

Virtue Rewarded:
Handel's Oratorios and the Culture of Sentiment

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Fall 2013

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ABSTRACT

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Throughout the 1740s and early 1750s, Handel produced a dozen dramatic oratorios. These works and the people involved in their creation were part of a widespread culture of sentiment. This term encompasses the philosophers who praised an innate "moral sense," the novelists who aimed to train morality by reducing audiences to tears, and the playwrights who sought (as Colley Cibber put it) to promote "the Interest and Honour of Virtue." The oratorio, with its English libretti, moralizing lessons, and music that exerted profound effects on the sensibility of the British public, was the ideal vehicle for writers of sentimental persuasions. My dissertation explores how the pervasive sentimentalism in England, reaching first maturity right when Handel committed himself to the oratorio, influenced his last masterpieces as much as it did other artistic products of the mid-eighteenth century.

When searching for relationships between music and sentimentalism, historians have logically started with literary influences, from direct transferences, such as operatic settings of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, to indirect ones, such as the model that the Pamela character served for the Ninas, Cecchinas, and other garden girls of late eighteenth-century opera. Some scholars have cataloged musical features that comprise a sentimental style. Others have found philosophical, aesthetic, and historical links between sentimental culture and Italian and French opera, north German keyboard music, and the chamber music of Boccherini.

What has been curiously passed over is musical sentimentalism in England (site of so many of the culture's landmark products) and its influence on the country's most famous adopted son. My dissertation addresses this lack, focusing on relationships between oratorio, contemporary theater, and religious philosophy. In Part 1, "Sentimental Oratorios, Sentimental Heroines," I show that we can speak with confidence of a sub-genre of "sentimental oratorio" that can be defined through comparison with both the sentimental drama of Handel's London and the Italianate sentimental opera that other musicologists have identified as emerging in the last third of the eighteenth century. In addition, I demonstrate that it was not only the aesthetics of contemporary drama that affected the

oratorios' libretti; the performance practices of the sentimental theater also informed their earliest realizations, with the expectations and demands that the theater placed on its personnel (particularly its women) affecting both singers and Handel's composition and revision processes for them. Part 2 discusses "Empathetic Men & Religious Sentimentalism," topics that have not yet been considered in any serious way by scholars of the oratorio. Handel's librettists James Miller (1703–1744) and Thomas Morell (1703–1784) were clergymen as well as men of the theater, and they aimed throughout their religious writing — including their texts for Handel — to inculcate virtue by privileging emotional over rational means. Both their devotion to the moral understanding of mankind's natural "sensibility" and the gentle men they created as heroes for their libretti influenced Handel's musical settings, which in turn reinforced their thematic and dramatic thrusts.

I use these perspectives to show that Handel's oratorios were situated at the intersection of the most current dramatic and religious trends of the mid-eighteenth century. Handel was sensitive to his Men and Women of Feeling; he adapted his oratorios to suit singers who specialized in sentimental dramatic "lines," and he displayed a keen understanding of his colleagues' attempts to move their spectators more than to astonish them, endeavoring that listeners' hearts (in Morell's words) "should be made better; moved with a compassion unknown before, and charmed with an opportunity of doing good."

For my teachers,
and especially for Joscelyn, who did his best to warn me

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For a dissertation focused on the morality of “fellow feeling,” I would be remiss not to try to acknowledge the many people who have been empathic to my dissertation, long in gestation and perhaps more than a little idiosyncratic in its march to completion.

Most of all, I am indebted to the members of my committee, all paragons of patience. Kevis Goodman was willing to join the group in an hour of need, and she was gracious, cheerful, and understanding in her participation. George Haggerty’s interest in sentimentalism inspired this project in the first place, and it was a great joy when he agreed to be an adviser. John H. Roberts continually astounded me with his immense knowledge of nearly every aspect of my study, and I hope that I have been always attentive to his gentle yet incisive criticisms. Mary Ann Smart has guided me through the entire program at UC Berkeley, often with a quizzical smile at my rambling thoughts and always with a boundless willingness to read and take seriously things that really weren’t fit to be shared. And I owe the deepest gratitude to Davitt Moroney, a professor whose aim is to educate rather than instruct, who joined me (as all of his students) on a journey of learning and exploration, who understands the thrill of the chase, who shoves the boundaries of ignorance back inches when I move them only millimeters, and whose eye for detail is as astounding as is his ability to read myriad drafts with unflagging excitement and engagement. I count it as the greatest pleasure of my graduate career to have gotten to know him as a teacher, guide, and friend.

For practical support, I am most indebted to the Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fund. A grant from this organization provided me with the graduate student’s ultimate dream: three years of totally unencumbered funding, with only the barest requirements for renewal. The Foundation has sustained both my project and my family for the bulk of my research, and I will be forever grateful for their support. The University of California has also been generous throughout my many years in residence here. After my advancement to candidacy, the music department provided semesters of employment that not only assisted financially, but broadened my teaching portfolio and intellectual horizons in ways that have been of immeasurable benefit. The University’s Conference Travel Grant Program enabled me to attend both domestic and international meetings, where I made scholarly connections that have continued to prove fruitful until the very final stages of this dissertation, and the Graduate Division provided a summer grant that enabled me to complete my project with great freedom.

Many people have also been generous in sharing materials, information, and ideas. Karen Paulik Witt, Special Collections Librarian at the University of Missouri-Columbia, helped track down and duplicate a document that was to be found nowhere else in the United States. Professor John Greene of the University of Louisiana kindly shared his research about Susanna Cibber’s activities in Dublin prior to his publication of that information. Zoe Stansell at the British Library’s Maps and Manuscripts Reference Service kindly dug through handwritten catalogues in order to find one small reference for me. The staff at Yale’s Beinecke Library was accommodating beyond the call of duty, rushing requests for items to save me one day of travel expenses, and Berkeley’s Hargrove Music Library has provided a comfortable home and rich store of resources for the bulk of my research.

Scholars abroad and at home have aided me more than they probably realize. Ruth Smith has been ever gracious and supportive of my efforts, as has Leslie Roberts; I count myself fortunate to have found a small group of people who also find Thomas Morell an engaging figure, and who are willing to share their knowledge and observations so freely. David Vickers provided clarification of murky questions about *Deborah*, saving me a great deal of time. Jason Roberts and Ernest Kaulbach of the University of Texas and Naomi Weiss of UC Berkeley were all of great help with questions about classical references and ancient languages. Beate Kutschke helped me, in a good-natured debate, to firm up my definitions of sentimental heroism. Berkeley's own Kate van Orden repeatedly provided me pats on the back and words of encouragement at exactly the right moments. And Wendy Allanbrook was always sharp-witted about my project, and occasionally sharp-tongued when called for; it is one of my great regrets that I was unable to sit at her feet longer, and I hope that the indelible mark her thoughtful comments made on me shows in some small way in these pages.

My fellow graduate students at UC Berkeley have been an indispensable source of support. Rebekah Ahrendt was my peer mentor in my first year, and she has never quite let go of that role, offering sage advice at every step of the way; when I was wise, I followed it. Harm Langenkamp kept me honest during his time at Berkeley and in his many subsequent visits to my Oakland apartment. I am especially indebted to a core group who met with me weekly for "dissertation therapy." I will be forever grateful to Laura Protano-Biggs and Rachel Vandagriff for their insightful and critical comments, their unfailing support, and their camaraderie. And most of all I will miss the constant presence of Sean Curran, my academic brother, who began and finished the program alongside me, who read, re-read, and helped shape many pages in this dissertation, and who joined me at Berkeley's Thursday Club, keeping me sane in moments when lucidity seemed a virtually unobtainable goal.

Thanks are also due to my closest friends and family, who have always understood not only what I do, but why I do it: to Jesse Greenstein for passionate guidance and support; to Jaime Schwarz for being the only friend outside of academia ever to read and comment on my writing (with the endearing blend of humility and insightfulness that seems to come naturally to him); to John Phillips and Kevin Fryer for keeping me distracted to just the right extent; to my late father, whose love for the eighteenth century shaped my own interests from an early age; to my Uncle Naz, who has always been a quiet role model and source of musical inspiration; and to my mother, without whose constant reminders of her love for and belief in me I would surely have given up long ago.

My wife, Sara Goldberg Lee, has offered more patience than she should have, and my gratitude is exceeded only by my love for her. My son Ethan's glimmering intelligence and boundless energy have taught me a great deal, and my daughter Addey showed wisdom beyond her years, always understanding the importance of Daddy's work even when Daddy sometimes didn't.

INTRODUCTION: VIRTUE REWARDED

Virtue rewarded: by the early 1740s, the English oratorio had proved itself a worldly illustration of this sentimental concept. For years, critics of the vices of Italian opera had hoped that an English specimen would take its place, and Handel was specifically called on to deliver Britain from its “Italian bondage” and to replace this unsavory, exotic, and luxurious entertainment.¹ Records of first reactions to oratorio are scant. Those that survive indicate some resistance to the genre in memorable ways, like decrying Italian singers’ bad English pronunciation that sounded like Welsh or even Hebrew and criticizing the works’ “brave hallelujahs.”² But the broader public responded differently to these mixtures of (mostly) biblical stories, operatic forms, and rousing choruses; although there is virtually no printed record of their reactions, they spoke through their sterling. As early as 1732, one writer expressed astonishment that Handel had raked in £4,000 from performances of his first publicly aired oratorio, *Esther*.³ The figure was surely hyperbolic, but attested to the marketability of oratorio, especially compared with the flailing fortunes of Italian opera. In 1738, when Handel’s operas lost money, his concert pasticcio entitled “An Oratorio” put no less than £1000 into his accounts.⁴ Virtue could be rewarding, indeed.

At exactly this moment, a parallel development was taking place in the literary world, one with similar discrepancy between critical reception and popular approval. In 1740, Samuel Richardson published *Pamela, or, Virtue Rewarded*. The novel’s subtitle succinctly proclaimed a moral theme: “A series of familiar Letters from a beautiful young Damsel, to her Parents . . . published in order to cultivate the Principles of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of the Youth of BOTH SEXES.” Readers of this tome found long, pious expostulations from Pamela balanced by passages describing the advances of her lascivious employer, his imprisonment of the young maid, and the help of an old hag who, at the work’s climax, held Pamela on a bed while feverishly urging her master to rape the girl. The novel ended as promised, with Pamela’s virtue intact and rewarded, although the nature of the “reward” might make us shudder today: Pamela reforms her would-be-assailant, weds him, becomes lady of his manor, and adopts his illegitimate child. Critical reaction to this material was swift and brutal. Ministers and newspaper correspondents decried the novel’s so-called “warm” scenes as pornographic. Eliza Haywood detested the book’s conclusion and attempted to expose the heroine as a social climber in *Anti-Pamela, or Feigned*

¹ Aaron Hill to Handel, letter of December 5, 1732. Quoted from Editionsleitung der Hallischen Händel-Ausgabe, *Dokumente zu Leben und Schaffen*. Händel-Handbuch 4 (Kassel, Basel, and London: Bärenreiter, 1985), 205.

² The complaint about singers making “rare work with the *English Tongue*” comes from one of the earliest sources of comment on the Handelian oratorio, the anonymous *See and Seem Blind* (London, 1732); Horace Walpole criticized the “hallelujahs” in a letter of February 24, 1743, rep. in *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence with Sir Horace Mann*, ed. W.S. Lewis, Warren Hunting Smith, and George L. Lam (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 2: 179-81. For an extended study of the earliest reactions to oratorio, including transcriptions of many documents, see Ilias Chrissochoidis, “Early Reception of Handel’s Oratorios, 1732-1784” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2004).

³ *See and Seem Blind*, 14-15. For an overview of the reliability of the information in *See and Seem Blind*, see Robert Hume’s preface to the Augustan Reprint Society’s facsimile of the pamphlet (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library and the University of Los Angeles, 1986).

⁴ *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Handel, George Frideric,” by Anthony Hicks, accessed May 21, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/>, under “From Opera to Oratorio.”

Innocence Detected, and Henry Fielding tried to do the same in *Shamela* (both 1741). But *Pamela* made Richardson famous, as did his subsequent works, *Clarissa* (1748) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), both of which also claimed to instill virtue and morality through readers' heightened emotional responses (a succinct definition of sentimental literature). Thus was born, amidst the fuss and flurry of critical dispute and popular acclaim, the genre now referred to as the "sentimental novel," with numerous well-known examples published throughout the latter half of the century.⁵

My study proposes that the historical coincidence of these popular triumphs is significant. I situate the oratorios within the so-called "culture of sentiment" in order to examine, in different ways than previous scholars, the motivations of these works' creators, the experiences of their first performers, and the effects of the works themselves. I place the oratorio of the 1740s at the joining of both secular and sacred influences. On one hand is the British stage, with practices and aesthetics that were bound to affect a nascent English-language genre whose creators borrowed personnel from the ranks of the theater and presented their works in some of the same spaces. On the other is mid-century Anglicanism, marked by discourses of charity, piety, and "latitude" that characterized many clergymen's thinking and rhetorical styles. English sentimentalism bound secular and sacred aims and aesthetics together, which coalesced in powerful ways in the Handelian oratorio.

Historians in various fields have long posited that the British Isles nurtured a robust culture of sentiment that reached first maturity just as English oratorio came of age. It has been described as a coherent movement, a set of shared aesthetics, or a temporal marker.⁶ Its roots lay both in religious discourse and in the school of moral sense philosophy founded at the turn of the century by the third Earl of Shaftesbury, but its paradigmatic expressions have long been said to be found in eighteenth-century art and literature that (putatively) held moral instruction as its greatest aim.⁷ Plays and novels of the 1720s to about the 1770s were populated by threatened virgins, men of feeling, and reformed rakes, who served as models for a burgeoning middle class readership (as poignantly affected as

⁵ R.F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974); Janet Todd, "The Novel," chap. 3 in *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986).

⁶ For the most frequently cited overviews, see G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) and Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*. Other historians have suggested that an "Age of Sentiment" might be proposed to explain trends in art and literature spanning the 1740s to the 1790s. I resist this term as unwieldy, but hold instead that an identifiable culture of sentiment, widespread, popular, and consistently identifiable, can be traced through artistic, philosophical, and aesthetic trends throughout the eighteenth century. For the arguments for and against an Age of Sensibility, see Northrop Frye, "Toward Defining an Age of Sensibility," in Harold Bloom, *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), 11-18; Howard D. Weinbrot, "Northrop Frye and the Literature of Process Reconsidered," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 24 (1990-91): 173-95.

⁷ For a broad overview of the philosophical roots of sentimentalism, see Todd, "The Philosophical Background," chap. 1 in *Sensibility: An Introduction*; Wendy Motooka, "Common Sense, Moral Sense, and Nonsense: Sentimentalism and the Empirical Study of Invisible Things," chap. 2 in *The Age of Reasons: Quixotism, Sentimentalism, and Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); and Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, esp. pp. 105-41.

were the characters within the stories themselves).⁸ Musicologists, too, have examined the effects of sentimentalism on various genres, from the *tragédie en musique* to opera buffa and the string quartet.⁹ Edmund Goehring has argued that that following what he calls sentimentalism's "migrations" can help explain elements of operatic dramaturgy and musical style.¹⁰ Understanding the aesthetics and aims of English sentimentalism can also

⁸ The most commonly cited monographs on sentimental literature include the following: Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress*; Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*; John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: the Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: the Senses in Social Context* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Jerome J. McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: a Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

The standard texts on the themes and plot devices of the sentimental theater include the following: Ernest Bernbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility*, Harvard Studies in English 3 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1915; rpt. Gloucester: P. Smith, 1958); Frederick Wood, "The Beginnings and Significance of Sentimental Comedy," *Anglia* 55 (1931): 368-92; Arthur Sherbo, *English Sentimental Drama* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1957); Laura Brown, *English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760: An Essay in Generic History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), esp. chaps. 3-5. A more recent overview can be found in Frank Ellis, *Sentimental Comedy: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

On Philippe Destouches and the influence of the *comédie larmoyante* on English theater, see Anne Vincent-Bauffault, *The History of Tears: Sensibility and Sentimentality in France*, trans. Teresa Bridgeman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), pp. 60 ff. On changing theories of acting technique in general, see Earl Wasserman, "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century Theories of Acting," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 46 (1947): 264-72. A useful overview of sensibility and approaches to acting can also be found in Paul Goring, "The Art of Acting: Mid-Century Stagecraft and the Broadcast of Feeling," chap. 4 in *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 114-41. ⁹ One of the earliest (and most discouraging) articles to treat the topic of sentimentalism and music is Georgia Cowart, "Sense and Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Musical Thought," *Acta Musicologica* 56, no. 2 (1984): 251-66.

On sentimentalism and opera, see the following: Mary Hunter, "Pamela: The Offspring of Richardson's Heroine in Eighteenth-Century Opera," *Mosaic* 18 (1985): 61-76; Hunter, "The Fusion and Juxtaposition of Genres in Opera Buffa 1760-1800: Anelli's and Piccinni's 'Griselda,'" *Music and Letters* 67 (1986): 363-80; Jessica Waldoff, "Sentimental Knowledge in *La finta giardiniera*," in *Recognition in Mozart's Operas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 104-164; Waldoff, "Reading Mozart's Operas 'for the Sentiment,'" in *Mozart Studies*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 74-108; Waldoff, "Sentiment and Sensibility in *La vera costanza*," in *Haydn Studies*, ed. W. Dean Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 70-119; Stefano Castelvecci, "Sentimental Opera: The Emergence of a Genre, 1760-1790" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1996); Castelvecci, "From 'Nina' to 'Nina': Psychodrama, Absorption and Sentiment in the 1780s," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 8, no. 2 (1996): 91-112; Castelvecci, "Sentimental and Anti-Sentimental in 'Le Nozze di Figaro,'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53, no. 1 (2000): 1-24; Edmund Goehring, "The Sentimental Muse of Opera Buffa," in *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 115-45; James Johnson, *Listening in Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), esp. Part 2, "A Sensitive Public," pp. 53-95; Downing Thomas, *Aesthetics of Opera in the Ancien Régime: 1647-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). On sentimentalism and keyboard compositions in the *Empfindsamer Stil*, see Doris Patricia Tishkoff, "Sensibility in the Eighteenth Century as Seen in the Fantasies from the 'Fuer Kenner und Liebhaber' of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach," (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1983). On Boccherini and the aesthetics of sensibility: Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), esp. pp. 53-5, and 69-77; Le Guin, "'One Says That One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep: Sensible, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini's Chamber Music,'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 2 (2002): 207-54. On previous connections between sentimentalism and Handel's oratorios, see discussion below.

¹⁰ Goehring, "The Sentimental Muse," 118.

provide a useful space for discussing Handel's oratorios, created in the midst of this culture's first flowering. If Laurence Sterne could describe a "sentimental journey," if Richardson could generate "sentimental novels," and if Oliver Goldsmith could decry playwrights' "sentimental comedies," then surely Handel and his librettists could produce works that might be read as "sentimental oratorios."¹¹

My focus is on those oratorios of the 1740s and early 1750s that Winton Dean called "dramatic." My definition of the genre, like his (and like the culture of sentiment itself), traverses the secular/sacred divide to include all seventeen of Handel's three-act unstaged vocal works with named characters.¹² The association of these pieces with sentimentalism is not new. In the middle of the twentieth century, both Dean and Percy Young identified in them the stultifying influence of the sentimental novel.¹³ Both authors argued that the oratorios possessed an inherent tension, a conflict between the "sententious" poetry and moralizing of the librettists and the timeless and robust music of Handel. Only when the composer resisted the debased directions suggested by the poems, when his music somehow rejected their thematic or dramatic thrusts, could Handel's collaboration with these librettists produce works of genius. From this fissure, Young and Dean argued, greatness emerged.

Recent scholarship has more favorably assessed the sentimentalism of these works. Ruth Smith was the earliest advocate of this reappraisal, critiquing twentieth-century criticisms of the libretti's static plots and "passive" heroes as anachronistic: "We still have no satisfying reasons, only excuses, for what critics have reluctantly identified as [the libretti's] unevenness of structure and content. . . . Showing that much in them can be appreciated as drama in the conventional modern sense has revealed much that cannot."¹⁴ Among other proposed contexts, Smith asserted that the oratorios' prolonged pathos, emphasis on feeling over action, use of tableaux, emotional depictions of family dynamics, and moralizing aims placed them closer to the drama of the eighteenth-century than to that of the twentieth, and that the works' music as well as their dramaturgy therefore deserved renewed critical adjudication. Philip Brett and George Haggerty made a first attempt at such a project in a jointly authored article that investigated both Handel's musical decisions and Samuel Humphreys's dramatic impulses in *Athalia* (1733) in the context of sentimental aesthetics. They claimed that "to consider the sentimental nature of a work like *Athalia*"

¹¹ Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (London, 1768); Oliver Goldsmith, *An Essay on the Theatre, or, a Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy* (1772), rep. as "Essay XXVII" in *The Works of Oliver Goldsmith* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881) 3: 378-80.

¹² The full list of dramatic oratorios under consideration is as follows (parenthetical dates refer to first performances): *Esther* (1718/32), *Acis and Galatea* (1718/32), *Deborah* (1733), *Athalia* (1733), *Saul* (1739), *Samson* (1743), *Semele* (1744), *Joseph* (1744), *Belshazzar* (1745), *Hercules* (1745), *Judas Maccabaeus* (1747), *Alexander Balus* (1748), *Joshua* (1748), *Solomon* (1749), *Susanna* (1749), *Theodora* (1750), and *Jephtha* (1752). I exclude *The Triumph of Time and Truth* (1757) because its allegorical nature stands at a remove from the more traditionally dramatic approaches of the oratorios listed above (*Jephtha* generally being referred to as Handel's last oratorio.).

¹³ See Young, *The Oratorios of Handel* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1949), 129-30; Young, *Handel* (London: Dent and Sons, 1947, rev. ed. 1965), 133; Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 132 and 592. For examples of Dean's claims of conflicts between Handel's tastes and a librettist's, see pp. 484-85, 556, and 616, among others.

¹⁴ Ruth Smith, "Intellectual Contexts of Handel's English Oratorios," in *Music in Eighteenth-Century England: Essays in Memory of Charles Cudworth*, ed. Christopher Hogwood and Richard Lucket (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 115.

could begin to suggest how such concerns might “affect the intimate workings of Handel’s musical imagination,” thus not only helping to situate the static plot of a work like *Athalia* within a dramatic context, but also to “explain certain musical features of Handel’s English oratorios.”¹⁵

Although a few scholars have continued to advance the theses proposed by these early efforts, there has been no extended study of the relationship between sentimentalism and Handel’s oratorios.¹⁶ My dissertation both overlaps with and broadens the discussion begun by those who have worked to establish a new critical approach. In Part 1, I show that we can speak with confidence of a subgenre of “sentimental oratorio,” related to both the sentimental drama of Handel’s London and to the sentimental opera of the last third of the eighteenth century. The oratorios’ libretti were shaped not only by the aesthetics of eighteenth-century drama; the performance practices of the sentimental theater also informed the oratorio, with the expectations and demands that the theater placed on its personnel (particularly its women) affecting oratorio singers and Handel’s processes of composition and revision. In Part 2, I turn to religious sentimentalism, which has not yet received serious scrutiny in connection with the English oratorio. I use these perspectives to show that the genre was situated at the intersection of the most current dramatic and religious trends of the mid-eighteenth century. It is my hope that the discussion that follows will show some of the ways through which Handel’s oratorios aimed to appeal to the women and men of feeling for whom, and by whom, they were written.

Oratorio as Drama

In Part 1, “Sentimental Oratorios, Sentimental Heroines,” I examine connections between the sentimental theater and the oratorio. By so doing, I take the methodological position that dramatic oratorios should be “read” as theater pieces. This idea has been scrutinized in recent years, largely in response to Winton Dean’s extreme criticisms of certain oratorios in his 1959 *Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*. Dean asserted that the oratorios should be understood as dramas — i.e., like operas — despite their lack of staging. This criterion informed his stance on the libretti, which he alternately praised for their sophisticated characterization and pacing or damned as simply bad dramas that, in the best cases, were saved by Handel’s music; in the worst cases, said Dean, they managed to drag the music

¹⁵ Philip Brett and George Haggerty, “Handel and the Sentimental: The Case of ‘Athalia,’” *Music and Letters* 68, no. 2 (1987), 117.

¹⁶ Smith herself has often returned to the sentimental drama in discussing individual works; most recently she has proposed that the sentimental drama provides a way of “comprehending” the late oratorio. See “Comprehending *Theodora*,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (2005): 57-90 and various arguments throughout *Handel’s Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Kenneth Nott, too, has argued against twentieth-century criticism of oratorio plots and Handel’s musical responses, although his focus is more directly on the rationality of the libretti from the standpoint of eighteenth-century biblical scholarship; see “‘Heroick Vertue:’ Handel and Morell’s ‘Jephtha’ in the Light of Eighteenth-Century Biblical Commentary and Other Sources,” *Music and Letters* 77, no. 2 (1996): 194-208. Finally, Leslie Robarts has argued for the effectiveness of the most maligned of the libretti, James Miller’s *Joseph and His Brethren*, when it is viewed as fulfilling the aesthetic norms of sentimental theater: “The Librettos as Literary Works,” chap. 2 in “A Bibliographical and Textual Study of the Wordbooks for James Miller’s *Joseph and His Brethren* and Thomas Broughton’s *Hercules*, Oratorio Librettos Set to Music by George Frideric Handel, 1743-44” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2008), esp. p. 149.

down to their unsatisfying level.¹⁷ Since the early 1980s, Ruth Smith has called for a reappraisal of the oratorios in various “intellectual contexts;” drama provides just one of many contexts that she suggests, including also contemporary literature, sermons, and especially political commentary.¹⁸ Most recently, Leslie Robarts has advocated an explicitly non-dramatic reading of the English oratorios, re-defining the genre as part of a reading culture, the culture of the closet: “Oratorio as unstaged music-drama has an aesthetic closer to the novels of its time than to opera and plays; it was created with hearers and readers in mind, not spectators,” Robarts writes, worrying that regarding oratorios as stage works “foists the determinacy of opera on to a virtual medium.”¹⁹ These contexts and cautions should not be ignored. As librettist Thomas Morell’s dedication of *Judas Maccabaeus* to the Duke of Cumberland (a “Truly Wise, Valiant, and Virtuous Commander”) makes clear, an association between Old Testament tales of Jewish struggles and the Hanoverian response to Jacobite tensions was evidently intended to be perceived by Handel’s audiences.²⁰ And statements made by Handel’s contemporaries show that oratorios were not considered equivalents to operas. For example, an anonymous pamphlet of 1732 entitled *See and Seem Blind* both remarked on the newness of the genre and ridiculed it as a passing fancy, issuing the damning conclusion, “(I am sorry I am so wicked) but I like one good Opera better than Twenty Oratorio’s.”²¹

Nevertheless, we should not forget the primary reason for these works’ existence, and what must have been their most exciting aspect for many consumers: these were pieces by Handel, the most celebrated opera composer of eighteenth-century Britain, and they were performed in London’s major theatrical venues. Many of the personnel, too, had definite associations with the theater, particularly in the early 1740s; for instance, an audience member who frequented Covent Garden would have been able to see Susanna Arne Cibber on Monday, February 18, 1743 as Micah in Handel’s *Samson* and then come back to see her the next night as Monimia in Thomas Otway’s *The Orphan*. Two days later, he could have seen Cibber as Isabella in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*, on February 24 as Desdemona in *Othello*, and then on the 25th again in *Samson*.²² Cibber was not an anomaly. Catherine Clive also successfully straddled the spoken and sung theatrical worlds, including numerous early oratorios.²³ Charles Burney praised equally the acting abilities and the singing of the tenor John Beard, who regularly appeared in roles that demanded

¹⁷ For instance, in describing James Miller’s libretto for *Joseph and His Brethren*, Winton Dean wrote, “Nothing could be falser than the common assumption that the quality of his oratorio texts scarcely varied and had little influence on the music. . . . [Miller’s] diction, compounded of vulgar colloquialisms and the most frigid conceits, and in particular his propensity for abstract and platitudinous generalization in the airs, froze the spontaneity of Handel’s lyrical gift” (*Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios*, 401).

¹⁸ Smith, “Intellectual Contexts” and *Handel’s Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ Robarts, “A Bibliographical and Textual Study,” 360-61.

²⁰ See Ruth Smith, “The Meaning of Morell’s Libretto of ‘Judas Maccabaeus,’” *Music and Letters* 71, no. 1 (1998): 50-71.

²¹ *See and Seem Blind*, 19.

²² See Appendix 2.1.

²³ See the following by Berta Joncus: “‘His Spirit is in Action Seen:’ Milton, Mrs. Clive, and the Simulacra of the Pastoral in *Comus*,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (2005): 7-40; “Handel at Drury Lane: Ballad Opera and the Production of Kitty Clive,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131, no. 2 (2006): 176-226; “‘In Wit Superior, as in Fighting:’ Kitty Clive and the Conquest of a Rival Queen,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (2011): 23-42.

extensive spoken performance.²⁴ And the divide between the secular theater and the semi-sacred oratorio would not have been conceptually vast. Not only were the oratorios performed within theatrical spaces; those spaces themselves were being subjected to a certain sacralization by the moralizing aims of sentimental playwrights. (The King's granting of a Drury Lane patent to Richard Steele in 1716 provided a particularly explicit example of this conflation. The order decried the modern theater's neglect of "the encouragement and honour of Religion" and gave Steele a patent due to his "public services" to the same.)²⁵ That oratorios were, in fact, theater pieces would have been inescapable for Handel's audiences.

I focus on a stereotypical character type common to both the oratorio and the spoken sentimental theater: the "exemplary" protagonist that historian Robert Hume has identified as the most legitimately new element of plays created in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁶ Writers of the period similarly remarked on the exaggeratedly virtuous characters that populated new works; John Dennis, in his vociferous 1723 attack on Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, argued that the play's protagonists were "drawn above" humanity.²⁷ Years later, Edmund Burke was still complaining that the town gave "high Encouragement to Plays that abound with Characters insipidly perfect."²⁸ The presence of these righteous protagonists has thus long been considered one of the defining characteristics — perhaps the defining characteristic — of the sentimental drama.

As in sentimental literature, the most commonly encountered sentimental protagonist of the oratorios is the chaste or virginal heroine under duress. Such women were at the heart of comedies (such as Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* and Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722)) and tragedies (Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane* (1701) and Aaron Hill's *Zara* (1736)). They made their greatest historical impact by migrating from the stage to the most successful instantiation of sentimental literature, the Richardsonian novel, with *Pamela* and *Clarissa* serving as twin (and mirrored) exemplars of the shared theme of virtue in distress.

They also migrated to Handel's dramatic oratorios. Themes of endangered virginity or chaste women were at the center of no fewer than seven of the seventeen works: *Esther*, *Acis and Galatea*, *Hercules*, *Alexander Balus*, *Susanna*, *Theodora*, and *Jephtha*. Their greatest concentration came in the last three, which premiered between 1748 and 1752. In *Susanna*, lecherous village elders spy on the title character bathing; they first unsuccessfully attempt to seduce her and to condemn her to execution until she is saved by another innocent, the child prophet Daniel. In *Theodora*, a steadfast Christian princess living under Roman rule is sentenced to enforced prostitution, a fate that she says would be worse than death; her death at the close of the work, with her virginity intact, is therefore a sort of cathartic

²⁴ Neil Jenkins, "John Beard: The Tenor Voice that Inspired Handel," *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 12 (2008): 197-216.

²⁵ The patent order is quoted in full in *Town Talk* 6 (January 20, 1715-16), rep. in *The Town Talk, The Fish Pool, The Plebian, The Old Whig, The Spinster, &c, by the Authors of the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian* (London, 1790), 92-9.

²⁶ Robert D. Hume, "Goldsmith and Sheridan and the Supposed Revolution of Laughing Against Sentimental Comedy," in *The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama, 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 237-76.

²⁷ John Dennis, *Remarks Upon a Play Call'd, The Conscious Lovers, A Comedy* (London, 1723), 63.

²⁸ Edmund Burke, Letter in *The Reformer* no. 10 (March 31, 1748), rep. in Arthur Warren Samuels *The Early Life, Correspondence and Writings of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke* (Cambridge, 1923), 322.

triumph of feminine virtue.²⁹ In *Jephtha* the libretto's source was the biblical story of a military leader inadvertently offering his own daughter as a sacrifice to God; the resolution of this conflict in Handel's version ensures both life and lifelong virginity for the woman, a fact that all characters celebrate. The frequency of the endangered maiden in Handel's English works, and especially its concentration in these late oratorios, was noted a half-century ago by Winton Dean. And it irritated him, leading to his memorable quip that *Theodora* and *Jephtha* were marred by "that mixture of Puritanism and sentimentality that permeated so much religious thought in the England of 1750 . . . [a] morbid emphasis on virginity."³⁰

Virgins and young wives were not the only endangered innocents in Handel's oratorios. *Solomon* was based on 1 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, scripture that involved betrayal, intrigue, and execution. But the librettist focused instead on far less active fare: the first act emphasized the wonders of virtuous marriage, and the work's dramatic climax focused on a desperate mother fighting for the fate of her child. Family relations and the well-being of children were frequent obsessions of contemporary drama. Mothers fought for their threatened offspring in, for instance, Ambrose Philips's popular *The Distrest Mother* (1712) and Colley Cibber's Shakespearean adaptation, *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John* (1745). Fathers, too, might have teared up at the idea of a sacrificed child if they had been paying attention in the theater. In comic settings fathers and long lost daughters shed tears of joy (Steele's *Conscious Lovers*, Edward Moore's *The Foundling* (1748), etc.) and in tragic ones grieving dads clasped and lamented daughters who were struck down in their youth (Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, 1703). Contemporary theatrical works gave sharp reproof to fathers who behaved unsympathetically toward their children, particularly when denying them the right to marry for love in, for example, Steele's *Conscious Lovers*, Thomas Southerne's *Oronooko* (1695), and James Thomson's *Tancred and Sigismunda* (1745). We might add to this list Morell's libretto for *Alexander Balus* (1748), in which the father of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra commits the unpardonable sin of using his daughter's marriage as a means to murder the Syrian king Alexander. A different type of family betrayal is at the heart of James Miller's libretto to *Joseph and His Brethren* (1744), in which attempted fratricide and abandonment is balanced by the wronged protagonist's aching longing for reunion with an aging and infirm father and a bevy of other sentimental traits: a weepy and sensitive hero, two wrongfully imprisoned youths, extended expressions of untainted marital bliss, a family reunion filled with lofty expostulations of forgiveness and reconciliation, and a significant quantity of tears.³¹ Stereotypically sentimental themes could be found, then, in well over half of Handel's dramatic oratorios, as shown in Figure 0.1.

²⁹ In *Theodora*, Part 1, Scene 5, the title character exclaims, "O worse than Death indeed! Lead me, ye Guards, / Lead me, or to the Rack, or to the Flames, / I'll thank your gracious Mercy."

³⁰ Winton Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios*, 539.

³¹ Ruth Smith and Leslie Robarts have both discussed *Joseph* in the context of the sentimental drama. See Smith, *Handel's Oratorios*, 6, and Robarts, "A Bibliographical and Textual Study," 7, 149, and 166.

Themes of threatened virginity or chastity

Esther, 1718/32

Acis and Galatea, 1720/32

Hercules, 1745

Alexander Balus, 1748

Susanna, 1749

Theodora, 1750

Jephtha, 1752

Other endangered innocents

Athalia, 1733

Joseph, 1744

Solomon, 1748

Figure 0.1 Dramatic oratorios with sentimental themes

What is the sound of sentiment as it manifested itself within the oratorio? How did these dramatic traits affect Handel's compositions, and was there an established language of musical sentimentalism for these expressions of endangered innocence? In Chapter 1, I attempt to answer these questions, rooting my discussion in the existing musicological literature on a different repertoire that has long been acknowledged to have connections to sentimental aesthetics. Mary Hunter, Jessica Waldoff, Edmund Goehring, and Stefano Castelvechi have written extensively about the effects of the culture of sentiment on late eighteenth-century opera.³² All of these scholars find similar traits, both dramatic and musical, within the works that they survey, enough so that they can identify what Mary Hunter calls a "subgenre" of opera buffa and what Castelvechi gives full status as a genre of its own — sentimental opera — which he sees as "emerging" around the middle of the eighteenth century in Italy.³³ Yet, as I argue in Chapter 1, a similar consistency of dramatic and musical elements can be found in the last of Handel's oratorios, with enough of these qualities that one might reasonably assert the presence of a "subgenre" of oratorio — sentimental oratorio — that emerged decades before the *Ninas* and *Cecchinas* of Italian opera reduced their audiences to tears.

In addition to positing a theatrical sub-genre of sentimental oratorio, I also examine the influence of the practices of sentimental theater on two of Handel's oratorio singers, Giulia Frasi (fl. 1740–c.1772) and Susanna Arne Cibber (1714–1766). These two women specialized in "exemplary" roles, most often as endangered maidens and as faithful male confidantes who served as conduits of empathy for both the characters on stage and for audiences in the theater. The English public responded most favorably to both of these dramatic singers when they performed music of deep pathos, and Handel found ways to exploit their musical and dramatic skills in ways that affected both the composition of and revision of no fewer than seven oratorios. But to be a successful actress in eighteenth-century England was a double-edged sword; audiences scrutinized these women both on and off of the stage, and their ability or failure to live up to the moral paragons whom they portrayed provided as much entertainment to audiences as did theater pieces themselves. The ways in which Frasi and Cibber navigated their offstage reputations within the culture

³² For the references to Hunter, Waldoff, Goehring, and Castelvechi, see n. 9 above.

³³ Castelvechi, "Sentimental opera" (see n. 9).

of sentiment provide musical examples of the extension of the concept of “character” beyond the proscenium as it has been debated since at least the eighteenth century. Lisa Freeman has recently advocated understanding how in eighteenth-century England the notion of character and identity became essential to the public reception of its theatrical institutions, and Suzanne Aspden has called for similar analysis of the history of the personnel of the musical stage.³⁴ My studies of Frasi and Cibber bridge connections between personal identity and career trajectory for Handel’s singers in ways that eighteenth-century theater audiences might have understood.

Sentiment and Sensibility

Given the plots described above, I would not disagree with one nineteenth-century commentator’s definition of sentimentalism as “the name of the mood in which we make a luxury of grief.”³⁵ And the music that Handel composed for these weepy maidens, wives, mothers, and fathers gave audiences plenty to luxuriate in. But Handel’s librettists would surely have disagreed with this writer’s charge of “luxury,” and especially his statement that sentimental works “regard . . . emotion as an end rather than a means . . . a mood rightly despised by men of masculine nature.” Earlier writers stressed that all these tears had a purpose, one rooted in a long and hotly debated tradition that found applications in philosophical, theatrical, and religious writing of the period.

Sentimental philosophy is frequently traced to the writings of Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, especially to ideas articulated in his *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711).³⁶ Shaftesbury explained the purpose of sentiment, advocating a notion of natural communal goodness. He said that within all people dwelt an impulse to contribute to an overall Oeconomy (i.e., society). The betterment of this system would please people as much as personal gain, and much more than personal gain at the expense of the system, the basic morality of which was ensured by the divine engineer behind it and, most importantly, by a divinely-inspired empathy nested within all individuals’ souls.

This shaping force was the so-called “moral sense,” which influenced eighteenth-century philosophers of sentiment and sensibility including Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith.³⁷ According to this constitutional ethical principal, all nature is drawn toward the common good and, by extension, toward personal happiness. Fondness for virtue is instinctual, born of a literal sixth sense, because, as Shaftesbury wrote, “In a creature capable of forming general notions of things, not only the outward beings which offer themselves to the sense are the objects of affection. . . . [P]ity, kindness, gratitude, and

³⁴ Lisa Freeman, *Character’s Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). Suzanne Aspden, “Singers’ Blueprints.” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 9, no. 2 (1997): 185-93; Aspden, “The ‘Rival Queens’ and the Play of Identity in Handel’s *Admeto*.” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 3 (2006): 301-31. See also Goring, “The Art of Acting,” op. cit.

³⁵ Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876; 2nd ed., London: Smith, Elder, 1902), 2: 436.

³⁶ See Norman Fiering, “Irresistible Sympathy and Humanitarianism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 2 (1976): 195-218, esp. p. 202; Todd, “The Historical Background,” chap. 1 in *Sensibility: An Introduction*; Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 105-41.

³⁷ See Motooka, “Common Sense, Moral Sense, and Nonsense.” See also Chapter 2.

their contraries, being brought into the mind by reflection, become objects.”³⁸ Reaction to these objects was immediate and aesthetic; virtue was beautiful, vice repulsive. Questions of morality thus appealed directly to the senses — or, more specifically, to the moral sense. Perception of goodness was intensely personal, reliant more on human nature than on any complex rational systems.

Nevertheless, Shaftesbury warned that the moral sense needed training and development: “‘Tis not instantly we acquire the Sense. . . . Labour and pains are required, and time to cultivate a natural genius.”³⁹ Training of the moral sense was therefore of utmost importance at all levels of society. Periodicals like the *Tatler* and *Spectator* promised to train such morality in the domestic sphere; their tales of threatened women, selfless gentlemen, and impassioned piety might be considered forerunners to Richardson’s sentimental novels. Yet if these papers and Richardson aimed to teach morality in the closet, other writers tried to reach audiences through the visceral means of theatrical experience. Richard Steele was perhaps the most vocal early advocate of such an approach; he argued in 1722 that tearful theatrical experiences were morally instructive: “To be apt to give way to the impressions of humanity is the excellence of a right disposition and the natural working of a well-turned spirit.”⁴⁰ And what more vivid way to evoke sympathetic tears from audiences, male and female alike, than with real, live women suffering injustices from boorish husbands and lecherous antagonists on the stage?

As we have seen, the patient, virtuous heroine was one key figure in the campaign to open audiences’ floodgates. The sentimental theater thus provided one platform for empathy and instruction that fed into the new genre of English oratorio. The pulpit provided another — an equally dramatic space in which ministers could both draw on congregants’ sensibility and perform sentiment themselves. In Part 2, I turn to the discourse of sensibility that influenced the oratorios and other writings of librettists James Miller (1703–1744) and Thomas Morell (1703–1784). These were ministers as well as men of the theater, and they answered the calls of authors like James Fordyce, who instructed preachers in 1753 to incorporate a “Glow of Sentiment” that could create a “lovely Contagion” in the audience, “the Breast heaving with reciprocal Emotion.”⁴¹

Fordyce’s bodily imagery was more than poetic license. The proposed naturalness of Shaftesbury’s “Oeconomy” and “Moral Sense” implied a physicality of response that came to be called, by the middle decades of the eighteenth century, “sensibility.” This concept’s bodily roots date back at least to the writings of Newton and Locke, with their hypothesis of a “sensorium” within the mind, a central processing unit and termination point for nerves, newly discovered in the late seventeenth century and studied by the vanguard of physio-psychological science throughout the first half of the eighteenth.⁴² Richardson’s

³⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (London, 1711; rep. 1732), 2:28.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 401.

⁴⁰ Sir Richard Steele, Preface to *The Conscious Lovers* (1722).

⁴¹ James Fordyce, *Action Proper for the Pulpit* (London, 1753), 73.

⁴² George Rousseau, “Science” in *The Context of English Literature: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Pat Rogers (London: Methuen, 1978), 194. See also Rousseau, “Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Toward Defining the Origins of Sensibility,” *Studies in the Eighteenth Century III: Papers presented at the Third David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra 1973*, ed. R.F. Brissenden and J.C. Eade (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976). On further links between sensibility and eighteenth-century medicine, see Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

physician friend George Cheyne was the most famous proponent of a physical understanding of the feelings.⁴³ His widely disseminated studies of the nervous system argued that all people possessed sensibility, as Cheyne explained by likening the human body to a musical organ. The reader who wanted to understand how sensation worked, he said, should keep in mind the following:

That the Human Body is a Machine of an infinite Number and Variety of different Channels and Pipes. . . . That the Intelligent Principle, or *Soul*, resides somewhere in the Brain, where all the Nerves, or instruments of sensation terminate, like a *Musician* in a finely fram'd and well tun'd Organ-Case; that these Nerves are like *Keys* which, being struck on or touch'd, convey the Sound and Harmony to this sentient Principle, or *Musician*.⁴⁴

Cheyne's strange use of the term "musician" is significant. The musician is not an active agent, but passively receives emotional signals provided by the "music" of vibrations flowing through nerves, the "keys" of his metaphorical organ. Jean-Jacques Rousseau expressed a similar concept in 1768: in his dictionary, he defined *sensibilité* in music as follows: "The soul of the composer should furnish ideas, the performer should be gifted with feeling . . . and the audience should be capable of being impressed."⁴⁵ All people thus possessed innate sensibility, an involuntary reaction to vibrations through air linking creator, performer, and audience.

Moralists who wielded sensibility in their didactic arsenal held that unsystematic, natural responses to such powerful stimuli activated the moral sense. And for men like Miller and Morell, librettists with what Percy Young called "a tendency toward reform," what better tool to use than music, which was "to touch the heart design'd, / . . . And has the ear in this no other part, / Than as it opes a passage to the heart"?⁴⁶ To reach an auditor's heart was to breach the rational faculties of the mind, which might be resistant to lessons about empathy and kindness.

To ask a man to trust the natural impulses of "fellow-feeling" was to ask, in eighteenth-century terms, that he succumb to the dictates of nature — i.e., that he behave more like a woman. Historians have identified the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries as periods of "crisis" for masculinity in English society.⁴⁷ Affable libertines and dueling men were balanced by "polite" gentlemen in commerce and conversation with

⁴³ Rousseau, "Science" and "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres." On the direct connection between Cheyne and Richardson, see David E. Shuttleton, "'Pamela's Library': Samuel Richardson and Dr. Cheyne's 'Universal Cure,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23, no. 1 (1999): 59-79.

⁴⁴ George Cheyne, *The English Malady: or, a Treatise of Nervous Diseases of All Kinds* (London, 1733), 3-4.

⁴⁵ Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique*, s.v. "Sensibilité: Disposition de l'ame qui inspire au Compositeur les idées vives dont il a besoin, à l'Exécutant la vive expression de ces mêmes idées, & à l'Auditeur la vive impression des beautés & des défauts de la Musique qu'on lui fait entendre." Translation from Charles Burney's contribution to Abraham Rees, ed., *The Cyclopædia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature* (London, 1802-20), s.v. "Sensibility."

⁴⁶ Young, *The Oratorios of Handel*, 130; Anonymous, "To Mr. Handel. On Hearing Alexander's Feast, L'Allegro, ed ill [sic] Penseroso, &c.," *Gentleman's Magazine* 10 (May, 1740), 254.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Michael Kimmel, "The 'Crisis' of Masculinity," in *Constructions of Masculinity in British Literature from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 89-108. Kimmel provides useful overviews of various historical explanations for the discussions about masculinity in England during this time.

members of the “softer” sex.⁴⁸ And although polite men worked to maintain differentiation between the spheres of male and female responsibility and experience, mid-eighteenth-century portrayals of idealized masculinity increasingly collapsed the distinction.⁴⁹ The preface to *The Conscious Lovers* proudly declared that a general had wept at the plight of the play’s sentimental heroine and that “men ought not to be laughed at for weeping till we are come to a more clear notion of what is to be imputed to the hardness of the head and the softness of the heart.”⁵⁰ Such a “leaky” man was the prototype for what the late eighteenth century would call the “man of feeling,” overwhelmed by emotion, a passive character, frequently unable to express himself except in fragmented stammers and accomplishing a heroic result not through active effort, but through gentle example.⁵¹

In Part 2, “Empathetic Men & Religious Sentimentalism,” I turn to the roles of such feeling men in the oratorios. In Chapter 3, I demonstrate the links between Miller’s libretto to *Joseph and His Brethren* (1744) and the aims and methods of sentimentalism, in particular their coalescence in the work’s protagonist, a man of feeling who continually weeps, displaying his sensitive, ardent empathy in the midst of tearful family tableaux and aphoristic moral precepts. Some twentieth-century musicologists critiqued this sentimental hero, complaining of his “static” characterization and his “tearful sensibility,” while others looked for some political symbolism to explain away the apparently humdrum sentimentalism of this oratorio.⁵² I offer an alternative explanation for the roots of the protagonist’s lachrymosity, rooted both in the Latitudinarian viewpoints that Miller espoused in his religious writing and in the generally sentimental attitude toward the moral content of this biblical story in other eighteenth-century discourse.

Chapter 4 explains the influence of such idealized sentiment and “soft” masculinity on Handel’s late oratorios, particularly as filtered through the writings of his last partner, the classicist, minister, and librettist Thomas Morell. I discuss Morell’s sermons and two newly discovered religious dialogues that show him to have been not only capable of rational proof in arguments against deists and doubters, but apt to rely on sentimental logic and the rhetorical power of pathos. Morell’s preoccupation with the link between sensibility, the arts, and moral didacticism indicates that the English oratorio would have been his ideal genre for moral instruction. Morell also believed that these lessons of empathy and sensibility could be imparted by re-defining masculinity away from the

⁴⁸ The most influential writing on the rise of the polite gentleman is by Lawrence E. Klein, particularly the following: “Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere in Early Eighteenth-Century England,” in Judith Still and Michael Worton, eds., *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 100-115; *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴⁹ For a recent theorization about the man of feeling as both a development of and a corrective to the polite gentleman, see Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2001).

⁵⁰ Steele, Preface to *The Conscious Lovers*, n.p.

⁵¹ I adapt the term “leaky men” from Lisa Wynne Smith, “The Body Embarrassed? Rethinking the Leaky Male Body in Eighteenth-Century England and France,” *Gender and History* 23, no. 1 (2011): 26-46.

⁵² For dissatisfaction with the libretto, see the following: Dean, *Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios*, 398; Paula Joan O’Brien, “The Life and Works of James Miller, 1704-1744, with Particular Reference to the Satiric Content of His Poetry and Plays” (PhD diss., Westfield College, University of London, 1979), 92. For political interpretations of *Joseph*, see Duncan Chisholm, “New Sources for the Libretto of Handel’s *Joseph*,” in *Handel, Tercentenary Collection*, ed. Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), 182-208; and Ruth Smith, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 304-7.

traditional discourses of valor and courage and toward a softer ethics of fellow feeling. After tracing these concepts through Morell's religious writing, I show that he provided examples of female models transforming and bettering rugged men in his religious poetry (*Divine Poems* (1732)), his last oratorios for Handel (*Theodora* (1749) and *Jephtha* (1752)), and a pasticcio oratorio prepared after Handel's death (*Nabal* (1764)). In addition to studying Morell's poetic and philosophical approach, I analyze the effects of these themes of reformed masculinity on Handel's settings, the heroes' musical voices both relating to and affected by the music of the idealized female characters in Handel's last great works.

On the pulpit as well as in the pages of oratorio libretti, these minister-poets aimed to educate while entertaining with the moving power of sentiment. It seems more than mere coincidence that the publisher John Watts included advertisements for socially and morally didactic literature within the pages of Miller's and Morell's libretti, such as those shown in Figure 0.2. The advertisement for a woman's conduct-book in *Joseph* encouraged association of that oratorio with the list of polite social accoutrements it promised to teach. This advertisement also implies that Watts knew his audience; the *Lady Preceptor's* advocacy for devotion, gentleness, and charity echoed sentiments that appeared in Miller's printed sermons and that informed the spirit of his libretto to *Joseph*. The advertisement in *Theodora* for French method books, including a translation of the New Testament, also implicitly linked religion, polite social accomplishment, and this musical work — a type of link that Morell himself was enthusiastic to make throughout his writing on the power of music and theater to teach moral behavior. These oratorios were pitched as part of a broad project of moral didacticism that embraced the Horatian *utile dulci* principle of wedding moral education with aesthetic pleasure. In Morell's words, these authors aimed through their tearful works that "by the sad countenance of the seen, the heart of the seer should be made better; moved with a compassion unknown before, and charmed with an opportunity of doing good."⁵³

* * *

In 1749, the term "sentimental" was new enough that Samuel Richardson's correspondent, Lady Bradshaigh, inquired about it: "What, in your opinion, is the meaning of the word sentimental, so much in vogue amongst the polite, both in town and country? I am frequently astonished to hear such a one is a sentimental man; we were at a sentimental party; I have been taking a sentimental walk."⁵⁴ Bradshaigh was not fond of learning amongst women; had she been, she probably would have been able to infer the meaning of this term from the reams of sentimental philosophy produced over the previous half century.⁵⁵ And had her letter been written a couple of decades later, after the

⁵³ Morell, *A Sermon Preached at the Anniversary Meeting of the Sons of the Clergy, in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul on Thursday, May 14, 1772* (London, 1772), 11.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Cowart, "Sense and Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Musical Thought" (see n. 9), 257.

⁵⁵ Bradshaigh's "distaste for learning in women" is cited in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. "Bradshaigh, Dorothy, Lady," by Thomas Keymer, accessed May 21, 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

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Of Conversation.	Of Receiving and Paying Visits.
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Of Flattery and Servility.	Of the Imitation of others.
Of Appearing Absent in Company.	Of Compliments and Ceremony.
Of Contradiction.	Of Asking Questions.
Of Calumny and Detraction.	Of Talking before Servants.
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Of being too Inquisitive.	Of Ridicule. Of Politicks.
Of Whispering and Laughing in Company.	Of Trusting to Appearances and Reports.
Of Applauding and Censuring People rashly.	Of Hope and Belief.
Of Mimicking others.	Of Idleness. [Places.
Of being Blind to what gives us Offence.	Of Appearing often in Publick [ness,
Of Gallantry from the Men.	Of Housewifry. [ness,
Of Friendship with Men.	Of Frugality and Covetousness.
Of Love. Of Matrimony.	Of the Learning proper to a young Lady.
Of Duty to Parents.	Of Letter-Writing.
Of Pride and Condescension.	Of the Choice and Entertainment of Books. Of Dress.
Of True and False Nobility.	Of Behaviour at Table.
Of Self-Conceit and Love of Vanity.	Of Behaviour at Assemblies, Operas, and Plays.
Of Humility and Pride.	Of Gaming.
Of Affectation. [tires.	Of Self Conversation.
Of Going to Court, and Courtiers.	Of Good nature and Charity.

Printed for J. Watts: And Sold by B. Dod at the Bible and Key in Ave-Mary-Lane, near Stationers-Hall.

Figure 0.2: Advertisements in libretti to *Joseph and His Brethren* (London, 1744), above, and *Theodora* (London, 1750), next page

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* * NOUVELLE METHODE pour apprendre facilement les Langues FRANCOISE et ANGLOISE, par Mr. ROGISSART. Nouvelle Edition, corrigée & augmentée d'un Essai sur la PROSODIE FRANCOISE par D. DURAND, Min. de la Savoye, & Membre de la S. R.

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Figure 0.2 (cont.)

publication of Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), the question never would have occurred to her. As Bradshaigh hinted, the culture of sentiment had many expressions: novels, letters, walks . . . and oratorios. These pieces, with their English libretti, biblical stories, virtuous themes, and the music of Handel — acknowledged in the oratorio's formative years for its ability to "calm the Passions, and improve the Heart" — were as timely as they were masterful, and I aim to understand their connections to both theatrical and religious sentimentalism.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Newburgh Hamilton, "To Handel, on His Setting to Musick Mr. Dryden's Feast of Alexander," preface to *Alexander's Feast* (London, 1739). On the tendency to see Handel's music as a socially elevating influence and the composer as "improver" and "moderator rather than the inciter of passions," see Suzanne Aspden, "Fam'd Handel Breathing, Tho' Transformed to Stone': The Composer as Monument," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 1 (2002): 39-90, esp. pp. 63-5.

A Note on Libretti, Musical Examples, and Translations

Unless otherwise noted, I have always quoted from the first published libretto of the oratorio under consideration. Typographical features such as spelling, capitalization, and dash lengths have been maintained as far as is possible.

All musical examples have been engraved using the Sibelius notation software. For examples from the oratorios, I have transcribed my sources from the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe when possible; in cases when those editions have not yet been completed, I have used Friedrich Chrysander's Händel-Gesellschaft edition.

Except where indicated, all translations are mine. Biblical quotations are taken from the King James Version.

PART 1: SENTIMENTAL ORATORIOS, SENTIMENTAL HEROINES

CHAPTER 1
PER PIETÀ: SENTIMENTAL ORATORIOS AND “SENSIBILITY STYLE”

The sentimental character practices a curious kind of heroism: he or she is not an active doer of deeds but is instead passive, a victim of a cruel society or world. But if the external world is malevolent and flawed, the protagonist’s internal, moral one approaches the heroic, revealing an almost unbounded optimism in the human capacity for altruism.¹

The epigraph above could easily belong in an essay about any of the sentimental genres of the eighteenth century. Such quietly suffering protagonists, with their humble stations, immediacy of emotional expression, and fundamental goodness designed to inspire virtue, were common to the domestic tragedy, the sentimental comedy, and the novel of sensibility. But the quotation is from a musicologist, Edmund Goehring, whose aim was to provide context for some of the most beloved music of the period: the *opere buffe* of Mozart.

Goehring’s study of what he calls the “sentimental muse of opera buffa” is part of a musicological literature that has sought connections between sentimental aesthetics and musical style in the late eighteenth century. Mary Hunter, Jessica Waldoff, and Stefano Castelvechi have also written extensively about the effects of the culture of sentiment on the opera of the period. Hunter, like Goehring, has looked at the forerunners of Mozart’s comic operas that established a clear line of “garden girls” derived from the model provided by Samuel Richardson’s most famous novel, *Pamela* (1740).² Waldoff has furthered this line of inquiry through studies of several Mozart and Haydn operas, and Castelvechi has drawn connections between French dramatic theory and Italianate operas from throughout the century.³

All of these musicologists have relied to some extent upon topical analysis of this repertoire as pioneered by Leonard Ratner. Ratner defined a “sensibility style” with one of his typically succinct and provocative lists of essential traits:

¹ Edmund Goehring, “The Sentimental Muse of Opera Buffa,” in *Opera Buffa in Mozart’s Vienna*, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120-21.

² Mary Hunter, “Pamela: The Offspring of Richardson’s Heroine in Eighteenth-Century Opera,” *Mosaic* 18 (1985): 61-76; “The Fusion and Juxtaposition of Genres in Opera Buffa, 1760-1800: Anelli’s and Piccinni’s ‘Griselda,’” *Music and Letters* 67 (1986): 363-80; “Sentimental Heroines and the Power of Suffering,” in *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart’s Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 84-92.

³ Jessica Waldoff, “Sentimental Knowledge in *La finta giardiniera*,” in *Recognition in Mozart’s Operas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 104-164; “Reading Mozart’s Operas ‘for the Sentiment,’” in *Mozart Studies*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 74-108; “Sentiment and Sensibility in *La vera costanza*,” in *Haydn Studies*, ed. W. Dean Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 70-119; Stefano Castelvechi, “Sentimental Opera: The Emergence of a Genre, 1760-1790” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1996); “From ‘Nina’ to ‘Nina’: Psychodrama, Absorption and Sentiment in the 1780s,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 8, no. 2 (1996): 91-112; Castelvechi, “Sentimental and Anti-Sentimental in ‘Le Nozze di Figaro,’” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53, no. 1 (2000): 1-24.

Sensibility style: Rapid changes in mood, broken figures, interrupted continuity, elaborate ornamentation, pregnant pauses, shifting, uncertain, often dissonant harmony — all qualities suggesting intense personal involvement, forerunners of romantic expression, and directly opposed to the statuesque unity of baroque music.⁴

Scholars of the musically sentimental have sought and found similar characteristics, positing that a “sensibility style” could be referenced, apprehended, and even mocked by opera composers in the eighteenth century. Crucially, they have demonstrated that such “sentimental” music was linked to dramatic scenarios and characters relatable to the Pamela model, leading all of them to posit that there is an identifiable subgenre they refer to as “sentimental opera.”

Ratner may have seen the “forerunners of romantic expression” in sensibility style, and musicologists may have most often located this style in the last decades of the eighteenth century, but the culture of sentiment reached a critical mass years before the operas they study were conceived, and its most representative products were more temporally and geographically aligned with a different repertoire: the English oratorios of Handel. A new theatrical aesthetic took root right as Handel began producing these works. The first paradigmatic plays of the sentimental theater were produced in the 1680s, but the most frequently cited exemplars of the sentimental genres date between the 1720s and the 1740s. The idea of a sentimental theater was then firmly enough established that the critic John Dennis could lament the “bastardization” of traditional genres, while the playwright Colley Cibber could claim with pride that his comedies, much tamer than those of the Restoration stage, had promoted “the Interest and Honour of Virtue.”⁵ By that point, most English audiences were also ready to embrace (and a vocal minority to rail against) Richardson’s most celebrated prose works on related plots and themes: the story of *Pamela*, with her virtue heartwarmingly rewarded, and the mirrored tale of *Clarissa* (1748), with hers tragically defiled.

When turning to the oratorio, it is tempting — and supportable — to make the broad claim that the oratorio writ large was a fundamentally sentimental genre. Ruth Smith, George Haggerty, and Philip Brett have all demonstrated that the norms of sentimental literature affected the oratorio libretti generally.⁶ Indeed, as shown in Figure 0.1 (p. 9), sentimental themes factored in the texts that Handel used throughout the sixteen years that he produced English oratorios. And these works, from their earliest public airings, were associated with moral didacticism much as were sentimental theater and literature, exhibiting what Suzanne Aspden has referred to as “the mythic and moral

⁴ Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 22.

⁵ John Dennis, *Remarks Upon a Play Call’d, The Conscious Lovers, A Comedy* (London: T. Warner, 1723), 5; Colley Cibber, *Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian* (1740, 2nd ed. London: John Watts, 1741), 218.

⁶ Brett and Haggerty, for instance, claim that the librettists were “men of their age,” and that “Their books, with some exceptions, represent an interesting offshoot of the sentimental drama, transposed from bourgeois contemporary life to Old Testament stories . . . domesticated for consumption by a London audience intent on sentiment rather than motive” (“Handel and the Sentimental: The Case of ‘Athalia,’” *Music and Letters* 68, no. 2 (1987), 118. See also Smith, “The Intellectual Contexts of Handel’s English Oratorios,” in *Music in Eighteenth-Century England: Essays in Memory of Charles Cudworth*, ed. Christopher Hogwood and Richard Luckett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 121-25.)

resonances in Handel's position."⁷ Yet many oratorios that possess sentimental elements also boast a broader subset of traits. *Samson* and *Deborah* for instance, both feature a "heroic action" (Samson destroys a pagan temple, Deborah murders an oppressive Canaanite) in addition to the "moral action" that literary scholars following Laura Brown have seen as the fundamental characteristic of the sentimental hero.⁸ Other subgenres might also be fruitfully studied as having been more or less codified within the brief flowering of Handelian dramatic oratorio: works focused primarily on success in war (*Deborah*, *Judas Maccabaeus*), allegorical oratorios (*The Choice of Hercules*, *The Triumph of Time and Truth*), mythological oratorios (*Acis and Galatea*, *Hercules*), etc.

Handel's last four oratorios — *Solomon* (1749), *Susanna* (1749), *Theodora* (1750), and *Jephtha* (1752) — possess a concatenation of dramatic and musical elements that delineates a readily legible subgenre. Just as sentimental literature was enjoying its greatest success, Handel and his librettists premiered these four oratorios that upheld chastity, virginity, or family values as cardinal virtues linked to religious faith. They also utilized what Charles Burney referred to as the "Pathetic, in Music" to deliver these morals in memorable ways.⁹ In what follows, I build on the work of the musicologists named above to posit that the dramatic and musical consistency they present when defining the subgenre of "sentimental opera" runs through Handel's last oratorios in equally clear fashion, works that might reasonably be classified as "sentimental oratorios." Close concentration on these four works also offers the opportunity to examine a different root of some of these musical and dramatic instantiations of sentimentalism: Handel's last prima donna, Giulia Frasi (fl. 1740–c.1772), starred in all of these oratorios, and both her training and the decisions that Handel made for her provide ways of examining how popular demand and the broader culture of sentiment informed these particularly well defined examples of a sentimental subgenre.

Sentimental Drama, Sentimental Opera . . . Sentimental Oratorio

Throughout much of the twentieth century, scholars who studied the sentimental drama exhibited taxonomic urges similar to the musicological work discussed above. The basic theatrical history on which they drew is a familiar one. In 1698, Jeremy Collier decried a "Smuttiness of Expression" that ran rampant in the theater.¹⁰ A printed debate raged between Collier and representatives of the traditional bawdy comedy, which was said to teach people "how they should act by showing them how they actually did," (in Janet Todd's summary of the controversy).¹¹ The reformers made great inroads. In the next two decades, many playwrights actively cultivated a morally didactic theatrical experience; or

⁷ Suzanne Aspden, "Fam'd Handel Breathing, Tho' Transformed to Stone: The Composer as Monument," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 1 (2002), 62.

