

*The Dublin Characters*



# Mr Nosey and friends: two Dublin broadsheets

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FOR SEAN SHESGREEN: IN MEMORIAM

IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS, SEAN SHESGREEN SET OUT TO INCORPORATE EXTRA-canonical artworks and genres into a more capacious understanding of eighteenth-century visual culture.<sup>1</sup> This article, consciously inspired by his approach, examines two hitherto unnoticed broadsheets in UCD Library's Special Collections (Plates 1, 11).<sup>2</sup> The great rarity of material such as this for eighteenth-century Ireland has, to a very large extent, precluded research comparable in scope to Sheila O'Connell's *The Popular Print in England*.<sup>3</sup> Niall Ó Ciosáin notes that 'the shortage of other sources' gives the 'study of popular print culture ... greater importance than usual in the Irish context', but confines his illuminating examination of the subject to the printed word.<sup>4</sup> Quite simply, a sufficient body of work does not survive, or at least has not been identified, to allow for meaningful comment about the production, marketing and display of 'popular prints' in Georgian Ireland.<sup>5</sup> This article presents a case study to address some of these issues.

The two broadsheets, *The Dublin Characters* (Plate 1) and *The Dublin Beauties* (Plate 11) illustrate sketchily delineated male and female figures arranged within a grid of boxes, in full-length format in the former and half-length in the latter. Each is identified by name, or sobriquet, in a title below. Crudely drawn – if not lacking a certain vigour – and poorly printed, the broadsheets are neither signed nor dated and do not bear a publisher's name; this is not unexpected for prints such as this. Nor does provenance reveal anything as to date or context.<sup>6</sup> The prints are preserved as stand-alone sheets, and, unlike much surviving material of this sort – and this is very often the reason for its survival in the first place – they have not been bound into an album. The font in both of the main titles of the sheets is closely comparable (compare 'Dublin' in each), though that of the captions differs (compare 'blind' in each). Stylistically it is certainly possible that the two sheets are by the same hand, though this cannot be proven. Technique – an expressive etched line – and paper are certainly compatible with a date in the eighteenth century. However, given the lack of secondary clues, their function, dating and intended audience

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1 – THE DUBLIN CHARACTERS

*n.d.*, etching, 26 x 20 cm sheet size (University College Dublin / Special Collections)



and at the same time adapting other iconographies usually associated with genres of greater prestige. The sheets include named individuals who worked the streets of Georgian Dublin, fictional characters and well-known actors who played the city's theatres. All are combined in a promiscuous miscellany that appears to defy taxonomic analysis. As part of the process of 'exhuming unjustly neglected images' that Shesgreen's lifetime's work has invited, this article attempts to shed some light on the origin, date and meaning of, and identify sources, both formal and iconographic, for, these anonymous prints.<sup>7</sup>

AS WITH SO MANY OTHER INSTANCES IN IRISH PRINT CULTURE, INDIGENOUS SUBJECT matter – local colour – is subsumed within metropolitan form. Both prints follow the broadsheet format which had been devised in late-sixteenth-century London to illustrate on a single page multiple city 'criers', or characters, shown in thumbnail-sized images within a series of boxes laid out in a grid.<sup>8</sup> Examples such as *The Manner of Crying Things in London*, which was originally published in the mid-seventeenth century but continued to be printed for more than a century, are clearly the formal source for the UCD prints (Plate 2).<sup>9</sup> By the date that can be assigned to the two sheets, the format was decidedly archaic. In London it had 'virtually vanished', having been supplanted earlier in the eighteenth century by the 'ensemble', with whole sheets devoted to individual characters, which combined to form a more recognisably book-like design.<sup>10</sup> However, a direct local comparison can be found in the broadsheet *The Dublin Cries or a Representation of the various Cries and calling throughout the Streets, Lanes and Allies [sic] of the City and Liberties of Dublin*, which can be dated to the late eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

*Dublin Characters* comprises four rows of four boxes containing a full-length standing figure. The fifth, and final, row, however, breaks with this pattern and consists of a single, similarly boxed, character, 'Mr Sparks', followed by two figures driving somewhat different carriages, shown in boxes half as big again as the standard. In addition to deriving its format from the London *Cries*, the print shares subject matter with the earlier tradition as it had recently been reimagined for Dublin by Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740–1808). Overlaps with Hamilton's 1760 album of drawings entitled *The Cries &c of Dublin*, and other sources, allow for the identification – with varying degrees of precision – of virtually all of the nineteen personages included in this sheet.<sup>12</sup> The repetition of three characters in the broadsheet and the *Cries of Dublin* suggests a date for the former of the mid-eighteenth century, perhaps more specifically some time not long after 1760, which further evidence, discussed below, seems to corroborate. It begs other questions, however, specifically about the relationship between the two sets of images.

