

Ralph McLean: 'The Days of Classic Fame: Ancients vs. Moderns on the Scottish Stage'

When eighteenth-century Scottish theatre is analysed by critics, it is usually the friction between the church and the stage which dominates scholarly debate. However, for most of the playwrights themselves, who were thoroughly schooled in the classics, there is in their works, a sharper focus on the appropriation of ancient theatrical techniques for modern education and improvement. Indeed this conflict was identified by Scottish literary critics who contested which form of theatre was more suited for instilling morals and ethics in its audience.

This paper traces the early theatrical debates of the Scottish literary critics in relation to the French *quarrelle*, focusing specifically on the importance of the relationship between truth and history in the construction of both ancient and modern tragedies. The second part of this paper analyses John Home's *Douglas*, the most famous of Scotland's eighteenth-century tragedies. Although the play is most famous for the religious controversy which erupted around it, Home's work frequently employs classical theatrical techniques and motifs which have been transported into a modern setting. Home's role in the ancients and moderns debate has been barely analysed, but this paper demonstrates how he utilises ancient theatrical traditions to instil a strong nationalist and civic pride into a modern audience.