⁸ Laura Brown, "Dramatic Moral Action," Part 3 in *English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760: An Essay in Generic History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

⁹ Charles Burney, s.v. "Pathetic, in music," in Abraham Rees, ed., *The Cyclopædia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature* (London, 1802-20).

¹⁰ Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage* (London: Keble, 1698), 2.

¹¹ Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, 33.

as Richard Steele put it, they trained “a right Disposition and the natural Working of a well-turn’d Spirit.”¹² Scholars have proposed various explanations for this upsurge of moral theater. Todd has suggested impetuses ranging from political crises surrounding James II to the influence of female patrons, new to theatrical houses at that time.¹³ R.F. Brissenden has taken a more cynical view, citing writers from the period who argued that tender depictions of virtue in distress were manifestations of a prurient pleasure rather than any grand moral project.¹⁴ Whatever the reason, the fact remains that new plays throughout the century tended toward restraint and decorum and that old ones were mollified to suit newer theatrical tastes, to the point that Todd has described the theater of 1740 through 1780 as “entirely sentimental.” The eighteenth century brought a profusion of new theatrical genres commonly classed together under a panoply of critically defined subtypes: “sentimental comedy,” “weeping comedy,” “she-tragedy,” “affective drama,” “domestic tragedy,” “bourgeois tragedy,” and “moral action” are all terms that have been used between then and now to describe plays that fall under the larger umbrella of “sentimental drama.”¹⁵ Since the 1980s, scholars have also referred to “sentimental opera,” or simply called the operas themselves “dramas of sentiment.”¹⁶ Similar observations about Handel’s last oratorios of the 1740s provide a case for considering a subgenre of “sentimental oratorio.”

Playwrights and critics began using “sentimental” as a generic marker in the last third of the eighteenth century, but their observations apply to plays stretching back for decades.¹⁷ Eighteenth-century commentators alleged that “insipidly perfect” characters inhabited generically bastardized new plays that were bound together by nothing more than what John Dennis referred to in 1723 as “violent Transports of Grief.”¹⁸ On the

¹² Sir Richard Steele, Preface to *The Conscious Lovers* (London: J. Tonson, 1723), n.p.

¹³ Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, 33.

¹⁴ Brissenden, for instance, cites Mme. Riccoboni writing to David Garrick in words that sound Mandevillian in their cynicism: “La bonté, la sensibilité, la tender humanité sont devenues la fantaisie universelle. On feroit volontiers des malheureux pour goûter la douceur de les plaindre.” Quoted in R.F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974), 83; see pp. 82-4 in general.

¹⁵ On the critical uses of the word “sentimental” in connection to drama in the 1740s and 50s, see Arthur Sherbo, *English Sentimental Drama* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957), 2-3. Oliver Goldsmith’s *An Essay on the Theatre; or, A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy* (1772) is one of the earliest documents that specifically cites sentimental comedy as a distinct genre. Other twentieth-century generic histories that provide definitions of these terms include Ernest Bernbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility*, Harvard Studies in English 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915; rep. Gloucester: P. Smith, 1958); Frank Ellis, *Sentimental Comedy: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Laura Brown, *English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760: An Essay in Generic History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), esp. chaps. 3-5.

¹⁶ See Castelveccchi, “Sentimental Opera: The Emergence of a Genre,” and Hunter, “Pamela,” 72, where she states that Paisiello’s *Nina* “qualifies” as a drama of sentiment.

¹⁷ The earliest instances of the term “sentimental comedy” in English circles appear to date from the 1770s, most famously in Oliver Goldsmith’s *An Essay on the Theatre, or, a Comparison Between laughing and Sentimental Comedy* (1772). However, a statement by a character in Hugh Kelly’s *A Word to the Wise* of 1770 hints that this was by that point a commonly recognized generic marker: “Upon my word, Harriot, a very florid winding up of a period, and very proper for an elevated thought in a sentimental Comedy” (2). See also Charles Jenner’s *The Man of Family*, which was subtitled *A Sentimental Comedy* (London, 1771).

¹⁸ Dennis, *Remarks Upon a Play Call’d, The Conscious Lovers*, 5. At the heart of Goldsmith’s complaint, too, was the “bastardization” of comedy, the removal of the socially corrective elements of satire and ridicule that had

positive side of the critical aisle, supporters of the sentimental drama argued that those who disapproved of its methods were simply not people of sensibility. The reverend Charles Jenner claimed that that “refined sentiments . . . have very little chance of amusing an audience, who go not to the theatre to think or feel.”¹⁹ And Steele, the earliest successful author of sentimental plays, taught that comedy would be improved by the introduction of “a Joy too exquisite for Laughter.”²⁰

Since the first decades of the twentieth century, scholars have tried to delineate which plays should and which should not be considered sentimental drama.²¹ Arthur Sherbo was perhaps the most ambitious, producing a succinct, bulleted list of desiderata for plays in the sentimental style:

- the presence of a moral element, variously designated as a “moral problem,” “moral treatment,” or “moral purpose”
- good or perfectible human beings as characters
- an appeal to the emotions rather than to the intellect
- an emphasis on pity, with tears for the good who suffer, and admiration for the virtuous²²

In addition, Sherbo devoted an entire chapter to playwrights’ technique of “prolongation,” a dwelling on the emotional high points of a story, which Sherbo considered essential to the sentimental genres. He made the careful observation that the mere presence of plot points that seem sentimental is not enough; reunited families or lovers, endangered or defiled innocent women, and threatened children are common property of drama of all periods. It is in the proportion that the classification “sentimental drama” becomes relevant: the more time dwelt on such moments, the better in sentimental genres. More recent writers have agreed, contrasting eighteenth-century techniques with the use of pathetic situations in

always been the stock and trade of comic theater. See *An Essay on the Theatre*. William Cooke similarly disparaged sentimental comedies, saying, “The laws of the drama know no species under this title.”

¹⁹ Charles Jenner, *The Man of Family: A Sentimental Comedy* (London, 1771), v.

²⁰ Steele, preface to *The Conscious Lovers*, n.p.

²¹ See the following: Bernbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility*; Allardyce Nicoll’s various volumes from Cambridge University Press, *Restoration Drama* (1923), *Early Eighteenth Century Drama* (1925), and *Late Eighteenth Century Drama* (1927), passim.; Frederick Wood, “The Beginnings and Significance of Sentimental Comedy,” *Anglia* 55 (1931): 368-92; Sherbo, *English Sentimental Drama*; Philip Rex Kleitz, “Nicholas Rowe: Developer of the Drama of Sympathy” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1967); Robert D. Hume, “Goldsmith and Sheridan and the Supposed Revolution of ‘Laughing’ against ‘Sentimental’ Comedy,” in *The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama, 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983); Ellis, *Sentimental Comedy, Theory and Practice*; Bruce McConachie, “Theatres for Knowledge Through Feeling,” in *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, ed. Gary Jay Williams (New York: Routledge, 2006, 2nd ed. 2010), pp. 235-269. Lisa Freeman has offered an updated take on such definitions, placing character at the center of her generic definition; in short, the unfailingly good hero, immersed in a system of “good breeding” (in Steele’s words, the “Temperate, Generous, Valiant, Chaste, Faithful, and Honest” man) stands at the center of Freeman’s definition of sentimental drama. Freeman’s theory echoes Hume’s definition of the genre, and I follow them in holding that the most immediately identifiable feature of the sentimental oratorios discussed below is the presence of sexually endangered heroines whose plights serve as opportunities to train and recharge the sentimental viewer’s “Moral Sense.” See Freeman, *Character’s Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), chap. 5.

²² See Sherbo, *English Sentimental Drama*, 21 for this bulleted list.

earlier drama; Todd has stated baldly, “What is new in the eighteenth century is the centrality of sentiment and pathos.”²³ Jean Marsden similarly argues that “the sufferings of oppressed and helpless virtue” reflected the eighteenth-century theater’s desire to “provoke emotion and through that emotion create a human connection between spectator and spectacle.”²⁴

The musicological definitions of sentimental opera have begun by noting the similarity between libretto storylines and these dramatic models. The most consistent feature that music historians have pointed to is the mediator standing between the spectacle and spectator of the sentimental drama, Sherbo’s “good or perfectible” protagonist, an inwardly focused character with a particular musical voice. In the epigraph to this chapter, Edmund Goehring provides an eloquent description of the sentimental protagonist that could serve equally for spoken or sung sentimental drama. The centrality of suffering for these characters is also noted by Mary Hunter, who writes of “the persecution [the protagonist] endures from the other characters,” and she goes further, stressing that what “qualifies [an opera] as a ‘drama of sentiment’ [is] the extraordinary intensity . . . and the exclusive focus of the work on the heroine’s emotional condition.”²⁵

In both the operas and the dramas that these scholars investigate, the most frequent suffering protagonist was surely the virginal or chaste heroine. Figure 1.1 lists a handful of influential female-centered plays and stories from popular publications from the first half of the century, which found their paradigmatic expressions in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. The plights of sentimental heroines were sometimes relatively mundane, such as delayed marriage or separation from loved ones. Other times, the conflict was more serious: a threat on their virginity or accusation of infidelity. In sentimental tragedies that focused on a female protagonist, such sexual conflicts were almost always what brought about their eventual deaths. And even in the most banal of sentimental comedies, sexual violence, immorality, or a threat to highly valorized romantic love always lurked just beneath the surface.²⁶ Finally, playwrights of the eighteenth century sometimes employed the model of the patient, suffering wife, either having an insecure husband test her virtue (like Griselda) or forcing her to suffer quietly while her husband violated the chaste bonds of marriage that she worked so hard to maintain. Crucially, as Mary Hunter has pointed out, the sentimental heroine is relational, defined more by other characters’ reactions to her suffering than by any heroic actions of her own.²⁷ Hers is a passive virtue.

²³ Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, 3.

²⁴ Jean Marsden, “Shakespeare and Sympathy,” in *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Peter Sabor and Paul Yachnin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 30-1. Elsewhere, Marsden specifically aligns the rewritten women of these adaptations with the “tragedies, pathetic plays, and later so-called sentimental comedies” in which characters “act as exemplary figures, suffering patiently at the hands of a villain and thus not only proving their own innocence by their inability to react aggressively, but also providing concrete evidence of the villainy of their oppressors” (38).

²⁵ Hunter, “Pamela,” 66 and 72.

²⁶ In Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers*, for instance, which is apparently only marginally about sex, both the play’s prehistory (in which the heroine has plunged herself into poverty by rejecting the sexual advances of her adoptive father’s brother) and its central point of conflict (the question of marriage between the classes) center on the heroine’s sexual identity.

²⁷ Hunter, “The Sentimental Heroine and the Power of Suffering,” 85-6.

<p><u>Sentimental comedy</u> G. Farquhar, <i>The Twin Rivals</i> (1702) R. Estcourt, <i>The Fair Example</i> (1703) C. Cibber, <i>The Lady's Last Stake</i> (1707) G. Lillo, <i>Silvia, or the Country Burial</i> (1730) T. Cibber, <i>The Lover</i> (1731) JW. Popple, <i>The Lady's Revenge, or the Rover Reclaimed</i> (1734) H. Giffard, <i>Pamela, a Comedy</i> (1741) J. Dance, <i>Pamela, or Virtue Triumphant, a Comedy</i> (1742) E. Moore, <i>The Foundling</i> (1748)</p>	<p><u>Sentimental tragedy</u> T. Otway, <i>The Orphan</i> (1680) T. Southerne, <i>Isabella, or, The Fatal Marriage</i> (1694) Anonymous, <i>The Rival Brothers</i> (1704) C. Johnson, <i>Caelia, or the Perjured Lover</i> (1732) J. Hewitt, <i>Fatal Falsehood, or Distressed Innocence</i> (1734)</p>
<p><u>Patient wife / Griselda examples</u> C. Cibber, <i>Love's Last Shift</i> (1696) C. Cibber, <i>The Careless Husband</i> (1704) C. Cibber, <i>The Lady's Last Stake</i> (1707) J. Addison, <i>The Drummer</i> (1714) C. Bodens, <i>The Modish Couple</i> (1732)</p>	<p><u>Stories from <i>The Tatler</i>, <i>The Spectator</i>, & elsewhere</u> Anon., Octavia's Tale, <i>Spectator</i> 322 Anon., Jenny Distaff's Tale, <i>Tatler</i> 33 John Hughes, "A Scene of Distress in Private Life," <i>Spectator</i> 375 E. Haywood, <i>Idalia</i> (1723) M. Davys, <i>The Reformed Coquet</i> (1724) S. Richardson, <i>Pamela</i> (1740) S. Richardson, <i>Clarissa</i> (1748)</p>

Figure 1.1: Sentimental female protagonists in plays and other literature

In the operas too, sentimental women suffer at the hands of men. As historians advocating sentimental opera as a generic subtype have shown, these works drew on consistent dramatic devices. The sexual purity or maintained chastity of their heroines is a central concern. Frequently isolated, these women express their woe in lonely pastoral settings, surroundings that are more than just places to lament; they remind us why the heroines are in the situations that they are in, providing simultaneous illustrations of innocence and sensuality.²⁸ And although the heroines are sexually appealing, most are wholesome, their virtue rewarded: "The virtue of constancy and its eventual reward form the moral meat of all the operas in this subgenre."²⁹

These essential generic markers are so concentrated in the last three oratorios of Handel's career that we might venture them as exemplary of an earlier and related subtype, the sentimental oratorio. The most obvious parallel with Richardson's *Pamela* or many of the operas and plays discussed above is the centrality of female sexuality to their moral messages. *Susanna* features a chaste wife and her doting husband and father.³⁰ After they extol the idyllic nature of their domestic circumstances, this idyll is immediately placed under threat; husband and father leave their village for unstated business, and village elders take the opportunity to spy on Susanna as she bathes. They then attempt to seduce her and, failing in their attempt, try to have her executed by portraying her to the court as a seductress and adulteress. In *Theodora*, a primitive Christian leader (and former Roman princess) takes a vow of chastity; when she refuses to worship Jove, the Roman authorities

²⁸ Hunter, "Pamela," 62. Hunter discusses the "blend of earthiness and airy sweetness" attributable to these characters.

²⁹ Hunter, "Pamela," 67.

³⁰ It is based on the apocryphal book of Susanna (Daniel 13).

condemn her to confinement in a brothel, which, according to her, is a “Fate worse than Death.”³¹ (This representation of sexual wholesomeness within a house of ill repute was also used by Richardson in *Clarissa* (1748), published just before Thomas Morell penned *Theodora*; Morell and many among the audience would surely have seen this connection.) And although the title character of *Jephtha* never has her sexual virtue threatened (it is her life at stake), the oratorio’s conclusion wrests it into a central position; the biblical account (in which Jephtha makes a pact with God for military success in exchange for his daughter’s life³²) was made palatable to eighteenth-century tastes by the dual devices of *angelus ex machina* and *lieto fine*: an angel descends from heaven, lifts the death sentence, and assigns a vow of virginity to the young woman.

The focus on sexuality is not merely incidental, but central to these oratorios’ moral messages, made explicit in concluding choruses and character speeches. Susanna’s steadfastness might have inspired some among Handel’s audiences to meditate, in a way that transcended this story of endangered chastity, about the role of faith and constancy in the face of tribulations. But the libretto’s final chorus implied a more literal moral:

A Virtuous Wife shall soften Fortune’s Frown,
She’s far more precious than a golden Crown.³³

Morell’s libretto to *Theodora* originally concluded with a scene (omitted by Handel) in which Septimius, a Roman soldier, comes to the Christian camp after watching the execution of Theodora and her devotee, Didymus. In later conversation with the Christians, Septimius dwells not on the death of a valorous fellow military man (Didymus), but on the power of seeing an innocent young woman meet such a fate. The death of the two heroes converted thousands of onlookers to Christianity, “but chiefly *Theodora*,” Septimius says:

A sweet Effusion of celestial Joy,
Flush’d in her Cheeks, and gave her native Charms
New Lustre . . .³⁴

Even as Theodora converted thousands of Romans through her death by immolation, their representative voice in the oratorio remarks on physical characteristics of youthful beauty, noticing her “flush’d Cheeks” and “native Charms.” And in the conclusion to *Jephtha*, the young Hamor laments the loss of his beloved fiancée to divinely ordered virginity (like Septimius, referring to her “Charm and beauteous Line” and to her “Lustre”); she, however, responds by exclaiming, “Freely I to Heav’n resign/ All that is in *Hamor* mine. / Great the Bliss assign’d to me . . .” The maintenance of feminine virtue is not mere allegory. It is “Bliss,” an accomplishment portrayed as symbolic of or perhaps even equal to these women’s religious faith.

³¹ Theodora’s story was first told by St. Ambrose, and was later given various poetic and dramatic renderings. See Chapter 4. Theodora’s comment about a “Fate worse than Death” is in Thomas Morell’s libretto, Part 1, Scene 5.

³² Judges 11.

³³ Part 3, Scene 2.

³⁴ Morell’s unpublished conclusion is reprinted in Ruth Smith, “Comprehending *Theodora*,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (2005), 90.

Solomon might also be considered “sentimental,” although it is something of an outlier. Based on passages drawn from 1 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, it features not one suffering heroine, but three women, each of whom reacts differently to the wisdom and virtue of the Jewish King. Part 1 praises Solomon’s nuptial bliss — not with seven hundred wives, as in the biblical account, but with one, praised by Zadok the priest: “Search round the World, there never yet was seen / So wise a Monarch, or so chaste a Queen.”³⁵ Part 2 centers on the famous Judgment of Solomon.³⁶ At this climactic moment, two women claim to be the mother of a child and stand before the king, suing for custody. Solomon states that matrilineage cannot be determined by sight alone, and he declares that the child is to be cut in half and divided equally between the feuding parties. The true mother’s horrified reaction settles the case for Solomon. Part 3 is, like Part 1, a static drama in which the Queen of Sheba arrives at the court to praise the king’s wisdom.³⁷ To entertain her, Solomon orders his musicians to move the queen, like Timotheus performing before Alexander, through various emotional states: absorption in sweet beauty (“Musick, spread thy voice around”), excitement caused by military battle (“Now a different measure try”), suffering from “hopeless Love” (“Draw the tear”), and relieving tension through the calming of torrid seas (“The rolling surges rise”).

From a modern standpoint of narrative dramaturgy, this libretto must be judged a failure. Without a coherent plot, there is no room for rising action, climax, denouement, or character development. The libretto could easily have been action-packed; 1 Kings features betrayal, intrigue, assassination attempts, rebellions, and the construction of a grand temple and palace; moreover, it concluded with the gradual erosion of Solomon’s power that could have been utilized in a tragic morality tale (as in Charles Jennens’s libretto to *Saul*). But such elements of dramatic tension are avoided in the libretto, replaced with three tableaux depicting the sanctity of marriage, the value of a parent’s love for her child, and the power of music to move the sentiments.

This static nature is part and parcel of the working method of sentimental literature and drama. Since the eighteenth century, it has been a common complaint that sentimental genres lack action; for the most famous and colorful example, one need simply recall Samuel Johnson’s quip that reading Richardson’s novels “for the plot” would lead one to hang himself.³⁸ In the twentieth century, Northrop Frye defined sentimental writing as a literature of “process over product,” and Castelveccchi remarked on an “absence of narrative complexity” in sentimental opera.³⁹ What replaces any traditional dramatic interest is the stock fare of sentiment, what Castelveccchi has called a “focus on emotions” common to “much sentimental literature and theatre of the eighteenth century.”⁴⁰ Sherbo’s chapter on “prolongation” provides dozens of examples of both such dramatic suspension and intense focus on the expression of emotional states. Hunter similarly argues that the “development of, and concentration on, an unusually sympathetic, plausible, and sentimental character-

³⁵ Part 1, Scene 2.

³⁶ 1 Kings 3: 16-28.

³⁷ 1 Kings 10: 1-13.

³⁸ Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson* (London, 1791), rep. and ed. G. B. Hill (London, 1891), 2: 480.

³⁹ Northrup Frye, “Toward Defining an Age of Sensibility,” in Harold Bloom, *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), 12-13. Castelveccchi, “Nina,” 92.

⁴⁰ Castelveccchi, “Nina,” 92.

type” with an “immediacy and effect of her characterization” is central to the “apotheoses of this subtype.”⁴¹

Defining “immediacy” of emotional presentation is a tricky proposition, but the musicologists who have identified such a quality in sentimental operas have all cited a similar set of musical characteristics, relatable to Ratner’s “sensibility style.” They often point out that such characteristics appear at those moments when characters lament the threat to or destruction of their innocence. Hunter, for instance, gives Dorina’s solo in the second-act finale from Giuseppe Sarti’s *Fra i due litiganti* (1782) as an example of this combination of climactic drama and intense sentiment. At this point in the opera, Dorina has fled to the woods to escape the advances of an unwanted suitor (modeled on Beaumarchais’s Count Almaviva). Hunter lists the sentimental qualities of Dorina’s music here as its sensual appeal, the “touching cantabile lines” of the vocal part, and an inward, absorptive power “divorced from the stage action.”⁴² Castelvechi draws on a more familiar example, Barbarina’s “L’ho perduta” from Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786), reading that aria as a thinly veiled expression of woe over lost virginity.⁴³ Both cases share certain traits: short vocal phrases, exposed melodies with contrasting orchestral accompaniment, and an open, searching quality created by structural half cadences at the ends of phrases. Goehring cites several similar examples of what he calls the “breathless” cavatina as a key aria type in sentimental opera.⁴⁴ He points to characteristics that he sees reflecting not only the intensely personal emotion of sentimental theater and writing, but also the tactics of fragmentation that are so common in this literature, most famously emblemized by the ellipses, dashes, and graphic disruptions of sentimental novels (see Figure 1.2).⁴⁵ Drawing a parallel with these visual traits, Goehring summarizes musical characteristics similar to those that Ratner, Hunter, and Castelvechi found distinctly sentimental: “The absence of an introductory ritornello, the avoidance of periodic closure . . . [and] the reliance on a single affect” are traits frequently encountered in the emotional arias that musicologists see as examples of the “pathos and seriousness” obligatory in a sentimental opera.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Hunter, “Pamela,” 69 and 75.

⁴² Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa*, 89-90.

⁴³ Castelvechi, “Sentimental and Anti-Sentimental,” 13-21.

⁴⁴ Goehring’s examples are “Ah pietade, mercede” from Martín y Soler’s and Da Ponte’s *Una Cosa rara*, “Soccorretemi, Sorelle,” from Anfossi and Bertati’s *La forza delle donne*, “Dove fuggo” from Haydn and Puttini’s *La vera costanza*, and “Crudeli, fermate” from Mozart and Petrosellini’s *La finta giardiniera*. See “The Sentimental Muse,” 128-135.

⁴⁵ On such devices, see the following: Janine Barchas, *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. chaps. 4 and 6.

⁴⁶ Goehring, “The Sentimental Muse,” 129.

Five o' Clock is come.

AND no young Ladies! --- So that I fanfy ---
But, hold! I hear their Coach, I believe. I'll
step to the Window. --- I won't go down to them,
I am resolv'd.

Good Sirs! good Sirs! What will become of me!
Here is my Master come in his fine Chariot! --- In-
deed he is! What shall I do? Where shall I hide
myself? --- Oh! what shall I do? Pray for me! But
Oh! you'll not see this! --- Now, good God of Hea-
ven, preserve me! if it be thy blessed Will!

Seven o' Clock.

THO', I dread to see him, yet do I wonder I
have not. To be sure something is resolving
against me, and he stays to hear all her Stories. I can
hardly write; yet, as I can do nothing else, I know
not how to forbear! -- Yet I cannot hold my Pen! --
How crooked and trembling the Lines! -- I must
leave off, till I can get quieter Fingers! -- Why should
the Guiltless tremble so, when the Guilty can pos-
sess their Minds in Peace?

SATURDAY Morning.

NOW let me give you an Account of what
passed last Night; for I had no Power to
write, nor yet Opportunity, till now.

This vile Woman held my Master till half an
Hour after Seven; and he came hither about Five in
the Afternoon. And then I heard his Voice on the
Stairs, as he was coming up to me. It was about
his Supper; for he said, I shall chuse a boil'd Chicken,
with Butter and Parsley. --- And up he came!

He

[81]

---why was I not content to put it here,
or there, any where rather than be in this
strait?

---Strait! said the abbess.

Strait --- said the novice; for terror
had struck their understandings --- the
one knew not what she said --- the other
what she answer'd.

O my virginity! virginity! cried the
abbess.

---inity! ---inity! said the novice,
sobbing.

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Barbarina

L'ho per - du_ ta... me-me- schi na... ahchi sa do-ve sa - rà, ahchi sa do-ve sa - rà?

Figure 1.2: Fragmentation. Expressive dashes of varying lengths and other graphic devices in S. Richardson, *Pamela*, 1740 (top left) and L. Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, 1768 (top right), and Barbarina's "breathless" cavatina "L'ho perduta" from *Le nozze di Figaro*, 1786, mm. 10-15 (bottom)

The dramatic themes on which Italian librettists of sentimental operas drew preceded them by decades within the literary milieu of Handel's London; so, too, did the idea of a consistent application of musical style to similar dramatic circumstances for suffering maidens. Like the opera composers of later decades, Handel repeatedly provided his sentimental heroines with characteristics that grant their music a consistently recognizable urgency, particularly at those moments when innocence is most threatened. *Theodora* provides a focused example of a woman under siege from the work's opening notes. Example 1.1 shows excerpts from three of the title character's five arias:

Example 1.1: *Theodora*, "Fond, flatt'ring world, adieu," mm. 17 ff. (top); "With darkness deep," mm. 4 ff. (middle); and "When sunk in anguish and despair," mm. 8 ff. (bottom)

Violini unisoni

Theodora

Continuo

17

Fond, flatt'ring world, a - dieu! fond, flatt'ring world, a-dieu, a dieu!

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Theodora

Continuo

4

With darkness deep, as is my woe, hide me, ye shades of Night, hideme! your thick - est veil a -

Violin

Theodora

Continuo

8

When sunk in an-guish and de-

Theodora

Continuo

14

spair, to Heaven I cried; Heaven heard my pray'r and bade a

The opening vocal phrase of her introductory aria (“Fond, flatt’ring world, adieu”) packs several expressive devices closely together for intensity. Theodora sings this music in the company of her fellow Christians, refusing to obey a dictate from the Roman leader to make a sacrifice to Jove or to face “Racks, Gibbets, Sword and Fire.” Preparations for the death that Theodora expects for her disobedience elicit the quietly suffering music that is this character’s natural language. After the ritornello sighs its way to the half cadence of m. 19, a moment of suspension precedes the vocal entrance (potentially accentuated by a long silence in a particularly emotive performance). When we hear Theodora’s voice for the first time, it is unmoored from any support, texturally isolated. Moreover, Theodora performs a new melodic gesture in m. 20, singing music that has not been part of the ritornello, nor will ever be taken up by it, a further sign of her lonely suffering. As the music progresses, it is fragmented, unsettled, unable throughout this first vocal sentence to achieve more than one or two-measure statements before beginning again. The orchestra’s response to Theodora in m. 22 is another disconnected, mournful gasp, featuring sudden changes in range. The half-step motion of this measure is taken up by Theodora in m. 26, a sort of inverse appoggiatura, moving from consonant note to implied dissonance, an emotional intensification of the usual gesture.

In Theodora’s other arias, these musical characteristics recur at her times of most intense suffering. She sings “With darkness deep” within a brothel, confined there following her refusal to obey the Roman orders to worship Jove. “When sunk in anguish and despair” is a more hopeful aria that describes her rescue from the brothel by Didymus, but its opening gestures, in which Theodora remembers the period of confinement, inhabit the sonic space of the heroine’s laments. In all these cases, ritornelli introduce gloomy minor modes, followed by monophonic introductory vocal gestures that are echoed by the orchestra, which seems to answer the woman’s expressions of grief with its own sympathetic moans. There follow a number of the features that Ratner identified as essential markers of sensibility style for later music: halting phrases, expressive chromaticisms, and aching suspensions. Taken together, Theodora’s arias create a unified musical portrait of a heroine suffering under threat of losing her vowed virginity.

In fact, Theodora has just two solo pieces that offer reprieve from this gloom, one of which features placid pastoralisms (“The pilgrim’s home”), the other a rare opportunity for this character to indulge in flights of vocal fancy (“O that I on wings could fly”). The first respite is itself a sentimental trope: evocations of pastoral simplicity are common sentimental fare (perhaps most familiar from Pamela, with her famous rustic dress and country origins).⁴⁷ Goehring has cited pastoralism as an essential element in sentimental plots, a space in which nostalgia and cynicism could coexist comfortably, where a sentimental work could both critique modern society and allow for hopefulness about the perfectibility of mankind through lower orders.⁴⁸ A sentimental heroine’s sexuality and her innocence could be simultaneously emphasized in such an idealized space (which on its own carried both associations). Hunter sees the same phenomenon in the operas that she studies, pointing out that the pastoral is flagged in the transformation of Richardson’s

⁴⁷ See R.F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress*, 5-6.

⁴⁸ Goehring, “The Sentimental Muse,” 122-23.

Pamela from serving girl into garden girl for her operatic descendants, a status that lends them both “earthiness” and “airy sweetness.”⁴⁹

Theodora’s pastoralism is also linked to her sensuality, and it is employed in a sort of seduction attempt by Theodora within the walls of the brothel, a concept surprising for a woman of such chaste aspirations (Example 1.2). Here the typical features of musical pastoralism, 12/8 meter and dotted figuration, combine with binary form to create an innocent and rustic appeal that seems ill-fitted to a captive in a Roman prison cell. Its text is paradisiac, associating death with better days to come:

The Pilgrim’s Home, the sick Man’s Health,
 The Captive’s Ransom, poor Man’s Wealth,
 From thee I wou’d receive.
 These, and a thousand Treasures more,
 That gentle Death has now in store,
 Thy Hand and Sword can give.

The rosiness of this air is explained by its performative nature; it seems that Theodora herself has consciously chosen this music for its persuasive or seductive properties. It is a plea to Didymus (who has broken into her cell in a rescue attempt) to kill her so that she can avoid sexual violation and ascend into the afterlife. It is also an attempt to seduce the audience, to draw them into the private world of this ever-suffering virgin.

Example 1.2: *Theodora*, “The pilgrim’s home,” opening (violas omitted)

The musical score for Example 1.2 is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 3-4) shows the vocal line for Theodora and the string accompaniment. The lyrics are: "The pil - grim's home, the sick__ man's health, the cap - tive's ran - som, poor__ man's wealth from". The second system (measures 5-6) continues the vocal line and string accompaniment. The lyrics are: "thee I would re - ceive, from thee__ I would re - ceive, from thee__ from thee. I would re - ceive! The". The score is in 12/8 time and features a vocal line for Theodora and a string accompaniment.

As shown in Example 1.3, similar pastoral music marks all of the sentimental heroines in this line of oratorios. Susanna, like Theodora, has a hopeful vision of rustic surroundings. In “Crystal streams in murmurs flowing,” parallel thirds and tenths in the accompanying parts express her untroubled enjoyment of a bath, unaware of the dangers awaiting her. In *Jephtha*, the heroine’s rustic aria (“Farewell, ye limpid springs and floods”) is a sort of inverse of Theodora’s; whereas the latter had used pastoralisms to evoke the

⁴⁹ Hunter, “Pamela,” 62.

Elysian promises of the afterlife, Iphis bids farewell to the transient pleasures of the natural world. Iphis's music utilizes the same 12/8 time signature and dotted gestures as her predecessor's. It is bleaker than Theodora's vision of paradise, with a melody line of brief, halting phrases, and with aching repetitions, both in Iphis's text and in little antiphonal responses from the strings. But it is pastoral music, nevertheless.

Pastoral music makes an odd appearance in Part 2 of *Solomon*. The aggrieved mother of the Judgment scene is certainly not a steadfast woman of religious faith and bodily purity: she is identified by the libretto as a harlot. Yet the earnestness of her pathetic appeal to Solomon moves him, and he sees in her distress the proof that he needs:

She who could bear the fierce Decree to hear,
Nor send one Sigh, nor shed one pious Tear,
Must be a Stranger to a Mother's Name —
Hence from my Sight, nor urge a further Claim:
But you whose Fears a Parent's Love attest,
Receive, and bind him to your beating Breast.⁵⁰

Solomon thus gives voice to a central tenet of sentimental philosophy: the legibility of goodness through bodily signs, a reflection of the Shaftesburian mechanical interpretation of "natural" goodness.⁵¹ Janet Todd has eloquently summarized the legibility of emotional response in sentimental literature: "In the world of this fiction, tears indicate correct response; they denote tenderness, sympathy, and a feeling heart. . . . Such physical manifestations constitute a language of the heart, a code of sincere and true expression far beyond words."⁵²

The mother, reunited with her son, offers a curious thanks to the Jewish king: a pastoral song about abandoned shepherds.

Beneath the Vine, or Fig-tree's Shade,
Ev'ry Shepherd sings the Maid
Who his simple Heart betray'd,
In a rustic Measure.

The obvious musical devices are again here at play: long pedal tones, glacial harmonic rhythm, compound meter, and parallel thirds and tenths. The dramatic reason for this pastoral song is left unclear. Is the harlot herself the unfaithful maid to whom the text refers, the song a longing for the idyllic days of her youth? Or is the move from sensibility style to pastoral mode simply a release of tension, the ethics of sentiment having rescued both child and mother? Whatever the answers to these questions, the union of pathos, pastoralism, and threatened innocence finds a place here as in all of Handel's other late heroine-focused oratorios.

⁵⁰ Part 2, Scene 3.

⁵¹ See Introduction.

⁵² Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, 77.

Example 1.3: *Susanna*, “Crystal streams in murmurs flowing,” ritornello (top); *Jephtha*, “Farewell, ye limpid streams and floods,” opening (middle); and *Solomon*, “Beneath the vine,” mm. 11 ff. (bottom)

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Continuo

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Continuo

Larghetto

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Flute
Continuo

Fare-wel, fare-wel ye limpid springs and floods

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Flute
Continuo

Fare-wel, fare-wel ye limpid springs and floods

11

Flute & Violin I
un poco piano
Violin II
Viola
First harlot
Continuo

Be-neth the vine, or fig-tree's shade, ev'ry shep-herd sings the maid, who his simple heart be tray'd in a

Theodora is perhaps the most consistent and extreme of Handel's sentimental heroines, but she does not weep alone. All of the female protagonists in Handel's late oratorios receive such musical treatment at climactic moments when innocence is most threatened, as shown in Example 1.4. The first quotation is the beginning of "Can I see my infant gor'd" from *Solomon*. The second, "Happy they," is sung in *Jephtha* by the apparently doomed Iphis, accepting that her father is going to execute her in order to fulfill his covenant with God. Finally, the third example is from Part 3 of *Susanna*; the heroine sings "Faith displays her rosy wing" as she stands at the place of execution, awaiting death in a chaste state. The first two arias, like Theodora's moments of highest pathos, open with pleading monophonic statements that leave the soloists exposed, pitiable, and able to elicit sympathetic tears. Their keys (again like Theodora's) serve as further aesthetic markers of extreme distress, particularly in the tempering systems of Handel's era; F# minor, F minor, and B minor possess expressive colors on key structural harmonies (piquantly wide major thirds on the dominants of F# and B, for instance). Finally, the fragmentation that is such a hallmark of the contemporary novel can be found not just in the small-scale stammering that Goehring and others see in the "breathless" cavatina. Almost all of these arias feature profound, expressive silences, a stop-and-start discontinuity. Handel also uses repetition and truncation of the poetry in expressive ways ("Can I see my Infant gor'd . . . Can I see, Can I see, Can I see him yield his breath;" "Fond flatt'ring World, adieu! Adieu!"). "Faith displays her rosy wing," features a special kind of fragmentation, with striking changes in gesture. The ritornello alone — if one can call it that — contrasts hammer-blow eighth-notes with languid ornamental trembling, extremes of dynamics, and jarring intervallic leaps. The sighing gestures that follow in m. 3 seem drawn from a different aria, and the vocal entrance does not give any opportunity for the accompanying instruments to cadence or conclude a rounded phrase. It enters of its own accord, exposed and vulnerable, while *Susanna* remains steadfast in her expressions of faith.

These works possess dramatic and musical characteristics that are both as conspicuous and as consistent as those identified by scholars of the sentimental drama and the sentimental opera: poetic expressions of the importance of virtue, a pastoral quality that imbues the heroines with both sensuality and innocence, and musical settings at the points when those values or the women's lives are most threatened that convey a particular intensity of pathos and fragmentation. In this rich tapestry one hardly finds the "statuesque" unity of Ratner's charge against music of this period. Instead, we see implementation of both Handel's pastoral and sensibility styles in connection with heroines whose sufferings are central to these works' moral messages — the essential elements of a sentimental oratorio.

Example 1.4: Solomon, "Can I see my infant gor'd," mm. 7ff. (top); Jephtha, "Happy they," opening (middle); and Susanna, "Faith displays her rosy wing," opening (bottom)

7

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
First harlot
Continuo

Can I see my in - fant gor'd with the

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of music, measures 7 through 12. It features five staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, First harlot, and Continuo. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The harlot's vocal line begins with the lyrics 'Can I see my in - fant gor'd with the'. The Continuo part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with a repeating eighth-note pattern.

13

f

fierce re-lent- less_ sword? Can I see, can I see,

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of music, measures 13 through 18. It features five staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, First harlot, and Continuo. The key signature changes to three flats (B-flat, E-flat, and A-flat). The harlot's vocal line continues with the lyrics 'fierce re-lent- less_ sword? Can I see, can I see,'. The Continuo part continues with a rhythmic accompaniment.

Largo, e piano

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Iphis
Continuo

Hap - py_ they! this vi - tal breath with con - tent I shall re - sign, with con - tent this vi - tal

Detailed description: This block contains the third system of music, measures 19 through 24. It features five staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Iphis, and Continuo. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the time signature is 3/4. The Iphis vocal line begins with the lyrics 'Hap - py_ they! this vi - tal breath with con - tent I shall re - sign, with con - tent this vi - tal'. The Continuo part provides a rhythmic accompaniment.

Largo

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Susanna
Continuo

Faith dis - plays her ro - sy wing, Che - rubs songs of glad - nes sing

Detailed description: This block contains the fourth system of music, measures 25 through 30. It features five staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Susanna, and Continuo. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The Susanna vocal line begins with the lyrics 'Faith dis - plays her ro - sy wing, Che - rubs songs of glad - nes sing'. The Continuo part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamic markings of *f* and *p*.

Giulia Frasi's Sentimental Schooling

Handel's last four oratorios all featured Giulia Frasi as their leading lady. As David Hurley has shown, Frasi was chosen to play the title role in both *Solomon* and *Susanna* after the works had been drafted; Handel made substantial revisions to their autographs in order to "give Frasi the sort of slow, solemn air at which she excelled."⁵³ Not only did Frasi "excel" at such music, she built her career around it. She arrived on English shores in 1742, "young and interesting in person" Charles Burney tells us, having been a pupil of Giuseppe Brivio (c. 1700–c.1758).⁵⁴ Brivio was a Milanese composer who may or may not have come to England with Frasi; but what is certain is that she came with Brivio's music, performing in several pasticcios that used it, culminating in her first great success, *L'incostanza delusa* of 1745.⁵⁵ (See Figure 1.3 for a representative list of Frasi's London roles in the period 1742–46.) This opera featured music both by Brivio and by Frasi's other teacher, who certainly was with her in her early years in London, the mysterious Comte de Saint-Germain (d. 1784).⁵⁶ Brivio and Saint-Germain cultivated different strengths in their young pupil, and they emphasized contrasting sides of Frasi's musical aptitudes within the bounds of this single opera. Eventually, Frasi chose to pursue Saint-Germain's school of musical and dramatic thinking — or rather, popular success demanded that she do so. These early experiences affected her musical and dramatic specializations, including her Handelian roles, as well as the ways in which she presented herself to a public steeped in sentimental culture.

Frasi hardly began as a specialist in pathetic singing. Her early career was exploratory, involving music of high technical demand and various character types before her success in *L'incostanza delusa* solidified her "line" as sentimental heroine. The earliest piece that Burney associates with her in his *General History of Music* was from an opera in which she did not actually take part, but which provided her with a concert piece: Pergolesi's *Meraspe* (an adapted version of his *Olimpiade*), which premiered in 1742 and told the story of the "trial of suitors" from Herodotus's *Histories*.⁵⁷ Castrato Angelo Monticelli had performed the title role, which included the aria "Tremende oscure atroci." Burney reports that the aria was better suited to "the compass and powers of Frasi," and that she sang it "with great applause for ten years at least, after the run of the opera was

⁵³ Hurley, *Handel's Muse: Patterns of Creation in His Oratorios and Musical Dramas* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 258.

⁵⁴ Burney, "Frase, Giulia," in Rees, *Cyclopædia*. Burney actually reports in this entry that Frasi came to England in 1743, but he indicates correctly that she came in 1742 in his *General History of Music* (London, 1776–79), 4:447. Newspapers confirm that she performed first in November and December of 1742, in the pasticcios *Gianguir* and *Mandane*, both featuring music by Brivio. See Figure 1.3.

⁵⁵ For skepticism about the assumption that Brivio was in London during these years, see *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Brivio, Giuseppe Ferdinando," by Sven Hansell, accessed June 1, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

⁵⁶ For an attempt at a biography of this mysterious figure, see Jean Overton Fuller, *The Comte de Saint-Germain: Last Scion of the House of Rákóczy* (London: East-West Publications, 1988). See also David Hunter, "Monsieur le Comte de Saint-Germain: The Great Pretender," *The Musical Times* 144, no. 1885 (2003): 40–44.

⁵⁷ The libretto was published as *Meraspe overo L'Olimpiade: Melodrama* (London, 1742). Walsh published a score, presumably in that same year: *The Favourite Songs in the Opera Call'd Meraspe o L'Olimpiade* (London, n.d.).

over.” The piece was sufficiently attached to Frasi over this decade that Burney goes so far as to call it her “Cheval de bataille.”⁵⁸

Opera				
Composer; Librettist	Year	Role	Character type	
<i>Gianguir</i> Pasticcio (Hasse, Lampugnani, Brivio, etc.); Zeno	1742	Mahobeth	Faithful confidant	
<i>Mandane</i> Gluck, Brivio; Metastasio	1742	Emira	Vicious and scheming queen of Media	
<i>Enrico</i> Galuppi; Vanneschi	1743	Costanza	Ambitious noblewoman	
<i>Temistocle</i> Porpora; Zeno	1743	Rossane	Suffering wife	
<i>Sirbace</i> Galuppi; Stampa	1743	Nirena	Vengeful heroine	
<i>Roxana, or Alexander in India</i> Lampugnani/Handel; Rolli	1743	Tassile	Faithful confidant	
<i>Alphonso</i> Lampugnani; Rolli	1744	Garzia	Ambitious nobleman/Philandering lover	
<i>Rosalinda</i> Veracini; P.R. (Rolli)	1744	Ernesto	Military hero, overthrows tyrant	
<i>Aristodemo</i> Pasticcio (Pescetti?); Rolli	1744	Timotele	Endangered prisoner	
<i>Alceste</i> Lampugnani; P.R. (Rolli)	1744	Olinto	Ambitious nobleman	
<i>L'incostanza delusa</i> Pasticcio (Brivio, St. Germain); Vanneschi	1745	Corina	Faithful pastoral nymph	
<i>La Caduta de giganti</i> Gluck; Vanneschi	1746	Briarèo	Cautious yet rebellious giant	
<i>Il trionfo della Continenza</i> Galuppi; Piovene	1746	Quinto Flaminio	Traitor	

Figure 1.3: Frasi’s London activities, 1742–1746⁵⁹

Indeed, “Tremende obscure” is ferociously difficult (Figure 1.4). In the text, Meraspe (Megacles) vows suicide as a heroic expression of his devotion. The story is the classic conflict between love and duty; Meraspe here vows to die in order to give up his love to his rival and best friend, Licida (Lycidas), in repayment for Licida having saved his life. Meraspe faces his suicide bravely and defiantly, welcoming death since it will allow him to fulfill his duty to his friend.⁶⁰ Remembering the ease of his life and the amorous palpitations that his soul has experienced up to this dire moment elicits virtuosic text-painting in the vocal line, with rapid passagework and repeated notes that would have

⁵⁸ Burney, “Frasì,” in Rees, *Cyclopædia*.

⁵⁹ This table has been compiled by consulting the following resources: Emmet Avery et al., *The London Stage* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968); OCLC’s WorldCat database; Eighteenth-Century Collections Online; Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800* (Cuneo: Bertola and Locatelli, 1990-); and Burney, *A General History of Music*. Character types were determined by my own reading of the libretti.

⁶⁰ *Meraspe*, 30.

required honed technique and a soprano of light agility. Frasi's successful rendition of this aria must have hinted that a capable singer was emerging.⁶¹



Figure 1.4: Pergolesi, "Tremende oscure atroci," GB-Lbl H.348.e.(6)

Burney recalled London's early reception of Frasi as follows: "Giulia Frasi was at this time [i.e., in 1743] young, and interesting in person, with a sweet and clear voice, and a smooth and chaste style of singing, which, though cold and unimpassioned, pleased natural ears, and escaped the censure of critics."⁶² The phrase "cold and unimpassioned" may seem strange for someone who eventually came to sing the most touching music of Handel's late oratorios.⁶³ However, with these words Burney was recalling Frasi's introduction to London audiences, writing directly in the context of Galuppi's *Enrico*. In this opera and several others of this period, an unimpassioned nature was in fact exactly what the roles demanded. *Enrico* tells the story of a power hungry noblewoman who is determined to

⁶¹ David Hurley offers the prudent caution that Frasi must not have sung this aria in any of the forms that have come down to us (in Walsh's edition of *Meraspe* and Pergolesi's score to *Olimpiade*). Those versions include a high c", well above Frasi's upper reaches of a". "If she sang the aria at all," Hurley states, "it was in a revised form no longer in existence" (*Handel's Muse*, 253, n. 12). In fact, there is at least one recorded instance of Frasi singing this aria; it is mentioned in a newspaper announcement for a benefit concert for the Decay'd Musicians Fund for March 17, 1755. (See Avery et al., *The London Stage*, entry for this date). Caterina Galli also sang this aria at an earlier performance for the same organization (April 10, 1745). Galli's voice was lower than Frasi's (in fact, she is now frequently referred to as a mezzo soprano), which further hints that there was an alternate version of this aria available in the 1740s and 50s. Nevertheless, whatever these women sang would have contained these same technical hurdles.

⁶² Burney, s.v. "Frasi, Giulia" in Rees, *Cyclopædia*.

⁶³ Hurley has, in his own advocacy for the idea that Frasi appealed to sentimental culture, drawn on the idea (first clearly articulated by Ian Donaldson) that modified notions of stoicism frequently accompanied suffering, virtuous protagonists in sentimental drama; characters like Susanna or Theodora face certain execution, yet exhibit steadfastness, a certain "unimpassioned" response to extreme circumstances in Hurley's reading. Hurley, *Handel's Muse*, 262-63. See also Ian Donaldson, "Cato in Tears: Stoical Guises of the Man of Feeling," in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century II*, R.F. Brissenden, ed. (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973): 377-95.

achieve her place on the Sicilian throne by marrying the title character. The one obvious obstacle is that Enrico is openly in love with another woman. Hardly bothered that she has not won Enrico's heart, Costanza is enraged merely at the thought of losing the throne, as she explains pragmatically to her own lover: "It does not much concern this easy heart / That I'm not object of Henricus' love: / It is enough that I partake the throne."⁶⁴ Immediately before she played this conniving role, Frasi had appeared in the 1742 pasticcio *Mandane* (with music by Gluck and Brivio) as a wicked queen, vying for power and scoffing at the idea of romantic love. She went on during the next few years to play similarly ambitious and morally bankrupt characters in Lampugnani's *Alphonso* and *Alceste* (both 1744) and Galuppi's *Il trionfo della continenza* (1746). Whether her "cold" singing emerged from dramatic concerns, or whether her casting reflected the perception of her performance style, the pairing was suited to the aloof and fiercely ambitious characters she portrayed.

L'incostanza delusa changed this pattern. It premiered on February 9, 1745 (OS), and was judged dismissively by Burney:

The great Opera-house being shut up this year [1745] on account of the rebellion, and popular prejudice against the performers, who being foreigners, were chiefly Roman Catholics; an opera was attempted April 7th, at the little theatre in the Hay-market, under the direction of Geminiani. Prince Lobkowitz, who was at this time in London, and fond of Music, with the celebrated and mysterious Count Saint Germain, attended all the rehearsals. . . . The opera was a pasticcio, and called L'INCOSTANZA DELUSA. But Count St. Germain composed several new songs, particularly *Per pietà bell'idol mio*, which was sung by Frasi, first woman, and encored every night. The rest of his airs, and two by Brivio, Frasi's master, which Walsh printed, were only remarkable for their insipidity. The first man's part was performed by [Caterina] Galli. The success of this enterprize was inconsiderable, and the performances did not continue more than nine or ten nights.⁶⁵

In Burney's estimation, the work's success was "inconsiderable," but his judgment was evidently clouded by misremembering the facts; he tells us that the work premiered on April 7, but newspapers show that the pasticcio was heard on Saturday April 6, the ninth in a run of ten performances on all Saturdays except for Easter weekend between the February premiere and April 20.⁶⁶ This was no "inconsiderable" success for an opera during this period. Burney may have been uncomfortable with the fact that London audiences of his youth responded so well to Brivio's music, which he damned for its "insipidity."

Even in Burney's account, one of Frasi's solos stood above the others:

⁶⁴ "Se Enrico non mi adora / Poco preme à quest'alma, à me sol basta / Nel suo trono regnar." Text and translation from *Enrico: Drama Per Musica Pel teatro di S.M.B. di Francesco Vanneschi* (London, 1742), Act 1, Scene 7, pp. 20-1.

⁶⁵ Burney, *A General History of Music*, 4: 452.

⁶⁶ The dates of *L'incostanza delusa*'s run are reported in David Hunter, "Monsieur le Comte de Saint-Germain," 40. See also the newspaper listings in Avery et al., *The London Stage*.

Saint-Germain's "Per pietà bell'idol mio." This aria was "encored every night," Burney recalled, and other details of its reception confirm that it was a huge success. John Walsh printed a volume of favorite songs from *L'incostanza delusa* whose ordering logically followed the opera's unfolding, with one important exception: details of the pasticcio's plot indicate that "Per pietà" was the last solo music that Frasi's character sang, but Walsh placed it as the first number in the volume, doubtless because of its popularity. The song also followed Frasi off the stage and into the real world. She performed it, for instance, at a benefit event for the Decay'd Musicians Fund on April 10, 1745.⁶⁷ The aria and Frasi also achieved a curious sort of physical immortality: John Jacob Heidegger, manager of the King's Theatre, had the opening phrase to "Per pietà" painted above the door of the most opulent room in his home, a large entrance hall decorated by wall paintings depicting scenes from London's operatic triumphs. A shield bearing the inscription "Frasì P. Co. S. Germer" slightly obscured the fact that the artist copied this music and its title from the published score's curious trilingual title: "Sung by Sig^{ra} Frasi nell'Incostanza Delusa par Monsieur le Comte de St Germain" (see Figure 1.5).⁶⁸

What was it about this aria that audiences found so appealing? It was hardly a technical tour de force. Nor was it a particularly like much of the music in *L'incostanza delusa*. The pasticcio was a humorous tale of female wit triumphing over male libertinism, filled with jaunty tunes and vocal pyrotechnics. The libretto told the story of Corina, a nymph from the island of Cythera who toys with the affections of a libertine (aptly named Filandro) in order to test the fidelity of her own lover, Dafni, explaining to him that while he must be faithful to her, she reserves the right to enjoy as many lovers as she desires (although she will try to limit herself to just two). This plot provided ample opportunities for showy vocal display, which Brivio utilized to utmost comic effect, as in the aria "Io sento che in petto" (Figure 1.6). Corina here announces to Dafni (as part of her scheme to test his loyalty) that she is overwhelmed by Filandro. Her musical gestures become part of her show: as she describes her heart's palpitations, the music itself "palpitates," with little hiccup-like rests in the melodic line (mm. 19, 21, 52); when she describes her uncontrollable trembling, the music "trembles" along with her (mm. 30-4, 60-5). A talented singer-actress could have used these devices to great comic effect.

But while the English public did not respond to Brivio's facile and clever arias, they did applaud "Per pietà," which joined pathos with a moral lesson in chaste virtue. Textually, it is the character's one heartfelt moment, when she reveals the purpose of her coquetry and cruelty to Dafni and begs him to believe that it is he alone whom she loves:

⁶⁷ See Avery et al., *The London Stage*, entry for April 10, 1745.

⁶⁸ A photograph of the painted shield can be seen in Edward Croft Murray, "The Painted Hall in Heidegger's House at Richmond — II," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 78, no. 458 (1941), 155. Murray believed that the artwork in this room was created by Antonio Jolli, a stage designer who had designed sets for the King's Theatre, with his name proudly advertised on the libretti for *Mitridate*, *Fetonte*, and *Bellerofonte* of 1746 and 1747 — all works in which Frasi had performed.

*Sung by Sig.^{ra} Frasi nell'Incostanza Delusa
Par Monsieur le Comte de St. Germain*

1

Larghetto

15

31

59

71

82

95

Per pietà bell'idol mio non mi dir che fo no in-
gato in fo - li - ce e l'ab - bas - ta il Ciel mi fa
no par pietà bell'idol mio non mi dir che sono ingato in - fe - lice
ventu - ra - to ab - bas - ta il Ciel mi fa in - fe - lice ventu - ra - to
ventu - ra - to ab - bas - ta il Ciel mi fa in - fe - lice ventu - ra - to

Figure 1.5: Saint-Germain, "Per pietà bell'idol mio," from *Favourite Songs in the Opera Call'd L'Incostanza Delusa* (London, 1745)

Per pietà bell' Idol mio
Non mi dir che sono ingrato
Infelice e sventurato
Abbastanza il Ciel mi fà.

For pity, my beautiful idol
Do not tell me that I am ungrateful.
Unhappiness and misfortune
Are given to me enough by heaven.

Se fedele a te son io
Se mi struggo a tuoi beí lumi
Sallo Amor lo sanno i numi
Il mio cor il tuo lo sà.

That I am faithful to you
That I melt in your beautiful eyes
Love knows, the gods know,
My heart and yours knows too.⁶⁹

Musically, the work is characterized by its sighing appoggiaturas, diminished chords, and sudden silences that interrupt the musical flow (Figure 1.5). These elements undergo a sort of crescendo throughout the work's A section, reaching a fever pitch on the second page. Sighing appoggiaturas flow freely and rapidly in mm. 69–71 followed closely by a diminished chord and chromatically altered appoggiatura on the words “infelice e sventurato.” A couple of exclamations of “nò, nò” that did not appear in the text's first statement heighten the pathos, sounding near the top of the aria's range (mm. 81–2). All comes to its dramatic conclusion with the longest grand pause of the vocal line, a full measure marked with a fermata, a magnified version of a pause in the first statement of the text (cf. mm. 53 and 97). A third grand pause for the vocalist comes in m. 107, a fourth in m. 112. All these halts in the melodic line were surely performative silences, opportunities for the singer to demonstrate her distress (possibly in gesture), and they provide points of aural tension capable of great dramatic effect. Such an approach resembles Burney's own definition of the pathetic style (for Abraham Rees's *Cyclopædia*), which included languorous tempo, inequality of measure, sudden stops and starts, and, most importantly, “In pathetic strains, the soul of the melody may be said to reside in the appoggiaturas.”⁷⁰ He also attested to the popularity of the “Pathetic, in Music,” calling it an English taste: “The general import of this word, which is purely English, is so well known, as seemingly to need no explanation.”⁷¹ With such audience proclivities, it is little wonder that it was not the clever and showy arias by Brivio that received plaudits, but “Per pietà,” encored every night.

The success of “Per pietà” was a turning point for Frasi. As shown in Figure 1.7, in the years between *L'incostanza delusa* and her roles under Handel, Frasi rarely played roles other than faithful confidants or abandoned lovers, which provided opportunities to evoke empathy from audiences (for her compatriots or for herself) through pathetic song. She also aligned herself definitively with Saint-Germain. If Frasi had been torn between two different musical aesthetics within the bounds of *L'incostanza delusa*, her success with Saint-Germain's emotive style convinced her of which to develop.

⁶⁹ Translation mine. This text is from Metastasio's *Artaserse* (Act 1, Scene 5). It was later set by Mozart (concert aria, K. 78) and Bellini (from *Sei ariette da camera*).

⁷⁰ Burney, s.v. “Pathetic, in Music,” and s.v. “Appoggiatura” in Rees, *Cyclopædia*.

⁷¹ Ibid., s.v. “Pathetic, in Music.”

<i>Antigone</i> Pasticcio; Metastasio	1746	Clearchus	Faithful confidant
<i>Artamene</i> Gluck; Vanneschi	1746	Arbate	Faithful confidant
<i>Anibale in Capua</i> ?; ?	1746	?	?
<i>Mitridate</i> Terradellas; Vanneschi	1746	Tamur	Faithful confidant
<i>Fetonte</i> Paradies; Vanneschi (after Quinault)	1747	Teone	Abandoned lover
<i>Bellerofonte</i> Terradellas; Vanneschi	1747	Assilane	Faithful confidant
<i>Rossane</i> Handel; Rolli	1747	Cleone	Military advisor
<i>Lucio Vero</i> Pasticcio (Handel); Zeno	1747	Lucilla	Abandoned lover
<i>La ingratitude punita</i> Pastoral (pasticcio); ?	1748	Silvia	Abandoned lover
<i>Dido (Didone abbandonata)</i> Hasse; Metastasio/Algarotti	1748	Selene	Abandoned lover and faithful sister
<i>La semiramide riconosciuta</i> Hasse; Metastasio	1748	Tamiri	Young and foolish princess; much desired by men, and object of an abduction attempt.
<i>Don Calascione (Gismondo)</i> Latilla; Federico	1748	?	?
<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i> Handel; Morell	1748	First Israelite Woman	N/A (but sang the most mournful music of the oratorio)
<i>Solomon</i> Handel; anon.	1749	Queen/First Woman/Queen of Sheba	Virtuous queen/Panicked mother/Elegant queen
<i>Susanna</i> Handel; anon.	1749	Susanna	Endangered maiden
<i>Hercules</i> Handel; Broughton	1749/ 1752	Iole	Innocent and wrongly- accused maiden

Figure 1.7: Frasi's London activities, 1746–1752⁷²

When Frasi began singing for Handel in 1749, she was still under Saint-Germain's tutelage, as indicated in a letter by Lady Jemima, Marchioness Grey. Lady Jemima attended a party (at the home of James Douglas, the fourteenth Earl of Morton), where she experienced what she referred to as a "great & extraordinary Event, one of those

⁷² Frasi also sang in *Messiah* in 1749, omitted from this chart since it was not a dramatic role. I have been unable to access libretti for Frasi's performances *Anibale in Capua* or *Don Calascione*.

unexpected fortunate Events which may happen once in a whole Life”: the arrival of Saint-Germain and Frasi as the evening’s entertainment. Saint-Germain played the violin, and both he and Frasi sang his compositions. Lady Jemima remarked on the intimacy of their relationship: “She is his favourite Singer I find, he teaches her his Songs & sings Duetts with her & her only.”⁷³ Lady Jemima didn’t go to the trouble of specifying exactly what the pair performed, but she did remark on Saint-Germain’s performance style:

[His] Execution is not of that rapid prodigious kind as Veracini & Geminiani; but his Play is more easy & harmonious & his Excellence is Softness. He piques himself you know upon the Expression of the Passions in his Music especially the Tender Ones, & both his Composition & his Manner are almost all Affettuoso; for his Musick is entirely fitted to his own way of performing.

Lady Jemima was moved to distraction by Saint-Germain: “No Fine Lady can stand at his Elbow while he Sings, & fancy herself a real Object of all that Languishment without its going to her Heart.” If Frasi had mastered the performance style and musical language of her teacher with similar effectiveness, then it is perhaps little surprise that she would pursue a career as a singer of sentiment.

Although Lady Jemima does not say exactly what pieces Frasi and her teacher performed that evening, Saint-Germain’s most extensive musical publication, which dates from the same year, gives a good idea. In *Musique raisonnée*, Saint-Germain collected forty-three arias, dedicated “aux Dames Angloises qui aiment le vrai goût en cet Art.”⁷⁴ An idiosyncrasy in the notation provides a window onto Frasi’s training in the period that led up to her participation in Handel’s oratorios: Saint-Germain peppers many of these arias with detailed performance instructions. Figure 1.8 shows “Figlio, se più non vivi.” The text, drawn from Metastasio’s *Artaserse*, is the utterance of a father uncertain of the fate of his child:

<p>Figlio, se più non vivi Morrò; ma del mio fato Farò ch’un Rè svenuto Preceda mefsaggier.</p> <p>In fin che il Padre arrive, Fà che sospenda il remo Colà sul guado estremo Il pallido nocchier.</p>	<p>Son, if thou hast ceas’d to live, I will die: but of my fate, I will take care that a sovereign Slain, shall be the harbinger.</p> <p>Till thy father can arrive There, on the ferry’s bank, Cause the pale pilot To suspend his oar.⁷⁵</p>
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⁷³ Jemima addressed this letter to her aunt, Lady Mary Gregory. David Hunter unearthed the letter, transcribing it with annotations in “Monsieur le Comte de Saint-Germain,” op. cit. The letter is housed in the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service; Wrest Park (Lucas) Collection, L30/9a/2.

⁷⁴ Comte de Saint-Germain, *Musique Raisonnée selon le bon Sens: Aux Dames Angloises qui aiment le vrai goût en cet Art* (London, n.d.). The dating of this publication is made possible by a statement of royal privilege, included in the copy housed in the British Library: GB-Lbl E. 161.

⁷⁵ Translation from *Artaserse. Drama per musica. Pel Teatro di S.M.B.* (London: G. Woodfall, 1754), 47.

94

Allegro Smanioso.

1

8

Con Smania rifoluto. Con Smania

Figlio, se più non vivi morrò, morrò, ma del mio fato farò, ch'un Rè svenato preceda pre-

ceda melsaggier. farò, farò, ch'un Rè svenato preceda preceda melsaggier. Figlio, se più non vivi

14

for. p^{no}

20

rifoluto Con Smania

figlio, morrò, morrò, ma del mio fato farò, ch'un Rè svenato ch'un Rè svenato preceda preceda melsaggier. farò, fa-

26

for.

precda preceda melsaggier. In fin che il Padre arrivi fà che, fof-

33

Con terrore.

penda il remo Colà ful guado estremo il pallido nocchier. il pal...lido nocchier. il pal...lido nocchier. Da Capo.

Figure 1.8: Saint-Germain, "Figlio, se più non vivi," from *Musique raisonnée* (London, 1749)

Such an emotive situation demands concomitantly touching music. Saint-Germain provides many of the markers of sentimental style described above, and of the musical pathetic as defined by Burney (a fragmented, gasping melody line; upper and lower appoggiaturas dotting almost every measure; and sudden changes in harmony). Lady Jemima tells us that Saint-Germain's music was "entirely fitted to his own way of performing," and his indications, "con smania," "risoluto," and "con terrore," give a hint as to what Saint-Germain's performances, and those by Frasi, must have been like. Lady Jemima noted that "he is wholly possess'd by the part he is Acting," and these terms are tied both to changes in musical setting (from the diatonicism of the opening vocal measures to the chromaticism of mm. 11, "risoluto;" from what initially appears to be the operating tonic center of the B section (B-flat), to a sudden shift to its relative minor at m. 34, "con terrore") and to quick affective changes in semantic focus ("If you do not live / [risoluto] I will die.").