The first of the Dublin 'characters', at top left, is designated a 'Quill Man' (Plate 3). This is clearly the same figure described by Hamilton as 'A Foolish Travelling Stationer' (Plate 4), a young man who made his living walking the city's streets selling small items of stationery and printed matter, with, as the broadsheet's designation indicates, a speciality in quill pens.<sup>13</sup> Hamilton's drawings were never engraved, and Sean Shesgreen has argued that they 'had no influence in the subsequent history of the genre'.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Toby Barnard has shown that the manuscript of Hamilton's *Cries* probably left



Ireland within a year or two of its compilation.<sup>15</sup> However, it is difficult to deny a connection between the broadsheet's and Hamilton's depiction of the same individual. Both are shown from the side as they walk from right to left; both wear a large paper crown and carry a box containing goods for sale in one hand and a sheaf of pens in the other; both are dressed in similar fashion down to details such as the unusually long hair. It seems highly unlikely that the artist of the broadsheet drew 'from the life', and so the most plausible scenario to account for the clear overlaps between the two images is that he (as we may presume) somehow had access to Hamilton's drawing and modelled his representation of the Quill Man upon it.

The figure at the end of this same row of *Dublin Characters* is again to be found in Hamilton's *Cries of Dublin*. Described on the broadsheet as 'Blind Daniell' [*sic*] (Plate 7), he is further characterised in the *Cries* by his profession (which is not immediately apparent in the broadsheet) as 'Blind Daniel the Piper' (Plate 5).<sup>16</sup> While Daniel seems certainly to have been a genuine Dublin character, the image of the blind musician, often imbued with powers of insight to compensate for loss of vision, recurs throughout folklore, literature and the visual arts, from Homer to Joseph Patrick Haverty's (1794-1864) portrait of Pádraig O'Briain (c.1773-1855).<sup>17</sup> Here, although depicting the same individual, the anonymous designer of the broadsheet does not take inspiration from Hamilton and, instead, 'Blind Daniel' is demonstrably derived from an etching, *Enough for Nothing*, seemingly of 1767 and signed with the initials 'RW' (Plate 6), the composition of which it schematically adapts.<sup>18</sup> While RW's etching may be taken as evidence to corroborate



5 – Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808)

*BLIND DANIEL THE PIPER*

from *THE CRIES & C OF DUBLIN* (1760)

(private collection)

6 – R.W. ENOUGH FOR NOTHING

etching, 1767

(© The Trustees of the British Museum)

7 – *Blind Daniell*

detail from *THE DUBLIN CHARACTERS*

etching, 26 x 20 cm sheet size (UCD Special Collections)

opposite

3 – *The Quill Man*

detail from *THE DUBLIN CHARACTERS*

etching, 26 x 20 cm sheet size (UCD Special Collections)

4 – Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808)

*A FOOLISH TRAVELLING STATIONER*

from *THE CRIES & C OF DUBLIN* (1760)

(private collection)





8 – Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808)  
 HAE BALL, KING OF THE BEGGARS  
 from *THE CRIES & C OF DUBLIN* (1760) (private collection)

1748, *Mill Cushion's Address to the Fools of Every Rank and Denomination in the City of Dublin*, in which he puts himself forward for election as an honest fool. Hackball also makes an appearance in this pamphlet. The line separating street life from pamphlet polemic could be permeable. The pattern of the UCD broadsheet confirming the essentials, and many of the details, of Hamilton's drawings, is disrupted by their respective images of Hackball which are fundamentally different. Hackball's carriage is shown in the broadsheet as two-wheeled and pulled by a diminutive pony but by Hamilton as four-wheeled and with a boy in attendance to pull or push him.<sup>21</sup> The same figure appears in a similar, but not identical, wheeled chair to that in the *Cries*, in a print of Sackville Street after Joseph Tudor (d. 1759).

Unlike Hamilton's *Cries of Dublin*, which has a distinct (though not wholly exclusive) focus on Dublin street traders, the broadsheet *Dublin Characters* is much more of a compendium. In addition to Dublin characters such as Blind Daniel and Hack Ball, who, with different degrees of certainty, we can relate to individuals who worked the streets of the city, several other categories of individual are included. Shown in the second from last row are the fictional characters Amintor and Daphne, taken from the comic opera of the same name by the Irish dramatist Isaac Bickerstaffe (1733-c.1808) (itself derived from *L'Oracle* by Germain-François Poullain de Saint-Foix (1698-1776)). This was published in both London and Dublin in 1765, five years after Hamilton's *Cries*,

the verisimilitude of Hamilton's drawing of Daniel – the two images clearly depict the same individual but in no way derive one from the other – its simplification on the broadsheet indicates a design process based on the recycling of earlier print sources rather than empirical observation. Similar borrowings from an earlier print source will again be seen in *The Dublin Beauties*.

The last 'character' on the sheet, who is afforded an over-sized landscape format to accommodate his vehicle, is described as 'Lord Hack-ball'. Again the same crippled mendicant appears in Hamilton's *Cries of Dublin*, as 'Hae Ball, King of the Beggars' (Plate 8).<sup>19</sup> In addition to being a real, indeed well-known, Dublin beggar, Hackball's name was attached to various printed satires; as John Gilbert put it, 'many jeux d'esprit were published relative to "His Lowness, Prince Hackball"'.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the second of *The Dublin Characters* is described as 'Mill Cushon', under which pseudonym appeared, in

providing a likely *terminus post quem* for *Dublin Characters*. If the date of 1767 inscribed on the etching of Blind Daniel is accepted, this may be advanced by two years. It is certainly suggestive that identifiable sources, visual and literary, for *The Dublin Characters* date from 1760, 1765 and 1767.

