

PRE-PRINT VERSION

Theatrical Gold Diggers: Fortune-Hunting and the Irish On and Off the Eighteenth-Century Stage

Plays about fortune-hunters constitute one of the main subgenres of eighteenth-century comic drama. Uncovering a misattribution to the actor-playwright Charles Macklin of a 1750 farce, *The Fortune-Hunters*, this essay considers the phenomenon of fortune-hunting as a deceitful practice within the eighteenth-century marriage market and the reasons for its being so regularly represented on the British stage. It shows how fortune-hunting was feared as a genuine threat to unmarried women of property, but was also used as a trope within anti-immigrant discourse concerning the Irish. The essay proves that Charles Macklin was not the author of *The Fortune-Hunters*, although he addressed fortune-hunting in other plays and attempted to challenge its common association with the Irish. The de-attribution allows an alternative explanatory context for the 1750 play to be brought forth, and the play is newly situated within a largely forgotten contemporary media event involving fortune-hunting, highway robbery and the penal system. Exploring fortune-hunting in the real world and as a popular trope in contemporary drama, the essay points to the theatricality inherent in dishonest courtship, and it shows the porousness of the boundary between practice and dramatic convention in the broad discourse concerning fortune-hunting that the eighteenth century produced.

Fortunehunter [...] A man whose employment is to enquire after women with great portions to enrich himself by marrying them. We must, however, distinguish between *fortunehunters* and fortunestealers.

Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755)

Then, at Norwich I mount, which, I think, shall be our last stage; for, if we fail there, we'll embark for Holland, bid adieu to Venus, and welcome Mars.

Archer to Aimwell in George Farquhar, *The Beaux Strategem* (1707)

Allur'd by ev'ry charming Face, and Shape,

For *Velvet* now he burns, and now for *Crape*.

John Breval, *Mac-Dermot; Or, The Irish Fortune-Hunter* (1717)

This essay is concerned with a devious profession, a stage convention and a stereotype. It considers the so-called ‘fortune-hunter’ – a figure who stalked the eighteenth century, wandering onto and off the stage, often speaking a strong Irish brogue, as he (and occasionally she) came into being as a familiar, crooked type. In his *Dictionary*, Samuel Johnson offered a strikingly plain and non-judgmental definition of the fortune-hunter. His definition casts fortune-hunting as a recognised form of male ‘employment’ – a line of business within the conjugal economy– and his unelaborated distinction ‘between *fortunehunters* and *fortunestealers*’ seems, by implication, to normalise, or even legitimate, the trade of the former. Johnson, who had himself married a well-to-do widow when he was on his uppers, points to a reality within the eighteenth-century marriage market, but by the time of his *Dictionary*, fortune-hunting was well-established and perhaps better known as a literary topos and choice matter for representation on the stage: since the Restoration, numerous plays had been built around the exploits of bold, impecunious charlatans attempting to wed their way to wealth. Farquhar’s *The Beaux Strategem* (1707), quoted in my second epigraph, has proven to be one of the most enduring fortune-hunter dramas, but versions of its plot – revolving around the schemes of Aimwell and Archer to restore their lost fortunes through seduction – are to be found in the work of many dramatists, both before and after Farquhar’s early eighteenth-century success.

In the theatrical explorations, the dramatic value of the fortune-hunter lies in what Johnson does not mention: in the deceptions and moral questionability of the false lover and in the complications that can arise in a plot when true status and intent are masked. In these plays, actors play characters who are themselves performing – there is a layering of pretence which could be highlighted by means of metatheatrical commentary, as when Archer and Aimwell discuss the ‘stage’ on which they will play the parts of master and servant. Through these characters’ reflections on their role-play, *The Beaux Strategem* acknowledges – or even

relishes – the essential theatricality of fortune-hunting; the play has a self-consciousness which partly dissolves the threshold between stage and world and in the process points to the performance skills required of those trickster seducers pursuing their business beyond the walls of the theatre. Within the theatre, then, we see both a mediation and underlining of the inherent theatricality of off-stage fortune-hunting.

But the figure of the fortune-hunter was also one that could be harnessed to perform ‘cultural work’ and, alongside charting the blurred boundary between the real and the theatrical, a further aim here – which prompts my indulgence in a third epigraph – is to consider how the fortune-hunter was exploited as a stereotype, specifically of Irishness within English discourse concerning immigration. The Irish Farquhar did not stamp his amiable fortune-hunters with an Irish background, but to do so was common in literary elaborations of the figure, such as that found in John Breval’s mock-heroic poem *Mac-Dermot; Or, The Irish Fortune-Hunter* (1717). Breval’s Mac-Dermot is an iteration of what Helen Burke has described as ‘a new negative stereotype’, which came into being ‘in response to Irish mobility within the new marketplace economy’.¹ Breval’s ‘hero’ is a rough but handsome Irish labourer who transcends his lowly position by stealing from his master and absconding to England where he charms and fleeces a rich English widow. Mac-Dermot’s narrative presents, as Burke puts it, a ‘nightmare inversion of the progressive myth that underwrote the new market economy’, and with its potential for probing ethnic tensions and conflicts it was a story which came to be much reproduced – and also challenged – throughout the Georgian period.²

The occasion for considering these broad issues here is a close examination of a play – or rather two plays – which have in the past been confused but which, when properly differentiated, offer an arresting demonstration of the ease with which the inherently theatrical figure of the fortune-hunter could slip between the stage and the world beyond. At the core of

the investigation here lies a case of deattribution concerning a two-act play entitled *The Fortune-Hunters* which was published anonymously in London in 1750. This play, also published in Dublin the same year, is a farce with a familiar comic plot revolving around impoverished characters attempting to enrich themselves through marriage. The Dublin edition presents only the play but appended to the London edition is a witty song for two voices: *A Humourous New Ballad, Called The Female Combatants; Or, Love in a Jail. As it was acted at Mac L—n’s Amphitheatre with great Applause.*³ The author of the ballad has not been identified, but the play has long been attributed to the Irish actor-playwright Charles Macklin (1699?-1797), being seen as the slightly belated publication of an afterpiece entitled *The Club of Fortune-Hunters; Or, the Widow Bewitch’d* which was performed, apparently only once, at Drury Lane theatre on 28 April 1748. At this time Macklin had great renown in London as an actor but he was still in the early stages of his career as a playwright. After a failed attempt at tragedy with *King Henry the VII; Or, The Popish Imposter* in 1746, he was trying his hand at short comic plays, and the 1748 afterpiece was, according to brief notes made by Drury Lane’s prompter Richard Cross, ‘a new farce written by M^r. Macklin’.⁴ It was part of a benefit evening for Macklin’s wife, and it was played following a revival of John Ford’s *The Lover’s Melancholy* (1628). Macklin and his wife performed in both pieces, with Macklin’s wife probably taking the main role of the widow in the afterpiece.⁵ The new work was not well received; the public verdict, according to Cross, was: ‘The play lik’d – farce not’.⁶

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

[CAPTION]Title-page of the London edition of *The Fortune-Hunters* (1750), RB K-D25, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

A point of this essay is to demonstrate that the 1750 publication is not based on the 1748 performance of *The Club of Fortune-Hunters* and that it is in all likelihood not by Charles Macklin. This may be a relatively minor matter of bibliographical correction but it is worth undertaking not least for the insights it affords into the easy slippage between stage and world where fortune-hunters were concerned. Making the case against Macklin's authorship does not bring forward an alternative author, but it does involve the revelation that 'Mac L—n's *Amphitheatre*', mentioned in the subtitle of the London edition in relation to the ballad, has nothing to do with Charles Macklin, as has been implied, but actually points outwards from the theatre towards another figure: an Irish fortune-hunter, who in 1750 became a figure of very considerable renown. The 1750 play, then, will lose its supposed author here, but it will gain an occasion for being published, one in which we find a crystallisation of the real, theatrical and stereotypical elements of eighteenth-century fortune-hunting. A corollary of the de-attribution is that the 1748 play must be deemed lost, although I will suggest that a likely source for what was performed that night at Drury Lane can be found among the great many plays portraying fortune-hunters in search of a wealthy spouse that were produced in Britain throughout the Restoration period and eighteenth century.

