order through challenging patriarchal gender hierarchies. Women's desire should be both limited and safely contained within marriage, not determining male fashion.⁸³ Moreover, men were expected to be active in courtship, rather than trying to get women to pursue them.

Maguire's physical and verbal proofs of his manliness act to destabilise the traditional hierarchies of the police court space. He both exerted his authority over the other members within it and used humour to shame and discipline those around him. At the same time, as represented in this article, he is also a comic character, entertaining and amusing the reading and, perhaps, watching audience. Whilst laughing at a person is usually understood as a shaming or diminishing mechanism, the key to the comic character is their ability to subvert laughter for their own purposes. Comic characters in literature may be silly or ridiculous, but the humour and significance of their representation often lies not in their own actions as much as in their interaction with the 'straight man'. They are frequently used as a literary device to highlight the problems with the seemingly normative, to draw attention to the absurdity of the everyday, and to destabilise existing power relationships.⁸⁴ Yet, whilst in many humorous contexts 'the challenge' to social order is as much as the comic character can offer as a form of resistance, Maguire goes further in his active assertion that his comic manhood is still masculine, still political, still a valid identity for the Irish.

As well as negotiating power relationships abstractly through theatrical prancing and humorous joking, Maguire explicitly engaged in a negotiation about appropriate behaviour and political power in the urban environment. Jemmy Maguire was arrested for drunken behaviour. As he noted: 'I can work better drunk than sober', drawing on an older ideal where work-time and pleasure-time were not distinctly separated and capturing a popular idea within this culture that the man who worked better drunk was the more successful for being able to maximise his pleasure time.⁸⁵ We can compare this with another theatrical drunk, who when questioned on his sobriety retorted: '(with great energy of tone and manner)—Admit I was drunk! To be sure I admit I was drunk! Drunk indeed! I was gloriously drunk—superbly drunk—majestically drunk—drunk as a tinker on his wedding night'.⁸⁶ By the early nineteenth century, the acceptability of drunkenness was far from an uncontested notion, as suggested by

the policeman's question. The 1820s saw a growing temperance movement in Ireland, and many people were actively trying to discard the stereotype of the drunken Irishman.⁸⁷

Maguire's defence of his lack of sobriety was a challenge to the authority of the police to arrest drunks, through asserting drunkenness as a valid manly behaviour.

Like many men arrested by the 'new police', Maguire demonstrated a general resentment towards their authority and questioned their ability to exercise power over people other than the very poor.⁸⁸ Maguire protested that his arrest was frivolous and motivated by the greed of officers, looking for financial reward after capturing a criminal. He repeatedly pointed to his earning potential – that he earned 10s a day, a sum that would make him comfortably middle class – and even referred to his university education, to suggest that his arrest was inappropriate. This was very typical behaviour in the police courts, with one magistrate even remarking in 1839 that: 'There appeared to be also a feeling gone abroad among the more respectable class of persons, that gentlemen, or all persons who choose to call themselves gentlemen, ought to be passed by, no matter what they may be doing, by the police, and it appeared to be the constant rule with such persons to obstruct the policemen in the discharge of their duty'.⁸⁹ Through contests over the appropriate boundaries of policing, such behaviour acted to challenge the role of the new police in the urban environment, particularly in relationship to men who considered themselves respectable. In doing so, such men reaffirmed their social class and the political authority that they felt went with it.

The case also engaged with the wider political debates of the day. Daniel O'Connell, Richard Shiel and the Brunswick Clubs were household names, appearing in almost every issue of every newspaper in these months. By introducing these characters into this rather everyday event – the arrest of a drunk for disorderly behaviour – this situation was explicitly politicised. The reader might wonder who 'the stranger' was who initially compared Maguire to Shiel and then asked him if he liked Dan O'Connell, but, in doing so, Maguire came not

only to symbolise a particular type of Irish manliness, but also a particular political position. Maguire, recognising that ‘independence’, including from party spirit, was a key touchstone of middle-class manliness during the period, attempted to both endorse O’Connell and locate himself as an independent political actor in offering to debate with him. The latter request was also effectively a boast given O’Connell’s renowned skills in verbal sparring. Despite Maguire’s attempt to situate himself as an independent political actor, his association with O’Connell implicated his performance in the police court in O’Connell’s cause. Written up for the press and published across Ireland, Maguire’s behaviour fed into wider discourse around the nature of O’Connellite and Irish manliness and, due to the association between political rights and manhood, Irish political rights.

