CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	'The modell of its sad afflictions': Henry Burkhead's Tragedy of Cola's Furie
Authors	Couglan, Patricia
Publication date	2001
Original Citation	Coughlan, P. (2001) ''The modell of its sad afflictions': Henry Burkhead's Tragedy of Cola's Furie or Lirenda's Miserie', in Ó Siochrú, M. (ed), Kingdoms in Crisis: Ireland in the 1640s: Essays in Honour of Donal Cregan, Dublin: Four Courts Press, pp. 192-211. isbn: 1-85182-535-5
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	https://www.fourcourtspress.ie/
Rights	© the various contributors and Four Courts Press
Download date	2026-11-08 06:12:27
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/15609

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

941.506 0510

Kingdoms in Crisis

Ireland in the 1640s

Essays in honour of Dónal Cregan

Micheál Ó Siochrú
EDITOR



FOUR COURTS PRESS



'The modell of its sad afflictions': Henry Burkhead's *Tragedy of Cola's Furie*[1]

Patricia Coughlan

For painfully obvious reasons, few literary texts in English emerged in Ireland during the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Among these, *A Tragedy of Cola's Furie, or Lirenda's Miserie* (Kilkenny, 1646), a five-act verse tragedy or tragi-comedy, is remarkable both in taking the viewpoint of catholics and in drawing capably on the tradition and conventions of English drama.[2] Surviving copies of *Cola's Furie* are very rare, possibly only two in number.[3] Almost nothing is known about its author, Henry Burkhead, who has been mistakenly conflated with another similar-sounding writer.[4] Anthony à Wood rather slightingly calls Burkhead 'no Academian, only a Merchant of Bristol', and Langbaine's brief mention of *Cola's Furie* repeats this description, as well as claiming that the play was never performed. A search of the Bristol city archives has failed to discover any mention of the author, indicating that he possibly resided in Kilkenny and

1 This essay is a revised and expanded version of my 'Enter Revenge': Henry Burkhead and Cola's Furie', *Theatre Research International*, xv, no. 1 (1990), pp 1–17. I am grateful to the journal's publishers, Oxford University Press, for permission to use material from the essay. 2 It is noticed in A. Harbage, *Annals of English Drama 975–1700* (revised by S. Schoenbaum, London, 1964), in C. Langbaine, *Outline of the English Dramatic Poets* (Oxford, 1961), pp 41–2 and G.E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. iii (Oxford, 1956), pp 94–5. There are longer discussions in La Tourette Stockwell, 'Lirenda's Miserie', *Dublin Magazine* n.s., v (1930), pp 19–26, which, however, is largely a plot summary; Peter Kavanagh, *The Irish Theatre* (Tralee, 1946), which is intemperately negative, and, more productively, in G.C. Duggan, *The Stage Irishman* (Dublin, 1937), pp 65–73. Dale B.J. Randall briefly explores *Cola* in the context of literary history in *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642–1660* (Kentucky, 1995), pp 88–92. 3 One is in the British Library and one in the Huntington Library. I have used the BL copy (C.2 1.c.54), which has a few MS annotations of unknown date by way of historical identifications alongside some of the 'Names of the Chiefe Actors'. Apart from being tantalisingly faint, these have also been half trimmed off (see below, n.43). 4 Wood is followed by Bentley in also listing Burkhead as the author of *The Female Rebellion* (*c.*1658), a political tragi-comedy surviving in MS, and since identified as in fact the work of Henry Birkhead (1617?–1696). I thank Joan Pittock for kindly communicating to me her disentanglement of Burkhead from this Birkhead, and also from his relative Sir John Birkenhead – the form in which W.S. Clark gives Burkhead's surname in *The Early Irish Stage* (Oxford, 1955, p. 40); see Joan H. Pittock, *Henry Birkhead, founder of the Oxford Chair of Poetry: poetry and the redemption of history* (Lewiston, N.Y., 1999).

merely traded with Bristol.[5] He may have been among the large number of recusants who had migrated from England in the decades before 1641.[6]

There is also a possible connection with the prominent Co. Limerick family, catholics of New English origin, whose name was variously spelt 'Burgatt', 'Burgat', 'Burgett' or 'Burgate' (although to our ears the 'k' and hard 'g' sounds seem somewhat different). Forms of the name occur in Munster from the sixteenth century onwards: a 'Thomas Burgate' was clerk of the council to the Munster Presidency in 1570, and then in 1576 comptroller of wine imports at Cork; a 'John Byrket', possibly connected, was attorney-general to the Munster Presidency in 1604.[7] At least one of the Co. Limerick Burgetts appears to have been active in the 1641 rebellion. '[O]ne Burgett', described in a letter from the lords justices as 'commissary general of the rebells' army', was captured by Inchiquin in early September 1642, not long after the battle of Liscarroll, along with Colonel Richard Butler, 'son to the traitor the Lord Viscount Ikeryn'. These two escaped the fate of another fifty rebels, who were hanged the next morning, presumably as Burgett, along with the nobleman's son, was considered to be of some social importance.[8] The role as commissary general (provider of supplies) is, of course, more than compatible with the occupation of merchant. A 'John Burg*a*tt of neare Kilmallock' is named in the 1641 depositions: he was said to have been present, together with large numbers of other rebels including Purcells, O'Briens, Fitgeralds, and a Butler, at the despoilment of Elizabeth Dowdall's house and possessions in Kilfinny, Co. Limerick. Furthermore, a 'John Burg*e*tt', in this case described as 'Esquire', was said to have been with Viscount Mountgarret's army at Lismore, Co. Waterford during the robbery of Daniel Spicer and the hanging of Richard Magner. On the latter occasion it is worth noting that another alleged member of the rebels' group was a son of Thomas Preston, the confederate general and hero of *Cola's Furie*.[9]

5 I have been unable to find him in educational records, and there seems at present no means of knowing how and where he acquired the degree of familiarity with the tradition, forms and conventions of English drama which underlie the play. Various forms of his surname do, however, occur in Bristol, and the name seems to be English rather than Irish. Joan Burkhead and Sarah and Thomas Burkett occur in *The Inhabitants of Bristol,* in 1696, and Thomas Birket in the *City Chamberlain's Accounts,* in 1557. I am grateful for this information to Professor K.G. Davies; I also thank Mr John S. Williams of the Bristol Record Office, who searched that office's records for a mention of Henry Burkhead, without success. 6 Michael McCarthy-Morrogh details this influx of English recusants and also the extensive human traffic to Bristol from Munster; see *The Munster Plantation: English Migration to Southern Ireland, 1583–1641* (Oxford, 1986), pp 194, 210, 243. I owe the references in this note and some in the three following to David Edwards, who has generously shared his research on New English recusants in Ireland with me, and whom I thank for several discussions about Burkhead's possible identity and background. 7 See James L.J.Hughes, ed., *Patentee Officers in Ireland, 1172–1826* (IMC, Dublin, 1960), pp 19, 21. 8 James Hogan (ed.), *Letters and Papers Relating to the Irish Rebellion,* (IMC, Dublin, 1936), p. 149. 9 The Dowdall deposition is in TCD Ms. 829, sworn in October 1642, and that by Spicer, sworn in August 1642, is quoted in Thomas Fitzpatrick, *Waterford During the Civil War, 1641–1653* (Waterford, 1912), p. 58.