Theatrical swindlers and the immigrant Irish

Fortune-hunter plays certainly constituted a significant subgenre of eighteenth-century comic drama, albeit that most have subsequently fallen into neglect. There were at least eight plays which included the phrase '*Fortune-Hunter(s)*' in their title or subtitle – as if deliberately to confound later theatre historians – and there were many more that featured a fortune-hunter character either as the driving force of a main plot or in a more incidental capacity.⁷ Most of these plays are farces but they addressed issues which were far from frivolous, and their

proliferation in eighteenth-century Britain can be seen as a humorous yet earnest cultural response to anxieties and practices which arose in a society marked by vast differences between rich and poor, by limited routes out of poverty, by a fiscally based attitude to marriage, and – given the common trope of the *Irish* fortune-hunter – by a nearby, economically downtrodden colony offering few local opportunities for social advancement. In other words, we can explain the plays as a part of the ‘work’ of the eighteenth-century British theatres – a way of ‘dealing with’ a social issue, or, in some cases, a fundamentally racist way of responding to an increase in Irish immigration to, particularly, London in the period.⁸ The actual prevalence of fortune-hunting is, of course, not something which can be easily established; it was not a clearly defined crime of which records might be kept, and what constitutes fortune-hunting is also open to interpretation: there may indeed not be a huge gulf between slyly marrying someone in order to gain an estate and simply allowing economic factors to influence a conjugal choice. In a marriage market, where consideration of a future spouse’s wealth is a norm, deviousness and prudence may be placed on a continuum.

The scheming type of fortune-hunting, though, was certainly seen as a pressing social problem or was used as a defamatory projection, not least in the years surrounding Macklin’s 1748 afterpiece and the 1750 printed play. It was addressed in many publications, some satirical but many serious, such as the anonymous *Proposals for Redressing Some Grievances Which greatly affect The Whole Nation. With A Seasonable Warning To Our Beautiful Young Ladies against Fortune-Hunters; and a Remedy proposed in favour of the Ladies*. Published in 1740, this is a substantial pamphlet containing a long sequence of complaints about matters which ‘call for redress’, none of which is given more attention than fortune-hunting. The author issues grave warnings to moneyed female readers: ‘[T]here are two or three Years of your Lives’, he cautions, ‘in which you are in very great Danger of being imposed upon by those about you, whose only aim [...] is to make a Property of you, to enrich themselves,

though thereby undo you'.⁹ And for this author, it is the immigrant Irish who pose the worst threat – 'These are the Vermin *Fortune-Hunters* who infest us', he avows.¹⁰ 'They come over with the view of being *Footmen*', he complains, as he launches into a rendition of the timeless they-come-over-here-and-steal-our-women invective, and the diatribe that follows then charts the typical career path of these men who, by working in service, acquire the knowledge of etiquette, of apparel and of the town that enables them to pass as gentlemen and charm suitably wealthy targets. These conmen do not work alone, the author asserts, but rather collaborate in a type of guild which offers backing for the campaigns:

What encourages them to make attempts upon Ladies is, that their Brethren *Footmen* and Countrymen have a pretty large *Fund*, or *Stock* of Money in *Bank* [...]. And when any of them has heard of a *Fortune* whom they want to deceive into Matrimony, they presently apply themselves to the Treasurers of their *Bank*, and are immediately put into fine Clothes and dress'd *Cap-a-pée*; and then set up for fine Gentlemen of good Estates, and make their Address accordingly.¹¹

This co-operative aspect of the enterprise is reflected on stage – the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters*, in fact, begins with a reference to 'The Society' which has set up the male protagonist with 'a House, [...] with Cloathes, and a suitable Equipage',¹² and the title of *The Club of Fortune-Hunters* suggests that this is also a matter for Macklin's play. For the author of the pamphlet, it is this idea of a mafia of Irish charmers that poses such a threat to the nation. These organized Irishmen, he argues, are dangerous and unfeeling mercenaries – one has concurrently married 'eight Ladies, and received all their Fortunes', he claims – and the only remedy is strict punishment: 'I therefore propose that all such Fellows who make any such

Attempt shall forfeit their Liberty, and be put to Hard-Labour and a low Diet for such time as our Rulers shall think fit'.¹³

The author's aim is to condemn and to spur punitive action, and we see some echoes of this in the fortune-hunter plays of the period which, despite their generic status as light-hearted farces, are not devoid of censure of the practice around which they revolve. The 1750 *Fortune-Hunters* charts the comeuppance of a trickster who wrongly believes himself to be courting 'a rich Miser's Daughter'.¹⁴ It is not obviously moralistic for the majority of its action, but it concludes with the charlatan characters being taken away by the bailiffs to face justice, and with a didactic maxim: '*Thus, when Corruption has all Right o'rethrown [sic], / The Law steps in, and Justice claims her own*'.¹⁵ In such ways, the theatres joined in with the wider condemnation of fortune-hunting, and, like the author of the pamphlet, they very often associated the offence with the Irish. The long tradition of representing fortune-hunters on stage included notable non-Irish characters – Dorimant in George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), for example, and Willmore in Aphra Behn's *The Rover* (1677) – and so we should not see fortune-hunting as purely a trope born of ethnic tension. In the later period, though, it did become particularly associated with Irishness through such characters as Phælim O'Blunder in Moses Mendez's *The Double Disappointment*. David Hayton has gone so far as to claim that '[b]y far the most popular eighteenth-century stock character was the Irish fortune-hunter'.¹⁶

Moral indignation and anti-immigrant feeling, though, must be seen alongside a further motivation for the many stage representations of the practice. Another explanation for the proliferation of such plays lies in what fortune-hunting offered drama in terms of amenable material – and this is actually gestured towards in *Proposals for Redressing Some Grievances* in its account of the staginess of the business: the Irish footmen, the author complains, 'having served an Apprenticeship to Dressing, and giving themselves Airs [...] go

on with their Show' – fortune-hunting, the pamphlet makes very clear, is theatrical in itself and it contains many of the ingredients of comic drama.¹⁷ It involves forms of role-play, costume and disguise, a rogue and a victim, tense interactions as one person attempts to charm or dupe another, as well as the constant prospect that the truth will be revealed and the scheme will collapse. We may, of course, follow Erving Goffmann and see all social interaction as a type of performance; if we do this, though, we must surely see fortune-hunting as *particularly* theatrical – or at least exceptional because of the deliberate theatricality inherent in pretence. As such, fortune-hunting was an ideal practice for transformation into drama, notably into farce which typically hangs upon deceit or misunderstanding, with the audience (or reader) placed in the position, akin to that of the fortune-hunter, of knowing more of the situation of certain characters than those characters know themselves. Fortune-hunting offered dramatists something almost ready-made for light theatrical entertainment – characters, plots and scenarios which could be transferred from life to the stage with little need of invention in the process. Thackeray would later see this potential in fortune-hunting for prose fiction when he based *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844) on the exploits of the Anglo-Irish fortune-hunter Andrew Robinson Stoney Bowes (1747-1810). When he did so he was following a very long tradition within the theatre.¹⁸

