

# THE 'PUBLIC MAN' AND THE 'PRIVATE THEATRICAL'

Frank Delaval's 1751 production of *Othello* and the  
performance of masculinity.



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# Sir Francis Blake Delaval KB 1727-1771

“ With many foibles, caprices, and even vices, Sir Francis was [...] generous, sincere, affable, and polite. His strong passion for pleasure hurried him into many extravagancies, and his violent attachment to the ladies often threw him into many whimsical and ridiculous situations [...] He has been accused of having a strong itch for play; but let it be remembered in this, as in every other pursuit, he always displayed the gentleman, and the man of honour.

Extract from ‘Genuine memoirs of the late Sir Francis Blake Delaval’ (4 September 1771) *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*.

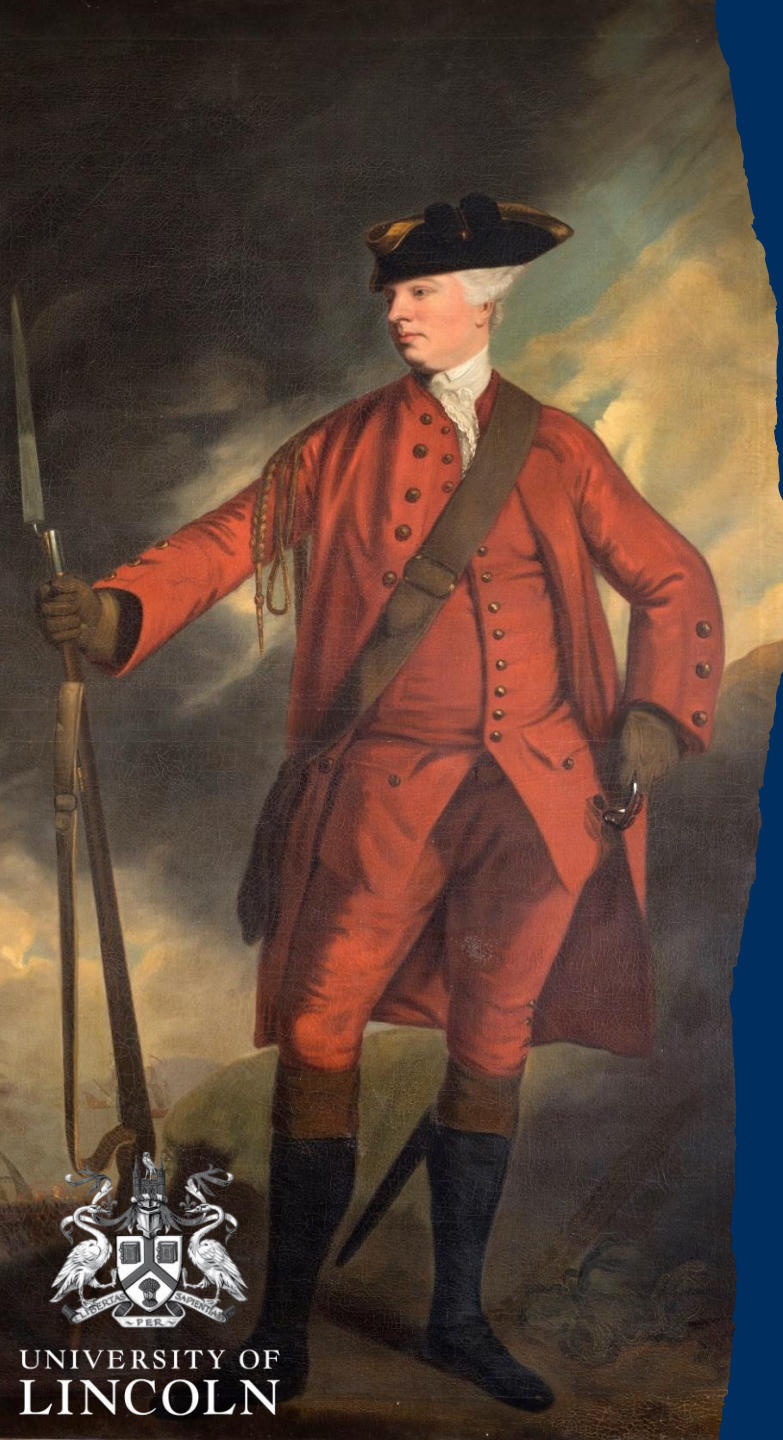


# Sir Francis Blake Delaval KB

## 1727-1771

“ On Tuesday Evening last Sir Francis Blake Delaval, Knt. of the Bath, and his Brother --- Delaval, Esq; coming over Hounslow Heath, were stopped by a single Highwayman, who robbed them of about eleven Guineas : They had not proceeded much farther from the Place, before they were stopped by another Highwayman, who robbed Sir Francis of his Watch, and then made off with his Booty

‘News’ (31 May – 2 June 1768) *St James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*



# Sir Francis Blake Delaval KB 1727-1771

“ a play has been acted by people of some fashion at Drury Lane, hired on purpose. They really acted so well, that it is astonishing they should not have had sense enough not to act at all. [...] the chief were a family of Delavals [...] The rage was so great to see this performance, that the House of Commons literally adjourned at three o'clock on purpose: the footman's gallery was strung with blue ribbands.

Walpole, H. & Lewis, W. S. (1960) *The Yale Editions of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, Yale University Press.







## The ‘public man’

“ [A man] of a certain station whose destiny it was to serve the public good” by exercising ‘independence’: a “condition in which self-mastery, conscience and individual responsibility could be exercised”