Adding a further dramatic flavour is the inclusion of several actors, all with Irish connections. The two best known of these are shown one above the other. Beneath Blind Daniel, in an approximation of harlequin costume, 'Mr Woodward' refers to the famous comedian Henry Woodward (1714-1777), who, indeed, was particularly noted for his performance in harlequinades.<sup>22</sup> Woodward, whose image was widely circulated in print, had been connected with the theatre in Dublin since 1739, returning in 1758 when he took over the management of Smock Alley, in which, ultimately unsuccessful, venture he partnered with the Irish actor Spranger Barry (1717-1777) who is shown in the box directly beneath him.<sup>23</sup>

To the left of Woodward stands the dancer Simon Slingsby (d. 1811), who was probably Irish. Certainly he is first recorded, in the spring of 1759, at Crow Street theatre, and performed in Dublin until 1764 when he moved to London and, subsequently, Paris.<sup>24</sup> To his left we see the Irish dancer and ballet master Robert Aldridge (d.1793) who played at Smock Alley, as well as touring provincial Ireland, before moving to Drury Lane for the 1762-63 season with a new dance, the *Irish Lilt*.<sup>25</sup> He was also associated with Barry and Woodward 'at Crow Street'. To Aldridge's left, 'Mr Saunders', engaged in a perilous juggling act with bladed instruments, is presumably the actor who, when listed at Covent Garden in December 1769, was described as being from Dublin.<sup>26</sup> In October of the previous year an actor by this name was billed as appearing in Crow Street theatre.<sup>27</sup> Below Saunders, Mr Shuter is the English actor Edward Shuter (1728?-1776), who first appeared at Covent Garden in 1745, and later worked with David Garrick (1717-1779) at Drury Lane, but who was engaged by Dublin's Crow Street theatre to perform for a few nights in 1760 and the following year.<sup>28</sup> The walking stick on which he leans suggests that he is shown in the character of the old man in Garrick's *Lethe*, a play which 'became as popular in Dublin as in London'; Shuter is certainly shown in this role in an anonymous print (Plate 9).<sup>29</sup> Continuing the theatrical theme in the next row down, 'Mr Tenducci', seen playing a lute, is the Siennese castrato Giusto Fernando Tenducci (c.1735-90), a well-known figure in the world of the Dublin theatre, who had moved to



9 – Anon, MR SHUTER IN THE CHARACTER OF THE OLD MAN IN LETHE  
etching (© The Trustees of the British Museum)





10 – after John Butler Yeats (1839-1922)

LINEN HANDKERCHIEF SOLD FOR ONE DOLLAR TO RAISE FUNDS FOR A BUILDING TO HOUSE  
SIR HUGH LANE'S GREAT GIFT OF PICTURES FOR IRELAND (April 1913) (detail) (private collection)

opposite 11 – THE DUBLIN BEAUTIES n.d., etching, 26 x 20 cm sheet size (UCD Special Collections)

Ireland in 1765 and met with acclaim at Smock Alley. The following year he married the Irish singer Dorothea Maunsell (c.1750-1814), but the union was later annulled on the, perhaps predictable, grounds of non-consummation, and Tenducci returned to London in August 1769.<sup>30</sup> 'Mr Sparks' in the last box of the first column must be Isaac Sparks (1719-76) who was mentioned in the *Dublin Evening Post* on 29th May 1779 as a veteran trouper of the Irish stage, and who is recorded acting in Cork, Limerick and Belfast, as well as at Smock Alley and Crow Street.<sup>31</sup> To the right of Mr Sparks in the last row, a final theatrical allusion comes, rather surprisingly, in the overlarge image 'The Dutch dogs', which must refer to 'the celebrated Dutch dogs' which made an appearance in the elopement scene of the pantomime *The Enchanted Lady* as performed at Crow Street in February 1766; Bernard in his *Retrospections* recalls how a coach was drawn by six large mastiffs, with apes serving as coachman and postilion.<sup>32</sup> The presence of so many theatrical performers linked to the Dublin stage might suggest that the broadsheet was marketed as a souvenir to Dublin theatregoers. An intriguing parallel across the centuries can be found in a commemorative linen handkerchief featuring, in a similar grid of boxes, eight leading Abbey actors reproduced from drawings by John Butler Yeats (1839-1922) (Plate 10).

In addition to this group of thespians, all of whom appeared in Dublin, two other figures have clear Irish toponymic names – the formidable sounding 'Mad Peg of Finglass' [*sic*], and, in the next row, 'Munster Nell'. Both are shown as simply and modestly dressed young women. These may either have been Dublin street characters or generic – or perhaps fictional – figures, and indeed in the theatre of the Dublin streets there was sometimes an overlap between the actual and the mythic, a blurring of the line between individual and type.