Charles Macklin undoubtedly played an important role within this tradition, and he exploited the potential of fortune-hunting for drama to great effect. His *Club of Fortune-Hunters* may have only had one performance, but he addressed the subject in other works, and, as an Irish writer who was driven to speak up for his nation, he used the theatre as a space for challenging the stereotype of the Irish fortune-hunter: the stage representations multiplied because of pro-Irish as well as anti-Irish interventions. Prior to the 1748 play, Macklin had put Irish characters on the stage in two afterpieces: *A Will and No Will; Or, a Bone for the Lawyers* in 1746, and *The New Play Criticiz'd* in 1747. Later, in 1759, he placed

another Irish character at the centre of his *Love à la Mode*, a fortune-hunter farce which would turn out to be one of Macklin's most successful works. These three works reveal a significant evolution in Macklin's representation of Irishness and of fortune-hunting. *A Will and No Will* reproduces prevailing Irish stereotypes; small challenges to the characteristics of stage Irishness are then detectable in *The New Play Criticiz'd*, before a full and explicit deconstruction of the stereotype is offered in *Love à la Mode*, with the Irish character, Sir Callaghan O'Brallaghan, who proves himself to be the very opposite of a fortune-hunter.¹⁹ This play, with debts to Thomas Sheridan's *The Brave Irishman* (1743), depicts the rivalry of four suitors to an heiress, and its action serves explicitly as a basis for staging inter-ethnic negotiations.²⁰ Macklin's challenge to negative representations of the Irish lies in his transference of a mercenary attitude to love away from the Irish character and onto his rivals: an Englishman, a Scot and a Jew. Sir Callaghan emerges as the only suitor willing to marry with no prospect of an ensuing fortune, and by the end of the play he has won both the courtship battle and the moral high ground. He has also gained the fortune but, importantly, this has not been his motivation. Fortune-hunting, *Love à la Mode* boldly declares, is not specifically an Irish problem.

Love à la Mode, then, may be understood as a reaction against the type of anti-immigrant discourse that was being presented both on the stage and in such pamphlets as *Proposals for Redressing Some Grievances*.²¹ Macklin, having previously toed the line regarding stage Irishness, offered in 1759 a bold challenge to the popular convention. How might his 1748 *Club of Fortune-Hunters* fit into this strand of Macklin's work as a playwright? Might the farce fit neatly into a narrative of Macklin's increasing intolerance of Irish stereotyping, or might it disrupt that trajectory? Would that this could be established, but as the following will set out, it has to be acknowledged that this chapter in the story is missing and is likely to remain so.

The cases for and against Macklin's authorship of the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters*

The attribution of the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters* to Macklin is longstanding and has had the support of highly respected scholars. Allardyce Nicoll included the work in his list of Macklin's plays in *A History of English Drama*, and the attribution has been followed by later scholars focused specifically upon Macklin.²² William W. Appleton, the author of the standard biography of Macklin, accepts the attribution but dismisses the work: the farce, he writes, 'merits its total neglect'.²³ Robert Findlay, in an article on Macklin's 'Dark Satire', similarly takes Macklin to be the author and finds him being 'caustic' in the play's 'portrait of folly and vice'.²⁴ Little attention has been given to *The Fortune-Hunters* by more recent critics, but the attribution still has currency.²⁵ The *ESTC*, citing Nicoll, gives Macklin as the author of the 1750 publication, while *ECCO*, which makes available the Dublin edition but not the London one, does the same.

The contrary idea – that Macklin's 1748 *Club of Fortune-Hunters* did not make it into print – has actually been expressed before but without the presentation of full proof. J. O. Bartley, the editor of *Four Comedies by Charles Macklin* (1968), suggested that the 1748 and 1750 works 'can hardly be the same' since the printed play 'has none of Macklin's characteristic vigour', but this alternative view can actually be traced back more than two centuries.²⁶ James Kirkman, one of Macklin's early biographers, stated that 'THE CLUB OF FORTUNE-HUNTERS, OR WIDOW BEWITCHED' was 'Not printed', when he compiled his *List of Mr. Macklin's Dramatic Works* which appears as an appendix to his biography of 1799.²⁷ Kirkman, as will be seen, was almost certainly correct on this front, but he was wrong on others. For example, his list states that the play was 'acted at Drury-Lane, in 1747' rather than 1748, and he suggests that the play 'met a tolerable reception', which seems not to have been the case when we consider the prompter's record of the public verdict.²⁸ Regarding the

reception, the account by another early biographer, Francis Asprey Congreve, chimes better with the available evidence: ‘Ever attentive to variety, he [Macklin] produced another new entertainment [...] entitled, *The Club of Fortune-Hunters; or, the Widow Bewitched*. Its novelty helped doubtless to give his wife a full house, but so little was it approved of, that it sunk into immediate oblivion after the first representation’.²⁹ Kirkman’s inaccuracy regarding some details may explain why later scholars such as Nicoll have not paid heed to his statement that the play was not printed.

What, though, is the basis for the case that the play actually did appear in print? A high percentage of new plays – particularly afterpieces – were not published in this period. Judith Milhous and Robert Hume have established that around a third of new plays staged in the first half of the eighteenth century were not published, and this rose to around a half in the second half of the century. Moreover, of ‘the plays proper that did not get published, a very high proportion are afterpiece farces of one sort or another’.³⁰ Why should we believe that the 1748 *Fortune-Hunters* was one of those that did make it to the printing house?

The connection between the 1748 performance and the 1750 publication is actually not strong. It seems to lie primarily in the appearance of ‘*Fortune-Hunters*’ in both titles, along with the relative proximity of the productions in terms of time (although if a play was deemed worthy of publication, it would often be published more swiftly: Macklin’s own *King Henry the VII*, which failed on the stage early in 1746 but was published the same year, provides a case in point). To bolster the assumption of a connection, the subtitle of the London edition has been taken as a sign of Macklin’s association with the work. Findlay states in a footnote that ‘two virtually identical pirated texts of 1750, one published in London, the other in Dublin, appear to be Macklin’s play. The London edition bears the inscription, “*The Fortune Hunters, a Farce, As it was acted at Mac L—n’s Amphitheatre with great Applause*”’.³¹ It is certainly tempting to see ‘Mac L—n’ as a not very obscure cover for

‘Macklin’ – not least when it appears on the title-page of a play published at a time when Macklin was active as a playwright, and so the association is understandable. But we should note that Findlay has silently omitted the ballad from the title, thus misleadingly suggesting a definite association between the *Fortune-Hunters* and ‘Mac L—n’s Amphitheatre’ which is actually not imparted when the title is seen in its entirety (see Fig. 1). Furthermore, what Macklin might have had to do with an amphitheatre of any kind is not clear, and Findlay has no suggestions regarding this.