McCormack, M. (2007) Introduction in *Public Men: Masculinity and Politics in Modern Britain* and McCormack, M. (2005) *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England*.





## The ‘private’ theatre

“ Historically the term 'private theatricals' has led to associations with the domestic, intimate, and amateur, and resulted in such theatrical activity being sidelined [...] Yet there was [...] no fixed definition of 'private' in the late eighteenth century. 'Private theatricals' [thus] signified a number of different understandings of 'privacy', including the nature of the place itself and the performance's accessibility to the general public.

Brooks, H. (2011) ‘One Entire Nation of Actors and Actresses’: Reconsidering the Relationship of Public and Private Theatricals. *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, 38(2), pp.1-13.





## Identity in 1751

“ What made such views about the doubling, splitting, or transmigrating of identities possible [...] was a non-essential notion of identity that was not anchored in a deeply seated self [...] For the eighteenth century a helpful image may be of a self [...] that was outwardly or socially turned.

Wahrman, D. (2011) *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-century England*, pp. 176-179

# Frank Delaval's *Othello*: Act The First

“ Whatever Dissipations the World may suppose our Days to have been consumed, many, many Hours have been consecrated to other Subjects than generally employ the Gay and the Giddy and unless I am greatly mistaken, it will soon be discovered, that joined to the acknowledged best heart in the World, Mr Delaval has a head capable of directing it.

Foote, S. (1765) *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Foote, Esq; in Two Volumes* quoted in Kelly, I. (2012) *Mr Foote's Other Leg: Comedy, Tragedy and Murder in Georgian London*.





# Frank Delaval's *Othello*: Act The Second

“ An Actor [...] must transform himself into every Person he represents, since he is to act all sorts of Actions and Passions [...] his Eyes, his Looks or Countenance, Motions of his Body, Hands and Feet, be all of a Piece

Advice on acting from Gildon, C. (1710) *The Life of Mr Thomas Betterton*

“ The player of true spirit [...] is no longer himself when he assumes his character [...] he lives, not acts the scene