The biographies of many of the actors – and particularly the chronologies of their sojourns in Ireland – certainly reinforces the evidence assembled above to date the broad-

*The Dublin Beauties*

				
<i>Spring</i>	<i>Summer</i>	<i>Autumn</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Shepherds</i>
				
<i>Miss Prim</i>	<i>Jone Gussel</i>	<i>Whist Jone</i>	<i>Blind Jack</i>	<i>Capt. Stout</i>
				
<i>Farity Whittle</i>	<i>Bryan</i>	<i>Moll Dowel</i>	<i>Mad Harry</i>	<i>Capt. Swab</i>
				
<i>Mr. Nosey</i>	<i>John Booze</i>	<i>Darby</i>	<i>Jone</i>	<i>Simple Bully</i>
				
<i>Cate Lemon</i>	<i>John Formal</i>	<i>and Wife</i>	<i>Old Thomas</i>	<i>Moth. Rice</i>
				
<i>Sist. Sarah</i>	<i>Mr. Coif</i>	<i>Miss Catty</i>	<i>Mary Lapid</i>	<i>Panney</i>

sheet to the mid-1760s, and specifically to some point after the arrival of Tenducci in 1765 and the performance of *The Enchanted Lady* early the following year. However, it is also conceivable, if less likely, that it was assembled subsequently, relying on intermediate graphic sources. The inclusion of Dublin street characters, actors in the city's theatre and women with specifically Irish designations, like Mad Peg, strongly suggests Dublin as the place of the broadsheet's production. Just one of the characters is anomalous within an Irish context. 'Jack Tar', at three down two across, is an archetypal and, indeed, often decidedly English name for a sailor; perhaps another, now lost, theatrical allusion was intended.<sup>33</sup>

THE SECOND BROADSHEET, *THE DUBLIN BEAUTIES* (Plate 11), IS OF SIMILAR FORMAT, though comprising thirty individuals, shown half-length, in boxes of equal size laid out in six rows and five columns. However, *Dublin Beauties* differs markedly in tone and lacks the theatrical associations which lend such a distinctive flavour to *Dublin Characters*. At the same time, the individuals depicted are noticeably more generic, and there is no specifically Dublin, or Irish, nomenclature. While almost all of the nineteen characters appearing in the first broadsheet are identifiable to varying degrees, there is considerably more ambiguity about the status of most of the 'beauties'. The sheet takes its title, ironically, from series of portraits such as the 'Hampton Court Beauties' by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), or the 'Windsor Beauties' by Sir Peter Lely (1618-80), which had already, and rather inevitably, been parodied in print in *A St Giles's Beauty* and *A St James's Beauty* depicting different classes of London prostitutes.<sup>34</sup> *The Dublin Beauties* opens with depictions of the Four Seasons, a set of female personifications which, with the months, the times of the day, the elements and the senses, formed such a staple of secular decorative schemes. Showing the very different registers in which the self-same iconography could circulate, from Grand Tour treasure to inexpensive print, a little earlier than the likely date of the broadsheets a set of pastels of the Seasons by Rosalba Carriera (1673-1757) (Plate 12) had been brought back to Ireland from Italy by the Leeson family of Russborough.<sup>35</sup> The elegance of dress and headwear as well as the poses and floral attributes of these coquettish, rather doll-like young women hint at a derivation from a 'high art' print source comparable to the Rosalbas.

The opening figures of the broadsheet adhere to the theme of 'Beauties' and contrast with the more aesthetically challenged figures in the rows beneath. So, too, does the next figure, an overdressed shepherdess, who reminds more of the grand ladies painted by Lely and Kneller, posed in pastoral garb, than any real agricultural worker. A comparison of the Shepherdess with, for example, William Wissing's (c.1656-87) portrait of the Countess of Kildare as a shepherdess (Plate 13) illustrates the applicability of the motif across utterly different media, and again illustrates the diffusion of iconographies into the popular print from more 'elevated' genres.

Highlighting the haphazard nature of the selection is the lack of congruence here between subject matter and structure – the fact that there are, of course, four seasons but five boxes to fill, with the shepherdess taking the extra slot. The Four Seasons also make an appearance in combination with conventional *Cries* figures and other stereotypical characters such as 'A mendicant friar' in the bottom row of a broadsheet *Cries of the*

12 – Rosalba Carriera  
(1673-1757)

*SUMMER*

c.1640, pastel, 35 x 28 cm  
(National Gallery of Ireland /  
Milltown Collection)



13 – Willem Wissing  
(c.1656-1687)

*ELIZABETH FITZGERALD,  
COUNTESS OF KILDARE*

c.1684, oil on canvas, 126 x 191 cm  
(Yale Center for British Art  
/ Paul Mellon Fund)





14 – John Overton (1640-1713), *BROADSHEET OF HAWKERS WITH THE FOUR SEASONS* from *THE CRYES OF THE CITY OF LONDON* (c.1680)

*City of London* (Plate 14) published by John Overton (1640-1713) in the late seventeenth-century, emphasising again the decidedly retardataire format of the UCD sheets. Most of Overton's broadsheet is divided into three columns but to accommodate the number of seasons an additional fourth column is added. The designer of the Dublin image could have reversed the process, and reduced the number of columns in the top row to four to match subject to form, but he has chosen not to.