Appleton similarly presents this subtitle as support for the claim that the publications are ‘pirated editions of Macklin’s lost farce’, but, like Findlay, he provides no illumination regarding a connection between Macklin and any amphitheatre (as a biographer of Macklin, it is surprising he does not question this). Appleton additionally considers the advertisements which preceded the 1748 performance to find evidence of an association with the printed play: ‘The number of principal actors required [by the 1750 printed play] corresponds to the actors listed in the preliminary advertisements of Macklin’s play which appeared in the *General Advertiser*’.³² This is actually a highly dubious claim. The *General Advertiser* printed a run of advertisements for Mrs. Macklin’s benefit night in April 1748, promoting the revival of Ford’s *The Lover’s Melancholy* as a play ‘Not Acted these Hundred Years’ and *The Club of Fortune-Hunters* as ‘a new Farce (never acted before)’. By 11 April, the casting had been settled and the advertisements began announcing who would be playing.³³ Regarding the farce, it was stated: ‘The principal Parts to be perform’d by Mr. MACKLIN, Mr. Winstone, Mr. Taswell, Mr. I. Sparks, Mr. Usher, Mr. Blakes, Mrs. Bennett, Miss Cole, and Mrs. MACKLIN’ – that is six men and three women playing principal parts.³⁴ To make this correspond with the requirements of the printed play demands creative wishful thinking. The *dramatis personae* of the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters* consist of three named male characters (‘Searcher, *The Fortune Hunter*’, ‘Slinge, *His Companion, a pretended Servant*’, ‘Trap, A

Pimp') plus 'Bailiffs', together with three named female characters ('Martha, Susy, *Two Courtezans*', 'Mrs. Keep, *A Bawd*'). Regarding parts that may sensibly be deemed 'principal', there are really two for male actors and two or three for female actors (Mrs. Keep is arguably not a principal part, but much might be made of the character by a sufficiently flamboyant actress). Appleton's apparent desire to find a correspondence demands that all of the named parts are seen as 'principal', and, more remarkably, it demands that the listing of 'Bailiffs' is taken to mean precisely three bailiffs (to get us up to six male actors) and that the bailiffs are seen as principal parts when the play shows that they are clearly minor. It is, in truth, an implausible claim.

Had Appleton focused on another detail in the advertisement – the subtitle of the farce – he would have found a far more obvious and compelling piece of evidence, but it is one which supports the opposite case: that the 1750 publication is not a printing of the 1748 play. We can fairly assume that a play subtitled '*The Widow Bewitch'd*', in the whole run of the advertisements which promoted it, had a plot revolving around a widow. But this is not what is offered by the 1750 printed play. For an account of the 1750 play's plot, we can, in fact, turn to Appleton: 'Dealing with the circle of young Irish bucks heiress-hunting in London, its action hinges on the entrapment of two young blades by two prostitutes'. It is a treatment, Appleton writes, 'of the "biter bit" theme'.³⁵ This is a fair summary. The trickery – and being tricked – goes both ways in this drama; both males and females are fortune-hunters, and all are fooled until the situation unwinds: 'Alack, how unlucky it was that two Beagles on the same Scent, shou'd cross one another', says the courtesan Martha when the two-way deception becomes uncovered.³⁶ The farce includes no obvious widow – and no bewitching of one – and this, together with the actual *lack* of correspondence between the actors announced in 1748 and the *dramatis personae* of the printed play, clearly deflates the case for the

connection between performance and publication and, thereby, the case for Macklin's authorship.³⁷

Who was 'Mac L—n'? A new context for the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters*

If the material presented thus far does not provide sufficient evidence for de-attribution, further grounds may be found if we return to the subtitle of the printed work – with the mention of 'Mac L—n' – and consider more carefully which personage of the time might be lurking behind the half-obscured name. It is not often that one can introduce a highwayman into a tale of bibliographical correction – more is the pity – but in this case it is appropriate to do so as I would like to suggest that when we read 'Mac L—n' we should usher Charles Macklin entirely to one side and allow another Irish figure to ride dashing into the scene: enter James Maclaine (1724-1750), the so-called 'Gentleman Highwayman', who both made his name and lost his life in the very year of the publication of *The Fortune-Hunters*. James Maclaine is rarely remembered now – unlike his predecessor Dick Turpin – but in the summer and autumn of 1750 he was suddenly a very famous figure due to his highly publicized capture, trial and execution at Tyburn; indeed at this time he was a far more talked-about 'Mac L—n' than Charles Macklin, who then enjoyed a more established but quieter fame.³⁸

There are, furthermore, very good reasons to connect James Maclaine to both the printed *Fortune-Hunters* and the '*Humourous New Ballad*' that was appended to the London edition. Maclaine can be said to have prompted a 'media event' in 1750, with numerous reports in the newspapers and a clutch of publications focused upon him and his case. There were 'as many prints and pamphlets about him as about the [London] earthquake', Horace Walpole told a correspondent when Maclaine's sentence had been passed.³⁹ *The Fortune-Hunters* and the accompanying ballad, it will be seen, were in all likelihood light-hearted contributions to the burst of media attention that Maclaine's case magnetized.

The story of James Maclaine (sometimes spelled ‘Maclean’ or ‘Maclean’) returns us to the topic of Irish immigrants to London, whilst also showing a type of social mobility (here mixed with criminality) which is only now beginning to come into focus in the historiography of eighteenth-century migration from Ireland to England.⁴⁰ Maclaine was born in the north of Ireland, like Macklin before him, and was the son of a Presbyterian minister. His education evidently gave him the skills to perform as a gentleman, while his chief characteristics seem to have been a desire to move within the *beau monde*, a love of fine clothes, plus limited means combined with profligacy. He had a brother, Archibald Maclaine, who followed the respectable path of his father and became a minister in the Hague, but James Maclaine, according to the several accounts published at the time of his demise, spent his short life lurching from scheme to dodgy scheme in search of easy winnings.⁴¹ He eschewed the mercantile career that his father had intended for him and squandered what he inherited when his father died in 1740. Completely broke, he entered service as a footman and butler, and it was in this capacity that he first travelled to England, thereby living up to the stereotype of the shady Irish footman put forward in *Proposals for Redressing Some Grievances*. His social aspirations, though, led him soon to abandon these positions. He survived in London by pretending to gentility and by borrowing money and receiving contributions to fund a never-realized plan to set himself up in Jamaica, until the mid-1740s when he married the daughter of an innkeeper and used her modest fortune to establish a grocery business. His wife died young – around 1748 – and having spent most of the capital he had gained through marriage, and having gambled away a handout from his brother, Maclaine was obliged to look for new sources of income. It was at this time that he met a kindred spirit, William Plunkett, with whom he began his eventful but short career as a highwayman (a 1999 film, *Plunkett & Maclean*, dramatizes their exploits).⁴² They were stylish criminals – Venetian masks were their chosen concealment – and they successfully raided numerous coaches, including that of