"Figlio, se più non vivi" is not unique among the arias in Saint-Germain's publication. Frasi, one of the "dames" learning the "vrai goût en cet Art" from her sentimental master, was guided by a veritable legion of such affective terms (parenthetical numbers here correspond with the contents of the *Musique raisonnée*, showing the number of works in which Saint-Germain uses each term):

affannato (3)	con più forza (43)
affettuosissimamente (37, 41)	con qualche dolcezza (29)
affettuosamente (25, 42)	con sdegno (21, 29, 43)
afflittamente (38)	con sicurezza (17, 19)
amorosamente (42)	con sicurezza nobile (26)
avec confiance (19)	con smania (31, 43)
compassionando (43)	con tenerezza (17)
con affanno sempre (20)	con terrore (31)
con afflizione (28, 43)	dolorosamente (38, 40, 43)
con colera (43)	in furia (38)
con compassione (20)	lusingando (22)
con disperazione e smania sempre (14)	pregando (15, 43)
con dolcezza (20)	rimproverando (29)
con dolor sempre (39)	risoluto (22, 29, 31, 42)
con dolore (18)	sempre risoluto (21)
con fierezza nobile (26)	sostenutissimo (32)
con gioia (26)	sostenuto (13)
con gran passione (28)	teneramente (19)
con maesta (26)	tutto compassionando (16)
con maesta e contento (30)	tutto con dolore (24)
con nobil sdegno sempre (23)	tutto con tenerezza compassionando (27)
con passione (25)	

Saint-Germain peppered his vocal lines with these indications in twenty-seven of the forty-three arias in the *Musique raisonnée*. Sometimes the singer is told to perform "with mania" (*con smania*), sometimes "resolutely" (*risoluto*), sometimes "with affliction" (*con afflizione*)

or *afflittamente*). He uses no fewer than forty-three such indications, including such creative constructions as “with cholera,” “always with a noble disdain,” and the untranslatable “*affettuosissimamente*.” This integration of intense performance style and emotive compositional approach clearly impressed Lady Jemima — “He piques himself you know upon the Expression of the Passions in his Music especially the Tender Ones” — and it was a technique that he must have been instilling within his favorite pupil.

Lady Jemima’s letter and the *Musique raisonnée* both date from 1749, the same year that Frasi appeared in her first Handelian oratorio, *Solomon*. Frasi was thus steeped in sentimental techniques when she began this illustrious association, and these aspects of her training and early successes give clues as to the performing style that she brought to her work with Handel. Someone with techniques suited to such sudden and dramatic changes of expression as indicated by Saint-Germain’s idiosyncratic performance indications would have had some idea of what to do with a text like this one from the Judgment scene of *Solomon’s* Part 2, even before seeing Handel’s score:

Can I see my Infant gor’d
With the fierce relentless Sword?
Can I see him yield his Breath,
Smiling at the Hand of Death,
And behold the purple Tides
Gushing down his tender Sides?
Rather be my Hopes beguil’d,
Take him all — But spare my Child.⁷⁶

At this climactic moment, the two women suing for custody have just heard Solomon’s order that the child be divided. The imposter is pleased to rob the other of her treasure, the real mother horrified at the suggestion. “Can I see my infant gor’d” is the true mother’s pathetic plea for her child’s life.

In the first half of this text, the anonymous poet has expressed the mother’s reactions in couplets with wildly swinging affective turns that would have suited the dramatic techniques implied by Saint-Germain’s instructions. The first and third lines refer to the delicate child, the second and fourth to terrifying images of death. The next couplet abandons this contrast for a single thought (the child’s bleeding corpse), but the final couplet balances the stanza with a more extreme contrast between the mother’s firm resolution to abandon her child (“Rather be my Hopes beguil’d, / Take him all”) and the return to the pathos of a mother begging for her son’s life (“But spare my Child”). To accentuate the sudden change between resolve and pleading, the poet used a dash, one of the favorite devices of sentimental writing. The overuse of this typographical aid by both Samuel Richardson and Laurence Sterne (the latter known as “the dashite” in the nineteenth century) led to its dismissal by one eighteenth-century commentator as suitable only for Grub Street publications.⁷⁷ But even this author had to admit that the dash could

⁷⁶ Part 2, Scene 3.

⁷⁷ For the reference to Sterne as the “dashite,” see J. Best Davidson, *The Difficulties of English Grammar and Punctuation Removed* (London, 1839), “Punctuation,” entry no. 64. The condemnation of the dash as a product of the ‘hasty and incoherent writers’ of Grub Street comes from Joseph Robertson, *Essay on Punctuation* (London, 1789), 129. This phrase was also used by Lindley Murray in his *English Grammar* (York, 1795), p.

be used “where the sense is suspended; where a significant pause is required; or where there is an unexpected turn in the sentiment.”⁷⁸ The “turn in the sentiment” at the dash in the First Woman’s soliloquy is a marked change of focus, a return to the pathetic appeal of the first six lines of the text, an intensified version of the contrasts in the opening couplets.

Handel only subtly reflected the drastic shifts of mood in the opening section of the text, while infusing the first paragraph of music with a consistent stammering pathos (see Example 1.5). The fragmented nature of the upper string parts in the ritornello makes its way into the vocal part, as the woman opens her plea with an exposed, unaccompanied line with a mid-phrase rest predictive of the broken nature of the remainder of this opening section (see e.g. mm. 15–18, 23–27, etc.). For the more sustained focus on the pitiful imagery of the bleeding child, Handel changed the musical texture, providing a chain of 7-6 suspensions (mm. 28–33). And for the mother’s final decision that, rather than chopping her son in half, the king should “take him all,” Handel abandoned the tortured, stumbling dotted bass line and replaced it with a more “decisive,” walking pattern (mm. 40 ff.).

For the moment when the mother makes this crucial decision, however (mm. 37–39), the point at which the poet had used an expressive dash, Handel’s musical material (a rather nondescript cadential formula) does not carry a clearly marked affective implication. The walking bass that begins a few measures later is also hardly the most striking change imaginable. A great deal of the success of this drama in contrasts, then, relies upon the performer’s dramatic presence and technique. Handel’s performance indication in m. 38, “Rissoluto” [sic], thus intercedes where musical notation does not perfectly convey the drastic change in sentiment. The use of such an expressive term is rare in Handel’s oratorios, and this is the only time in any oratorio that he used “Rissoluto.”⁷⁹

168. See also Janine Barchas, “Sarah Fielding’s Dashing Style and Eighteenth-Century Print Culture,” *ELH* 63, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 633–56; Barchas discusses Henry Fielding’s “corrections” to Sarah Fielding’s texts, including his zealous removal of her expressive dashes. According to historian M.B. Parkes, Richardson was led to use the dash in such extensive ways because of his experience as a printer of sentimental comedies, where onstage emotional vacillation was particularly effective. M.B. Parkes, “The Technology of Printing and the Stabilization of the Symbols,” in *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 50–61.

⁷⁸ Robertson, *Essay on Punctuation*, 129.

⁷⁹ When Handel does employ performative terms, they are of two types. First is the standard use of “Adagio” within arias for cadential gestures with opportunities for cadenzas or flourishes. (See the conclusion of “Sacred Raptures” or “Indulge Thy Faith and Wedded Truth” from *Solomon*.) The second type, which Handel uses in “Can I See My Infant Gor’d,” uses these terms at moments of heightened pathos. In *Jephtha*, for instance, the accompanied recitative “First Perish Thou” features contrasting phrases marked “concitato” and “adagio,” expressing alternately a mother’s frantic distress at the thought of losing her daughter and her tender love for the child. The succeeding arioso, “Let Other Creatures Die,” also features expression marks that mirror those in the recitative: “dolce” and “concitato.” Other examples include *Jephtha*’s “On Me Let Blind Mistaken Zeal” and “Deeper and Deeper Still.”

Example 1.5: Solomon, "Can I see my infant gor'd," opening

Largo, e piano

1st harlot

Strings

8

Can I see my in - fant gor'd with the fierce re - lent - less sword?

16

Can I see, can I see, can I see him yield his breath, smil - ing at the hand of death? can I

24

see him, can I see him, and be - hold the pur - ple tides gush - ing down his ten - dersides, and be

32

hold the pur - pletides gush - ing down his ten - der sides? can I see? — Ra - ther be my hopes be - guil'd

Rissoluto.

40

take him all, take him all ra - ther be my hopes be - guil'd

45

Adagio. *Rissoluto.*

take him all but spare my child! ra - ther be my hopes be - guil'd

This term appeared frequently in the music of Saint-Germain, however. It appears in five of the arias in the *Musique raisonnée* (see list above). He uses this term as he does other expression markings, to set off little gestures reflective of changing textual meanings similar to those in “Can I see my infant gor’d.” Compare Handel’s approach in Example 1.5 with Saint-Germain’s in Figure 1.8. Perhaps the most surprising parallel is that both composers used the same term in connection with a mourning parent. Saint-Germain’s “Risoluto” marking, which comes on the word “morrò,” is clearly intended for emotive effect similar to that in the mother’s aria in *Solomon*, a moment where the text turns from the death of a child to a grieving parent’s firm decision:

Con smania: If you do not live
Risoluto: I will die
Con smania: but . . .

The musico-rhetorical strategy in Handel’s aria is almost identical:

Largo: “Can I see my Infant gor’d?
Rissoluto: “Take him all!”
Adagio: “But spare my Child.”

Was Handel here echoing the practices of Frasi’s old teacher? Was he perhaps even familiar with this very piece? Did the idea of implementing the term come from a rehearsal with Frasi, or from Burney, who claimed to have played the harpsichord in Frasi’s sessions with Handel and to have taught her himself during this period?⁸⁰ The evidence is too slender to state for certain; we cannot even know that “Figlio se più non vivi” was a piece that Frasi sang. But Handel’s use of the term “Rissoluto” here, and nowhere else in the rest of his output, along with this unusual procedure of granting a single phrase of music such a specific expressive marking, makes this a suggestive coincidence.

The intensity of this climactic moment, this union of endangered innocence and pathetic appeal, set the stage for the roles Frasi would play during the last period of Handel’s compositional career. Her training at the hands of Saint-Germain prepared her well for the dramatic demands of *Susanna*, *Theodora*, and *Jephtha*. It was in these works that Frasi finally came to embody the ideal sentimental heroine, playing embattled and endangered innocent characters who could move audiences to heartfelt empathy.

The Tone of Voice of Persons of Sensibility

The portrait of Frasi that emerges by surveying her early career and her Handelian roles is a clear development of dramatic and musical specializations, both of which drew heavily on the aesthetics and theatrical codes of sentimentalism. The mid-eighteenth century was an age in which actors followed discrete “lines” and “casts,” with which their personal lives

⁸⁰ Fragment 56 (Winter 1749-50) in *Memoirs of Dr. Charles Burney, 1726-1769*, ed. Slava Klima et al. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

could become associated, or even conflated. If “the Frasi” was an acting singer who specialized in innocent, endangered, and abandoned women, then perhaps her onstage depictions signaled something about her offstage self to eighteenth-century minds.

Some authors believed that a successful performer of pathetic sentiments was more than an actor, that the spirit of her material would infuse her life more generally. Hugh Blair (1718-1800), Scottish minister and instructor of rhetoric, offered such advice to his students:

[It] should be considered, that there is a great difference between shewing the hearers that they ought to be moved, and actually moving them. To every emotion or passion Nature has adapted a set of corresponding objects; and without setting these before the mind, it is not in the power of any orator to raise that emotion. The foundation of all successful execution in the way of pathetic oratory, is to paint the object of that passion which we wish to raise, in the most natural and striking manner; . . . Every passion is most strongly excited by sensation; next to the influence of sense is that of memory; and next to memory is the influence of the imagination. Of this power, therefore, the orator must avail himself, so as to strike the imagination of the hearers with circumstances, which . . . resemble those of sensation and remembrance. For this purpose . . . the only effectual method is to be moved yourselves. The inward emotion of the speaker adds a pathos to his words, his looks, his gestures, and his whole manner, which exerts a power almost irresistible over those who hear him.⁸¹

Blair’s thoughts on pathetic appeal imply permeability between subject matter, performer, and receiver, and Blair’s language, particularly his emphasis on the links between sensation, memory, and imagination, demonstrate him to be an adherent of mid-century ideas of sensibility.

These were notions echoed by Burney when discussing the pathetic in music. To achieve a pathetic effect was no mere technical feat:

The poetry, the musical composition, the figure, countenance, tone of voice, expression, and situation of the character represented, must all combine to produce the full effect of a pathetic air. All are requisite in dramatic and theatrical music, which tend to move and paint the great passions, particularly those of grief and sorrow.⁸²

Effectively pathetic music had to reach beyond the notes on the page, beyond the words of the text, and even beyond the character’s situation. With Blair’s ideas of a moved orator in mind, Burney’s claim that the “countenance” and “tone of voice” of the performer were

⁸¹ Anonymous, s.v. “Pathetic, in oratory,” in Rees, *Cyclopædia*. This entry draws on Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London, 1783). The preface to this collection states that the lessons included had been “read in the University of Edinburgh for Twenty-four years,” before the publication (p. iii).

⁸² Burney, s.v. “Pathetic, in Music,” in Rees, *Cyclopædia*.

essential to effective pathetic renderings also implies an inherent, “natural” aptitude for sentimental skills.

Turning to the music itself, Burney tries to define the technical characteristics that create pathos. Effective musical pathos is not a matter of tempo; it “is felt in all measures, even in those the most lively,” Burney states. What then, made a good pathetic air? Burney is able to answer this question only by a sort of negative definition:

If the pathetic character is not in the movement, we cannot say that it is in the genus, the melody, or the harmony: as there are pieces equally pathetic in the three genera, the three modes, and all the harmony imaginable. The true pathetic is in the accents of passion, which are not to be taught by rule; but let genius find, and the heart *feel*, without applying to art to give the law.

Nieuwentyt tells us of a musician at Venice, who excelled in the pathetic to that degree, that he was able to play any of his auditors into distraction; he adds, that the great means he made use of was the variety of motions, &c.⁸³

It is telling that Burney chooses to offer as an example here (presumably drawn from the writings of Bernard Niewentyt, 1654-1718) an anecdote about a performer. Such a performer was unable to rely upon techniques and artifice, but, in order to achieve the “true pathetic,” had to rely upon the “heart,” and a particular, personal “genius.” The performer who could provide pathetic music evidently possessed an inherent pathos herself.

In his article “Expression, in music,” Burney also roots the idea of a natural resonance between creator and created in the composer. “To give an expression to his works, a composer ought to seize and compare all the relations which can be found between the features of his object, and the productions of his art; in a musical drama, he ought to know and feel the peculiar cast of all the characters, in order severally to exhibit them exactly as delineated by the poet.”⁸⁴ But composers could not accomplish their tasks alone: “Though the greatest force of expression is derived from the combination of sounds, the quality of their tone is not indifferent in the effect.” Burney thus admitted that a large part of the effectiveness of pathetic music stemmed from the performance. And performers, as Burney was always quick to point out, were “naturally” qualified for certain types of expression: “There are voices so strong and sonorous as to impose by their force; others thin, flexible, and fit for execution; others again so touching and delicate as to penetrate the heart by soothing and pathetic strains.” Vocal timbre was therefore important to Burney in identifying what made a successful performer of pathetic material.

Yet Burney is careful here, also, to point out that a capacity for expressive performance required something more than technical ability or simple vocal qualities: “And this is still very conformable to nature, which gives to the tone of voice of persons of sensibility, certain touching and delicious inflections, which those who feel nothing never possessed.” Nature thus imbued certain people — namely, persons of sensibility — with a hardly explicable quality of communication, something that more callous performers,

⁸³ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

⁸⁴ Burney, s.v. “Expression, in music,” in Rees, *Cyclopædia*.

“those who feel nothing,” could never convey. For Burney, successful performance of pathos necessitated an inherent sensibility.

With the extent to which Frasi specialized in dramatic and musical sentimentality, she must have been an effective performer of such styles. She must also have come a long way from the “cold and unimpassioned” performance style that Burney noted in 1743. But was Frasi a “person of sensibility?” What few anecdotes remain about this Handelian soprano offer some enticing hints about her reputation in private circles, and her public identity was also evidently subject to some degree of sculpting along sentimental lines.

There is a certain irony in Frasi’s perennial depiction of virgins and chaste women. The nature of Burney’s comment that Frasi was “young and interesting in Person” might in part be explained by the amount of male attention that she received at this time. In his correspondence, Horace Walpole reports blithely of her sexual activities: “Young Churchill has got a daughter by the Frasi; Mr. Winnington calls it the opéra comique; the mother is an opera girl; the grandmother was Mrs Oldfield.”⁸⁵ This illegitimate child had an interesting heritage; the Churchill in question was the grandson of Anne Oldfield (1683–1730), an actress known simultaneously for her sexual looseness and for her ability to instill virtuous behavior in audiences.⁸⁶ Within a week of this letter, Frasi’s child, the little “opéra comique” herself, had died.⁸⁷ Walpole gleefully reported the following year that Frasi had begun an affair with Thomas Winnington (1696–1746), Whig parliamentarian, Lord of the Treasury, Privy Counsellor, Cofferer of the Household, and Paymaster General of the Forces.⁸⁸ He was also the man who, according to Walpole, had applied the demeaning nickname upon Frasi’s now deceased child. This affair, too, led to tragic ends; Winnington died less than a year after this letter was penned. Do the birth and death of this child and lover hint something about Frasi’s increased activities as a mistress of pathos from 1746? Burney believed, after all, that “those who feel nothing” could never possess “natural” tones of sensibility; the inverse of this formula argues that personal tragedy in a public figure’s life may equate to sentimental capacities.

In public life, Frasi worked to show herself to be a person of empathy through her frequent performances at the Concerts for the Benefit of the Decay’d Musicians Fund. She first participated in these benefits on March 30, 1743, soon after her earliest performances in London, and she continued to sing in them throughout her English career. At these events, Frasi sometimes sang airs that had been written with her in mind. She performed “Per pietà bell’idol mio” on April 10, 1745, and she sang selections from *Jephtha* on at least two occasions: “Ye sacred priests” on April 6, 1758, and, on March 12, 1761, both “Farewell, ye limpid springs” and “Freely I to heav’n resign.” On March 25, 1746, she performed a work of great emotive appeal: “Return, O God of hosts” (from *Samson*), a piece that had

⁸⁵ Walpole, Letter to Sir Horace Mann, July 22, 1744; printed in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 18: 481.

⁸⁶ See discussion in Chapter 2.

⁸⁷ The editor of *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence* cites a penciled annotation on a mezzotint of Frasi dated July 28 that indicates that the child had died. (See v. 18, p. 481, n. 15.)

⁸⁸ “This is the only answer I can give you to your who lies with who, for all the women are with child. My Lady Lincoln is cooking up her belly as fast as she can at my Lady Granville’s: in short they both teem with rivalry in old love and new politics. Winnington goes on with the Frasi, so my Lady Townshend is obliged only to lie of people, instead of with them.” Walpole, Letter to George Montagu, June 25, 1745; printed in *The Yale Edition*, 9: 16.

been composed for one of Handel's other great performers of pathetic music, Susanna Cibber.⁸⁹ There were other connections to Cibber, too. On April 5, 1748, Frasi sang "Heart, the seat of soft delight" from *Acis and Galatea*; Cibber had introduced this aria to many Londoners in the work's first staged performance in 1732.⁹⁰ On April 6, 1758, Frasi sang "He shall feed his flock," and, most importantly, "He was despised," both pieces that Cibber sang in *Messiah*. The latter was forever associated with Cibber because of the famous Dublin premiere of this air. As I discuss in detail in Chapter 2, Cibber also had a dramatic association with the sentimental, playing endangered maidens on the spoken stage and empathetic confidantes in Handel's oratorios in the years leading up to Frasi's participation. These were sisters in sentiment.⁹¹

The importance of these performances to Frasi's public image is evident from a complaint that Frasi allowed to be printed in the *Public Advertiser* in 1757:

It having been reported that Sga Frasi has refused to sing for the Benefit of the Decayed Musicians, she thinks it her duty to take this public method of clearing herself of that charge by informing the Nobility, Gentry, &c., that being applied to for her assistance, she readily consented (as she has always done for these fourteen years past) but that a few days after a number of the Managers called upon her to let her know that Giardini had undertaken to conduct the performance, and that they would not want her assistance. For the truth of this she appeals to those Gentlemen who called upon her with that message.⁹²

Clearly, Frasi was at pains to present herself as a character empathetic to the needs of her fellow musicians. In public life, as in fictional persona, Frasi thought that it was important to appear to be a woman of sensibility.

In his posthumous biography of Frasi for Rees's *Cyclopædia*, Burney granted the singer's claims a certain amount of credibility. After her popularity had waned, Burney tells us, Frasi left London and escaped debtors prison by retreating to Calais, where she died penniless. This had been the biographical trajectory of a number of singers, particularly castrati. In the case of the *virtuosi*, however, the narrative usually explained that their

⁸⁹ Frasi sang this aria again for the Decay'd Musicians Fund benefit on March 17, 1755. For a discussion of Handel's transformation of a chorus into this aria for Cibber, see Chapter 2. Assuming that this advertisement was correct, then this performance must surely have been transposed; in its form for Cibber, this was a low alto aria.

⁹⁰ On this date, Frasi also sang "The prince unable to conceal his pain" from *Alexander's Feast*.

⁹¹ These performances were reported in London newspapers, and are recorded in Avery et al., *The London Stage*, passim. Other arias that Frasi performed on these occasions were frequently of a pathetic nature. In addition to the arias described above, Frasi performed the following: "Alma mia" (Lampugnani), "Scherz'il nocchier" (Brivio), "Parto non ho costanza" (Galuppi), "O sleep" (Handel), "O lovely peace" (Handel, in duet with Caterina Galli), "Infelice in van milagno" (Ciampi), "O dio mancar mi sento" (Ciampi), "O fairest of ten thousand fair" (Handel, in duet with Guadagni), "Se vedi nascere" (Cinzer), "Caro sposo" (Alberti), "See, Hercules, how smiles yon myrtle plain" (Handel, in duet with Galli), "Se perde l'usignolo" (Jomelli), "Sberno delli astir egiooco" (Conforti), "Sol ti chiedo o sposo amato" (Galuppi), "Quella fiamma" (Handel), "Ti parli in seno amore" (Perez), "Tremende oscuri atroci" (Pergolesi; see discussion above), and "Wise men flatt'ring" (Handel).

⁹² Quoted in Avery et al., *The London Stage* under this date.

destitution was due to an extravagant and immoderate lifestyle (in eighteenth-century English terms, one that indulged in the great sin of “luxury”). The impetus behind Frasi’s financial woes was quite different:

Yet with all this apparent prosperity, and a clear income of from 1100*l.* to 1800*l.* a year, she literally died a beggar! And this in a great measure was occasioned by poor Frasi’s too liberal spirit of hospitality toward the natives of Italy; who, coming to this country on mere speculation, without any means of subsistence, preyed upon her, and constantly kept her in uneasy circumstances.⁹³

Thus, according to Burney, Frasi’s dedication to empathy and “humanity,” two of the era’s greatest “feminine virtues,” led to her demise. Despite the contributions of a number of patrons (Burney says that there were “ten or twelve” who continued to provide for her throughout her final days), Frasi was unable to support herself in Calais, and, according to Burney’s sad story, she died of a most pathetic cause: starvation.⁹⁴ Burney, showing himself to be a firm believer in the power of sentimental stories to move and educate an audience, provides a final moral to his biography of Frasi: “These melancholy particulars are here inserted to warn our fair songstresses.” Frasi, in death as in life, continued to play the role of sentimental heroine, with all the affective and didactic qualities demanded of that particular line.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have endeavored to introduce two ways in which we can regard Handel’s late English oratorios as a product of the culture of sentiment. First, I have shown that it is possible to speak confidently of a subgenre of sentimental oratorio. Surveying these works allows us to generate our own bulleted list of characteristics that overlaps significantly with Sherbo’s desiderata for sentimental drama and with the combination of musical and dramatic traits that scholars have associated with sentimental opera:

- a protagonist of unassailable virtue, linked with other virtuous characters
- a threat posed to that virtue by an outside force
- a centrally placed pathetic aria marking the moment of greatest danger to the protagonist’s life or virtue
- a resolution accomplished by passive, patient means rather than by heroic action
- an association between the protagonist and the pastoral, implying simplicity, innocence, and sensuality

⁹³ Burney, s.v. “Frasì, Giulia,” in Rees, *Cyclopædia*.

⁹⁴ “For the convenience of receiving these benefactions she settled at Calais, where, by the utmost parsimony, she was able to support a miserable existence, till, by the death of her benefactors, her income was at length reduced to ten or fifteen guineas a year, and we fear that her own death was somewhat accelerated by mere inanition!” Ibid.

Other elements of these works align with frequently encountered traits of sentimental literature, including an intense focus on family relationships (between husband and wife and parents and children) and an explicitly stated “moral purpose” that is linked to the innocent virtue of the protagonist.

The majority of the musicological work on sentimentalism has focused on such generic definitions and classification. But the history of Giulia Frasi, Handel’s quintessential sentimental heroine, reminds us that the culture of sentiment was a broad network of associations and motivations. Her story points to a second, and ultimately more promising avenue for association between sentimentalism and the oratorio. It is possible to do more than simply catalog the characteristics of a sentimental work, like ossified remains of a past culture. We would do well to remember that this culture exerted broad and deep influences on English society of the mid-century, and that its members used and inhabited its norms and expectations both for their own advantage and out of necessity. It is to this topic that I turn in Chapter 2, and in the chapters that follow; the creators of Handel’s oratorios played for audiences steeped in sentimentalism, and they were as shaped by those audiences’ expectations as were the pieces that they performed.

CHAPTER 2
“THE PART, THAT IS BY NATURE THINE”
SENTIMENTAL HEROINES, “FALLEN” WOMEN,
& HANDEL’S ORATORIO REVISIONS FOR SUSANNA CIBBER

The eighteenth-century actor’s life was one of consistency. Old plays ran for decades, and London audiences relished opportunities to see the same plays over and over again. Actors’ roles were consistent, too. They “owned” their parts, acting them for years, and playwrights wrote sequels with the expectations that actors would repeatedly play the same characters.¹ But the predictability of an actor’s experience did not end with repetition of roles, and consistency of characterization was tied not only to the fictional worlds of related storylines. The acting system of the eighteenth century was one in which typecasting, following a particular “line” in the parlance of the day, was a vital part of the actor’s identity.

This practice was born of fierce pragmatism. Thespians often performed six times a week and sometimes in more than one play in an evening.² Additionally, as theater historian Tiffany Stern has shown, private study took precedence over group rehearsal throughout the century.³ This professional atmosphere meant that knowing how to act a part meant understanding not so much one’s character within the boundaries of a play, but understanding one’s character within the social structure of the theater company.⁴ The Turkish general, the Roman statesman, the *ingénue*, the vengeful woman — such were the expected “lines” or “casts” in eighteenth-century dramas, and for each type there was a specialist actor.⁵ Audiences were familiar with the practice of course, seeing the same actors in the same types of roles (and, indeed, the same roles) for years at a time; when an

¹ Ownership of roles was both figurative and literal. In terms of the physically printed play, an actor’s part was just what its name implied: a part of a play; i.e., it was a small, printed book that contained only the lines that an actor was to speak, with cues from the other parts. When an actor decided or was ordered to turn over his parts to another member of a company, the exchange was therefore very much a physical one. See Peter Holland, *The Ornament of Action* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 65. On sequels, see pp. 67-9.

² For an example of this type of hectic activity by a Handelian singer, see Neil Jenkins, “John Beard: The Tenor Voice that Inspired Handel,” *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 12 (2008): 197-216. Jenkins provides a number of tables that detail Beard’s activities, which was a packed schedule that forced Beard to run from theater to theater to provide music during simultaneous productions. Catherine Clive also frequently acted in mainpiece and afterpiece in the same evening, including both musical and spoken productions.

³ Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 198–203; 214–15; 253–61; and passim. Stern demonstrates that, although some eighteenth-century commentators questioned the wisdom of a part-based understanding of a play taking precedence over a more holistic approach, the practice nevertheless dominated throughout the century.

⁴ Stern describes a frequent comic device in eighteenth-century plays in which characters playing actors claim to ‘know nothing about the story in which they are acting outside their [own] lines’, or even occasionally being unaware of which play they are performing. See Stern, *Rehearsal*, 253-4.

⁵ See Stern, *Rehearsal*, 211-12.

actor stepped “out of line,” the results were sometimes disastrous, entailing public rejection of the effort.⁶ Such were the realities of the eighteenth-century actor’s life.

Given this professional rigidity, it is remarkable that one of the century’s most acclaimed actresses, who also happened to be one of Handel’s oratorio singers, experienced a drastic shift in theatrical persona. Susanna Arne Cibber (1714–1766) established her line in the 1730s as a prototypical sentimental heroine. She did so on the operatic stage before going on to a successful career in spoken theater. At first, her success in operatic *ingénue* roles fueled her character types in sentimental comedies and female-centric tragedies. But her line became more complex after a personal crisis that erupted in 1739, a highly publicized sexual scandal followed by two years of retirement. Immediately upon returning to the stage, Cibber added new, less wholesome character types to her repertoire. The rise of this actress depended upon the audience’s belief that she held a “natural” and “chaste heart,” and a change in that perception demanded a change in public persona.⁷ The actress who had once served as a model for the young women in the audience soon came to embody the cautionary morality tale.

The period of Cibber’s public transformation coincided with her years of work under Handel’s direction. Cibber participated in many oratorios throughout the 1740s, including several new ones with roles created or revised specifically for her: *Samson* (1743), *Hercules*, and *Belshazzar* (both 1745). She also sang in the premiere of *Messiah* in Dublin in April 1742. Cibber’s appearances in these oratorios (especially *Messiah*’s premiere) have been frequently discussed in the Handel literature, but the commonly repeated truths about her — that she was not a particularly strong singer, that her great tragic acting skills held as much sway as her musical abilities, and that Handel surely must have employed her because she would draw audiences into the theater — do not quite capture the complexity of Handel’s sensitivity to this singing actress’s public identity.⁸ They

⁶ In 1743, for instance, Catherine Clive attempted the role of Bayes in George Villiers’s *The Rehearsal*. She played the part as a trousers role, which would only have increased the inherent humor of the part, a pompous and overly moralistic author of heroic dramas modeled on John Dryden. At this point in her career, Clive was far more apt to play “pert” female roles, and her adoption of a moralizing stick-in-the-mud struck at least one contemporary as a mistake; he claimed that Clive’s participation in this role “missed [its] aim, for she did it [the part] most wretchedly” (quoted in Avery et al, *The London Stage* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), entry for May 6, 1743). In her own *Bayes in Petticoats*, Clive struck back, demonstrating, as Tiffany Stern writes, “that she was fully capable of playing the part — on her own terms” (Stern, *The Rehearsal*, 242).

Similarly, a posthumous remembrance of Susanna Cibber stated, “This actress, by nature formed for tragic representation, was uncommonly desirous of acting characters of gaiety and humour, to which she was an absolute stranger: she had no idea of comedy.” (Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, (Boston, 1818), 1: 141.) When she stayed “in line,” critics were kind; “Francis Gentleman’s” *The Dramatic Censor* praised Peg Woffington as Rosetta and Cibber as Fidelity in *The Foundling* for their appropriateness in the parts: “The elegance, the notions of love, and the vanity of admiration, which are united in Rosetta, were natural to Mrs Woffington, so that she had the advantage of looking and speaking in her own character — the softness and pathos, which distinguished Fidelity sat with much ease on Mrs Cibber.” See *The Dramatic Censor, or, Critical Companion* (London, 1770), 2: 206.

⁷ These descriptions of the young Cibber come from the prologue to Aaron Hill’s *Zara* (1736), her first major performance in spoken theater. See Hill, *Zara: A Tragedy by Aaron Hill, Esq.* (London, 1736; rep. 1791), xviii.

⁸ A particularly extreme version of these viewpoints can be found in Julian Herbage, “The Truth about Mrs. Cibber,” *The Monthly Musical Record* 78 (1948): 59-68. In this article, Herbage attempted to demote Cibber from her position as “Handel’s great contralto” by emphasizing her musical shortcomings. Later historians have been kinder to Cibber’s musical contributions, but it is telling that they so quickly quote Charles

do not fully describe how the revisions that Handel undertook for Cibber appear to have been influenced by this singer-actress's complex public line, an example of one of the ways in which mid-century sentimentalism influenced Handel's new English genre.

Connections between singers and character types have been noted in Handel studies before. In his 1995 book on Handel's singers, C. Steven LaRue demonstrated how the Royal Academy aimed to "reach beyond the individual work and create a cultural institution . . . in which individual cast members increasingly came to be associated with not only particular types of roles but also with specific character types within such roles."⁹ Such a consistency of musical and dramatic characterization may have been rooted in traditional operatic practice, but within the milieu of the English theater, this type of identification possessed a particular timeliness. Reviewers of LaRue's volume expressed reserved enthusiasm about his observations, but they also noted that something was missing. Suzanne Aspden, for instance, drew attention to unanswered questions surrounding "personality theory" and "character."¹⁰ She called for connections to be drawn between public performers and the concurrent English debates about "personal Identity," citing John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1694) as one of the foundational documents for this psychoanalytical concept. She suggested other possible approaches for studying the eighteenth-century understanding of "personal Identity," including persistent humoral theories and various typological approaches to personality that populated the pages of

Burney's statement that Cibber's voice was "a thread" without giving the fuller context of this quotation, which also states that no great Italian singer had ever been able to perform "He Was Despised" as convincingly as Cibber. (See discussion and full quotation below.)

Typically narrow assessments of her influence can be found in the following: Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 107, 349-50; Herbert Weinstock, *Handel*, 2nd ed.. (New York: Knopf, 1959) 234-35; Paul Henry Lang, *George Frideric Handel* (New York, 1966), 335-36; Jonathan Keates, *Handel: The Man and His Music* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 242-43; Franzpeter Messmer, *Georg Friedrich Händel* (Düsseldorf, 2008), 230-31.

One notable exception to the generally tangential treatments of Cibber by Handel historians can be found in Chapter 5 of Richard Lockett, *Handel's Messiah: A Celebration* (London: Gollancz, 1992). Lockett perhaps goes a bit too far, making Cibber the central protagonist of the *Messiah* premiere. He also gets some small details incorrect, such as claiming that Cibber played the role of Euphrosyne in Dublin performances of Thomas Augustine Arne's *Comus*. Although Cibber appears to have sung some of Euphrosyne's numbers in this production (including "Sweet Echo," which became one of her signature songs), Dublin newspaper advertisements clearly indicate that Cibber played the morally virtuous role of The Lady, the same role she had played in the original London productions. See John C. Greene and Gladys L.H. Clark, *The Dublin Stage: 1720-1745* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1993), 297 and passim. Lockett follows Brian Boydell in this error; see *A Dublin Musical Calendar: 1700-1760* (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1988), 76. Nevertheless, Lockett clearly expresses the evident connections between Cibber's private life, her theatrical experiences in Dublin, and the *Messiah* premiere. Mary Nash, too, writes extensively about this moment of Cibber's return to public life; see *The Provoked Wife: The Life and Times of Susannah Cibber* (Boston and Toronto: Little and Brown, 1977), 164-82.

⁹ LaRue, *Handel and His Singers*, 124.

¹⁰ Suzanne Aspden, "Singers' Blueprints," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 9, no. 2 (1997), 185-93; esp. p. 191. Aspden takes the phrase "personal Identity" from Pope, Gay, and Swift, *The Memoirs of the Scribblers* (London, 1714). Other reviewers expressed similar complaints about omissions in LaRue's approach. Judith Milhous states that an overriding organization is lacking from the monograph; Nicholas Temperley complained that the book was a "technical" study, and that "no broader historical implications come to mind." See Milhous, review of *Handel and His Singers*, by C. Steven LaRue, *Notes* 53, no. 2 (1996): 457-59; Temperley, review of *Handel and His Singers and The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace* by Michael Musgrave, *Albion* 28, no. 3 (1996): 500-2.

philosophy, sermons, and other writings.¹¹ Aspden has recently applied identity analysis to Handel opera, reevaluating the famed rivalry between Faustina Bordoni and Francesca Cuzzoni by investigating the ways in which these singers' personas influenced dramatic, musical, and visual elements in the opera *Admeto*.¹²

In the case of oratorio, one need not reach quite so far afield to fill some of the gaps that bothered Aspden. A more narrowly defined theatrical history, a context in which Cibber and some of Handel's other English singers performed their daily work, provides a useful framework for understanding how singers' and audiences' experiences and expectations may have influenced Handel's revision process for the oratorios in which Cibber performed.¹³ I demonstrate below that Cibber experienced at a personal level the eighteenth century's tendency to collapse the distinction between character and actress. As was the case with so many thespians, Cibber's life off the stage intersected with her performances on it, theatrical personas being, as Lisa Freeman has put it, "not merely as symptomatic of an interior, but rather as the *only* basis upon which judgments about [an actor's] character could be formed."¹⁴

Freeman has explored how the modern notion of "character" as associated with an individual's interior moral state was only beginning to be separated from the etymological root of the term, which referred to a letter (or "character") pressed into the surface of a coin, printing plate, etc. This terminology reflected a linkage between interior and exterior, an understanding of moral character as externally legible.¹⁵ Freeman explains that such legibility was constantly in question as character came to be understood as something

¹¹ Aspden points specifically to Christopher Fox as one historian whose work provides potential models for such psychoanalytic understanding of performer identities: Fox, *Locke and the Scribblers: Identity and Consciousness in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988).

¹² Aspden, "The 'Rival Queens' and the Play of Identity in Handel's *Admeto*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 3 (2006): 301-31.

¹³ LaRue himself touched on the fringes of this approach when quoting, at the beginning of his chapter on character type, letters from Handelian soprano Anastasia Robinson. Writing to someone who might have interceded with Handel, a somewhat timid Robinson ventured that the composer might change the nature of a role, stating that "the more I look at it [the part], the more I find it is impossible for me to sing it." Robinson refers to herself as a "distressed Damsel" and goes on to plead, "You might be my friend and represent, though the greatest part of my Life has shew'd me to be a Patient Grisell by Nature, how then can I ever pretend to act the Termagant?" (Walter Eisen and Margret Eisen, eds., *Händel-Handbuch*, vol. 4, *Dokumente zu Leben und Schaffen* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1985), 112-13. Also quoted in LaRue, *Handel's Singers*, 125-6.). In a second letter, Robinson continues to protest that she cannot sing songs that require "fury and passion to express them." Her reasoning once again is to connect her private persona with the one that she will portray upon the musical stage: "Nature design'd me a peaceable Creature, and it is as true as strange, that I am a Woman and can-not Scold." In light of such evidence, Robinson requests that Handel replace a fiery rage aria ("Pensa, spietata madre" from *Ottone*) with "a Short Melancholly Song," a request that, as LaRue shows, Handel obliged (with "Ah tu non sai"). Robinson's language here demonstrates how the sentimental stage influenced her ideas of acting and identity. The connection to an established theatrical type is clear. Robinson explicitly conflates her offstage identity with the distressed and patient Griselda, whom she had played in Bononcini's opera of that name in 1722, a type strikingly similar to the distressed damsels who populated sentimental dramas. (See LaRue, *Handel's Singers*, 127-30.) On Griselda as a prototypical sentimental heroine, see Mary Hunter, "The Fusion and Juxtaposition of Genres in Opera Buffa 1760-1800: Anelli's and Piccinni's 'Griselda,'" *Music and Letters*, 67 (1986): 363-80.

¹⁴ Lisa Freeman, *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 27.

¹⁵ Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 20.

internalized, and the theater supplied the perfect venue in which to lay bare tensions between hidden realities and displayed façades. For instance, Susanna Cibber's father-in-law, the poet laureate Colley Cibber, ridiculed in 1740 the idea that an audience could ascertain anything about an actor's virtue based on his line: "If the Personal Morals of an Actor, were to be weighed by his Appearance on the Stage, the Advantage and Favour . . . might rather incline to the Traitor . . . Because No Man can naturally desire to cover his Honesty with a wicked Appearance; but an ill Man might possibly incline to cover his Guilt with the Appearance of Virtue."¹⁶

Yet actors following David Garrick extolled "acting from the feelings," instead of from mechanical or studied rules of rhetoric.¹⁷ Aaron Hill similarly urged actors in the mid-1730s to identify with the characters they played, to empathize with their feelings, so that the natural mechanisms of the body could work to create a successful portrayal.¹⁸ Moreover, for Colley Cibber to make his dismissive claim about legibility was implicitly to recognize that audiences believed in the equivalence of stage performances and performers. As Kristina Straub has shown, public obsessions with actors' personal mores led to a huge commerce in "memoirs" and pamphlets, and Freeman concedes that the foregrounded tensions between internal and external "character" that she finds laid bare upon the eighteenth-century stage became muddled in perceptions of actresses:

This conflation of publicly acted with privately lived character in the reception of stage performances was especially marked for actresses . . . Eighteenth-century audiences were not only obsessively aware of aspects of an actor's or actress's personal life . . . they were also persistently encouraged to draw associations between those private lives and the roles players played. Audiences, in short, were keenly aware of how public and private "character" either converged or diverged in performance.¹⁹

Perhaps the best-known examples of such "conflation" of public and private identities were the instances when audiences would reject, find amusing, or be perplexed by moments when an actor stepped "out of line" on the stage, when they perceived dissonance between their understanding of her "true" self and an onstage character.

Cibber's career provides a case study of this type of reception, as her well-established line as sentimental heroine suddenly collapsed under the weight of public scandal. Handel evidently played a part in helping Cibber overcome the central crisis of her personal and professional lives; once this feat was accomplished, Cibber served as Handel's principal mouthpiece for virtue, employing her social currency to emphasize the morally didactic nature of English oratorio. Understanding the complex interplay between her public and private lives and tracing the development of her line place new light on the

¹⁶ Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (London, 1740). Quoted in Freeman, 38.

¹⁷ Paul Goring, "The Art of Acting: Mid-Century Stagecraft and the Broadcast of Feeling," chap. 4 in *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 114-41.

¹⁸ Hill wrote, "Thus the *Look, Air, Voice, and Action*, proper to a Passion, preconceiv'd in the *Imagination*, become a *mere, and mechanic*, NECESSITY; without Perplexity, Study, or Difficulty." *The Prompter* 118 (December 26, 1735).

¹⁹ Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992), chaps. 5-6. Freeman, *Character's Theater*, 38-9.

consistency of her oratorio roles. Handel never had a libretto in which he could cast Cibber as a full-fledged sentimental heroine, and, given her new theatrical turn, he was probably prudent not to do so. But the revisions that Handel made to oratorios with Cibber in mind show how carefully he crafted roles that drew on the strengths that had served her since her earliest days on the stage, dramatic renderings of deep pathos with an unwavering focus on virtue and empathy — the very stuff of eighteenth-century theatrical sentimentalism.

Impressions of Humanity

Cibber began her career playing the types of sentimental heroines that Giulia Frasi later did for Handel (described in Chapter 1). Figure 2.1 provides a list of the plays that Cibber starred in during her earliest seasons at Drury Lane Theatre:

<u>Author, Title</u>	<u>Character</u>	<u>Role type</u>
A. Hill, <i>Zara</i>	Zara	Endangered virtue
R. Steele, <i>The Conscious Lovers</i>	Indiana	Endangered virtue
C. Cibber, <i>Love's Last Shift</i>	Amanda	Suffering wife
A. Philips, <i>The Distrest Mother</i>	Andromache	Endangered virtue/mother
W. Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i>	Desdemona	Suffering wife
N. Lee, <i>The Rival Queens</i>	Statira	Suffering wife
J. Hughes, <i>The Siege of Damascus</i>	Eudocia	Endangered virtue
W. Shakespeare, <i>Measure for Measure</i>	Isabella	Endangered virtue
T. Otway, <i>The Orphan</i>	Monimia	Endangered virtue
J. Addison, <i>Cato</i>	Marcia	Endangered virtue
N. Rowe, <i>Tamerlane</i>	Arpasia	Endangered virtue
T. Otway, <i>Venice Preserv'd</i>	Belvidera	Endangered virtue
[J. Dryden, <i>All for Love</i>	Cleopatra	Seductress]
G. Etherege, <i>The Man of Mode</i>	Mrs. Loveit	Abandoned lover
J. Thomson, <i>Agamemnon</i>	Cassandra	Endangered virtue

Figure 2.1: Cibber's dramatic roles, 1736–1738²⁰

Aside from Dryden's *All for Love* (discussed below), all of these plays feature exemplary sentimental heroines, a type that no theatergoer of the time could fail to recognize. These women share a number of defining characteristics. They are empathetic to the needs of others. They are innocent, although subjected to harsh cruelties. Their tribulations both test and reaffirm the importance of marital bonds. In cases where these bonds are maintained, their troubles end with happy reunion; death comes when they are violated. Perhaps most importantly (and virtually universally for plays in this mold), there is a threat to their sexual purity, on which the dramas hinge. In 1740, Samuel Richardson, after himself printing many such plays, created the most famous sentimental heroine of the age in *Pamela*. As I showed in Chapter 1, such women appeared in Handel's oratorios too, particularly the last four (in which Frasi played innocent women desperately defending innocence). Like these Handelian heroines, Cibber's consistent roles on the musical stage brought with them a consistent musical voice. And like Frasi, her persona on the stage

²⁰ The data in this table is compiled from the calendars given in Avery et al., *The London Stage* (Carbondale, Illinois, 1968). The category marked "Role Type" is generated from my own readings of these plays.

followed her off it. But whereas Frasi managed to maintain her reputation as the ideal sentimental heroine, Cibber lived a failed narrative; if the story of Frasi's persona was a tale of Virtue Rewarded, Cibber's more closely resembled a she-tragedy.

Cibber's most lasting reputation was as a stage actress, but she forged this reputation and her early dramatic "line" as a wholesome heroine in four English operas that premiered in 1732 and 1733 (Figure 2.2):

1731-32 Season

Amelia (music, J.F. Lampe / libretto, H. Carey; March, 1732)

Acis and Galatea (music, G.F. Handel / libretto, J. Gay et al; May, 1732)

1732-33 Season

Teraminta (music, J.C. Smith / libretto, H. Carey; November, 1732)

Rosamond (music, T.A. Arne / libretto, J. Addison; March, 1733)

Figure 2.2: Cibber's operatic roles, 1732-33

Cibber was introduced to London in *Amelia*, with Henry Carey's sentimental plot featuring a Christian woman under threat of rape by Osmyn, "Grand Vizier of the Turks," and her subsequent near execution by her own fiancé, who wrongly questioned her fidelity. The work was evidently a success; *See and Seem Blind*, a pamphlet of 1732, reported how attendance at Handel's opera was "thin," while both the house and stage of the English opera were "thronged" with onlookers charmed by Cibber.²¹ The other three operas attempted to cash in on this success by repeating the formula, casting Cibber repeatedly as sentimental heroines battling to maintain (or in one case reclaim) chastity. Two months after *Amelia*, Cibber starred in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, with a libretto by John Gay in which the brutish Cyclops Polyphemus pursues the innocent and pastoral Galatea. Next came *Teraminta*, with another libretto by Carey that featured not only a murder attempt on the steadfastly innocent title character, but also attempted rape. Finally, *Rosamond*, with a libretto by Joseph Addison, told the familiar legend of the English king Henry II and his mistress, Rosamond Clifford, who laments her loss of purity until the angry Queen Eleanor offers her the choice of death by dagger or poison. In the end of Addison's re-telling, the Queen spares Rosamond, placing her in the refuge of sexual purity: a convent. This story had traditionally been a lachrymose tale of innocence lost; Addison transformed it into one of innocence regained.²²

²¹ [Aaron Hill?], *See and Seem Blind, or, a Critical Dissertation on the Publick Diversions* (London, n.d. [1732]); facsim. rep. with an introduction by Robert D. Hume, Augustan Reprint Society, 235 (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1986), 13-14. On Hill's possible authorship of this pamphlet, see Hume's introduction, iii-iv.

²² The legend of Rosamond Clifford was frequently re-told from the sixteenth century onwards. For a useful overview, see Virgil Heltzel, *Fair Rosamond: A Study of the Development of a Literary Theme* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1947). Eleanor's act of sparing Rosamond appears to have been Addison's own invention. For more detailed summaries on the contents of these operas, see Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973, 2nd ed. 1986). See also the following: Phillip Lord, "The English-Italian Opera Companies, 1732-3," *Music and Letters* 45, no. 3 (1964): 239-51; Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, "J.F. Lampe and English Opera at the Little Haymarket in 1732-3," *Music and Letters* 78, no. 4 (1997): 502-31.

These women's musical portraits were as consistent as their dramatic characterizations. Carey and Lampe were particularly unerring with their portrayal of the prima donna of *Amelia*, using her plight to prime emotional effect. Although little of Amelia's music survives (in only reduced scores for flute, voice, and continuo), the libretto shows that throughout this high drama more than half of her nine arias were heartfelt lamentations (Figure 2.3).²³ Amelia's role opens with "O let me die," whose text reads "O let me die, while yet I see / The Comfort of my Heart; / For worse than instant Death 'twill be / From thee, my Love, to part." Though certainly doggerel, this passage both foreshadows the climactic moment when Casimir condemns Amelia to death and immediately places the spotlight on the heroine as sad and suffering. The following two arias make up the entirety of Amelia's music in the first act, during which she does nothing but lament. Act 2 must have brought with it some musical variety, as Amelia pretends to be happy in the harem as part of her ploy to save Casimir. But even such feigned happiness is tempered by two pathetic numbers: "So the gentle turtle-dove" and "How can you vainly thus pretend." In Act 3, at the climactic execution scene, Amelia sings her final lament at the gallows, awaiting execution by her lover's order: "Amelia wishes when she dies / Her dearest Lord may close her Eyes, / And Heav'n may open his." Amelia was designed to cry, and simultaneously to evoke the tears of her audience.

As Figure 2.3 shows, the other sentimental heroines of this rash of English operas exhibited similarly lachrymose tendencies. Like Amelia, Galatea is most effective when she laments alone on stage. The proprietors of the English opera must have seen Galatea as an intense mourner who is frequently urged by a pastoral chorus to give up her suffering. She responds to their sentiments with slowly unfolding expressions of personal grief due to the loss of her beloved Acis.²⁴ (The most celebrated such moment comes in Act 3 of the 1732 version, in the chorus with solo "Must I my Acis still bemoan.") Teraminta, too, was inveterately weepy and, like her Handelian predecessor, combines tears with a pastoral sensuality; such pastoralism was a characteristic of many sentimental heroines (Pamela's country attire being only the most famous example from sentimental literature), including many of Handel's sentimental heroines.²⁵ The exact state of Thomas Augustine Arne's setting of *Rosamond* is a bibliographic puzzle, since the original score and libretto from 1733 are lost. But if the earliest extant libretto (from 1740) is any indication of what was performed at the work's premiere, then Arne's *Rosamond* was an even weepier character than she had been for the libretto's first musical treatment by Thomas Clayton in 1707.²⁶ Parentheses in Figure 2.3 show the cuts that the remaining materials seem to indicate,

²³ The following arias from this opera survive printed in single-sheet printings: "A Favourite Song in the Opera of Amelia ("Amelia Wishes When She Dies,") RISM A/I L449; "A Song in the Opera of Amelia" ("Ah Traitor, Wicked and Impure"), RISM A/I L450 (RISM incorrectly titles this work "A Traitor Wicked and Impure"). Several arias were also included in *British Musical Miscellany* (London, Walsh: 1734-7), v. 2, all titled "A Song in the Opera of Amelia by Mr. Lampe:" "Ah Traitor, Wicked and Impure," "My Charmer's Very Name," and "The Youngling Ravish'd From its Nest."

²⁴ Diane Dugaw similarly sees *Acis and Galatea* as possessing a conflict between the artificiality of the pastoral and the genuine nature of modern, personal sensibility. Diane Dugaw, "Opera, Gender, and Social Strata: Gay and Handel's *Acis and Galatea*" in *Deep Play: John Gay and the Invention of Modernity* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 165.

²⁵ On pastoral tendencies in sentimental literature, opera, and oratorio, see Chapter 1.

²⁶ On the history of the settings of *Rosamond*, see Fiske, *English Theatre Music*, 45-7.

Amelia		
	Act 1	Affect
<u>Aria</u> "O let me die" "Distracting fears" "Come, sad companion of eternal grief"		Lament at idea of separation Lament at separation Lament at presumed death of lover
	Act 2	
"So the gentle turtle-dove" "The youngling ravish'd from its nest"		Lament at inability to save lover from captivity Falsified "contentment aria" (She pretends to be happy in the harem in an effort to save Casimir.)
"How can you vainly thus pretend?" "Who would not with gladness surrender"		Plea for pity Falsified "contentment aria"
	Act 3	
"Let not mortals tempt their fate" "Amelia wishes when she dies"		Moral proclamation: good comes to the virtuous Lament: patient suffering (at gallows)
Acis and Galatea (act divisions given as in the 1732 libretto)		
	Act 1	Affect
<u>Aria</u> "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir" "As when the dove"		Pastoral (A-section)/Lamentation (B-section) Turtle-dove aria
	Act 3	
"Must I my Acis still bemoan" "Heart the seat of soft delight"		Lamentation Metaphor aria (stream)
Teraminta		
	Act 1	Affect
<u>Aria</u> "When lovers for favours petition" "Sing on, sweet warbler of the grove!" "Ye nymphs! For my sake n'er believe in man"		Morality aria Sensual, Pastoral Morality aria
	Act 2	
"Shall strangers weep, and shall not I" "Come, oh sleep, my eyelids close"		Lament Sleep aria
	Act 3	
"Thus dash'd by the billows" "The turtle lamenting"		Lament Turtle-dove aria
Rosamond (Parentheses indicate numbers presumed cut from 1733 production)		
	Act 1	Affect
<u>Aria</u> "From walk to walk" (accompanied recitative) ("Was ever passion cross'd like mine?") ("Ye pow'rs I rave, I faint, I die") "Beneath some hoary mountain"		Lament (Lament) (Urgent pleading) Lament
	Act 2	
("They're fantoms all, I'll think no more") ("Transporting pleasure! Who can tell it") "Think on the soft, the tender fires" "Accept, great Queen, like injur'd heav'n" "Think not, thou author of my woe"		(Excited, joyful) (Contented pleasure) Pitiful pleading Pitiful pleading Rage/Madness

Figure 2.3: Heroines' arias in English operas of 1732-33

omissions that purge the character of much of its contrasts and overt sensuality. The portrait of Rosamond that remains is one of profound pathos. Throughout Arne's setting, the title character does nothing but lament, plead, or rave when she sings alone.

Weepy women might have been expected in tragic settings, but all of these works were comedies, ending with marriages or other affirmations of the sanctity of wedded love, and none of them, even *Rosamond*, involving grander questions of heroic tragedy. Indeed, these operas were criticized in the twentieth century by Roger Fiske for being difficult to classify. For instance, he said of *Amelia's* librettist that modern critics "may condemn him for not writing a genuinely tragic libretto or a full-scale comic one."²⁷ Fiske laments the impurity of opera libretti of the era in general: "The age was inimical to tragedy, and scarcely any eighteenth-century opera in any country tries to deal realistically with tragic emotions or ends unhappily."²⁸ Elsewhere, Fiske felt the need to explain the conclusion to *Rosamond*: "Addison saved his heroine from her legendary fate, because happy endings were becoming an operatic convention."²⁹

Happy endings in dramas infused with "tender melancholy conversation" were not merely operatic convention in this period; they were characteristic of sentimental theater more generally.³⁰ Fiske's discomfort with the generic complications of these works echoes a debate in eighteenth-century theatrical circles, in which critics lambasted the "bastardization" of their theater, particularly the infusion of tears into comic works.³¹ In 1723, John Dennis called such generic mixture a "fraud," stating that "violent Transports of grief . . . are inconsistent with Comedy."³² And in 1775, William Cooke drew on sexual imagery that lampooned the damsels in distress of these dramas when describing Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* of 1722: "Comedy being thus debauched, like an unhappy female, began to be viewed in the light of *common game*, by those poets who dare not look up to her in the days of her chastity; such finding the intercourse easy, and the profits great, immediately hired themselves in her service."³³ Steele, however, had trumpeted the tearful experience of modern comedy in the preface to that very play: "[Anything] that has its Foundation in Happiness and Success, must be allowed to be the Object of Comedy, and sure it must be an Improvement of it, to introduce a Joy too exquisite for Laughter, that can have no Spring but in Delight."³⁴ Indeed, Steele was proud of having reduced a particularly virile man to tears at the work's premiere: "And I think it was very politely said of Mr. Wilks to one who told him there was a *General* weeping for *Indiana*, I'll warrant he'll fight ne'er the worse for that."³⁵ Steele's military man might have maintained virility on the battlefield, but in the theater he wept at displays of feminine virtue.

²⁷ Ibid., 142.

²⁸ Ibid., 133.

²⁹ Ibid., 46.

³⁰ Henry Fielding, Preface to *The Author's Farce* (1730), rep. in *Works* (London, 1806), 1: 291-2. Oliver Goldsmith echoed this phrase in his *Essay on the Theatre: A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy* (London, 1773), referring disparagingly to "a sprinkling of tender melancholy conversation" that would ensure that "the ladies will cry and all the gentlemen applaud" (97).

³¹ Goldsmith, *A Comparison* refers to the sentimental comedy as a "bastard tragedy" (98).

³² Dennis, *Remarks Upon a Play Call'd, The Conscious Lovers, A Comedy* (London, 1723), 5.

³³ William Cooke, *The Elements of Dramatic Criticism* (London, 1775), 143-44.

³⁴ Steele, preface to *The Conscious Lovers*, n.p.

³⁵ Ibid., "Mr. Wilks" refers to Robert Wilks (c. 1665-1732), who played Myrtle in the play during the 1720s.

To be touched by such emotional display was indicative of a pervasive strain of sentimental philosophy that prized empathy as a marker of morality. Steele urged that “men ought not to be laughed at for weeping,” since “to be apt to give way to the impressions of humanity is the excellence of a right disposition and the natural working of a well-turned spirit.” In the late 1750s, Adam Smith would define his sought-after “moral sentiments” similarly: “Humanity consists merely in the exquisite fellow-feeling which the spectator entertains with the sentiments of the persons principally concerned, so as to grieve for their sufferings, to resent their injuries, and to rejoice at their good fortune.”³⁶ Writers advocating such sentimental aesthetics in plays could assert that they trained what philosophers since the third Earl of Shaftesbury had called the “moral sense,” audiences’ empathy simultaneously reinforcing and proving their own natural goodness.³⁷

The eighteenth century saw continued faith in the morally didactic value of the theater. William Chetwood claimed in 1749 that “Lessons for the Stage may be convey’d . . . stronger than from the Pulpit.”³⁸ By the end of the century, Erasmus Darwin could recommend plays as part of a woman’s moral training through reading “polite literature,” a perception of the theater worlds away from the charges of “smuttiness” that Jeremy Collier famously levied at it in the 1690s.³⁹ Such didacticism helped distance some eighteenth-century players from traditional associations with licentiousness, and actresses from Anne Bracegirdle (1671–1748) at the century’s beginning to Sarah Siddons (1755–1831) at its end were renowned for their virtue both on and off the stage, wholesome personas that enhanced their credibility as stage performers.⁴⁰ Chetwood gave the general rule of what would make the strongest impression upon an audience: he urged “the Performers to be as blameless as human Nature will allow.” But such criteria cut both ways; actresses could be dismissed by audiences if they stepped above their personal standards of virtue in a role. Chetwood records the “Horse-laugh” that greeted one poor actress’s protestations of “*Virgin Innocence*” onstage: “Here the Audience was disconcerted, and the Reality of the Subject before them loses much of its Force.” His prescription was clear: “Performers . . . ought to imitate those virtuous Characters they represent upon the Stage; the Dignity of the Theater, then, might emulate that of *Athens*.”⁴¹

³⁶ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Sect. 3, “Of Mutual Sympathy,” (London, 1759), 364.

³⁷ For a useful overview of sentimental philosophy, see Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, esp. pp. 23-8 (New York: Methuen, 1986), and Wendy Motooka, *The Age of Reasons: Quixotism, Sentimentalism, and Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, chap. 2 (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). See also Introduction, above.

³⁸ Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage, from its Origin in Greece Down to the Present Time* (London, 1749), 28.

³⁹ Erasmus Darwin, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools* (Derby, 1797), 32. Collier’s accusation comes in *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage* (London, 1698), 2.

⁴⁰ For information on both Siddons and Bracegirdle, see Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, passim. See also Sandra Richards, *The Rise of the English Actress* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993); on Siddons, see esp. chap. 4.

⁴¹ Chetwood, *A General History*, 25.

From Zara to Alicia and Beyond

Although Cibber first established her line in operatic settings, she solidified it in the spoken theater. Her earliest advocate there was Aaron Hill, in whose *Zara* she made her first major appearance as an actress at Drury Lane on January 12, 1736. Hill had seen Cibber sing the role of Amelia, and he was moved by what he called her “entirely modern” manner, and her “*je ne scay quoy*.”⁴² Hill knew what he liked in these performances clearly enough that he could imitate the source of inspiration. Both *Amelia* and *Zara* have vaguely Middle Eastern settings: in and around Jerusalem for *Zara*, on the Turkish border for *Amelia*. Both feature a villain named Osmyn (or “Osman,” as it is spelled in the character list for *Zara*). And both stories hinge on the sexual purity of an innocent Christian woman, put through seemingly endless trials and tribulations, giving rise to frequent pathetic speeches (or arias, in the case of *Amelia*). Yet whereas Cibber’s operatic premiere had ended with the traditional comedic finale of a double wedding, *Zara* was a tragedy. The play concludes with a despicable husband bringing a pitiable end to Zara’s young virgin life. Little could Cibber have known that, in just a few short years, her own life would imitate the art of this theatrical debut, culminating in the metaphorical death of her innocent persona at the hands of a morally suspect husband.

In *Zara*, as in the operas that had formed her first experiences on the British stage, Cibber played a role that utilized the sentimental heroine’s most characteristic traits. She was innocent and above reproach. She suffered needlessly at the hands of callous male oppressors. And most importantly, her steadfast virtue provided a moral lesson for the characters within the drama (and for audiences viewing it). Even Osmyn by the end empathetically resonates with Zara’s sadness: “Zara — thy tears were form’d to teach disdain, / That softness can disarm it.”⁴³ Seeing Cibber in sentimental operas during the first years of the 1730s, Hill recognized the makings of a great stage actress, one perfectly suited for sentimental roles. As he wrote in the prefatory material for *Zara*, “her *Person*, her *Voice*, the unaffected *Sensibility* of her *Heart*, . . . naturally qualified her” for such roles.⁴⁴

Hill’s early assessment of Cibber’s “natural” abilities proved prophetic. During the next two years, Cibber began rising through the ranks, claiming many new parts as the central female character. Figure 2.1 lists the parts that she added to her repertory from *Zara* until 1738, arranged in the order in which she first played them. In all cases but one, the model of her earliest theatrical experiences provided the template for these roles. In play after play, she portrayed maidens under threat of (or already suffering from) sexual violence. Other times, she quietly endured the sexual impropriety of a philandering husband, or died at the hands of a wrongfully jealous spouse. The only exception to such models was Dryden’s *All for Love*, in which Cibber played the seductive Cleopatra, who comes between Antony and not just one, but two wives. Evidently, this instance of Cibber stepping “out of line” did not sufficiently please audiences to warrant a change in character; newspapers recorded only one performance, on March 16, 1738.⁴⁵ Throughout all the

⁴² [Hill,] *See and Seem Blind*, 13.

⁴³ Hill, *Zara*, lines 149-50.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁴⁵ See also entry for this date in Avery et al, *The London Stage*.

other plays, her role remained consistent: Cibber was the empathetic moral model for fellow young women.

All for Love may have signaled someone's recognition that Cibber's persona was soon to become complicated by personal affairs. In December 1738, Susanna's husband, Theophilus, sued William Sloper, Susanna's extramarital lover, for criminal conversation, demanding damages of £5,000.⁴⁶ Following his theatrical instincts, Theophilus granted the case dramatic flair by broadcasting the juiciest details of his wife's sexual encounters, made possible by a peephole that had been bored in the couple's meeting rooms. An anonymous member of the gallery recorded these legal maneuverings and published them for an audience hungry for gossip.⁴⁷ The resultant reports read like today's cheap fiction:

[He] took her upon his Lap, took up her Clothes, took down his Breeches, and put his privy Member between her Legs. I stayed there longer. Between five and six in the Evening, he let down the Turn-up Bed softly, she laid herself upon it, upon her Back, and pulled up her Clothes; her Body was bare. He unbuttoned his Clothes, hung his Bag-wig upon a Sconce, let down his Breeches, took his privy Member in his Hand, and lay down upon her.⁴⁸

As shameful as the broadcasting of such details must have been for Susanna, even worse were the admissions that came out in the course of her defense. Theophilus had encouraged the affair, and for some time the three even spent nights together, sleeping at one point in a single room with three beds, at another in two adjoining rooms, all paid for by Sloper. A witness's recollection of Theophilus's nickname for his rival, "Mr. Benefit," clarified the nature of the "aggrieved" husband's part in this little domestic drama.⁴⁹

The scandal remained foremost in the British consciousness for over a decade, as indicated by its frequent republication. In 1739, the first anonymous transcription was issued in London under the title *Tryal of a Cause for Criminal Conversation*.⁵⁰ The following year, a second court case was also recorded and broadcast, together with a reissue of the first.⁵¹ The publicity of this trial (and the new presence of a child sired by Sloper) led Cibber to retire from the stage for nearly four years. There are no records of performances by her between May 1738 and December 1741, when she reemerged in Ireland with both a

⁴⁶ The term "criminal conversation" was used for adultery in English law since at least the early sixteenth century. See *OED*, third definition under s.v. "conversation, n." (online edition, accessed March 15, 2013).