Conclusion

As represented in the press, Maguire could have been read in multiple ways. For some, he may have been a comic and witty fellow, reflecting the sharp-tongue and playfulness of the true Irishman, so demonstrating their political readiness; for others, he would have been a drunken sot, also typical of the Irish, and highlighting their inability to take care of themselves. For yet another group of readers, he may have been a drunken sot but not particularly typical of Irishness and, so, an anomaly to be overlooked when considering their political rights. Having noted these potentials however, it is worth highlighting just how successful Maguire’s performance was. Whilst his behaviour was rendered in a comic mode as extravagant and entertaining, the masculinity represented here exceeds that offered by the other men he encounters in the space of the court. In some similar reports, this extravagant manly potential was shut down by the magistrate through his use of punishment, but Maguire,

in all likelihood due to his social class, was not penalised. In many respects, he was left as the ‘bigger man’ in this interaction.

It is likely that some men would have rejected Maguire’s model of manliness *due* to its extravagance, perhaps particularly because of the lack of decorum, and so self-control, that he demonstrates. Yet, within this period at least, whilst it was not the only model of manliness available, the physically aggressive, fast-talking and quick-tongued Irishman was a matter of some pride for much of the Irish population, who wrote, read and watched such characters in books and plays. As such, Maguire and his fellow Paddys’ representations of manliness acted to challenge the powerlessness associated with colonial stereotypes, and are suggestive of their potential to be not only a tool for colonial resistance but an assertion of power and national identity. In demonstrating ‘Paddy’s’ ability to exert power over other men in the space of the court, if temporarily, and the superiority of his masculinity to the other forms on offer, Jemmy held out a national stereotype as an evidence of the equivalency – perhaps even superiority – of Irishness to the identities offered by the police and magistracy and so implicitly the colonial state.

Whilst humorous stereotypes have been recognised as sites of contestation over power and meaning, being used to shape communities and their boundaries, to create in-group solidarity or to limit the power of others, they also have the potential to be reworked as sites of resistance to existing political and social structures. Here the comic potential of many stereotypes is not insignificant, with humour and its ties to the carnivalesque providing opportunities to critique and destabilise sites of authority. However, as with the ‘Paddy’ stereotype, it is not always clear that this is a simple case of the reclamation of a ‘label’ for subversive purposes, but it is reflective of the ways that certain identities and stereotypes are a product of systems of power relations. Paddy was an artefact of both the Irish and British, the embodiment of the tensions, competitions and identity overlaps inherent within

colonialism, of competing claims to what it meant to be Irish and British. Its uses by the Irish and the Irish press therefore contributed to a protracted and evolving discussion around Irish identity, one that – through the courts and press – was open to men who often had little other opportunity to contribute to such discussions. In its contestation of the existing structures of power within which identities are embedded (whether those of gender, class or nationality), it is not dissimilar to the other ‘larger than life’ characters that appeared in the press in other parts of the United Kingdom. Yet, as the structures that shaped Paddy were those of colonialism, in an Irish context these representations had wider implications for nationhood. This was foregrounded when such issues were explicitly discussed in the police courts. The police court reports of ‘larger-than-life’ characters, then, were not simply humorous tales of the criminal poor, but complex representations of and engagements with debates around Irish identity.

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³⁵ 'Court House News Rooms', *Wexford Independent*, 9 June 1841; Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'Oral culture, literacy and the growth of a popular readership, 1800-1850', in James H. Murphy (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book* (Oxford, 2011), vol. 4, 173; Kelly J. Mays, 'Domestic spaces, readerly acts: reading(,) gender and class in working-class autobiography', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 30(4) (2008), pp. 342-68; David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: a Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography* (London, 1981), 24-5.