Members of the Burgat(t) family had strong clerical connections in seventeenth-century Munster. Two were prominent Dominicans during the 'clandestine ministry' of the 1630s, and their family possessed the resources to donate silver chalices engraved with their name. One of the Dominicans, a Henry, was prior of Kilmallock around 1639.[10] In 1661 the Capuchin and confederate historian Richard O'Ferrall wrote instructions from St Malo for a visit to Rome by the most eminent of these clerics, William Burgat, then vicar-general of Emly and procurator of the province of Tuam. A friend of Oliver Plunkett, Burgat was eventually nominated archbishop of Cashel in 1669.[11]

Three sets of conventionally fulsome commendatory verses by William Smyth, Paul Aylward, and Daniel Breede are printed with the play, providing a little help in placing the dramatist specifically in the south-eastern milieu. Nothing is known about Breede, but Paul Aylward was probably a member of the prominent Clonmel and Waterford family of catholic merchants. Major clients of the Butlers in Ireland, the Aylwards also had an extensive trading presence in various continental European ports (Malaga, Saint-Malo and Lisbon) during the later part of the century.[12] William Smyth may have been the well-known figure who came from the west of England in 1630, perhaps at the instigation of the emphatically catholic Walter Butler, earl of Ormond, or Walter *na bpaidrín*í (of the rosaries) as he was known. Smyth acted for the Butlers in many capacities as secretary, printer, and attorney, and it is possible that his talents extended to turning out a passable twenty-two lines of verse.[13] In 1635 he was rewarded with a patent of arms and a gift of land at Damagh, County Kilkenny. His family, though staunch catholics, continued for decades to be closely associated with Walter's successor as earl, James Butler, thus making 'a successful marriage of political loyalty and religious deviation'.[14] This religious allegiance, together with William Smyth's New English and Bristol origins, makes a link with Burkhead likely.[15]

In the text of the play itself, there is one linguistic peculiarity which may have

10 Thomas Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans, 1536–1641* (Dublin, 1993), p. 272. 11 P.J.Corish, 'Two contemporary historians of the confederation of Kilkenny', *IHS*, VIII (1953), p. 226; Brendan Jennings, 'Miscellaneous documents III', *Archivium Hibernicum*, XV (1950), p. 39, and *Michael Ó Cléirigh* (Dublin and Cork, 1936), p. 210 n. 16; Brendan Fitzpatrick, *Seventeenth-Century Ireland: The War of Religions* (Dublin, 1988), pp 233, 244. 12 Information from Julian Walton, *'The Family of Aylward (Continued), VI (a)', Irish Genealogist*, V, no. 2 (1974), pp 218–19, whom I thank for helpful discussions on the families of south-eastern Ireland. 13 William Smyth was associated with various of the Butlers: he acted as highly trusted attorney, for example, on behalf of the catholic Richard Butler of Kilcash in 1638 (NLI, Ms. 11,044, no. 99, Ormond Archives). 14 See *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, I (1849–51), pp 260–3; Revd William Carrigan, *History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory* (Dublin, 1905), III, pp 442–5; Monica Brennan, 'Kilkenny Landowners, 1641–1700', in William Nolan and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Kilkenny: History and Society* (Dublin, 1990), p. 117. 15 Some of William Smyth's descendants were later dispossessed under the penal laws when a younger son became a protestant and inherited the family property. *J.R.S.A.I.*, III, n.s. (1860–1), p. 92.

some significance in terms of Burkhead's own geographical origins. This is a construction which replaces the standard demonstrative adjective ('those') with a demonstrative pronoun ('them'). Typical examples from the play include: 'them powers above'(*Cola* I, p. 6), 'them pleasant smiles'(*Cola* i, p. 11), 'them gloomy shades' (*Cola* IV, p. 42). A total of eighteen instances of this idiosyncratic grammatical construction, widespread in non-standard Englishes, occur in the text. Furthermore, there are two examples of what in linguistics is called 'plural subject non-concord'. This involves the use of a singular verb following the plural subject which is qualified by 'them': for example, '*Them* noble acts *renders*/you famous to posterity' (Berosus' speech, *Cola* I, p. 3; emphasis added). The other instance occurs in Tigranes' lines in *Cola* III, p. 38 (emphasis added): '*Them* gentlemen / That now are in restraint for the same fact / *Speakes* thy accomplisht willingnesse'. In both these cases the plural noun – 'acts' and 'gentlemen' respectively – would in standard English require a plural verb ('render' and 'speak'), and 'them' would be 'these' or 'those'. Some linguists, discussing twentieth-century usage, suggest that this construction – a singular verb after a plural subject, with 'them' – is typically Hiberno-English.[16] It is, of course, difficult to verify that this was the case in the seventeenth century, and that it might not also characterise an English West Country dialectal feature. Finally, while these constructions may suggest spoken rather than written forms, there is no evidence that Burkhead meant to indicate lower social status in their speakers: generals and aristocrats of both genders are given these forms, as well as the queen of fates and the god Morpheus.

As for Burkhead himself, all that seems certain from a biographical viewpoint is the inescapable inference from the play of his strong adherence to the catholic cause. There is no reason, however, to doubt Langbaine's characterisation of him as a merchant, a number of whom played an important role in supporting the confederate association. Many wealthy merchants sat in the confederate general assembly, which usually met in the house of one of their colleagues, Richard Shee of Kilkenny. While their social standing excluded them from the inner councils of confederate government, they provided vital financial advice and support throughout the 1640s.[17]

One part of the play's prefatory material helps in its dating – this is Burkhead's dedication to the king's envoy Edward Somerset, the catholic earl of Glamorgan. Burkhead compares the earl to Noah's dove bringing the olive branch, and praises his willingness

> with a glance of reall compassion to viewe and survey the modell of its sad afflictions, having with unspeakable toyle, charges, and dangers adventured hither ... to appease the raging fury of our intestine harmes ...[18]

16 For example David Crystal (ed.), *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 338. Crystal's example is 'Them cars is great'. I thank Elisabeth Okasha and Jeff Kallen for helpful discussions on this point. 17 Micheál Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland, 1642–1649* (Dublin, 1999), pp 206, 216. 18 This may refer not just to the general hazards of

Glamorgan was sent directly from Charles to try and ensure the speedy dispatch of Irish troops, desperately needed to help improve the position of the royalist army in England. The earl finally reached Kilkenny in August 1645, while the title page of *Cola's Furie* indicates that it was printed in 1645, but 'to be sold at the signe of the white Swanne, in Kilkenny' in 1646. The play, therefore, was probably written some time during the second half of 1645, and indeed the narrative only includes events up to 1643. Supporting this dating is the fact that *Cola's Furie* has no Rinuccini figure – the papal nuncio who arrived in Ireland in late October 1645 – although this may be because, in the tradition of heroic representations, it concerns itself primarily with military events. In any case, the play is highly unusual in being a literary text amidst the political, religious and administrative documents, pamphlets and proclamations which make up the remainder of the output from Kilkenny.[19]