⁴⁷ Twentieth and twenty-first century audiences also seem to be drawn to this seedier side of Cibber's history. A Hallmark television special from 1963 called "A Cry of Angels" includes references to the affair. An updated version of the story of *Messiah's* premiere and Cibber's sexual history is currently in production, directed by Stephen Fry. See Dalya Alberge, "Hallelujah! Sex Life of Handel's Muse Coming to Screen near You," *The Times* (January 14, 2008), 30.

⁴⁸ Anonymous, *Tryal of a Cause for Criminal Conversation* (Dublin, 1749), 15.

⁴⁹ *Tryal of a Cause*, 31.

⁵⁰ *The Tryal a Cause for Criminal Conversation* (London, 1739).

⁵¹ *The Tryals of Two Causes for Criminal Conversation* (London, 1740). There were two versions of this publication, one somewhat longer than the other. The British Library holds copies of both versions. The longer version is 41 pages, and has the shelf mark 518.c.20(7). The shorter version is 32 pages, and bears the shelf mark 499.aa.15(10). Copies of the short version can also be found at The National Trust in Swindon, U.K., and at the Huntington Art Collections in San Marino, California. The long version can be found at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington, D.C. Electronic images of both versions can be accessed through *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (<http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/>).

run at the Aungier Street Theatre and the famed premiere of *Messiah*.⁵² Despite the warm reception she received in Ireland, Cibber's past followed her; Dubliners continued to purchase enough copies of the trial to warrant a republication of it in 1749 in that city.

The sexual profligacy of an actress was nothing new to the British public. As studies by Kristina Straub and Felicity Nussbaum have shown, audiences viewed actresses' private sexual lives as extensions of their public entertainments, and the details of their daily activities were eagerly gobbled up in "memoirs" (written by anonymous third parties) and other quasi-biographical documents.⁵³ On the boards, actresses were scrutinized for their dress, the sounds of their voices, and for their manners of presentation. Off the boards, they were expected to fall short of the moral standards of their female audience members. Fanny Burney put into the mouth of a fictional character what was probably the most succinct expression of the century's attitude toward actresses: being accosted by would-be rapists, a character in *Evelina* exclaims, "No,— no,— no— . . . I am no actress — pray let me go, — pray let me pass — ." ⁵⁴ As this statement hints, actresses were often taken as open sexual fare, particularly in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In the Green Rooms and backstage areas of the English theater, these women were constant objects of pursuit by what Samuel Pepys once referred to as a "base company of men."⁵⁵ Indeed, the profession was long associated with prostitution and sexual looseness, and earlier theater audiences had smiled and winked at the activities of its favorite starlets, from Nell Gwyn to Anne Oldfield.⁵⁶ Despite the latter's parentage of illegitimate children with two men, her performances could still be praised for their didactic value; one admirer wrote that "she taught Virtue in such persuasive Accents, that the Hearers have been with Imitation fired, and wish that they so could Act that so they may Instruct, and so instructing be adored like her."⁵⁷

In the mid-eighteenth century, audiences were less forgiving, and some actresses cared more cautiously for their reputations off the boards. Catherine Clive and Sarah Siddons both famously maintained unsullied reputations, and Siddons used this pristine persona to bolster her claims to onstage didactic authority.⁵⁸ Cibber (and Siddons after

⁵² On Cibber's absence during the period 1739-1741, see Nash, *The Provoked Wife*, 162-63.

⁵³ See Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), esp. chap. 3, "Actresses' Memoirs: Exceptional Virtue." See also Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, passim.

⁵⁴ Burney, *Evelina; or, the History of a Young Lady's Introduction to the World*, (London, 1779), 2: 123.

⁵⁵ Pepys, Diary entry for October 5, 1667.

⁵⁶ For a detailed view of Gwyn's reputation on and off the stage as "the protestant whore," see Richards, *The Rise of the Actress*, 16-23. For an excellent overview of Oldfield's importance in the early eighteenth century, see Nussbaum, *Rival Queens*, 100-112.

⁵⁷ William Egerton [Edmund Curll], *Faithful Memoirs of the Life, Amours and Performances of . . . Anne Oldfield* (London, 1731), 152. Her first biography, the anonymous *Authentick Memoirs of the Life of that Celebrated Actress Mrs. Ann Oldfield* (1730), similarly praised her abilities to instruct: "[Oldfield] appear'd with such a noble Grandeur in her Person, that it were to be wish'd some of our modern Ladies of Quality could learn in their Turn to personate Mrs. *Oldfield*: So infinitely did the Copy transcend the Original, and so much more amiable did they appear when represented by Mrs. *Oldfield*, than when at home with their Lords'. On Oldfield's relationship with Arthur Maynwaring and Charles Churchill and their children, see Nussbaum, *Rival Queens*, 46-7 and 100-12.

⁵⁸ Berta Joncus has discussed Clive's persona and its influence on her musical roles in a series of articles: "Her Spirit Is in Action Seen: Milton, Mrs. Clive and the Simulacra of the Pastoral in *Comus*," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (2005): 7-40; "Handel at Drury Lane: Ballad Opera and the Production of Kitty Clive," *Journal of*

her) inherited many of her parts from Oldfield. But in the late 1730s and early 1740s, Cibber's sins of the flesh appear to have affected her professional activities in a way that would have been unimaginable a generation before. Following the trial and the publicity that surrounded it, Cibber retired for three and a half seasons. If this absence was due to worries about public reaction to this "stained" woman, the fears apparently proved correct; she returned to acting at the Aungier Street Theatre on December 12, 1741, and as Robert Hitchcock later recalled, "To her first night there was not ten pounds."⁵⁹ Five days later, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire attended a command performance of Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*.⁶⁰ Cibber played her customary role of Belvidera, and audiences were apparently bolstered by aristocratic approval. Cibber went on to perform nearly fifty more engagements in Dublin between December and July, including reprisals of many of her "innocent" roles.⁶¹

The Dublin period also marked Cibber's second appearance under Handel's guidance, her first significant work with the composer. London newspapers had advertised in 1733 that she sang one of the "principal Parts" in the premiere of *Deborah*, but it is unclear exactly what she sang.⁶² Early in Handel's Dublin visit, she sang in an adapted version of *Alexander's Feast*, and she caused a logistical nightmare for *Imeneo* (in a concert

the Royal Musical Association 131, no. 2 (2006): 179-226; "In Wit Superior, as in Fighting: Kitty Clive and the Conquest of a Rival Queen," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (2011): 23-42. On Siddons, see n. 40 above.
⁵⁹ Robert Hitchcock, *An Historical View of the Irish Stage, From the Earliest Period Down to the Close of the Season 1788* (Dublin, 1788-94), 1: 115. Thomas Sheridan reported in 1758 that this entire season was a loss for the visiting troupe, claiming that ticket sales typically went to pay actor James Quin's agreed-upon salary, and that "Mrs. Cibber's Contract was made good out of the private Purse of one of the Proprietors" (Thomas Sheridan, "An Humble Appeal to the Publick, Together With Some Considerations on the Present Critical and Dangerous State of the Stage in Ireland" (Dublin, 1758)). Hitchcock remembered it quite differently, stating that after the initial false start, Cibber's company played "with uncommon applause, & generally to crowded houses" (Hitchcock, 1: 115). The amount of activity on the Aungier Street stage would seem to argue in favor of Hitchcock's version of the history.

⁶⁰ Curiously, Mary Nash claims that this performance took place on December 13, the day following the troupe's disastrous Irish premiere. Irish newspapers advertised the performance on December 17 (as recorded in Greene and Clark, *The Dublin Stage*, 296). Nash also makes the appealing claim that the hesitation of Dublin audiences to attend Cibber's first performances in 1741 were due to moral qualms: "Provincial Dublin society, though dying to have a look at this notorious actress, were not sure they ought to patronize a woman who could not show her face before decent people in her own country." Nash goes on to state that the command performance acted as a palliative: "Reassured by this ducal sanction, Dublin's gentry turned out to see the exile and from then on Aungier Street played to capacity crowds." Unfortunately, Nash provides no evidence to support these intriguing statements. See Nash, *The Provoked Wife*, 169-70.

⁶¹ See Appendix 2.1, which gives a calendar of Cibber's activities up through her years of involvement with Handel. See also Donald Burrows, "Handel's Dublin Performances," in *The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995, Selected Proceedings, Part 1*. Irish Musical Studies 4 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 46-70.

⁶² On March 20, 1733, the *Daily Advertiser* reported the following about *Deborah*: "Wherein Signor Senosini [sic], Signora Strada, Signora Gismundi [sic], Signora Bertoldi, Signor Montagnana, Miss Young, Miss Arne, Mrs Wright, and Mr Swartzs [sic], perform'd the principal Parts." In March of 1733, Cibber was, of course, still "Miss Arne," not yet married to Theophilus Cibber. Some sources claim that Cibber sang the role of Jael in this performance; however, this part was transposed down for Cibber for a 1744 revival, and was almost certainly sung by Celeste Gismondi in 1733. I am indebted to David Vickers for his generous comments via personal correspondence on this question.

version under the title of *Hymen*) by becoming ill and postponing the work's first performances. Many of the details of these events are lost or only hazily understood.⁶³

What is clear, however, is that Cibber's appearance in the premiere of *Messiah* went down in anecdotal history as a turning point in her biography, a moment that provides a glimpse of the importance of both Cibber's reputation and the role of sentimentalism in its rehabilitation. In April 1742, seven hundred people crowded into the Great Music Hall on Dublin's Fishamble Street to hear the premiere. By this point Cibber was a star, and for some audience members, this might have been the first opportunity they had to see her since her scandal. Many Dubliners would have seen her acting at Aungier Street; others, like the Reverend Patrick Delany, were squeamish about the stage, but Handelian oratorio provided a suitable circumstance in which to scrutinize the actress-singer.⁶⁴ At that point, Delany was among the Protestant Church of Ireland's most prominent preachers, Professor of Oratory and History at Trinity College, and the chancellor of both Christ Church and St. Patrick's Cathedrals. According to legend, Cibber's first performance of the alto aria "He was despised" made a deep impression on Delany; at the aria's conclusion, he supposedly rose to his feet and exclaimed, "Woman! Thy sins be forgiven thee!"⁶⁵ Among the Dublin audience, there could be no doubt exactly which sins the eminent clergyman meant.

An early account of this story says that Delany's reaction was due to "the extreme sensibility of her [Cibber's] manner."⁶⁶ Thomas Sheridan also heard this performance in Dublin, and reported that "no person of sensibility" could have heard Cibber's singing there without being moved.⁶⁷ And Charles Burney, who famously commented on Cibber's lack of musical knowledge, also claimed that no singer had ever surpassed her rendition of this aria:

This air, the first perhaps in our language, has been often sung by Italian singers of the greatest abilities, but never, I believe, in a manner so truly touching to an Englishman, as by Mrs. Cibber, for whom it was originally composed; and whose voice, though a mere thread, and knowledge of music inconsiderable, yet by a natural pathos, and perfect conception of the words,

⁶³ On what is known about these performances, see the following: Donald Burrows, "Handel and 'Alexander's Feast,'" *The Musical Times* 123, no. 60 (April, 1982): 252-55; Burrows, *Handel* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994), 265; John Roberts, "The Story of Handel's *Imeneo*," *Händel-Jahrbuch* 47 (2001): 337-84.

⁶⁴ Delany would not, for instance, attend the premiere of Handel's *Semele* in 1744, referring to it as a "profane story." See Letter from Mary Delany to Ann Dewes, February 21, 1744, quoted in Eisen and Eisen, *Händel-Handbuch* vol. 4, 373.

⁶⁵ This is the earliest form of this famous anecdote that I have yet found, dating from 1780, in Davies, *Memoirs* 2: 110-11). Mary Nash also cites this document (*The Provoked Wife*, 342), although she never quotes it as it stands there. The more familiar form of this quotation, found throughout the literature on *Messiah*, reads "Woman, for this be all thy sins forgiven thee." This appears to be a nineteenth-century rendering of the anecdote; Donald Burrows traced this version as far back as 1857 to Victor Schoelcher's biography of Handel, quoting "fragmenta" from the British Museum Library (*Handel, Messiah*, Cambridge Music Handbooks (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 111, n. 35). Familiarity with this anecdote was widespread by this date; New York's *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in September of that year gives the same quote. See *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 15 (June-November 1857), 501. The quotation first appeared in issue no. 88 (September, 1857).

⁶⁶ Davies, *Memoirs*, 2: 110.

⁶⁷ Thomas Sheridan, *British Education: or, the Source of the Disorders of Great Britain* (Dublin, 1756), 306.

she often penetrated the heart, when others, with infinitely greater voice and skill, could only reach the ear.⁶⁸

However affecting this redemptive performance might have been, the new plays that Cibber added to her repertory while in Dublin and soon afterwards in London marked the beginning of a new phase in her career, in which her line was significantly broadened. Figure 2.4 provides a list of the parts that Cibber added in the years after 1742:

<u>Author, Title</u>	<u>Character</u>	<u>Role type</u>
W. Congreve, <i>The Old Batchelor</i>	Laetitia	Disgruntled wife
J. Dryden, <i>The Spanish Fryar</i>	Queen Leonora	Corrupt monarch
N. Rowe, <i>The Fair Penitent</i>	Calista	"Fallen" woman
C. Cibber, <i>The Double Gallant</i>	Lady Dainty	Affected upperclass woman
J. Gay, <i>The Beggar's Opera</i>	Polly	Naive young woman
T. Southerne, <i>Oronooko</i>	Imoinda	Endangered chastity
C. Cibber/W. Shakespeare, <i>Richard III</i>	Lady Anne	Endangered chastity
B. Jonson, <i>Volpone, or, the Fox</i>	Celia	Endangered chastity
J. Vanbrugh, <i>The Provok'd Wife</i>	Lady Brute	Disgruntled wife
W. Wycherly, <i>The Country Wife</i>	Mrs. Margery Pinchwife	Disgruntled wife
C. Cibber, W. Shakespeare, <i>Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John</i>	Lady Constance	Grieving widow and mother
J. Thomson, <i>Tancred and Sigismunda</i>	Sigismunda	Endangered maiden
C. Cibber, <i>The Provoked Husband</i>	Lady Townly	Gambling addict
N. Rowe, <i>Jane Shore</i>	Alicia	Cruel spurned lover
N. Tate/W. Shakespeare, <i>King Lear, and His Three Daughters</i>	Cordelia	Endangered maiden
E. Moore, <i>The Foundling</i>	Fidelia	Endangered maiden
G. Farquhar, <i>The Beaux' Stratagem</i>	Mrs. Sullen	Disgruntled wife
W. Shakespeare, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Juliet	Star-crossed lover
S. Johnson, <i>Irene: A Tragedy</i>	Aspasia	Endangered chastity

Figure 2.4: Cibber's new roles in spoken theater, 1742-49, arranged chronologically by first appearance

The comparison with Figure 2.1 is striking. When Cibber reemerged after her publicized trial and sex scandal, the range of her line (or rather, lines) became significantly more complex than when she was a relative newcomer. Of the new roles that she added in Dublin, three of them, Laetitia, Leonora, and Lady Dainty, were hardly sentimental, let alone sympathetic. In comparison with Cibber's *ingénue* roles of the 1730s, that of Laetitia was the most extreme departure. In this biting Restoration comedy, a woman who has been married for some years to an older man declares herself impatient and unhappy and willingly cuckolds him with no consequences or remorse.⁶⁹ Queen Leonora was also guilty of reproachable behavior, using the affections of an admirer to condemn an innocent man to death, thereby putting that admirer in grave danger, all in the service of her own

⁶⁸ Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster-Abbey, and the Pantheon, May 26th, 27th, 29th; and June the 3d, and 5th, 1784 . . .* (London, 1785), 25-6.

⁶⁹ This was a role long played by Catherine Clive. Cibber and Clive were frequently juxtaposed on the stage, playing polar opposite roles, and their offstage personas were also understood to be contrasting. (See Berta Joncus, "In Wit Superior"). This context highlights just how much of a change it was for Cibber to portray this role in Congreve's play.

romantic desires. And Lady Dainty was absurdly affected, hypochondriacal, and fond only of foreign and exotic items and people, until her “reformation” by the play’s end (at which point she marries a “properly” rugged, English man).⁷⁰

Such a non-sentimental turn was something truly new for Cibber. With two of her new Dublin roles (Laetitia and Lady Dainty) she tried her hand at comedy in parts that ironized the seriousness of her earlier virginal sanctity. After her return to the London stage in the 1742-43 season, Cibber continued to take on new comic roles that rejected the ideals of the sentimental drama; she accepted parts that fit the “disgruntled wife” model, plays that bore little respect for the sanctity of the marital bond.⁷¹ Yet these comedic efforts were still dwarfed by the frequency of her tragic roles. Cibber wasn’t made of funny stuff; quite to the contrary, as one admirer put it after her death, “Cibber, Sir, seemed to need and dispose of your tears from the delicacy of her frame.”⁷²

Peter Holland has demonstrated how actors, starting in the Restoration, often inhabited different lines in comedy than in tragedy: “The type established in one is not transferable to the other. . . . There are two separate traditions, two lines for the actor. The tragic line need not affect the comic at all.”⁷³ Yet Cibber’s sudden addition of new character types cannot be explained simply by her newfound comic muse. Even in tragedy, her roles of the 1740s were no longer unsullied. Nicholas Rowe’s *The Fair Penitent* provided a striking example of how Cibber’s sexual past followed her onto the stage to inform her professional activities. Rowe’s play was famous by the eighteenth century as the first of the so-called “she-tragedies,” works that, like sentimental comedies, focused on the plight of a young woman, though without the happy endings and virtuous behavior of the comic genre. Cibber’s role in this play was that of Calista, a “fallen” woman whose engagement to an upstanding young man brings her to a breaking point. She tries desperately to convince her former lover to marry her. He confesses his unattenuated sensual desire for her, but refuses to make an “honest woman” out of her. The play ends with the suicides and murders expected in tragic genres, and its closing lines reinforce the seriousness with which seventeenth- and eighteenth-century audiences took sexual purity: “By such examples are we taught to prove, / The sorrows that attend unlawful love; / Death, or some worse misfortunes, soon divide / The injur’d bridegroom from his guilty bride.”⁷⁴ Cibber also played in Rowe’s other influential she-tragedy, *The Tragedy of Jane Shore*. Although her new line might have predicted that she would play the title character (a royal concubine and adulteress drawn in a sympathetic light despite her sexual sins), she instead played Alicia, the worldly, jealous lover who exhibits harsh cruelty toward the suffering Jane, right up to the moment of her death.⁷⁵ In such roles, Cibber was no longer the model virgin, but

⁷⁰ When Cibber played this hypochondriac, the newspapers advertised it as “her first time of performing since her late Indisposition,” indicating that she had cancelled several Dublin performances preceding this one. (Quoted in Avery et al, *The London Stage*, entry for April 5, 1742.) Knowledge of this absence would have added yet another straddling of the fourth wall, this time an unabashedly comic one.

⁷¹ In *The Old Batchelor*, *The Beaux Stratagem*, *The Provok’d Wife*, and *The Country Wife*, Cibber’s characters flirted with the idea of an affair, cuckolded their husbands, or managed to escape an unhappy marriage.

⁷² James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons Interspersed with Anecdotes of Authors and Actors* (Philadelphia, 1827), 40.

⁷³ Holland, *The Ornament of Action*, 80.

⁷⁴ Nicholas Rowe, *The Fair Penitent: A Tragedy* (London, 1754), 82.

⁷⁵ As a point of comparison, it should be noted that Anne Oldfield played the role of Jane Shore. Cibber inherited many of her roles from Oldfield, and it is interesting that their lineage breaks here.

the pitiable, or even occasionally reprehensible, subject of morality tales. From Amelia to Alicia was a long way to fall.

Although Cibber's dramatic roles were broadened by the early 1740s, she by no means abandoned her established "line;" her dramatic possibilities were enriched rather than transformed. Figure 2.5 provides a count of her performances in spoken theater as advertised in newspapers between 1742 and 1749, arranged by number of appearances.⁷⁶ Out of 341 advertised performances, Cibber played the morally compromised Calista in *The Fair Penitent* far more often than any of her other roles; the unsympathetic character of Alicia in *Jane Shore* also counted among her most frequently performed parts. Yet Cibber continued to play innocent women, most often as Desdemona in *Othello* and as Monimia in *The Orphan*. Figure 2.6 shows that, in terms of total number of performances organized by character type, Cibber continued in her established line for the majority of her appearances. Comedic disgruntled wives and tragic corrupt and "fallen" women comprised less than a third of her performances. The rest were roles that featured her as innocent, good, or oppressed. Alicia may have joined her repertoire, but Cibber's onstage persona remained principally empathetic.

Throughout Cibber's long career, audiences' heartstrings continued to vibrate sympathetically with the actress. They evidently believed, along with Hill, that she was "naturally qualified" for virtuous, didactic roles. Indeed, if any "personality theory" holds relevance in her case, it is the conflation that eighteenth-century audiences made between Cibber's internal and external characters. For instance, a poem in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1742 enthusiastically memorialized her ability to move audiences in song:

Now tuneful as Apollo's lyre,
She stands amid the vocal choir;
If solemn measures slowly move,
Or Lydian airs invite to Love,
Her looks inform the trembling strings,
And raise each passion, that she sings;
The wanton Graces hover round,
Perch on her lips, and tune the sound.⁷⁷

Here, Cibber exhibited marvelous power over the music that was produced around her. The described "looks" were surely her famously expressive face, recalled by Thomas Davies in 1780: "In grief and tenderness her eyes looked as if they swam in tears; in rage and despair

⁷⁶ Data gathered from the following sources: Avery et al, *The London Stage*, Greene and Clarke, *The Dublin Stage*, and private correspondence with John Greene, who provided entries that were omitted from his publication.

⁷⁷ Sylvanus Urban, Gent., "To Mrs. Cibber, on her Acting at Dublin," *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 12 (1742), 158.

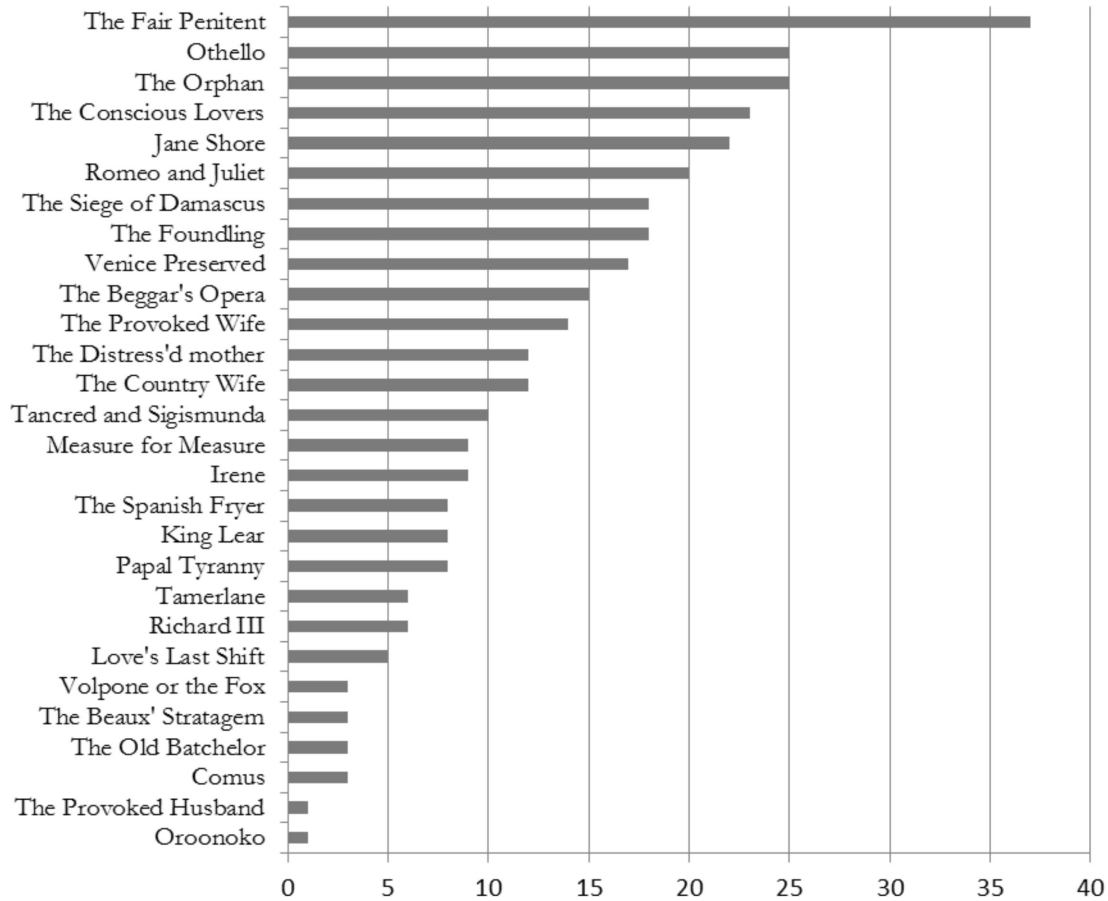


Figure 2.5: Cibber's appearances as announced in London and Dublin newspapers, 1742-1749

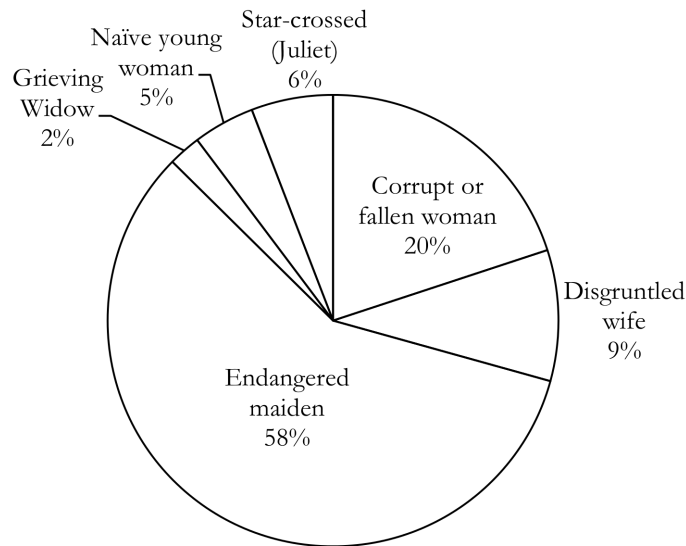


Figure 2.6: Cibber's appearances grouped by "line," out of 341 appearances advertised in Dublin and London newspapers, 1742-1749 (see Figures 2.1 and 2.4 for play titles)

they seemed to dart flashes of fire.”⁷⁸ This countenance was strong enough to lead the poet to confound creator and performer, to ascribe to Cibber a power over the orchestra’s execution. The strings tremble at her delicate “looks,” implying that she holds spontaneous compositional power over them, or perhaps over the composer (Handel?), whose knowledge of her particular traits informed an affective decision. Composers commonly adapted music to suit singers’ strengths, yet here it is not vocal ability that is accommodated, but acting ability, physical characteristics, and sentimental appeal.

This poem appeared in the Dublin-based magazine in March 1742, and the snippet above has been occasionally quoted in the Handel literature because of the obvious connection to the premiere of *Messiah*.⁷⁹ What is not noted in these reports, however, is that the quotation comes from a long encomium that throughout collapses the distinction between actress and role, linking gentleness and virtue with Cibber’s being and true inner nature. The poem begins,

O Thou, to whom thy poet pays
The tribute of his earliest praise!
The friendly song, to merit due,
And honestly reserv’d for you!
Amidst the many, grave, or gay,
Parts, that with varying grace you play,
MARIA,* tell! for few divine,
The part, that is by nature thine.
In thee, with art’s immingling dyes
So kindly blended, nature lies,
So close the wedded pair convene,
That not a thought can pry between.

*(Maria was Cibber’s middle name.)

Once again, “Nature” is invoked in an effort to express the uniqueness of this affecting actress. While she might have played a variety of roles by 1742, there was only one type that was “kindly blended” with Cibber’s very self, for which it seemed she was created.

These purported links between Cibber’s self and her onstage persona typify claims that were made about her by admirers and colleagues throughout her career. John Hill, playwright, journalist, and critic (and career botanist) saw in Cibber an ineffable spirit of pathos. In his treatise on acting, he praised her depiction of the main character in Otway’s *The Orphan*:

It will be easily seen . . . that the art of delivering a sentiment justly, or, as we otherwise call it, the truth of recitation, can never be treated methodically, or deliver’d in the form of a science. . . . [This approach] would be of no more

⁷⁸ Davies, *Memoirs*, 109-10. Cibber’s eyes also moved the poem’s anonymous author. In a portion of the poem not often quoted, he writes, “The little eye’s pellucid round / Thus holds the widely verdant ground, / Sea, air, and starry heav’n, dispos’d / In order due, a world enclos’d.”

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London: A. and C. Black, 1955), 544; Christopher Hogwood, *Handel* (New York, 1987; rev. ed. 2007), 175.

use to the performer . . . than the description, if it were possible to describe it, of the manner in which Mrs. *Cibber* engages our affection, our tears, in the character of *Monimia*, (in which she seems inspir'd with the very genius of the author who wrote the part, and with the very soul of the heroine whom she represents) would be to another actress, who would wish to succeed by imitation of that manner, tho' without the genius or the soul that gave existence to it in the original.⁸⁰

Above all, Cibber's pathos was *natural*, not garnered from "scientific" application of rules or method, but drawn from her inner being. No one could play the role of *Monimia* in the way that Cibber had without affecting little more than hollow imitation of her genuine impression, according to Hill.

A similar opinion was expressed by David Williams, philosopher and founder of the Royal Literary Fund.⁸¹ He composed a lengthy letter to Cibber's long-time collaborator, David Garrick, in which he compared Garrick's artful acting unfavorably to Cibber's natural style:

The criterion by which I judge of an actor is the degree of power he has of making me forget that he is one. This Mrs. Cibber possessed in a greater degree than any one I ever saw. I have often thought her actually mad; — and when she breathed the soft and distressful accents of an unhappy love; — she occupied my whole heart, and so fascinated my eyes, that I always imagined myself in the scene, and viewing the very spot where the poet had placed her. — I have felt the highest admiration when I have seen you in your capital parts: but it has been only admiration. Nothing but nature could well exceed many of your imitations; — and Mrs. Cibber was nature. She felt the passions in the highest degree; they tuned her voice and shaped her countenance. You model your's by an art . . . Hence the difference in the universality of your talents. She entered only on those parts for which nature had formed her; and expressed the passions which she felt.⁸²

Like the author of the 1742 poem in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Williams collapses the distinction between role and actress. Cibber, in her scenes of tearful pleading, mad raving, and pathetic lamentation, was not acting — she was *being*, tapping into her own core. Williams would also distance Cibber from the whole of the acting profession: "I may have erred in calling her an actress," he enthusiastically conceded. "She expressed a few passions

⁸⁰ John Hill, *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing, Interspersed with Theatrical Anecdotes, Critical Remarks on Plays, and Occasional Observations on Audiences* (London, 1750), 183. This treatise is sometimes wrongly claimed to be by Aaron Hill, Handel's correspondent and friend, who was also Susanna Cibber's coach early in her acting career. See, for instance, Molly Donnelly, "Susannah Maria Arne Cibber" (DMA diss., University of Maryland, 1991), 8.

⁸¹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Williams, David (1738–1816)" (online edition, accessed February 8, 2013).

⁸² David Williams, *A Letter to David Garrick, Esq. On His Conduct as Principal Manager and Actor at Drury-Lane* (London, 1772), 16-17.

in their natural tone; but they were her own constitutional ones; tho' happily delineated by the poet."⁸³

Even at the height of scandal, Cibber could be portrayed as an empathetic figure. In 1739, an author writing with the pseudonym "Francis Truelove" published a pamphlet capitalizing on the Sloper scandal. Truelove was not above summarizing the juiciest details of the court trial, but at least nominally sided with the unfortunate wife. He presented the details of the case with an air of objectivity, but elsewhere moralized: "What must the World imagine, if . . . there should be a Monster amongst Mankind, who could submit to be the Cause of his own Shame? And even by *consenting* to his Wife's Prostitution, at once break through all the Ties of *Religion*, Honour and Honesty; the most unpolish'd, unciviliz'd Barbarian, or remote *Indian*, would scarce believe there could be such a Man."⁸⁴ Having thus thrashed Theophilus, Truelove laments Susanna's absence from the stage, urges the audience to accept that she was not principally responsible for her crimes, and imagines how powerful her return could be:

Mrs. C—r, as an Actress, hath been very well received by the Town; I cannot answer how far the late unhappy Accident may affect her, but am persuaded, if the Audience were once convinced she is injured, she might again appear in the Light of an excellent Actress . . . in the Characters she was wont to represent. And sure no one could see her in the *feigned Grief* in the part of *Amanda*, in *Love's Last Shift*, but must pity her, for the Similitude it bears to the Cause of her *real Sorrow*.⁸⁵

Truelove here makes a parallel between Theophilus, Susanna, and the characters in *Love's Last Shift* (Colley Cibber's most famous sentimental comedy), in which a husband who has abandoned his wife to escape gambling debts is eventually reformed by her unfailing marital virtue and love. Truelove thus drew attention to the husband's own habits of philandering and especially to his gambling, the putative inspiration for the despicable arrangement with Sloper, "Mr. Benefit." In so doing, the author shows that he recognized the effect that such a role *in propria persona* could have. He ends his essay by hoping that readers "on the Side of Good-nature will be her Friend" and welcome Susanna back onto the stage.

There is not a hint of irony in Truelove's essay until its concluding lines, quoted from Matthew Prior:

When poor, weak Women go astray,
Their Stars are more in fault than they.

Truelove draws here from Prior's ribald poem about the doctor Hans Carvel (1700), who dreams that Satan has given him a magical ring to ensure his roving wife's fidelity. Believing himself to have placed his finger into the ring, Carvel has actually, as his wife tells him, "thrust [his] finger G-D knows where," an act that, temporarily at least, would indeed

⁸³ Williams, *A Letter*, 19-20.

⁸⁴ Francis Truelove, *The Comforts of Matrimony* (London, 1739), 8.

⁸⁵ Truelove, *The Comforts*, 9.

block any other man's entrance. Was Truelove clumsily ridiculing Theophilus in this passage, or, by quoting these words (issued in Prior's poem from the mouth of the roving and disgruntled wife), making it clear that his entire plea on the actress's behalf was a farce? The answer is not forthcoming from Truelove's text alone. Such tension neatly summarizes the complicated public reception of this actress at the period when Handel began creating roles for her.

"I Have Some Hopes That Mrs. Cibber Will Sing For Me" — Handel's Revisions

The complexity of Cibber's public persona could not have been lost on Handel; its power was surely familiar to him when Delaney publicly absolved Cibber during *Messiah's* premiere. By the time that Cibber had re-established herself in London in the autumn of 1742, Handel was revising *Samson*, first prepared in 1741, enlarging the part of Micah with Cibber in mind. Cibber's revised role in this oratorio stood in sharp contrast to the part of Dalila, performed by Cibber's real-life rival, Catherine Clive.⁸⁶ The two women served like opposite sides of a moral coin in this oratorio, Cibber's part a virtuous compass for the title character, Clive's the seductive temptress. Thus, Handel did not shy away from putting a moral message into the mouth of this complex public figure.

Nevertheless, the fact that Cibber was singing the part of Micah meant that these moral precepts were now being delivered by a male character, a gender bending that distanced Cibber's persona from the libretto's world, reducing its potential for contaminating public perception of the libretto's message. Cibber never would sing the part of the distressed heroine for Handel; that role fell to the younger Giulia Frasi (see Chapter 1). Instead, *Samson* established a precedent: in that oratorio and Cibber's remaining new works for Handel, *Hercules* and *Belshazzar*, Cibber took on male roles who pronounced the pieces' central moral messages. Cibber, as always, presented a consistent musico-dramatic portrait: pathetic musical language and the theme of empathy unite the characters to one another and tie them to the actress who "seemed to need and dispose of your tears" in the sentimental and tragic roles in which she specialized.

To suit Cibber's newly masculinized theatrical presence, Handel provided her with a lower vocal range than she had previously used. In the early stages of her career, Cibber sang true soprano parts. When she began singing with Handel, she was granted deep, throaty alto parts. Figure 2.7 provides the ranges of her non-Handelian roles and those that she sang for Handel from 1743 onwards. As can be seen from this figure, Cibber's lower ranges were used more frequently as years passed, but as late as the 1760s, she was still singing high soprano music on some occasions.⁸⁷ Handel consistently wrote for her lower registers more extensively than did other composers, and in *Samson* he used the very bottom of her range, pushing down to a striking g in "O mirror of our fickle state."

⁸⁶ See Joncus, "In Wit Superior."

⁸⁷ Molly Donnelly has pointed out that as late as 1761, Cibber was still singing pieces with high ranges, reaching up to a". For example, she sang in this high range in "Ye fair possess'd of ev'ry charm," composed by her brother for use in the play *The Way to Keep Him* in 1761. See Donnelly, *Susannah Maria Arne Cibber*, 53–4.

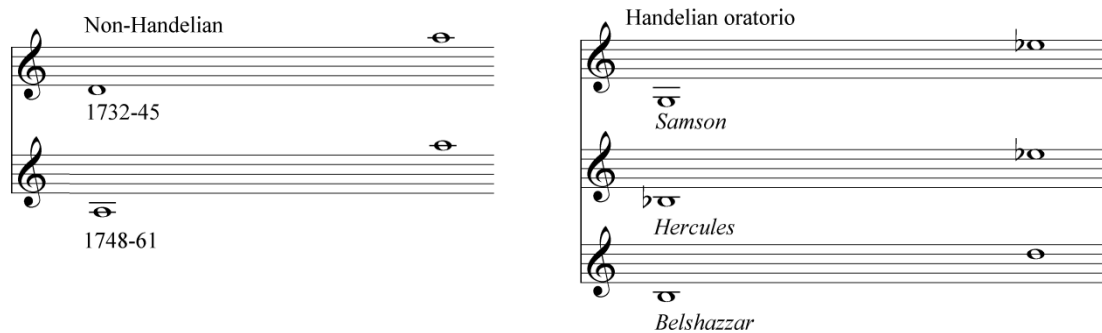


Figure 2.7: Ranges of Cibber's arias and accompanied recitatives⁸⁸

The revisions Handel made for Cibber in *Samson* and *Hercules*, works basically complete at the time that Cibber joined the casts, show the lengths to which the composer was willing to go to feature this performer. In the case of *Samson*, the score's complex history has recently been untangled by Hans Dieter Clausen.⁸⁹ A note in the autograph (*B-Lbl* RM 20.f.6) indicates that Handel completed the first act on September 29, 1741.⁹⁰ Soon thereafter, John Christopher Smith prepared the first version of the conducting score

⁸⁸ The data for the non-Handelian portion of this table were compiled from the following sources. (Parenthetical dates give the years in which Cibber first sang the songs in question, not necessarily the years of composition or first performances.)

Lampe, from *Amelia*: "Amelia Wishes When She Dies," "My Charmer's Very Name," "The Youngling Ravished From Its Nest" (1732); Arne, from *Rosamond*: "Beneath Some Hoary Mountain," "Rise, Glory, Rise," "Was Ever Nymph Like Rosamond" (1733); Arne, from *The Opera of Operas*: "In That Dear Hope" (1733); Charke, from *The Festival* (1733): "Sweet Linnets," "Ah How Inviting;" Seedo, song used in *The Lottery*: "I've Often Hear" (1735); Boyce, song used in *The Conscious Lovers*: "From Place to Place Forlorn I Go" (1736); Anonymous, from *Othello*: "The Willow Song" (1736); Eccles, song used in *The Provok'd Wife*: "When Yielding First to Damon's Flame" (1742); Carey, songs used in *The Provok'd Husband*: "Stand by! Clear the Way!," "Oh I'll Have a Husband and Marry" (1745); Arne, song used in *The Foundling*: "For a Shape and a Bloom" (1748); Arne, song used in *The Oracle*: "Would You in Her Your Love Be Blest" (1752); Arne, from *Alfred*: "See Liberty, Virtue, and Honour," "Come, Calm Content" (1754); Michael Arne, song from *The Winter's Tale*: "Come My Good Shepherd" (1756); Thomas Augustine Arne, song from *The Way to Keep Him*: "Ye Fair Possess'd of Ev'ry Charm" (1761). I am indebted to Molly Donnelly's Appendix 4-A for much of this data (*Susannah Maria Arne Cibber*, 37-54).

⁸⁹ Hans Dieter Clausen, ed. *Samson*. Hallische Händel-Ausgabe, ser. 1, vol. 18. 2 vols. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2011. Vol. 2 contains Clausen's Kritischer Bericht and Appendixes. See also Dean's discussion of the *Samson* autograph in *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*, op cit. I have also cross-referenced these scholars' work with my own inspection of the Harvester microfilm image of the autograph (British Library RM 20.f.6).

⁹⁰ At this stage, Handel left a number of the recitatives as only roughly copied text, with no musical setting whatsoever. See, for instance, my discussion of "Woman At First Seems Meek" below, which never received a musical setting. By inspecting the text spacing of the accompanied recitatives in the autograph, Clausen has reached the conclusion that these movements, too, were initially copied into the autograph with no music. Smith's copy of the autograph also left these stretches without accompaniment. See Clausen, *Samson*, 1: xxi, n. 8.

for Act I (*D-Hs M A/1048*), apparently while Handel was working on Acts 2 and 3.⁹¹ By October 12, 1742 — after Handel’s return from his collaborations with Cibber in Dublin — the autograph was substantially revised to feature Micah in Act 1; as Clausen has shown, this was the first stage of revision that Handel undertook, adding to and deleting from the part music that stood in the original autograph version.⁹² Figure 2.8 shows the main changes that Micah’s role underwent between the original version and the first performance.

<u>Micah’s movements in <i>Samson</i> of 1741</u>	<u>Micah’s movements in <i>Samson</i> premiere of 1743</u>
Act I	Act I
Scene 2 Recit, secco: Oh change beyond report Chorus: O mirror of our fickle state	Scene 2 Recit, secco: Oh change beyond report Air: O Mirror of our fickle state (head-motive and key retained)
Recit (with Samson): Whom have I to complain of? Recit, secco: Since light so necessary is Recit with Samson: You see, my friends	Recit (with Samson): Whom have I to complain of? Recit, accomp: Since light so necessary is Recit with Samson: You see, my friends
Scene 3 Recit with Manoa: Brethren, and men of Dan Recit: Oh ever-failing trust Air: God of our fathers Recit secco: There lies our hope	Scene 3 Recit with Manoa: Brethren, and men of Dan Recit and air transposed from A minor to D minor and assigned to “an Israelite” tenor. Recit secco: There lies our hope Arioso: Then long eternity shall greet your bliss (added for Cibber) Air: Joys that are pure (added for Cibber)
Act II	Act II
Scene 3 Recit with Samson: She’s gone! Aria: It is not virtue	Scene 3 Recit with Samson: She’s gone! Transposed from G minor to D minor and re-assigned to “an Israelite woman”

Figure 2.8: Revisions for Micah before *Samson* premiere, 1743. Bold typeface indicates substantial changes.

Handel’s revisions for Micah created a character capable of great empathy to his fellow men. The first addition was “O mirror of our fickle state,” which began life as a chorus.⁹³ This change moved Micah’s musical presence to the beginning of the oratorio (Act 1, Scene 2), whereas his first substantial number had originally come well into the third scene. After this revision, he was the first Israelite other than Samson to sing an aria, thus foregrounding this pair as the main characters among the Israelite prisoners.

⁹¹ Clausen has shown that there was a long gap between Smith’s copying of Act 1 and his copying of Acts 2 and 3. The conducting score’s later acts represented the oratorio’s revised version at the time of their initial copying; the conducting score’s first act, however, required pasting and emendation. See Clausen, *Samson*, 2: 438.

⁹² Clausen, *Samson*, 1: xxi. See also 2: 430-439, esp. pp. 433 and 438. These changes entered by fits and starts; Clausen has traced four phases of revision of Act 1 evident in the autograph and conducting scores.

⁹³ See British Library RM 20.f.6, ff. 17v-23v. The aria version is inserted on ff. 18r-19v.

From Micah's introduction, he serves as the principal intercessor between the audience and the oratorio's world. He is the first Jewish character to speak other than Samson, and he introduces his aria with a recitative text that remorsefully reacts to the hero's condition:

O Change beyond Report, Thought, or Belief!
See how he lies with languish'd Head, unpropp'd!
Abandon'd! past all Hope! Can this be he?
Heroick *Samson*? whom no Strength of man,
Nor Fury of the fiercest Beast cou'd quell?

Having adopted the role of narrator, Micah goes on to introduce every character and important detail of the work. It is Micah who announces that Samson is blind: "Which shall we first bewail, / Thy Bondage, or lost Sight?"⁹⁴ With this recitative, Micah introduces what is surely the moment of highest pathos in the oratorio, Samson's "Total Eclipse."⁹⁵ At the close of the hero's lamentation, Micah introduces Samson's "rev'rend sire, old Manoah, / With careful Steps, and Locks as white as Down."⁹⁶ Later, Micah ushers Dalila in and out of the drama, and he does the same for each of the villainous Harapha's entrances and exits.⁹⁷ He again welcomes Manoah onto the stage in Act 3, Scene 2, and in the oratorio's final scene he announces the arrival of an Israelite messenger who brings news of Samson's death and the destruction of the Philistines' Hall of Dagon. Finally, Micah has the honor of welcoming Samson's dead body into the mind's eye of the audience with the recitative that comes just after the "Dead March" ("The body comes").⁹⁸ Micah is thus the first point of contact between the work and its auditors, the mediator of the creators' message. Micah's voice, and hence Cibber's, was the force that shaped and clarified the drama's progress.

If Micah was empathic with the audience, he was even more so with the characters in his world. Lamentation is a vital part of this oratorio, and Micah sings some of its most poignant pieces. "O mirror of our fickle state" follows Samson's first substantial music, the aria "Torments, alas," in which he describes his pains in prison. Micah's text, sung while observing Samson in his downtrodden condition is as deeply saddening as it is direct:

Oh Mirrouer of our fickle State!
In Birth, in Strength, in Deeds how great!
From highest Glory fall'n so low,
Sunk in the deep Abyss of Woe.

⁹⁴ Act 1, Scene 2.

⁹⁵ This piece's sentiment proved too much for even the composer to bear without tears. One of his contemporaries related how Handel broke down during a performance in 1755, after Handel's own blindness had taken root. The reference comes from a letter by one C. Gilbert, who wrote, "I was told, at the total eclipse in *Samson*, he cry'd like an infant. Thank God I did not see it." This letter is printed in full in Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, *Music and Theatre in Handel's World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 290-1.

⁹⁶ Act 1, Scene 2.

⁹⁷ Act 2, Scene 4; Act III Scene 1 (twice each, entrance and exit).

⁹⁸ Act 3, Scene 3.

In setting this text, Handel moves from the gloomy C minor of “Torments, alas” to the even darker world of F minor.

The aria’s vocal line inhabits the deep, throaty range that Handel must have considered the most movingly expressive register for the “virtuous male” version of Cibber’s persona (Example 2.1). Particularly striking in “O mirror of our fickle state” is the word painting in m. 37, with its descent to b-natural. Handel took this gesture a step further in mm. 78ff, with a florid depiction of the term “deep,” pushing all the way down to g.⁹⁹ Handel designed this aria not only to showcase musical talents, but to allow Cibber to express the “depths” of sorrow in plaintive tones.

Example 2.1: *Samson*, “O mirror of our fickle state,” mm. 36-38 (top) and 78-82 (bottom)

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the aria "O mirror of our fickle state" from Handel's *Samson*. Both systems are in F minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. The top system, measures 36-38, features a vocal line for Micah and a Continuo line. The vocal line begins with a rest in measure 36, followed by a descending melodic line in measure 37 that reaches a low G (b-natural), and continues in measure 38. The Continuo line provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. The bottom system, measures 78-82, also features a vocal line for Micah and a Continuo line. The vocal line begins with a rest in measure 78, followed by a highly ornate, descending melodic line in measure 79 that reaches a very low G, and continues in measures 80-82. The Continuo line is mostly rests, with a few notes at the end of the system.

The source of this sorrow is empathy for Samson, and Handel therefore ensured that Micah’s music resonated with the hero’s (Example 2.2). As Samson had in “Torments, alas,” Micah begins monophonically.¹⁰⁰ Samson began with a tortured descending diminished fourth; Micah begins with exactly the same melodic gesture, effectively echoing (or “mirroring”) the sentiments expressed by the character with whom Micah empathizes and

⁹⁹ These measures are simplified in the conducting score, but it is tempting to believe that this was the version that Cibber sang and that the emendation came at a later date, when a different singer took over the role. (Donald Burrows implies as much in his suppositions about the revision history of this aria. See Burrows, *Samson* (London: Novello, 2005), xi.) Walsh’s early edition, published just one month after the work’s premiere, contains a shortened version of “O mirror,” which seems to indicate that some abbreviation was in fact undertaken during the oratorio’s first run. However, this early edition does contain the measure with the G, and its indication “Sung by Mrs Cibber” argues in favor of the low passage being present at the premiere ((London, 1743), 22-3). One of the later copies of the full score, which Donald Burrows believes to have derived from the 1750 revival of the oratorio, features the shortest version, not containing the G, indicating a gradual simplification of what began life as an ambitious and substantial air. (The shortened version is in the copy of *Samson* in the Coke Collection, Harvester MS 89. See Burrows, *Samson*, xi.)

¹⁰⁰ This decision was also apparently a revision. Handel’s conducting score contains a ritornello, but the earliest printed edition by Walsh (1743) presents the air without its introduction.

establishing a musical kinship between the two. Since the characters' two introductory arias come back-to-back, the effect could have been easily perceived. The physicality of this gesture communicates the pain that Micah feels, pain comparable (and musically identical) with Samson's.

Example 2.2 Samson, "Torments, alas," opening (top) and "O mirror of our fickle state," opening (bottom)

The image displays two musical excerpts. The top excerpt is for Samson's aria "Torments, alas!". It features a vocal line in treble clef and a Continuo line in bass clef, both in 3/4 time and D minor. The lyrics are "Tor - ments, a - las! are not con fin'd". The bottom excerpt is for Micah's aria "O mirror of our fickle state". It also features a vocal line in treble clef and a Continuo line in bass clef, both in 3/4 time and D minor. The lyrics are "O mir - ror of our - fi - ckle state".

The school of moral sense philosophy held such palpability of sensation through observation of a fellow man's suffering as a fundamental tenet. Following the third Earl of Shaftesbury, these philosophers took sensory experience seriously.¹⁰¹ David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), for instance, argued that instinctual response to vice and virtue manifested itself in literal pain and pleasure (or "uneasiness and satisfaction") within the moral soul.¹⁰² In 1759, Adam Smith pushed the notion even further, linking bodily reactions with sympathy, the core of his moral system in *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Although Smith acknowledged the Aristotelian distrust of the body, he nevertheless used sensory response as proof of natural morality.¹⁰³ As had Hume before him, Smith stressed that the moral sense could generate internal pain for a witness to another person's suffering. Smith describes an individual forced to watch his brother tortured upon the rack: "By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body and become in some measure him . . . and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what

¹⁰¹ On the physicality of the culture of sensibility and on shared suffering as part of an ethics of empathy, see G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 67ff. See also the following: Norman Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion: an Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 2 (1976): 195-218; George S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Toward Defining the Origins of Sensibility," *Studies in the Eighteenth Century III: Papers presented at the Third David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra 1973*, ed. R.F. Brissenden and J.C. Eade (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976); Barker-Benfield, "The Origins of Anglo-American Sensibility," in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85-6.

¹⁰² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London, 1740), 2: 36-8.

¹⁰³ Smith devoted an entire chapter to the nobility and communicability of feelings produced by what he called "the imagination" as opposed to the body (Section 2, Chapter 1, "Of the Passions Which Take Their Origin from the Body").

he feels.”¹⁰⁴ Smith’s words here postdate Hamilton’s librettos by a little less than a decade, and they reflect a tendency that had begun with Shaftesbury, Locke, and the whole empiricist tradition of British philosophy, a push to raise the status of all the senses in systems of ethics and morality.

Handel excised from *Samson* anything that distracted from this unilateral presentation of Cibber’s empathetic character. Micah’s first music was to have been “God of our fathers,” which the composer reassigned to an anonymous Israelite tenor.¹⁰⁵ The printed libretto, however, still indicates Micah as the soloist here, hinting that the change was a very late one.¹⁰⁶ Notations in the autograph show that Cibber’s presence was responsible for the removal of this air. At the bottom of the preceding recitative (“O ever-failing trust in mortal strength,” f. 20v), Handel scratched out Micah’s name. A second level of emendation, in a different pen and on two different places on the page, indicates that the air was re-assigned to Micah when castrato Gaetano Guadagni played the role in 1750.

This omission could hardly have been due to concerns about Cibber’s technical abilities. The alto version of “God of our fathers” is of limited compass (a-d”) that falls well within Cibber’s normal ranges described above.¹⁰⁷ Its technical challenges, which consist of only a few bars of melismas and leaps of no more than a sixth and an occasional octave, would also have been well within Cibber’s reach.

The aria’s text provides a hint as to why it may have been removed from Micah’s part when Cibber sang, but returned to Micah when other singers took over:

God of our Fathers, what is Man,
So proud, so vain, so great in Story?
His Fame, a Blast; his Life, a Span;
A Bubble at the height of Glory:
Oft’ he that’s most exalted high,
Unseemly falls in Human Eye.

This text, especially its closing couplet, would have expressed sensitive ideas for Cibber, who had been so “exalted high” as the theatrical representative of virtue before her recent fall. An aria about “unseemliness” was perhaps something that Cibber was unwilling to sing — or Handel was unwilling to have her sing — during her first reappearance before the composer’s London audiences.

Further evidence of expurgation can be found in other omissions. In Act 2, Micah originally had just one air, “It is not virtue.” At some point before the premiere, it was taken from Cibber and transposed up to D Minor for one Miss Edwards, a pupil of Kitty Clive.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh, 1767), 2-3. Smith’s citation of Aristotle’s association between feeling and lower orders of animals is on p. 40 of this edition.

¹⁰⁵ See Burrows, *Samson*, xi. The first eighteenth century edition (Walsh’s) states that Mr. Low sang this number (p. 25). This is also indicated in the autograph, in a personnel list given by Handel during the second stage of revision; see Clausen, *Samson*, 2: 433.

¹⁰⁶ Hamilton, *Samson: An Oratorio* (London, 1743), 10.

¹⁰⁷ This version is printed in Appendix 1b of Clausen, *Samson*.

¹⁰⁸ “Miss Edwards” was almost certainly Mary Edwards, the daughter of a singer named Thomas. She later married the Drury Lane actor Thomas Mozeen. See Philip H. Highfill, Kalman A. Burnim, et al, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 10: 370, s.v. ‘Mozeen, Mrs. Thomas, Mary?, née

Handel indicates this change in the autograph by writing “Miss Edwards in Soprano.”¹⁰⁹ Walsh’s published score of 1743 also heads the aria “Sung by Miss Edwards.”¹¹⁰ As it originally stood, the melody would have suited Cibber’s skills without adaptation; its range is rather limited (c’-d’), and it features profoundly affective passages that she could have delivered with dramatic flair. Its text again provides a possible explanation for reassignment.

It is not Virtue, Valour, Wit,
Or Comeliness of Grace,
That Woman’s Love can truly hit,
Or in her Heart claim Place.
Still wav’ring where their Choice to fix,
Too oft’ they choose the Wrong;
So much Self-love does rule the Sex,
They nothing else love long.

One other omission similarly softened Micah’s role, sparing Cibber from indicting her own sex. It is a recitative text indicated in the autograph that does not appear in the printed libretto or the other musical sources:

Woman at first seems meek,
But when once joined, a Thorn,
Intestine proves, a cleaving Mischief.
Such outward Beauty’s lavish’d on the Sex
That inward Gifts are left for haste unfinished.¹¹¹

The blatant misogyny of such words would hardly have bothered a mid-century listener, and it would not have seemed particularly odd for them to issue from a woman’s lips. Such perorations are frequent from female characters of the period, and a woman did, in fact, sing “It is not virtue” in the first performance. Yet these revisions would have been in practice prudent given the assaults on Cibber’s own virtue, so unfeelingly broadcast in the printed trials of 1739–40. The omissions also created an always empathetic character who never condemned the humbled hero for his sins of the flesh.

This unwavering focus on empathy carried over to Cibber’s next role. In *Hercules*, Cibber played the part of Lichas, identified by the cast list only as a “herald” who acted throughout the drama as assistant to Dejanira, Hercules’s wife. Cibber once again played a

Edwards.” See also *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Edwards (ii) (Mrs Mozeen; first name unknown),” by Winton Dean (accessed February 15, 2013).

¹⁰⁹ RM 20.f.6, f. 31v.

¹¹⁰ On this aria and its keys in extant sources, see Mark Stahura, “The Publishing Copy Text of Handel’s *Samson*,” *The Journal of Musicology* 4 (1985-6), 209.

¹¹¹ RM 20.f.6, f.31v. This incomplete recitative was based on two disparate sets of lines from Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*: Lines 1025-1027 (“Is it for that such outward ornament / Was lavish’t on thir Sex, that inward gifts / Were left for haste unfinish’t, judgment scant . . .”) and Lines 1035-1040 (“Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil, / Soft, modest, meek, demure, / Once join’d, the contrary she proves, a thorn / Intestin, far within defensive arms / A cleaving mischief, in his way to vertue / Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms”).

close confidant of a suffering principal character, providing plenty of opportunities to show capacity for empathy.

Handel basically created Cibber's role anew when he revised *Hercules* before its first performance. Like the part of Micah, that of Lichas had been fully drafted before Cibber confirmed involvement with the project. A series of letters to Charles Jennens shows the uncertainty of her availability and hints when Handel's revisions may have taken place. In June 1744, Handel wrote to Jennens about his preparation of the libretto for *Belshazzar* and mentioned the possibility of Cibber's involvement in the upcoming season:

I have some hopes that Mrs Cibber will sing for me. She sent me word from Bath (where she is now) that she would perform for me next winter with great pleasure if it did not interfere with her playing, but I think I can obtain Mr Riches's permission (with whom she is engaged to play in Covent Garden House) since so obligingly he has gave Leave to Mr Beard and Mr Reinhold.¹¹²

Handel penned this letter one month before beginning work on *Hercules*, which he finished by mid-August. During this month, Handel was apparently still unsure about Cibber's availability, since he scored Lichas initially as a tenor, as later emendations in the autograph show. Figure 2.9 gives one example of such changes, the clef being amended from C4 to C3, and the pitch of the vocal line being generally raised to suit Cibber's compass.

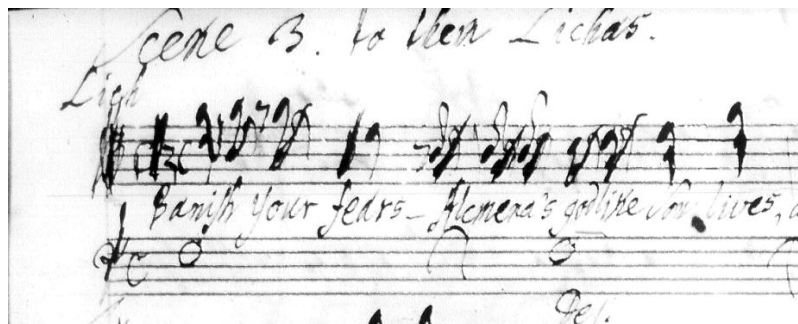


Figure 2.9: Correction in *Hercules* autograph, B-Lbl RM 20.e.8, f. 24r, m. 1

By October 2, Cibber was unambiguously onboard, as Handel reported to Jennens:

I hope you will make a visit to London next Winter. I have a good set of singers. S. Francesina performs Nitocris, Miss Robinson, Cyrus, Mrs. Cibber,

¹¹² E.H. Mueller von Asow, ed., *The Letters and Writings of George Frideric Handel* (London: Cassell, 1935), 47-9. "Mr. Rich" refers to John Rich (1692-1761), the manager of the theaters at Covent Garden and Lincoln's Inn Fields. "Mr. Beard" is, of course, the tenor John Beard (1717-1791), who was employed at Covent Garden as an acting singer. "Mr. Reinhold" refers to Henry Theodore Reinhold (d. 1751), a bass with whom Handel frequently worked.

Daniel, Mr Beard (who is recovered), Belshazzar, Mr Reinhold, Tobias, and a good Number of Choir Singers for the Chorus's.¹¹³

It seems likely that Handel undertook revisions to *Hercules* at about this time.

With Cibber in his cast, Handel not only changed Lichas from a tenor to an alto; he made the character the veritable moral center of the work.¹¹⁴ Lichas originally sang only a few lines of recitative. Handel's revision of the part inserted six arias and one accompanied recitative for Lichas, including the first and last solo music in the oratorio (Figure 2.10).

Title	Key	Character
See, with what sad dejection in her looks (accompagnato)	B-flat minor	First solo music of oratorio; mourning
No longer fate relentless frown	F minor	Pleading, a prayer
The smiling hours a joyfull train	F	Celebratory
As stars that rise and disappear	D	Hymn to constancy
Constant lovers never roving	E	Hymn to constancy
Oh scene of unexampled woe	F# minor	Mourning
He who for Atlas prop'd the sky	B-flat	Last solo music of oratorio; celebratory

Figure 2.10: Lichas's role as revised for *Hercules* premiere

The oratorio's opening particularly signaled this new perspective, allowing Lichas to introduce the work and its principal characters. In the autograph's first version, Handel headed the first scene, "Act 1. Scene 1. A Royal Apartment. Dejanira and Chorus of Trachinians," opening with Dejanira's recitative "O Hercules! Why art thou absent from me" and her subsequent aria, "The world, when day's career is run." A note in the autograph manuscript (f. 4r) shows that once Cibber was slated to sing, Handel opened instead with Lichas: "NB. Lychas ac. [accompanied recit] And Aria. poi segue." The indication "NB." signals a separate piece of composing paper, inserted at this point in the bound autograph, with the result that Dejanira's music is bifurcated by Lichas's pair of pieces. Folios 4r and 4v contain Dejanira's recitative and the first fourteen measures of her aria; Lichas's insertions intervene at this point (ff. 5r-8v), concluded with a note that Dejanira's pieces are to follow ("poi segue Dejanira accomp. O Hercules! Why art thou absent from me"). Dejanira's aria continues from m. 15 on the following page (f. 9r). The inserted pieces for Lichas also received a new stage direction, updating the original conception of the imaginary setting: "Act 1. Scene. 1. A Royal apartment[.] Dejanira, Lychas & Chorus of Trachnians" (f. 5r).¹¹⁵

The music originally slated to open the oratorio placed Dejanira in the customary position for a damsel in distress: alone, separated from her lover, and mourning his absence. Her sorrow is clearly deep-felt, as the tortured chromaticisms of her opening

¹¹³ October 2, 1744. Quoted in Asow, *The Letters*, 53-4. "S. Francesina" = Elisabeth Duparc (d. 1773); Miss Robinson's first name is unknown (fl.1733-45), although she took part in many of Handel's productions from the 1740s, including the premieres of *Hercules* and *Belshazzar*. In the latter, she took over Cibber's part when illness prevented her from singing the part of Daniel.

¹¹⁴ My discussion of the revisions of Lichas's part is based on the autograph manuscript in the British Library, RM 20.e.8. See also Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios*, 430.

¹¹⁵ Handel also penned Lichas's name into the scene description on f. 4r, writing it out anew on the top of Lichas's accompanied recitative, f. 5r.

accompanied recitative express (Example 2.3). For Lichas's new opening number, also an accompanied recitative, Handel provided even more mournful gestures: pulsating orchestral figuration, chromatic "lamento" gestures in the bass, and unrelentingly dark tonal areas. (The work opens in B-flat minor, and touches on both C minor and F minor before a final cadence in A-flat.) The theme of the text further establishes Lichas's credentials as a bona fide man of empathy: "See, with what sad Dejection in her Looks, / indulging Grief, the mournful Princess sits!" Lichas sees and musically expresses Dejanira's grief before we hear the princess herself lament. From the earnest seriousness of Lichas's following aria, a prayer to fate to spare Hercules's life, we might suspect that Lichas suffers just as poignantly as Dejanira at the hero's absence. The music is filled with sighing gestures, surprising harmonic turns, and aching suspensions.

