

## Edmund Burke's Political Poetics

The politician and orator, Edmund Burke (1729-1797), has a curious place in British literary and political history. His speeches are considered among the finest in the British canon but are also regarded as anomalous in terms of their aesthetics and rather excessive in the passion exerted to excite a political response.<sup>1</sup> This essay investigates the organisation and conduct of the literary and debating clubs that Edmund Burke founded both while a student in Dublin and later as a writer and politician in London to argue that they share remarkable similarities with the exuberant Cúirteanna or “Courts of poetry” of Burke’s childhood among the Gaelic landed class of eighteenth-century Ireland. The essay closes with a discussion of Burke’s understanding of his function as a political orator and literary man to show how his performance in this regard might appear strange in a British context but is consonant with self-fashioning of the gentlemen-poets of the Munster Cúirteanna.

At the age of sixteen, while at Trinity College Dublin, Edmund Burke founded a debating and discussion society known as “The Club,” which exists today as the TCD Literary and Historical Society. Burke’s Club is the earliest example we have of a student debating society in Ireland or Britain.<sup>2</sup> In a letter to his close friend from his schooldays in Ballitore, Dick Shackleton, Burke referred to the fact that the idea for the formation of such a group had been with him for a few years before he went to Trinity.<sup>3</sup> The Club was not an open society; it was a small exclusive group of seven members and its activities consisted of reading prepared essays, the reciting and reading aloud of poetry, and debating in “personated characters” on set themes. The rules of conduct and minutes of the meetings of Burke’s Club are still extant and the preface to the rules states that the Club is to perform the function of a school so that “when years draw us further into the cares and business of life, we would be thereby enabled to go with more ease through the Duties of it; and more largely to contribute to the good of the public and to the increase of our private interest”.<sup>4</sup>

When he settled in London, Burke was the founder member of “The Literary Club,” dedicated to the entertainment and instruction of its members through the art of conversation and debate. This club met for over thirty years, every Monday at seven in the evening at the Turk’s Head tavern in Soho. At its inception it consisted of nine men, including Dr Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Joshua Reynolds and Burke’s father-in-law, Dr Nugent. “The Club,” immortalised in Boswell’s *Life of Dr Johnson*, later admitted more members, among them some of the most famous names in British eighteenth-century cultural life, such as David Garrick, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Charles Fox, David Hume and Adam Smith.

Robert Bisset gives us a vivid account of Burke at The Literary Club; he tells us that Burke excelled at conversation as much as he did at formal public speaking because, like the best of oral performers, he could tailor his discourse to “the capacities, and habits, and knowledge of the person addressed. He could convey information either to the simple or the refined, and instruction either to the clown or the sage”. Bisset describes Burke’s conversation as “an unaffected effusion of knowledge, imagery, sentiment, reasoning, philosophy”.<sup>5</sup> Besides *ad hoc* debates in various coffee houses, there was no model in English culture for this regular gathering of talent and wit in the Turk’s Head tavern.<sup>6</sup> The Scriblerus Club of Swift, Pope, Gay and others met for a few months in 1714 “to ridicule all the false tastes in learning”,<sup>7</sup> and the Dilettanti Society was a gathering of gentlemen who had travelled in Italy and Asia Minor and were keen to promote the study of the region by British artists and antiquarians, but neither group bears much affinity with the Literary Club.

An obvious precedent for Burke’s Clubs is the exuberant Cúirteanna or “Courts” of Burke’s childhood among the Gaelic landed class of eighteenth-century Ireland. Burke’s mother was a Nagle from North Cork, and the Nagles were a proud Gaelic Catholic Jacobite clan, one of the most influential Gaelic gentry families among the few who survived the defeat of the Stuarts in Ireland. Burke’s formative childhood years were spent with the Nagles in the Blackwater Valley, North Cork, where he was educated in a traditional manner at a local hedge-school.<sup>8</sup> Bardic schools were part of Irish history by the eighteenth century, but *dámhscoileanna* (schools of poets), *cúirteanna éigse* (courts of poetry) and *cúirteanna na mbúrdún* (district courts of poetry) still flourished all over Cork. Like Burke’s Clubs, these poetic schools and courts were private groups of literary men, dedicated to their own instruction and entertainment through competitive performance. These gatherings of poets and wits centred around a “sheriff,” “high sheriff,” or “chief poet,” and they provided a playful yet sophisticated forum for the performance of new poetic compositions, the recitation of old favourites, and a learned arena for the setting of future literary and political agendas. Ever since the Elizabethan

proclamation to “Hang the Harpers,” and burn their instruments, Gaelic poetry was engaged with the political situation of colonised Ireland, not least of all because the very language itself was under threat of erosion from the official language of English.<sup>9</sup> A verse by Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín/Hugh Mac Curtin, provides a vivid illustration:

Féach na flatha ba fairsing in Éirinn uair  
gur éirigh Galla agus ceannaithe caola an chnuais  
le tréimhse eatortha ag teagasc a mbéas don tsluagh;  
do réir mar mheallaid a mbailte dob aolta snuadh  
tá Béarla i bhfaisean go tairise is Gaeilge fuar.

Consider the rulers who once were generous in Ireland  
until foreigners and the cunning avaricious merchants came between them, teaching their own customs to the  
people;  
according as they seduce our fairest towns  
English becomes fashionable and Irish decays.<sup>10</sup>

Daniel Corkery tells us that “verses were nearly always written on current events, as was the Gaelic fashion” (Corkery 102). In reviewing eighteenth-century Gaelic literature in Cork city, Cornelius Buttimer shows how poets such as Burke's tutor, the friar, Liam Inglis, composed poems in reaction to newspaper reports on the progress of what came to be known as the Seven Years War.<sup>11</sup> **Letter to his uncle Patrick asking for English – sending on newspapers** The Seven Years' War (1756-63) was waged between the colonial powers of Britain and France as each sought commercial dominance of the new world colonies. Britain's allies were Prussia and Hanover, while France drew on the support of Austria, Sweden, Saxony, Russia and eventually Spain. Many of these poems can be generally described as Jacobite in character but many Gaelic poems from this era also focus on local issues. The North Cork poet Seán Clárach Mac Dónaill was famous for his Jacobite songs but one of his best-known compositions is a poem on the death of the hated landlord, Colonel Dawson from Aherlow, which begins:

Taiscigh, a chlocha, fá choigilt i gcoimeád criadh  
an feallaire fola 's an stollaire, Dawson liath;  
a ghaisce níos cloiseadh i gcogadh ná i gcath lá glia,  
ach ag creachadh 's ag crochadh 's ag coscáirt na mbochtán riamh.

Keep fast under cover, o stones, in closet of clay  
this grey-haired Dawson, a bloody and treacherous butcher.  
Not in struggle or strife in the fight are his exploits known  
but ravaging and hanging and mangling the poor forever.<sup>12</sup>

Seán Ó Tuama explains that Irish poetry from Burke's time was inherently political in its subject matter and public in its address. The Irish poets sought to rally their audiences to speak back against political injustices, especially on the matter of the oppression of Irish culture.

A great deal of [Irish poetry] is political poetry or a response to social — and linguistic — injustice. The purely personal lyric voice is rarely heard, [...]

but there is no mistaking the strong personal feeling that attaches itself to public issues. And it is a kind of poetry that demands a listening rather than a reading audience.<sup>13</sup>

Irish language poetry of this era was not published in print form and manuscripts were not generally circulated but were used as personal aide memoirs: This learned, politically inspired poetry was created to perform before a live audience and it explicitly sought to engage with and shape a public political consciousness. The Cúirteanna were also occasions where musicians gathered and played and the poetry of the courts was transmitted in the same manner as music has been traditionally transmitted: received and learned by rote to be recited in other venues.

Burke's Clubs were similarly engaged in a passionate fusion of literary and political debate. His Trinity Club favoured the recitation of Milton's poetry and debate ranged over a number of contentious topics such as “Lenity for the [Jacobite] Rebels of the Forty-Five” (Bisset 134). Bisset recounts that in the Literary Club, Dr Johnson, “who considered conversation as a competition of intellectual powers, declared he was never stimulated to such exertion as when contending with Burke” (Bisset 135).