³⁶ For examples of barristers see references in: *The Speeches of Charles Phillips, Esq., delivered at the Bar and on Various Public Occasions* (London, 1822), 76-101 (Guthrie v. Sterne 1815, Dublin); 128-143 (Connaghton v Dillon 1816, Roscommon); 161-81 (Blake v. Wilkins 1817, Galway); 202-24 (Brown v. Blake 1817, Dublin). For the lower orders see:

‘Kilrush Petty Session’, *Dublin Morning Register*, 23 September 1840; ‘Dublin Police’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 May 1842.

³⁷ William P. Bottom and Dejun Tony Kong, “‘The casual cruelty of our prejudices’: on Walter Lippman’s theory of stereotype and its ‘obliteration’ in psychology and social science”, *Journal of the History of Behavioural Sciences*, 48, 4 (2012), 370; Wall, ‘It is and it isn’t’; Mangan, ‘Images for confident control’, 108; Heininge, *Buffoonery*, 56.

³⁸ For example, Trotter argues that Irish representations of the stage Irish were limited by the demands of English audiences, Trotter, *Ireland’s National Theaters*, 38; see also Heinz Kosok, ‘John Bull’s other ego: reactions to the Stage Irishmen in Anglo-Irish drama’, in Richard Wall (ed.), *Medieval and Modern Ireland* (Gerrard’s Cross, 1988), 19-33.

³⁹ Isobel Lindsay, ‘The uses and abuses of national stereotypes’, *Scottish Affairs*, 20 (1997), 138-44.

⁴⁰ Stuart Hall, ‘Negotiating Caribbean identities’, *New Left Review*, 209 (1995), 3-14; Claudia Barcellos Rezende, ‘Stereotypes and national identity: experiencing the “emotional Brazillian”’, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 15 (2008), 103-22.

⁴¹ K. Anthony Appiah, ‘Stereotypes and the Shaping of Identity’, *California Law Review*, 88, 1 (2000), 41-53; Penny Summerfield, ‘Culture and composure: creating narratives of the gendered self in oral history interviews’, *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), 65-93.

⁴² Hall, ‘Negotiating Caribbean identities’.

⁴³ Hall, ‘Negotiating Caribbean identities’, 14.

⁴⁴ Joanne Smith Finley, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance: Uyghur Identities and Uyghur-Han Relations in Contemporary Xinjiang* (Leiden, 2013); Heininge, *Buffoonery*, 56.

⁴⁵ Simon Critchley, *On Humour* (London, 2002); Boskin and Dorinson, ‘Ethnic humour’; Krista Cowman, “‘Doing something silly’: the uses of humour by the Women’s Social and

Political Union, 1903-1914', *International Review of Social History*, 52 (2007), 259-74;

Marjolein 't Hart, 'Humour and social protest: an introduction', *International Review of Social History*, 52 (2007), 1-20 (and remainder of this special issue); Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago, 2011); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1983), 20 and 41.

⁴⁶ Jean-Yves Le Naour, 'Laughter and tears in the Great War: the need for laughter/ the guilt of humour', *Journal of European Studies*, 31 (2001), 265-75; Andrew Robertshaw, "'Irrepressible chirpy Cockney chappies"? Humour as an aid to survival', *Journal of European Studies*, 31 (2001), 277-87; Neringa Klumbyte, 'Political intimacy: power, laughter and coexistence in late Soviet Lithuania', *East European Politics and Societies*, 25 (2011), 658-77; F.K.M. Hillenbrand, *Underground Humour in Nazi Germany, 1933-1945* (London, 1995).

⁴⁷ Elkins, *Slavery*, 133-40; Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black/White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York, 1986); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, 1995), 153.

⁴⁸ Katie Barclay, 'Singing and lower-class masculinity in the Dublin Magistrate's Court, 1800-1845', *Journal of Social History*, 47, 3 (2014), 746-68.