The historical events underlying *Cola's Furie* are examined in detail in the accompanying chapters, and do not need to be retraced in detail here. The play deals with the period from the outbreak of the Ulster rebellion in October 1641 until the cessation agreement between royalists and confederates in September 1643. The lords justices, William Parsons and John Borlase, and Sir Charles Coote, governor of Dublin, responded with savage repression to the rebellion, targeting all catholics indiscriminately, and their misdeeds loom large in the action of the play.[20] In late 1641 and early 1642, Parsons and Borlase ordered respected and elderly catholic gentlemen of the Pale, who had nothing to do with the rising, to be tortured in Dublin Castle.[21] The harsh attitude of the lords

travel between Britain and Ireland (coasting Parliamentary vessels made communications difficult) but to the fact that Glamorgan was shipwrecked on his way to Ireland. See Corish, 'The Rising of 1641 and the Catholic Confederacy, 1641–5', in Moody (ed.), *NHI*, III, p. 315. **19** On the issue of printing, it is likely that the Jesuit press in Kilkenny was used, as the official confederate press was probably still in Waterford in 1645–6. See E.R. McClintock Dix, 'Printing in the City of Kilkenny in the Seventeenth Century', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, xxxii (1914), pp 125–37, and William Sessions, *The First Printers in Waterford, Cork and Kilkenny pre-1700* (York: Ebor Press, 1990), especially the comments by Derek Nuttall and James Mosley, pp 214, 270–1. *Cola* is one of the earliest plays printed in Ireland. It was just preceded by Thomas Randolph's *Aristippus or the Jovial Philosopher* (Dublin, 1635) and Henry Burnell's *Landgartha* (Dublin, 1641), a historical romance with an ostensibly Danish, but perhaps allegorically Irish, setting performed in Dublin in 1640. Burnell was a member of the confederate general assembly. See E.R. McClintock Dix, 'Plays Printed in Ireland before 1701', *The Irish Book Lover* (March-April 1929), pp 36–7. **20** Their activities – burning and plundering villages, murdering and torturing civilians – are detailed in an appendix to Clarendon's history of the rebellion; see Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and the Civil Wars in Ireland* (London, 1720), pp 341, 348, 352. **21** Bellings gives the following account (in J.T. Gilbert (ed.), *History of the Irish confederation and the war in Ireland*, 7 vols (Dublin 1882–91), I, pp 78–9, 81–2) of the racking of Sir John Read (the character Rufus), represented in the play at *Cola* III, p. 28, and of its political effects: 'the torture Sir John Read suffered and the leading interrogatories put to him, while he lay on the racke, concerning the King's being privy to the raysing of the Rebellion,

justices was echoed in the reaction of the English parliament, which in March 1642 passed the Adventurers' act, allocating the lands of Irish rebels to those making financial contributions towards their reduction. These developments, along with the atrocities committed by Coote in Dublin and Wicklow,[22] prompted leading catholics across the country to join the revolt begun by the Ulster Irish.[23]

Cola's Furie vividly represents the fears, anger and frustrations common to all catholic members of the landed interest in Ireland. This group consisted of a hereditary aristocracy and gentry proud of their traditions of civility, in which Hiberno-Norman and native Irish ethnicities had become increasingly intertwined.[24] The prosperous catholic bourgeoisie, including Burkhead himself, also supported this interest group and were intimately bound up with it in the confederate association. Much in the manner of the royalists in England at the time, the play repeatedly insists upon the mission of the Lirendeans (that is, the Irish) to defend the king's prerogatives, under attack by 'an elected crew of shamelesse Roundheads' (*Cola* I, p. 5). The term 'elected' in this context is presumably a pun, invoking both the parliamentary and the puritan senses of the word. Rebels across the country made similar protestations of loyalty to the king in the early months of the uprising.[25] The play defends, in sophisticated political language, Irish catholics from the imputation of automatic disloyalty, distinguishing between spiritual and civil allegiance (*Cola* I, p. 10). This position reflects in many ways the argument presented by the gifted lawyer Patrick Darcy to the Irish parliament in June 1641, which was subsequently printed by the confederate association. The confederate 'model of government' drawn up in November 1642, and the remonstrance of grievances, presented by their agents to the royalists at Trim in March 1643, similarly stressed the prerogatives of the king. These documents also castigated the intemperate actions of the lords justices and official discrimination against catholics, and appealed directly to the king for redress, above the heads of his officials on the Dublin executive.[26]

did compleat men's aversion to the State'. The aged Patrick Barnewall of Kilbrew, Burkhead's character Cephalon, was also tortured. **22** See Clarendon, *History*, p. 341. **23** As Castlehaven put it, the lords justices 'proceeded with so much Rigour and Cruelty in the shedding of Blood', and used such 'unnecessary Severity and Devastation', that many hitherto loyal catholics were 'by the Passion and Rigour of those who were then in Authority ... driven to put themselves into the Protection of those whose Ways and Courses they totally disapproved'. See James Tuchet, earl of Castlehaven, *Memoirs*, pp 13, 18, 19, 20. **24** Micheál Ó Siochrú's *Confederate Ireland, 1642–1649* (Dublin, 1999) is now the most comprehensive and illuminating discussion of the political background to *Cola's Furie*; see also the earlier analyses by Patrick J. Corish, in 'The Rising of 1641 and the Catholic Confederacy, 1641–5', and 'Ormond, Rinuccini and the Confederates, 1645–9', in *NHI*, pp 289–335. On the conflict of loyalties facing the catholic Anglo-Irish, see especially p. 312. See also D.F. Cregan, 'The Confederation of Kilkenny' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, National University of Ireland 1947), and J.C. Beckett, 'The Confederation of Kilkenny Reviewed', in M. Roberts (ed.), *Historical Studies*, II (London, 1959), pp 29–41. **25** See for example, the deposition of Elizabeth Dowdall, describing the attack on her house by a band of rebels (TCD Ms. 829). **26** See the extensive discussions in Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland*, pp 47ff., 62–3.

Contrary to previous interpretations which focus on the polarizing role of ethnicity in the confederate association, Micheál Ó Siochrú has stressed the ethnic mix of many or most of the individuals who made it up. The rejection from the outset by the confederate general assembly of any distinction between Irish or English, whether 'old' or 'new', 'upon pain of highest punishment', reflects an intense awareness of this ethnic hybridity.[27] The play implicitly adopts this position by giving phrases such as 'my Countrey' to all the catholic characters, and in referring to them collectively as 'Lirendeans'. Thus a leading spokesmen for the catholic cause, Athenio (Lord Antrim), expresses an 'ardent zeale/to right our natives slavery, and stop the current of their puritan designe/intended for our totall ruine' (*Cola* I, p. 5). It is hard, however, not to conclude that Burkhead's efforts to highlight the role of Abner (the relatively ineffectual Old English general, Thomas Preston) over that of Theodorike (the talented Ulster Irish commander, Owen Roe O'Neill) are motivated by a degree of ethnic partisanship. Nonetheless, the bitter personal rivalry which actually existed between Preston and O'Neill is quite absent from the play.

Cola's Furie depicts some of the crucial episodes in the confederate wars, from October 1641 until September 1643. Written in very uncertain blank verse, occasionally interspersed with passages of rhyme, the play outlines a military campaign being fought by the opposing forces of Angola and Lirenda. Between the bouts of combat there are two torture scenes, an episode of attempted rape, songs (some courtly, and one 'low' performed by common soldiers), a dance and two supernatural interventions, one by a set of classical divinities, the other by the figure of Revenge. The human characters represent leading historical figures in the wars, and the play invents disguised names, some allegorical, some anagrammatic, for people and places. Identifying these characters is undoubtedly part of the interest of the play, especially from a historical viewpoint.[28]

The texture of *Cola's Furie* is very loose, and it passes from incident to incident without a very strong sense of dramatic necessity. The succession of events is largely determined by the sequence of history. This episodic structure in effect re-enacts the lack of co-ordination and the inconclusiveness of the fighting itself.[29] The play, however, is something more than a versified chronicle. It sets up and exploits a series of contrasts in tone, and a sensational dramatic climax in the death of the villain Cola, altering historical sequence in order to do so (in reality Coote had been killed in May 1642, before Preston's arrival in Ireland the following September). The attempt to match the characters to their historical originals has a curious effect on one's experience of the play. It greatly diminishes the reader's initial impression of gratuitousness and sensationalism, and gives a lively sense of the fear and political passion of those suffering through the upheavals of the period.