Such empathy marks Lichas's role throughout the oratorio. In his next aria, "The smiling hours a joyful train," Lichas rejoices at Hercules's safe return. Coming immediately after Dejanira's own enthusiastic expression of relief ("Begone, my fears"), Lichas's aria again echoes and reinforces the lady's sentiments. With the addition of this new aria, Handel and his librettist Thomas Broughton brought the oratorio's first section, encompassing Hercules's absence, to a pleasingly symmetrical conclusion. *Hercules* had opened with Lichas introducing Dejanira's lamentation; the first section ends with Lichas echoing her relief, followed by the chorus that caps this section of the narrative, "Let none despair."¹¹⁶ The next important event is the arrival of Iöle, a captive princess, and the celebration of Hercules's safe return, which together make up the remainder of Act 1.

The following act introduces the story's central conflict: Dejanira is jealous of Iöle's beauty and distrustful of her husband's fidelity. This lack of trust provided Handel and Broughton with their next theme for Lichas's character development. The arias that they added in Act 2 ("As stars that rise and disappear" and "Constant lovers never roving") are hymns to marital fidelity, bringing a wholly new element to the oratorio compared with its original conception.

The work's moment of crisis comes in Act 2, Scenes 2–3. Dejanira confronts Iöle with her suspicions in Scene 2. Scene 3 was interpolated anew in the revisions. In the autograph's original state, Dejanira performed a brief (2-measure) recitative, proclaiming, "It is too sure, that Hercules is false." This decisive turning point (for this must surely be the moment when Dejanira decides to poison her husband as punishment for his presumed infidelity) was originally followed immediately by the chorus titled "Jealousy, infernal pest." In the autograph's first state, the chorus provided an extradiegetic, somewhat

¹¹⁶ The autograph bears markings that prove this aria for Lichas to be an afterthought. A note at the end of the recitative "A Train of Captives," which was the only music between Dejanira's aria and the chorus "Let none despair" in the original manuscript, signals the change of order: "segue Aria of Lichas the smiling Hours." A note to the right of the "da capo" indication for Lichas's aria indicates that the chorus follows: "poi seg[ue] il Cor[o] Let none despair."

Example 2.3: Hercules, "Oh Hercules," opening (top); "See, with what sad dejection," opening (middle); and "No longer fate," mm. 28-41 (bottom)

Adagio

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Dejanira
Continuo

Oh Her-cu-les! why art thou ab-sent from me? re-turn, re-turn, my he-ro, to my arms! Oh gods, how rack-ing are the pains of

3^b 6[#] 6 7^b₅
3

Largo

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Lichas
Continuo

See, with what sad de-jec-tion in her looks, in-dul-ging

6 6[#] 6

28

Violin I
Violin 2
Viola
Lichas
Continuo

[crown.] and, oh! re-store him to his weep-ing wife, re-

33

Violin I
Violin 2
Viola
Lichas
Continuo

store him, re-store him to his weep-ing wife, and, oh! re-store him,

sanctimonious commentary on Dejanira's mistrust. Its opening couplet nicely summarizes the entirety of the poem's theme: "Jealousy! infernal Pest, / Tyrant of the human Breast!"

The newly composed Scene 3 provided justification for the chorus. Handel added a stage direction indicating Lichas's arrival at the end of Dejanira's brief recitative ("Dej: going out meets Lichas"), and he provided a symbol to direct copyists to a secondary sheet.¹¹⁷ On the inserted page (f. 55r), Handel indicated an additional stage direction, "enter Lichas," newly composing an intervening dialogue between Dejanira and the herald:

- L. My god-like Master?
D. Is a Traitor, Lichas,
Traitor to Hymen, Love and Dejanira.
L. Alcides false? Impossible!

Lichas's aria, "As stars that rise and disappear," follows. Lichas hymns the constancy of the work's hero, beginning "As Stars that rise, and disappear, / Still in the same bright Circle move, / So shines unchang'd thy Hero's Love / Nor Absence can his Faith impair." Dejanira's response is a brief recitative statement: "In vain you strive his Falsehood to disguise." Lichas retorts, "This is thy work, accursed Jealousy," the last volley in this little struggle.¹¹⁸ The chorus now rises directly out of this character's own distaste for jealousy's pernicious influence. The re-composed sequence of movements thus foregrounds Lichas as the section's moral center.

Lichas's second aria, "Constant lovers never roving," is linked to "As stars that rise" through textual focus. I classify both of these texts as "hymns to constancy" in Figure 2.10, and this unwavering faith in marital fidelity forms the second major textual subtype for the character. Lichas's other arias throughout the oratorio had focused on his capacity for empathy, sharing either the sadness ("See, with what sad dejection," "No longer fate relentless frown," "O scene of unexampled woe") or the celebration of the protagonists ("The smiling hours a joyful train," "He who for atlas prop'd the sky"). In his constancy arias, the character enshrines marital fidelity as a mark of a modern sort of masculine heroism, in line with the sentimental ethics of male heroes in contemporary drama and fiction.¹¹⁹ By refusing to doubt the constancy of his hero, Lichas further demonstrates his own sentimental credentials.

Faith in constancy marked many of the sentimental dramas in which Cibber specialized, and it was an important feature of sentimental literature generally. Indiana in Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* was a heroine unable even to imagine that her protector could harbor anything but the noblest of feelings for her, and the play presents their eventual marriage as a triumph of love over the less admirable dictates of mercantile-aristocratic

¹¹⁷ The symbol, ⊗, is on f.54v. Handel also canceled the original indication that the chorus was to follow at this point.

¹¹⁸ Dejanira's response and Lichas's retort were composed on a single staff on the back of the inserted aria, f. 57v, along with a note to direct the copyist back to the chorus.

¹¹⁹ Examples of such unwaveringly faithful men include Bevil Jr. in Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, Jaffier in *Venice Preserv'd*, and the title character of *Oronooko*. Male characters whose greatest moral accomplishment was the reformation of rakish behavior number among the most frequent character types in eighteenth-century literature and drama. Mr. B in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* is perhaps the most familiar example to modern readers.

relations. Monimia in Otway's *The Orphan* grieved herself to death after the tragic (and accidental) compromise of her own marital purity. Literary historian Janet Todd has stated that in the eighteenth century, "an emphasis unknown before was placed by literature and art on the image of the small, loving nuclear family."¹²⁰ Indeed, the great triumph of such a paradigmatic character as Richardson's Pamela was her "conquest" of a rake, culminating in marriage; her adoption of the husband's illegitimate child as her own in the final pages of the novel completes the family tableau, the summit of British middle-class values.¹²¹ And Cibber's role in the oratorio as advocate for marital virtue perhaps indicates a final triumph for the singer-actress over her scandalous past.

One final technique shared by all of the oratorios revised or created for Cibber emphasizes the morally didactic importance of her roles: these works feature connections between Cibber's characters and communal choruses. In these moments, Cibber's characters call on the assembled masses to respond in appropriate ways, sometimes to dramatic developments and sometimes to moral dictates, on one occasion even leading them in prayer. In *Hercules*, a second moment of union between Lichas and the people comes in Act 3, just after the hero's poisoning has been reported. Lichas begins a long recitative with a call to mourning: "Ye sons of Trachin, mourn your valiant Chief." After four bars of recitative, a Trachinian interjects with just five notes of response: "Oh! Doleful Tidings!" Lichas continues with an extended speech describing the death of the hero, and then sings an aria that meditates on the tragedy: "Oh scene of unexampled woe," in F-sharp minor. This in turn evokes one more small outburst from the Trachinian (a three-measure recitative beginning "Oh fatal jealousy") before the full Trachinian chorus expresses its horrified reaction to the news in "Tyrants now no more shall dread."

In Cibber's other two oratorios of this period, her interactions with Jewish choruses also portray her characters as moral leaders. In *Belshazzar*, Part 1, Scene 3 features Daniel in four sequential solo numbers:

Oh sacred oracles of truth	Aria
Rejoice, my countrymen	Accompanied recitative
For long ago	Secco recitative
Thus saith the Lord	Accompanied recitative
Sing oh ye heavens	Chorus

Figure 2.11: Daniel leads the Jews in prayer

The scene resembles a miniature religious service, with Daniel speaking from the pulpit. It opens with a supplicant prayer (the aria). Daniel then delivers a homily (the first accompanied recitative), calling for faith and celebration with "Rejoice, my countrymen." In a brief secco recitative ("For long ago"), Daniel then turns his auditors' attention toward holy scripture before beginning an actual reading of Isaiah 45:1 (in "Thus saith the Lord"), which promises emancipation of the Jews and rebuilding of the temple. The chorus

¹²⁰ Todd, *Sensibility*, 16.

¹²¹ On the changing role of the family in British society, see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). For a modern study of the development of the family and the rising importance of the loving nuclear family in the eighteenth century, particularly as captured by family portraiture, see Kate Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

responds with appropriate rapture in “Sing oh ye heavens,” concluding with a rousing “Hallelujah, amen.” Belshazzar immediately afterward calls for his own people to join in a different type of revelry, a hedonistic celebration, the contrast reinforcing the idea of Cibber as the moral leader of the opposing Israelite group.¹²²

The most formally inventive of all these interactions between Cibber’s characters and the assembled masses is in *Samson*. In two cases, not only Micah’s emotional but also his musical presence continues during communal (i.e., choral) prayers. The first comes early in Act 2, when Micah and his fellow Jewish captives pray for the protection of their chief warrior, Samson, recently made blind and weak by the scheming Dalila. Micah begins with a supplicant prayer in the aria “Return, O God of hosts.” The chorus responds with its own words to God:

Micah:
Return, O God of Hosts! behold
Thy Servant in Distress,
His mighty Griefs redress,
Nor by the Heathen be they told.

Chorus:
To Dust his Glory they wou’d tread,
And number him amongst the Dead.

The choral words here would be obscure without Micah’s introduction (the chorus’s pronoun “they” lacking its antecedent). Moreover, Handel’s setting incorporates Micah’s music directly into the choral texture, creating continuity of musical thought to complement the libretto’s textual continuity (Example 2.4).

Micah’s second such aria-choral relationship even more clearly illustrates the moral influence of Cibber’s characters within the oratorios’ fictional worlds. In “The holy one of Israel be thy guide,” Micah advises Samson, on the verge of entering the temple of the idolatrous god Dagon, to trust in the power of the Judaic god to inform his actions:

The Holy One of Isr’el be thy Guide,
The Angel of thy Birth stand by thy Side:
To Fame immortal go,
Heav’n bids thee strike the Blow:
The Holy One of Isr’el be thy Guide.

“The holy one of Israel” begins with a 10-measure ritornello. After its cadence, Micah intones a psalm-like melody, with a repeating a’ lending the phrase an atmosphere of sobriety (Example 2.5). This opening is presented monophonically, with the violins playing in unison with the voice. The text is also reprised by the chorus, first singing the third line of Micah’s air to different music (“To Fame immortal go,” etc., m. 43), and then repeating both the opening text and Micah’s monophonic approach (mm. 51-56). The

¹²² Belshazzar’s number is “Let Festal Joy Triumphant Reign” (Part 1, Scene 4).

Example 2.4: *Samson*, "Return, O God of hosts," mm. 59-67 (Upper string and oboe parts omitted)

59

Micah

Re - turn, re - turn O God of hosts; be - hold be - hold thy

Continuo

63

ser - vant in dis - tress be hold be - hold, O God of hosts

to dust his glo - ry they would tread, and

to dust his glo - ry they would tread, and

to dust his glo - ry they would tread, and

to dust his glo - ry they would tread, and

66

be - hold thy ser - vant

num - ber him a - mongst the dead,

num - ber him a - mongst the dead,

num - ber him a - mongst the dead,

num - ber him a - mongst the dead,

Example 2.5: Samson, "The holy one of Israel," mm. 9-12 (top) and mm. 50 ff. (bottom)

9

Violins I and II

Micah

Continuo

The ho - ly One of Is - rael be thy guide;

50

Oboe

Oboe

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Continuo

The ho - ly One of Is - rael is thy

The ho - ly One of Is - rael is thy

53

Ob.

Ob.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

S.

A.

T.

B.

Bc.

guide,

guide,

guide,

guide,

whole is a tightly integrated structure that unites Micah's sentiments and those of the Israelites through musical and textual means. The effect emphasizes the central importance of this character to the captive Jews. Here and in the oratorios discussed above, Cibber served as the moral instructor for her onstage compatriots, and in an overtly moralizing genre like the oratorio, presumably for the auditors in the hall.

The didactic nature of Cibber's roles within these works was not far removed from the aims and approaches of the moralizing plays on which she had built her career. The most powerful pedagogic tool that she utilized in both spoken and sung roles – empathy for her fellow men – was the one most stereotypical to the culture of sentiment. Erik Erämetsä, in a lengthy study of the vocabulary of sentimentality, juxtaposed the most frequently employed terms of praise, “sweet” and “grateful,” with the damning judgments “cruel,” “base,” and “unfeeling.”¹²³ Other scholars, such as R.F. Brissenden and G.J. Barker-Benfield have cited the profound and widespread influence of Shaftesburian concepts such as “benevolence,” “sympathy,” and the “humane” among sentimental writers, and theater historian Frank Ellis has gone so far as to venture a basic definition of sentimentality as “a spectrum of attitudes reaching from pity for a non-existing object at one extreme to pity for all humanity at the other.”¹²⁴ Sentimental novelists also placed empathy at the core of their didactic moral projects, such as Laurence Sterne, who wrote that *A Sentimental Journey* aimed “to teach us to love the world and our fellow-creatures.”¹²⁵

In Handel's oratorios, Cibber expressed sympathetic vibrations with humanity, ranging from the suffering of Christ in *Messiah* to the more worldly concerns of an ancient hero in *Hercules*, and most memorably through a penchant for deeply moving music. From her earliest days as an actor, Cibber's contemporaries conflated inherent sensibility with her memorable performances. David Williams effusively wrote to David Garrick that Cibber “had nothing to do with any to which nature had made her a stranger. . . . Nothing could exceed her tender and natural expression.”¹²⁶ Handel similarly recognized Cibber's greatest skills, setting her the task of harnessing the power of empathy, drawing the audience in by appealing to them as fellow men and women of sensibility. Cibber served as a conduit through which eighteenth-century sentimentalism could flow into and out of the oratorio, and the changes that Handel made for her provide an opportunity to see one way in which the British theater influenced the composer's last major genre.

¹²³ Erik Erämetsä, “A Study of the Word ‘Sentimental’ and of Other Linguistic Characteristics of Eighteenth-Century Sentimentalism in England,” *Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia* 74, no. 1 (1951).

¹²⁴ See Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 225-26; Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974), 32; and Frank Ellis, *Sentimental Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4-5.

¹²⁵ L.P. Curtis, ed., *Letters of Laurence Sterne* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935), 401.

¹²⁶ Williams, *A Letter*, 19-20.

PART 2: EMPATHETIC MEN & RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTALISM

CHAPTER 3
"THE LIGAMENTS OF LOVE"
MEN OF FEELING, RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTALISM, AND *JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN*

Joseph, reclining in a melancholy Posture.

Air
Be firm, my soul, nor faint beneath
Affliction's galling Chains;
When crown'd with conscious Virtue's Wreath,
The shackled Captive reigns.
Joseph and His Brethren, Part 1, Scene 1

"A Tearful Sensibility"

Among Handel's oratorios, *Joseph and His Brethren* (composed 1743, premiered March, 1744) is one of the least familiar to modern audiences. Performances are rare, and only one full recording is available.¹ This low profile may stem in part from some influential twentieth-century critics' reactions to the libretto by James Miller (1704-1744), particularly its treatment of the title character. In 1949, Percy Young wrote pointedly of Miller as a "sentimentalist." He disliked Joseph's idyllic views of country life and his carefully refined language, a "cleanliness" that he believed could appeal only to English mores of the 1740s.² Ten years later, Winton Dean similarly criticized the story's "bathos," dismissed Joseph as a stereotypical man of feeling by ridiculing his "tearful sensibility worthy of [Laurence] Sterne," and alleged that *Joseph* came nearest to "complete failure" of all the oratorios.³ In the 1970s, Roger Fiske deemed Miller's contribution "Handel's worst oratorio libretto."⁴ More recent commentators have remarked that the text is narratively fragmented and confusing; Paula O'Brien, in the latest survey of Miller's life and works, called it "sadly lacking in dramatic structure and characterization, and stilted and rhetorical in style," and Ruth Smith summarized the century's critical adjudication of Miller's plotting in one word: "unintelligible."⁵

Narrative fragmentation, moral optimism that might now be considered naïve (or "bathetic" in Dean's terms), and a tearful, sensitive hero: these are the very characteristics of sentimental literature. All three elements abound in this oratorio. The sentimentalism

¹ The King's Consort, conducted by Robert King, *Joseph and His Brethren*, recorded March 19-25, 1996, Hyperion CDA 67171/3, 1996, 3 compact discs.

² Percy Young, *The Oratorios of Handel* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1949), 133.

³ Winton Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 398-400.

⁴ Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (1973; 2nd ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 155.

⁵ Paula Joan O'Brien, "The Life and Works of James Miller, 1704-1744, with Particular Reference to the Satiric Content of His Poetry and Plays" (PhD diss., Westfield College, University of London, 1979), 92. Ruth Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 23.

that marks *Joseph* and its title character may not have appealed to twentieth-century critics, but twenty-first century historians should not be blind to its importance for Miller and his contemporaries. In preparing *Joseph*, the librettist drew on a large body of literature about this biblical character that was itself rooted in aesthetic and philosophical theory of the mid-century. Considering these roots along with the Latitudinarian Anglicanism that Miller expressed allows us to understand both why he would have created a sentimental drama for his contribution to Handel's oratorios and why his hero would have been a typical man of feeling. This vantage point also provides various ways to think about Handel's setting and to examine how his compositional decisions reflected the key thematic and focal points of Miller's libretto.

The libretto was based on the familiar conflict (recorded in Genesis 37 and 39-45) between one of two sons born to Jacob and his favorite wife, Rachel, and his ten older half-brothers (born to Jacob and Leah). Joseph's half-brothers, enraged by what they perceive to be his haughty disposition, decide to kill him after he reports a dream that they interpret as a challenge to their birthright. One of the brothers (Reuben) convinces the others to sell Joseph as a slave instead of committing fratricide. The others acquiesce, and then dip Joseph's coat in blood as fabricated proof to their father that Joseph was murdered by a wild boar.

Joseph's trials are far from finished at his moment of enslavement, and he is faced with both temptation and further humiliation. As a slave, Joseph eventually makes his way into Egypt and becomes a treasured servant, part of the household of the captain of the Pharaoh's guard. His youth and beauty do not go unnoticed; his master's wife is smitten, but he refuses to commit adultery. Enraged, she falsely accuses him of attempted rape, and he is imprisoned. While incarcerated, Joseph successfully interprets the dreams of two fellow inmates, predicting the execution of one and the absolution of the other. The absolved inmate promises to put in a good word for the dream interpreter, but then forgets him. Years later, when Pharaoh himself has troubling dreams, the former inmate finally remembers Joseph, who is summoned. Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams (that seven years of plentiful harvest will be followed by seven years of famine) again restores him to royal favor. He becomes the Pharaoh's chief assistant and receives the hand of Asenath, daughter of a high priest of Egypt, as rewards for his wise council. Joseph presides over Egypt during the seven years of abundance and into the seven years of famine.

At the famine's height, Jacob sends his eldest sons into Egypt to beg for sustenance, keeping with him Benjamin, his youngest and, as far as Jacob knows, only surviving son of Rachel. The half-brothers do not recognize Joseph, now a grown man and bedecked in the finest Egyptian costume — but he recognizes them. He conceals his identity and falsely accuses them of being spies against the state (although he fights back tears as he does so). They protest and insist that they have a sickly father and younger brother suffering in Canaan. Joseph imprisons one of his brothers, Simeon, and demands that the others return home and fetch Benjamin as proof of their story.

These events set the stage for the climax of Miller's oratorio (and that of other contemporaneous poetic and dramatic treatments of this story): the moment when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, a family tableau filled with heartfelt tears. That moment reaches its point of highest tension when Benjamin, the only other innocent brother in this family circle, returns and is wrongly accused of theft by Joseph. He stands before the second most powerful man in Egypt and pleads his innocence in such an affecting manner

that Joseph's resolve is nearly broken. This hint of brotherly love makes the subsequent moment of catharsis all the more powerful, when one of the other, sinful brethren finally pleads on Benjamin's behalf, reducing Joseph to tears and leading to the long-awaited family reunion. Weeping intermittently and clinging to his younger brother, Joseph's struggle ends not in heroic military glory or amorous conquest, but in tender fraternal embrace.

This is the stuff of Joseph's "tearful sensibility" that so disturbed Dean and like-minded scholars. A number of writers have attempted to defend *Joseph* from these critics. In his 2008 study of the libretto to *Joseph*, Leslie Robarts refers to the work as "a powerful sentimental drama" and as "an unambiguously sentimental drama designed to excite pleasurable tears."⁶ Unlike the critics of earlier generations, Robarts claims this work's sentimental nature as one of its dramatic accomplishments, when viewed from an eighteenth-century critical sensibility. He points both to its "reputable" sources that advocated "Christian values" and to its novelty; its similarity to contemporary sentimental drama, Robarts argues, would have been a sign of "an author well versed in . . . cultural innovation" in the mid-century.⁷ He uses such claims to explain why the eighteenth-century appraisal of this work, one of the most frequently revived in Handel's day, was so different from more recent assessments.⁸

Other scholars before Robarts have also performed rescue attempts on this maligned oratorio. Duncan Chisholm and Ruth Smith have both claimed that all this apparently humdrum sentimentalism was really in service of a more exciting political symbolism; they see Robert Walpole (1676–1745, prime minister from 1721 until resignation in 1742) lurking behind Joseph, the Egyptian "Prime Minister," and posit that Joseph's sensitive goodness contrasted with competing portrayals of Walpole during the

⁶ Leslie Robarts, "The Librettos as Literary Works," chap. 2 in "A Bibliographical and Textual Study of the Wordbooks for James Miller's *Joseph and His Brethren* and Thomas Broughton's *Hercules*, Oratorio Librettos Set to Music by George Frideric Handel, 1743-44" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2008), 7 and 166.

⁷ Robarts, "A Biographical and Textual Study," 149.

⁸ *Joseph* premiered in March of 1744 and met with a warm reception. The Earl of Egmont called it "inimitable," and Handel's friend and correspondent, Mary Delany, reported on the tenth of March, "The oratorios fill very well . . . [and] Joseph is to be performed (I hope) once more . . ." (Earl of Egmont, diary entry for March 1, 1744 and Delany, letter to Ann Dewes, March 10, 1743/44, both quoted in Walter Eisen and Margret Eisen, eds., *Dokumente zu Leben und Schaffen*, vol. 4, *Händel-Handbuch* (Kassel, Basel, and London: Bärenreiter, 1985), 374. Delany got her wish with a repeat performance on March 14, and she must have been particularly fond of the work since Handel gave it a private reading at her home on April 3 (Eisen and Eisen, *Dokumente*, 375). *Joseph* had more performances in 1745, 1747, 1755, and 1757, making it one of the most frequently revived oratorios during Handel's lifetime; Winton Dean reported that *Joseph* was the second most revived oratorio of the 1740s and '50s, following only *Judas Maccabeus*. (Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios*, 407). The HWV records that Handel also planned a revival in 1751, which never came to fruition (see *Händel-Handbuch* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1984), 2: 248). It continued to be performed after the composer's death and throughout the century. The first full-scale revival after Handel's death came in in 1768. In March of 1772, there was a command performance at Drury Lane, and in the 1780s selections from *Joseph* were still frequently performed; there was a 1788 revival of the full oratorio, and selections were also featured both as part of the Concerts of Antient Music and in pasticcio oratorios compiled by Samuel Arnold. See Avery et al, *The London Stage*, v. 4.3, p. 1620. On the 1788 revival, see Winton Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 410. Pasticcio oratorios that incorporated numbers from *Joseph* included *The Sacred Oratorio of Redemption* (1786) and *The Trimuph [sic] of Truth; a Sacred Oratorio* (1789).

1740s.⁹ Drawing on the wealth of eighteenth-century literature about Joseph, in which the Old Testament patriarch was depicted as alternately selflessly virtuous or selfishly ambitious, these two scholars posit that Miller's libretto could have been read by his contemporaries as political allegory, portraying Walpole in either an apologetic light (according to Chisholm) or a critical one (according to Smith). In their revisionist critical readings, Joseph's unshakable civic uprightness and his selfless care for the public were aimed at a readership familiar with the very different portrayal of Walpole in the opposition press. Yet *Joseph* premiered two years after Walpole had been ousted, and there is arguably nothing explicitly political about either the broader Joseph literature or the oratorio. Even Smith acknowledges the "opacity" of this perceived symbolism, stating, "Were it not for Miller's known commitment to the opposition cause, we could not be certain" of the political message of this characterization.¹⁰

There is nothing opaque about the pathos and sentimentality of *Joseph* and its title character. In this chapter, I offer an alternative explanation for the roots of the protagonist's tearfulness, located far from the biting wit and rancor of governmental politics. In his defense of *Joseph* on aesthetic grounds, Robarts prudently stops short of describing Miller's intentions, limiting himself to textual analysis: "Without documents that testify to the librettists' aesthetic and literary aims, the librettos . . . must be judged according to the texts presented in the wordbooks and other sources."¹¹ But if one wants at least to attempt to understand Miller's aesthetic, intellectual, and (I would add) moral aims, then it is important to remember that Miller was not only a librettist, satirist, and man of the theater, penning critiques of stock characters and identifiable public figures; he was also a minister whose own consistent theology was recorded in posthumously published sermons.¹²

⁹ Duncan Chisholm, "New Sources for the Libretto of Handel's *Joseph*," in *Handel, Tercentenary Collection*, ed. Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), 182-208; Smith, *Handel's Oratorios*, pp. 304-7.

¹⁰ Smith, *Handel's Oratorios*, 306. Walpole resigned in early February, 1742. Carteret was acting head of Spencer Compton's prime ministry throughout the years leading up to the premiere of *Joseph*. Compton died in July of 1743, and was succeeded by Henry Pelham in August. Smith also proposes Carteret as a possible target of Miller's political statement, venturing that Miller may have intended his portrait of Joseph as a message to the administration about how a new Prime Minister should comport himself. Such political allegory would have required a good deal of extrapolation by Miller's audience members. Moreover, Miller seems to have formed a firm opinion of Carteret by January 1744, when his *The H—r* [Hanover] *Heroes* appeared, a satiric "translation" of a fictional German soldier's reminiscences about the battle of Dettingen. O'Brien points out that this work, which Miller presumably penned immediately after completing the libretto to *Joseph*, is a sharp criticism not only of the British relationship with the Hanoverians, but of Carteret's involvement in the military campaigns and his own self-serving behaviors in court (O'Brien, "The Life and Works," 93-5). The ballad is also indicative of the type of political statement that Miller made in his poetry; when he aimed his pen at those in power, he did so in a manner that is anything but "opaque."

¹¹ Robarts, "A Bibliographical and Textual Study," 147.

¹² The best overview of Miller's life is given in O'Brien, "The Life and Works of James Miller," 13-108. Smith also gives an outline of Miller's main career activities in *Handel's Oratorios*, drawing largely on O'Brien. The earliest biography of Miller is in Theophilus Cibber's *Lives of the Poets* (London, 1753).

Miller finished his education at Oxford in 1730. While there, he completed his first theatrical work, *The Humours of Oxford* (1730), which lampooned easily identifiable members of the university. This work gained him some enemies, but he did not learn his lesson; he went on to critique members of the English theatrical and musical scenes in print, including, in his *Harlequin-Horace* (1731, in imitation of Horace's *Ars poetica*), both Handel and Farinelli. He also lampooned members of the church, including the Bishop of

Sentimentalism had both its sacred and its secular instantiations; besides the contemporaneous successes of she-tragedies, sentimental comedies, Steele's morality tales, and Richardson's suffering heroines, the mid-century was also a time when Anglican churchmen and nonconformists alike moved away from severe Augustinian models of Christianity to preach a theology of brotherly love, a "naturalness" of fellow-feeling that reflected the gracious, merciful, and loving God in whose image all humans were created. Religious historian Norman Sykes once referred to the period's "widespread vogue of this doctrine of Divine Benevolence," stemming from the late seventeenth century and continuing through the time of Miller's libretto, when the Archdeacon of Carlisle, Edmund Law, could boast that English ministers had abandoned "unprofitable austerities [for] reasonable service and devotion, which renders the Deity amiable . . . [and] makes each worshipper more happy in himself, and helpful to his fellow-creatures."¹³ Citing such a prevalent doctrine of benevolence and "amiable" virtue, R.S. Crane proposed as long ago as 1934 that the most influential models for the literary man of feeling lay not in secular philosophy, but in Latitudinarian teachings.¹⁴

Miller's own viewpoints reflected the influence of such Latitudinarian religiosity. His published sermons (as well as *Joseph*) advocated an ideal Christian whose love and empathy culminate in Christ-like charity and concern for fellow man. Miller stressed above all a "natural" love of one's neighbors and a shared distress for their suffering. This religious outlook was intimately connected to the empathetic man whom Miller proffered as an exemplar for his Handelian audiences. For such a librettist, we might reasonably expect that religious philosophy would have informed the one "sacred drama" (as he subtitled his libretto) that he produced. *Joseph* was not a typical eighteenth-century play, with fops and Frenchmen competing for amours, with noblemen and merchants battling over questions of marriage and inheritance, or with a tragic hero struggling against impossible circumstances. It was a dramatic and musical instantiation of a religious story

London Edmund Gibson (1669-1748), in thinly veiled and vituperative ways, in works such as his poem *A Seasonable Reproof* (1736) and his adaptation of Voltaire's *Mahomet* (1744).

Miller's activities as a social critic earned him a great deal of trouble in both his theatrical and clerical lives. According to Cibber's biography, Miller immediately gained a position at London's Trinity Chapel as a lecturer upon graduation from Oxford. But a dispute with the Gibson stopped his advancement any further; Gibson evidently denied Miller a preferment because of his association with the stage (O'Brien, "The Life and Works," 35). One must read between the lines of Miller's *Seasonable Reproof* to make this assumption, as was first done by Powell Stewart, and later followed by O'Brien and Smith (see "A Bibliographical Contribution to Biography: James Miller's *Seasonable Reproof*," *The Library* s5-III (1949): 295-301. See also David Erskine Baker, *Biographia Dramatica, or a Companion to the Playhouse* (London, 1764-1782), 1: 315). In 1743, Miller may have begun to receive the benefice that his father had earned as rector of Dorset, but there is no evidence that he ever held that position (O'Brien, "The Life and Works," 92-3). Gibson's ties to Walpole's administration created added trouble for Miller in the theater, and his efforts were never particularly remunerative. When he died at the age of thirty-nine, he had large outstanding debts, which his wife attempted to cover by publishing his sermons by subscription, and later through a benefit performance of *Mahomet*. (See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Miller, James (1704-1744)," by Paula Joan O'Brien (online edition, accessed March 5, 2013).

¹³ Norman Sykes, *From Sheldon to Secker: Aspects of English Church History, 1660-1768* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 176. Edmund Law, *Considerations on the State of the World with Regard to the Theory of Religion, in Three Parts* (Cambridge, 1745), 239. Sykes sees the beginning of this "widespread vogue" in the writings of John Tillotson.

¹⁴ R.S. Crane, "Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,'" *ELH* 1, no. 3 (1934): 205-30.

focused on empathy, endangered innocence, and the reward of virtue, concepts central to both sentimental literature and to Miller's theological perspective. Indeed, *Joseph* enabled Miller to dramatize the core tenets of his religious outlook in a way that his previous stage works (a string of comedies and a mock pantomime) had not.

I propose that for Miller this oratorio's title character was more than timely political allegory; Joseph was the sort of ideal moral person whom Miller elsewhere described, with expressive opportunities that the librettist might have found in contemporary descriptions of the patriarch. In this chapter, I examine the oratorio's libretto and its musical setting in the contexts of both other eighteenth-century writing about this biblical figure and Miller's own religious thought, focusing on three main strains: (I) Miller's contemporaries' understanding of Joseph's history as one of powerful sentimental appeal; (II) Miller's Latitudinarian theology; and (III) Miller's incorporation, adaptation, and augmentation of the inherent sentimentality of his immediate dramatic source, Apostolo Zeno's libretto to the *azione sacra* entitled *Giuseppe* (1722) — elements to which Handel responded with musical settings that reflect an understanding of and willingness to underline the librettist's thematic ideas.¹⁵ To take seriously the sentimentalism of *Joseph* reminds us that Handel's oratorios were not only the political allegories that musicologists often consider them to be, but also works that aimed to touch the private lives of empathetic men and women.

I. "A Virgin Theme": Mid-Century English Views of Joseph

That Miller and Handel would have created a weepy hero "worthy of Sterne" is unsurprising, given the tearful nature of previous writing about Joseph. As Duncan Chisholm discovered in 1987, Miller's libretto was, like many of his stage works, largely a translation.¹⁶ Miller's immediate source was Apostolo Zeno's *azione sacra* entitled *Giuseppe* (1722), which Miller translated almost wholesale to form Parts 2 and 3 of his oratorio. Chisholm pointed toward this source (and its own progenitor, a French play by the Abbé Genest from 1711) as the root of what he called "Joseph's lachrymose tendencies."¹⁷ Yet there is also ample evidence to show that eighteenth-century English audiences considered Joseph's history powerful in its appeal to sentiment, traceable in the didactic and hermeneutic literature about Joseph that appeared in the decades before Miller's work.

¹⁵ Zeno's *azione sacra* was set to music by Caldara in 1722; an incomplete manuscript for this work dating from 1780-1800 is housed at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris (F-Pn D-1719). The libretto was published by Giovanni Pietro van Ghelen in Vienna.

¹⁶ Miller's best-known translation involved the works of Molière. According to Cibber, Miller was "principally concerned" in the first English translation of Molière's plays, and Miller included the preface to this collection in his own *Miscellaneous Works* of 1741 (Cibber, *Lives* 5: 334; O'Brien, "The Life and Works," 27). Miller subsequently wrote two works based on Molière plays (*The Mother-in-Law* and *The Man of Taste*), a modernization of Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* (retitled *The Universal Passion*), a ballad opera based on Rousseau's afterpiece *Le Caffé* (*The Coffee-House*), a sentimental comedy based on L.F. de La Drévetière's *Arlequin sauvage* and Rousseau's *Le Flatteur* (*Art and Nature*), and an adaptation of Voltaire's *Mahomet* (*Mahomet the Impostor*). O'Brien thoroughly discusses the relationship between Miller's source material and his plays in *The Life and Works*.

¹⁷ Chisholm, "New Sources," 183.

Miller must surely have been aware of Joseph's reputation as it had been debated in English literature in the years immediately preceding his libretto. Joseph's true identity was at the center of this literature, which fell into two groups. First, there was a didactic tradition that drew on Joseph's story, written by authors who openly stated that they hoped to persuade their audiences by touching their sensitive, impressionable hearts. Second, the power that such writers proclaimed for this emotional story worried others, particularly that group most distrustful of emotionalism and "enthusiasm" in modern religion: the deists. From this distrust arose a heated debate that questioned whether Joseph was a truly admirable figure, as the established church maintained, or, as deists argued, a man of unscrupulous ambition, the eventual founder of despotic power and slavery, a cold and calculating politician who used the sufferings of thousands for his own gain. His supporters sprang to his defense, drawing on the moving nature of Joseph's encounter with his brothers as itself proof of Joseph's good nature. Figure 3.1 lists some of the eighteenth-century literature about Joseph that preceded Miller's libretto.¹⁸

William Rose, <i>The History of Joseph: A Poem in Six Books</i> (1712)
Elizabeth Singer Rowe, <i>The History of Joseph: a Poem in Eight Books</i> (1736)
Thomas Morgan, <i>The Moral Philosopher</i> (1737)
Richard Grey, <i>Historia Josephi patriarchae</i> (1739)
Moses Lowman, <i>A Dissertation on the Civil Government of the Hebrews in which the True Designs, and Nature of their Government are Explained. . .</i> (1740)
John Chapman, <i>Eusebius; or the True Christian's Defense against a Late Book Entitul'd The Moral Philosopher</i> (1741)
Samuel Chandler, "The History and Character of Joseph Vindicated," Ch. 2 in <i>A Vindication of the History of the Old Testament in Answer to the Misrepresentations and Calumnies of Dr. Thomas Morgan . . .</i> (1741)
Anonymous, <i>A Review of the Moral and Political Life and Administration of the Patriarch Joseph</i> (1743)
Peter Annet, <i>The History of Joseph Consider'd: or, The Moral Philosopher Vindicated Against Mr. Samuel Chandler's Defence of the Prime Ministry and Character of Joseph</i> (1744)

Figure 3.1: Eighteenth-century Joseph literature before 1744

Pleasure wed to moral education, the *utile dulci* principle, was at the heart of writing about Joseph that marshaled his story as a tool in moral education. Richard Grey's *Historia Josephi patriarchae* (1739) made the most explicit case for the story's didactic value. In this Hebrew primer, Grey presented Joseph's history in two columns, with transliterated Hebrew on one side of the page, Latin on the other. In his preface, Grey extols the virtues of the story:

Finally, lest there be lacking suitable matter for very fruitful exercise . . . you have here the very rich and very beautiful History of the Patriarch Joseph,

¹⁸ All of these sources and many others, from both England and the Continent, are discussed in Bernhard Lang, *Joseph in Egypt: a Cultural Icon from Grotius to Goethe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

printed in both Latin and Hebrew: an history evoking from everywhere refined affects of the mind and a certain, fully inspiring divine empathy! For who would be so stoic as to hold back tears when reading it? Also, not to sense even himself being completely upended, seized [and] overwhelmed by the numerous disasters and so many perils? A worthy history! If read and re-read, it fixes itself especially into the minds of the young; indeed, where it is permitted to be a primary text, it is an exemplum worthy of imitation by the moral sense of the young; there it is a breathtaking unfolding of the governance of a clear divine providence which makes firm its own counsels in marvelous ways. A very saintly man.¹⁹

The exemplary nature of Joseph's story stems not from its descriptions of his heroic deeds, but from its overwhelmingly emotional nature, able to inspire "imitation by the moral sense of the young." This tale could thus evoke, as Richard Steele put it in the epilogue to *The Conscious Lovers*, a "gen'rous Pity of a painted Woe / [that] Makes us ourselves both more approve, and know."²⁰

Earlier in the century, two poets retold Joseph's story, similarly aiming to teach their readers through their empathy. William Rose published in 1712 *The History of Joseph: A Poem in Six Books*. Rose's poem clearly served as a model for Elizabeth Singer Rowe's far more successful *The History of Joseph: a Poem in Eight Books* (1736); the titles of both poems are nearly identical, and both were divided into multiple "books." Rose's work was eclipsed by Rowe's in readership. In all, the latter saw ten editions throughout the course of the century, at least four of which preceded the publication of Miller's libretto.²¹ Both of these poems drew on the particularly eighteenth-century model of the besieged, virtuous virgin to achieve their sentimental appeal. The virgin in question, however, was a man.

Rose and Rowe both remarked on the inherent pathos of Joseph's story. Rose, for instance, wrote, "There are, I believe, scarce any who read this Passage [i.e., the relevant

¹⁹ "Postremo, ne idonea deesset uberrimæ praxeos material (quod ego in hac re potissimum duco) characteribus tam Romanis quam Hebraicis excusam habes elegantissimam pariter ac vetustissimam Historiam Josephi Patriarchæ: Historiam tenerrimos animi affectus undiquaque elicentem, & divinum quoddam Pathos plenissime spirantem! Quis enim adeo durus, ut in ea legenda a lacrymis temperet? ut non tot gravibus, tamque insperatis casibus se totum commoveri, rapi, obrui identidem persentiscat? Historiam dignam, si quæ alia, quæ legatur, relegatur, adolescentum præsertim animis altissimè infigatur; quippe in quâ conspicere liceat, hinc omni imitatione dignum officii juvenilis exemplum, illinc stupendam plane Divinæ Providentiæ Œconomiam, sua sibi consilia miris modis stabiliens; sanctissimumque adeo virum." Richard Grey. *Historia Josephi Patriarchæ, Literis tam Romanis quam Hebraicis Excusa, cum Versione interlinerari S. Pagnini, et Vocum Indice analytico* (London, 1739), 4-5. Translation Ernest Kaulbach, via personal communication.

²⁰ Richard Steele, Epilogue to the *Conscious Lovers* (London, 1723).

²¹ There were editions prepared in London in 1736, 1737, 1738, 1742, 1744, 1759, 1760, 1767, 1778, and 1783. The poem was expanded to 10 books for these later editions. This tradition of poetic renderings of the Joseph story continued with other authors throughout the eighteenth century. There were Joseph poems by John Bartlett in 1732, John Macgowan in 1780, and Humphrey Jeston in 1789. One author, calling herself Mrs. M. Peddle, published a novel version of the life of Jacob in 1785, prepared, she stated, to awaken "the curiosity of young persons to induce them to study in the sacred records those amiable characters which are here imperfectly delineated." See M. Peddle, *The Life of Jacob* (Sherborne, 1785), 1: iii.

pages in Genesis] with Attention, without being sensibly affected by it.”²² Like Grey, Rose aimed to teach morality by being as moving as possible. He continues, “Such as it is, it may, I hope, meet with a favourable Reception among those, for whose sake it was chiefly intended: those, I mean, who have a Regard for Matters Serious and Religious; and to whom the Contemplation of Virtue *oppress’d*, is no farther grateful, than as previous to the more agreeable Turn of Virtue rewarded.”²³ Rowe similarly remarked on the qualities of her source material, pointing to it as an appropriate choice for a female poet:

Let others tell, of ancient conquests won,
And mighty deeds, by favour’d heroes done;
(Heroes enslav’d to pride, and wild desires,)
A virgin Muse, a virgin theme requires;
Where vice, and wanton beauty quit the field,
And guilty loves to steadfast virtue yield.²⁴

It is significant that Rowe identifies the poet’s story as a “virgin theme.” It features a very different sort of hero than that of the typical epic poem. These poets emphasize both the didactic potential and the immense pleasure that could come from witnessing the perils of a virtuous person under duress. Joseph’s job in this didactic project is the one usually reserved for women, the sentimental heroines of eighteenth-century literature; Joseph is a curiously feminized hero, a threatened innocent whose greatest accomplishment is his steadfast virtue. With such a hero, it is fitting that Rose’s statement about “the more agreeable Turn of Virtue Rewarded” foreshadowed the subtitle of Richardson’s most famous novel: *Pamela, or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740).

Rose could hardly have better emphasized the “virginal” qualities of the hero than with his treatment of the interactions between Joseph and Potiphar’s wife. With this encounter, Rose found an opportunity to stress Joseph’s passivity and his inviolable virtue, reversing the typical gender roles of eighteenth-century writing. Potiphar’s wife ignores both “her Sex and Fame” and behaves like a typical male libertine, appealing to Joseph’s “Pity” in an effort to convince him to acquiesce to her amorous desires and praising his physical beauty and the pains that they cause her (referring at one point to “The matchless Lustre of those killing Eyes”).²⁵ Joseph responds like a Richardsonian heroine, stressing “th’indissoluble ties / Of Sacred Wedlock, Source of virtuous Joys.”²⁶ Enraged, Potiphar’s wife decides to use the ultimate weapon of the injured amorous aggressor:

²² William Rose, *The History of Joseph: A Poem in Six Books, with Cuts Proper to Each Book* (London, 1712), preface.

²³ Rose, *The History of Joseph*, preface.

²⁴ Elizabeth Rowe, *The History of Joseph: A Poem in Ten Books*, 2nd ed. (London, 1737), 3. She also points to Joseph’s “unblemish’d truth” in her invocation of the muse.

²⁵ Rose, *The History of Joseph*, 64.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

Yet since his Coldness does my Passion brave;
And plays the Tyrant, where he's sold a Slave:
Resolv'd I am his Virtue to assail,
And o'er his stubborn Modesty prevail.
I'll force that Bounty, which I could not charm;
And fire the Breast, I wanted Pow'r to warm.²⁷

The woman lies in wait for Joseph and ambushes him, insisting that “Resistance is in vain.”²⁸ Joseph responds in a perhaps surprising manner for a hero; he breaks away with great difficulty (strength reaching him because of his “rally'd Virtue”) and runs away “trembling, swift as Wind.”²⁹ The irony of this role reversal was not lost on Rose, who provided Potiphar's wife with an impassioned speech to her husband, describing in lurid detail an imaginary attempted rape, in which she played the innocent, accosted heroine. While Potiphar's wife weaves her tale, Joseph sits in his rooms and mourns, Rose drawing a sharp distinction between the active, “publick” nature of the woman's actions and the passive, “private” weeping of the oppressed man.³⁰

In the course of the exegetical debate that rose up around Joseph in the middle of the century, even his fiercest opponents admitted the tender power of the story's family reunion passages — a power that they feared. The furor began with a three-volume essay entitled *The Moral Philosopher*, published serially beginning in 1737. It was penned by Thomas Morgan, a dissenting minister who early in life lost his pastoral rights because of extremist views on Trinitarianism and church doctrine, and who later became the century's most prolific deist author.³¹ In the opening pages of this philosophical dialogue, Morgan establishes the basic premises of his deistic stance, an effort to rid Christianity of “Judaizing,” which he later defines as “the Weakness and Absurdity of . . . systematical Orthodoxy and Church Authority.”³² Morgan singled out Joseph as the founder of this “epidemic.” According to Morgan, Joseph was responsible for not only the idea of church hierarchy, but also monetary corruption, the invention of slavery, and the spread of

²⁷ Ibid., 67.

²⁸ Ibid., 68.

²⁹ Ibid., 69.

³⁰ Ibid., 70. Rowe's poem featured a similar sexual aggression from Potiphar's wife; see *The History of Joseph*, 54. The irony of such a role reversal was also not lost on Peter Annet, who found it one of the most improbable passages in the whole of the scripture: “However it [the interaction with Potiphar's wife] happened, the *Hebrew Historian* would have us believe [Joseph] did it for Fear of having a Rape committed on him by his Mistress. This is one of the most amazing Strokes that can be struck, that a Lady should attempt to ravish a young Man, and he run away with his Cloaths half off for Fear of it! and a Jew too! *This is in the marvellous Taste!* It would have seemed more plausible, if the Genders had been changed. There is reason to suspect this Story . . .” Peter Annet, *The History of Joseph Consider'd: or, The Moral Philosopher Vindicated Against Mr. Samuel Chandler's Defence of the Prime Ministry and Character of Joseph* (London, 1744), 30-1.

³¹ Morgan collected these early controversial writings under the title *A Collection of Tracts, Relating to the Right of Private Judgement, the Sufficiency of Scripture, and the Terms of Church-Communion; upon Christian Principles: Occasion'd by the Late Trinitarian Controversy* (London, 1726), and it might be considered his earliest foray into a prolific career as a deist writer. See also *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Morgan, Thomas,” by Peter Harrison, accessed July 20, 2012, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19239>.

³² Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher* (London, 1737), 1: vii.

witchcraft and superstition among Semitic cultures, elements that eventually seeped deep within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Yet even Morgan had to admit that the tale was stirring, writing, “The Story of what passed between Joseph and his Brethren before he discovered himself to them, is very movingly and pathetically told, and is, perhaps, one of the finest Pieces of Dramatic History in the World.”³³

Unsurprisingly, given the extreme nature of Morgan’s claims about Joseph, the response was vituperative. This topic had consumed a mere eighteen pages of Morgan’s lengthy argument, but it inspired volumes of discussion in the years that followed. The most thorough response came from Samuel Chandler, a dissenting minister who in 1741 generated a 350-page chapter rebutting Morgan’s statements about Joseph.³⁴ Chandler was preceded in his defense by a fellow nonconformist named Moses Lowman and also by a High Church writer, John Chapman, the archdeacon of Sudbury, both in 1740.³⁵ Others entered the fray on Morgan’s side. An anonymous author penned *A Review of the Moral and Political Life and Administration of the Patriarch Joseph* in 1743, and Peter Annet, polemical writer and ardent anti-Christian, published his own book-length response to Chandler in 1744.³⁶

Morgan may have grudgingly acknowledged the inherent sentimentality of this story, but his most immediate supporter seized upon this characteristic as its greatest danger. The anonymous author of the 1743 *Review* began with words that point out the damaging nature of this seductive pathos: “There is no Part of the Holy Scriptures to young Minds so entertaining, and perhaps so little understood as the History of the Patriarch *Joseph*; the Narrative of his Sufferings, with a Singularity peculiar to the History [i.e., the Bible], glides into our Souls, stirs up our Passions, and excites a Pity . . . destructive of those Ideas which should impartially distinguish between the Innocent and the Oppressor.”³⁷ The author claims that this is the most affecting story in the Old Testament, possessing strong rhetorical power that directed readers’ attention away from the depravity of Joseph’s

³³ Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher*, 3: 14.

³⁴ Samuel Chandler, “The History and Character of Joseph Vindicated,” chap. 2 in *A Vindication of the History of the Old Testament in Answer to the Misrepresentations and Calumnies of Thomas Morgan, M.D. and Moral Philosopher* (London, 1741).

³⁵ Moses Lowman, *A Dissertation on the Civil Government of the Hebrews in which the True Designs, and Nature of their Government are Explained. The Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness of the Mosai’cal Constitutions are Vindicated: In Particular, from Some Late, Unfair, and False Representations of them in the Moral Philosopher* (London, 1740). John Chapman, *Eusebius; or, the True Christian’s Defense against a Late Book Entitul’d The Moral Philosopher* (London, 1740).

³⁶ Peter Annet, *The History of Joseph Consider’d: or, The Moral Philosopher Vindicated Against Mr. Samuel Chandler’s Defence of the Prime Ministry and Character of Joseph* (London, 1744).

Deborah W. Rooke has also recently put Morgan’s complaints in the context of other publications that did not directly respond to Morgan’s work (and in one case preceded it); see *Handel’s Israelite Oratorio Libretti* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 121-44. Rooke reads Miller’s adaptations and additions to this libretto as answers to some of the most common charges of this literature: Joseph’s marriage to an idolatrous wife (136-39), Joseph’s supposed swearing on the life of Pharaoh and Joseph’s divination (138-39), Joseph’s management of the famine crisis (for political gain; 139-41), Joseph’s ambition (141-43), and Joseph’s cruelty to his father and brothers (143-44). Rooke also sidesteps broader political interpretations of the libretto, focusing on the readily legible historical and doctrinal disputes in all these publications. For another review of these documents, see Lang, *Joseph in Egypt*, esp. chap. 2, “The Icon of Piety: Joseph for Children” and chap. 3, “The Icon of Chastity: the Handsome Hebrew.”

³⁷ *A Review of the Moral and Political Life and Administration of the Patriarch Joseph* (London, 1743), 1.

character. Indeed, the compassion and pity that the author says we naturally feel for Joseph was particularly corrupting for young readers:

Which cruel and destructive Notions [i.e., Joseph's sins], so much applauded, and so little examined, even by the Lovers of Liberty and Freedom, are conveyed insensibly into the Minds of young People, which too often retain the base Impression, stir up their Pity for his first Sufferings, and commiserate one of the most arbitrary and destructive of human Kind, who built his Dignity and Grandeur on the Ruin of the Rights and Liberties of Thousands.³⁸

Whereas the earlier poets had praised this story for its moving qualities, this author argues that the sentimental scenes misled readers, especially young ones eagerly consuming sentimental novels and the moral tales of serial publications, which also relied on intense emotions to make their moralizing points.

In his response to Morgan's accusations, Chandler also employed the sentimental power of Joseph's story. Joseph's interaction with his brothers after their father's death (Genesis 49: 15-21) provides one salient example:

What was this Politician's conduct at this *moving Message* [i.e., his brothers' fear of reprisals for their heinous actions now that their father was dead]? Joseph *wept when they thus spoke to him*. A thousand tender Thoughts crowded into his Mind, and his Tears discovered the Compassion and Generosity of his heart. But his Brethren, not content with the Message they had sent, *went and fell down before his Face, and they said behold we be thy Servants*. Did he reproach them for their Perfidy and Cruelty to him? No. Observe, Reader, the Answer, and if thou canst read it without a warm Emotion in thy Breast, thou art made of very different Materials from what I am.³⁹

This analysis encapsulates Chandler's sentimental rhetoric in his defense of Joseph. As in his other biblical summaries, he inserts his own commentary into the italicized quotations, drawing on language of eighteenth-century sensibility, referring to Joseph's "tender Thoughts," his tears, his "Compassion," and the "Generosity of his Heart." He then appeals to his readers as people sensitive enough to know the truth and goodness of such a story through their own emotional responses to it. Indeed, although his chief attack on Morgan is to discredit his biblical and historical accuracy, Chandler almost as frequently rebukes his enemy as a cold and unfeeling man, unable to be moved by the extraordinary circumstances of this history: "I am persuaded . . . that no Reader of Candor and Humanity can look over the Account which he hath given of this *illustrious Patriarch*, without detesting the Malice that appears throughout the whole of it. . . . Under the Guise of Morality and Philosophy, [he] hath spread in the World the cruelest Invectives . . . without betraying

³⁸ Ibid., 18. As examples of such dangerous writing, this author cites both the poetic rendering by Rowe (to whom he refers by her maiden name of Singer) and Grey's Hebrew primer.

³⁹ Samuel Chandler, *A Vindication of the History of the Old Testament*, 586.

one single Sign of Compassion for *the Worthies* he attempts to ruin.”⁴⁰ These are the “proofs” of this author’s retorts to Morgan: the emotional nature of the tale arouses empathy, demonstrating the truth and goodness of the model and its readers.

These documents are the chief ancillary evidence that Duncan Chisholm (and after him Ruth Smith) provided when proposing Miller’s libretto as political allegory. Yet there is little if anything explicitly political in them, and Chisholm’s thesis depended on some ambitious close reading. His primary evidence for the politicization of the anonymous anti-Joseph diatribe of 1743 involves a single Jacobite turn of logic that comes at the end of a fifty-two page document (a nod toward divine right) and an advertisement for a pamphlet on social depravity and luxury.⁴¹ He additionally points out that one author’s criticism was directed toward Rowe’s poem; Chisholm argues that an attack on a Whig poet must prove political motivation: “Although the author uses some of the standard Whig terminology . . . it is clear that he has some other game afoot. His denigration of Mrs Singer . . . makes it clear that he is opposed to the Whig cause.”⁴²

Yet one need not seek beneath the surface to find the true thrust of the discussion about Joseph: the deist cause, the moral fiber of a nation, the inviolable or specious nature of Holy Scripture itself — these are its immediate concerns. And these principal arguments hinged on Joseph’s status either as a deeply feeling, empathetic character, steadfastly virtuous and kind regardless of the ills inflicted upon him, or as a heartless man of cold, hard ambition. The political resonances that Chisholm sensed in these documents, as well as in Miller’s libretto, may have been obvious to some members of the audience. But the more immediate context that would have been sensed by everyone involved questions of fellow-feeling, social virtue, and unworldliness. For eighteenth-century readers who admired Joseph, this moving story provided a chance to indulge in luxurious grief, a

⁴⁰ Ibid., 599-600.

⁴¹ Chisholm, “New Sources,” 190. The passages of the Anonymous *Review* that Chisholm discusses here are on pp. 50-2. The actual quotation’s link to Toryism is hardly definitive:

The History of this projecting Minister [i.e., Joseph] has not only been propagated, but very much extoll’d among our Youth by several; but I shall content myself with mentioning only two, Mrs. *Singer* and Dr. *Grey*; the first of which has let flow her poetic Spring into the Minds of several, but less to be fear’d because chiefly in those of her own Sex; the other has shewn a great Desire of making our Youth in love with SYSTEMS of *arbitrary Government*, by introducing his History into Schools: But had that learned Clergyman given himself Time to think (but that perhaps was not to his Purpose) he must have observ’d, that tho’ *Egypt* was once the Mother of Arts and Sciences, by losing its Liberty it lost its Politeness, and as the natural Consequence of Slavery, degenerated into Ignorance, Barbarity and Vileness, and became an easy Prey to every Invader . . .

What a glorious Example is it to the present *Potentates*, to behold what a pleasing Gratitude has been paid to several of the *Egyptian Kings*, whose meanest Actions were regulated by their Laws! Whilst living, they were honour’d as so many visible Representatives of the Deity, and after their Deaths lamented as an universal Loss. These Sentiments of grateful Respect and Tenderness could proceed from nothing but from a strong Persuasion, that the *Divinity* had placed them on the Throne, and distinguished them greatly from other *Mortals*, and, that those who bore the noblest *Characteristick* of the supreme Being, in whose Breasts they found united the Power and Desire of doing good to others.

⁴² Ruth Smith offered at least one explicit eighteenth-century parallel between Joseph and Walpole. It comes from a letter of 1733, describing a Parliamentary discussion with no direct connection to the other literature on Joseph of this period (Smith, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 305).

favorite sentimental pastime, and even those who disapproved of Joseph admitted the story's emotional effectiveness. Contemporary moral sense philosophy provided justification for such luxury, an understanding that the viewing of tender scenes could train one's inner ethical compass. Such an idea resonated with Miller's own religious perspectives, rooted as they were within the culture of sentiment.

II. Miller and Latitudinarian Sentiment

The Joseph created by Miller and his predecessors provides an exemplar for the type of morality that Miller advocated more generally in his religious work. His twenty-two published sermons are preserved in a collection issued by his widow in 1749.⁴³ They present a coherent and consistent theology. Miller embraced notions of goodness, benevolence, and the naturalness of virtue, thus echoing the sentimental philosophies of the mid-eighteenth century in general, and the religious outlook of the Anglicans known as the "men of latitude" (or "Latitudinarians") specifically.

Miller's most recent biographer writes that Miller's theology "veered toward the Latitudinarian," which, in fact, understates the case.⁴⁴ Miller fully endorsed the major themes of Latitudinarian divines as they had been expressed since the late seventeenth century. In 1683, Gilbert Burnet had defined this term in his *History of My Own Time*, proclaiming the roots of the movement among the Cambridge Platonists and pointing to John Tillotson, Edward Stillingfleet, and Simon Patrick as its founders. In the turbulent years following the Restoration, a time of seething heterodoxy within the Protestant church, the men of latitude called for broader perspectives, said Burnet: "They loved the constitution of the Church, and the Liturgy, and could well live under them: But they did not think it unlawful to live under another form. . . . And they continued to keep a good correspondence with those who had differed from them in opinion, and allowed a great freedom both in philosophy and divinity; from whence they were called men of Latitude."⁴⁵ Despite such a gentle definition, Burnet admits that Latitudinarians were from their very formation associated with more extreme heterodox views ("their enemies called them Socinians," Burnet wrote), an assessment that was reinforced by the history of the most famous Latitudinarian of Miller's day, Benjamin Hoadly.

Hoadly has been called both "the loudest mouthpiece for the Latitudinarians" and "the best-hated clergyman of the century amongst his own order."⁴⁶ Miller himself summed up the general anger toward Hoadly in his 1736 poem, *A Seasonable Reproof*. This moral satire was mostly aimed at the contemporary theater, but Miller reserved a few lines for his fellow clergymen, balancing attacks with occasional praise, as in his defense of Hoadly,

⁴³ Miller, *Sermons on Various Subjects by the Late Reverend Mr. James Miller* (London, 1749). Only the first sermon in this collection is dated (1735).

⁴⁴ O'Brien, "The Life and Works," 101.

⁴⁵ Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time* (London, 1725), 1: 308-9.

⁴⁶ These assessments come from James Sambrook, *The Eighteenth Century: the Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1700-1789* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), 46, and Leslie Stephens, *A History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Smith, Elder, and co., 1902), 152.

whom he lauded for his “Rev’rence,” “Sense,” and “Virtue.” Miller gives more details in a diatribe against orthodoxy:

Lo upright *Hoadley!* lov’d by all, but those
Who’re Vertue’s, Wisdom’s, Truth’s, and *Rundle’s* Foes.

...

What! own the *Reason* which God gave Mankind,
Was giv’n to prove God’s Word, discern God’s Mind.
That all true *Faith* is not on *Ign’rance* built,
Nor *Thinking*, in Heav’ns Sight, held mortal *Guilt*;
That common *Sense* with Christian *Rites* may join,
And *Morals* not prophane a sound *Divine*;
That *Creeeds* can never alter *Wrong* to *Right*;
Nor *Orthodoxy* wash an *Æthiop* white.⁴⁷

With these assertions, Miller was aligning himself with one of the more extreme positions of Latitudinarian philosophy. His impassioned lines are somewhat obscure now but would have been timely in the mid-1730s. Hoadly was by then infamous for his involvement in the so-called “Bangorian Controversy,” a theological pamphlet war that erupted in 1717 after Hoadly, then Bishop of Bangor, preached a sermon that poured salt onto wounds that had been open since the Glorious Revolution; having already questioned the divine right of kings, Hoadly turned his attack on the clergy themselves, arguing that Christ’s kingdom “*is not of this World*” and that God needed “no *Viceregents*, . . . no *Interpreters*, upon whom his Subjects are absolutely to depend; no *Judges* over the Consciences or Religion of his People.”⁴⁸ Hoadly built his career on such “desertion of the Anglican canon,” as one religious historian has described his writings.⁴⁹ He followed his 1717 sermon with another controversy (the immediate catalyst for Miller’s defense): the 1735 *A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper*, which held that if the Eucharist celebration was mere symbolic act, then the clergy had no direct influence over a congregant’s salvation.⁵⁰ Public demonstrations of Christianity were merely symbolic, meaningless exercises unless accompanied by an inner morality. Miller

⁴⁷ Miller, *A Seasonable Reproof* (London, 1736), 12. Thomas Rundle (1687-1743) was the Bishop of Derry for the Church of Ireland, early in his career an advocate of “primitive Christianity,” and later a supporter of Hoadly and Samuel Clarke, whose own views were openly criticized as “Arian.” Both Hoadly’s and Rundle’s appointments (as bishop of Winchester and bishop of Gloucester, respectively) were contested by Edmund Gibson, inspiring a great deal of press coverage. Gibson accused Rundle of being a deist. The London bishop was also closely allied with Walpole, occasionally being referred to as “Walpole’s pope.” Both Gibson’s association with the administration and his condemnation of these Latitudinarian clergymen would have been enough to warrant an attack from Miller’s perspective, but he also held a personal vendetta; according to one of the earliest biographical notes on Miller, he had been denied preferment in the church by Gibson because he refused to stop writing for the theater. See n. 15.

⁴⁸ Benjamin Hoadly, *The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ. A Sermon Preach’d before the King, at the Royal Chapel at St. James’s, on Sunday March 31, 1717* (London, 1717), 11-12.

⁴⁹ Guglielmo Sanna, “How Heterodox was Benjamin Hoadly?” in *Religious Identities in Britain, 1660-1832* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 65.

⁵⁰ See also Hoadly, “St. Paul’s Discourse to Felix: Sermon VI Preached before the King, Febr. 15, 1729-30,” in *Twenty Sermons* (London, 1755), 112.

summarized these views in a lengthy footnote to the term orthodoxy above (and later in his printed sermons), angrily denouncing what he called “Polite” religion that made public show without private conviction, religious practice which, as he put it, remained “on the Porch of Virtue.”⁵¹

Hoadly, Miller, and like-minded ministers stressed a genuine, inwardly directed, and private religiosity, one quietly radical in a society that had demanded a very public form of orthodoxy from its monarchs and citizens alike since 1688. The nature of this private virtue corresponded with the most popular secular moral philosophies of the mid-century. R.S. Crane even suggested that the Latitudinarian tradition played a fundamental role in the foundation of eighteenth-century sentimental philosophy and the concept of the man of feeling, far outstepping the “teaching of individual lay moralists after 1700.”⁵² Scholars have occasionally debated whether the pulpit could actually have been a main line of popular influence (as Crane argued) but it is difficult to dispute that there is a marked resonance between Latitudinarian thought and secular sentimental morality.⁵³ Crane summarized the most incontrovertible aspect of his basic point as follows: “In the early eighteenth century the current of this humanitarian homiletic was flowing more strongly than ever. . . . It was not necessary to read the works of the Earl of Shaftesbury to learn that ‘to love the public, to study universal good, and to promote the interest of the whole world, as far as lies within our power, is surely the height of goodness . . .;’ the same lesson was being taught from hundreds of pulpits in London and the provinces by clergymen who had inherited the benevolistic spirit of their Latitudinarian predecessors of the generation before.”⁵⁴ Given Miller’s own theological positioning vis-à-vis Hoadly, the Latitudinarian ethic must surely be taken as his own moral starting point more directly than other secular philosophies.