If Miss Prim, the first figure in the second row, seems almost a sister to the elegant Seasons above her – and so continues, for now, the promise of the title – things quickly change in the next box with the heavily caricatured and deliberately grotesque old crone Jane Gussel. Her juxtaposition with the delicate features of Miss Prim seems deliberate and the comic potential of a visual clash between the beautiful and the ugly, youth and age, has been explored in caricature from Leonardo to Thomas Rowlandson. If it is a stretch to describe it as an organising structure to the sheet, there are other, clearly intended, pairings of figures who respond one to another, such as the two musicians in the next two boxes or, in the fourth row, the figures of Darby and Jone [*sic*], depicting the fictional – and archetypal – married couple who first make an appearance in a 1735 poem by Henry Woodfall (c.1686-1747) *The Joys of Love never forgot*. However, arguing against much deliberation in the design are the figures in the right-hand column (Captain Snab, for example) who look out into the space of the margin instead of being oriented to face the other way according to the most basic principle of *repoussoir* design.

The tendency in *Dublin Beauties* towards the stereotyped or generic is clearly apparent in aptronymic characters such as Captain Stout. Other figures, John Booze, for example, are characterised by behaviour or impairment, so too the fiddler Blind Jack, Simple Billy and Mad Harry, a male equivalent of Mad Peg. The broad, cartoonish humour of the sheet, largely based on exaggerated physiognomical caricature, is noticeably more pronounced than is the case with *Dublin Characters*. This is apparent in a borrowing from the earlier tradition of 'Cries'. In the third row, 'Bryan' the pot-bellied and hunch-backed figure with lolling tongue (an ironic inclusion in a print titled *The Dublin Beauties*), is derived from the print *Clark the English Posture Master* in Marcellus Laroon's (1653-1702) *Cries of the City of London* (Plate 15). The last image of the broadsheet is also



15 – Marcellus Laroon (1653-1702),  
CLARK THE ENGLISH POSTURE MASTER  
from *THE CRIES OF THE CITY OF LONDON*,  
DRAWN FROM THE LIFE (first published 1687)  
(© The Trustees of the British Museum)



lifted directly from *The Merry Fiddler* in Laroon's influential series (Plate 16). The 'Cries' tradition was often highly self-referential with artists quoting earlier series and recycling stock imagery rather than observing life on the streets directly, as Hugh Douglas Hamilton was to do. Less a formal borrowing than an overlap in subject matter, 'Cate Lemon' perhaps comes closest of the *Dublin Beauties* to the tradition of the 'Cries' and is comparable with Laroon's 'Fair Lemons & Oranges', and, indeed, Hamilton's 'Oranges and Lemon' [*sic*].<sup>36</sup>

If examined in isolation, it would be difficult to identify in *Dublin Beauties* any specific Irish content, apart from its title, and, indeed, the borrowing of two figures from Laroon might even suggest an origin in London and a satirical – mildly anti-Irish – intent. However, the suggestive shared provenance and overlaps of style and font with *Dublin Characters*, a series of images

much more clearly rooted in Irish culture, seems to argue for its origins here. But what most characterises both sheets is their heterogeneity and this was also a feature of similar material in London; Diana Donald writes of the 'bizarre combinations of images' in print sellers catalogues noting that their customers could be 'indifferent to logic or the self-consistency of the art work'.<sup>37</sup> Unrelated subject matter could co-exist within the same print without bothering the artist or purchaser. Decorative impulse trumped iconographic coherence.<sup>38</sup> This is a point exemplified by the London print seller Robert Walton (1618-88). When advertising a new map of the British Isles in 1655, he noted that it could be enlarged with additional imagery such as 'the 5 Senses, the 4 Seasons, the 4 Elements and the Cries of London and the like'.<sup>39</sup> In effect – and the same is an organising dynamic here – allegorical figures such as seasons, were used as building blocks to bulk out series of figurative compositions with no meaningful links between them intended by the artist, or sought by the viewer.

WHAT THEN WAS THE MARKET FOR SUCH IMAGES WITHIN THE WORLD OF COMMERCIAL Dublin print culture? Their lack of polish and low production values certainly suggests a non-elite audience as the target market, although the subject matter alone would not necessarily have been off-putting to the better off. Certainly in London, *Cries* by Laroon and others, and even less sophisticated broadsheets, depicting the urban poor found buyers among the wealthier classes.<sup>40</sup> Addressing this question of the market for broadsheets such as these in London, Shesgreen asks 'who would have wanted these

copper scratchers' busy cluttered cuts? Cobbled together from commonplace figures in templates repeated from one sheet to the next, they put no value on originality and have little in common with fine prints by old masters'.<sup>41</sup> Despite all these evident negatives, he concludes that such images formed part of print sellers' standard inventory, and a similar situation likely pertained in Dublin. The city's booksellers certainly catered for the market in amusing prints. In July 1777, John Magee, of 41 College Green, advertised for sale: 'funny scenes, droll prints ... all the humorous new prints as soon as published', also suggestively singling out in his stock 'high finished characters in abundance'.<sup>42</sup> The *Dublin Cries*, a noticeably comparable sheet was published by George Powell of Green Street.<sup>43</sup> But crude broadsheets like these, located at a distinctly humble position within any hierarchy of printed matter were also likely to have been sold by chapmen or 'flying stationers' – indeed by just the same sort of traders that Hamilton portrayed in his 'Foolish Travelling Stationer' (Plate 4).<sup>44</sup> They decorated lodgings or taverns as shown in a London print after Egbert van Heemskerck (1634-1704) (Plate 17) or, closer to home, hung in the ale house of Oliver Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* (1760): 'The pictures placed for ornament and use, The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose'.<sup>45</sup> Through itinerant pedlars selling at regional fairs, cheap prints were even available to the rural poor. Paddy O'Donnell visiting a thatched cabin near Banbridge in about 1760 noted 'the many prints, ballads and papers that were pasted against the wall' to form a very different print room from Lady Louisa's at Castletown, if one on which just as much ingenuity of arrangement

