Mid-eighteenth-century London witnessed a major expansion in public culture as a result of a rapidly commercializing society. Of the many new sites of entertainment, the most celebrated (and often notorious) were the Carlisle House and Pantheon assembly rooms, and the Ladies Club or Coterie. In the first major study of these institutions and the fashionable sociability they epitomized, Gillian Russell examines how they transformed metropolitan cultural life. Associated with lavish masquerades, excesses of fashion such as elaborate hairstyles, and scandalous intrigues, these venues suggested a feminization of public life which was profoundly threatening, not least to the theatre of the period. In this highly illustrated and original contribution to the cultural history of the eighteenth century, Russell reveals new perspectives on the theatre and on canonicals plays such as The School for Scandal, as well as suggesting a pre-history for British Romanticism.

GILLIAN RUSSELL is Reader in English at the Australian National University. She is co-editor, with Clara Tuite, of Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770–1840 (Cambridge, 2002).
This series aims to foster the best new work in one of the most challenging fields within English literary studies. From the early 1780s to the early 1830s a formidable array of talented men and women took to literary composition, not just in poetry, which some of them famously transformed, but in many modes of writing. The expansion of publishing created new opportunities for writers, and the political stakes of what they wrote were raised again by what Wordsworth called those ‘great national events’ that were ‘almost daily taking place’: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic and American wars, urbanization, industrialization, religious revival, an expanded empire abroad and the reform movement at home. This was an enormous ambition, even when it pretended otherwise. The relations between science, philosophy, religion and literature were reworked in texts such as Frankenstein and Biographia Literaria: gender relations in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Don Juan: journalism by Cobbett and Hazlitt: poetic form, content and style by the Lake School and the Cockney School. Outside Shakespeare studies, probably no body of writing has produced such a wealth of response or done so much to shape the responses of modern criticism. This indeed is the period that saw the emergence of those notions of ‘literature’ and of literary history, especially national literary history, on which modern scholarship in English has been founded.

The categories produced by Romanticism have also been challenged by recent historicist arguments. The task of the series is to engage both with a challenging corpus of Romantic writings and with the changing field of criticism they have helped to shape. As with other literary series published by Cambridge, this one will represent the work of both younger and more established scholars, on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

For a complete list of titles published see end of book.
WOMEN, SOCIABILITY AND THEATRE IN GEORGIAN LONDON

GILLIAN RUSSELL
To Ben and Tom
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of illustrations</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of abbreviations</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Circe of Soho: Teresa Cornelys and Carlisle House</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Harmonic routs and midnight revels: the politics of masquerade</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ‘Dissipation’s hydra reign’: Almack’s and the Coterie</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ‘Welcome to the Pleasure Dome’: the London Pantheon</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Lady Bab and Mrs Ab: the woman of fashion and the theatre</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ‘Alias, alias, alias’: the trials of the Duchess of Kingston</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. ‘Lady Teazle’s occupation’s o’er’</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Conclusion</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

1. ‘The Eleventh Society in Soho Square at Mrs. Cornelys’.
   Permission British Library 1889.b.10.2 f. 15 top.  page 22
2. ‘A Gentleman’s Toilette’, pub. John Wesson, 1771.  36
   © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.
3. ‘Remarkable Characters at Mrs. Cornely’s Masquerade’,
   engraved for the Oxford Magazine 6 (March 1771). Courtesy
   of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.  46
4. ‘The Soho Masquerade Conference, between the Premier and his
   Journeyman’, engraved for the Town and Country Magazine 2
   (1770). Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.  50
5. ‘Trial of the sovereign Empress of the vast Regions of Taste’,
   engraved for the Oxford Magazine 6 (March 1771).
   © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.  58
6. ‘[Cupid Turn’d Auctioneer, or Cornelys’ Sale at Carlisle
   House]’, engraved for Westminster Magazine 1 (1773).
   Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.  59
7. ‘Lady Fashion’s Secretary’s Office, or Petticoat [sic] Recommendation
   the Best’, pub. Carington Bowles, 1772. Courtesy of the Lewis
   Walpole Library, Yale University.  64
8. ‘The Female Coterie’, c. 1770. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole
   Library, Yale University.  75
9. Interior of the Pantheon, Oxford Road, London (oil on canvas)
   by William Hodges (1744–97). © Leeds Museums and Art
   Galleries (Temple Newsam House) UK.  89
    Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.  99

12. ‘Ridiculous Taste or the Ladies Absurdity’, pub. M. Darly, 1771. © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.