However, one need not differentiate too stringently; the basic principles of Latitudinarian ethics are known to anyone familiar with eighteenth-century moral philosophy after Shaftesbury.⁵⁵ Latitudinarians stayed far from severe dictates of fire and brimstone, a jealous God, and original sin.⁵⁶ Theirs was a theology that stressed a benevolent creator moved by “the Softer Dictates and Whispers of Humanity.”⁵⁷ Since we

⁵¹ Sambrook nicely summarizes the Latitudinarian line: “Christianity subsisted not in the visible church but in the commitment of each sincere individual believer to the teachings of Jesus” (*The Eighteenth Century*, 45).

⁵² R.S. Crane, “Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the ‘Man of Feeling,’” 207.

⁵³ The most direct refutation of Crane’s thesis came a long time after its publication, with Donald Greene’s “Latitudinarianism and Sensibility: The Genealogy of the ‘Man of Feeling’ Reconsidered,” *MP* 75 (1977): 159-83. This in turn was answered by Frans de Bruyn, “Latitudinarianism and Its Importance as a Precursor of Sensibility,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 80, no. 3 (1981): 359-68.

⁵⁴ Crane, “Toward a Genealogy,” 212. His citation is to Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (London, 1711), 1: 37.

⁵⁵ Crane provides a numbered list of the “ethical and psychological propaganda” of the Latitudinarians that handily illustrates their kinship to the moral sense school of philosophy: 1. Virtue as universal benevolence; 2. Benevolence as feeling (including ardent anti-Stoicism); 3. Benevolent feelings as ‘natural’ to man; 4. The “Self-approving Joy” (pp. 208-229).

⁵⁶ For a description of the ever softening attitudes of Latitudinarian ministers, see Randall McGowen, “The Changing Face of God’s Justice: the Debates over Divine and Human Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Criminal Justice History* 9 (1988): 63-98, esp. pp. 73-8. See also G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 69.

⁵⁷ This phrase comes from a sermon by George Stephens, *The Amiable Quality of Goodness as Compared with Righteousness* (London, 1725).

were created in such a being's image, we were naturally disposed toward empathy and kindness. G.J. Barker-Benfield has described the Latitudinarians' desire to "restore 'all natural feelings and bodily passions' to a 'Nature' they called 'humane,'" and their obsession with the "material signs" of virtue, such as sympathetic tears, then considered "as crucial as the more spiritual signs of grace had always been."⁵⁸ Other scholars have discussed how gut reactions to the sufferings of others were "natural revelations of God's moral expectations of us."⁵⁹ Such reactions were also compared with the automatic, "mechanical" instincts of lesser creatures. Just as the satisfaction of these urges brought pleasure to animals, so human beings' empathetic behavior brought pleasure, a fulfillment of human nature.⁶⁰ To deny such desires was to commit the gravest of sins, for which no public profession of faith could ever compensate; Hoadly explained that it was certain "that a charitable and good-natured *Pagan* has a better Title to Favour, than a cruel and barbarous *Christian*; let him be never so orthodox in his Faith."⁶¹

Throughout Miller's published sermons, he passionately advocated such a view of Christianity. He provided the most cogent exposition of his theology in his charity sermon, a meditation on Romans 13:8, "Owe no Man any thing but to love one another for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law." Miller was careful to distinguish his literal interpretation of Paul's words from a more general reading. Some commentators insisted, Miller said, "that it means only the Duties contained in the second Table of the Commandments which relate to our Neighbour." Miller's interpretation was more encompassing: "I own myself to be of a different Opinion, for by that emphatical Expression *of all the Law*, the Apostle here undoubtedly means the whole Duties we owe both to God and to our Neighbour. . . . So that this Virtue may be said in the strictest Sense to include in it all that is due from us with respect to our Creator."⁶²

By adopting such a literalist reading here and elsewhere in his religious writing, Miller privileged private over public virtue, and indeed distrusted the latter. Miller elsewhere attacked mere outward show of the pomp of religious practice: "Though we may be zealous in the Practice of the external Parts of Religion, regular in the Observation of

⁵⁸ Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 67. As an example, he cites Robert South in 1662 pointing to Christ's own tears as important indicators of his own empathetic nature.

⁵⁹ This quote comes from Norman Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion: an Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 2 (1976), 200. It is echoed almost verbatim by Gary Ebersol; spontaneous emotive and physical responses were, he says, "*natural revelations of God's moral expectations of human beings*, [and] they were also signals to persons for action" (in *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Postmodern Images of Indian Captivity* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 111; emphasis added.)

⁶⁰ Sociologist Colin Campbell described this concept as "autonomous hedonism" in *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1987). See also Barker-Benfield, "The Origins of Anglo-American Sensibility," in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85-6. For an instance of a religious writer arguing in favor of mechanical explanations of social benevolence, see the 1720 sermon of Richard Fiddes, who writes that "when we see any of our Fellow-Creatures in Circumstances of Distress, we are naturally, I had almost said, mechanically inclined to be helpful to them . . . [And] as all the Actions of Nature are sweet and pleasant, so there is none which gives a good Man a greater, or more solid, or lasting Pleasure than this of *doing Good*." Quoted in Crane, "Toward a Genealogy," 225-26. Barker-Benfield also describes the connection between "mechanical" empathy and the work of scientists like George Cheyne; see *The Culture of Sensibility*, 68.

⁶¹ Benjamin Hoadly, "The Good Samaritan," chap. 16 in *Twenty Sermons* (London, 1755), 332.

⁶² Miller, *Sermons*, "A Charity Sermon," 32-3.

every Ordinance, and punctual to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church we adhere to, yet this is only remaining in the Porch to Virtue; these are only the Plumes and Trappings of Piety, under which many a foul Heart is hid.”⁶³ The common understanding of the term “orthodoxy” was unfortunate, said Miller: “This Word is seldom or ever made use of to signify *right Opinion* or *true Faith*, as from its Etymology . . . but rather *Synod Faith*, *hereditary Faith*, *fashionable Faith*, &c.”⁶⁴ Such outward “Trappings,” said Miller, meant nothing next to Paul’s injunction to love one another as the full law of Christianity: “Without this, all our Pretences to Religion are frivolous . . . Love of our Fellow-Creatures is the only true Cement which can unite us to our good Creator; That Faith and Hope, however great and necessary Graces, are still inferior to this, and nothing valuable without it.”⁶⁵ Repeatedly throughout this and other sermons, Miller reminded his audience that to love to one’s neighbor is the only essential law of religion: “All things in Religion cannot be of the same Value,” he wrote.⁶⁶ Like Hoadly, Miller stressed that even faith itself is subservient to its “end,” the extension of love, charity, and kindness to fellow men.

Throughout his sermons, Miller attempted to prove the naturalness of fellow-feeling by stressing the pleasure that benevolent actions provide those who perform them. God created people in his image, and implanted in their souls “several natural Tendencies and Affections for the better preservation of their Beings, and Security of their Happiness. Amongst these, the social Passions, or the Inclinations toward Society . . . are the most powerful and useful.”⁶⁷ Doing good to others causes us “Pleasure or Benefit,” Miller stressed, which makes love “nothing more than what is natural to our very Constitutions.” Fellow-feeling is therefore “rational” and “flows from that friendly and social Principle of the Mind, and which inclines us to rejoice in, and promote the Happiness of others which prompts us to a Fellow-feeling with others in their Necessities; and to a Humanity and Bounty in our Behaviour toward them.” Miller admitted that there are degrees of fellow-feeling; blood ties and friendships, he said, naturally incline us to some people more palpably than to others. Yet, Miller insisted, “There is a Proportion of that Affection to be diffused throughout the World: like that Principle of Gravitation in the Works of Nature, which tho’ it increases in Strength the nearer Bodies are to one another, yet extends itself in some Measure through the whole Universe, and acts upon the most remote Parts of Matter.”⁶⁸ For congregants who might have found such Newtonian concepts challenging, Miller offered an aphorism that summarized the argument in more organic terms: “As the Strength and Perfection of the natural Body arises [sic] from the due Connexion and Adherence of its Parts, so the civil Body is . . . join’d together with the Ligaments of Love.”⁶⁹

Such bodily explanations ran throughout Miller’s sermons, in which he frequently claimed that altruism fulfills “appetites.” To put it bluntly, according to Miller, doing good feels good. Miller himself was fond of such blunt formulations, writing once, “Charity is really a Piece of Sensuality,” and elsewhere, “There is no Sensuality like that of doing Good. . . . We never knew what it was to be an Epicure indeed, till we became the Subjects

⁶³ Miller, *Sermons*, “On Lukewarmness in Religion,” 243.

⁶⁴ Miller, *A Seasonable Reproof*, 13.

⁶⁵ Miller, *Sermons*, “On Lukewarmness in Religion,” 29.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

and Votaries of Godliness.”⁷⁰ Miller would push even farther toward bathos in his insistence that virtuous behavior could have immediate, worldly reward. For instance, a Christian’s doing good toward others could help foster what Miller called “a general Love and Esteem among his Acquaintance.”⁷¹ Miller even claimed that such friendships translated easily into successful business relationships: “For *to do good*, is the natural Way to raise us Friends, who shall be obliged to contribute their Endeavours to the furthering [of] our pursuits; to the upholding and securing us in our Prosperity.”⁷² He stressed that a life of virtue is “not only no Hindrance to our temporal Designs, but a great Furtherance of them,” one which contributes “to the bringing about our worldly Aims.”⁷³ Moreover, there is “no such ready way to attain what our Flesh and Blood most desires, most delights in, as to be sincerely pious.”⁷⁴ Miller did not argue (as he did elsewhere) that the ultimate desire of our natural constitution is love, fellow feeling, and pure happiness. Instead, he made the bold claim that what he called the “Idols of the World,” namely wealth, honor, and pleasure, are best acquired by being godly: “I shall therefore make it appear that Godliness and Religion is [sic] a very great Furtherance to the Acquisition of all these [idols]; and that no Man can take a more ready way, either to improve his Fortune, or purchase a Name and Reputation among Men, or to live comfortably and pleasantly in this World, than heartily to serve God, and to live in the Patience of every Virtue.”⁷⁵ Getting riches, he says, is “an Art, and falls under Precepts and Directions; no Man alive can propose a better Expedient in order thereto than serious Practice of Religion.”⁷⁶ Miller thus directly linked human success with the Latitudinarian standpoints that he had earlier advocated.

Why, then, do the virtuous sometimes suffer misfortune if heaven provides earthly rewards for good behavior? Such unjustness is due to external factors, perpetrated by the “*worst and vilest of Mankind*; such who have debauched the natural Principles of their Minds, have lost all the Notions and Distinctions of Good and Evil, are fallen below the Dignity of Human Nature . . . *Monsters and Extravagances of Nature*.”⁷⁷ In another sermon in which Miller warned about the dire consequences of luxury, he pointed to its most damning result, sinners’ tendency of “locking up their Breasts against all Sensations of Pity and Humanity for their necessitous Fellow-creatures.”⁷⁸ To deny the virtuous, to suppress fellow-feeling, was an aberration of nature, the worst violation of innate humanity.

Such monstrosity surely should not go unpunished; indeed, it was a logical corollary that, if virtue was rewarded, even in this world, then vice must be penalized. And if the moral compass is a natural, internal system whose fulfillment makes mankind happy, then the most logical conclusion is that the vicious must be unhappy. Such sensations apply, for instance, to the man who makes insincere outward expostulations of virtue. These hypocrites practice “the most mean and odious of all Vices,” because it is “destructive of all Commerce and Intercourse with Men.” Society demands what is natural and virtuous, and

⁷⁰ Miller, *Sermons*, “On Doing Good,” 144; “On Godliness as Profitable Unto All Things,” 331.

⁷¹ Miller, *Sermons*, “On True Wisdom,” 117.

⁷² Miller, *Sermons*, “On Doing Good,” 143.

⁷³ Miller, *Sermons*, “On Godliness as Profitable Unto All Things,” 303.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 305-6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 315; emphasis added.

⁷⁸ Miller, *Sermons*, “A Fast Sermon,” 8-9.

the imbalance between dissimulated virtue and internal dismissal of virtue leads “both the Body and Mind [of the hypocrite] upon the Rack of Dissimulation. . . . There is likewise a certain Apprehension and Terror, which continually accompanies the Consciousness of Guilt, and which arises from the Dread of being discover’d and expos’d.”⁷⁹ The truest test of such internal consequences comes when oppressive external forces arise. If the man of virtue meets with “ill Treatment,” Miller wrote, “he can easily bear it; because he is sure he has not deserv’d it. This placid Retreat into a Man’s Self is the great, the only Asylum from Troubles abroad . . . the principal Consolation of human Life.”⁸⁰ In contrast, he who causes pain to others suffers when under adversity: “What an Aggravation of our Trouble would it be should Adversity befall us, if we had Cause to make this bitter Reflexion: Thus and thus I deal with others in my Prosperity, and now it is come home to me. I had no Sense of Equality and Humanity toward others then, and I must now justly expect they’ll have none toward me.”⁸¹ Guilt is immediate punishment for vice, a private suffering worlds away from the fire and brimstone of earlier divines.

It is perhaps no surprise that Miller would choose Joseph’s brothers as the prime examples of this sort of earthly punishment. In this same sermon, he imagines “what Agony of Mind must *Joseph’s* Brethren be in, when they themselves came to be in Straits, and reflect on their former unnatural Dealing with their Brother? *We are verily guilty*, cry’d they, *concerning our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this Distress come upon us.*”⁸² This is the only mention of Joseph and his brothers in all of Miller’s printed sermons. But when he penned his oratorio libretto, Miller found the opportunity, at the work’s very opening, to show a man of virtue under duress, taking refuge in his private, inner goodness, the “placid Retreat.” And Miller’s Joseph met with great earthly reward for his faith, while his brethren suffered harsh physical as well as emotional torments. Miller’s interpretation of Joseph’s history reflected a theology in which one is naturally rewarded or punished by pleasure or pain, a reflection of mankind’s creation in the image of a benevolent and loving God.

III. Giuseppe, Joseph, and Simeon

With the many English portrayals of Joseph as background, Miller apparently read Apostolo Zeno’s libretto to *Giuseppe* as one more example of a sentimental retelling of this story. As we have seen, Miller, Handel, and their audiences had a robust literature about Joseph on which to base their interpretations. Zeno’s libretto provided yet another model for dramatization of one of the most sentimental tales of the Old Testament, and one that accorded well with Miller’s worldview as outlined in his religious writing.

A man of the theater like Miller would have seen in *Giuseppe* all the requisite materials for an English sentimental drama. Its protagonist is not only an empathetic man, but an unquestionably virtuous character. Giuseppe’s love for his wife, his unwavering

⁷⁹ Miller, *Sermons*, “On Sincerity,” 54-5.

⁸⁰ Miller, *Sermons*, “On Doing Good as We Would Be Done By,” 132.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 133-34.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 133-34.

devotion to God, and his reclamation of his brothers' love are his tangible, sentimental "accomplishments." (The rescue of thousands of Egyptians from starvation is mentioned, but occurs before Zeno's action has begun.) There is a fundamental belief in the goodness of mankind; even the wretched brothers are remorseful for their past sins and express wonder at Giuseppe's seemingly unfeeling attitude toward their suffering brother.⁸³ And once Giuseppe has ascertained that his brothers have truly repented, the drama can climax in one of the stock devices of the sentimental drama, the "scene of discovery," a tableau where family bonds are re-established and where characters react with prolonged, deeply felt emotion to the preceding events. Giuseppe's identity, for so long suppressed and now climactically discovered before his bewildered brothers, is thus the heart of this almost actionless drama.⁸⁴ Miller was left the tasks of translating the two-act *azione sacra* into English (with a few significant additions and alterations) and adding a third part to suit Handel's favored dramatic structure.⁸⁵ The changes that Miller made to his source material strengthened traits that he found in the Italian work: Joseph, even more than Giuseppe, suffers an internal conflict, a suppression of natural emotional fondness for his immediate family, which climaxes at his tearful discovery scene. Above all, Miller focused on Joseph's challenges as a loving family man, a thoroughly sentimental domestication of the work's passive hero. Handel grasped Miller's dramatic and thematic thrusts and provided musical portraits that reinforced and strengthened the new characterizations of the English libretto.


In order to swell Zeno's *Giuseppe* to a length that conformed to Handel's other dramatic oratorios, Miller needed to supply another act. Zeno's libretto begins *in media res*, after the brothers have been sent to fetch Benjamin, leaving Simeon as collateral, and concludes with the tearful family reunion. Miller could have extended the drama forward to include Joseph's reunion with Jacob (as Rowe did). However, Miller opted to keep the dramatic climax focused on the discovery scene. He thus extended the story backward in Part 1, focusing on Genesis 41, which narrates a period two years before the events of Zeno's *azione sacra*. This prologue dramatized Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, the event that both secured his position in the court and made the family-centered action of Zeno's storyline possible. Miller's introduction of Joseph also foregrounded the character's emotional state and inner turmoil as the oratorio's dramatic focus, on which Handel capitalized in his opening musical portrait of the character.

⁸³ Simeon's aria "Quel cor che fugge i miseri" clearly expresses this point of view. For one author's discussion of the idea that an overwhelming majority of fundamentally good characters is a desideratum of the sentimental drama, see Frank Ellis, *Sentimental Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4-5 and *passim*.

⁸⁴ Such an unveiling of identity before stunned family members was a dramatic technique common to sentimental comedies of the period 1700-1750, and would have appealed to a contemporary English playwright. One of the most famous uses of the "scene of discovery" was in Steele's *Conscious Lovers*, a moment deplored as unfitting for comedy by John Dennis in the "Remarks on a Play Call'd The Conscious Lovers" (London, 1723). Other examples can be found in Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (1696) and in the family reunion scene that closes Edward Moore's *The Foundling* (1748). Beaumarchais lampoons the technique to great effect in *Le mariage de Figaro* (1778).

⁸⁵ On Handel's insistence on three-act structures, including the combination of one- and two-act works to create a balanced evening's entertainment, see Robarts, "A Biographical and Textual Study," 158.

Miller begins with Joseph in prison, expressing a tortured but resolute state. He begins with an aria of steadfast prayer that is soon interrupted with probing and troubled questions set as recitative. Miller printed the text to the aria in full twice, making a striking visual impression (Figure 3.2):



J O S E P H
 AND HIS
 B R E T H R E N.

P A R T I. S C E N E I.
 S C E N E, a P R I S O N.
 J O S E P H *reclining in a melancholy Posture.*
 A I R.
B
*E firm, my Soul, nor faint beneath
 Affliction's galling Chains;
 When crown'd with conscious Virtue's Wreath,
 The shackled Captive reigns.* [Starting up.
 RECITATIVE *accompany'd.*
Jos. But wherefore thus? Whence Heav'n these bitter Bonds?
 Are these the just Rewards of stubborn Virtue?
 Is this contagious Cell the due Abode
 Of too much Innocence? --- Down, down, proud Heart,
 Nor blindly question the Behest of Heaven!
 These Chastishments are just - - for some wise End
 Are all the partial Ills allotted Man.
 A I R repeated.
*Be firm, my Soul, nor faint beneath
 Affliction's galling Chains;
 When crown'd with conscious Virtue's Wreath,
 The shackled Captive reigns.*

S C E N E

Figure 3.2: Miller, *Joseph and His Brethren* (London, 1744), p. 7

Miller's poetic technique here is expressive of Joseph's measured fortitude under extreme duress. The common meter (86.86) of the opening quatrain stands in sharp contrast with the flexible blank verse of the recitative. Few poetic meters wear their regularity as brazenly as does common meter, a fact accentuated by the ABAB rhyme employed by Miller. Both this meter and rhyme scheme are the stuff of the eighteenth-century hymn; the result is a "churchy" feel, a stylistic reference that efficiently evokes contemporary ideas about private devotion and inner virtue.⁸⁶ The recitative brings a sudden change. Its blank verse contrasts with the sing-song regularity of the aria. Joseph opens the central section with a rapid succession of questions ceding to firm expostulations of faith as Joseph swings from probing doubt to staunch acceptance of the divine plan.

The repetition of the opening aria both provided striking contrast at the largest structural level and offered Handel an opportunity to foreground Joseph's internal struggle through powerful musical means. Whether this idea stemmed from Handel or Miller is unclear, but the resultant *dal segno* structure surpasses the affective contrast that typically marks the *da capo* aria, here moving from measured music and text to the less ordered world of recitative, and back. The aria features a confidence that contrasts sharply with the recitative's fragmentation (Example 3.1). The long opening ritornello, with its dotted figuration and implied tortured harmonies, might be read as indicative of Joseph's tribulations; once he begins singing, however, this rhythmic drive is paired with Joseph's expressions of fortitude (see e.g. mm. 41, 59–62), and the pulsating figurations of mm. 13–16 become the musical "wreath" of his virtue (mm. 30–33, 65–66). Joseph thus effectively takes the sonic representation of his oppressive environment and makes it into a reflection of his own ability to trust in God's grace and the inevitable reward of virtue. (One of the brothers' reactions to these same dramatic and sonic circumstances will, as we shall see, be very different from Joseph's.) Joseph's florid, monophonic opening statement is especially powerful, a representation of self-sufficient "firmness" of character that reflects Miller's own description of virtue in distress: "Or if he chance to meet with ill Treatment from Men, he can easily bear it; because he is sure he has not deserv'd it. This placid Retreat into a Man's Self is the great, the only Asylum from Troubles abroad . . . the principal Consolation of human Life."⁸⁷ Miller provided a poetic representation of the virtuous man of his sermons, suffering under unfair circumstances; Handel's music captures this trouble and "placid Retreat" with great creative force.

⁸⁶ Blank verse and alternating rhymes are the stock fare of such familiar hymn collections as Sternhold and Hopkins' psalter (Day's Psalter), in common use in England from the sixteenth century, and Isaac Watts's influential *Hymns and Spiritual Songs in Three Books* (1707). J.R. Watson argues that the strict observation of meter in English hymnody was not only one of its defining characteristics, but its most effective way to move a congregation, utilizing "the powerful rhythms of primitive or folk art." (*The English Hymn: a Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon University Press, 1997), 26.)

⁸⁷ Miller, *Sermons*, "On Doing As We Would Be Done By," 132. Miller also stresses a capacity to bear undue suffering as one of Christ's most admirable qualities: "How serene and unmoved did he bear all the various Contumelies and Inventions of Cruelty?" Miller, *Sermons*, "On the Work of Lord and the Certainty of Its Reward," 341.

Example 3.1: Joseph and His Brethren, "Be firm my soul," opening

Larghetto, e pomposo

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Joseph

Continuo

10

pp

20

6/4 4# 4#

3 3 3

Be firm, my soul! nor faint be-neath, nor faint be-

27

pp

3# p

neath af- flic - tion's gal-ling chains! when crown'd with con - scious vir - tue's wreath

pp

Example 3.2: Joseph and His Brethren, "Be firm my soul," middle section, mm. 66 ff.

66

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Joseph

Continuo

Adagio

wreath, the shack - led cap - tive reigns.

74 *Accomp.*

(starting up)

But where-fore thus? whence Heav'n these bit-ter bonds? Are these the just re-wards of stub-born vir-tue?

79 6 6 6 3²

is this con-ta-gious cell the due a-bode of too much in - no-cence? Down, down, proud

83

heart, nor blind-ly ques-tion the be-hest of Heav'n! These cha-stise-ments are just, for some wise

The recitative brings a striking change, and Handel provided the middle section itself with internal contrast (Example 3.2). Miller's unevenly divided blank verse inspired musical irregularity. The opening question is set as a one-measure exclamation, preceded by a C-major blast from the orchestra that wrenches us away from the E-minor conclusion of the opening aria (m. 74). The bass line's augmented fifth between mm. 74 and 75 and the harmonic shift that accompanies it are additional unmooring devices, capped by concitato gestures from the strings in mm. 76 and 78. A further harmonic wrench to G Major comes in m. 82, underlining Joseph's reaffirmation of his faith in the heavenly protection of virtue. The sustained strings of the closing section (mm. 79–87) reflect Joseph's more settled state of mind and lead logically back to the measured fortitude of the framing aria. This opening scene provides an idea of Joseph that is consistent throughout the work: he is emotional, his self-expression is fragmented and tortured, but his faith and resolve are steadfast.

There was nothing about this scenario that inherently signaled the sentimental drama, or that indicated Joseph as a particularly "feeling" man. Virile heroes of this period often found themselves down on their luck, temporarily rendered ineffectual and weak. To take but one example relevant to Handel's oratorios, Samson was frequently depicted in weakened state, as in the oratorio libretto by Newburgh Hamilton or in countless paintings in which he lay helpless in the lap of the wily and manipulative Delilah.⁸⁸ But the resolutions of such characters' trials were broken bonds, achieved through active effort, weak moments overcome with heroic and muscular deeds. Samson reclaimed his strength and destroyed the Philistines' house of worship in a rugged, manly action, killing himself in the process, but preserving his honor for the ages. Joseph's accomplishment, on the other hand, is of a very different kind. His triumph is "soft," emotional, and his sins, conversely, are rooted in a temporary "hardness" of heart, an imperviousness to the suffering of his fellow man. Miller's Joseph is an empathetic man who has temporarily lost his way, and his greatest accomplishment is succumbing to the emotions of fraternal love and care for innocence that swell innately within him.

The power of Joseph's opening scene is reinforced and its structural symbolism made clear early in the oratorio's second act. Dramatic heroes deserve dramatic villains, and Miller evidently thought that Zeno's libretto lacked a well-defined foil, a single identity who could stand for the opposite of Joseph's gentleness and empathy. He thus undertook more revisions and additions to his model that provided such dramatic balance. Amongst all the brothers, there was one whose crimes outweighed the accessory functions of the other perpetrators: Simeon, according to interpretive tradition the cruelest of Joseph's persecutors. Miller's changes to his model foregrounded Simeon's role and added an element of redemption through empathy that was lacking not only in the Italian source, but in the relevant chapters from Genesis. Both Zeno and Miller introduced the brothers through Simeon, according to tradition the ringleader of the brothers, and the one most culpable for Joseph's abuse. Zeno did so in a tense conversation between the brothers in the prison cell, culminating in Simeon's aria, "Impostori? Ah! sì: nel volto."⁸⁹ Miller

⁸⁸ See, for instance, the famous large oil painting by Peter Paul Rubens from ca. 1610, housed at the National Gallery in London.

⁸⁹ I have copied and translated Zeno's texts from *Raccolta di Melodrammi seri scritti nel secolo xviii* (Milan: Società tipogr. dei classici italiani, 1822), v. 2. Zeno did not divide his two-act libretto into scenes. I have endeavored here to make the points of comparison between Zeno's libretto and Miller's as clear as possible. Page references to the *Raccolta* are given in lieu of Act/Scene divisions. "Impostori" comes on p. 144 of the

incorporated this aria as “Impostor! Ah! My foul offence” (Part 2, Scene 4), but first presented Simeon in a solo prison scene of his own creation (Part 2, Scene 2). This added scene made the polarization of these two characters clear, a dramatic function not lost on Handel, as shown in his musical realizations of the men, one virtuous and empathetic, the other fierce. In this scene and others involving Simeon, Miller’s dramatic intensification of these elements in the Zeno source material inspired strong musical responses from Handel, who reinforced the character portraits that the English librettist created anew.

A long line of biblical interpreters, including the English poets who had preceded Miller in re-telling this story, portrayed Simeon as the brothers’ ringleader. There were biblical roots for the ascription. Genesis 34 told the story of Simeon and Levi, the twin sons of Jacob and Leah who brutally slayed the men of Shechem in retaliation for the rape of their sister, Dinah, subsequently pillaging the land and enslaving the women and children.⁹⁰ They met with reprobation from Jacob for these violent acts. At this point, the biblical narrative was explicit that Jacob’s disapproval was due to possible military repercussions from other Canaanites.⁹¹ Yet a later verse, recording Jacob’s dying words, levied a more general condemnation:

⁵ Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.

⁶ O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

⁷ Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.⁹²

Jacob’s dubbing of his sons as “instruments of cruelty” did not bode well for their posthumous reception. Rabbinical texts also identified Simeon as the central perpetrator. For instance, the midrash *Sefer haYashar* (רפס רשיה) claimed that it was Simeon who suggested circumcising and murdering the Shechemites, and also specified him as the brother who had Joseph cast into the pit.⁹³ Similarly, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a pseudepigraph dating from the second century that gave the dying words of the sons of Jacob, placed the blame on Simeon, using his own deathbed speech as a meditation on envy. Miller might have known this document in the Latin translation by Robert Grossthead dating from the early thirteenth century, or from one of many English editions available from the sixteenth century onwards.⁹⁴ Most of these included engravings

Raccolta. Miller’s adaptation is in Part 2, Scene 4. Chisholm also includes a two-column appendix to his article, with Zeno’s text on one side and Miller’s on the other, omitting large portions of both texts where he does not find direct correspondences.

⁹⁰ Genesis, 34: 25-27.

⁹¹ Genesis 34: 30:

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitant of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.

⁹² Genesis 49: 5-7.

⁹³ 33: 37-38; 41: 25.

⁹⁴ See, for instance, the version “Englyshed” by A.G. in 1574 as *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Sons of Jacob. Translated from the Greek by Robert Grossthead, B.D.* (The translator is generally thought to be

of Simeon holding in one hand the sword that had slain the Shechemites, in the other Joseph's bloodied coat, graphically depicting Simeon's great sins (Figure 3.3). Nevertheless, his actual murders are passed over in the text; Simeon turns immediately to his relationship with Joseph, identifying envy as his worst sin: "In those days I envied *Joseph*, because my father loved him: I hardened my heart against him to kill him . . . because the prince of error sending forth the spirit of envy so blinding my mind that I could not take heed to spare my father *Jacob*."⁹⁵ Simeon declares the justice of his imprisonment at Joseph's order, and goes on to describe Joseph's nature as opposite to his own: "Of all the days of his Life, he never did cast us in the Teeth with it, but loved us as his own soul."⁹⁶ Miller would have recognized the dire seriousness of this sin, since he considered envy "that Bane of all Religion and Virtue, that infernal Passion" that turned otherwise loving people into "shining Plagues both to themselves and to their Fellow-Creatures."⁹⁷

Eighteenth-century commentators also placed the central blame on Simeon. Rowe's poem, for instance, described Simeon as "fierce," stating that in the attack on the Shechemites, he "old and young, without distinction, slew."⁹⁸ Rose's poem also focused on Simeon's fierceness, placing bloodthirsty words into his mouth:

But *Simeon*, with the keenest Hatred mov'd,
 All soft and gentle Methods disapprov'd:
 And said: 'T'attack aspiring *Fraud* with *Lies*,
 Were to indulge the Vice, we should chastise:
 And, to attend Ambition's *later Growth*,
 A needless *Patience*, and imprudent *Sloth*.
 Quick our Resentments to Redress should move.
Suspence as irksome is in *Hate*, as *Love*.
 'Tis my Advice, that *early* we destroy,
 And crush the *full-grown Rival*, in the *Boy*.⁹⁹

Anthony Gilby, but Arthur Golding was claimed as the translator shortly after his death in 1606; see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Golding, Arthur (1535/6–1606)," by John Considine (online edition, accessed March 4, 2013).

⁹⁵ A.G., *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (1574; rep. London, 1706), n.p. In some later reprintings, this quotation is altered to read "I could not take heed to spare my brother *Joseph*." See, for instance, the edition of 1731. An English translation of Joseph's testament was published on its own in the sixteenth century; its subtitle demonstrates its didactic focus this early, but one somewhat different from the eighteenth-century approach: "*Reade thys prety [and] wholsome volume, that maye theach the [sic] to fle from the abhominable synne of adultery.*" (*The Testament of Joseph whych Was Translated Oute of Greke into Latyne by a Certayn Bysshop of Lyncoln Called (by Hys Syr Name) Grosthede, and into Englishe, by Wyllyam Freloue*. London, 1539).

⁹⁶ Grosthead, *Testament of the Patriarchs*, n.p.

⁹⁷ Miller, *On Vain-Glory*, 68 and 71.

⁹⁸ Rowe, *The History of Joseph*, 11.

⁹⁹ Rose, *The History of Joseph*, 15. Elsewhere, Rose refers to Levi and Simeon as "from his [Joseph's] suit averse / Bloody as Tygers, and as Lions fierce, / . . . They bid the tender Youth himself resign, / By quick Submission, to their first Decree; / From which nor Cries, nor Tears should set him free" (30).

The Testament of Simeon
made to his Children at hys
death concerning Envy.



The hart in Womans mout b, the face,
the sword, the Wolfe, the cap:
All these point out the envious race,
that run to their mishap.

The Testament of *Simeon* made to
his Children at his Death, con-
cerning Envy.



The Heart in Womans Mouth, the Face,
the Sword, the Wolf, the Cap:
All these point out the envious race,
that run to their mishap.

Figure 3.3: Arthur Golding, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, title page to “The Testament of Simeon;” 1574, left; 1706, right

Rose and Rowe also had precedents for this approach. In a collection of religious poetry from early in the century, John Bunyan focused on Simeon’s cruelty, giving Jacob’s deathbed condemnation even more bite than the biblical text: “*Simeon and Levi’re Brethren. Instruments / Of Cruelty are lodged in their Tents: / . . . Curst be their anger, fierce, yea cursed be / Their Wrath, for it was full of Cruelty.*”¹⁰⁰ Cruelty also formed the focal point of the Joseph story for one minister writing early in century. He decried Simeon’s “*natural Inclination to Blood and Cruelty*” and then pointed to Joseph’s imprisonment of Simeon as centrally important to the story:

And *Joseph* seems to express a Remembrance of *Simeon’s* Unkindness, when he pick’d out him among the rest to keep as Prisoner, and a Pledge for the Honesty of his Brethren: And that Prison he was then confin’d to might possibly have that good Effect on him, as to make him sensible of his *Sin*, not only against his *Brother*, but against his *well-meaning Neighbour*: Certainly

¹⁰⁰ John Bunyan, *Meditations on the Several Ages of Man’s Life: Representing, the Vanity of It, From His Cradle to His Grave. Adorn’d with Proper Emblems. To Which is Added, Scriptural Poems* (London, 1701), n.p.

it's a great happiness to have Brethren, near Relations, and real Friends to stand by us in Adversities or Troubles; Advice, Comfort, Sympathy, Assistance are desirable Things, and from whom can we expect them more naturally and reasonably than from those who are bound to us in the nearest Ties of Blood? But it's an extreme Infelicity when those who should be Fellow-helpers to one another in that which is good, express their mutual Dearnesses only in the most criminal and desperate Actions.¹⁰¹

This discrepancy between the bonds that one can “naturally and reasonably” expect from family and Simeon's heinous acts were answered not by mere condemnation, but by Joseph's role in Simeon's reformation, the “good Effect” of the brother's imprisonment. The reformative nature of these brothers' interactions is absent from the biblical narrative.¹⁰² Yet such was a feasible theory for one who believed in the power of empathy and virtue, or, as this author put it, “certainly Goodness and Virtue is [sic] of a . . . healing and uniting Nature in it self.”¹⁰³ Miller himself showed that he, too, understood such a jealous personality as the stark opposite of Joseph's natural goodness, and demonstrated Joseph's role in the reformation of this sinful enemy through the power of brotherly love.

Miller had established Joseph's virtue at his libretto's outset; the prison scene showed him to be tempted by self-pity, but to overcome that temptation by concentrating steadily on his faith in the eventual heavenly reward for virtue. It was thus a powerful symbolic device for Miller to introduce the brothers with a scene that showed the basest of them in a similar circumstance. Simeon's complaints in prison trace a trajectory that is opposite to Joseph's; instead of overcoming adversity through faith in virtue's eventual reward, he steadily devolves into near madness. Simeon opens with probing questions not dissimilar to Joseph's in “But wherefore thus:”

Where are these Brethren --- Why this base Delay!
To let me languish a whole Year in Dungeons!
But are not Brethren base? O *Joseph! Joseph!*
That Thought is Hell ---- Remembrance scorches with it!

Like Joseph, Simeon begins by interrogating the reasons that he has suffered in prison for so long. Unlike his brother, instead of reaching a moment of self-assurance, Simeon is wracked with guilt.

Eventually, Simeon's “disquieted mind” reels at these thoughts, which become nonsensical. Simeon is, like the guilty man of Miller's sermons, convinced that all people are as despicable as he. Miller drew a contrast between the man of faith, who would be ever content with his surroundings even in the face of persecution, and the guilty man, miserable in his sinful condition. Those who habitually sinned were “ever apt to grow churlish and fall out with the World. *They say in their Haste that all Men are Liars, and all*

¹⁰¹ Luke Milbourne, *Sermon Preached on the Thirtieth of January, 1712, Being the Solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation for the Execrable Murder of Charles the Martyr, of Blessed Memory* (London, 1712), 6.

¹⁰² The description in Genesis 42:24 is indeed succinct: “And hee turned himselfe about from them and wept, and returned to them againe, and communed with them, and tooke from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.”

¹⁰³ Milbourne, *Sermon Preached on the Thirtieth of January, 1712*, 6.

the Children of Men deceitful on the Weights. It [dissatisfaction] makes Men grow selfish, suspicious, and unconvertible." Such indulgent sinners, Miller continues, "sympathise with their Condition, grow worse as fast as their Fortune, and there is as great an Alteration within them as without."¹⁰⁴ Miller's accompanied recitative encapsulates these ideas, giving expression to Simeon's own internal torment. Simeon condemns even those with the closest natural ties: all brothers are "base," he charges. From this lack of reason, it is but one small step to supernatural fantasy:

But was it I alone? --- O no! --- Then Heav'n
Has been at 'compt perchance with my Confederates,
Whilst the wild Beast, false-tax'd with *Joseph's* Death,
Has met 'em on the way, and ta'en his Vengeance.

The wrongly accused imaginary beast of Simeon's delusion is controlled by "Heav'n," the hand of God evidently doling out stern punishment for past sins.

Miller also inventively provided Handel with materials that dictated an inverse musical effect than had Joseph's opening music. The common meter of Joseph's resolute aria text was interrupted by a less orderly and impassioned accompanied recitative, which in turn was rejected through the repetition of the meditative, measured aria. Simeon, on the other hand, had no such balanced structure. His probing accompanied recitative is followed by a fiery aria depicting his "Remorse, Confusion, Horror, Fear" (Examples 3.3 and 3.4.)

These parallels were not lost on Handel; the opening of Simeon's music echoes that of Joseph's (cf. Examples 3.1 and 3.3), most obviously in their identical meters (3/4), the dotted rhythms of their opening orchestral introductions, and their similar tempo indications (*larghetto, e pomposo / largo e staccato*). Simeon's introduction also includes a gesture that is reminiscent of the tritone leap and trill of Joseph's orchestral opening (Example 3.1, mm. 11–12), this time intensified by occurring twice and by employing two different dissonant intervals (a minor seventh and a tritone, Example 3.3, mm. 1–2 and 3–4). The alternating scalar motion and large leaps of Joseph's ritornello also find their way into the beginning of Simeon's recitative. This is the music of prison — the same prison, in fact.

Of course these were two very different men who found themselves in a similar situation. If their orchestral openings stressed the similarity of their circumstances, what followed accentuated the differences of their reactions to them. Joseph's aria had begun with self-reliant, "firm" gestures: long held tones, meditatively repeated notes, a comforting regularity of harmonic change, and slow tempo. Simeon, on the other hand, launches into serial questions given inflection by Handel's vocal gestures, which avoid downbeats or any sense of extended phrasing, and which feature dissonant leaps (mm. 15, 18–19, 24, etc.). Simeon's recitative is also underpinned by tortured harmonic expression; even Joseph's probing middle recitative had nothing as striking as the sudden diminished chord of Simeon's m. 16, or such drastic changes of style: declamatory statements with instrumental punctuations (mm. 12–16), impassioned cries with pulsating accompaniment (mm. 17–19, 24–25), and a passage of utter instrumental frenzy (mm. 26–31).

¹⁰⁴ Miller, *Sermons*, "On Contentment," 78-9.

Example 3.3: Joseph and His Brethren, "Where are these brethren," opening

Accomp. Simeon in prison

Largo, e staccato

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Simeon

Continuo

9 *Adagio*

15 *Adagio* *Concitato*

21

26

Where are these Breth- ren... Why this base de- lay? To let me lan- guish

a whole year in dun- geons! But are not Breth-ren base? O Jo- seph! Jo- seph! That thought is Hell... Re- mem- brance

scor- ches with it! But was it I a- lone? O no! then heav'n has been at compt per- chance,

with my con- fe- de- rates, whilst the wild beast, false

Example 3.4: Joseph and His Brethren, "Remorse, confusion, horror, fear," mm. 17 ff.

17

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Simeon

Continuo

hor - ror ye vul - tures! fear, con - fu - sion, hor

21

ror, ye vul - tures, ye vul - tures, ye vul - tures of the guil - ty breast! Now,

25

fu - ries! now she feels you here, she feels you here, who gnaw her

29

most, who gnaw her most, when most dis - trest

Simeon's subsequent aria (Example 3.4) is the type of athletic music that one might expect from such a "fierce" character. It is also marked by irregularity; on the small level, its text's metric placement is ever changing, and it eschews any type of rounded formal procedure, instead freely juxtaposing two primary affects, namely the "fury" of his confused mind and the remorse that "gnaws" his soul.

Remorse, Confusion, Horror, Fear,
 Ye Vultures of the guilty Breast!
 Now, Furies! now she feels you here,
 Who gnaw her most, when most distressed.

This aria's phrasing and tonal structure are also of note in comparison with those of Joseph's own prison aria:

Phrasing of Joseph's Vocal Lines, "Be firm, my soul"										
	9		8		8		9		12	
	1+2+6		4+4		3+5		4 + 5		5+4+3	
mm.	21, 22-3, 24-9		30-3, 34-7		41-3, 44-8		49-52, 53-7		59-63, 64-6, 66-9	
Keys:	e:		G:				e:			

Phrasing of Simeon's Vocal Lines, "Remorse, confusion, horror, fear"											
	7		3		5		10		5		7
	4+3		3		3+2		4+4+2		3+2		4+3
mm.	9-12, 13-15		16-18		19-21, 22-23		24-27, 28-31, 32-3		34-6, 37-8		39-42, 43-5
Keys:	g:		E-flat:		B-flat:		c: f: c:		g:		

Joseph sings four balanced phrases that end on a grand pause on the dominant harmony before a 12-bar phrase returns the piece to its home key and poised calm. Simeon's aria, on the other hand, is unstable and restless. The phrases are highly irregular, and the harmonic instability of Simeon's aria contrasts with the tidy motion of Joseph's, which went through two modulations in forty-eight measures, as opposed to the six modulations of Simeon's thirty-six measure vocal line.

Such musical depiction suits well Miller's characterization of Simeon in prison, a dramatic instantiation of the author's speculation in his sermon *On Doing Good*, in which he had explicitly drawn on the history of Joseph's brothers as an illustration of the guilt that will eventually plague an unfeeling man (see pp. 119-20). Miller depicts Simeon as the central figure amongst the sinning brothers, the leader of men who have become the worst sort of villains in Miller's ontology, who have, by attacking a man of virtue — and their brother — "debauched the natural Principles of their Minds, have lost all the Notions and Distinctions of Good and Evil, [and] are fallen below the Dignity of Human Nature."¹⁰⁵ Simeon's internal suffering was a further symbol of Miller's theological worldview of "natural" punishment. If Joseph's music is that of a "placid Retreat" into the self, Simeon's is that of a restless, disordered mind, suffering "on the Rack of Dissimulation."

¹⁰⁵ See n. 77, above.

Miller capitalized on this polarization with one final set of adaptations of his model that both provided a grand climax, a resolution to the internal struggles of both man of virtue and man of vice, and gave Joseph the greatest earthly reward that such a sentimental hero might have ever anticipated: the reunion of his family. Joseph's resolve while testing his brothers was staunch, but eventually his empathy for their suffering, the pain of his father, and one brother's willingness to sacrifice himself proved too much for Joseph to bear.

Miller showed himself to be a master of the art of dramatic prolongation in his treatment of the final discovery scene. His audiences would have known that this scene was coming; the most powerfully emotional treatment of it, then, involved delaying the gratification that the audiences expected. *Zeno's Giuseppe* provided an effective addition to the biblical narrative that accomplished precisely this aim. Benjamin, having been accused of theft and sentenced to slavery by Joseph, pleads before the powerful man, nearly breaking his resolve, as he notes in parenthetical asides:

Recit:
 E senza me voi far ritorno a lui?
 Che dirà? Qual conforto
 Darete a l'infelice? Oh Dio! nascendo,

 Diedi morte alla madre:
 Torrò, morendo, anche di vita il padre.

Aria:
 Deh! pietà . . . (Ma non m'ascolta.)
 Non di me . . . (Nè pur mi mira.)
 Ma del caro . . . (Egli sospira.)
 Mio cadente genitor.

[Recit:
 And you are going to return to him without me?
 What will he say? What comfort
 Can you give to the sick man? Oh God! Being
 born,
 I brought death to my mother:
 I will take, by dying, also my father's life.

Aria:
 Oh! Pity . . . (But he isn't listening to me.)
 Not me . . . (Nor is he looking at me.)
 But my dear . . . (He sighs.)
 My infirm father.]¹⁰⁶

Joseph barely maintains his burgeoning emotion, responds gruffly, and leaves with tears in his eyes, instructing his guards to place Benjamin in irons and release the others.

Miller assessed that Zeno had missed an opportunity for dramatic tension in this interaction. He subjected the exchange to a subtle but important transformation in Part 3, Scene 4 (Figure 3.4):

¹⁰⁶ Zeno, *Giuseppe*, 155.

A R I O S O.

Benj. *O Pity! ---*
 Jof. [*Aside.*] ——— *Ah! I must not hear.*
 Benj. *Not to myself---*
 Jof. [*Aside.*] ——— *Be blind, my Eyes.*
 Benj. *My sinking Father! ---*
 Jof. [*Aside.*] ——— *Trait'rous Tear!*
 Benj. *O pity him! ---*
 Jof. [*Aside.*] ——— *Be still, ye Sighs.*

A I R.

Benj. *Remember, at the first Embrace*
 You call'd me Son---O view this Face;
 I still as much deserve the Name;
 Thy Heart alone is not the same.

Figure 3.4: *Joseph and His Brethren* (London, 1744), pp. 27-8

Miller's poem here inventively captures the Janus-faced nature of this exchange. The visual intensity of the original published wordbook is striking, marked with dashes that highlight both poetic structure and the scene's emotional charge. Joseph's asides convey the contrast between his outward appearances and suppressed emotions. The expressive, poetic breakdown of the text further emphasizes the emotional struggle of the title character; Joseph's contributions to these eight-syllable poetic lines are increasingly fragmented, moving from five syllables ("Ah! I must not hear") to four ("Be blind my Eyes") to three ("Trait'rous Tear!") before one final outburst of four ("Be still, ye Sighs.") This poetic diminuendo parallels the diminishing power of the dissimulating brother, rendered increasingly inarticulate (and, as we will see in the music, silent) by his overwhelming emotion — one of the most characteristic marks of the literary man of feeling — suffering as he witnesses the pain of his innocent younger brother.¹⁰⁷ Whereas Zeno had Benjamin remark on Joseph's feelings, Miller intensified the emotion by giving these expressions to Joseph, who shows the audience in asides his own barely contained sentiments. Zeno's "But he isn't listening to me" became the exclamation "Ah! I must not hear;" Zeno's "Nor is he looking at me" and "He sighs" evolved into Joseph's self-directed imperatives, "Be blind my Eyes" and "Be still, ye sighs;" and Miller even added new tears to Joseph's response with "Trait'rous Tear!", thereby adding an instance of weeping to the biblical narrative, too, since this interaction with Benjamin does not take place in Genesis.

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the notion that it was fundamental to the eighteenth-century idea of the man of feeling that he would be rendered inarticulate by his emotions, see Walter Göbel, "Sarah and Henry Fielding's Definitions of the 'Man of Feeling,'" in *Engendering Images of Man in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Walter Göbel, Saskia Schabio, and Martin Windisch (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2001), 177-79. Göbel's article provides a useful and succinct summary of varying attitudes toward and depictions of the type, including Altamont and Sciolto in Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* (1703), the title character in Sarah Fielding's *David Simple* (1744), and William Booth in Henry Fielding's *Amelia* (1751).

Miller's intervention inspired a stroke of formal inventiveness from the composer (Example 3.5):

Example 3.5: *Joseph and His Brethren*, "O pity," opening

Andante larghetto

Violin I

Violin 2

Viola

Benjamin

Joseph

Continuo

O pi-ty! not to my-self--- my sink ing fa- ther!---

(aside) (Ah! I must not hear.) (Be blind, my eyes.) (Trait' trous

O pi-ty him! Re-mem-ber, at the first embrace you call'd me son --- O view this face O

tear!) (Be still my sighs!)

p

Handel's setting emphasizes the intensity of Joseph's internal struggle, his suppression of natural tears. The printed wordbook's division of this text into arioso and air is deceptive. Handel set the passage as one piece of music, opening with the characters' alternating lines, followed by Benjamin's impassioned stanza. The effect is one of discontinuity: the work begins as if a duet, the moment of catharsis at which Joseph will join his younger brother in uninhibited, rapturous expressions of empathy. Handel's subversion of this expectation is powerful, as Joseph, resolutely resisting the pull of his brother's emotions, suddenly ceases to sing. Benjamin's music is pleading, but Joseph's is ever more fragmented, punctuated by little gasping silences (mm. 1-2, m. 5) and a rhythmic restlessness that betrays his discomfort. As Benjamin's music rises higher and higher, increasing the intensity as his text moves toward their suffering father, Joseph's stays in the same range, stammering, struggling to avoid joining Benjamin's musical expressions of their shared pain before he lapses into silence. This formal disintegration musically underlines the hero's quiet

struggle. With structural and harmonic continuity between the sections, Joseph's character is paradoxically rendered all the more present by his absence; the memory of his pained asides assures us that he is there throughout the arioso, listening to Benjamin's heartfelt plea and suffering violently as a result, even when he is no longer singing. Joseph's heartstrings resound sympathetically throughout Benjamin's solo passages, and the elder brother's passive empathy is as central to his heroism as his earlier salvation of starving Egyptians. The power of this abortive duet lies in its utilization of theatrical norms. Handel recognized the dramatic importance of the generically common family discovery scene, and in Joseph's and Benjamin's duet he tantalizes the audience, hinting at the emotional and thematic fulfillment that the discovery will soon provide.

Joseph resists the pull of Benjamin's speech, but he cannot hold out forever. It is Simeon who finally breaks Joseph's resolve. The end of Part 3, Scene 4 brings important character development to Simeon, who subsequently makes impassioned pleas to God and to his disguised brother in the discovery scene (Part 3, Scene 5). In the final moments of the conflict, Miller provided a satisfying culmination of his thematic intervention in Zeno's *Giuseppe* that had begun with Simeon's prison scene. With a few final adaptations, Miller clearly pointed to Simeon's reformation as the catalyst for Joseph's emotional overflow. Handel recognized the focus of Miller's dramatic climax, and he trained all of these scenes' musical attention onto Simeon by giving him with no fewer than three set pieces, including the only accompanied music of the discovery scene.

Zeno had also used the brothers' reformation as his story's tipping point, providing Miller with two impassioned speeches, both of which he gave to Judah: an admission of guilt and a plea for mercy on behalf of the young Benjamin. The first of these speeches is addressed to God:

Giuda:
 Dio d'Israel, ben meritammo il grave
 Flagel che ne percote.
 Tu vedi il nostro error; ma vedi ancora
 Il nostro pentimento.
 Pietà di noi, pietà. Tu di clemenza
 Fonte inesausta sei; tu buon, tu pio,
 Tu padre a noi, tu creator, tu Dio.

[Judah:
 God of Israel, we merit well this grave
 scourge with which you beat us.
 You see our error; but you also see
 our penitence.
 Have mercy on us, have mercy. Thou art
 a fount of inexhaustible clemency; thou
 good, thou merciful, thou father to us,
 thou creator, thou God.]

Miller translated this in the barest outline at the close of Part 3, Scene 4:

Simeon:
 O gracious God,
 We merit well this Scourge, but thou art He,
 Whose property is ever to have Mercy.

This truncation allowed space for the addition of another original contribution: a chorus for all of the brethren, "Eternal monarch of the sky," that encapsulated ideas from Zeno's poem

that Miller's short translation of "Dio d'Israel" had omitted.¹⁰⁸ Unlike the Handelian oratorio, Zeno's did not have choruses; Miller thus uses the grandest musical structure of his genre to point out the themes that had run so prominently in his sermons: a sinful neglect of brotherly love leading to guilty suffering, balanced by an ultimately benevolent and loving deity, ready to grant forgiveness for even the basest of sinners.

These words of contrition to God foreshadow the desperate pleading before Joseph in the discovery scene, which follows immediately after Joseph returns and scolds the elder brothers for remaining in his household.

<p>Giuda: Signor, tu padre avesti, o l'hai fors'anco. Deh! per quanto ami il tuo, pietà del nostro. Punire il non suo fallo, in me il punisci. Il terrò qui sue veci. A regger ceppi Tenero ancora è l'altro. Anni e fatiche Me fer robusto. Io pesi, io ferri, io posso, Posso tutto soffrir; ma al padre mio Esser nunzio di morte ah! non poss'io. Di Giuseppe al crudo fato Tramortì lo sconcolato: Morìa ancor; nè il tenne in vita, Che l'amore del piccolo figlio.</p>	<p>[Judah: Lord, you had a father, or perhaps you still have one. Oh! As you loved yours, have pity on ours. Punish not his errors [i.e. Benjamin's], punish me. I'll keep his place here. A steady experience I have already and age. Years and labor have made me strong. I can lift, I can be in irons, I can suffer anything; but to my father to be the messenger of death, ah! That I cannot. Joseph's cruel fate Injured him disconsolately: He will die; nothing keeps him alive Except the love of that young son.]</p>
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Once again, Miller's text shows that he found Zeno to have provided more material than he needed:

Simeon:
Thou hadst, my Lord,
A Father once --- perhaps hast now --- O feel,
Feel then for us --- as thou didst love thy own,
O pity ours --- Feel then our Anguish, feel.

Give, give him up the Lad
In whom his Life is bound ---
O let me suffer,
Whatever Punishment is doom'd for him;
He is too young for Slavery or Stripes;

¹⁰⁸ Eternal Monarch of the Sky,
Our cruel Crime thou didst decry,
O! with the same all-piercing Eye
Our melting Penitence observe.

Thou, the Beginning and the End!
Creator! Father! Guardian! Friend!
Returning Prodigals attend,
And grant us Aid we don't deserve.

Labour and Years have render'd me more hardy.

Lay all on me, Imprisonment, Chains,
Scourges,
All, all I can endure --- But to my Father,
To be the Messenger of Death I cannot.¹⁰⁹

Both Zeno's text and Miller's translation employ techniques of persuasion: an appeal to Joseph's memory of his father and a brother's willing self-sacrifice to save the innocent young Benjamin. Miller's adaptation adds the stammering language of the impassioned speeches of sentimental theater, with a word repetition that stresses the most important message of the culture of sensibility: "O feel, / Feel then for us . . . Feel then our Anguish, feel."

Most significantly, Miller changed the speaker of both these words and those of "O gracious God." Whereas Judah had pleaded with Joseph in Zeno's setting, Miller reassigned these texts to Simeon. By so doing, the librettist brought the work's central conflict to a fittingly symmetrical conclusion, unambiguously enshrining fellow-feeling as the oratorio's central virtue. Simeon's prison scene had introduced him as starkly contrasting with the morally upright Joseph, but his speeches in the work's climax show him to have undergone a transformation, to have moved closer to the humanity and feeling that comes naturally to his younger brother. Simeon's newfound empathy reconfigures his entire ethos, ends the conflict, and leads Joseph's natural love to overflow the confines of his dissimulated persona; following Simeon's plea, Joseph exclaims, "I can no longer" and discovers himself to his brothers with "floods of joyous Tears," praising their "Fraternal Love" and care for their innocent and helpless brother.¹¹⁰

The dramatic significance of these two pleas for mercy was not lost on Handel. Indeed, his musical realization highlighted them even more than Miller's words alone, which buried the speeches in a seventy-line passage of blank verse, implying recitative.¹¹¹ Instead of providing unbroken dry music, Handel opted to emphasize further the evolving moral and musical kinship between Simeon and Joseph by casting Simeon's pleas as independent set pieces. He treated "Oh gracious God" as another accompanied recitative that borders on *arioso* (Example 3.6). Simeon's moment of penitence before God moves him closer to Joseph's style of singing, particularly the music of Joseph's self-remonstrance in his opening musical complex; the sustained accompanying strings of Example 3.6 are analogous to those in the second half of Example 3.2 (mm. 83 ff.), and the phrasal regularity of "O gracious God" is also far closer to Joseph's acceptance of God's judgment in "Be firm, my soul" than to any music that Simeon has sung previously. Suddenly, this reformed man

¹⁰⁹ Zeno, *Giuseppe*, 158; Miller, Part 3, Scene 5.

¹¹⁰ The words "joyous Tears" are issued by Benjamin in another original, emotional contribution from Miller: "My Brother *Joseph* living! Ah! my Father! / What Floods of joyous Tears at this glad Tale, / Will wash the Furrows of thy hoary Cheeks?"

¹¹¹ Zeno had given Judah an aria in the midst of this span of recitative, with a touching text about the effect of Joseph's putative death upon Jacob ("Di Giuseppe al crudo fato," *Giuseppe*, 59). Miller removed this aria text entirely, and added a few little additions and changes, such as an emotive line interjected by Joseph upon hearing Judah's speech ("My Soul itself now weeps"). Such touches would have been effective in the spoken theater, but likely lost in a long stretch of declamatory recitative in a concert setting.

is not so dissimilar from his younger brother in either philosophical outlook or musical style.

Example 3.6: *Joseph and His Brethren*, “O gracious God, we merit well this scourge,” opening

Lento

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Simeon
Continuo


O gra - cious God, we me - rit well this scourge; but thou art He, whose pro - per - ty

is e - ver to have mer - cy. O gra - cious God, we me - rit well this scourge, we me - rit well this

6# 6 7

3# 3# 6 7 6b 7b 6b 3b 6 6b 5 5 3#

Simeon’s moment of contrition in front of Joseph brings more sonic evolution for the character. In “Thou had’st, my lord,” Handel gives Simeon a loosely structured accompanied piece called “air” in the printed libretto, but perhaps best described as an arioso (Example 3.7).¹¹² Simeon shows himself once again through his music as well as his text to have learned the power of empathy. His style is completely different from the disjointed nature of his earlier music; in place of passages of quick contrast, flittering from one extreme and aggressive emotion to another, Simeon now sings linear melodies, with clear antecedent-consequent phrasing mirroring the shifts in textual focus (mm. 1–4, 5–8, 9–11). Aching suspensions accompany his plea for feeling and pity, until they leave him to beg nakedly to

¹¹² “Be firm, my soul,” “O gracious God,” and “Thou had’st my lord” are further linked by their implementation of similar rhythmic gestures (notated  in Simeon’s last arioso). Handel also uses this rhythm

extensively in the chorus “Eternal monarch of the sky,” both for its homophonic opening and for its central fugue subject. Handel thus seems to be linking these texts, all of which are humble sentiments of supplication to a higher power, through musical means.

Joseph “Feel thou our Anguish, feel.” Moreover, Handel charges the singer, who for his other solos has been required to prove his technical abilities, with the task of mastering pathetic appeal. Handel uses expressive indications in his musical text, instructing his singer to change affect at the level of the phrase; he marks “forte” over the opening phrase that addresses Joseph as the mighty assistant to the Pharaoh (“Thou had’st, my Lord”), and “dolce” over words that refer to the ailing father (“a Father once”). Expressive indications in the string parts accompany further shifts in semantic reflection: “un poco forte” as his words again are directed to Joseph in m. 3, and a pianissimo marking for mm. 4 ff., in which he makes direct appeal to Joseph’s empathy with the words “O feel, / Feel then for us.” Handel thus relies on the expressivity of his performers to create changes at the local level, a dependence on personal sensibility that suits well the themes with which Handel was working.¹¹³

Example 3.7: Joseph and His Brethren, “Thou had’st, my lord,” opening

Largo, e staccato

Violin 1 *p* *un poco forte* *pp*

Violin 2 *p* *pp*

Viola *pp*

Simeon *forte* *dolce*

Continuo Thou had'st, my Lord, a fa - ther once, per - haps hast now... O feel, feel then for

6^b 3[#] 4[#] 6 6[#]
2

6

8 us! As thou did'st love thy own, O pi - ty ours... feel thou our an - guish, feel

3^b

¹¹³ This was a technique that Handel had used before for some of his most emotive music. See Chapter 1, where I discuss this technique in connection with Giulia Frasi.

Both Zeno and Miller had their characters' speeches progress from pleas for pity to definitive action, from sentimental evocations of filial devotion to offerings of self-sacrifice for the sake of the young and innocent Benjamin. Handel signaled this change in semantic focus with another change in musical approach, giving Simeon one last solo, a final chance to show that he is made of militant stuff: the accompanied recitative "Give him up the lad," which follows immediately on the heels of his arioso (Example 3.8).

Example 3.8: *Joseph and His Brethren*, "Give him up the lad," mm. 9 ff.

The musical score for Example 3.8 consists of five staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Simeon (voice), and Continuo. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 9-11) is marked *Concitato* and *Accomp., concitato*. The second system (measures 12-14) is marked *Adagio*. The third system (measures 15-17) is marked *Adagio, e piano*. The lyrics for Simeon are: "stripes; la-bour and years have ren-der'd me more har-dy. Lay all on me, im pri-son-ment, chains, scour-ges, all, all I can en-dure... But to my fa-ther to be a mes-sen-ger of death I can-not!"

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Simeon
Continuo

Concitato *Accomp., concitato*

8 stripes; la-bour and years have ren-der'd me more har-dy. Lay all on me, im pri-son-ment,

3# 3b 7 4 2b

5

Adagio

8 chains, scour-ges, all, all I can en-dure... But to my

8 *Adagio, e piano*

8 fa-ther to be a mes-sen-ger of death I can-not!

p 6b 4# 3#

Again, concitato instruments and rapid-fire declamation give musical expression to Simeon's self-characterization in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*: "I went thro' the Business of my Life without Fear . . . my Heart was stout, my Mind unmoveable, and my Stomach undiscourageable."¹¹⁴ But now, in his newly empathized state, his toughness is not directed toward military rivals, "base" brethren, or imaginary beasts. Simeon invites Joseph to enslave him, to allow him to take on the punishment designed for Benjamin. Simeon's natural roughness is harnessed for the ultimate good, protection of innocence (rather than vengeance), and is further balanced by the aching pathos of the music which closes the recitative (mm. 13–16). This is the moment that finally leads Joseph to open himself to his brothers (in recitative), the resolution of the work's conflict coming with Simeon's perfect balance of strength and newfound care for the weak. Simeon has learned to feel — and it is feeling that restores Joseph and his brethren.

* * *

The combination of Miller's changes to Zeno's libretto and Handel's musical settings tightened the focus of this story and created a clear conflict and resolution that reflected Miller's religious philosophy of social fellow feeling. Joseph's imprisonment of Simeon provided the villain with the opportunity to examine his past sins and to learn the importance of empathy. Simeon's willingness to sacrifice himself to save his youngest brother is a profound symbol of a changed man, one previously fierce enough to slay entire towns and to eradicate a brother in whom he found a rival. Benjamin's self-professed innocence and emotional appeal move Joseph to tears, but it is Simeon's displays of tender emotion and selflessness that finally lead Joseph to absolve him and his other brothers of their despicable sins. Handel's savvy decision to break this long stretch of recitative into more discreet and affecting musical units thus gave an appropriate expressivity to the height of this story, the resolution of the internal struggles of these men, achieved through the repentance of the brother who, according to tradition, was the greatest sinner.