17 – Bernard Lens (1659-1725)  
after Egbert van Heemskerck  
(1634-1704)  
TAVERN INTERIOR  
c.1710, mezzotint, 13.7 x 10.7 cm  
(© Trustees of the British Museum)

opposite

16 – Marcellus Laroon  
(1653-1702)  
THE MERRY FIDDLER  
from *THE CRIES OF THE CITY OF  
LONDON DRAWN FROM THE LIFE*  
(first published 1687)  
(© Trustees of the British Museum)



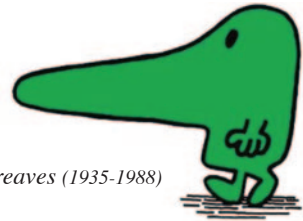


and juxtaposition may conceivably have been expended.<sup>46</sup> No doubt some of the original purchasers of these sheets were illiterate, and it is possible that they sit on an unmarked fault line of print and oral culture with their amusement value residing in nothing more sophisticated than the fun to be had with crude caricature of comic types and the enjoyment of silly names.

At the same time there is more than a hint of the world of the ballad and urban folklore about some of the gruesome characters in *The Dublin Beauties*, and perhaps one way to view the pronounced difference in register between the two broadsheets is to note the child-friendly humour that pervades it when compared to *Characters*. Figures like 'Mr Nosey' (Plate 18) are, of course, *Mr Men avant la lettre*, even if the innocently good-natured humour of Roger Hargreaves's later series is here vitiated by more than a hint of anti-Semitic caricature (Plate 19). It is impossible to know if this childlike aesthetic, based very largely on exaggerated facial features, translated into how the print was marketed or, indeed, by whom it was purchased, though it is noticeable that the not dissimilar *Dublin Cries*, having been published by Powell, who traded in children's books, was among the printed matter for juveniles offered by John Dunn of Thomas Street in about 1800.<sup>47</sup> If both sheets lack the didactic or prescriptive thrust of so much printed matter intended for children, both have features in common with the, so-called, 'lotteries', sheets of small images which could be cut-out, coloured or traded by children.<sup>48</sup> A 1786 advertisement listing the subjects of such prints once again reflected the heterogeneity of the Dublin broadsheets 'the seasons of the year, sports, diversions, humours, trades, caricatures, the ways of life, etc'.<sup>49</sup> Complicating ideas of class-based humour



18 – Mr Nosey  
detail from *DUBLIN BEAUTIES*, etching, 26 x 20 cm sheet size  
(UCD Special Collections)



19 – Roger Hargreaves (1935-1988)  
*MR. NOSEY* (1971)  
(courtesy of Simon C. Dickinson Ltd)

20 – Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)  
*CARICATURE OF LORD BRUCE, THE HON JOHN WARD, JOSEPH LEESON JR AND JOSEPH HENRY OF STRAFFAN*  
1751, oil on canvas, 63 x 49 cm (detail) (© NGI)



which inevitably equate the popular with the crude, it is worth noting that even if this correlation is valid, the reverse is not, and the Leeson of Russborough not only purchased idealising imagery by Rosalba (Plate 12), but also commissioned images of themselves and their friends from the young Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) with similarly Shandean emphasis on nose size (Plate 20); a predilection for puerile humour is primarily determined by gender rather than socio-economic class.<sup>50</sup> The potential audience for these broadsheets was then wide, making them an attractive commercial proposition, and research on the market penetration of inexpensive graphic images, in England at least, has shown how they could be consumed by different social groupings, indeed their appeal was not unlike that of the Dublin theatres, with which *The Dublin Characters* has a distinct, if imprecise, connection, which were attended by all classes, except the very poorest.<sup>51</sup>

IF ON OCCASION PURCHASED BY THE BETTER-OFF, THESE PRINTS WOULD HAVE ELICITED very different reactions depending on visual education, their naïve quality provoking amusement, even derision, from the owner of, say, James McArdell's (1729-1765) mezzotints after Reynolds or the prints of Thomas Frye (1710-1762), whose work sold for the substantial price of two guineas for twelve prints.<sup>52</sup> By contrast, cheap graphic images were rarely treasured as works of art, and were perceived instead as ephemeral decoration, and hence were frequently damaged, destroyed or just thrown away. At the same time, popular prints did not attract the attention of early antiquarian-minded collectors in Ireland in the same way as they occasionally did in England, and particularly in Germanic countries, hence the paradoxical situation, noted by Shesgreen, that 'the commonest prints always become the rarest' is all the more applicable in an Irish context.<sup>53</sup> And yet, a suspicion remains – and this is difficult to quantify – that even allowing for losses on a large scale the number of inexpensive prints produced in Dublin in the period was proportionally far smaller than in London, which itself saw a lower rate of production than did continental Europe.<sup>54</sup>