Horace Walpole, in Hyde Park and the environs of London. At the same time, Maclaine was using his share of the takings to maintain the life of a gentleman, with expensive lodgings in the West End and the garb required to move in high society. It was, in fact, clothing that led to Maclaine's ultimate arrest in 1750 when he sold some stolen lace which was later recognized and traced back to him (clearly not quite a master criminal, Maclaine had given his name and address to the buyer who was in contact with the original owner of the lace). He was arrested, imprisoned and tried and, having already become well known as a man about town, he gained further renown as a prisoner and for his emotional performances in the dock. He was seen in court, according to *The Complete History of James Maclean*, 'whimpering and crying like a whipp'd School Boy' but 'this Behaviour, absurd as it was, drew sympathetic Tears, and opened the Purses of his fair Audience, whose Bounty supported him in great Affluence while in the *Gatehouse*'.⁴³ He was much visited in prison – he was held first in Westminster Gatehouse before being moved to Newgate shortly before his sentencing – and for several months his straddling of the polite and criminal worlds made him an unusual celebrity.⁴⁴ '[T]he Conversation of the Town', the preface to another contemporary biography stated, 'has been for some Time engrossed, by different Accounts, given of this remarkable Highwayman, and his genteel Treatment of those who have unluckily been plundered by him on the Road, together with his gallant Behaviour to the Ladies'.⁴⁵ Maclaine was popular to the end. He was executed on 3 October 1750 and, having repented of his crimes, he reportedly 'stood the Gaze of the Multitude (that was on this Occasion almost infinite) without the least Concern'.⁴⁶

Why should we draw any connection between this unlucky highwayman and the 1750 publication of *The Fortune-Hunters* and its accompanying ballad? Considering the play first, the historical Maclaine is linked to the fictional drama by the fact that fortune-hunting by means of courtship formed an even greater part of his mendacious career than the robbing of stagecoaches. Samuel Johnson noted in his *Dictionary* that one must 'distinguish between

fortunehunters and fortunestealers’, but Maclaine readily took on both roles, and indeed fortune-hunting formed a major part of his collaboration with Plunkett. The title-page of *A Complete History of James Maclean* highlights this aspect of the alliance, stating that the work will provide an account of ‘The Particulars of their Fortune-hunting Schemes; in which Maclean generally pass’d for a Gentleman of Worth, and Plunket personated his Footman’. The pair, in other words, performed in real life the basic situation that is played out in numerous dramas, including the 1750 *Fortune-hunters* which involves, as has been noted, the adventures of ‘Searcher, *The Fortune Hunter*’ and ‘Slinge, *His Companion, a pretended Servant*’. Perhaps the two even took direct inspiration from the stage – from Farquhar’s *Beaux Stratagem*, for example, echoes of which resonate in accounts of their short career, as well as in the 1750 play. Many of Maclaine and Plunkett’s activities certainly have an air of fiction about them, not least when they are related in the present tense as when the *Complete History* describes an audacious scheme in which they pursued the plain but staggeringly wealthy daughter of a gentleman: ‘Mr. *Maclean* assumes the Title of a Lord, and *Plunket* acts in the Capacity of his Valet, and both together set out to run down the Doe of 40,000 l.’.⁴⁷ An interest in such beaux stratagems is ultimately presented in *A Complete History* as more deep-rooted in Maclaine than his thievery on the road. ‘Thus ended this famous Man’, the author writes in the conclusion, ‘in whose Life we may observe, that he had but one predominant Foible, that is, an extraordinary Itch for a gay Appearance, and that to maintain this, he had from his Infancy proposed to himself no other Scheme but by seducing some Women of Fortune to marry him’.⁴⁸

It was, then, this theatrical side of Maclaine’s short career, I propose, that formed the motivation for the publication of the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters*, which may be seen as a hasty capitalisation upon the unexpected fame of an exposed, real-life fortune-hunter. The play and the ballad were published, according to an advertisement in the *General Advertiser*, on 3

September 1750 – a time of high tension in Maclaine’s case.⁴⁹ At that point, he had made several court appearances, but it was before the passing of his sentence, which occurred on 13 September. At the time of the play’s publication, then, Maclaine’s life lay in the balance and there was enormous public interest in his plight. There was petitioning on his behalf – indeed, a plea was sent all the way from Holland, where news of Maclaine’s situation had struck a chord: the *Whitehall Evening Post* of 23-25 August reported ‘that there is a Petition come from Holland, signed by a great many Persons of Distinction, to the Lords of the Regency, in Favour of Maclean’.⁵⁰ This was due to the efforts in the Hague of Maclaine’s brother, who ‘made all the Application possible for his Life’ and mobilized those of his acquaintance who he believed might have influence on the case.⁵¹ At the same time, less earnest reflections on Maclaine’s situation were being circulated. The *Whitehall Evening Post* of 8-11 September advertised a print, the title of which points to its droll tenor:

THE REAL FACT display’d in a PRINT: Being D—LL’s Embassy to MACLEAN, with the LADIES SUBSCRIPTION PURSE: In which are introduced some Characters that nearly resemble Human Life, with Their NATURAL PASSIONS so expressive, that you would really think they were design’d for L— P—, L— T—, Miss A—, Mrs. W—, and many others, Male and Female.

There may or may not be a surviving copy of this print, but even without one we can discern that the work was offering a satirical reflection on the community of Maclaine’s admirers, while the timing of the print’s advertisement – just two days before the sentencing – shows that the prospect of a capital punishment for Maclaine was no justification for the suppression of humour.⁵² The 1750 *Fortune-Hunters* can be seen as a diversion in the same spirit as this print. The published drama, sold for the relatively low price of sixpence, would have provided

readers with an opportunity to be entertained by a play which did not exactly replicate Maclaine's story but offered close parallels to it and thereby invited reflection upon the daring plots of the captured fraudster.⁵³ The play is undeniably conventional (and it may have a dominant source, yet to be identified), but since Maclaine's life so often followed the conventions of the stage or of prose fiction, the dramatic trope of the fortune-hunter could readily be commandeered in a work which inserted itself into the public discourse concerning the historical Maclaine as he faced the the unforgiving force of the British penal system.

The play's publication in the midst of Maclaine's downfall provides a reminder of Marx's notion that history repeats itself – first as tragedy and then as farce. In the intermingled stories of Maclaine and the *Fortune-Hunters* there is certainly both tragedy and farce, but in September 1750 the succession from one to the other was not quite as neat as Marx would have it, while the long and complex dialogue between the theatrics of real-life fortune-hunting and the representation of the practice on stage confounded any simple notion of repetition. Tragedy would continue to merge with farce – or at least with comedy – in the weeks leading up to Maclaine's execution and following it. There were many further public interventions – *A Petition to the Right Hon. Mr.—, In Favour of Mr. Maclean. By a Lady*, for example, and prints including 'Newgates Lamentation or the Ladys Last farewell of Maclean' (see Fig. 2).

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

[CAPTION] 'Newgates Lamentation or the Ladys Last farewell of Maclean', British Museum 1851,0308.411. Reproduced by permission of The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.

Among the satirical publications is one which adds further support to the idea that the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters* needs to be seen as a part of the media event prompted by Maclaine's story. It is a short pamphlet, which builds on the idea of a guild of Irish fortune-hunters, entitled:

*M-----C L-----N's CABINET broke open; Or, His Private List of all the Duchess Dowagers, Countesses, Widow Ladies, Maiden Ladies, Widows and Misses of Honour, Virtue, and large Fortunes in England: Together With their several Places of Abodes, And Also His Charge and Advice to the Honourable Society of Hibernians: With their Orders and Resolutions.*⁵⁴

In this London publication – ‘Printed for’, the title-page states with a wink, ‘*Patrick McLaughter, near St. Paul's*’ – we see Maclaine's courtship schemes again being given precedence over his stealing, and again, as in the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters*, they are the basis for a witty published response. And as Maclaine matched so neatly the stereotype of the Irish fortune-hunter, this publication is keen to position him within a wider Hibernian enterprise of ripping off the loaded ladies of England. Also significant, though, with regard to the authorship of the *Fortune-Hunters*, is the fact that this work presents a further example of the internal truncation of Maclaine's name. It shows that in 1750 ‘Maclaine’ did not need to be spelled out in full in order for readers to recognize the man. James Maclaine – not Charles Macklin – was the ‘Mac L—n’ of the moment.