For an eighteenth-century audience, this oratorio would have been far from a "complete failure" or "unintelligible," as it was for twentieth-century critics. Miller, Handel, and their public had at their disposal a wealth of contemporary literature about the patriarch that readily acknowledged the powerful pathos of this tale of family separation and reunion. Miller thus presented a story that drew on the culture of sentiment's favorite rhetorical strategies, and by retraining the focus of his Italian model onto the dialectic of Joseph and his arch-nemesis Simeon, he emphasized the themes of brotherly love and intense feeling that intrigued Latitudinarians and secular philosophers alike. Handel's music reflected an awareness of Miller's dramatic focus, intensifying its effect and clarifying the relationship between the two brothers and their tortured emotional states. The result is a musical drama about internal, parallel struggles resolved simultaneously, two men reunited by the "Ligaments of Love."

¹¹⁴ A.G., *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, n.p.

CHAPTER 4
SENSIBILITY AND PASSIVE HEROISM IN THE WORK OF THOMAS MORELL

In literature the softer side of Puritanism became explicit in the “sensibility” of Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and Young’s *Night Thoughts* (1741-5). These works, so highly regarded in their own day, are almost unreadable in ours: the prurient primness of the one and the sententious commonplaces and turgid diction of the other are equally distasteful to the modern reader. But they were the staple fare of the new middle class which had become the repository of the Puritan tradition, and their influence on Handel’s later oratorio librettos, especially those of Morell, is very marked.

Winton Dean, *Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (1959), 132

Thomas Morell, in his own words, aimed to “charm” and “deceive” his audiences into goodness and piety, a goal perfectly in line with the moralizing sentimentalism of his age. As I showed in earlier chapters, secular and sacred writers alike tended to link gender, empathy, and social virtue. The virginity and chastity cults described in Chapters 1 and 2 were this tendency’s most frequent instantiations, and the core ideas of Latitudinarianism described in Chapter 3 were prevalent within an Anglicanism focused on the charitable aspects of Christianity, exhibiting connections (generative, derivative, or coincidental) with the contemporary school of Shaftesburian moral sense philosophy. These ethical principles found aesthetic counterparts in both sentimental sermons and plays, with pathos claimed to set primed, empathetic heartstrings vibrating, training spectators for moral interactions in the real world. All of these elements played roles in Morell’s religious writing, his work as a classicist, and his late oratorios.

Morell has received significant attention from Handel scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and the details of his life and work need only be sketched here.¹ Morell was born in 1703 in humble circumstances, but with the good fortune of having a “boarding dame” of Eton College for a mother. This situation provided him entrée into both that college and later Cambridge (from which he received his DD in 1743), where he established himself as a classical scholar. Until the end of his life (1784) and posthumously, this was the reputation that served him most; in addition to the translations into Latin and English of Greek plays discussed below, Morell was responsible for reference works in ancient languages that were used well into the nineteenth century.² From his classical sources, Morell learned the art of poetry, and he was a self-described “scribbler,” writing poems both published and carefully copied into a notebook for his wife in the late 1770s.³ Today, his best-known of poems are, of course, his libretti for Handel. The earliest two, *Judas Maccabaeus* (1747) and *Alexander Balus* (1748), were militaristic in tone; the latter

¹ The most recent and thorough summary of Morell’s life and output is in Ruth Smith, “Thomas Morell and His Letter about Handel,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 127, no. 2 (2002): 191-225. I have relied heavily on this article in my brief overview of Morell’s life and career.

² His 1762 *Thesaurus graecae poeseos* was reprinted as late as 1824, and his 1773 revision of Ainsworth’s Latin dictionary was still in use in the 1880s. See Smith, “Thomas Morell and His Letter,” 210 and 223.

³ His poetry collection is the Beinecke Library’s Osborn c395. See also Ruth Smith, “Thomas Morell (1703-84) and the Osborn Collection,” *The Yale University Library Gazette* 78, no. 1/2 (2003), 41.

two, *Theodora* (1750) and *Jephtha* (1752), showed a greater affinity with the contemporary sentimental drama and with the sentimentalism that Morell exhibited in much of his other writing. Morell probably also wrote the song texts for *Alceste* (1750) and the libretto for *The Choice of Hercules* (1751), and he penned three pasticcio oratorios that used Handel's music, compiled after the composer's death: *Nabal, Tobit* (both c. 1764), and *Gideon* (1769).⁴ His publications also included political verse in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and a number of religious poems. The oratorios and sacred verse joined his sermons as his body of published religious writing. Almost all of Morell's work has been recorded in a recent bibliography by Ruth Smith; I am able to add two newly discovered items to this list: a religious dialogue and an anti-deist pamphlet (both described below).⁵ Like much of Morell's output, both of these works emphasize his religious fervor and advocacy of a style of moral teaching through appeals to sentiment and sensibility.

Winton Dean's assessment of the timeliness of Morell's stylistic proclivities was as apt as it was disparaging; the religiosity and pathos of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* did, indeed, influence Morell's libretti, as remarked upon by nearly everyone who writes about these oratorios. Dean considered such sentimentalism a detriment, complaining of the "morbid" nature of *Theodora* and accusing Morell's adaptation of *Jephtha*'s biblical conclusion (an *angelus ex machina* rescues an endangered heroine from death and preserves her in perpetual virginity) of "nearly wrecking" that oratorio.⁶ More recently, Ruth Smith has encouraged us to embrace the sentimental sides of both *Theodora* and *Jephtha* as one way of assessing these works on eighteenth-century terms, and Kenneth Nott has shown that Morell's adaptation of *Jephtha* might have been considered by an eighteenth-century theologian to be both a rational interpretation of the biblical text and a powerful moral lesson.⁷

What all of these scholars agree upon is that we can learn much about Morell's oratorio texts by studying their author's religious and literary milieus. I argue that we can also learn much by studying these libretti alongside other writings by Morell himself. Morell's thinking frequently demonstrated a faith in sentiment and sensibility that I trace through several contexts: the rhetoric of sensibility and admission of the limits of rationality in his religious works; his ideas about the power and potential of the performing arts; and his gendered illustrations of morality in religious writing, including the oratorio libretti. In addition to such concerns with the texts, I examine the effects of these sentimental themes on Handel's music.

Dean looked to Handel for corroboration of his own aesthetic judgment: the musician, he said, resisted the librettist's dramatic guidance. For instance, in his assessment of *Theodora*, Dean projected his own distaste for Morell's sentimentalism into

⁴ Richard G. King, "John Christopher Smith's Pasticcio Oratorios," *Music and Letters* 79, no. 2 (1998): 190-218; King, "Who Wrote the Texts for Handel's *Alceste*?" *The Musical Times* 150, no. 1906 (2009): 93-6.

⁵ Smith's bibliography is an appendix to "Thomas Morell and His Letter about Handel."

⁶ Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios*, 594-5. See also Paul Henry Lang, *George Frideric Handel* (New York: Norton, 1966), 517.

⁷ Ruth Smith, "Comprehending *Theodora*," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (2005): 57-90, esp. pp. 73-6; Smith, "Why Does *Jephtha* Misinterpret His Own Vow," in *Handel Studies: A Gedenkschrift for Howard Serwer*, ed. Richard G. King (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press), esp. pp. 67-73; Kenneth Nott, "'Heroick Virtue': Handel and Morell's *Jephtha* in the Light of Eighteenth-Century Biblical Commentary and Other Sources," *Music and Letters* 77 (1996): 194-208.

Handel's very being, claiming that the composer was "half pagan and half Christian" and that he refused to vilify the Romans who persecute the title character: "While Morell's Romans . . . are brutal and licentious, Handel's are care-free children of nature."⁸

There is another story to be told here, keeping in mind the dictates of sentimentalism and gendered morality that I describe in detail below. The "carefree" pagans of whom Dean approved have two representatives within the named cast: Valens, the president of Antioch (as he is identified in the *dramatis personæ*) who orders the death of Christians who refuse to sacrifice to Roman gods, and Septimius, an officer charged with carrying out those commands. (Didymus, also a Roman, has converted to Christianity before the action begins.) Their arias represent two diametrically opposed attitudes toward suffering and empathy. In Part 1, Scene 1, Valens revels in the opportunity to declare a death sentence; as he orders the "Racks, gibbets, sword, and fire" that will slaughter the Christian resisters, his music is not the stock material of a rage aria, but that of joy (Example 4.1). Its F-Major orientation, arpeggiated violins, and the way that the lower strings alternate (presumably representing the strikes of deadly weapons) carry more exuberance than menace. Both Valens's textual focus and his musical language inspire the first choral representation of the Romans, "For ever thus stands fix'd the doom," which is cast as a swinging gigue and features the same tonality, similar violin figuration, and a related text: "For ever thus stands fix'd the Doom, / of Rebels to the Gods and Rome: / While sweeter than the Trumpet's Sound, / Their Groans and Cries are heard around." These are not "carefree children of nature" — they are sadists, as both the text and music emphasize.

Septimius, on the other hand, laments his charge in the following scene (Example 4.2). Valens makes the cruel declaration that that "nor gushing Tears, nor ardent Pray'rs / Shall shake our firm Decree," but Septimius pleads to the skies: "Descend, kind Pity, heav'nly Guest, / Descend, and fill each Human Breast, / With sympathizing Woe." His aria is a hymn to the most fundamental virtue of the sentimental man: an ability to empathize, to witness other people's circumstances and "to grieve for their sufferings, to resent their injuries, and to rejoice at their good fortune."⁹ He delivers these sentiments with a musical illustration of descent (of course), overlaid with repeating sighing gestures (indicated both by the word setting and by Handel's careful slur markings) and with a linearity of melody and an *andante* tempo that oppose the arpeggiation, stolid rhythms, and jaunty nature of Valens's aria. These are musical representations of competing masculinities: Valens is a hardened version of a militaristic manhood with an unwavering loyalty to the state that leads to callousness and cruelty. Septimius is deeply influenced by the softer influences of humanity, empathy, and pity; unable to take action to rescue the endangered maiden, he can only feel her suffering: "But *Antioch's* President must be obey'd; / Such is the *Roman* Discipline: While We / Can only pity, whom we do not spare." His masculinity is a sentimental one.

⁸ Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios*, 560.

⁹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, 1759), Sect. 3, "Of Mutual Sympathy," 364.

Example 4.1: *Theodora*, "Racks, gibbets, sword and fire," opening (top) and "For ever thus stands fix'd the doom" (next page)

Allegro

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Valens

Continuo

4

8

Racks, gib-bets, sword and fire shall speak my venge-ful ire,

Example 4.1 (continued)

Allegro

Soprano
For e - ver thus stands fix'd the

Alto
For e - ver thus stands fix'd the

Tenor
For e - ver thus stands fix'd the

Bass
For e - ver thus stands fix'd the

Strings

3
doom of re - bels to the gods and Rome,
doom of re - bels to the gods and Rome,
doom of re - bels to the gods and Rome,
doom of re - bels to the gods and Rome,

Example 4.2: *Theodora*, "Descend, kind pity," mm. 16 ff.

16 *Andante*

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Tenor

Violoncello

De scend, kind Pit- y, heav'n ly guest, de-scend and fill each hu - man breast, de- scend, and fill each

22

hu - man breast with sym-pa- thi - zing woe, with sym-pa - thi - zing woe!

27

De scend, kind Pit-y heav'n ly guest, de scend, kind Pit - y, heav'n - ly guest, and

33

fill each hu-man breast with sym-pa- thi - zing woe,

The “soft” masculinity practiced by Septimius prepares him well to accept the lessons of Christianity, to which he converts at the close of Morell’s libretto. His conversion reflects the association between sentimentalism and Christianity that Morell preached in other contexts, and Handel’s musical settings reinforce, rather than work against, the text’s message. The simple juxtaposition between Valens’s militarism and Septimius’s sensibility is worked out by Handel and Morell in a more complex way within the principle male characters in the last two dramatic oratorios, *Theodora* and *Jephtha*; both Didymus and Jephtha experience internal conflicts, and their gradual change from active to passive heroism and toward a more Christian ethics (as Morell would have understood them) have both poetic and musical expressions.

Morell’s broader output provides a useful context in which to consider *Theodora* and *Jephtha*. It shows that this librettist considered sentiment and sensibility vital elements in religious instruction, ways of reaching audiences, of teaching them morality and appealing to their natural moral sense. Oratorio offered Morell, as he expressed in his writings about the arts, the opportunity to deliver these ethical lessons through the combined emotional power of drama and music. This contextual literature also illustrates a recurrent, gendered theme in Morell’s work, to which Handel was far from resistant; his musical settings corroborated and strengthened the librettist’s approach, a harmonious realization of Morell’s sentimentalism.

“Deceiv’d Into Piety”: Religion, Sensibility, & the Power of the Performing Arts

The language of sentiment and sensibility was the preferred rhetoric for an Anglican clergyman of Morell’s period. As historian Paul Goring has shown, a fundamental tenet of English preaching held appeal to sentiment at the heart of ministerial practice.¹⁰ Preachers were frequently urged to adopt styles that moved congregants. For instance, in the midcentury the Reverend James Fordyce insisted that if a preacher would simply “consult his Feelings, [then] how great a Superiority . . . that Preacher would have, whose Face looked what his Words spoke, and from whose Eyes his very Soul seemed to *emanate*, and who to all the *Music* of his Voice, and *Majesty* of his Gestures, joined the *Significance* of a sensible, spirited, and recollected Air.”¹¹ Morell was a master of such sentimental rhetoric, as demonstrated in his religious writing. In two newly discovered dialogues, his published sermons, and his writing on the moralizing power of the performing arts, Morell relied upon spontaneous responses to extreme stimuli, appealing to his audience’s natural sensibility in order to inspire religious fervor and moral action. His belief in the power of automatic and irrational response — i.e., eighteenth-century sensibility — provides a window onto one of his motivations for writing libretti and helps explain why, as Dean first pointed out, the influence of mid-century sensibility on his oratorios was “very marked.”

In the 1730s, Morell involved himself in the controversy then raging between deists and supporters of the Anglican Church in two works that seem to have escaped the notice

¹⁰ Paul Goring, “Spectacular Passions: Eighteenth-Century Oratory and the Reform of Eloquence,” chap. 1 in *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 31-59.

¹¹ James Fordyce, *An Essay on the Action Proper for the Pulpit* (London, 1753), 72.

of anyone who has written about him. Sensibility was at the root of Morell's defense of orthodox Christianity. The basis of the deist argument was that the church had abandoned rational thought, replacing "natural Religion," observable in human behavior and social structures, with irrational and dangerous orthodoxy; in 1737, Thomas Morgan expressed this deistic distaste for orthodoxy and organized religion in succinct terms in the opening salvo of the best known (or most notorious) publication of the controversy, the dialogue entitled *The Moral Philosopher*: "The moral Truth, Reason, and Fitness of Actions is founded in the natural and necessary Relations of Persons and Things, *antecedent* to any positive Will or Law, and therefore cannot be alter'd by any positive Will or Law whatever."¹² Morell used dialogue as the form for his responses, too, in which he proved himself not only an ardent enemy of deism and freethinking, but someone who embraced both rationalism and "sublimity" as means of judging the feasibility of religious claims.

One of Morell's statements against freethinking and non-belief came in a long forgotten and curious little dialogue entitled "A Modern Conversation," now housed at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.¹³ Morell preceded the dialogue with a letter to a famous recipient:

To D.G. Esq.

When I came home this morning and found no particular engagement, I sat me down, reflecting upon our Symposiac of yesterday; This Appellation perhaps may not be so proper for a Fast-day; but the Subject of Conversation was by no means improper: You will excuse an Addition or two . . .

"D.G., Esq." refers to David Garrick, Esq., the famous actor and manager of Drury Lane.¹⁴ Since the dialogue was purportedly based upon a "Symposiac" that took place at Garrick's home, the actor also makes it into the dramatis personæ, listed under the anagram "D. Kircrag, Esq., a moderate Man" (see Figure 4.1). The other interlocutors were Morell himself, thinly disguised as "Dr. Lle-rom, a Believer," and "Dr. Bergmosch, an Unbeliever." The trio's "Unbeliever" was undoubtedly a member of the Schomberg family, with whom Garrick closely associated. Any of the Schombergs could have fit the role assigned by Morell. The eldest was of the previous generation, Dr. Meyer Low Schomberg (1690–1761), a Jew who from the 1740s was an outspoken critic of the Jewish community in England; in his *תנומת אומא* (*Emunat Oman / A Physician's Faith*), Schomberg presented himself as a sort of Jewish deist, borrowing language from the rationalist argument against organized Christian religion (distaste for orthodoxy and church hierarchy, insistence on humanistic

¹² Thomas Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher. In a Dialogue between Philalethes a Christian Deist, and Theosophanes a Christian Jew* (London, 1737), 8. For the relationship between this work and James Miller's libretto for *Joseph and His Brethren*, see Ch. 3. Morell also provides a useful summary of this particular side of the deistic stance in his own *Truth Triumphant or, a Summary View of the Late Controversy Occasioned by a Book, Intituled, The Moral Philosopher* (London, 1739), 5-6.

¹³ Yale, Beinecke Library GEN MSS 282, box 1, fol. 51. I give an annotated transcription of "A Modern Conversation" as Appendix 4.1.

¹⁴ Morell wrote the date January 31, 1733 at the bottom of this dedication, but numerous facts indicate that the anagrams were added between 1743 and 1779, and that this particular copy dates from 1783. See explanatory note to Appendix 4.1.

A Modern Conversation

Between

Dr Bergmosch, an unbeliever

Dr Le-rom, a believer

and

Dr Kivcrag Esq, a Moderate Man.

B. - All stuff and nonsense, by G-!

There never was such a man as Moses,
or David, Solomon, &c or Malachi.

L. - Well, S^r, so much for the old Testament;
but what say you to the New?

B. - Why, I say, by G-, there never were
any such men as Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

L. Pray, S^r, have you any more non-
entities to swear to?

B. - Yes, I have.

K. - The Devil you have!

B. - The Devil, Ha, Ha, Ha.

L. - Oh, S^r, I make no doubt but the
Dr looks upon him as a nonentity indeed;
but I am enquiring after Beings of
another sort.

B. - Why then I swear, there never was upon Earth
any such Person as Jesus Christ upon
Earth.

Figure 4.1: Sample page from "A Modern Conversation"
(Yale University, Beinecke Library GEN MSS 282, box 1, fol. 51)

morality over doctrinal obedience, etc.).¹⁵ Two of his sons were also doctors: Ralph (1714–92), a playwright and librettist in addition to a medical doctor, and his twin, Isaac (1714–80), who was present at Garrick’s death.¹⁶ The former son would seem to be the best candidate for the Bergmosch anagram, as he was a literary man like Morell and a close friend of Garrick, likely to be met at a visit to the actor’s home. At least one of these sons, Isaac, converted and joined the Church of England in order to gain licensure as a physician; the elder Schomberg also baptized his youngest sons in infancy (he had eight children), an act that certainly had more to do with helping them avoid the difficulties that the older children had in gaining admission to Cambridge and licensures as physicians as it did with any religious conviction. Coupled with the father’s rationalist/deist viewpoints, this family of religious opportunists would have been particularly appalling to Morell.

The dramatic scene consists of a debate between the three men over the viability of biblical truth, beginning with Dr. Bergmosch’s extreme position that, “by G—, there never were any such man as Moses, or David, Solomon, or Malachi . . . Matthew, Mark, Luke or John . . . I swear, there never was upon Earth any such Person as Jesus Christ.” The unbeliever bases his position on a lack of evidence, demanding of Dr. Lle-rom, “Have you any contemporary Writer that speaks of him [i.e., Jesus]?” The believer answers with a roster of rational, textual proofs, including evidence of these men’s existence or echoes of their philosophies in sources as divergent as the writings of Greeks and Romans (Hermippus, Pythagoras, Numenius, Longinus), the Koran, and the Epistles of Seneca to Paul, among others. Morell’s alter-ego’s eruditions are intended to demonstrate that the unbeliever’s position is untenable. Bergmosch’s response is conversely terse and vapid: “I care not what others write or think; I think for myself,” a position that Lle-rom ridicules as “a sort of Anti-Revelation.”

With this little joke that placed revelation at the center of even Bergmosch’s lack of faith, Morell swerves to discuss the importance of revelation to the believer. Lle-rom turns to his other interlocutor for a milder interaction: “And so, Sr, you may now catechize me as you please.” In his discussion with Kircrag, Lle-Rom shows that an appeal to rationality was not his only support of traditional religion. Kircrag begins with what was at that time a hotly contested aspect of English doctrine: Trinitarianism. In later years, Morell would more formally assert the importance of this doctrine to Christianity.¹⁷ In “A Modern Conversation” he merely defers to the Scriptures; to question the doctrine of the Trinity would mean that he “could scarce understand a single chapter in the New Testament, or a Page in the Common Prayer.” This recourse to the authority of holy writ surprises Kircrag, who asks about the “strange . . . Contradictions” that mar those documents. Lle-rom’s answer, that there are no contradictions, meets with further surprise from the “moderate,” unleashing an enthusiastic response from Lle-rom: “Some Men are apt to dream of Contradictions, because our Understandings are unequal to the sublime Subjects therein set forth.” Lle-rom’s citation of the Scriptures’ “sublimity” surpassing human comprehension is a rather different justification of Christianity than the history lesson he

¹⁵ Meyer Low Schomberg, תנומה ומוא (Emunat Oman, Eng. trans. *A Physician’s Faith*, London, 1746). Transcribed and translated in Harold Levy in *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 20 (1959–61): 101–11.

¹⁶ Alex Sakula, “The Doctors Schomberg and the Royal College of Physicians: an Eighteenth-Century Shemuzzle,” *Journal of Medical Biography* 2 (1994): 113–119.

¹⁷ Morell, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity Justified* (London, 1774).

had provided to Bergmosch. Here, he advocates belief in mystical (“sublime”) revelation, reliance on faith where reason fails to provide explanations for evident contradictions within the Bible. God, too, is hardly a rational dispenser of rewards for the faithful and punishments for sinners in Lle-rom’s characterization:

As it is essential to the Goodness of God, to will the final Happiness of the Creatures he brings to his Wisdom to contrive, and his irresistible Power to effect the Means proper thereto; and consequently, that, All, after certain Punishments or Trials, will, in the End, arrive at that State and Degree of Happiness for which they were at first created, and the Creator himself be freed from the Necessity of sacrificing to his Justice that more amiable Attribute of his Nature[,] Mercy.

Morell thus aims to bring the “moderate” over to the believing side not through rational proof, but by stressing the mystery of religious experience and the benevolence of a heavenly father with an indiscriminate — and even irrational — love for his spiritual children.

This blend of rational proof and faith-based enthusiasm was also at the root of Morell’s discussion of “revealed religion” in his more extensive contribution to this debate, *Truth Triumphant*, published in 1739 in response to Morgan’s *Moral Philosopher* and cast as a dialogue between the same two discussants Morgan had used.¹⁸ *Truth Triumphant* has also disappeared from Morell’s modern bibliography, but it appears that he was, in fact, the author.¹⁹ The dialogue was published anonymously and concluded with the cryptic signature “TantuM,” the two capital letters giving a hint of its authorship. As early as 1797, it was firmly attributed to Morell in *Alumni Etonenses*, a biographical dictionary of alumni from Eton College. The author of the entry on Morell purports to have known the man (calling him “a profound and laborious Scholar, and a chearful and entertaining companion”), and he includes *Truth Triumphant* among a nearly complete list of Morell’s publications.²⁰ Later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources continued to attribute this work to Morell, although they almost always garbled the title.²¹

Like “A Modern Conversation,” this dialogue strives to prove the rationality of orthodox English practice, going through Morgan’s dialogue and dissecting it, seeking logical flaws, and presenting it as unlearned and unsupportable. But Morell’s characters’ arguments in favor of rational logic faltered on one point: the question of “revealed religion.” One of the main targets of the deist critique was the fact that established faith relied upon miraculous revelations; charges of superstition could thus be strongly

¹⁸ Morell, *Truth Triumphant: or, a Summary View of the Late Controversy Occasioned by a Book, Intituled, The Moral Philosopher* (London, 1739).

¹⁹ *Truth Triumphant* does not appear in Ruth Smith’s bibliography in *JRMA*, the most authoritative (and recent) published modern bibliography of Morell’s works.

²⁰ Thomas Harwood, *Alumni Etonenses: A Catalogue of the Provosts and Fellows of Eton College and King’s College, Cambridge* (London, 1797), 304.

²¹ The typical error is the replacement of the word “Late” with the word “Last.” But the most remarkable conflation of Morell’s works comes in Daniel Lysons’s *The Environs of London* (1792–96; 2nd ed., 1811), which calls the work “A Summary of the Controversy occasioned by a book called the Medical Philosopher’s Poems on Divine Subjects” (825)! Thanks to Professor Davitt Moroney for assisting me in tracking down *Truth Triumphant* and for noticing the discrepancy between titles.

proposed. As Morgan put it, "This *clerical* Religion, or Religion of the *Hierarchy*, is a new Thimble and Button, or Powder-le-Pimp, which may be this or that, every thing or nothing, just as the Jugglers please."²² In place of mystical religious precepts, Morgan and his fellow deists aimed to prove the rationality of an ethics rooted in observable human relations.

Morell dismissed such notions of "natural religion" as misleading due to the finite wisdom of human rationality. Miracles, however, and particularly the foundational miracles of Moses and the early Christians as passed down through religious tradition, were incontrovertible proofs of a benevolent God. How could one distinguish real, divine miracles from chimeras? Morell explains,

Miracles of a certain Quality and Kind . . . even *alone*, i.e. without regard to the Quality of Doctrines delivered by the Workers of them, [can] be certain Evidence of divine Truth in those Doctrines; and in all Cases they will carry that with them, in Conjunction with the Doctrine, that has nothing immoral, nothing evidently false, or unbecoming the Holiness and Majesty of God to attest.²³

Morell never defines the "quality," "kind," or "circumstances" that must attend a valid miracle, other than to state that Christians will not be misled by chimeras because of "the extraordinary Gifts and Powers of the *Holy Ghost* conferred upon them," Christ having sent to them "his *Spirit to guide them into all Truth*."²⁴ In other words, the Christian simply senses the rightness of the miraculous because he is imbued with a natural sensibility by the creator. Such non-rational sensibility laid the foundation for further contemplation of moral precepts; in Morell's words, they "awaken and alarm" mankind, and in so doing, they lead the "sensible Spectator, once *awakened*," to goodness.²⁵

This idea of the conscious mind "awakened" to virtue by the shock of an emotional encounter was among the most fundamental sentimental approaches of Morell's era. (As one literary critic has put it when describing the importance of Richardson's so-called "warm" scenes, "If Pamela is to touch the reading public 'sensibly,'" her moral lessons "must be mediated through the *sensibilia* that the audience is prepared to receive."²⁶) A survey of Morell's religious writing shows that he frequently relied on this strategy, reflecting an understanding that one's natural sensibility, a weakness due to the human constitution of "nerves" and "fibres," while dangerous, could be used for good.²⁷ The involuntary nature of

²² Thomas Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher*, 96. Morell quotes this passage in *Truth Triumphant*, 126.

²³ Morell, *Truth Triumphant*, 131.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁶ James Grantham Turner, "Novel Panic: Picture and Performance in the Reception of Richardson's *Pamela*," *Representations* 48 (1994), 77.

²⁷ Historian George Rousseau has called the 1740s the "great heyday for literature of all types concerning the nerves," and G.J. Barker-Benfield has similarly remarked upon the role that literature and religion played in spreading "popular knowledge of sensational psychology." Rousseau, "Science" in *The Context of English Literature: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Pat Rogers (London: Methuen, 1978), 194; G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6. See also Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Toward Defining the Origins of Sensibility," *Studies in the Eighteenth Century III: Papers presented at the Third David Nichol Smith Memorial*

one's sensual reactions to the world was a central moral question, particularly when the arts that embraced this nature moved outside of the Richardsonian "closet." For example, writers like Jeremy Collier and even Richardson worried about these effects on attendees at the theater, but Morell, like many moralists of the middle of the century, embraced the idea of educating through the passions rather than through rational argument. He saw the performing arts as a useful tool in this didactic approach.

One important "dramatic" platform for Morell was the pulpit. Moralistic sentimentalism often drew on depictions of suffering to evoke emotional response. Just as the sentimental dramas of Richard Steele and the novels of Richardson claimed that their audiences' tears were evidence of imparted moral wisdom, so Morell tugged at his auditors' heartstrings in the service of religion. At least some of Morell's congregants must have wept, for instance, at his powerful descriptions of suffering children, orphans, and widows in his sermon to the members of the Sons of the Clergy (a charitable organization established in 1655).²⁸ Having discussed the biblical plight of Ruth, he turned to more contemporary distress:

But go with me into the cell, and view them [needy children] in real life, if it can be called life; behold a group of children, some of them insensible of their loss, and therefore the more to be pitied; others crying for bread to the surviving parent, who can as easily recall their father, as supply them with necessaries, that flowed from, and entirely depended upon, the income of the deceased. Still more deplorable is the case of orphans, who have not the slender comfort of *pouring out their soul into a mother's bosom*; and *the tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst*; not only bereft of parents, but of a comfortable dwelling too; so that *they who fed delicately* (for their station) *are desolate in the streets*; complaining with the captive Israelites, *We are orphans and fatherless, our inheritance is turned to strangers, and our houses to aliens*.²⁹

The evocative language here, the carefully chosen italicized biblical quotes (from Lamentations), and above all the extremity of the cases presented push Morell's speech into the realm of sentimentalism.

As he went on to explain, this indulgence possessed a distinctly didactic aim:

Melancholy as this scene may be, I invite you to it, because I cannot help thinking with Solomon . . . that *it is better to go to such a house of mourning, than to a house of feasting*. For, if need were, it is almost impossible, but that by the sad countenance of the seen, the heart of the seer should be made

Seminar, Canberra 1973, ed. R.F. Brissenden and J.C. Eade (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976), 137-57.

²⁸ Morell, *A Sermon Preached at the Anniversary Meeting of the Sons of the Clergy, in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul on Thursday, May 14, 1772* (London, 1772).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-11. The biblical quotations, italicized in the original, come from Lamentations 2:12, 4:4, 4:5, and 5:2.

better; moved with a compassion unknown before, and charmed with an opportunity of doing good.³⁰

Morell thus justified his descent into pathos by claiming the naturalness of empathy. He wrote that auditors and readers who saw this scene in their minds' eyes would be "made better" by their observations, and that their emotional responses would lead to tangible good works. Morell stressed that a charitable member of his congregation could serve as "*Father to the fatherless*." The severed ties of family security could not only evoke warmly sympathetic responses from Morell's auditors; they could inspire a charitable action that would promise to restore those ties. Playing the role of surrogate father could fulfill the natural urge for humane sociability, too: Morell went on to discuss the "dictates of pure and uncorrupted nature" that compelled a person to behave charitably, and he argued that "the more we resemble [the "Father to the fatherless,"] the more we advance on our own happiness."³¹ His was a Shaftesburian logic coupled with Richardsonian tactics of engagement.

Such a preaching style hints that Morell was a talented performer in the pulpit, and it is thus little surprise that he would have also articulated a moral project that used the performing arts in its service. The *utile dulci* principle, or the belief that works of art could (and should) use pleasure in order to instruct, had ancient roots but saw a resurgence among moral reformers of the eighteenth century.³² Morell, too, believed in the power of the performing arts to shape auditors' minds, hearts, and souls. His preoccupation with the link between sensibility, the arts, and moral didacticism provides a window onto the motivations of an oratorio librettist; for such a staunch supporter of sentimentalism in the service of moral instruction, the English oratorio must have appeared the ideal genre for moral instruction.

Morell's published commentaries on the moral value of the theater can be found in prefaces to his translations of plays by Euripides into both Latin and English.³³ As a classicist, the Latin translations held an important place in his output, but as a moralist, he must have had higher hopes for his separately published English versions. The latter were prepared, he said, "for the use of the *English Reader*, I mean those who understand not the original Language, or such young Gentlemen as are now entering upon the Study of it."³⁴ Morell's target readership included impressionable, middle-brow readers without access to ancient languages and young men in formative stages of their moral and intellectual educations. Such readers deserved works that would orient their ethical compasses, and Morell believed that these plays would provide them with an admirable didactic theatrical tradition.

In the preface to the earliest of the English editions (for *Hecuba*, 1748–49), Morell lauded Euripides in terms that suited mid-century tastes. He reported that the ancient

³⁰ Ibid., 11.

³¹ Ibid., 12.

³² For a recent and extensive discussion of the debates over the morality of music and theater during this period, see Maria Semi, *Music as a Science of Mankind in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, trans. Timothy Keates (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

³³ Euripides, *Hecuba, Orestes, Phoenissæ, Alcestis* (Latin, 1748); Euripides, *Hecuba* (English, 1749); Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* (Latin, 1767, rev. 1773); Aeschylus, *Prometheus in Chains* (English, 1773).

³⁴ Morell, *Hecuba: Translated from the Greek of Euripides with Annotations* (London, 1749), v.

playwright was instructed by Socrates in his “*almost Christian* Morals, and other excellent Doctrines relating to the Providence of God.”³⁵ These morals found expression in his plays; citing Ælian, Morell wrote that Socrates “seldom appeared at the Theatre but when some new Play was exhibited by Euripides, and then he never failed in his Attendance; for he lov’d the Man, and was particularly charm’d with the Virtue and Wisdom” of his stage works.³⁶ But praise came not only from the ancients, Morell pointed out, describing the reaction of a “French Critic” to the “natural” style of Euripides’s writing: “Indeed, as the *French Critic* hereupon observes, he [Euripides] seems to have owed more to Nature than to Art, and to have been guided in his Compositions rather by the Motions of an humane and tender Heart, than the Dictates of a laborious and studious Mind. He felt what he wrote; it was the Constitution of the Man.”³⁷ How Morell knew that Euripides’s dramatic themes were commensurate with the author’s inner nature is left to the imagination, but the idea resonated with contemporary attitudes about creators and creations. Richardson, for instance, was assumed by at least one of his correspondents to be “delicate,” and Henry Fielding, the author of the biting satire *Shamela*, to be a “robust, strong man.”³⁸ Such conflation as made by Morell and by Richardson’s correspondent between creator and created testified to a keen faith in the legibility of the moral claims of art (and they parallel the types of assumptions made about the commensurability between actors’ onstage personas and offstage identities examined in Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation).

Contemporary tastes were important to Morell, as he made clear in asserting that these ancient plays would suit modern theatrical proclivities. Steele would have approved of *Hecuba*, Morell said; he thought, in fact, that very play could have been the work that Steele described in *Spectator* No. 39 as follows:

As a perfect Tragedy is the noblest Production of human Nature, so it is capable of giving the Mind one of the most delightful and improving Entertainments. A virtuous Man (says *Seneca*) struggling with Misfortunes, is such a spectacle as Gods might look upon with Pleasure. And such a Pleasure it is which one meets with in the Representation of a well-written Tragedy. Diversions of this kind . . . cherish and cultivate that Humanity which is the Ornament of our Nature; they soften Insolence, sooth Affliction, and subdue the Mind to the Dispensations of Providence.³⁹

Morell continues to quote Steele, who asserted that although the modern tragedy may have been more intricate and sophisticated, the “Christian Writer should be asham’d to own . . . [that it] falls infinitely short of [ancient plays] in the moral Part of the Performance.” Morell goes on to praise *Hecuba*’s “natural” appeal, its Aristotelian unities, and its potential, like the other works of Euripides, to be “*Useful and Entertaining*.”⁴⁰

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vi.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, vii. Morell leaves the identity of this critic a mystery, but the most likely candidate seems to be Pierre Brumoy, whose *Théâtre des Grecs* appeared in 1715.

³⁸ *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Anna L. Barbauld (London, 1804), 4: 30.

³⁹ Quoted in Morell, *Hecuba*, viii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, xv.

In his thoughts on the theater, Morell advocated powerful emotion in order to soften and humanize an audience; when he wrote about music, he drew even more heavily on the value of sensual pleasure in reaching the multitudes. Many moralizing writers accused mankind's natural sensibility of being the chief reason that the theater, and especially its music, could corrupt the public. Jeremy Collier, for instance, had claimed in 1688 that music was "almost as dangerous as Gunpowder."⁴¹ In 1734, Richardson had also linked the theater's improprieties explicitly with music's power, decrying "these Places where the Temptation is made the stronger, by the Impressions which the Musick and the Entertainment are liable to make on young and unguarded Minds."⁴² But other moralists praised these sensual qualities for their potential service to ethical instruction. Steele, for instance, recognized the fundamental importance of the pleasure and sensuality that disturbed Collier and Richardson; in the second decade of the eighteenth century, he had designed and built an ideal musical theater, an alternative to Italian opera that might "*give law and bounds to pleasure, and make us all its followers.*"⁴³ The aim was to imbue moral values, but not through dry, purely rational means. Recognition of the importance of sensual pleasure was inscribed in the very name of the venue where he presented this ideal entertainment: the "Censorium," a place where the subliminal power of music could have full effect: "This institution or establishment is a design to promote virtue by pleasure, and knowledge by diversion . . . [The] approbation of persons of genius of both sexes assembled frequently together may diffuse itself through the age, and *insensibly correct their false notions.*"⁴⁴ Steele thus argued that moral instruction was itself a kind of seduction.

The idea of a moral musical seduction would have resonated with Morell when he began his own didactic undertakings in the 1740s. He declared, in similar terms to Steele's, his belief in music's role in moral education in *The Use and Importance of Music in the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving*. He preached this sermon in September 1746 at the annual Three Choirs Festival, which brought together the choirs of Gloucester, Hereford, and Worcester. Morell was a good choice to deliver this annual address. Music was important to him, as evidenced most memorably by his portrait by William Hogarth, with the materials of a classicist (books, pen, and paper) balanced by the organ that he kept in his home, shown behind a half drawn curtain (Figure 4.2). And the specific timing of Morell's contribution to this religious and musical tradition is noteworthy; the autumn of 1746 coincided with his first association with Handel, who had completed setting Morell's earliest libretto (to *Judas Maccabaeus*) in mid-August. Thoughts of the role of music wed to moral didacticism would have been very much on Morell's mind during this time.

⁴¹ Collier, *A Short View*, 279.

⁴² Richardson, *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*, 10.

⁴³ Town Talk 4, rep. in *The Town Talk, The Fish Pool, The Plebian, The Old Whig, The Spinster, &c, by the Authors of the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian* (London, 1790), 51.

⁴⁴ Steele, *Town Talk* 4, 50. Emphasis mine. Steele's Censorium went from planning to operation to closing between 1712 and 1728 and was located in London's York Buildings; see John Loftis, "Richard Steele's Censorium," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1950): 43-66. George Chambers defined this term (which he spelled "Sensorium") in his *Cyclopædia* of 1728 as "that part of the brain wherein the nerves, from all the organs of sense, terminate" (s.v. "Sensory"). Steele similarly defined the term, as follows: "The CENSORIUM, every body knows, is the organ of sense, as the eye is of sight; and it seems more proper to use a word which implies the *sentio tantum*, the bare conception of what is presented to the spectator, rather than any name which in a didactic manner pronounces what ought to be received or rejected."



Figure 4.2: Thomas Morell (1703-1784) engraved by James Basire (1762), after a lost drawing by William Hogarth

In this sermon, Morell praised the very *unreasonableness* of music, an art that he described as “above all sensible Enjoyments.” He contrasted the power of music with more rational persuasion: “Music seizeth irresistibly upon the Affections, and, when duly attended to, can raise, and still govern the Passions, with an almost arbitrary Sway . . .”⁴⁵ This power of music to infiltrate the mind had worried the earlier moralizers discussed above, but Morell, like Steele, saw this characteristic as something that could be harnessed to move auditors “even against the Will.”⁴⁶

These notions of music’s power to transcend or subvert mankind’s rational capabilities fit well with Morell’s ideas about the “sublime” and unfathomable nature of Holy Scripture. Indeed, only such a super-rational art was suitable for praising a creator so far beyond human comprehension. According to Morell, even the human voice itself was not enough to glorify such a deity, but required the addition of instruments:

The Soul still labours after higher Transports; still panteth to magnify God, and his Goodness, in a more exalted Strain, *and make his Praise glorious*. . . . Sensible of this from the Beginning, and, no doubt, inspired by God himself, hath the pious and devout Soul call’d in the Melody of Instruments, to indulge the Voice with Variety, fill it up with Extent, and strengthen it with Continuity; and thereby enable her [the voice] to express her rapturous Admiration with a more sublime and heavenly Pathos. For why? *Music* applied to Objects of Passion, serves to embellish and aggrandize them, and make them enter, with a Pleasure unknown before, into the very Recesses of the Soul. It raises noble Hints, and opens the Mind to great Conceptions; furnishing it with a new Capacity, as well as a new Opportunity of Satisfaction.⁴⁷

The subversive power of instrumental music could thus infiltrate both the body and the “very Recesses” of the soul. Music’s most powerful effect was on that most impressionable (and irrational) aspect of the human disposition: the heart. Morell wrote about music, “Above all, it qualifies the Heart to receive the influence of this important Consideration; we therein feel a lively Sense of God’s Goodness, and are taught to thank him for this, among other Instances of his loving Kindness; this one of the greatest Felicities of human Nature, a *melodious Constitution*.”⁴⁸ Mankind’s “melodious constitution” reflected more than a propensity to be touched by vibrations of air columns. It was a sign of innate love for one’s neighbor, for natural social harmony.

In addition to music’s powers of persuasion, the sermon discussed the “natural cheerfulness” that music could provide, a similarly automatic response. Music offered a number of earthly rewards for those who were bound together in harmony. Music inspired the “natural,” “friendly,” and “social Affections” (Morell named love, gratitude, good nature, pity, and succor). The power of such social benefits was not to be underestimated; indeed,

⁴⁵ Morell, *The Use and Importance of Music in the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving* (London, 1747), 21. Cf. Steele’s comment, “Musick, Eloquence, and Poetry, are the powers which do most strongly affect the imagination, and influence the passions of men.” *Town Talk* 4, 50.

⁴⁶ Morell, *The Use and Importance of Music*, 15-16.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-1.

there was nothing else on earth to match the pleasure that music could provide. Music was here granted a profound significance:

As nothing can open and enlarge the Heart to these divine Offices like the sweet Charms of Music, how commendable is this Anniversary Testimony of fraternal Concord, to advance and propagate Music for the Service of God, and the Exercise of Benignity and Goodness among Men? — Music assimilates the Disposition of the Heart to itself; and therefore I cannot think the Author much mistaken, who took *the delighting in Harmony to be a moral Sign of all Good*. Where the Love of Harmony dwells (O may it ever dwell among us!) the Voice of Hatred and Animosity, the Voice of Malice and Revenge is heard no more! It [music] carries us to the very Borders of the celestial Paradise; and unburthening the Soul of all earthly Cogitations, fills it with the divine Contemplation of the Glory of God, the Beauty of Heaven, and the inexpressible Pleasures there reserved for us.⁴⁹

In this remarkable passage, Morell went farther than claiming that music inspires good-natured behavior toward others. Music took listeners to the “very Borders of the celestial Paradise;” it was the closest earthly pleasure to the divine promises of heaven.

Music’s subliminal power was essential to Morell’s ethical advocacy for the art. He did admit that the greatest ideal was music wed with religious “Sense,” pointing out that the “Terrors of the Lord . . . described with expressive Melody” would affect the soul powerfully, or if the goodness of God was “aloud declared with harmonious Joy; how is the Soul rap’d above itself, till it catches the Flame of Heaven! We are all Love and Gratitude. — And thus does Music endear to us all the Offices of Religion.”⁵⁰ Nevertheless, for Morell the true benefit of music for the ambitious proselytizer was in its potential to subvert rational process, even (or especially) among those who could not perform it and did not particularly understand it:

So extensive is the Power of Harmony, that it calls in those, who have no Abilities to perform, nay, even those *whose Hearts were not ready*, to partake of this divine Pleasure. It composes their Minds into Attention, and enamours them with *the Beauty of Holiness*. They are deceiv’d, as it were, into Piety; and if the goodly Motion be not check’d, it will make such lasting Impressions, as having made them fit for, shall attend them to the Choir of Heaven.⁵¹

Morell’s idea of “deceiving” listeners into piety echoes, in inverse, Richardson’s fears about “young and unguarded Minds,” just as it calls upon the same discourse of moral, didactic sensuality espoused by Steele. His musical ideal utilized sensibility in the service of moral education.

Morell found his ideal wedding of religious texts with powerful music in a theatrical setting: the oratorios of Handel. In 1777, he recorded in a recently rediscovered letter how

⁴⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 22-3.

⁵¹ Ibid., 23.

Handel had “applied” to him to provide oratorio libretti in July, 1746.⁵² The poet’s excitement at the request for lines for *Judas Maccabaeus* is evident from his report that he brought the oratorio’s first act to the composer “within 2 or 3 days.” Handel completed Part 3 of *Judas Maccabaeus* on August 11. A little less than a month later, Morell stood in the pulpit, extolling the wonders of music, doubtless excited about the impact that his own pious words and Handel’s powerful music would have on their auditors of sensibility.

Morell’s enthusiastic advocacy for the power of sentiment to spur audiences to moral reflection found a place in his libretti, lying at the root of Dean’s statement about sensibility’s “very marked” influence on the late Handelian oratorio. The most obvious example of such sentimentalism is found in his choice of subject matter for Handel’s last two dramatic oratorios: both *Theodora* and *Jephtha* centered on endangered virgins. In the former, a woman who has dedicated herself to God by taking a vow of chastity is forced into prostitution by a callous military man; in the latter, another warrior endangers a young woman by inadvertently condemning his own daughter to death. As Richardson had proved with *Pamela* and *Clarissa* (1748), the English public would eagerly consume tales of such heroines with (putatively) moralizing goals. Morell may have aimed to fulfill such audiences’ eagerness to be “awakened and alarmed” with powerfully stimulating situations like a virgin in a brothel and a young daughter under the sacrificial knife. And he provided the men in his audiences with models within the bounds of the libretti, male characters transformed by the intensity of the suffering of innocent women, “moved with a compassion unknown before and charmed with an opportunity of doing good.”

Reforming Masculinity in *Theodora* and *Jephtha*

If Morell recognized in Handel’s oratorios the opportunity to touch men’s hearts through their sensibility, he also used his texts to espouse such values in dramatic terms. In addition to being intensely emotional (even gloomy) works, his last dramatic oratorios appealed to two of the midcentury’s favorite preoccupations: the importance of parental love and the ethical power of female innocence, a power that, as Morell’s contemporaries stressed, could have beneficial didactic effects on the men whom it touched. The timeliness of Morell’s damsels in distress has been noted (disparaged, defended) before.⁵³ But his male characters also deserve attention; paradoxically, these female-centric oratorios can allow us to study how religious and sentimental ideas of masculinity were given voice in Handel’s last works.

Historians working in masculinity studies have demonstrated that eighteenth-century religious ideas about gendered morality featured a fundamental paradox: while they articulated a sharp distinction between the sexes, they also brought them closer together. On the one hand, religious writers argued that women possessed a superior morality to men; benevolence and piety, the supposedly “natural” traits of women, set them apart from the more aggressive sex, which was prone to atheism and rowdy sin. On the other hand, men were encouraged, particularly by religious writers, to behave in more

⁵² See Smith, “Thomas Morell and His Letter,” op. cit.

⁵³ See n. 6 and 7, above.

stereotypically “feminine” ways. Women made good students of religious precepts, models for men striving after Christian morality.

Such pedagogues and “softened” men figured prominently in both Morell’s religious writing and his late works, including libretti produced during Handel’s lifetime (*Theodora*, *Jephtha*) and one after the composer’s death (*Nabal*). His earliest effort at religious verse came in his *Poems on Divine Subjects*, published in 1732 and headed by a poem that held the power of women over that of kings.⁵⁴ In *Theodora*, the steadfast lessons provided by a passively suffering heroine helped shape and refine the aspirations of the work’s principal male characters. In Handel’s last dramatic oratorio, *Jephtha*, a conflict between loving fatherhood and devotion to God created the drama’s tension. In his last oratorios, Handel’s musical settings reflected keen awareness of the musico-dramatic possibilities inherent in the model provided by female moral pedagogues and their male pupils.

Earlier periods in English church history were antipathetic toward the idea of female influence. With roots stretching back centuries, religious writers placed women firmly on the natural side of the nature/culture divide.⁵⁵ Women were controlled by their reproductive organs, went the logic, which had fundamental effects on their capacity and makeup.⁵⁶ The “sponginess” of the female physical constitution, as opposed to male “hardness,” made women more susceptible to outside influence, and as the creation myth demonstrated to religious writers, satanic influences were among those that might seep into the permeable female exterior.⁵⁷ Women also had long borne the blame for the corruption of men; over-exposure to women held the dangers of weakening men’s rational capacities, of distracting them from their duty to active civic virtue, and of creating the mollies and “pretty Gentlemen” reviled in popular literature. Morell’s years (and later decades of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) saw much of this sort of argumentation continued.⁵⁸

On the other hand, religious writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries also increasingly turned to women’s “natural” constitutions as exemplary. Their bodies’ “sponginess” may have opened them to the devil, but it also helped them to be open to God. Religious writers typically paid double-edged compliments to their female readers; if a woman was a weak, mutable vessel, then she was free from the strong (masculine)

⁵⁴ *Poems on Divine Subjects, Original and Translated from the Latin of M. Hieron. Vida, Bp. Of Alba., With Large Annotations, More Particularly Concerning the Being and Attributes of God* (London, 1732).

⁵⁵ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 31-4; Nancy Snow, “Virtue and the Oppression of Women,” in *Feminist Moral Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume 28 of *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), 33-62, esp. pp. 33-7.

⁵⁶ Anthony Fletcher, “Women’s Spiritual Experiences,” in R.N. Swanson, ed., *Gender and Christian Religion* (Woodbridge: Ecclesiastical History Society/Boydell Press, 1998), 189; Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 291-3; R. Martensen, “The Transformation of Eve,” in Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich, eds., *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes to Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 107-33.

⁵⁷ Fletcher, “Women’s Spiritual Experiences,” 187-88 and 194; Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 32.

⁵⁸ For a satirical contemporary illustration of this tendency, see the anonymous *The Pretty Gentleman, or Softness of Manners Vindicated* (London, 1747). For a general overview of the complicated intersections between sexuality, gender, and the softening of male manners, see George Haggerty, *Men in Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), esp. chap. 2.

constitutions of self that might get in the way of religious instruction.⁵⁹ In extreme expressions of women's natural capacity for religion, they were praised more often than men as seers and mystics. On a more mainstream level, they were lauded for their natural inclination to piety.⁶⁰ As Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have argued,

Although the practice of piety was never the exclusive province of the female sex, there are many signs that private godliness and public morality were labeled as feminine concerns, especially toward the end of the seventeenth century. . . . Both sexes assumed that a pious lifestyle naturally pertained to the female domain, and that women were more inclined than their male counterparts to religious duties and personal devotions.⁶¹

An early seventeenth-century male writer neatly summarized the general attitude described by these historians: "The weaker sexe, to piety more prone."⁶²

The presumed emotional and empathetic proclivities of the "fair sex" rendered them well primed for the messages of the period's Anglicanism. If earlier generations most frequently used (as Sears McGee argues of Anglicanism during the Stuart reign) imagery of warfare and combat between the fleshy and the transcendent, many eighteenth-century Anglican writers avoided such severe illustrations.⁶³ Mirroring the softening ideal of the gentleman in broader society (the growing campaign against dueling, the alleged barbarity of boxing, the increased acceptance of women in public forums), the ideal Christian man was distanced from older models of masculinity.⁶⁴ For instance, among the most popular masculine conduct manuals of the eighteenth-century, Steele's *The Christian Hero* (1701) argued that Caesar, Cato, Brutus, and Cassius all died ignobly, despite their great social heroism; Steele's conclusion (in Jerome Gregory's summary) is that "religious faith is the only basis for the truly heroic man, sustaining discipline, public responsibility, and above

⁵⁹ Fletcher, "Women's Spiritual Experiences," 188; Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 73-5; Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, 347; Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 28-34.

⁶⁰ On the perception of women as naturally religious, see the following: Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 210. On female mystics, see Mack, *Visionary Women*, chaps. 1 and 2, esp. pp. 39 and 49, Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England*, 10-17, and John Spurr, "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration Church," *The Historical Journal* 31 (1988): 61-82

⁶¹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 226.

⁶² Earl of Stirling, *Recreations with the Muses* (1637), 107; quoted in Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 226.

⁶³ Sears McGee, *The Godly Man in Stuart England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 43. McGee argues that "before 1660 the model of the godly man was a combative one, where leading a properly religious life was envisaged as a constant war between the world of the flesh and heaven, [but] after 1660 theology can be seen to have modified its priorities and to have developed the notion that a rational and benevolent God had created a universe in which earthly ends were desirable as well as heavenly bliss."

⁶⁴ Karen Downing, "The Gentleman Boxer: Boxing, Manners, and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century England," *Men and Masculinities* 12, no. 3 (2010): 328-52; Erin Mackie, "Boys Will Be Boys: Masculinity, Criminality, and the Restoration Rake," *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 46, no. 2 (2005): 129-49; Robert Shoemaker, "Male Honour and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth-Century London," *Social History* 26, no. 2 (2001): 190-208; Jeremy Gregory, "Gender and the Clerical Profession in England, 1660-1850," in *Gender and the Christian Religion*, ed. R.N Swanson (Woodbridge: Ecclesiastical History Society/Boydell Press, 1998), 98.

all an 'extreme magnanimity' and forgiveness which defined the highest ideal for male behavior. Given that traditional ideals of manliness had placed great stress on physical strength, hardiness, courage and martial values, such an emphasis on forgiveness is an important shift in priorities."⁶⁵ Softer dictates were at the heart of eighteenth-century Anglican practice; as Gregory has shown through extensive survey of sermons of this period, "The clergy of the Church of England prided themselves on being 'pious,' charitable,' and 'moderate.' This is interesting for our purposes since 'piety,' 'charity,' and 'moderation' were also deemed in the period to be specifically feminine virtues."⁶⁶

From whom better to learn such "feminine virtues" than women? Richard Allestree, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, argued as early as 1673 that even the "more impregnable" portion of the male populace was unreachable by clergymen, and that he would look to women, "whose native Softness and Gentleness may render them less apt for the Resistance of good Counsel," to be his primary missionaries among the English.⁶⁷ Mary Astell followed these precepts, in 1705 referring to herself as "a Daughter of the Church of England" and arguing that women, more naturally inclined to religion, should become the nation's theologians and religious leaders.⁶⁸ From the 1740s through the 1770s, philosopher David Fordyce and his clergyman brother James explicitly advised Christian men to seek the council and training of morally superior women, most extensively in David's *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (1748) and James's *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women* (1776).⁶⁹

In both his religious writing and his oratorios, Morell also advised his male audiences to de-militarize their notions of virtue. He argued that they should instead adopt a more modern virtue, a "charitable disposition" rooted in the rhetoric of kindness and benevolence that was such a part of mid-century Anglicanism. Throughout his sermon entitled *The Charitable Disposition of the Present Age* (1753), the terms "virtue" and "charity" are interchangeably linked. As the title suggests, Morell upholds the mid-century as the most charitable period in recorded history. Prior to the Christian era, Morell writes, society's degree of virtue was "comparatively low and mean." Ancient clemency was "but the dead Image and artificial Counterfeit of Virtue; not the genuine Offspring of Sincerity."⁷⁰ Morell clearly had in mind Steele's *The Christian Hero*, as he followed the same method of marching through antiquity and showing the inferiority of ancient models of virtue. He tells

⁶⁵ Gregory, "Gender and the Clerical Profession," 91.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁶⁷ Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling*, rep. in *The Works of the Learned and Pious Author of the Whole Duty of Man* (London, 1726), 161. For secondary literature on the new religious male, see the following: William Van Reyk, "Christian Ideals of Manliness in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," *Historical Journal* 52, no. 4 (2009): 1053-73; Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow: Pearson, 2001), esp. pp. 41-4; Gregory, "Homo Religiosus: Masculinity and Religion in the Long Eighteenth Century," in Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen, ed., *English Masculinities 1660-1800* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), 85-110; Gregory, "Gender and the Clerical Profession;" Fletcher, "Women's Spiritual Experiences;" Barker Benfield, "The Reformation of Male Manners," chap. 2 in *The Culture of Sensibility*.

⁶⁸ Mary Astell, *The Christian Religion; as Professed by a Daughter of the Church of England* (1705).

⁶⁹ David Fordyce also espoused the power of women in shaping men's moral sense in his *Dialogues Concerning Education* (1745-8). For a useful overview, see Dana Harrington, "Gender, Commerce, and the Transformation of Virtue in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no. 3: 33-52.

⁷⁰ Morell, *The Charitable Disposition of the Present Age* (London, 1753), 7.

us, for instance, that Caesar claimed compassion and clemency, but failed to exercise it in all military entanglements. Morell denounces Caesar for his unrepentant attitude toward mutilation and torture. So, too, does he critique Caesar's idolization of Alexander the Great: "Yet, where was *Caesar's* Clemency, where his Humanity . . . when at reading the Life of *Alexander* he wept; for what? But because he had not arrived at equal Glory, that is, he had not made so great Havock among his Fellow-Creatures."⁷¹ By distancing his ideals from such classic emblems of military prowess as Caesar and Alexander, Morell emphasizes the gulf between valor and virtue.

Morell also lambastes Lycurgus, the famed Spartan who consulted the oracle at Delphi to establish the Spartan "virtues," chiefly militarism and adherence to the will of the state. To Morell, Lycurgus's greatest sin was the euthanasia of children who were deformed or otherwise thought to be physically unfit. To a Spartan philosophy, such a figure would be incapable of military service, and hence unable to live a virtuous life. To Morell, the idea is utterly abhorrent:

To murder a poor innocent Babe, because seemingly of a weak Constitution, or even suppose it was deformed, without an Endeavour to rear and strengthen it, without considering the Faculties of the Mind, and all its possible Improvements, and that an homely Casket may contain a precious Jewel; surely this cannot but cast a Blemish upon the Reputation he [i.e., Lycurgus] otherwise deserved; and which the Ecomiums of a *Plutarch*, or *Plato* himself, can never wipe off.⁷²

Morell continues along these lines, criticizing other philosophers and statesmen of the ancient world before turning to the Jews of the Old Testament as practitioners of a deplorable system of revenge and punishment.

If these were all negative examples, then Morell was obliged at this point in his sermon to give instructive ones. John 13:34, Jesus's famous "New Commandment," serves as the scriptural centerpiece of Morell's argument.⁷³ The "Practice of a true Christian," he says, is one in which love "is not fixed on this or that Object, as mere Humour, or some selfish End and Design moves him, but extends itself to the whole Race of Mankind." Morell continues,

[The Christian's] Heart is enlarged into an universal Benignity, while he acts not by the narrow Principle of Nature, but by the unbounded Principle of Grace. This is what carries the Virtue, now distinguished by the Name of *Charity*, to a nobler height, insists more earnestly on the Necessity, enforceth it upon stronger Motives, and recommends it from more eminent Examples.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid., 7-8.

⁷² Ibid., 8-9.

⁷³ "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

⁷⁴ Morell, *The Charitable Disposition*, 12.

The modern world thus possessed more benevolent modes of human interaction due to the Christian doctrines of forgiveness and universal love that overturned older systems of factiousness and division. Morell's virtue, characterized by compassion, pity, and universal brotherhood, triumphed over systems that emphasized strength and military prowess.

Throughout, Morell makes one point abundantly clear: the grandest accomplishment of such charity is that it contributes to private happiness, rather than any more public security. "Think," writes Morell, "how decent and humane an Action it is to take up the poor labouring Man . . . and by the Blessing of God [the caregiver] soon restores a Father to his helpless Family."⁷⁵ Elsewhere, Morell waxes poetic about the possible cure for insanity that mental institutions might promise:

Like another *Hercules*, to drive the Monsters from their Possessions; to recal [sic] the fugitive Reason to her own Home, as the *Spartans* did *Lycurgus*; to restore the Man to himself, to his Wife perhaps, and Children; Oh! what manifold Blessings must attend the noble Deed! If the Prayers and Thanksgivings of a devout Family, or of a grateful Heart, but reach the Heavens, . . . how blessed must such a Benefactor be; blessed in his Person, blessed in his Posterity, yea, his Righteousness remaineth for ever!⁷⁶

Morell's juxtapositions are striking, and evidently calculated. The achievements of private morality rooted in family were to this moralist equated with or even greater than Hercules's valorous deeds or Lycurgus's homecoming to ensure the glory of Sparta. Morell claimed that modern society had stripped virtue of its outward, publicly recognized grandeur and placed it in the hands of every British citizen, every Christian, every mother, every father. In this sermon, modern virtue was found not in heroism and active deeds, but in compassion and gentle care.

One of Morell's explicit praises of female influence came in his 1732 *Poems on Divine Subjects*. Morell divided his *Poems* into two parts. Part 1 consists of translations of and annotations on the *Hymni de rebus divinis* by the sixteenth-century Catholic bishop Marco Girolamo Vida.⁷⁷ Part 2 presents Morell's own *Divine Poems*. These treat a number of matters central to Christianity ("On Sin," "On Repentance," etc.). The whole is preceded by the longest poem in the volume, the ambitiously titled "Great is Truth, and Mighty Above All Things." The title is taken from the third chapter of the apocryphal biblical book of 1 Esdras. The substance of this book's third and fourth chapters provides the content for Morell's poem: a dispute between the bodyguards of the Persian king Darius I in the sixth century BCE. They vie for the king's attention by making cases for whatever or whomever they believe to wield the greatest power on earth. The first courtier claims that wine possesses the most influence over men. The drink "scorns to stoop to servile Fear, / Breaks thro' Law-Cobwebs, and delights to err. / It binds the Senses in a slumberous Chain, / And Sweetly blunts the Poignancy of Pain."⁷⁸ The second courtier attributes the greatest power

⁷⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁷ For a brief discussion of the significance of Morell's translations of Vida in the context of his broader output, including the oratorio libretti, see Ruth Smith, "Handel's English Librettists," in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, ed. Donald Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 95-6.

⁷⁸ Morell, *Divine Poems*, 241.

to a human bearer: "Superior Pow'rs superior Honours claim: / Such is the *King*, at whose majestic Nod / Whole Nations trembling own an earthly God."⁷⁹

The third courtier, the winner of the competition, turns to a softer inspiration: women, he says, have greater dominion than even the world's kings. The argument in 1 Esdras was direct enough. It claimed that women bore men and were necessary to see them through childhood, that men would risk dangerous circumstances more often for women than for any other cause, and that even gold and silver were no match for the allure of a beloved woman, since men so readily parted with these items in pursuit of love. And women, of course, carried with their immense power great danger on a par with that of both wine and kings: "Wine is wicked, the king is wicked, women are wicked, all the children of men are wicked, and such are all their wicked works; and there is no truth in them; in their unrighteousness also they shall perish."⁸⁰ Only divine truth could conquer the great corrupting powers of the world.

Morell maintained the outlines of this argument, but, as might be expected of an eighteenth-century English cleric, softened the blows to women and bolstered the arguments in favor of matrimonial bliss. He praised women's tender maternal care:

All, all must yield, if I but *Woman* name;
(Oh! may my Words flow charming as my Theme!)
For *Kings* in splendid Majesty enthron'd,
And *Heroes*, with immortal Honours crown'd,
From *Woman* sprung; to *Woman's* tender Care
All owe a Debt, who breathe the living Air:
She rais'd them all from the dark Womb of Night,
Nor e'er without her had they seen the Light.

A woman's care was enlightening, and Morell praised "Her curious Work, that emulates the Sun, / And gives a double Lustre to the Throne." Whereas the author of 1 Esdras had claimed that gold and silver would be forsaken and dangers endured in gaining a woman, Morell was pleased to announce that "the sweet Converse of a faithful Wife" is the reward of a lifetime of toil.⁸¹ And although Morell's speaker admitted that "*Women* sometimes err,"

⁷⁹ Ibid., 243.

⁸⁰ 1 Esdras 37.

⁸¹ In 1725, Morell had made a similar argument. In the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* he answered the poetic complaint of Katherine Thurston entitled "Women born to be controul'd." Women were, Morell corrected her, indeed the happier of the two sexes because they had men throughout their lives caring for them. As proof, he cited "a *Father's* tender Love," a kind brother, and the husband, in whom the wife would find "The Father, Brother, Friend." Women, moreover, were put on earth "to enjoy," men "to toil with pleasing Pain." Joined together, both men and women would receive the greatest boon in earthly life from union:

Marriage, thou safest, happiest state!
From thee what Pleasures flow;
What numerous Blessings on thee wait,
None but the Married know.

Morell copied this poem into a notebook for his wife in 1779, annotating this paragraph, "By guess, then; now (1779) from above 40 Years Experience." And Morell urged his readers, "Forget we not, those golden Days / When Women reign supreme," looking forward to a time that women like Kitty Thurston might soon cease their complaints:

Then, say not, that the Pow'rs ordain

he never linked women and sinfulness in the same way that the apocryphal scripture had.⁸² Instead, women's influence was simply said to be, like all mortal things, temporary; if their power was a source of light, then like the sun, it must also someday set.