27 Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland*, p. 48. 28 The most extensive attempt to date at such identifications was made by G.C. Duggan in *The Stage Irishman* (Dublin, 1937), pp 65–73. 29 See John Lowe, 'Some Aspects of the Wars in Ireland, 1641–1649', *The Irish Sword*, iv (1959), pp 82–7, and Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland*, pp 33, 55.

Cola may be in part an attempt to counter virulent protestant propaganda detailing the 1641 massacres of English and Scottish settlers in Ulster. The play lays great stress on the atrocities being committed by the more extreme Angolean commanders, as well as the judicial torture of the characters Rufus and Cephalon, and personifies in the figure of Cola himself a savagely irrational appetite for murderous cruelty.[30] In this it seems to draw upon old Senecan models of a quasi-absolute rage, which influenced Elizabethan tragedies, to realise this figure – one of the many apparently old-fashioned theatrical qualities of the play, which may indicate that it draws upon popular theatre of the 1630s.[31] Recent critical work on English drama from 1640–1660, such as that of Martin Butler, Sue Wiseman, and Janet Clare, emphasises the energetic life of 1640s English political theatre, much of it popular and decisively engaged on one side or the other of the civil war, as indeed is the case with Burkhead's play. Such work actively refunctions the traditions of tragedy and chronicle plays in the new context of a violent and polarised political system.[32] This growing knowledge and deeper understanding of the nature of English drama in this very disturbed period would indicate that *Cola* is quite like many works actually produced on stage in England during this decade.

In the past some theatre historians tended to take a dismissive attitude to the play, considering it no more than a slightly versified political pamphlet. Bentley, for instance, calls it 'a crude and diaphanously veiled account of Irish affairs'; and Peter Kavanagh, in *The Irish Theatre,* is contemptuous:

> It does not surprise us that Burkhead did not succeed in getting it acted ... It is vulgar and, above all, bloody ... The only merit *Cola's Furie* has is its sincerity ... It is a pity that Burkhead had not written his account of the Insurrection as chronicles ... As it is, *Cola's Furie* is worthless.[33]

It can now be more clearly understood that such negative opinions may stem from an inappropriate set of aesthetic expectations derived from Shakespearean tragedy. Burkhead's play is probably no more 'crude' or 'vulgar' than much of the drama of its period in England. The political tensions and disruptions of the civil wars were working to fracture and dislocate, often productively, the smoothness

30 A representative early example of these pamphlets is Henry Jones' *A Remonstrance* (London, 1642), which was devastatingly effective in hardening English opinion against Irish catholics. There is of course a large historical literature on the subject; a judicious modern account of the depositions taken from victims, on which the atrocity accounts are based, is Aidan Clarke's 'The 1641 Depositions', in P. Fox (ed.), *Treasures of the Library* (Dublin, 1986), pp 111–22. 31 Compare Martin Butler's comments about the old-fashioned characteristics of the plays, often patriotic and political, performed at London popular theatres in the decade up to 1642; *Theatre and Crisis 1632–1642* (Cambridge, 1984), pp 181–93. 32 See Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis,* Sue Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1998), and Janet Clare, *Drama of the English Republic 1649–1660* (Manchester, 2000). I thank Dr Clare for showing me her draft introduction on 'The Theatre and Cultural Revolution', and for helpful discussions on *Cola.* 33 Kavanagh, *Irish Theatre,* pp 47–8.

of drama's literary forms, as has been argued by neo-Marxist and Brechtian critics.[34]

There are grounds for assuming that *Cola's Furie* was meant as a closet drama, as indeed both Langbaine and Kavanagh assert, though without offering evidence. It is difficult to imagine how the torture scenes could be staged either convincingly or bearably, and the supernatural apparitions would require a good deal of technical apparatus only found in a purpose-built professional theatre. The frequent stage directions, however, calling for music and dancing, would seem redundant in a play only intended to be read.[35] Whether or not it was ever performed, *Cola* must have drawn upon certain literary-dramatic conventions. Assuming the context to be an Irish one, what are the influences upon the play likely to have been? There had been a professional theatre company in Dublin at Werburgh Street from 1637 until the outbreak of rebellion in October 1641, managed by John Ogilby under the auspices of the lord deputy, Thomas Wentworth (later earl of Strafford).[36] Accounts of Strafford in Ireland have focussed almost exclusively on his political career, but the cultural aspects of his court warrant further investigation. He was a collector of pictures, a lover of plays and an enthusiastic patron. The resident dramatist at Werburgh Street was James Shirley, and apart from his own plays – *The Royal Master, Rosania: Or Love's Victory,* and *St. Patrick for Ireland* – it is known that works by Jonson, Fletcher, and Middleton were also performed there.

The bulk of the audience for this theatre, which corresponds in character to the private theatres in London, must have been made up of the Dublin upper and middle classes, mainly catholic and Old English. Many of these subsequently joined the confederate association between 1642 and 1649. Although Shirley complains bitterly in his prologues of the inadequate support offered by the people of Dublin, as well as their lack of aesthetic discernment, the fact remains that they enjoyed first-hand exposure to regular performances of classic and modern plays in the English tradition for over four years. We should note that in Aylward's prefatory verses commending *Cola's Furie,* Burkhead's work is compared to that of Jonson, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher; and 'The most admired Sherly and the crew/Of English Dramaticks cry hayle to you'. Breede's verses also invoke the names of major contemporary artists:

34 See Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, and also Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London, 1985), and Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy* (Brighton, 1984). 35 Dale Randall, *Winter Fruit*, p. 92. 36 See Clark, *Early Irish Stage*, pp 26–43; T.G. Fitzgibbon, 'Purpose and Theme in the Drama of James Shirley', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, NUI (1982), pp 13–16; A.H. Stevenson, 'James Shirley and the Actors at the First Irish Theatre', *Modern Philology*, xl (1942), pp 149–55 and 'Shirley's Years in Ireland', *Review of English Studies* xx (1944), pp 19–28; J.P. Turner (ed.), *St. Patrick for Ireland* (New York, 1979). There is further discussion of Shirley in Dublin in Patricia Coughlan, '"Cheap and common animals": The English anatomy of Ireland in the seventeenth century', in Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (eds), *Literature and the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1990), pp 205–23.

Had Rubens and Vandike liv'd and at strife,
Who should pourtray best, Cola to the life,
Their curious Art, the way could never find
To paint his body, as thy Muse, his minde.