A Humorous New Ballad, Called The Female Combatants

It is unlikely that the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters* was actually performed, at least not professionally. There are no records of its having been performed in 1750 at any of the recognized theatrical venues in London, and there is no sign that it was performed in Dublin.⁵⁵

It may be noted again here that while the title of the publication indicates a performance at ‘Mac L—n’s *Amphitheatre*’, it does not state explicitly that the *play* was performed there. The full title of the publication is: *The Fortune-Hunters. A Farce. To which is annexed, A Humourous New Ballad, Called The Female Combatants; Or, Love in a Jail. As it was acted at Mac L—n’s Amphitheatre with great Applause.* This may be taken to point not to the play but to the ballad as the work that was performed, and this is reinforced by the actual presentation of the ballad which is printed under a reiteration of the subtitle with small variations: *The Female Combatants; Or, Love in a Jail. As it was perform’d at Mac L—n’s Amphitheatre, By Mrs. Quibble, and Mrs. Coakser.*⁵⁶ There is a shift from ‘acted’ on the title-page to ‘perform’d’ in the later title: both are appropriate for this particular ballad, since it takes the form of a dramatic dialogue. A more important aspect of the ballad, though, is its inclusion in its final line of a further reference to ‘*Mac L—ne*’, and here again the reference can readily be taken to indicate James Maclaine. We know that balladeers were drawn to Maclaine’s case: Horace Walpole reported that he was ‘honorably mentioned in a grub ballad for not having contributed to his sentence’.⁵⁷ The piece attached to the *Fortune-Hunters* is a slightly earlier musical response, produced when Maclaine had been captured but had yet to be sentenced.

‘The Female Combatants’ is a comic ballad, to be sung to the tune of ‘Derry down’, in which pseudo-polite rivalry between two ladies turns to violence over the course of a ten-stanza exchange. Then, as the tenth stanza moves into a final verse, the perspective shifts and an external narrative voice suggests that their combat has been prompted by love for ‘their Hero *Mac L—ne*’. It is a light piece – very reminiscent of the exchanges in *Newgate* between Lucy Lockit and Polly Peachum in *The Beggar’s Opera* (which, like the ballad, features a Mrs. Coaxer) – and quoting the opening and closing exchanges will sufficiently convey its qualities and pertinence to Maclaine:

Mrs. Coakser.

I Vow, Mrs. *Quibble*, you look as to-day,
 Beyond your own Custom, unusually gay;
 Nor know I a Lady whose Beauty is less
 Beholding than yours to her Painting and Dress.

Derry down, &c.

Mrs. Quibble.

O, Madam! that Compliment well might be spar'd
 Since 'tis but small Credit with Paint to be smear'd;
 But some have their Faces in Safron so dy'd
 As the Skin is too yellow for Painting to hide.

Derry down, &c. [...]

Mrs. Coakser.

How now, saucy Minx! your Discourse makes me wild,
 Wou'd you hint by that Sneer, that he got me with-Child?
 Take that, you pert Hussy! and I do protest,
 Were it not for those present, I'd give you the rest.

Derry down, &c.

Mrs. Quibble.

Ha! a Box on the Ear! do you think I'll take this
 From one who but late was a Pawn-broker's Miss?

That I was so passive, shall never be said,
 So saying, she flung the Cream-Jug at her Head.

Derry down, &c.

And now to describe all the Rage of these two,
 The Blows they exchange'd, and the Things that they threw,
 Wou'd be harder Task than to sing in high Strain,
 The many Exploits of their Hero *Mac L—ne*.

Derry down, &c.

Recalling that the alternative title for this piece is 'Love in a Jail', it seems very clear that this final line alludes to James Maclaine – a renowned ladies' man, who had 'many Exploits' behind him and who, when in jail himself, received enormous attention from friends and female admirers. Could it refer to Charles Macklin? Macklin was no womanizer, he was admired but not seen as a hero, and, while he had had a spell in jail in the past (having accidentally killed a fellow actor in 1735), he was on the right side of the law in 1750. As a reference to Macklin, it makes no sense at all.

At this point it would be pleasing to present an assured explanation of what 'Mac L—n's *Amphitheatre*' refers to, but this, regrettably, cannot be done. There is no obvious entertainment venue to which the phrase might refer, although various locales were referred to as 'amphitheatres' in the period. Concerts at Ranelagh House were held at a so-called 'Amphitheatre' – one which could be 'made Warm' and also offered 'Breakfasting'.⁵⁸ The stage seating at Covent Garden was, on occasions, 'form'd into an Amphitheatre, illuminated, and enclos'd, as at an Oratorio'.⁵⁹ Probably the best known amphitheatre at the time was 'Broughton's Amphitheatre' in Oxford Road, which was opened in 1743 as a venue for

boxing matches; announcements and reports of fights there appear very frequently in the newspapers. The term ‘amphitheatre’, then, was associated with both high and low culture, but there are no obvious traces of an amphitheatre connected with Maclaine (or any other candidate for ‘Mac L—n’) beyond the reference in the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters*. Given what we know of Maclaine’s career – from duplicity to captivity – ‘Mac L—n’s *Amphitheatre*’ is in all likelihood a sobriquet for something provisional, or a witty appellation for a locale with which he could be associated. Most probably it is an ironic naming of a setting within Westminster Gatehouse where Maclaine received his visitors before his transfer to Newgate (we might note that the semi-circular gathering of visitors depicted in Fig. 2 has something of the amphitheatre about it, but this is a depiction of Newgate, not the Gatehouse, and the formation is doubtless in part determined by the two-dimensional medium of the print). Maclaine’s supporters would have struggled to stage a two-act play in the Gatehouse, but a ballad for two voices could readily have been performed there, and the setting would have given something very literal to a rendering of ‘Love in a Jail’, while the ironies of using the term ‘amphitheatre’, particularly with its suggestion of more elegant musical venues, would not have been lost on all those who in the autumn of 1750 were aware of Maclaine’s ruin as a would-be man of fashion. We cannot be sure here, but even with this detail still obscure there is more than enough evidence to connect the play and the ballad to James Maclaine and in turn to disassociate Charles Macklin from the 1750 publication.

Macklin’s lost play

What, though, might we conclude regarding Macklin’s afterpiece? If we accept that the play performed in 1748 with the title *The Club of Fortune-Hunters; Or, The Widow Bewitch’d* was not the drama that was printed in 1750, we must also accept that this afterpiece is most probably lost. There is no known manuscript for the 1748 play. A manuscript should, for legal

reasons, have been submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for pre-performance approval since the play was, according to the advertisements, ‘new’ and ‘never before acted’. There is, though, no copy of the play in the Larpent Collection of the scripts sent to the Lord Chamberlain. As Robert Hume has established, the Larpent Collection is far from a complete gathering of the works sent to the Lord Chamberlain’s office – many of the plays deemed less important may have been simply thrown away – and so the absence of the 1748 *Fortune-Hunters* does not prove that it was not submitted.⁶⁰ Probably it was submitted but has not been preserved.