Burke's childhood home at Ballyduff was ringed by a number of such schools: poets gathered around Seán Clárach Mac Domhnaill in Charleville, Seán Ó Tuama in Croom and Ballynonty, and Piaras Mac Gearailt held a court in East Cork which continued to flourish, under various successors, into the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Pádraig Breathnach details the close networks of personal contacts and friendships between Munster poets and it seems that every poet could be linked to another poet at least through mutual acquaintances.<sup>15</sup> According to Brian Ó Cuív, no part of Gaelic speaking Ireland was without poets in the eighteenth century, but it is in Munster, specifically Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Clare, that poets were more numerous than anywhere else in the country. While Burke was living at Ballyduff, in the barony of Fermoy, around fifty poets, many of them belonging to former ruling families, were active in the neighboring Muskerry barony, and Ó Cuív believes this figure to be representative of the number of poets composing in the other Cork baronies. Ó Cuív asserts that: even the mediocre among them had a considerable technical skill and a good command of language, and the combination of scribal activity and poetic composition ensured that a great deal of verse was preserved accurately.<sup>16</sup>

A striking feature of the poetic gatherings of Munster, the *cúirteanna éigse*, is the atmosphere of familiar jocular banter and the playful, ostentatious display of learning and wit among the Gaelic literati of gentlemen, priests and scribes.<sup>17</sup> This atmosphere is preserved for us in the accounts we have of the summons, which called for an assembly of the *cúirt* and in their jovial elaboration on rules of conduct and the issuing of authorisations or certificates of competence known as, *pas filíochta*.<sup>18</sup> The summons was composed by the chief poet and then learned by rote by a *canntuire*, a messenger who walked the county and beyond, publicising fresh compositions and reciting the call to the *éigse* to the designated poets.<sup>19</sup> Burke's Clubs were organised in a similar fashion to these poetic Courts in a number of important respects: there was a presiding figure, (the chair rotated at the Trinity Club but it was largely Dr Johnson who was Master of Ceremonies at the London Club); membership was by invitation only and was offered to those who had distinguished themselves in literary and intellectual endeavour; and while the evidence is that Burke's student Club took itself rather seriously in its rules of conduct and awarding of contests, it is clear that the Club at the Turk's Head shared the same spirit of banter, wit and skilled debate that were the hallmark of the Munster Courts. The form, tone and content of the Clubs and *cúirteanna*, are in strong contrast to the polite models of debate and social inquiry that were encouraged in the pages of *The Spectator*, which was regarded in early eighteenth-century Britain as the epitome of the best taste and practice in social intercourse.<sup>20</sup>

While tea or coffee are beverages best associated with *The Spectator*, copious amounts of alcohol fuelled the proceedings of the both the Club at the Turk's Head and the *cúirteanna*, which were held regularly in an inn, or else in the homes of the lavishly hospitable Gaelic gentry.<sup>21</sup> **Burke's uncle, Patrick Nagle, hosted poetry recitations at Ballyduff.** In a letter to his son Richard, Burke refers to the "honours shown in the old times" by the Nagles of his boyhood.<sup>22</sup> It was the style of the Gaelic gentry to provide visitors, and particularly those who might provide entertainment, such as poets, with an extremely generous hospitality. According to Ó Tuama, "In the socially important matter of hospitality [...] poets were more readily provided for than others".<sup>23</sup>

While the *cúirteanna éigse* were eagerly anticipated social events, they were also important cultural meetings where skills and learning were displayed; information was relayed, discussed and analysed; poets transcribed from each other's manuscript book or *duanaire*; and generally celebrated themselves as the guardians of the culture and learning of their people. In the same manner, the Club at the Turk's Head came to see itself as an important cultural establishment: membership of the Club was awarded to those who had distinguished themselves as men of letters and so participation conferred a certain social and cultural standing. This was obviously an important, if not crucial, fellowship for Burke who proudly insisted on his literary and political reputation as an independent voice in the adjudication of the public good. This persistence in maintaining such a reputation cost him dearly in material terms. Burke's first clash on this issue came when, after a number of years of working for the parliamentarian William Hamilton, he insisted on being left with "a discreet liberty" to continue his own literary endeavours.<sup>24</sup> In a letter to Hamilton, he says that whatever advantages he had acquired had been due to a literary reputation and he could only hope for a continuance of such advantages on condition of doing something to keep the same reputation alive. Hamilton took extreme offence and Burke was in turn so outraged that he gave up the pension that Hamilton had secured for him.<sup>25</sup>

Burke's guardianship of his "discreet liberty" was again to the fore on the occasion of his fortuitous election as MP for Bristol in 1774, when he took the opportunity to insist that an MP's

“unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not sacrifice.... to any man, or to any set of men living [...] They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable”. Burke repudiated for himself the customary undertaking to be bound in Parliament by the instructions of his constituents. He made a distinction between a representative and a delegate, declaring that authoritative instructions which a member was bound blindly to obey were things utterly unknown to the law of the land, and alien to the spirit of the Constitution. He claimed that he was not required to represent the electors of Bristol; he offered himself for election on the understanding that Bristol would wish to support a man of his virtue and accomplishments to deliberate on how the common good might best be protected and promoted: “Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your **opinion**.” Burke’s speech, which he also claimed he made during the election as well as at its conclusion, is a remarkable and singular assertion, not only without any precedent in British politics, but quite contrary to the popular understanding at that time (and today) of how a popularly elected politician should act. The poets, wits and scholars of the *cúirteanna* also proudly asserted their position as the independent political voice of the Gaelic nation; according to Corkery’s influential argument, eighteenth-century Munster poetry is the elegiac voice of a people dispossessed and oppressed by political colonisation. The most common theme in the poetry laments the fall of the Gaelic nobility and rails at the injustice of the new order, but the *cúirteanna* were also home to a theatrical, baroque poem known as the *Barántas* (Warrant poem), whose raucous irony is described by Corkery as “intimately freakish.”<sup>26</sup> The *Barántas* *conventionally* begins with the English word “Whereas” and continues with a judicious sprinkling of English legal jargon, producing a new Gaelic genre, a pompous dull discourse that is formed under the heavy influence of English legal procedure in a suitably simplistic jingle of metre and rhyme. The *Barántas* is at once both a hilarious parody of the leaden, rational language of the English legal courts and also a wry commentary on the impotence of the Gaelic poet, and indeed his learned audience, to influence the course of justice. That the *Barántas* is an ironic contrast to the classical age of Gaelic culture when the Bard was the legislator of the Gaelic world, both file and **breithemh**, poet and judge, was well understood by the audiences of the *cúirteanna*.

The poetry of the *cúirteanna*, be it elegy or satire, was profoundly political in content but it is the attitude of the poets to their social and political position that has a certain resonance with Burke’s stance as he articulated it to Hamilton and at the conclusion of the Poll in Bristol. The Gaelic poets inherited a sense of themselves as arbiters and defenders of the public good, answerable not the masses but to their tradition. A *burdún* or epigram from an eighteenth century manuscript provides a succinct encapsulation of the Gaelic poets’ attitude:

Uireasa oidis bheir dorchadas tlás is ceas  
ar thuilleadh agus ormsa i bhfogas don táin nár cheart,  
mar do ritheadar bodaigh i mbrogaibh na dáimhe isteach  
is do bhaineadar solas na scoile de chách ar fad.

Loss of our learning brought darkness, weakness and woe  
on me and mine, amid these unrighteous hordes.  
Oafs have entered the places of the poets  
and taken the light of the schools from **everyone**.<sup>27</sup>

Burke’s declaration at Bristol that his “mature judgment” was, like a talent, a “trust from Providence,” and that he chose to be answerable to a higher power than the opinion of the electorate, fits easily with the Gaelic **tradition**.

It was due to his advocacy on behalf of Irish trade and toleration for Catholics that Burke eventually fell foul of the Bristol constituents and it is in that controversy that he elaborates more fully on his understanding of his role as a political representative. In a letter to Samuel Span, of the Society of Merchant Adventurers, he argues that:

Beggary and bankruptcy are not the circumstances which invite to an intercourse with [Ireland] or any other country; and I believe it will be found invariably true, that the superfluities of a rich nation furnish a better object of trade than the necessities of a poor one.

It is in the interest of the commercial world that wealth should be found everywhere.<sup>28</sup> He says that if he had been capable of acting as an advocate on behalf of his constituents in opposition to “a plan so perfectly consonant to my known principles, and to the opinions I had publicly declared

on a hundred occasions,” he would “have lost the only thing which can make abilities as mine of any use to the world now or hereafter”.<sup>29</sup> Burke defines this commodity as:

the authority which is derived from an opinion, that a member speaks the language of truth and sincerity...that he is in Parliament to support his opinion of the public good, and does not form his opinion in order to get into Parliament, or to continue in it.<sup>30</sup>

According to Burke, the public perception that he is personally devoted to truth and sincerity in the public good is his precious capital. Like all verbal performers, including the dispossessed elite poets of the cúirteanna, Burke needs the public audience in order to realise his performance. Burke understands that his speaking position is authorised by public opinion that he is “true and sincere” in his efforts on behalf of the “public good”. It is this, rather unique, understanding of his performance as a man of letters and politics that makes Burke such a complex and interesting figure. In the words of Thomas Copeland: “He was an orator, a pamphleteer, a political philosopher, an aesthete, a historian, and a journalist — if we go no further”.<sup>31</sup> Burke was well acquainted with what he terms in the *Reflections of the Revolution in France*, the “politick well-wrought veil”. He was most adroit in all the careful machinations needed in moving people and institutions towards change; but it is in his affirmation of the combined roles and duties in being a man of letters and politics that the precedent of the gentlemen-poets of the Munster cúirteanna can be seen.