Although the characteristics of these broadsheets, as outlined above, certainly invite their inclusion within the rather slippery category of the popular print – usually anonymous and often derivative, visually conservative, 'oblivious of aesthetic qualities' and offering 'an unsophisticated or naïve view of the world' – it would be incorrect to position them as genuinely demotic, or outsider art; the quotations of Laroon argue against this.<sup>55</sup> O'Connell reminds us that printing was always a capital-intensive business, and that 'no matter how crude' the resulting image, 'it is not an example of folk art'.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless they seem to reflect the robust popular culture of the street at not too great a remove, and this surely makes them more, not less, worthy of study. Richard R. Godfrey in his influential *Printmaking in Britain* loftily opined that 'the crude woodcut purchased from a street-hawker's basket' was 'best passed over in discreet silence'.<sup>57</sup> It is in large part thanks to Sean Shesgreen's work on broadsheets and *Cries* that the condescension with which such material was treated in the connoisseurial literature has dissipated, but only the identification of a larger body of similar material and its analysis will allow for firmer conclusions about the 'popular print' in eighteenth-century Ireland.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

*IA&DS* *Irish Architectural & Decorative Studies – The Journal of the Irish Georgian Society*

*Oxford DNB* *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

- 1 Sean Shesgreen, *The Criers and hawkers of London, engravings and drawings by Marcellus Laroon* (Aldershot, 1990); Sean Shesgreen, *Images of the outcast: the urban poor in the Cries of London* (Manchester, 2002); Sean Shesgreen, *Hawkers, beggars and quacks: portraits from the cries of London* (Oxford, 2021).
- 2 UCD Special Collections, James Joyce Library, Map Area, Area B D3/8, B D3/9.
- 3 Sheila O'Connell, *The popular print in England* (London, 1999).
- 4 Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture in Ireland 1750-1850* (London, 1997) 1. For a brief overview of the substantial, though mostly nineteenth- and twentieth-century collection of Irish printed ephemera in the National Library of Ireland, see 'Posters, broadsides, ballads' in Noel Kissane (ed.), *Treasures from the National Library of Ireland* (London, 1995) 51-67.
- 5 Studies by Sheila O'Connell and Diana Donald have highlighted the problematic, or at least ambiguous, nature of the concept of the popular print. See O'Connell, *The popular print in England*; and Diana Donald, *What is a popular print?* (Manchester, 2000).
- 6 The two sheets share a recent provenance, possibly from one of UCD's antecedent institutions, and bear a blind stamp reading 'Pax et Copia'.
- 7 Shesgreen, *Images of the outcast*, 17.
- 8 Shesgreen, *Hawkers, beggars and quacks*, 34-42.
- 9 *ibid.*, 36.
- 10 *ibid.*, 42-43.
- 11 G.W. Panter, 'Eighteenth-Century Dublin street cries', *Journal of the Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 5th series (1925) 68-87. This print is discussed further by Sean Shesgreen in William Laffan (ed.), *The Cries of Dublin &c, drawn from the life by Hugh Douglas Hamilton, 1760* (Dublin, 2003) 51-53.
- 12 Laffan, *Cries of Dublin*, and William Laffan "'The Cries of Dublin" revisited: four new drawings by Hugh Douglas Hamilton', *IA&DS*, XXI, 2018, 30-39.
- 13 See Laffan, *Cries of Dublin*, 110-11.
- 14 Shesgreen in Laffan, *Cries of Dublin*, 51.
- 15 Toby Barnard, 'Hugh Dublin Hamilton, Paul Sandby, the Gaussens and Hamilton (Victoria)', *IA&DS*, XXIII, 2020, 62, and *passim*.
- 16 Laffan, *Cries of Dublin*, 134-35.
- 17 *ibid.*, 134.
- 18 An impression in the British Museum (BM 1879,0614.782) is inscribed on the backing sheet 'Blind Daniel / The Irish Piper at Dublin, 1767'. It is also inscribed 'Forester' and 'Lyon' while a price of 6 pence forms part of the printed plate.
- 19 First recorded in 1720 and identified as a Joseph Corrigan, 'Hackball' was a well-known Dublin personality for half a century, though conceivably the same name was applied to more than one individual. Laffan, *Cries of Dublin*, 98-99.
- 20 John T. Gilbert, *History of the City of Dublin*, 3 vols (Dublin, 1854-59) I, 326. For example, *Hackball's address to the c---t p---r---y, with some curious remarks on the beggar's-feast, held at the Crow's Nest, near Crow street; and a list of the toasts drank by Lord Prig, and Squire Higgins, to which are added, some curious observations on Caiphaz, Chaplain to the Beggars*.
- 21 Laffan, *Cries of Dublin*, 98-99.
- 22 *Oxford DNB*.
- 23 *ibid.*
- 24 Philip H. Highfill, Kalman A Burnim, Edward A Langhans, *A biographical dictionary of actors, actresses, musicians, dancers...* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1991) 112.
- 25 *ibid.*, vol. 1 (1973) 57.
- 26 *ibid.*, vol. 13 (1993) 211.
- 27 *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 27th Oct 1768.
- 28 Highfill, Burnim, Langhans, *Biographical*