Furthermore, English companies performed plays in Youghal during the reigns of both James I and Charles I, travelling there 'with some frequency'.[37] There was, of course, a local dramatic context of sorts for *Cola* in Kilkenny. Besides the fairly simple folk mummers' plays of Leinster, this included the open-air miracle play, a feature in the city's public places on Corpus Christi and Midsummer Day since the mid-sixteenth century. These religious plays were based around the temptation and resurrection of Christ, and their list of characters included Mary, the archangel Michael, Hector, Charlemagne, Satan, and another demon called Belphegor, a comic devil or vice-figure. The performances may have originated with the protestant proselytising drama of Bishop John Bale in the 1550s.[38] Furthermore, it is known that the Jesuit college, set up in Kilkenny in 1642 as part of the post-Tridentine expansion of their mission, produced at least one play in 1644.[39] It was a religious drama called *Titus: Or the Palme of Christian Courage*, based on the history of the Jesuit mission to Japan and strongly Counter-Reformation in flavour, rehearsing the steadfast resistance of the hero to the threat of martyrdom. Between the main scenes of prison, threatened torture, and heroic defiance, however, there are 'Interludes' which seem to be comic in flavour, bearing a loose relation to the plot, and involving low characters, specifically common brutish soldiers and thieves. This sharp alternation between high heroic and demotic textures is characteristic of Burkhead's play as well.

It seems that dramatic performances of some description were produced during the confederate period, and the association itself practised considerable ceremony, both ecclesiastical and secular in nature. The pomp greeting the arrival of Rinuccini, who loved 'splendour', in Kilkenny in November 1645, provides one such example. He was met by a formal procession, including a group of fifty mounted students from the Jesuit college. The students 'after caracoling round me conveyed their compliments to me though one of their number, a youth crowned with laurel and in a richer habit than the rest, and who recited some verses to me'.[40] Grandeur in liturgy and vestments and a stress on outward and visible religious performance were, of course, hallmarks of Counter-Reformation catholicism, which exercised an important influence on Irish practice at this time.[41] The *Aphorismical Discovery*, a contemporary account of events during the

37 Clark, Early *Irish Stage*, p. 18. 38 Ibid., pp 22–3. 39 A very elaborate and informative playbill advertising this production survives. The playbill is in the Bradshaw collection of Cambridge University Library. Kavanagh's is the fullest account of this play and of Jesuit educational drama in Ireland (*Irish Theatre*, pp 47–55). 40 Aiazza, G. (ed.), *The Embassy in Ireland of Monsiguor G.B. Rinuccini*, translated by Annie Hutton (Dublin, 1873), p. 90. 41 See Corish, *Irish Catholic Experience*, and John Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Ireland', in *Historical Studies*, VIII (1971), pp 155–69.

1640s, refers specifically to a stage play in September 1642. After the arrival of Thomas Preston from the Netherlands, his wife and daughters were feted and

> arrivinge were served with dayly invitations, feasts and banquetts with the varietie as well of pallat-inticinge dishes, as of gratulatorie poems, civill and martiall representations of comedies and stage playes, with mightie content.[42]

II

Concerning the historical originals of characters in *Cola's Furie,* Bentley's 1956 comment that 'a little study of the play and of the Rebellion of 1641 would probably enable one to identify most of the characters' (Bentley, p. 95) is somewhat optimistic: it takes rather more than 'a little' study.[43] It may be useful to list the identifications made by the various commentators up to and including G.C. Duggan.

Cast of Characters

On the Angolean (English) side:

*Pitho (*Sir William Parsons) and *Berosus* (Sir John Borlase), the draconian lords justices at the outbreak of the rebellion. These New English planters quickly emerged as supporters of the English parliament in the ensuing civil wars.

Osirus (earl of Ormond), the leading royalist in Ireland and viceroy from late 1643 onwards. Perhaps not surprisingly, given Ormond's close connections with a number of leading confederates, including his great-uncle, Richard Butler, Viscount Mountgarret, president of the confederate supreme council, Osirus is represented as a moderate, and explicitly exonerated from the rackings perpetrated during the play.

Cola (Sir Charles Coote the elder), a particularly rapacious New English colonist, and notorious for atrocities committed during the early months of the

42 Anon., *Aphorismical Discovery of Treasonable Faction,* in John T. Gilbert (ed.), *A Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland from 1641 to 1652,* 1, pt 1 (Dublin, 1879), p. 46. 43 Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage,* vol. 3, p. 95. Apart from hints from the scarcely decipherable annotations already mentioned, I have gathered the information in these notes largely from the following sources: Gilbert, *Ir. Confed., 1641–1653,* 7 vols (Dublin, 1882–91), which prints Bellings' account as well as many contemporary documents, and also the *Aphorismical Discovery* (see above, n. 42); C.P. Meehan, *The Confederation of Kilkenny* (Dublin, 1873). There is a still-useful summary account of the fighting in Lowe, 'Aspects of the Wars' (see n. 29 above). I thank Dr Bríd McGrath for useful discussion on the historical personnel represented as characters in the play, based on her research in 'A Biographical Dictionary of the Irish House of Commons, 1640–1641' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, TCD 1998).

war. He was shot mysteriously, perhaps by one of his own men, at Trim in May 1642 (*Cola* IV, p. 48).

Lysana (Lord Lisle), protestant cavalry commander and Ormond's second-in-command. He fled ignominiously at the battle of Poulmounty, outside New Ross, in March 1643, and the corresponding scene in the play (*Cola* V, p. 53) portrays him desperately calling for help to escape, in a manner strongly reminiscent of *Richard III*.

Crambich (Colonel Crawford), one of the commanders of Robert Monro's Scottish covenanter troops in Ulster. Monro himself is probably represented by the figure of *Sir Daretas*.

On the Lirendean (Irish) side:

Cephalon (Patrick Barnewall of Kilbrew), an elderly and highly respected Pale gentleman. He was racked on the orders of Parsons and Borlase in the spring of 1642 (*Cola* III, pp 27–8). The play, however, enhances the dramatic effect of the incident by showing Cola (Coote) supervising the torture in person.

Rufus (Sir John Read), a catholic of Scots birth and agent of the catholic leadership of the Pale. Captured in early 1642 on his way to England to request clemency for Irish catholics, he was also racked in an attempt to obtain an admission of royal complicity in the rebellion (*Cola* III, p. 28).

Abner (Thomas Preston), a member of one of the most important Old English families of the Pale. He arrived in Ireland in September 1642 from the Spanish Netherlands, where he had gained extensive military experience during the Thirty Years' War, and assumed command of the confederate forces in Leinster (*Cola* IV, p. 40).

Theodorike (Owen Roe O'Neill), the most successful confederate general, and leader of the Ulster Irish faction. While Theodorike enjoys a fairly prominent role in the play, there is no doubt that Abner (Preston) is the central Lirendean figure. Burkhead displays no particular hostility to the native Irish elements in the confederate association, but shows natural leadership as residing with an Old English figure.

Guyroa, or perhaps Guyrva (Rory Maguire), native Irish Ulster chieftain. Duggan believes this character might represent either Conor or Rory, but it must be Rory as Conor was imprisoned in the Tower of London from November 1641 until his execution there in 1644.

More tentatively, G. C. Duggan further identified the following figures:

Meneus (Viscount Mountgarret), and *Athenio* (Randal MacDonnell, earl of Antrim), both important confederate leaders.

Dora (Patrick Darcy), renowned lawyer and confederate 'lord chancellor' until 1644.