Burke had an intimate knowledge of such cúirteanna (ie attended them?), or the lesser claim that they were embedded within his socio-cultural matrix and that as a form for oral debate and dissemination that they influenced him in this manner?

Burke wrote to Arthur Murphy, the translator of Tacitus, and complained of a new style which was becoming increasingly more evident. The tendency of this mode was the establishment of “two very different idioms”, that is the introduction of “a marked distinction between the English that is written and the English that is spoken”.<sup>32</sup> Burke’s disquiet at the new “marked distinction” between English that is spoken and English that is written is indicative of his deepest ethical concerns. He displays a keen awareness of the changes that occur when political and social symbolic processes become more removed from personal interaction between people and the fluctuating dynamics of spoken language. When social and political significance and meaning is generated and mediated primarily through print, then the foundations of such socio-political knowledge and truth is dependent on circumstances and contexts that do not necessarily relate to actual lives. What is represented becomes more inter-textual, abstract and metaphysical and relates more to the reflexive terms of printed language rather than speakers. Text is detached from the original situation which is described in its discourse and text is predisposed by its materiality to become an object for analysis, comparison, contrast, and reflection. But when people speak they have the opportunity to enact an affective identification with what they represent and represent.<sup>33</sup> In speech, people’s gesture, intonation, bodily stance and facial expression as well as their words, convey their experience. When people assert their personal feelings it is impossible to prove or disprove the quality of what they say they feel. While the activity of silent reading enables people to experience a sense of their own interior consciousness, communicating in signed or spoken language enables people to experience one another as conscious interior beings.

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<sup>1</sup> His biographer, Robert Bisset is compelled to admit that Burke’s crusading speeches against the East India Company contain “most violent expressions” *The Life of Edmund Burke* (London: George Cawthorn, 1798) 127; Matthew Arnold complains of Burke’s “Asiatic style....barbarously rich and overloaded” *Letters, Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs* (reprinted London: Cresset Library, 1988) vi; and Sir Philip Magnus explains that: “Burke spoke always with a pronounced brogue, which helped to emphasise his strangeness, and his gestures when he was on his feet were ungainly. *Edmund Burke: A Prophet of the Eighteenth Century* (London: John Murray, 1939) 77.

<sup>2</sup> For a record of the minutes of the Club, see A.P.I. Samuels, *The Early Life and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 223–95,

<sup>3</sup> Thomas W. Copeland, et al. eds., *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* 10 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958–78), Vol. 1, 47.

<sup>4</sup> Samuels, *Early Life*, 223.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Bisset, *The Life of Edmund Burke* (London: George Cawthorn, 1798), 134–35.

<sup>6</sup> See the four volume work edited by Markman Ellis, *Eighteenth Century Coffee House Culture* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006) which reprints in facsimile satires, plays and histories of the period that take the coffee house as their subject. The coffee-house provided a forum for airing views, debate and the formation of public opinion that was integral to the development of the public sphere but the formality around membership, meeting and modes of address and debate of the Literary Club, marks it as a unique learned organisation.

