Poets, Playwrights, and Prostitutes: Literary Life in Eighteenth-Century Ireland

Short Title: Poets, Playwrights, and Prostitutes (10 ECTS) MT
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Option Content and Aims: A century of politeness and Enlightenment, but also one of revolution and filth, the eighteenth century was a period of excitement and change. The literature of the time both reflects and shapes this perception, and the Irish literary scene is particularly striking for the variety and richness of its literary productions. Many of the eighteenth-century's greatest figures attended Trinity College Dublin - Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke, Jonathan Swift - while many also attended the city's brothels and taverns, as well as frequenting Smock Alley Theatre or visiting Marsh's Library. Different urban and rural venues provide the setting, the stage, or the inspiration for a variety of literature across genres, including poetry, plays, life writing and novels.

Many of the male and female writers on this module also had cosmopolitan aspirations, and several moved to London to pursue careers there. The module will highlight these connections between Ireland and England, and indeed France, investigating the realities of authorship and readership across the eighteenth century. As well as familiarising students with the literary developments taking place in Ireland, and Dublin in particular, the course also engages with issues such as gender, sexuality and the commodification of the female body; performance and the self; and politics and national identity. It also draws on the wonderful richness of built literary heritage from eighteenth-century Dublin, and includes a research visit to Marsh's Library.

Course Schedule:
1. Introduction to Literary Life in Eighteenth-Century Ireland
2. Early Irish Fiction and Place: Anon., *Virtue Rewarded, Or, the Irish Princess* (1693)
3. Poetic Exchange in Dublin: Swift, Grierson, Barber (1720s & 30s)
7. Reading Week
8. Theatre and Social Mobility: Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Rivals* (1775)
9. Prostitution in Practice and in Literature: Mrs Leeson's Memoirs (1795)
10. Rebellion and Rhyme: Poetry from the 1790s
11. Tales of Other Times: Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent* (1800)
12. Conclusions
Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

• Write critically about literature in Ireland in the eighteenth century.
• Analyse critically the set texts while also relating them to each other and their social, cultural, and political contexts.
• Demonstrate an awareness of changes to, and the development of, those genres studied.
• Achieve enhanced understanding of Irish contribution to Georgian theatre.
• Identify themes and discourses relevant to the construction of gender in Ireland.
• Appreciate and engage in existing debate over the definition of what constitutes Irish writing.

Assessment Details:
This module will be assessed by two essays (Short Essay: 2,000 words, 30%; Longer Essay: 4,000 words, 70%). The longer essay topic can be of the student’s own choice, reached upon consultation with the module convenor.