Caspilona (James Tuchet, earl of Castlehaven), confederate general. Bentley reads the relevant faint British Library manuscript annotation as 'ldlae', possibly a Latin version of 'Audley', Tuchet's English title. Visiting Dublin to intercede on behalf of catholic landowners, Castlehaven was imprisoned but escaped in

disguise, in September 1642. In the play he bribes a keeper to turn a blind eye, and is assisted by a Lirendean gentlewoman (*Cola* v, pp 49–50).

Tygranes (Murrough O'Brien, Lord Inchiquin), protestant commander in Munster. Although from a native Irish background, he was virulently anti-catholic and fought against the confederates. His brutal and ruthless method of warfare gave rise to his well-known Irish nickname *Murchadh na dTóiteán*, or Murrough of the Burnings.

More recent research would indicate that Tygranes is in fact Viscount Moore of Mellifont, a royalist commander, shot to pieces by Owen Roe O'Neill's gunner at the battle of Portlester in September 1643. In the play Tygranes is killed by a cannon shot at long distance, while, as Duggan remarks, Inchiquin survived the confederate wars. Furthermore, a fairly striking similarity of sounds suggests that the other Angolean commander Tibernus, about whom both Bentley and Duggan are silent, may stand for Sir Henry Tichborne, Parsons's replacement as lord justice in April 1643. This identification would, however, require a major distortion of the facts, as in the play Tibernus instructs his troops to falsely promise quarter and a massacre ensues, starkly rendered by the stage direction 'men, women and children enter and are killed'. In fact, Tichborne, to his credit, refused to carry out summary executions in early 1643, on prisoners taken during a skirmish at Rathconnell. If Tibernus does indeed represent Tichborne then Burkhead would be tarring him with the same brush as Parsons, who actually ordered the killings.[44] This would represent an uncharacteristic lapse from the play's fidelity to actual events, which is fairly strong. A matching of historical fact to dramatic representation leaves the impression that Burkhead wished to portray individual battles and skirmishes as they happened, and indeed such accuracy appears to be an essential part of his project. Nonetheless, this emphasis on reality may not have extended to the enemy, and partisanship is definitely in evidence in at least one case of positive rather than negative distortion (*Cola* v, p. 53), when Abner (Preston) is represented as taking Osirus (Ormond) prisoner.

There are six relatively minor female characters, all on the Lirendean side, three of whom make only one, quasi-communal, appearance in *Cola* i. The other three, Elleanora, Barbazella and a maidservant, are subjected respectively to threatened rape, torture, and an attempted robbery which is robustly resisted. No obvious historical equivalent for any of these characters suggests itself, which is not very surprising. In later classic-realist texts the female characters may function as a repository of the heroes' private feelings, but are nevertheless conceived as possessing interior selves on their own account. In *Cola* they are, to an even greater extent than the male figures, living instances of appropriate abstract qualities who perform prescribed supporting roles. The decorative Florilla, Dulcis and Pulchrima duly provide an interlude of encouragement for the 'Nation's gloomy lords' by singing and dancing (*Cola* i, pp 11–13). Elleonora almost becomes the sexual prey of the Angolean soldiers in a captured town, and thus is the due occasion for

44 See C.P. Meehan, *Confederation*, pp 65–81.

disguise, in September 1642. In the play he bribes a keeper to turn a blind eye, and is assisted by a Lirendean gentlewoman (*Cola* v, pp 49–50).

Tygranes (Murrough O'Brien, Lord Inchiquin), protestant commander in Munster. Although from a native Irish background, he was virulently anti-catholic and fought against the confederates. His brutal and ruthless method of warfare gave rise to his well-known Irish nickname *Murchadh na dTóiteán*, or Murrough of the Burnings.

More recent research would indicate that Tygranes is in fact Viscount Moore of Mellifont, a royalist commander, shot to pieces by Owen Roe O'Neill's gunner at the battle of Portlester in September 1643. In the play Tygranes is killed by a cannon shot at long distance, while, as Duggan remarks, Inchiquin survived the confederate wars. Furthermore, a fairly striking similarity of sounds suggests that the other Angolean commander Tibernus, about whom both Bentley and Duggan are silent, may stand for Sir Henry Tichborne, Parsons's replacement as lord justice in April 1643. This identification would, however, require a major distortion of the facts, as in the play Tibernus instructs his troops to falsely promise quarter and a massacre ensues, starkly rendered by the stage direction 'men, women and children enter and are killed'. In fact, Tichborne, to his credit, refused to carry out summary executions in early 1643, on prisoners taken during a skirmish at Rathconnell. If Tibernus does indeed represent Tichborne then Burkhead would be tarring him with the same brush as Parsons, who actually ordered the killings.[44] This would represent an uncharacteristic lapse from the play's fidelity to actual events, which is fairly strong. A matching of historical fact to dramatic representation leaves the impression that Burkhead wished to portray individual battles and skirmishes as they happened, and indeed such accuracy appears to be an essential part of his project. Nonetheless, this emphasis on reality may not have extended to the enemy, and partisanship is definitely in evidence in at least one case of positive rather than negative distortion (*Cola* v, p. 53), when Abner (Preston) is represented as taking Osirus (Ormond) prisoner.

There are six relatively minor female characters, all on the Lirendean side, three of whom make only one, quasi-communal, appearance in *Cola* i. The other three, Elleanora, Barbazella and a maidservant, are subjected respectively to threatened rape, torture, and an attempted robbery which is robustly resisted. No obvious historical equivalent for any of these characters suggests itself, which is not very surprising. In later classic-realist texts the female characters may function as a repository of the heroes' private feelings, but are nevertheless conceived as possessing interior selves on their own account. In *Cola* they are, to an even greater extent than the male figures, living instances of appropriate abstract qualities who perform prescribed supporting roles. The decorative Florilla, Dulcis and Pulchrima duly provide an interlude of encouragement for the 'Nation's gloomy lords' by singing and dancing (*Cola* i, pp 11–13). Elleonora almost becomes the sexual prey of the Angolean soldiers in a captured town, and thus is the due occasion for

44 See C.P. Meehan, *Confederation*, pp 65–81.

the politically required manifestation of their moral barbarity (*Cola* I, p. 10). Barbazella is graphically tortured by Tygranes, ostensibly for military intelligence, but with the dramatic purpose of providing one more icon of Lirendean steadfastness and vulnerability (however voyeuristic the undertones the spectacle may stir in the reader).[45]

Cola's Furie does not answer to the type of realist reading which characteristically emphasises a strongly individuated and coherent subjectivity, and therefore values characters who give the illusion of possessing psychological depth. This fact may well explain Kavanagh's scorn for the play. Its characters, even Cola, are not defined by emotional interiority, self-analysis, or moral effort. Rather they *are* their roles: Cola the inexplicably deranged villain; Abner the good general divinely approved; Theodorike the god-gifted commander (the meaning of his Greek name). The minor characters are emblems of heroism or brutality, called into being for their necessary moment. *Cola's Furie* is a study of violent human actions, sometimes as performed and sometimes as suffered, which are given ultimate meaning by the historic struggle depicted in the play. This determines the piece's episodic structure: it is a parade of many brief scenes. The concentration on political passions and imperatives leaves no room for private motive, but to consider this as an impoverishment is surely to misunderstand Burkhead's whole project.