- <sup>7</sup> This mandate of the Scriblerians is summarised thus by poet Alexander Pope: see Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men: Collected from Conversation*. James M. Osborn ed. 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) Vol. 1 56.
- <sup>8</sup> Katherine O'Donnell, "The Image of a Relation in Blood: *Párliaiment na mBan* and Burke's Jacobite Politics", *Eighteenth-Century Ireland : Iris an dá Chultúr* 15 (2000): 98–119.
- <sup>9</sup> In 1603 the Lord President of Munster ordered the extermination of all "all manners of bards, harpers, etc.," this order was shortly followed by an order from Elizabeth I to Lord Barrymore: "to hang the harpers where found." Quoted in Sean O'Boyle, *The Irish Song Tradition* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976) 172.
- <sup>10</sup> Written while serving in Lord Clare's regiment in Flanders, translated by Brian Ó Cuív, "Gaelic Language and Literature: 1691–1845," in T.W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan, eds., *A New History of Ireland* Vol. 4, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 397. Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín collaborated on the English-Irish dictionary, published in Paris in 1732, a copy of which was owned and annotated by Burke.
- <sup>11</sup> Cornelius G. Buttimer, "Gaelic Literature and Contemporary Life in Cork, 1700–1840," in Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttimer, eds., *Cork History and Society* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1993), 585–654.
- <sup>12</sup> Seán Ó Tuama and Thomas Kinsella, eds., *An Duanaire 1600–1900: Poems of the Dispossessed* (Dublin: Dolmen Press with the aid of Bord na Gaeilge, 1994), 172–73. Translation by Kinsella.
- <sup>13</sup> Ó Tuama and Kinsella, *An Duanaire*, xxv.
- <sup>14</sup> See Breandán Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí: 1700–1850* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar Teoranta., 1982).
- <sup>15</sup> Pádraig Breathnach, "Oral and Written Transmission in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland : Iris an dá Chultúr* 2 (1987): 60. See also Breandán Ó Conchúir, "Cúirteanna Éigse" in Pádraigín Riggs, Brian Ó Conchúir and Seán. Ó Coileáin, eds., *Saoi na h Éigse* (Baile Átha Cliath: Clóchomhar Teoranta, 2000), 55–81.
- <sup>16</sup> Brian Ó Cuív, "Irish Language and Literature: 1691–1845," in T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, eds., *A New History of Ireland* vol. 4, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 403.
- <sup>17</sup> Breandán Ó Buachalla, "James our true king: the ideology of Irish royalism in the seventeenth century," in D. George Boyce et. al., eds., *Political Thought in Ireland since the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 8.
- <sup>18</sup> Brian Ó Cuív, "Rialacha do Chúirt Éigse igContae an Chláir," *Éigse* 11 (1965–66): 216–18.
- <sup>19</sup> One of the most famous canntuirc in Cork was the cross-dressing Anna Príor, also called Seón. Burke's tutor, Liam Inglis, used her services. Risteárd Ó Foghluda, ed. *Cois na Bríde: Liam Inglis* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1937).
- <sup>20</sup> Thanks to Michael Brown for discussing this point with me. Burke's interest in *The Spectator* is evident in a number of the letters he wrote while at Trinity to Richard Shackleton. *Correspondence*, Vol. 1, but the verbal performance of Burke's clubs owes nothing to the politeness recommended by Addison and Steele. For a good overview of this more general topic see Adam Potkay, *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).
- <sup>21</sup> Sometimes the cúirteanna were held at a 'lios', the name given to an historic and revered meeting place in the local countryside. Lios signifies the place of a ring fort, fairy mound, and also the nighttime halo of light around the moon. Niall Ó Dónaill, *Foclóir Gaeilge-Bearla*, (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1977). The custom of gathering at a lios meant that lios in the eighteenth century also denoted a dispute, debate or strife, as well as a fort, palace and house. Edward O'Reilly, *Irish-English Dictionary*, (Dublin: O'Neil, 1821). Public gatherings of concerned citizens at the local lios seem to have been a long-standing tradition. Edmund Spenser, whose castle at Kilcolman is a neighbourly few miles from Ballyduff, tells us that it was customary among the Irish, or rather, "all the scumme of the people," to make "great assemblies together upon a rath or a hill, there to parlie (as they say) about matters and wrongs between township and township, or one private person and another." *View of the Present State of Ireland*, ed., W.L. Renwick, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970. **Page?**
- <sup>22</sup> *Correspondence* Vol. 7, 102–106.
- <sup>23</sup> Ó Tuama and Kinsella, *An Duanaire*, 23.
- <sup>24</sup> *Correspondence* Vol. 1, 190.
- <sup>25</sup> *Correspondence* Vol. 1, 190.
- <sup>26</sup> Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland*, 106. For a wonderful example of a Warrant poem see Ó Rathaille's 'Ar Choileach a Goideadh ó Shagart Maith' [On a Cock Stolen from a Good Priest], Ó Tuama and Kinsella, *An Duanaire*, 146–49.
- <sup>27</sup> Ó Tuama and Kinsella, *An Duanaire*, 194–95.
- <sup>28</sup> *Correspondence* Vol. 3, 436.
- <sup>29</sup> *Correspondence* Vol. 3, 436.
- <sup>30</sup> *Correspondence* Vol. 3, 436.
- <sup>31</sup> Thomas W. Copeland, *Our Eminent Friend, Edmund Burke*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1949) iii.
- <sup>32</sup> *Correspondence* vol. 8, 502.
- <sup>33</sup> See Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1963).