It may be, though, that, whether or not it reached the Lord Chamberlain, the 1748 farce was not as entirely ‘new’ as the advertisements suggested. The theme of ‘*The Widow Bewitch’d*’ does not appear in the 1750 publication, but it had been addressed by earlier dramatists, among them James Carlile (d. 1691) in a work with a title that is becoming familiar here: *The Fortune-Hunters*. Carlile’s *The Fortune-Hunters: Or, Two fools well met* was a five-act comedy first performed at Drury Lane in 1689 and published the same year (with later editions in 1714 and 1736). Among the characters in this play is ‘The Lady *Sly*, a Widdow, a formal Hypocritical Lady, and in Love with young *Wealthy*’.⁶¹ This elderly widow may well be described as ‘bewitched’; she is consumed by her passion for the younger *Wealthy* and much of the play’s comedy rests on the trope of cross-generational love which in Carlile’s work, true to convention, is thwarted by the presence of an alternative, younger lover for *Wealthy*. The widow has a major role in the drama, and it is easy to see how the character might be made the centre of the piece in an adaptation. Since revising and reworking older works was standard practice in the provision of new material for the eighteenth-century stage, it is very possible that the 1748 afterpiece was a shortened version of Carlile’s play.

Alongside the thematic connection indicated by the 1748 subtitle, it is worth noting that the *dramatis personae* of Carlile’s *Fortune-Hunters*, with six principal parts for men and four for women, very nearly match the principal parts for the 1748 *Fortune-Hunters* (with six men and

three women), and one of Carlile's female characters – a Mrs Spruce, the wife of an Exchange man – might readily be jettisoned in the process of abridgement. It seems likely that Macklin drew upon the plotting and conventions found in Carlile's play, but there are other plays revolving around fortune-hunters from which he may equally well have borrowed (and there are others concerning widows: a play entitled *The Widow Bewitch'd*, for example, was performed at Goodman's Fields in 1730). Without the script of the play, we can, of course, only speculate about its sources.

There is doubtless more work that could be done to untangle the interrelated throng of plays concerning fortune-hunting that entertained theatre-goers of the eighteenth century, and there is more to be considered regarding the connection of these stage fictions to real-life fortune-hunters such as Maclaine and regarding the deployment of the fortune-hunter as a trope in the cultural and ethnic negotiations that were prompted by the presence of those Irish immigrants who had, in Toby Barnard's words, 'crowded into London' in the eighteenth century.⁶² This essay, I hope, has made a modest contribution to those lines of enquiry while, for scholars interested in Charles Macklin, it has established that when we wish to consider his *oeuvre* we should not include the 1750 *Fortune-Hunters* as a part of his output. That play, even though we now know more about the occasion of its publication, must rather be categorized as the work of that most prolific of writers: Anon.

¹ Helen M. Burke. 'Crossing Acts: Irish Drama from George Farquhar to Thomas Sheridan' in *A Companion to Irish Literature*, ed. Julia M. Wright, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2010), I, 127-141 (137).

² Burke, 137.

³ *The Fortune-Hunters. A Farce. To which is annexed, A Humorous New Ballad, Called The Female Combatants; Or, Love in a Jail. As it was acted at Mac L—n's Amphitheatre with great Applause* (London, 1750). It is a 24-page publication, printed by A. M'Culloh for L. Donnelly, a stationer in the Strand, with the ballad on the last two pages. This is the edition cited below. I have consulted the copy held in the Huntington Library.

⁴ Ms. 'Diaries of Drury Lane Theater performances kept by Richard Cross and William Hopkins', Folger Shakespeare Library, W.a.104 (1-13), vol. 1. This diary provides the main evidence I have seen for Macklin's authorship of the 1748 play. In a string of advertisements in the *General Advertiser* in April 1748, the work was announced as 'a new farce (never acted before)', but Macklin's authorship was not given. George Winchester Stone Jr. apparently conflates the advertisements and Cross's diary when he lists the work as 'A New Farce never acted before by Charles Macklin' in *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 4: 1747-1776. Volume 1: 1747-1755* (Carbondale, 1962), 50.

⁵ Stage widows are typically of the mature kind, and the performance records in *The London Stage* show that around this time Mrs. Macklin was playing older characters such as Mrs. Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera* and the Widow Lackit in *Oroonoko*.

⁶ Folger Shakespeare Library, W.a.104 (1-13), vol. 1.

⁷ The title of Moses Mendez' *The Double Disappointment* (1746) was augmented with the phrase when it was printed: *The Double Disappointment: Or, The Fortune Hunters. A Comedy in Two Acts Written by a Gentleman* (London: 1755). Other published dramatic works include: *The Match-Maker fitted; Or, The Fortune-Hunters rightly serv'd* (1718) by Mr. Surly; *The Noble Pedlar; Or, The Fortune Hunter. A Burletta* (1771) by George Saville Carey; *Honour Rewarded: Or, The Generous Fortune Hunter* (1775) by John Dalton; *The Fortune-Hunter; Or, The Gamester Reclaim'd* (1775?), with no known author; plus James Carlile's *The Fortune-Hunters: Or, Two fools well met* (1689), which is discussed below.

⁸ For an exploration of how the London stage responded to the presence of non-English ethnic groups in the capital – including the immigrant Irish – see Michael Ragussis's article, 'Jews and Other "Outlandish Englishmen": Ethnic Performance and the Invention of British Identity under the Georges', *Critical Inquiry* 26:4 (2000), 773-797, and his later book, *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain* (Philadelphia, 2010).

⁹ Anon., *Proposals for Redressing Some Grievances Which greatly affect The Whole Nation* (London, 1740), 46.

¹⁰ *Proposals for Redressing*, 49.

¹¹ *Proposals for Redressing*, 50.

¹² *The Fortune-Hunters* (1750), 3.

¹³ *Proposals for Redressing*, 57, 54. Addressing this organized type of fortune-hunting are other publications such as 'Memoirs of a modern Society of Fortune-Hunters; with the Rules and Orders of their Club: In a Letter from the Father of a young Lady lately ruin'd by them' in the *British Magazine* of September 1747 (advertised in

the *London Evening Post*, 29 Sept.-1 Oct. 1747). An earlier satire of fortune-hunting clubs is found in *Votes of the Irish Society of Fortune-hunters; otherwise call'd; the Killing Captain's Club* (London, 1720).

¹⁴ *The Fortune-Hunters* (1750), 4.

¹⁵ *The Fortune-Hunters* (1750), 22.

¹⁶ David Hayton, *The Anglo-Irish Experience, 1680-1730: Religion, Identity and Patriotism* (Woodbridge, 2012), 16.

¹⁷ *Proposals for Redressing*, 50.

¹⁸ This is not to downplay the place of fortune hunting in prose fiction before Thackeray. It is clearly a topic for numerous eighteenth-century novels including canonical works, such as Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), with its female fortune hunter, and lesser-known works, such as John Oakman's *The Life and Adventures of Benjamin Brass, An Irish Fortune-Hunter* (1765).

¹⁹ I have discussed this aspect of Macklin's career in "‘John Bull, pit, box and gallery, said No!’: Charles Macklin and the Limits of Ethnic Resistance on the Eighteenth-Century London Stage", *Representations* 79 (2002), 61-81 (68-71).

²⁰ Susan Cannon Harris discusses Macklin's debts to Sheridan and their revisions of the Irish fortune-hunter trope in 'Mixed Marriage: Sheridan, Macklin, and the Hybrid Audience' in *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses: Investigating Performance, 1660-1800*, ed. Michael Corder and Peter Holland (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 189-212.