Cola's characterisation provides the only possible exception to this flatness. He is represented as in the grip of a dementia, the 'fury' of the title, which causes him to commit senseless cruelties against the Lirendeans. This uncontrollable, inexplicable rage sets him apart from the other Angoleans in the play, although after his death at the end of Act IV, Tygranes in a sense takes over this malevolent role and functions as Cola's double. Cola is distinguished from the others not only by his greater ruthlessness, but also by his social inferiority. His soliloquy in the first act gives him a psychological motivation, but as much against his own party as the enemy:

> My hearts
> as good as theirs, had I equal power, ide
> teare the fabricke of this world asunder,
> my fury like loves violent thunder
> should blast the earth farre worse than Phaeton
> in his heedlesse course, what would I not have done,
> what Kingdomes ransackt till I had my will
> of these on whom I ground my hatred still. (*Cola* I, p. 9)

In conceiving this figure, Burkhead was probably not only influenced by the malcontent types of Elizabethan and Stuart theatre (Webster's Bosola, Shakespeare's

45 The torture is to make her reveal information about 'Brinfort' – probably some identifiable castle or fortified town.

Iago, and other such examples), but also by the perceived reality of the time. Coote's low origins and taste for brutality are both scornfully noted, and their alleged connection asserted, in the following anecdote from the *Aphorismical Discovery*. It describes the chill reception he received from the earl of Antrim's wife (formerly the duchess of Buckingham), after raising the siege of Drogheda in March 1642

> That humaine-bloudsucker, Sir Charles Coote ... bragginge too much of that daies service, Ormond and both the other earles silent, but the duttchesse took upon her to answeare him, as both Englishe and better acquainted with his good genius, tould him what he was, a poore mecanicall fellow, raised by blind fortune, as enformer and promoter, against all that is iust and godly, beinge chiefe instrument of the shedinge of many inocent bloude, and of the comencement of the now distempers; that the Irish was more loyall to the crowne of England; very bad language she gave him, to this tune.[46]

In the play Cola seems to almost suffer his rage rather than being the agent of it. In Act III, after torturing Cephalon and Rufus, he soliloquises: 'What Hercules can remove this mountaine/of enraged passions from my heart?' The very embodiment of fury ('Enter Cola, his weapon drawne'), incapable of self-analysis but compelled by an insane force, he plans 'to hang, to racke, to kill, to burne, to spoile, untill I make this land a barren soile' (*Cola* II, p. 14).

The Lirendeans see Cola as a 'Machavillian' figure, and compare him to 'a demidivell or Cannibal' crying out 'kill, kill'. As a character he is uninflected, headlong, absolute, resembling a personification of anger in a medieval morality text or allegory, who cannot get outside the quality he is doomed endlessly to represent.[47] Yet Cola's very energy is imaginatively compelling, and Burkhead's resort to this conception of character is politically revealing, falling back upon a notion of human affairs as fated, perhaps under the pressure of the war. It also strongly resembles the characterisation of prominent political opponents in English drama of the 1640s. Coherent and effective human will is resigned to supernatural destiny. In *Cola* IV, both Abner and Cola are acted upon by greater forces which manifest themselves on the stage: the gods Mars, Bellona, Pallas and Mercury, and Revenge, 'followed', retributively, by 'three Spirits in sheets'.

The hero Abner, in his first appearance, is dispirited on receiving bad news about his sons, an incident which probably refers to the capture at Rathconnell of Preston's son, known as Don Diego. He is cast into a magic sleep, during which time the 'Queene of fates' dances around him with her nymphs, and the

46 *Aphorismical Discovery* in Gilbert, *Cont. Hist.*, vol. I, p. 31. 47 This is emblematic rather than illusionist psychology (I am borrowing the terms used by Catherine Belsey, *Subject of Tragedy*), having a family resemblance, for instance, to Jonson's characterisations based on the theory of humours.

gods enter, promising to aid 'the discontented Lirendeans' (*Cola* IV, pp 40 ff.). Strengthening the sense of his divinely sanctioned status, Burkhead's name for Preston (Abner) comes from King Saul's 'captain of the host', who is similarly cast into an enchanted sleep. The biblical Abner, like Burkhead's in the last act of the play, calls (though rather more eloquently) for an end to fighting: 'Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?'

At his death, David ceremoniously laments the fallen hero, with great honour and signs of grief (I Samuel 17.55, 26.7–15, II Samuel 2.14–32, 3.28–39). During the concluding battle of Burkhead's play the vicious Angolean general Tygranes expresses his belief that the Lirendean victory is indeed fated:

> All will not doe, some horrible wicked
> destinie befriends them, our men drop downe
> on every side, whereat they seeme to scoffe,
> and floute ... (*Cola* v., p. 59)

Cola's rage and Abner's fatedness, therefrore, are substituted in fantasy for the political contentions prevailing in actuality, and thus a metaphysical resolution of the material conflict is brought about. This supernatural management of affairs by means of emblematic figures featured regularly in Elizabethan plays, and remained prominent in the politically oppositional repertoire of the London popular theatres right up to the civil war.[48] It is interesting to note this reliance, both by the catholic Burkhead and by protestant patriotic dramatists of the Jacobean and Caroline periods, on the notion of providence and on the device of unearthly intervention. This involved an imaginative enlistment of transcendent backing which seeks to circumvent the reality of political powerlessness. The supernatural beings summoned in these plays are both sophisticated and popular. The retributive haunting of Cola, in our example, is a motif common to 'high' Elizabethan tragedies such as *Julius Caesar* – Burkhead's scene is strongly reminiscent of Caesar's phantom visitation of Brutus in his tent before Philippi – and to the political pamphlet plays of the civil war period. These sometimes represent Cromwell, Fairfax and other parliamentary leaders as terrified by the visits of indignant ghosts.[49] Two of the three 'spirits in sheets' who visit Cola possibly originate from an actual incident in Coote's Leinster campaign of terror:

48 See Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, pp 81, 189: 'the red bull phrase', said John Cleveland mockingly, 'was enter three devils *solus*' (the Red Bull being looked down upon by some as one of the public theatres). This recalls Burkhead's haunting of Cola by the three spirits in sheets. See also Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre* (London, 1987), pp 32–3, 114–15. In *A Looking Glass for London and England* (1590) 'a hand from out a cloud threatens with a burning sword' (p. 32); similarly, Burkhead's Revenge says to Cola: 'This bloodie sword and flaming torch are them / true Emblems of thy furious strategeme ...'. 49 For example, the royalist play

> 2. *Sp.* Wee are them two poore harmelesse country swaines,
> to get an honest living spared no paines,
> we to thy quarters went, and would from thence
> bring salt abroad just worth some eighteen pence,
> thy souldiers tooke us, stript us, shrewdly bang'd us,
> then after to the gibbet and there hang'd us
> by thy command, wherefore we doe implore
> Revenge may take, revenge on thee therefore. (*Cola* IV, p. 47)

In his version of Cola's death, Burkhead may have been drawing on folk accounts of Coote's end. The *Aphorismical Discovery* links it with a specific impiety in a way which suggests that such accounts were current:

> his son Ricc Coote (qualis arbor, talis fructus) hitted upon a great ancient portraiture, or image of Our Blessed Ladie engraven in wood, kept with great veneration in the same house since the supression of holy churche in Henry the 8 his time, which younge Coote caused to be cutt and cloven in sunder, to make fire therof for his father against his cominge in. Butt God Allmight, the righteous judge, did not prolonge the punishment of this impietie, for as soon as Sir Charles thought to enjoy the benefitt of that transformed-divine fire, worde came to him that the Irish alreadie intred the towne ... Sir Charles was shott or otherwise wounded, and makinge as much examination in this behalf as reasonablie I might, could never learne how or by whom was he soe wounded, how ever, it beinge mortall, was conveyed to his lodginge deade.[50]