⁴⁹ 'Dublin Police', *Freeman's Journal*, 19 June 1844; 'Dublin Police', *Cork Examiner*, 21 June 1844; 'Most Extraordinary Case', *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 22 June 1844, 7; 'Dublin Police', *The Warder & Dublin Evening Mail*, 22 June 1844, 7; 'Dublin Police', *Dublin Weekly Register*, 22 June 1844, 3; 'Dublin Police', *Kilkenny Journal and Commercial & Literary Advertiser*, 22 June 1844; 'Henry Street Police Office', *Belfast Commercial Courier*, 24 June 1844; 'Henry Street Police Office', *Waterford Chronicle*, 26 June 1844; 'Dublin

Police', *Athlone Sentinel*, 28 June 1844; 'Dublin Police- Henry Street', *Northern Standard*, 29 June 1844; 'Dublin Police', *Tuam Herald*, 29 June 1844; 'Dublin Police- Henry Street', *Drogheda Conservative Journal*, 29 June 1844; 'Dublin Police', *John O'Groats Journal*, 12 July 1844; 'The Polka in Dublin', *Hereford Times*, 27 July 1844, 120; 'The Polka in Dublin', *Glasgow Citizen*, 2 August 1844; 'The Polka in Dublin', *Leamington Spa Courier*, 3 August 1844; 'The Polka in Dublin', *Kendal Mercury*, 3 August 1844; 'The Polka in Dublin', *Fife Herald*, 8 August 1844, 100; 'The Polka in Dublin', *Leicester Journal*, 9 August 1844.

⁵⁰ 'Dublin Police', *Freeman's Journal*, 17 October 1844; '184B and Gaffney the Tailor', *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 19 October 1844, 3; 'Dublin Police', *Kerry Examiner & Munster General Observer*, 22 October 1844.

⁵¹ 'Head police office', *Saunders's Newsletter*, 22 December 1828; 'Head police office', *Dublin Evening Post*, 24 December 1828; 'Dublin Police', *Drogheda Journal, or Meath & Louth Advertiser*, 24 December 1828; 'Dublin police', *Belfast Newsletter*, 26 December 1828; 'Dublin Police', *Morning Advertiser*, 30 December 1828.

⁵² Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians*, 37; Robert Munter, *The History of the Irish Newspaper 1685-1760* (Cambridge, 1967); Brian Inglis, *The Freedom of the Press in Ireland, 1784-1841* (Westport, 1975).

⁵³ Barclay, 'Manly Magistrates'; see also discussion around police in 'To Major Miller, Inspector General of the City Police', *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 21 June 1834.

⁵⁴ 'Dublin Police', *Freeman's Journal*, 28 December 1844. I am yet to uncover a petty session/police court case where multiple descriptions of the same event were published simultaneously, although this occurs for the higher courts.

⁵⁵ Barclay, 'Manly Magistrates'.

⁵⁶ Other examples include: ‘Dublin police’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 3 December 1838; ‘Dublin police’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 December 1844; ‘Dublin police’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 9 January 1844; ‘Dublin police’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 September 1844; ‘Dublin police’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 31 October 1828; ‘Dublin Police’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 12 September 1840; ‘Dublin police’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 24 October 1840; ‘Dublin Police’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 7 September 1844.

⁵⁷ ‘Cork Police’, *Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail*, 15 June 1844, 8.

⁵⁸ For a similar point see: Barclay, ‘Singing and Lower-Class Masculinity’.

⁵⁹ Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow, 2000); Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century* (Oxford, 1998).

⁶⁰ ‘Dublin Police’, *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 29 May 1830.

⁶¹ Barclay, ‘Singing and Lower-Class Masculinity’.

⁶² ‘Dublin Police’, *Dublin Monitor*, 25 June 1839.

⁶³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, 1999).

⁶⁴ Mathew McCormack, *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester, 2006), 165-9; Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley, 1995), 141-47; Nancy Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford, 1994), 13-37.

⁶⁵ A saraband was a type of dance, noted for its small steps. It evolved from a Spanish dance performed to maracas.

⁶⁶ ‘Switch the primer’ is an expression referring to the practice of swapping out the prayerbook (primer) or Bible for another text when swearing an oath, allowing the oath-taker to lie without facing eternal retribution.