- Dictionary*, vol. 13 (1991) 373; *Dublin Courier*, 22nd May 1761.
- <sup>29</sup> Esther K. Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock Alley...* (Princeton, 1967) 167.
- <sup>30</sup> *Oxford DNB*.
- <sup>31</sup> ‘The late Mr. Isaac Sparks, whose merit is universally acknowledged, long laboured for 12s per week’; cited La Tourette Stockwell, *Dublin theatres and theatre customs (1637-1820)* (Kingsport, Tennessee, 1938) 333.
- <sup>32</sup> John C. Greene, *Theatre in Dublin, 1745-1820: a calendar of performances* (Bethlehem, PA, 2011) 1033.
- <sup>33</sup> See, for example, William Hazlitt, ‘Jack Tars’ in William Hazlitt, Tom Paulin and David Chandler (eds), *The fight and other writings* (London, 2000) 157-62.
- <sup>34</sup> Published by Carington Bowles in 1784.
- <sup>35</sup> Sergio Benedetti, *The Milltowns, a family reunion*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Ireland (Dublin, 1997) 80-83.
- <sup>36</sup> Shesgreen, *Hawkers, beggars and quacks*, 142-43; Laffan, *Cries of Dublin*, 86-87.
- <sup>37</sup> Donald, *What is a Popular Print?*, 11.
- <sup>38</sup> Similarly, in the next century, Dublin publishers of plagiarised copies of London single-sheet satires preferred the generic to the specific, and removed titles identifying subject matter so, for example, James Sidebotham changed the title of William Heath’s caricature ‘Grimaldi leap-frog in the comic pantomime of the Golden Fish’ to ‘Leap Frog!!’. This made for an image devoid of specific meaning but still decorative, amusing and presumably more marketable. See Silvia Beltrametti and William Laffan, ‘William McCleary and the trade in pirated caricatures in early nineteenth-century Dublin: part 2 – “The Great Extinguishing Caricaturist”’, *IA&DS*, XXIV, 2021, 117.
- <sup>39</sup> Quoted in Shesgreen, *Images of the outcast*, 40.
- <sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 47; Shesgreen, *Hawkers, beggars, quacks*, 42-45. See also the discussion in James Kelly, *Gallows speeches from eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2001) 56-61.
- <sup>41</sup> Shesgreen, *Images of the outcast*, 19.
- <sup>42</sup> *Magee’s Weekly Packet*, 28th June 1777.
- <sup>43</sup> Shesgreen in Laffan, *Cries of Dublin*, 51; M. Pollard, *A dictionary of members of the Dublin book trade 1550-1800* (Dublin, 1998) 465.
- <sup>44</sup> For ‘Flying Stationers’, see James W. Phillips, *Printing and bookselling in Dublin, 1670-1800* (London, 2000) 54-58.
- <sup>45</sup> See Toby Barnard, *Making the grand figure, lives and possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven and London, 2004) 179, and for single-sheet *Cries* decorating London domestic spaces and entertainment venues, see Shesgreen, *Hawkers, beggars and quacks*, 35-36. Oliver Goldsmith, *The deserted village* (London, 1770).
- <sup>46</sup> Patrick O’Donnell, *The adventures of Patrick O’Donnell, in his travels through England and Ireland written by himself*, cited in Toby Barnard, *Brought to book, print in Ireland 1680-1784* (Dublin, 2017) 268. Ruth Johnstone, ‘Lady Louis Conolly’s print room at Castletown house’ in Elizabeth Mayes (ed.), *Castletown, decorative arts* (Dublin, 2011) 66-77.
- <sup>47</sup> Panter, ‘Eighteenth-Century Dublin street cries’ and Shesgreen in Laffan, *Cries of Dublin*. For Dunn, see Toby Barnard, ‘Children and books in Eighteenth-Century Ireland’, in Charles Benson and Siobhán Fitzpatrick (eds), *That woman! Studies in Irish bibliography: a festschrift for Mary ‘Paul’ Pollard* (Dublin, 2005) 231.
- <sup>48</sup> O’Connell, *The popular print*, 32-33.
- <sup>49</sup> Cited *ibid.*, 33.
- <sup>50</sup> For closely contemporary nasal musings, see J. S. Dodd, *A satirical lecture on hearts: to which is added, a critical dissertation on noses, etc.* (London, 1767); for Reynolds, see most recently William Laffan, ‘“Much Humour and Spirit”, A Grand Tour caricature by Joshua Reynolds’, *IA&DS*, XXIV, 2021, 56-65.
- <sup>51</sup> O’Connell, *The popular print*, 14.
- <sup>52</sup> For Frye’s prices see a receipt from the artist to Sir James Caldwell published in Toby Barnard, ‘The artistic and cultural activities of the Caldwells of Castle Caldwell, 1750-1783’, *IA&DS*, X, 2007, 101.
- <sup>53</sup> Shesgreen, *Images of the outcast*, 25. For English collectors of popular prints and similar ephemera, see O’Connell, *The popular print*, 192-202.
- <sup>54</sup> See O’Connell, *The popular print*, 210.
- <sup>55</sup> Donald, *What is a popular print?*, 10, 8, 11, 7.
- <sup>56</sup> O’Connell, *The popular print*, 10.
- <sup>57</sup> Richard R. Godfrey, *Printmaking in Britain* (Oxford, 1978), cited Shesgreen, *Hawkers, beggars and quacks*, 42.