The marginal gloss says, as if to clinch the point: 'Not known how killed unlesse by a miracle'. Nevertheless, perhaps because of the chronicle-like character of Burkhead's material, the empirical events stubbornly retain their accidental quality despite his intention to subsume them into the supernatural plan of justice and deserved retribution. Moreover, the nature of the war in Ireland obtrudes its modernity on the traditional procedures of gallantry and single combat. Both Cola's death at the climax of Act IV and Tygranes' at the end of Act V, are produced from a distance, by a pistol and a cannon shot respectively. They are thus deliberately shorn of the dignity and personal directness of sword-fighting. As a result, Burkhead's probable intention – to show the deserved fate of such abhorrent figures – may seem to the modern eye to be overridden by a sense of randomness. The intervention of Providence in the play has a somewhat desperate quality, given our inescapable hindsight about the eventual disastrous outcome of the war for the confederates and their supporters. The vindicating

Crafty Cromwell does this, and also invokes the Eumenides to intervene in the rise of anti-royalism (see Janet Clare, 'Theatre and Revolution'). 50 *Aphorismical Discovery* in Gilbert, *Cont. Hist.*, vol. I, p. 32.

visitations of the gods and the final angel of peace, who appears 'to perclose the Scaene' in *Cola* v, fail to cancel the reader's more forceful impression of disorder and brutality prevailing, and of the ultimate absence of a redressing Providence.

From a different perspective, the vivid portrayal of the figures of the common soldiers is a quality which works to counter the effect of the metaphysical invocations in the play, by bringing things firmly down to earth. Certainly most of the characters represented in *Cola* are homogeneous in social status and language – gentlemen, ladies and aristocrats. As already outlined, a possible exception among the commanders is the base-born Cola himself, but Burkhead still gives him the same register of language – high and heavily laced with classical allusion – and the same (metrically loose) verse as the other generals and 'Governors'. Two other social groups, however, do appear during the course of the play. The first of these, very briefly suggested, consists of prosperous protestant citizens (probably of Dublin) who, at the beginning of the play, are used to ventilate the plot by expressing their alarm about the rising. The other, more fully represented, is that of the Angolean common soldiers, along with the peasants and maidservant who become their victims. Burkhead's imaginative interest in this group is evident from the fairly extended scene they are given in *Cola* III, and their reintroduction later on in the play. In one sense they form part of an extended narrative of the inhumanities of the Angoleans as a whole. Thus the soldiers are shown committing indiscriminate robbery and the attempted rape of Elleonora, and harassing terrified countrymen. But the atmosphere and language of the scene recall the 'Interludes' in the Kilkenny Jesuit play *Titus,* and also the scene in Shirley's *St. Patrick for Ireland* in which the noblewoman Emeria is almost assaulted by a pair of wisecracking soldiers.[51] The effect of the soldiers' presence is predominantly one of robust low comic relief, even when threatening the two 'countrymen' caught stealing bags of salt. Presumably Burkhead's sympathies lie with these two hapless characters, who fail to grasp the seriousness of the situation, due to their inadequate knowledge of the English language. As they are hauled off to be hanged, they incoherently ask: 'Where master? I trow no, for what *Agra?*' (*Cola* III, p. 29) – *A ghrá* means 'my love', 'dear', in Irish. Burkhead does not depict the common soldiers as part of the heroic struggle going on between the more noble-minded leaders. They sing derisive songs about the Lord Justice ('Pitho is doting; we don't care who knows it ...'.) and complain trenchantly about the material discomforts of their lives:

> Masse alls but need never so payd in our dayes
> with mouldie scraps of cheese, and butter, with
> as many collours as the rainbow in't. (*Cola* III, p. 34)

51 The first Interlude in *Titus*: 'A Country Clowne hearing that a proclamation was to issue against the Christians, is mightily merry, and attempts to rob a passenger' (quoted in Kavanagh, *Irish Theatre*, p. 51; see discussion above). The scene in *St. Patrick for Ireland* is Act V.I.

Following their defeat in the last act, they simply desire to go home: 'an yee be wise not a word of fighting more'. Significantly, Burkhead gives the motive of land acquisition for their presence in Ireland in the first place. 'An I could to my granam once againe, I'de ne're come looke for land in Stelerne [= Leinster] more'. (*Cola* v, p. 52). They are rough and indiscriminate. When a 'gentleman' enters they first beg from, then threaten, and finally 'rifle him', after the following comic exchange.

> *Gentleman.* I am a protestant.
> *Souldiers.* Be what you will, all's one to us sweet Sir. (*Cola* III, p. 36)

The liveliness of Burkhead's imagining of these soldiers is matched by the characterization of the maidservant who preserves her mistress's goods and her own person from their attentions (*Cola* III, pp 35–6). Otherwise, it is evident only in the characterisation of Cola, the very embodiment of energy and motion in the play.

The character of Cola is a strange compound of empirical fact and literary type, in the form of the tragic villain-hero. His restlessness and vigour, like those of Cromwell in Marvell's 'Horatian Ode', Milton's Satan and Marlowe's despot heroes, make him perversely attractive to the imagination. Burkhead, however unconsciously or inconsistently in political terms, gives Cola by far the most compelling language of the play. Like Marlowe's Tamburlaine, he dominates his environment, the subject with an over-reaching will. His victims play the structurally feminine role of Lirendean submission, invoked in the subtitle of the play, to the masculine force of Angola, which Cola most effectively personifies. Only supernatural intervention can put an end to Lirenda's captivity and griefs; or as Theodorike says in a dignified lament for his dead countrymen:

> Lirenda, poore Lirenda now farewell,
> farewell thy former pompe, all's turned to griefe
> attired in crimson robes of bloodie death
> that none but heavens compassive motions can subdue ... (*Cola* II, p. 24)

Beside this overpowering sense of desperation, the positive ending of the play, with a Lirendean victory followed by a one-year cessation, provides a rather shaky triumph. True to the facts of history, Abner has to insist upon the acceptance of the truce against the resistance of some of his colleagues, who call it 'this needless fond cessation' (*Cola* v, p. 60). Many confederates bitterly opposed the truce with the royalists, and the peace treaty signed with Ormond in 1646, which they believed gave the enemy breathing-space to regroup. The raggedness of this ending denies 'the telos of harmonic integration', as Brecht wanted epic theatre to do.[52] So, on a larger scale, does the unresolved opposition, between the sense

52 The phrase quoted is from Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p. 63. Dollimore's later remark, paraphrasing Benjamin on Brecht, also illuminates *Cola's Furie*: 'Contradiction is

of hopelessness before the irrational force centred in Cola's active hatred, and the desire to insist upon the ultimate victory of those possessing courage and a righteous cause.

It is unclear how far Burkhead was authorially in control of his effects, or somewhat at their mercy, but this should not take away from the poignancy inherent in the play's contradictions. The text of *Cola's Furie,* however clumsily, represents with unparalleled vividness the painful interaction of the literary imagination with the facts of Irish history in the 1640s.

incorporated in the very structure of the epic play rather than simply being ignored or, alternatively, acknowledged but ultimately transcended ... Different genres are juxtaposed, sometimes jarringly so', ibid., p. 64.