⁶⁷ The first line of the song may have been ‘The sons of old Erin are bold and free’, but its origins have not been identified. ‘Sons of Erin’ and ‘bold and free’ appear in a number of popular works. Line two may be quoting ‘First flower of the earth and first gem of the sea’, from Thomas Moore, ‘Remember Thee’, in *The Works of Thomas Moore, esq* (Leipsic, 1833), 244.

⁶⁸ ‘Dublin police’, *Belfast Newsletter*, 26 December 1828.

⁶⁹ Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin Civic Politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism, 1660-1840* (Oxford, 1997); Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830* (Cork, 1996); C. H. E. Philpin, ed., *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 2002); John Bew, *The Glory of Being Britons: Civic Unionism in Nineteenth-Century Belfast* (Dublin, 2009).

⁷⁰ I cannot identify the origins of ‘shillicock’.

⁷¹ Sean Farrell, *Rituals and Riots: Sectarian Violence and Political Culture in Ulster, 1784-1886* (Lexington, 2000), 88-9.

⁷² Farrell, *Rituals and Riots*, 69-74; the relationships between yeomanry and moustaches is made in a number of nineteenth-century literary works and later becomes ‘regulation’, see for example, Charlotte Yonge, *Dynevor Terrace, or the Clue of Life* (Leipzig, 1857), 115.

⁷³ Desmond Keenan, *Ireland 1800-1850* (Bloomington, 2001), 195.

⁷⁴ Roderick Floud, Annabel Gregory, Kenneth Wachter, *Height, Health and History: Nutritional Status in the United Kingdom, 1750-1980* (Cambridge, 1990), 202-3.

⁷⁵ ‘Carlow Petty Session’, *Carlow Morning Post*, 2 January 1832.

⁷⁶ Matthew McCormack, ‘Dance and drill: polite accomplishments and military masculinities in Georgian Britain’, *Cultural and Social History*, 8, 3 (2011), 315-30.

⁷⁷ Barclay, ‘Singing and Lower-Class Masculinity’.

⁷⁸ Peter Stallybrass, “‘Drunk with the cup of liberty’: Robin Hood, the carnivalesque, and the rhetoric of violence in early modern England”, in Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (eds), *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence* (London, 1989), 45-76.

⁷⁹ William Curran, *The Life of the Right Honourable John Philpott Curran, Later Master of the Rolls in Ireland* (New York, 1820), 69.

⁸⁰ James Mongan, *A Report of the Trial of the Action in which Bartholomew McGarahan was the Plaintiff and the Rev Thomas Maguire was the Defendant...* (Dublin, 1827), 64.

⁸¹ Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Great Dan: a Biography of Daniel O’Connell* (London, 1984), 75-98; Patrick M. Geoghegan, *King Dan: the Rise of Daniel O’Connell, 1775-1829* (Dublin, 2008), 56-84.

⁸² Christopher Breward, ‘Masculine pleasures: metropolitan identities and the commercial sites of Dandyism, 1790-1840’, *London Journal*, 28, 1 (2003), 60-72.

⁸³ Katie Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power: Marriage and Patriarchy in Scotland, 1650-1850* (Manchester, 2011), Chapter 3.

⁸⁴ Agnes Heller, *Immortal Comedy: The Comic Phenomenon in Art, Literature, and Life* (Oxford, 2005), 156.

⁸⁵ James S. Roberts, ‘Drink and industrial work discipline in nineteenth-century Germany’, *Journal of Social History*, 15, 1 (1981), 25-38.

⁸⁶ ‘Dublin Police’, *Cork Examiner*, 23 September 1842.

⁸⁷ Colm Kerrigan, ‘Temperance and politics in pre-famine Galway’, *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 43 (1991), 82-94; Maria McHale, ‘Singing and sobriety: music and the temperance movement in Ireland, 1838-43’, in Michael Murphy and Jan Smaczny (eds), *Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), 166-86.

⁸⁸ Brian Griffin, *The Bulkies: Police and Crime in Belfast, 1800-1865* (Dublin, 1998), 98-115.

⁸⁹ 'Dublin police – yesterday', *Freemans Journal*, 7 September 1839.