Hill, J. (1755) *The Actor*



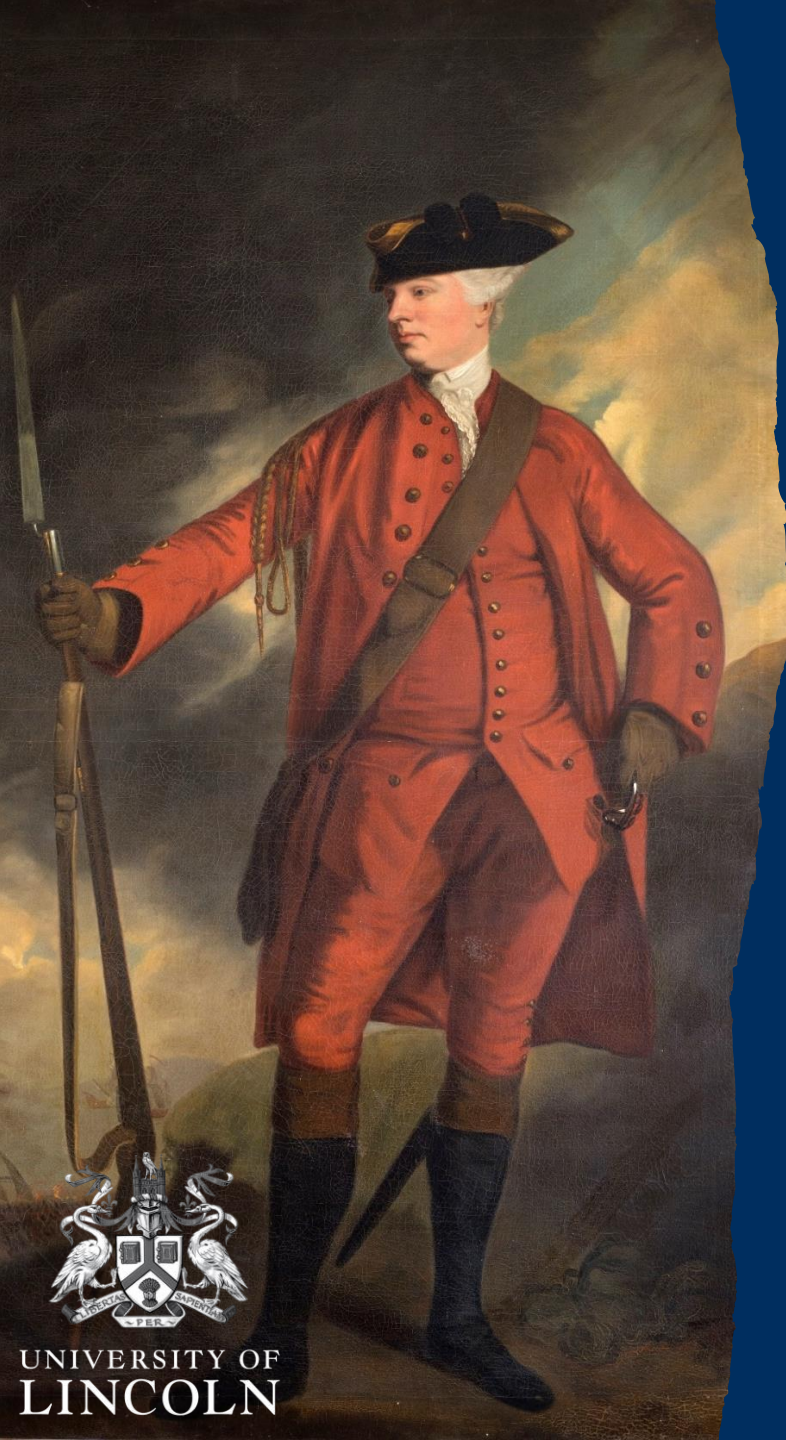
# Frank Delaval's *Othello*: Epilogue

“ Delaval has turned Capuchin with remorse [after the St Malo raid] for having killed four thousand French with his own hand

Walpole, H. & Lewis, W. S. (1973) *The Yale Editions of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, Yale University Press, p.288

“ the twinness of actors – whatever two actors were available for the parts – was achieved through identical costuming

Wahrman, D. (2011) *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-century England*, pp. 178-179





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The Seven Eldest Children of Captain Francis Delaval and Rhoda Apreece (c.1751) possibly by Rhoda, Lady Astley. Credit: National Trust, Seaton Delaval.