15. ‘A Hint to the Ladies to take Care of their Heads’, pub. R. Sayer and J. Bennett, 1776. © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.


18. Mrs Abington as Miss Prue in Congreve’s Love for Love, 1771 (oil on canvas) by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92). © Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, USA.


20. ‘Explanation to A Perspective View of Westminster-Hall, with Both Houses of Parliament, on the Trial of the Duchess of Kingston’. Permission British Library LR.301.h.10 (23).


List of illustrations

23. ‘Slight of Hand by a Monkey – or the Lady’s Head Unloaded’, pub. Carington Bowles, 1776. © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.

24. ‘The Lady’s Maid, or Toilet Head-Dress’, c. 1776. © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.


Acknowledgments

Research for this book was supported by a grant from the Australian Research Council and by a fellowship at the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. I would like to thank the then librarian, Richard Williams, as well as Anna Malicka and Joan Sussler, and latterly Susan Walker, for her prompt and efficient help with the acquisition of images.

The writing of the book coincided with the excellent production in 2001 of Sheridan’s *The School for Scandal* by the Sydney Theatre Company, directed by Judy Davis. I would like to thank the Artistic Director of the STC, Robyn Nevin, for inviting me to talk to the company, and Miss Davis and Colin Friels for their courtesy and interest: Essie Davis’s performance as Lady Teazle, particularly of the epilogue, was revelatory.

This book has benefited considerably from the expert research assistance and reliability of David Free, who also came to my rescue in producing the index. I would also like to thank Glen Rose for her indefatigable checking and my brother Colin Russell for timely gifts of prints, including a 1772 map of London, which was my constant reference point in the writing. Clara Tuite, Deirdre Coleman and Jon Mee were inspirations as always, surpassed only by Sarah Lloyd, collaborator, co-teacher and friend. The experience of teaching and researching with Sarah since 1997 has shaped this project in fundamental ways. I would also like to thank Donna Andrew and Daniel O’Quinn for their exemplary scholarship, and Tom Crochunis for inviting me to contribute to the conference ‘Drama and Theatre History, 1770–1840: New Approaches, Contexts and Pedagogies’, an adjunct event at the meeting of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism in 2002, and the participants there, including Jacky Bratton, Julie Carlson, Alex Dick, and Jane Moody. At the Australian National University my colleagues Debjani Ganguly, Julie Gorrell, Simon Haines, Ian Higgins, Rosanne Kennedy, Jacqueline Lo, Jill Matthews, Iain McCalman, Judith Pabian and Carolyn Strange, and my graduate students Fiona Brideoake and Neil Ramsey, have offered support in many ways: I am also indebted in
Acknowledgments

a particular way to David Blaazer and Renata Grossi (with Glen Rose) for safeguarding my notes during the Canberra bushfires of 2003. At Cambridge University Press, Linda Bree has shepherded the project with her customary acumen and courtesy. I would also like to thank the general editors, Professor Marilyn Butler and Professor James Chandler, for supporting a book that, like the epilogue in relation to the mainpiece play, is in many ways para-
textual to Romanticism as it is conventionally understood.

Parts of this book have appeared in different versions in Kathleen Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), and *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 27 (2005), special issue, *Romanticism and Sexual Vice*. I am grateful to the editors of these volumes, Kathleen Wilson and Daniel O’Quinn, for invitations to contribute.

My greatest debts, as ever, are to Benjamin Penny for his insights, enthusiasm and faith, and to our son Tom, a constant source of joy.
Abbreviations


BMCat refers to page reference in the above.


LWL Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.