²¹ That this aspect of Macklin's work – in *Love à la Mode* and his later *The True-born Irishman* (1761) – had only limited effects is a main argument in 'Charles Macklin and the Limits of Ethnic Resistance', cited above.

²² Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama, 1660-1900, Volume II: Early Eighteenth Century Drama*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 1955), 342.

²³ William W. Appleton, *Charles Macklin: An Actor's Life* (Cambridge MA, 1960), 87.

²⁴ Robert R. Findlay, 'The Comic Plays of Charles Macklin: Dark Satire at Mid-Eighteenth Century', *Educational Theatre Journal* 20:3 (1968), 398-407 (401).

²⁵ Macklin's authorship of the 1750 play is accepted by, for example, J. C. D. Clark in 'Providence, Predestination and Progress: Or, Did the Enlightenment Fail?' in *Ordering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Frank O'Gorman and Diana Donald (Basingstoke, 2006), 27-62 (30).

²⁶ Charles Macklin, *Four Comedies by Charles Macklin*, ed. J. O. Bartley (London, 1968), 23.

²⁷ James Kirkman, *Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin*, 2 vols. (London, 1799), II, 443. Edward Abbott Parry, a later biographer, followed Kirkman and listed the 1748 work as ‘Not printed’ in *Charles Macklin* (London, 1891), 196. Nicoll, cited above, refers to Parry when he lists the 1750 publication as by Macklin, apparently assuming the 1748 play to be the same as that printed in 1750, albeit with a different subtitle (*History of English Drama, 1660-1900, Volume II*, 342).

²⁸ Kirkman, *Charles Macklin*, I, 310.

²⁹ Francis Asprey Congreve, *Authentic Memoirs of the Late Mr. Charles Macklin, Comedian* (London, 1798), 29. Congreve’s account is probably reliable, but the fact that the play was performed only once is not necessarily a sign of failure: hundreds of pieces were played only once at this time. ‘*The London Stage Data Associations, 1660-1880*’, in the online *Eighteenth Century Drama* (Marlborough, 2016), can be used to provide an eloquent (if imprecise) demonstration of the number of one-offs, suggesting that around two-fifths of all performances were played only once. This includes dances, songs, acrobatics, Harlequin pieces etc.; for works that may be categorized as plays, the proportion is clearly smaller, but their number still points to success or failure not being the only determining factor behind a repeat performance.

³⁰ Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *The Publication of Plays in London, 1660-1800: Playwrights, Publishers, and the Market* (London, 2015), 116.

³¹ Findlay, ‘Comic Plays of Charles Macklin’, 402, fn. 11.

³² Appleton, *An Actor’s Life*, 254.

³³ The play was initially scheduled for 22 April 1748, which explains the relative earliness of the advertisements. The ill health of one of the performers caused its postponement to 28 April.

³⁴ *General Advertiser*, 11 April 1748.

³⁵ Appleton, *An Actor’s Life*, 87. Bartley notes the absence of a widow in the printed play (*Four Comedies*, 23).

³⁶ *The Fortune-Hunters* (1750), 21.

³⁷ Mrs. Keep, who runs a bawdy house, is a mature female character (addressed sometimes as ‘mother’) who could be a widow, but this is not explicit and the character is not ‘bewitched’.

³⁸ Maclaine is not entirely forgotten and has been considered by some recent scholars. See, for example, Ch. 3 of Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 2010).

³⁹ Letter to Horace Mann, 20 September 1750, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis, vol. 20: *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence with Horace Mann IV*, ed. W. S. Lewis, Warren Hunting

Smith and George L. Lam (New Haven, 1960), 188. 1750 saw several earthquakes in Britain, including two in London early in the year.

⁴⁰ An excellent collection of revisionist studies of the Irish in London is found in a special issue of *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 39:1 (2015): *Networks of Aspiration: The London Irish of the Eighteenth Century*, edited by David O'Shaughnessy.

⁴¹ My account of Maclaine is based on two anonymous contemporary accounts: *A Complete History of James Maclean, The Gentleman Highwayman* (London, 1750), and *A Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of James Maclean, Highwayman* (London, 1750). I have also consulted the *ODNB* entry on Maclaine by Andrea McKenzie.

⁴² The film is an Arts Council of England, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment and Working Title production, directed by Jake Scott.

⁴³ *Complete History of James Maclean*, 54.

⁴⁴ The *London Evening Post* of 6-8 September 1750 reported that 'Yesterday Maclean, the Highwayman [...] was remov'd, with many other Prisoners, from the Gatehouse to Newgate'.

⁴⁵ *Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of James Maclean*, preface (n. p.).

⁴⁶ *Complete History of James Maclean*, 64.

⁴⁷ *Complete History of James Maclean*, 49.

⁴⁸ *Complete History of James Maclean*, 65.

⁴⁹ The advertisement in the *General Advertiser* of 3 September 1750 announces *The Fortune-Hunters* under the conventional heading '*This Day is published*'; in the same paper of 5 September 1750, the advertisement was repeated, again stating '*This Day is published*'. Given the unreliability of '*This Day is published*', we cannot be sure that *The Fortune-Hunters* was published on 3 September – it could have been earlier – but we can be fairly sure that the work was available by 3 September.

⁵⁰ *Whitehall Evening Post*, 23-25 August 1750.

⁵¹ *Complete History of James Maclean*, 55. Several of Archibald Maclaine's letters are reproduced in this account (55-62).

⁵² The advertisement announced publication for '*Tomorrow Morning*' – presumably, then, the day before Maclaine's sentencing.

⁵³ My suggestion that the price was relatively low is based on the account of the price of plays in Milhous and Hume, *Publication of Plays in London*, 143-146. As these authors point out, a low price does not imply that plays were commonly bought by people other than the relatively wealthy.

⁵⁴ This work appeared after the play and was published some two months after Maclaine's execution. It was advertised as a new publication in the *Whitehall Evening Post* of 8-11 December 1750 and the *General Advertiser* of 10 December 1750.

⁵⁵ I base this on the performance records presented in *The London Stage, 1660-1800* and on John C. Greene's online index of *Theatre in Dublin, 1745-1820* at <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/lupress/dublintheatre/> (accessed 29 October 2017).

⁵⁶ The ballad appears on two sides of a leaf following the play, 23-24.

⁵⁷ *Walpole's Correspondence with Horace Mann IV*, 188.

⁵⁸ See the advertisement for an eleven o'clock 'CONCERT of MUSICK' at Ranelagh House in the *General Advertiser*, 13 April 1748.

⁵⁹ See the advertisement for a performance of *Venus and Adonis* in the *General Advertiser*, 15 March 1748.

⁶⁰ Robert D. Hume, 'What the Larpent Collection Contains – and What It Does *Not* Contain', *Eighteenth Century Drama* (Marlborough, 2016). Web: <http://www.eighteenthcenturydrama.amdigital.co.uk.huntington.idm.oclc.org/Explore/Essays/Hume>. (accessed 30 October 2017).

⁶¹ James Carlile, *The Fortune-Hunters: Or, Two fools well met* (London, 1689), list of *dramatis personae* (n.p.).

⁶² Toby Barnard, 'The Irish in London and "The London Irish," ca. 1660-1780', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 39:1 (2015), 14-40 (34).