The idea of a virtuous female providing enlightenment to empathetic men stood at the heart of *Theodora*. This work's libretto drew on the history of a Christian martyr, first recorded in the fourth century in the writings of St. Ambrose. Theodora was an early Christian of noble Roman heritage, living sometime in the third century. Upon conversion to Christianity, she took a vow of celibacy, wedding herself, Ambrose tells us, to Christ. An edict banning celibacy among Roman women made her Christian devotion illegal; authorities failed to convince Theodora of her duty to marry and produce Roman heirs, and therefore condemned her to enforced prostitution. The story that emerged, of the attempt by Didymus, a converted Roman soldier, to rescue her, and of their death together at the hands of Roman authorities, made material fit for dramatic treatment by Pierre Corneille (*Théodore, vierge et martyre, tragédie chrétienne*, 1646) and for a prose romance by Robert Boyle (*Love and Religion Demonstrated in the Martyrdom of Theodora and Didymus*, 1687). Morell knew both these works, drawing on them in his own adaptation of the story. That Theodora was an endangered virgin would have appealed to many dramatists of the mid-eighteenth century; that this source material also presented her as a pedagogical figure for the reformation of men would have made her irresistible to Morell.

Morell's main inspiration for *Theodora* came from Boyle's poem. In the preface to his libretto, Morell tells his readers that he has taken Theodora's heritage ("Descendent of *Antiochus*") from Corneille's play, but that the rest of the work was based on Boyle's book. Indeed, the opening sentence of the preface justifies the existence of this oratorio through the precedent that Boyle had set: "I believe nothing more need be mention'd to account for, or recommend the Choice of the following subject on this Occasion, than that the great Mr. Boyle thought it worthy of his Pen."⁸³

If the *raison d'être* for this oratorio could be justified by Boyle's romance, then Boyle's own arguments for the story's value might just as easily be transferred to Morell. Boyle, in the preface to his work, made clear his pedagogic aim, calling the book "a piece, which . . . might do some good, by rendring Vertue Amiable, and recommending Piety to a sort of Readers, that are much more affected by shining Examples, and pathological Expressions, than by dry Precepts, and grave discourses."⁸⁴ Boyle aimed to move beyond the role of "meer Historian" and to reform his readers through pleasure. Apologizing for the love scenes and youthful verve of his characters' rapturous expressions, Boyle stated that he aimed to "convey unperceivedly, into the minds of those young Persons of Quality for whom I wrote, Sentiments of true Piety and Vertue." The idea of inculcating virtue "unperceivedly" would have sat easily with Morell, whose own thoughts on the value of "deceiving" listeners into piety through musical means descended from such didactic ideas.

That men shou'd bear the Sway;
When Reason bids, let Women reign,
When Reason bids, obey.

(Yale, Beinecke Library Osborne c395, 6-7)

⁸² Morell, *Divine Poems*, 248.

⁸³ Morell, *Theodora* (London, 1750), "Advertisement," n.p.

⁸⁴ Boyle, *Love and Religion in the Martyrdom of Theodora and Didymus* (London, 1687; 2nd ed. 1703), "Preface," n.p. All further quotations from Boyle's novel are drawn from this edition.

Boyle understood the possible objections to his work and its suffering heroine, as he made clear through a lengthy digression in the midst of this preface.

I will not here examine, whether the Ignorance wont to be imputed to Women, be Their fault, or that of their Accusers, and whether it is any natural want of Capacity, or rather want of Instruction, that keeps most of them from Knowledge, though This regards not Sexes. But without inquiry, whether it be not our Interest, or our Envy, that Makes Women what we are wont to decry them for Being; I shall not scruple to own, that I have sometimes had the honour to converse with Ladies; that convinc'd me, That, to attain to a great Proficiency in Knowledge, 'tis not necessary to be a Doctor of Divinity, or so much as a Man, since they discours'd of Divine things, with no less Wit than Piety.

Boyle thus both defends the female sex from common charges and argues for the pedagogic value of his female hero for both male and female readers. And in the body of his romance, he would place into Didymus's mouth a succinct expression of the value that virtuous heroines might have for society at large:

Alas, Madam, there are Legions, that as well as I dare expose their Lives to the greatest hazards, and run greater dangers for some despicable pay [i.e., soldiers]. . . . Every day affords thousands of such Men as I. . . . But such Persons as attain to be both the Ornaments of their Religion, and the Honour of their Sex, must be so Excellent, and are so Rare, that 'tis not every Age that produces so much as one of them. Such Exemplary Ladies, do as well improve as enoble the times and places they live in: The respect and love Men have for them, makes their good Counsels very persuasive; the loveliness of their Persons is so diffus'd to their Action, as, by making Men forward to take them for Examples, adds to their Vertues, both a great Splendor, and a powerful Influence. . . . If you please to permit me, as I now hope you will, the Honour and Satisfaction of compleating my Endeavours to deliver you; I shall much more value my self, upon the having paid you that Service . . . than if I had rescued a *Roman* General, or for successful attempts, been made one my self.

Boyle, through Didymus, extolled the “powerful influence” of feminine virtue, valued even more highly than masculine, militaristic valor. The author also tells us that he had learned from female interlocutors, whom he ranked alongside “Doctors of Divinity.” He, and Morell after him, evidently hoped that their readers would do the same.

When the oratorio's story begins, Didymus has already learned some lessons from Theodora. He is designated in the cast list as “a Roman Officer, converted by, and in love with Theodora.” In *Love and Religion*, Didymus is a former Roman soldier who fought under Septimius's command, rather than a current officer. This change, as Ruth Smith has pointed out, makes the conflict between civic duty and religious conviction even more sharp than in

Boyle's novel.⁸⁵ It also emphasizes the significance of Didymus's conversion to Christianity and makes conversion the central moral of the work. Septimius, too, eventually accepts Christianity; Handel's decision not to set this final conversion evidently irked Morell, who published his original conclusion in the preface to the libretto in order to "complete in some measure the Story, and point out the Moral of it."⁸⁶

The primary party responsible for the accomplishment of this moral was, as Didymus tells Septimius, Theodora:

I will disclose my Mind. — I am a Christian.
And she, who by Heav'n's influential Grace,
With pure religious Sentiments inspir'd
My Soul, with virtuous Love inflam'd my Heart.⁸⁷

Later, in conversation with Theodora within the brothel, he refers again to her as his pedagogue; upon her insistence that his sword could free her from her vile sentence, he exclaims, "Shall I in *Theodora's* Blood embrue / my guilty Hands; & give her Death, who taught / Me first to live?" in Morell's libretto, Didymus was thus brought into the Christian fold by Theodora, an element completely absent from Boyle's story.

Handel underscored this character's conversion by providing him with a musical language that gradually, as his understanding of Christian virtue grows more sophisticated, comes to resemble Theodora's. Didymus begins with a musical idiom that reflects his Roman ideas of active heroism, filled with fanfares and bluster, but also hints of Theodora's influence. His opening aria, "The raptur'd soul," is virtuosic, but interspersed with unaccompanied expressions of "rapture" (Example 4.3). It opens with an active ritornello whose triplets, leaps, and dotted figures announce the heroic intentions of the soloist. In his opening vocal statement (mm. 11–12), Didymus expresses the rapture that his converted soul feels in a slow, sustained phrase in common time, contrasting with the overriding 6/8 (and one might imagine decorated with "rapturous" ornaments by Gaetano Guadagni, the alto castrato who first portrayed Didymus). But his military training soon takes over, and Didymus continues with the heroic gestures of the ritornello (mm. 13 ff.); he has learned from his Christian teacher that faith "defies the sword" and promises a reward for virtue, but his musical language hints that his understanding of these precepts is at odds with the transcendent triumph that Theodora's martyrdom will later bring. His next aria, "Kind heaven, if virtue be thy care," repeats this portrait of contrast; solo vocal expressions of rapture, this time directed toward "kind Heaven" (e.g., mm. 25–7), are interspersed with jaunty 3/8 sections marked by 64th-note figures and leaping gestures from the violins that lend the aria an urgent, heroic quality carried into the B section, in which Didymus claims that he will either save the princess or himself die. Once again, Didymus apes Theodora's pious sobriety, but he has not yet realized that the truest reward awaits them not in escape, but in death and ascension. Didymus's love for Theodora has brought him close to understanding her Christian philosophy, expressed in his heartfelt declarations of rapture

⁸⁵ Smith, "Comprehending Theodora," 63. Smith states that Didymus was a Syrian in Boyle's poem, but I have been unable to locate any such designation in *Love and Religion*.

⁸⁶ Morell, *Theodora* (London, 1750), "Advertisement," n.p.

⁸⁷ Part 2, Scene 3.

and prayer, but the militarism that lurks under the surface of his music (triplets, showy style, leaps and dotted figuration) shows that he still has something to learn.

Example 4.3: *Theodora*, “The raptur’d soul,” mm. 9 ff. (top) and “Kind heav’n, if virtue be thy care,” mm. 25 ff. (bottom)

9 **Andante**

Violin

Didymus

Continuo

The rap - tur'd soul, the

13

Violin

Didymus

Continuo

rap - - - tur'd soul de-fies the sword, de-fies the sword,

p

25 **Adagio** **Andante**

Viols I and II

Alto

Continuo

Kind Heav'n, if vir-tue be thy care: with cou rage fire me, or art in - spire me,

32

to free the cap-tive fair, the cap-tive fair,

Theodora's musical language is quite different. She is most at home in the minor mode: only one of her six arias is in the major. (Their keys are C minor, F major, F# minor, E minor, D minor, and G minor.) Her music's steadfast purpose, often characterized by a contrapuntal texture, contrasts with the vacillating nature of Didymus's arias. (For the openings of Theodora's most sober arias, see Example 1.1.) Moments of release come when Theodora is able to imagine death and heavenly escape as a contrast to her current circumstances. Theodora's part opens with "Fond flattering world, adieu," a limpid, poignant aria in which, after she receives the order to make sacrifices to Roman gods or face death, she bids farewell to earthly life. Small touches of imitation in this piece are musical flashes of hope in an otherwise bleak aria (Example 4.4). At mm. 34–37, "the gayly smiling Pow'r" receives a rocking musical smile in imitation between the voice and upper strings, with this imitative texture continued in closer fashion for the "empty treasures" and "fleeting pleasures" of the text in the following measures. In her second aria, "Angels ever bright and fair," imitation is the driving force expressing Theodora's imagined future bliss in the afterlife. Imitation occurs both in simple, antiphonal echoes between the voice and instruments (e.g., mm. 8–9) and in closer, quasi canonic statements from the violins in the ritornello (mm. 1, 3, etc.) and the voice and strings after the singer's entrance (mm. 11–14). The contrapuntal treatment of false hope in "Fond flattering world" becomes the textural focus of an aria describing the true peace and wonder of the world to come.

Example 4.4: *Theodora*, "Fond, flattering world, adieu," mm. 33ff. (top) and "Angels ever bright and fair," mm. 7 ff. (bottom; violas omitted)

33

Violin

Theodora

Continuo

Thy gai - ly smil - ing pow'r thy gai - ly smil - ing pow'r emp - ty trea - sures, fleet - ing plea - sures ne'er shall

7

Violin 1

Violin 2

Theodora

Continuo

fair, take, O take me, take, O take me to your care.

10

— take me, take, O take me, an - gels, ev - er bright and fair,

By observing Theodora's unwavering example, Didymus eventually learns the meaning of Christian bravery. His first participation in her musical world comes in their duet, "To thee, thou son of glorious worth" (Example 4.5), sung just after she has agreed to allow him to take her place in the brothel cell. Theodora opens the piece, which is infused with her language of serious sobriety, rather than Didymus's language of hopeful optimism and valorous certitude. The contrapuntal texture, with four freely imitative parts above a walking bass line is different from any of the music that has yet accompanied Didymus, as is the minor mode, and both are characteristics common in Theodora's earlier music. Theodora may have capitulated to his valiant offer, but her own certainty in the future bliss of heaven has taught Didymus something, moved him closer to her passive, Christian ideal than to his own notions of valor and courage.

In Part 3, we see Theodora return to the Christian settlement, where she learns both of Didymus's defiance before Valens and of the fact that, if the authorities apprehend her again, she will face certain execution. Theodora is pleased by this news, and hastens back to the Roman brothel, anxious to plead for Didymus's life, the fear of "Infamy" (as her assistant Irene calls it) removed from the equation. Once Theodora returns to the side of her would-be rescuer, no clouds part, no great savior comes to reward the couple's virtue and deliver them from their captors. As this reality becomes clear, Didymus begins his final solo music, "Streams of pleasure ever flowing." Gone is any hint of muscularity that marked his earlier music; Didymus has learned that the true reward for faith lies not in earthly protection, but in heavenly bliss, which he expresses as well as he can, in Roman terms of "Fruits ambrosial" and "starry Crowns." The texture is again lightly contrapuntal, with antiphonal imitation between the voice and strings. After twenty-nine measures, Theodora gently intrudes upon his aria, transforming it into a duet and moving the tonality to E minor. The texture changes too into a bit of quasi-Corellian writing with the two singers alternately moving in the anticipated parallel thirds of lovers (in this case, lovers "in Christ," e.g., m. 32) and acting like the upper parts of a trio sonata above a walking bass line (carried over from Didymus's aria for unifying effect, e.g., mm. 35 ff.) in a much more sophisticated counterpoint than before. Theodora's text turns attention away from the outward promised pleasures of the heavens and inwards toward her and Didymus's hearts, "Objects pure of pure Desire." The piece ends in the tonal and textural world introduced by Theodora, and Didymus is thus fully brought into his teacher's musical and spiritual sphere. It is Didymus's final lesson from Theodora, of the true nature of gentle Christian heroism.

Didymus is not the only man who exhibits a transformation through the sentimental heroine's gentle power. Morell's libretto expanded the role of Septimius significantly in comparison with its source. *Love and Religion* gave Septimius only the role of aiding his friend in infiltrating the brothel. Morell grants Septimius a constant presence in the libretto, portraying him as a different type of Roman than Valens, the unyielding ruler. Ruth Smith has described Septimius as "an ethically sound man of feeling," no doubt referring to his unwavering concern for the welfare of others, most fervently espoused in his opening aria, a hymn to pity ("Descend, kind pity, heav'nly guest," discussed on pp. 147–50).⁸⁸ Septimius has earlier declared himself an adherent of traditional Roman religion: "Tho' not a Christian, (for I worship still / The Gods my Fathers worship'd) yet, I own, / Something within declares for Acts of Mercy." The "something" that stirs with Septimius is the moral

⁸⁸ Smith, "Comprehending Theodora," 69.

Example 4.5: *Theodora*, “To thee, thou son of glorious worth,” ritornello (top); “Streams of pleasure,” mm. 4-8 (middle); and “Thither let our hearts aspire,” mm. 29 ff. (continued on next page)

Andante larghetto

System 1 (mm. 1-5): Ritornello
 Bassoon, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Continuo. Dynamics: *mp*.

System 2 (mm. 6-8): "Streams of pleasure"
 Bassoon, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Continuo. Dynamics: *f*.

System 3 (mm. 4-8): "Thither let our hearts aspire"
 Violin I, Violin II, Didymus, Continuo. Dynamics: *p*.

Streams of plea-sure ev - er flow-ing fruits am - bro-sial ev - er grow-ing fruits am
 bro - sial ev - er grow - ing, gold - en thrones, star - ry crowns, are the

Example 4.5 (cont.)

29

Violin I

Violin II

Theodora

Didymus

Continuo

Thith-er_ let our_ hearts a - spire, Thith er_ let our_ hearts a - Thith er_ let our_ hearts a -

3# p 6 3# 5

33

spire: ob-jects pure of_ pure de - sire, ev - er_ spire: ob-jects pure of_ pure de - sire, still in - creas-ing

36

pleas-ing, wake the song and tune, wake the_ song and tune the_ lyre of the wake the song_ and_ tune, and_ tune the lyre_ of the

sense, a natural goodness that the corruption of Roman society has not been able to eradicate.

Septimius is thus well primed to accept the lessons of gentle Christianity that have so transformed his friend, Didymus. And in the conclusion to Morell's libretto, he does accept them, upon witnessing the execution of his friend and the condemned heroine:

Septimius to the Christians

Ye happy Christians, happy 'midst your Woes,
Behold a Convert; take me to your Fold;
Your Enemy no more, if helpless Friend.⁸⁹

Boyle's novel has no such conversion at its conclusion. It describes the Romans' distress at seeing virtue abused and is particularly vivid in its description of their reaction to Theodora's innocence and calm resoluteness:

Every sort of Spectators [sic] found something in her Person and Condition, that made them mournful Ones. The Christians . . . Lamented, to see their Religion deprived of so great an Ornament. . . . Those among the Spectators that yet retained *Roman* Spirits, and were the genuine Offspring of those noble Ancestors . . . could not but be troubled to see so rare a thing as a Female Hero, punished for a Generosity, that could not sufficiently be Rewarded. . . . All the other Spectators of her Sufferings, were deplorers of them too: And many to that degree, that to judge by Their looks, and those of our fair Martyr, one would have believ'd that the Assistants were to be sufferers in the approaching Tragedy, and She but the Spectator of it.⁹⁰

Thus moved but not converted, Boyle's Romans watch Theodora's execution with teary eyes.

In Morell's poem, not only was Septimius brought into the fold by the heroine's death, but so too were a thousand Romans:

Fal'n are the matchless Pair: and falling thus,
They struck Conviction in a thousand Hearts;
But chiefly *Theodora*, whom no Threats,
Nor her disfigur'd Lover's lifeless Limbs,
Could terrify. — . . .

New Lustre, ev'n such Majesty, she seem'd
Not going to Heav'n, but just come from thence;
To Lesson with this Truth the Standers-by;
That *Whoso hopes to live, must wish to die*.

⁸⁹ Morell's unpublished conclusion is printed in full in Smith, "Comprehending Theodora," 90.

⁹⁰ Boyle, *Love and Religion*, 165-67.

The deaths of these martyrs thus brought about an important moral lesson for the characters remaining alive. And it was “chiefly *Theodora*,” who, dying with paraphrased words of the gospels on her lips, converted multitudes, retaining the role of religious teacher until the very final moment of her life.⁹¹ In Morell’s poetic treatment, *Theodora* becomes the great “Female Hero” of Boyle’s text, leading the masculine soldiers into the ambrosial rewards of paradise, achieved not by active heroism, but by passive martyrdom.

Handel chose not to set Septimius’s final report of these conversions and the ensuing praiseful chorus, “Join ye your songs.” *Theodora* thus ends with the martyr’s death, a brief proclamation about divine love from *Theodora*’s assistant Irene, and the chorus “Oh love divine.” Was it this somber ending that led to the disappointing reception that the oratorio received, and which Handel himself supposedly lamented to Morell: “The Jews will not come to it (as to Judas) because it is a Christian story; and the Ladies will not come, because it [is] a virtuous one”?⁹²

Perhaps in response to this failure, the creative team changed tactics for their next venture, *Jephtha*. If Handel’s audiences, many of whom would have been accustomed to the happy endings of rescue operas, were disappointed by *Theodora*’s tragic conclusion, then the *lieto fine* of *Jephtha* might have been intended as a pleasant surprise.⁹³ That oratorio tells a story with which eighteenth-century English audiences would have been familiar; it is drawn from Judges 11, which tells the history of a battle between the Ammonites and the Jews. The battle is won under Jephtha’s command after he has made a rash vow, Morell’s rendering of which reads, “What, or whoever shall first salute mine Eyes, shall be for ever thine, or fall a Sacrifice.”⁹⁴ The object of this vow turns out to be Jephtha’s own daughter, Iphis, and in the biblical conclusion, she dies at her father’s hands. In Morell’s adaptation, an angel descends from the heavens and spares the maiden, declaring that she will remain a virgin for the rest of her life, a fact that all the characters, with the possible exception of her betrothed, celebrate. Musicologists have viewed this conclusion as either a dismal failure, a reflection of the worst elements of contemporary sentimental drama and the eighteenth century’s “morbid emphasis on virginity,” or as a reflection of a contemporary debate about the nature of Jephtha’s vow.⁹⁵

If we set aside for the moment the thorny issue of this adapted conclusion and focus on the rest of the drama and its musical treatment, it becomes clear that Morell once again presented a story with a virtuous woman at its center, reforming the ambitious and

⁹¹ *Theodora*’s italicized phrase echoes Luke 9:24 and Mark 8:35 in the King James Bible.

⁹² Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London: A. and C. Black, 1955), 852. Burney similarly reports that Handel had complained to a couple of musicians who asked for free admission to a later performance of *Messiah*, “Oh your servant, mein Herren! you are damnable dainty! you would not go to *Theodora* — there was room enough to dance there, when that was perform.” (Quoted in Dean, *Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios*, 572.) The fourth Earl of Shaftesbury also remarked that “The Town don’t like it at all.” (Quoted in *Music and Theatre in Handel’s World: The Family Papers of James Harris*, ed. Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 269-70.)

⁹³ Smith notes that audiences accustomed to the standard practices of eighteenth-century rescue operas may have been unpleasantly surprised by the tragic conclusion to *Theodora*: “The eighteenth-century audience would probably have assumed that all was going to the normal opera plan at the start of Didymus’s trial.” *Comprehending Theodora*, 59.

⁹⁴ Part 1, Scene 4.

⁹⁵ See the citations to Dean, *Handel’s Oratorios and Masques*; Paul Henry Lang, *George Frideric Handel*; and Nott, “Heroick Virtue” in n. 6 and n. 7, above.

misguided aims of traditional masculine heroism. Handel responded, as he had in *Theodora*, with another musical characterization of feminine pedagogy in action.

The traditional site of female influence in the eighteenth century, and the one where women's piety sat most comfortably, was in the home. It was there that women could practice what Mendelson and Crawford have called "a self-imposed regime, an all-encompassing lifestyle, a private vocation that transformed every facet of existence."⁹⁶ Pious women recorded their activities in diaries that documented their practices of prayer, scripture reading, and confession.⁹⁷ And it was in the education of children and servants that women exerted the most obvious influence over their spheres.

Yet the first half of the eighteenth century also brought men more comfortably into the home, as G.J. Barker-Benfield, Peter Alan Clark, and other historians have documented.⁹⁸ An increased presence in the home led to new understandings of the roles of husband and father, and the period saw a huge upsurge in conduct manuals for family men. Many such works stressed the superiority of husbands to their wives, particularly justified through Christian language, but many also advocated the compassionate side of the "husbandsmen" (as one eighteenth-century manual called them) and their importance in the moral and spiritual upbringing of children.⁹⁹ The general model in the eighteenth century moved from one of patriarchal authority to one that Lawrence Stone has called "a more affectionate and equalitarian relationship" between patriarchs and their families, and what Barker-Benfield describes as "a more 'humane' form of childrearing."¹⁰⁰

This increased focus on fatherhood was reflected in some of the most famous sentimental literature and drama of the period. Fathers enjoyed pride of place in climactic, tearful scenes at the hearts of such works. In comic settings, tears of joy were shed at reunions between fathers and long-lost daughters, in, for instance, Steele's *Conscious Lovers* (1722) or Edward Moore's *The Foundling* (1748). Fathers who behaved unsympathetically were sharply reproved in such works (e.g., Thomas Southerne's *Oronooko* (1695) or James Thomson's *Tancred and Sigismunda* (1745)). In tragic plays, children struck down in their youth were clasped and lamented by their grieving parents (Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* (1703)). Even the Stoic Cato, who in historical narratives had wept not for his children but

⁹⁶ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 226.

⁹⁷ Crawford, *Women and Religion*, 34-40; Sara Mendelson, "Stuart Women's Diaries," in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 189; Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, 211.

⁹⁸ Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse* (London and New York: Longman, 1983); Carole Shammas, "The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America," *Journal of Social History* 14, no. 1 (1980); Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 99.

⁹⁹ For one influential husband's manual of the eighteenth century that presents fathers instructing their children in religious matters, see Daniel Defoe, *A New Family Instructor; in Familiar Discourses between a Father and His Children, on the Most Essential Points of the Christian Religion* (1727), which went through multiple editions throughout the eighteenth century. See also the Anglican tract by Edward Welshman, *The Husband Man's Manual* (1694) and the anonymous, *The Duty of a Husbandman* (1703). Some historians have also studied the effects of the English clergy's changing preference for marriage over celibacy, which helped fuel a new religious attitude to the male role within the family. See Jacqueline Eales, "Gender Construction in Early Modern England and the Conduct Books of William Whately (1583-1639)," in *Gender and Christian Religion* (1996), 163-74; 165.

¹⁰⁰ Keith Wrightson, "Husbands and Wives, Parents and Children," chap. 4 in *English Society, 1580-1680* (1982; rev. and rep. London: Routledge and Rutgers University Press, 2003), 97-128; Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 102; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper, 1977).

for the fall of Rome, was transformed by Joseph Addison in 1712 into a man described by his daughter as “all goodness . . . always mild, / compassionate and gentle to his Friends, / Fill’d with Domestick Tenderness, the best, / The kindest Father!”¹⁰¹ The thought of Cato as a family man filled with “Domestick Tenderness” irritated critics of Addison’s play, but the work remained one of the most frequently lauded and performed of the eighteenth century, artfully expressing the points of tension between traditional ideas of masculinity and modern ideals of fatherhood.¹⁰²

Throughout the opening passages in *Jephtha*, the title character is presented as a virile, militaristic hero; but later passages draw upon the familiar contemporary images of the weeping father and the reunited father and daughter. Jephtha’s linguistic imagery and musical voice are firmly established in Part 1. We first meet him in a recitative, negotiating the terms of his return to Jewish lands, from which he has been exiled for being a harlot’s child. His brother, Zebul, has asked if Jephtha will return and command the Jewish armies against the Ammonites. Jephtha responds:

I will: — so please it Heav’n; and these the Terms:
If I command in War, the like Command,
Should Heav’n vouchsafe us a victorious Peace,
Shall still be mine. —¹⁰³

This is a man of military bearing, and ambitious for power.

Jephtha’s thirst for power is absent in the biblical account, but clear in Morell’s poetic rendering. This characterization continues in Jephtha’s first aria. Zebul having agreed to Jephtha’s terms, the latter makes clear his plans for advancement:

Virtue my soul shall still embrace;
Goodness shall make me great.
Who builds upon this steady Base,
Dreads no Event of Fate.¹⁰⁴

These words capture the certitude that marks Jephtha throughout the opening half of the oratorio. Jephtha is sure that his goodness will lead to greatness, an earthly recognition of both his steadfast devotion to God and his military might. His other texts in the oratorio’s first half reinscribe this self-promoting ambition. In Part 1, Scene 4, Jephtha admits that his ego is enflamed:

¹⁰¹ Joseph Addison, *Cato: A Tragedy* (London, 1713), 74.

¹⁰² Addison’s fiercest critic was John Dennis, who wrote of the play’s doting and emotional father, “Is this, after all, his boasted Firmness? Is this the Courage of a valiant Soldier, or the Magnanimity of a *Roman* General, or the impassiveness of an habitual *Stoick*, or the undaunted invincible Resolution of an admired Assertor of Liberty?” (John Dennis, *Remarks Upon Cato, a Tragedy* (London, 1713), 19. On the influence, impact, and sentimentalism of this play, see Ian Donaldson, “Cato in Tears: Stoical Guises of the Man of Feeling,” R.F. Brissenden, ed., *Studies in the Eighteenth Century II* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973): 377-95.

¹⁰³ Part 1, Scene 2.

¹⁰⁴ Part 1, Scene 2.

What mean these doubtful Fancies of the Brain?
 Visions of Joy rise in my raptur'd Soul,
 There play awhile, and set in darksome Night.
 Strange Ardour fires my Breast; my Arms seem strung
 With tenfold Vigour, and my crested Helm
 To reach the Skies. —

Realizing his unsavory thirst for power, Jephtha attempts discipline by directing his attentions toward God:

... Be humble still, my Soul. —
It is the Spirit of God; in whose great Name
 I offer up my Vow. —

Having convinced himself of the worthiness of his motivations, Jephtha makes his ill-fated promise to sacrifice to God the first person who comes before him following a success in battle. A focused militarism is thus at the root of Jephtha's worst mistake, and his next aria, "His mighty arm," reinforces this attitude, portraying a God of vast military might, capable of delivering a "sudden Blow" and of issuing "sweeping Winds in Vengeance."

Handel's music for Jephtha focuses upon his militaristic nature with obvious topical gestures (Example 4.6). "Virtue my soul shall still embrace" boasts martial fanfares in the strings and high, heroic tenor writing for the voice with long, upwardly striving (ambitious?) melismas. The B section of this aria sets the poem's last two lines, expressing Jephtha's certitude with long pedal tones in the bass and a continuation of the martial dotted rhythms of the opening section. Handel set Jephtha's vow as an accompanied recitative ("If, Lord, sustain'd by thy almighty pow'r"), giving the vocal line an arpeggiated opening that demonstrates his continued focus on power, heavenly and military. The

Example 4.6: *Jephtha*, "Virtue my soul shall still embrace," mm. 15 ff. (top); "If, Lord, sustained," opening (next page, top); "His mighty arm" (next page, bottom)

The musical score for Example 4.6 consists of three systems. The first system (measures 15-21) includes staves for Violin I, Jephtha (voice), and Continuo. The Violin I part begins with a forte (f) dynamic and features a melodic line with accents and slurs. The Jephtha part starts with a piano (p) dynamic and includes the lyrics: "Vir - tue, vir - tue, vir-tue my soul shall still em- brace,". The Continuo part provides a harmonic foundation with a similar dynamic range. The second system (measures 21-27) continues the vocal line with the lyrics: "good - ness shall make me great, and good - ness". The Continuo part continues with a steady bass line. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Example 4.6 (cont.)

Accomp.

Jephthah

If, Lord, sus-tain'd by thy al- mighty pow'r, Am- mon I drive, and his in-sult-ing

Strings

5

bands, from these our long un- cul- ti - va- ted lands, and safe re- turn a glo- rious conque- rer: - what, or who

15 **Andante**

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Jephthah

Continuo

His migh- ty — arm, with sud- den blow, dis pers'd and quell'd the

p

21

haugh - ty foe, the haugh - ty foe, his migh ty — arm, with

p

Ammonites' defeat appears to provide Jephtha with confirmation of the righteousness of his approach, and his aria of triumph, "His mighty arm," is filled with many of the same gestures as his other music: arpeggiation, concitato figures, and flamboyant melismas.

Upon Jephtha's return from battle, his daughter, Iphis, is the first person to appear to welcome him home, thus invoking the sacrificial vow in a terrible way. Jephtha's realization of this dire consequence is the vital turning point for this character. His initial reaction is one of denial; he begs God to entomb him, so that he is not required to sacrifice his daughter:

Open thy marble Jaws, O Tomb,
And hide me, Earth, in thy dark Womb:
Ere I the Name of Father stain,
And deepest Woe from Conquest gain.¹⁰⁵

Jephtha's language here is different from his earlier texts. Gone are his military images and language of mighty winds, vigor, and virtue. Jephtha turns instead to feminine language, wishing to be submerged in the earth's "womb," and to the familial, with "Ere I the Name of Father stain." His faith in the promised glory of military conquest is shaken by his realization of his vow's result.

Jephtha's poetic and musical language is most profoundly transformed at his moment of highest pathos, his accompanied recitative in Part 3, Scene 4, "Deeper and deeper still." Jephtha here responds to his daughter's willingness to be sacrificed, issued with unwavering faith in the divine protection of innocent virtue. Morell's text is filled with the techniques of eighteenth-century poets for representing intense emotion:

Deeper and deeper still, thy Goodness, Child,
Pierceth a Father's bleeding Heart, and checks
The cruel Sentence on my falt'ring Tongue.
Oh! let me whisper it to the raging Winds,
Or howling Deserts; for the Ears of Men
It is too shocking. — Yet — have I not vowed?
And can I think the great *Jehovah* sleeps,
Like *Chemosh*, and such fabled Deities?
No, no; Heav'n heard my Thoughts, and wrote them down. —
It must be so. — 'Tis This that racks my Brain,
And pours into my Breast a thousand Pangs,
That lash me into Madness. — Horrid Thought! —
My only Daughter! — and so dear a Child,
Doom'd by a Father! — Yes, — the Vow is past,
And *Gilead* hath triumph'd o'er his Foes. —
Therefore, to-morrow's Dawn — I can no more.

¹⁰⁵ Part 2, Scene 3.

Morell's blank verse may be syllabically regular, but its semantic impact is unstable, marked by exclamations ("Oh!", "Horrid Thought!") repetitions ("Deeper and deeper still," "No, no"), and the tell-tale dashes found in the most emotional speeches of the eighteenth-century stage. Jephtha's language is fragmented, too, and increasingly so as he moves closer to the moment when he must pronounce sentence on his daughter.

Musically, the recitative is a centerpiece for the character (Example 4.7). Its quick changes of emotion invoke the music of a mad scene: the sustained strings that open it (mm. 1–4) are quickly replaced by dotted figures (mm. 15–24), a *concitato* outburst accompanies disjointed melodic writing that underlines Jephtha's own expressions of deteriorating mental stability (mm. 25–29), and a pulsating throb emerges as Jephtha declares the horror of a father forced to sacrifice his daughter (mm. 30–38). The tragedy of the vow eventually proves too much for Jephtha to bear, and his attempt (in mm. 40 ff.) to pronounce the sentence upon his daughter is rendered even more fragmented by Handel's setting than it was in Morell's text, with a stammering repetition of "tomorrow's dawn" punctuated by gasping silences (mm. 41–43) before his final, pitiful expression of defeat: "I can no more." Yet Jephtha must also admit that God has fulfilled his part of the bargain and conquered his foes. This concession brings back for fleeting moments the militarism of Jephtha's earlier music; in mm. 18–23 and 38–9, the dotted rhythms of his opening arias announce these military turns as Jephtha sings of his victory in the field. The recitative's close juxtaposition of aching pathos and memory of recent triumph artfully summarizes Jephtha's situation. The military language and musical topoi of Jephtha's earlier arias emerge here like the remnants of a collapsed stronghold; the musical gestures lurking amongst the rubble are analogous to the fractured speech and typographical irregularity of the contemporary sentimental novel and drama.¹⁰⁶

The force that collapsed Jephtha's militaristic "stronghold" was his daughter's goodness. Jephtha had introduced himself in his first aria by claiming that goodness would make him great; in the opening to his central sentimental recitative, he admitted, "Deeper and deeper still, thy Goodness, Child, / Pierceth a Father's bleeding Heart." Iphis offered her father a broader concept of "Goodness," one that moved away from "Command" and "crested Helm" and toward gentler ideas of glory. In Jephtha's last major aria of the oratorio, "Waft her, angels, through the skies," any hint of militarism is stripped from the father's textual and musical language (Example 4.8). In its place are images of winging angels and azure plains, accompanied by gentle musical breezes; Jephtha seems to have learned such musical pictorialism and idealism from his daughter, who had earlier prepared the way for her father's return in an aria that described warbling flutes and melodious lutes (in "Tune the soft melodious lute") and then welcomed him home with "Welcome as the cheerful light," both of which were accompanied by the same sort of wide rocking intervals that characterize the orchestral parts of Jephtha's later aria.

¹⁰⁶ On later eighteenth-century musical analogues to these typographical irregularities, see my summary of work by Mary Hunter and Stefano Castelvechi in Chapter 1.

Example 4.7: *Jephtha*, "Deeper and deeper still," mm. 14 ff.

14
 Jephtha *Yet—have I not vow'd? And can I think the great Je ho-vah sleeps, like Che-mosh and such fab-led de-i- ties?*

19
 Ah *no; Heav'n heard my thoughts, and wrote them down. — It must be so. — 'Tis*

25 *concitato*
this that racks my brain, and pours in - to my breast a thou - sand

28 *Largo*
pangs, that lash me in-to mad-ness— Hor - rid thought! Hor - rid thought!

33
My on - ly daugh-ter!— So dear a child, — doom'd by a fa-ther!— Yes,—the vow is past, and

39
Gil-le-ad hath tri-umph'd o'er his foes.— There-fore, to-mor-row's dawn, to-mor-row's dawn— I can no more.

Example 4.8: *Jephtha* “Waft her, angels, through the skies,” mm. 7 ff. (top); “Tune the soft melodious lute,” mm. 9 ff. (middle); “Welcome as the cheerful light,” mm. 26 ff. (next page)

7

Violin 1

Violin 2, viola

Jephtha

Continuo

Waft her, an- gels, through theskies, waft her, an- gels, through the

10

skies, far a- bove yon a - zure plain, far a- bove yon a - zure plain;

9

Flute

Violin 1, 2

Iphis

Continuo

12

tune the soft me - lo - dious lute, pleas - ant harp and war - bling flute,

Example 4.8 (cont.)

The musical score for Example 4.8 (cont.) is presented in two systems. The first system, starting at measure 26, features three staves: Violin 1, 2; Iphis; and Continuo. The Violin 1, 2 staff contains a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and a final quarter-note flourish. The Iphis staff is empty, and the Continuo staff provides a steady bass line of quarter notes. The second system, starting at measure 30, features three staves: a vocal line (Iphis), a vocal line (Continuo), and a Continuo staff. The vocal lines contain the lyrics "Not cheer-ful day, or spring so gay," with the vocal line having a melodic line and the Continuo line having a bass line. The Continuo staff provides a steady bass line of quarter notes.

The transformative power of feeling is in full force in *Jephtha*. Its title character achieves an even more modern accomplishment than Addison's Cato had been able to do. Whereas the earlier general, even if he was filled with "Domestick Tenderness," had wept not for his son but for the fall of his country, Jephtha managed to weep for his daughter while remaining faithful to the God who had saved his people, the ideal balance of "manly" valor, religious fidelity, and sentimental family virtue given poetic and musical expression by the work's creators. Jephtha, like Didymus before him, is changed, made better, not by heroic accomplishment but by gentler forces. Their evolution is reflected in the musical portraits provided by Handel. While their female mentors maintain their sonic identities, the men mature, broaden their expressive capacities. They are reformed by the tender force of sentiment.

Nabal: A Posthumous Epilogue

Morell tried his hand at this theme one last time after Handel's death. Pasticcio performances drawing on Handel's music for new oratorio texts were common in the Lenten repertoire in the next decade, and Morell provided texts for three such works for John Christopher Smith the younger: *Nabal* (performed March 1764), *Tobit* (apparently not performed, but prepared in 1764), and *Gideon* (performed February 1769).¹⁰⁷ The latter two works took on a more adventurous spirit; *Gideon* was a bellicose oratorio in the spirit of *Judas Maccabaeus*, and *Tobit* was filled with fantastic occurrences, such as an encounter with a giant fish and miraculous healings.

¹⁰⁷ On the dating of these works, see King, "John Christopher Smith's Pasticcio Oratorios," op. cit.

Nabal followed more closely the model that had served Morell for his last oratorios with Handel. As with the earlier works, Morell's dramatic instincts led him to enhance the elements of a biblical source that most resembled contemporary literary and dramatic trends in service of his favorite, quasi-feminist theme. In this story, the tearful plea of a virtuous wife averts the destruction of a kingdom by stopping a warrior king from responding to an affront to his honor. *Nabal* draws on 1 Samuel 25, in which the title character, a rich Calebite, refuses David provisions, although the future Jewish king has provided his people protection. Enraged, David vows to slay Nabal for the offense. He is met by an obsequious Abigail, Nabal's wife, who convinces him to spare her household:

23 And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,

24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

This circumstance provided an ideal opportunity for a librettist of Morell's persuasions to emphasize the virtuous heroine in distress, offering herself as sacrifice for the foolish actions of a boorish man.

In the early stages of this libretto, we see Abigail like so many sentimental heroines, isolated and in pastoral environs. She finds solace only when alone, in a quiet contemplative mode, like Richardson's Pamela in her closet, as when she is introduced:

How hard the Woman's Fate, by sacred Ties
United to a Churl, insensible of Good!
Such is the Lot, I am condemn'd to mourn,
And find no Comfort, but in Solitude.¹⁰⁸

Upon her next appearance, Abigail takes refuge amongst her sheep (in the accompanied recitative "Thrice, happy sheep"), whose innocence both moves her and contrasts sharply with her husband's sinful nature.¹⁰⁹ Their blitheness is juxtaposed with her own pitiful misery in her subsequent aria, "Mind eternal."

It is little surprise that Smith would have located this heroine's musical power in the same pathetic vein as that of Theodora, Iphis, Susanna, or any of a number of sentimental heroines of Handel's other oratorios. All of these characters' musical calling cards are present in Abigail's solos: vocally exposed writing ("Free from discord"), pastoralism ("Thrice, Happy Sheep"), and minor mode ("Mind eternal," "On me, my lord," and "Mercy, thou heavn'ly cherub"). For all of his borrowings from Handel, Smith drew from works introduced to London audiences by a singer most renowned for her mastery of moving song: Francesca Cuzzoni, praised by Quantz for her "innocent and affecting" singing; Tosi similarly lauded her "delightful soothing *Cantabile*" and her mastery of "the *Pathetick*."¹¹⁰ Abigail's opening aria ("Free from discord") parodied "Dolci aurette" from *Scipione*, a song

¹⁰⁸ Part 1, Scene 2.

¹⁰⁹ Part 2, Scene 3.

¹¹⁰ Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song* (London, 1742), 171.

that Burney described as follows: “with only a violoncello accompaniment [i.e., a continuo aria], [it] is pleasing and pathetic, and in [Cuzzoni’s] best style of singing.”¹¹¹ Burney compares “Dolci aurette” with another memorable Cuzzoni work, the simple continuo aria from *Ottone* entitled “Falsa imagine,” which, according to legend, the soprano initially refused to sing; she relented upon threat of being thrown out of the window by Handel, and the aria made a great effect, as reported by Burney: “The number of songs in this opera that became national favourites, is perhaps greater than in any other that was ever performed in England. The slow air, *Falsa imagine*, the first which Cuzzoni sung in this country, fixed her reputation as an expressive and pathetic singer.”¹¹² Having thus established the heroine’s musical voice, Smith went on to parody some of Cuzzoni’s other profoundly moving music. “Mind eternal” was based on *Lotario*’s “Menti eterne,” a prison aria in B-flat minor.¹¹³ “Mercy, thou heavn’ly cherub,” Abigail’s final plea at David’s feet, was another borrowing from *Ottone*, Cuzzoni’s aria “Ben chè mi sia crudele,” which was popular enough to have merited individual publication soon after the opera’s premiere.¹¹⁴ Abigail’s dramatic power was thus rooted in a tradition from the sentimental side of the drama and oratorio, her musical power from that of the opera.

Nabal’s male characters were sharply delineated from the lead female. The biblical account had described Nabal as “churlish and evil in his doings” and depicted him holding a banquet while his wife was away begging that his household be spared. Morell extends this portrayal of Nabal, opening the oratorio with a scene of luxurious debauchery reminiscent of Belshazzar’s feast. In his introduction, Nabal critiques his wife’s moroseness in a significantly gendered way:

Avaunt, unpleasing Wretch! Is this a Time
To hide thyself in mournful Solitude? . . .
Begone; and leave us with more grateful Friends,
To celebrate our Feast, with manly Joys.¹¹⁵

Nabal’s inability to appreciate the influence of the softer sex eventually leads to his demise, as God smites him following his refusal of David’s request for assistance.

David, on the other hand, begins his life as a warring if pious leader, but is eventually touched by this virtuous woman in a way that not only stands in contrast to Nabal’s insensitivity, but is far beyond what the biblical account would suggest. David’s religious fervor is expressed first, in the solo numbers “Have mercy on us lord,” “Food they ask’d,” and “Great creator, who kindly feedest.” He next expresses his militaristic might in

¹¹¹ Charles Burney, *A General History of Music* 4: 304. The identifications of borrowings for *Nabal* were made by Anthony Hicks and Richard King, and published as Appendix 2 to “John Christopher Smith’s Pasticcio Oratorios,” 213-14.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 286-7.

¹¹³ It is described by Winton Dean as marked by “drooping phrases with prominent falling fourth and anguished upward leaps [that] strike as deeply as anything in the opera.” *Handel’s Operas 1726-1741* (Woodbridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 143.

¹¹⁴ “Sung by Sgra. Cuzzoni in Otho.” (London, c. 1725). For Handel’s own ornaments for this and other arias from *Ottone*, see “Three Ornamented Arias,” ed. Winton Dean (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

¹¹⁵ Part 1, Scene 3.

“Fury in all thy terrors.”¹¹⁶ But immediately after this most aggressive of David’s music, Abigail sings her most pleading aria, appealing to David’s sensibility with her own tears:

Mercy, thou heav’nly Cherub,
With pleasing Smiles look down,
His Passion to controul;
My heavy Griefs redressing,
Pour down thy choicest Blessing,
And sweetly sooth his Soul.¹¹⁷

Her appeal to his soft side works, and David recants his vow of vengeance, stayed by the tears of a gentle and besieged wife: “Blessed be the Lord God of *Israel*, / And blessed thy Advice! Thou hast withheld / The strong uplifted Arm from shedding Blood.”¹¹⁸ David’s adviser, Asaph, witnesses the change in David’s bearing and describes it in terms that might have come from a prologue or epilogue to a sentimental drama:

When Beauty Sorrow’s Livery wears,
Our Passions take the Fair One’s Part:
Love Dips his Arrows in her Tears,
And sends them pointed to the Heart.¹¹⁹

David is yet another of Morell’s portraits of powerful men not only moved to love by sorrowful beauties, but made morally better, brought closer to the feminine virtues, and spared from the damage that could be caused by misguided courage alone.

With *Nabal*, Morell continued in the direction that he had established in Handel’s last oratorios. Moving from the militarism of *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Alexander Balus* to the gentle lessons of these weeping women and their spiritual pupils was a natural development for an author who so fervently believed in the power of sentiment in moral education. Of course, these moral lessons were supposed to transcend the world of the libretti and their scores, to infiltrate the audience, to “deceive” their souls into piety. The fact that Morell aimed to do so through the “sad countenances” of his female characters, the moral transcendence of his passive male heroes, and the powerful pull on listeners’ sensibility through Handel’s music places these works in a long line of sentimental writing — yet another way in which the culture of sentiment shaped the “sentimental oratorio” standing alongside the “sentimental novel” and the “sentimental drama” of the mid-eighteenth century.

¹¹⁶ This was a transposed version of “*Gia che morir non posso*” from *Radamisto*, which possesses a very different text, but was probably suggested to Smith by its use of the word “*furie*,” which forms the principle affect of that piece, with its “*furious*” running scalar passages.

¹¹⁷ Part 2, Scene 6.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Part 3, Scene 2.

APPENDIX 2.1
A CALENDAR OF SUSANNA CIBBER'S ACTIVITIES, 1732-1749

The calendar below provides a record of Susanna Arne Cibber's theatrical activities between her stage debut (in the opera *Amelia*) in 1732 and the height of her fame in the late 1740s. Her career was interrupted for three seasons, from 1738 through 1741, presumably because of her involvement in the "Sloper affair" described in Chapter 2. She returned to the public eye in Dublin and then resumed acting on the London stage in the 1742-1743 season. This calendar provides roughly balanced coverage, chronicling seven London seasons before and seven after Cibber's sojourn in Dublin. In addition to operas, plays, and oratorios, I have included all references to song performances that I have come across in the reference materials used to prepare this calendar: Emmet Avery et al., *The London Stage* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960-68), vols. 3 and 4; John Greene and Gladys L.H. Clarke, *The Dublin Stage* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1993); and private correspondence with John Greene, who in 2010 kindly provided entries that were omitted from his publication.

KEY:

AST = Aungier Street Theatre (Dublin)	LS = Avery et al., <i>The London Stage</i>
CG = Covent Garden Theatre	Nash = Mary Nash, <i>The Provoked Wife</i> (1977)
DL = Drury Lane Theatre	
HAY = Little Theatre in the Haymarket	
KT = King's Theatre	

List of plays, operas, and pantomimes in this calendar (Title / Creator(s) / Role):

Acis and Galatea / George Frideric Handel, John Gay / Galatea
Agamemnon / James Thomson/Cassandra
L'Allegro, il penseroso, ed il moderato / G.F. Handel, John Milton, Charles Jennens / Alto arias
All for Love / John Dryden / Cleopatra
Amelia / John Frederick Lampe, Henry Carey / Amelia
The Beggar's Opera / John Gay / Polly
Cato / Joseph Addison / Marcia
Comus / Thomas Augustine Arne, J. Milton / The Lady
The Conscious Lovers / Richard Steele / Indiana
The Country Wife / William Wycherly / Margery Pinchwife
Cupid and Psyche / J.F. Lampe (Pantomime) / Psyche
Deborah / G.F. Handel and Samuel Humphreys / Unknown (1733; see chap. 2, n. 63)
 and Jael (1744)
Dido and Aeneas / T.A. Arne, Barton Booth / Dido
The Distressed Mother / Ambrose Philips / Andromache
The Double Gallant / Colley Cibber / Lady Dainty
The Fair Penitent / Nicholas Rowe / Calista
The Festival (The Impromptu Revel Masque) / Richard Charke, H. Carey / Venus
The Foundling / Edward Moore / Fidelia
Hercules / G.F. Handel, Thomas Broughton / Lichas
Jane Shore / N. Rowe / Alicia
King Lear, and Amelia wishes when she dies / William Shakespeare, C. Cibber / Cordelia

Love and Glory (rev. as *Britannia*) / T. A. Arne, Thomas Phillips / Venus
Love's Last Shift / C. Cibber / Amanda
Mahomet and Irene / Samuel Johnson / Aspasia
The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter / George Etherege / Mrs. Loveit
Measure for Measure / W. Shakespeare / Isabella
Messiah / G.F. Handel, C. Jennens / Alto arias
Ode for St. Cecilia's Day, G.F. Handel / John Dryden / Alto arias
The Old Batchelor / William Congreve / Laetitia
The Opera of Operas / T.A. Arne, Eliza Haywood, and William Hatchett / Queen
Huncamunca
Oroonoko / Thomas Southerne / Imoinda
The Orphan / Thomas Otway / Monimia
Othello / W. Shakespeare / Desdemona
Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John / W. Shakespeare, C. Cibber / Lady
Constance
Romeo and Juliet / W. Shakespeare / Juliet
Rosamond / T.A. Arne, J. Addison / Rosamond
The Provoked Husband / C. Cibber / Lady Townly
The Provoked Wife / John Vanbrugh / Lady Brute
The Rival Queens / Nicholas Lee / Statira
Samson / G.F. Handel, Newburgh Hamilton / Micah
Saul / G.F. Handel, C. Jennens / David
The Siege of Damascus / John Hughes / Eudocia
The Spanish Fryar, or, The Double Discovery / J. Dryden / Queen Leonora
The (Beaux) Stratagem / George Farquhar / Mrs. Sullen
Tamerlane / N. Rowe / Arpasia
Tancred and Sigismunda / J. Thomson / Sigismunda
Teraminta / John Christopher Smith, H. Carey / Teraminta
Venice Preserv'd / T. Otway / Belvidera
Zara / Aaron Hill / Zara

Songs sung between the acts:

Amelia wishes when she dies (*Amelia*, J.F. Lampe)
Bella sorge la speranza (*Arianna in Creta*, G.F. Handel)
Consolati, o bella (*Orlando*, G.F. Handel)
Hush, ye little warbling choir (*Acis and Galatea*, G.F. Handel)
If 'tis joy to wound a lover (*Rosamond*, T.A. Arne)
L'empio rigor del fato (*Rodelinda*, G.F. Handel)
Lusinghe più care (*Alessandro*, G.F. Handel)
Mi volgo ad ogni fronda (*Tolomeo*, G.F. Handel)
O care parollette (*Orlando*, G.F. Handel)
Per le porte del tormento (*Sosarme*, G.F. Handel)
Quanto dolce (*Alessandro*, G.F. Handel)
Rise glory, rise (*Rosamond*, T.A. Arne)
Vorrei poterti amar (*Orlando*, G.F. Handel)
Was ever nymph like Rosamond (*Rosamond*, T.A. Arne)

SEASON 1731-1732

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = HAY)</u>
Mar. 13	Amelia Repeated: March 20, 22, 24, 29, April 17, 21, 24, 25, May 17, 19
May 17	Acis and Galatea Note: "... being the first time it ever was performed in a Theatrical Way." Repeated: May 19

SEASON 1732-1733

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER)</u>
Nov. 20	Teraminta (LIF) Repeated: November 23, 30
Feb. 22	Rosamond announced
Mar. 7	Rosamond / T. Clayton / J. Addison (LIF) Repeated: March 9, 14, 16
Mar. 27	Deborah / Handel and Humphreys (KT) Note: Premiere Repeated: Mar. 31, Apr. 3
Apr. 5	Rosamond
Apr. 7	Deborah
Apr. 9	Rosamond Note: Benefit Miss Arne
Apr. 10	Deborah
Apr. 30	Rosamond Note: Benefit T. Arne

SEASON 1733-1734

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = HAY UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED)</u>
Oct. 6	Sang "L'empio rigor del fato," "Was ever nymph like Rosamond," and "Rise glory, rise" Repeated: October 8
Oct. 13	Sang "Was ever nymph like Rosamond," "If 'tis joy to wound a lover, and "Mi volgo ad ogni fronda" Repeated: October 15
Oct. 20	Sang "Quanto Dolce" and "Per le porte del tormento" (with "Young Master Arne") Repeated: October 22, 25 Note: "Master Arne" was Richard Arne (b.1719), younger brother of Thomas Augustine and Susanna, and was currently playing the role of Tom Thumb in The Opera of Operas.
Oct. 27	Sang "Hush, ye little warbling choir" and "Was ever nymph like Rosamond"

Oct. 29 The Opera of Operas
 Note: This performance ran concurrently with Lampe's setting of the same at DL
 Repeated: Oct. 31, Nov. 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17

Nov. 19 Sang "L'empio rigor del fato," "Was ever nymph like Rosamond," and "Per le porte del tormento" (with "Master Arne")

Nov. 22 Sang "O care parollette" and "Vorrei poterti amar"

Nov. 24 The Festival
 Repeated: Nov. 26, 28, 29, Dec. 6, 10, 15, 17, 18, 27

Dec. 28 The Opera of Operas

Dec. 29 The Festival

Dec. 31 Sang "Hush, ye little warbling choir" and "Was ever nymph like Rosamond"

Jan. 4 Sang "L'empio rigor del fato," and "Per le porte del tormento" (with "Master Arne")

Jan. 5 Sang "Per le Porte del tormento" (with "Master Arne") and "Consolati o bella" (with Master Arne and Miss Jones)

Jan. 12 Dido and Aeneas
 Repeated: Jan. 14, 15, 19, 21, 24, 25

Jan. 26 Sang "Lusinghe più care" and "Sentirsi dire"

Jan. 28 The Opera of Operas

Jan. 29 Dido and Aeneas
 Repeated: Jan. 31, Feb. 1

Feb. 4 Sang "Was ever nymph like Rosamond," "Hush, Ye Pretty Warbling Choir," and "Lusinghe più care"

Feb. 6 Dido and Aeneas
 Repeated: Feb. 8, 11, 16, 18, 19

Mar. 4 Sang "Hush, Ye Pretty Warbling Choir," and "Per le porte del tormento" (with Master Arne)

Mar. 8 Note: Moves with Haymarket actors to Drury Lane. See *Daily Advertiser*, March 9. See also *London Stage* 3:1, p. 374.

Mar. 21 Love and Glory (DL)
 Repeated: Mar. 28
 Note: Benefit S. Arne

Mar. 30 Sang "Was ever nymph like Rosamond" and "Bella Sorge la speranza" (DL)

Apr. 1 Sang "Bella Sorge la speranza" (DL)

Apr. 2 Sang "Per le porte del tormento" (with Master Arne) (DL)

Apr. 3 Sang "Quanto dolce" (DL)
 Repeated: Apr. 4

Apr. 6 Sang "Was ever nymph like Rosamond" and "Hush Ye Little Warbling Choir" (DL)

Apr. 15 Cupid and Psyche (DL)
 Repeated: Apr. 16, 17, 19

Apr. 20 Cupid and Psyche
 Note: Marries Theophilus Cibber on this date

Apr. 24 Cupid and Psyche

Apr. 26 Sang "original song" (anonymous setting of "From Place to Place Forlorn I Go" in *The Conscious Lovers*)
 Note: First appearance as "Mrs. Cibber"
 Apr. 29 Love and Glory
 May 3 Sang "Quanto dolce"
 May 13 Sang "A teneri affeti" (with Jane Barbier) and "Amelia wishes when she dies"

SEASON 1734-35

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER)</u>
5-Oct	Cupid and Psyche (DL)
25-Oct	Sang "Was ever nymph like Rosamond" (DL)
12-Dec	Merlin, or, The Devil of Stone-Henge
3-Feb	The Tender Husband Note: "Benefit a Gentleman and his Family under Misfortunes" – Benefit for the Cibbers after the death of their child? (See Nash, 77)

SEASON 1735-36

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = DL UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED)</u>
12-Jan	Zara Repeated: Jan. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26
27-Jan	Zara Note: Comment in <i>Daily Journal</i> on this date spurs "Polly War" with Catherine Clive – "We hear that the Beggar's Opera is soon to be acted . . . by Mr Cibber's Wife, who is to have all the first Parts, having, during the Run of Zara, shewn her natural Genius, by never any one Night varying in either Tone of Voice or Action from the Way she was taught." See also <i>Prompter</i> on this day."
9-Feb	The Conscious Lovers Repeat performances: Feb. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, Mar. 3
13-Mar	Love's Last Shift
15-Mar	The Conscious Lovers
16-Mar	Love's Last Shift Repeated: Mar. 18
23-Mar	The Distrest Mother Note: Also spoke epilogue Acis and Galatea (CG)?
24-Mar	Note: No cast given for this performance. DL was black on this date, so it is possible that Cibber reprised her role as Galatea.
27-Mar	Love's Last Shift Repeated: Mar. 29, 30
31-Mar	Acis and Galatea (CG)

Season 1736-37

<u>Date</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = DL)</u>
26-Aug	The Conscious Lovers Repeated: Aug. 31
11-Sep	Love's Last Shift
5-Oct	Othello
22-Nov	The Rival Queens Repeated: Nov. 24, 26
13-Dec	Love's Last Shift
16-Dec	Othello
11-Jan	The Siege of Damascus Repeated: Jan. 12
13-Jan	Othello
26-Jan	The Rival Queens
8-Feb	Love's Last Shift
5-Mar	Love's Last Shift
7-Mar	The Universal Passion Repeated: Mar. 8
10-Mar	Measure for Measure
14-Mar	The Universal Passion
15-Mar	The Orphan
22-Mar	The Conscious Lovers
16-Apr	The Distrest Mother
20-Apr	The Orphan Note: Benefit S. Cibber
21-Apr	Measure for Measure
29-Apr	Love's Last Shift
7-May	The Distrest Mother
21-May	The Orphan

SEASON 1737-38

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = DL)</u>
1-Sep	The Orphan
6-Sep	Love's Last Shift
8-Sep	Cato Repeated Oct. 4
1-Nov	Measure for Measure
4-Nov	Tamerlane Repeated: Nov. 5, 7
12-Nov	The Conscious Lovers
2-Jan	Cato
11-Jan	Venice Preserv'd Repeated: Feb. 3, 4, 23

25-Feb Othello
 4-Mar Comus
 Repeated: Mar. 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14
 16-Mar All for Love
 21-Mar The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter
 23-Mar Comus
 Repeated: Apr. 3, 4, 5
 3-Apr Agamemnon
 Repeated: Apr. 4, 5, 6
 15-Apr The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter
 18-Apr Agamemnon
 19-Apr Comus

Season 1738-39 SC absent
 Season 1739-40 SC absent
 Season 1740-41 SC absent

SEASON 1741-42, DUBLIN

DATE	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = AST)</u>
12-Dec	The Conscious Lovers (AST) Note: Her first appearance in Ireland. A recollection by Thomas Sheridan in 1771 (quoted in <i>Dublin Stage</i> , 295) states that initial performances were a failure. "After the first few nights they played to empty benches. On one occasion . . . [they] played to a beggarly £8."
17-Dec	Venice Preserv'd (AST) Note: "Her second performance in this kingdom;" Duke and Duchess of Devonshire Command performance
21-Dec	The Orphan (AST)
31-Dec	Love's Last Shift (AST)
7-Jan	Comus Repeated: Jan. 11
18-Jan	The Old Batchelor
20-Jan	Ode for St. Cecilia's Day Note: Handel composed a new version of "The Soft Complaining Flute" for Cibber
21-Jan	Measure for Measure
22-Jan	Love's Last Shift
23-Jan	Measure for Measure
28-Jan	The Spanish Fryar
1-Feb	The Fair Penitent Note: Benefit Mrs. Cibber

4-Feb	The Old Batchelor
5-Feb	Love's Last Shift
9-Feb	The Conscious Lovers
16-Feb	The Betrayal of His Country Note: Spoke epilogue
18-Feb	The Fair Penitent
19-Feb	Venice Preserv'd
22-Feb	The Spanish Fryar
26-Feb	Comus
27-Feb	The Orphan
4-Mar	The Betrayal of his Country Note: Spoke epilogue
12-Mar	Love's Last Shift
15-Mar	Nature [Comedy by Mr. Dixon]
23-Mar	The Distrest Mother
5-Apr	The Double Gallant Note: "Her first time performing since her late indisposition" = an "in-joke," since role is that of a hypochondriac
8-Apr	The Siege of Damascus
13-Apr	Messiah Note: Premiere
26-Apr	The Siege of Damascus
29-Apr	The Orphan
3-May	The Man of Mode
4-May	Comus
5-May	Comus "Mrs. Cibber will sing in character 'Sweet Echo'"
13-May	The Man of Mode
15-May	Othello
17-May	The Beggar's Opera Note: "Her first appearance in that character" Repeated: May 20, 24
25-May	Saul
27-May	The Beggar's Opera
31-May	Venice Preserv'd Note: Benefit Mrs. Cibber
3-Jun	Messiah
4-Jun	The Distrest Mother
11-Jun	Oroonoko Repeated June 21
24-Jun	The Beggar's Opera
29-Jun	Othello
6-Jul	The Distrest Mother

SEASON 1742-43

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = CG UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED)</u>
22-Sep	Othello Note: Cibber's return to London stage after separation and scandal (see Chapter 2)
24-Sep	Othello Repeated: Sep. 27
29-Sep	The Conscious Lovers
1-Oct	Venice Preserv'd
4-Oct	The Orphan
6-Oct	The Old Batchelor
11-Oct	The Spanish Fryer
13-Oct	Richard III (DL) Note: David Garrick's first appearance at DL Repeated: Oct. 14
15-Oct	Volpone, or, The Fox
16-Oct	Love's Last Shift
21-Oct	The Fair Penitent Repeated Oct. 23
3-Nov	The Provok'd Wife
6-Nov	The Fair Penitent
12-Nov	The Old Batchelor
13-Nov	Oroonoko
15-Nov	The Country Wife Repeated: Nov. 16
23-Nov	Othello
24-Nov	Volpone, or, The Fox
25-Nov	Measure for Measure Repeated: Nov. 26
29-Nov	The Distrest Mother
2-Dec	Othello
4-Dec	Measure for Measure
6-Dec	Richard III (DL)
8-Dec	The Provok'd Wife
11-Dec	Othello (CG) Repeated: Dec. 13
14-Dec	The Country Wife
18-Dec	The Distrest Mother
23-Dec	Venice Preserv'd
30-Dec	The Country Wife
31-Dec	The Spanish Fryer
3-Jan	Love's Last Shift
4-Jan	Measure for Measure

5-Jan The Siege of Damascus
 Repeated: Jan. 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
 20-Jan The Country Wife
 25-Jan The Fair Penitent
 26-Jan The Conscious Lovers
 28-Jan Richard III
 1-Feb Measure for Measure
 2-Feb Venice Preserv'd
 4-Feb Volpone, or, The Fox
 5-Feb Othello
 10-Feb The Country Wife
 18-Feb Samson
 Note: Premiere
 19-Feb The Orphan
 21-Feb Measure for Measure
 23-Feb Samson
 24-Feb Othello
 25-Feb Samson
 26-Feb The Distrest Mother
 2-Mar Samson
 5-Mar The Country Wife
 7-Mar Richard III
 8-Mar Measure for Measure
 9-Mar Samson
 11-Mar Samson
 14-Mar The Fair Penitent
 Note: Benefit Mrs. Cibber; "To prevent the ladies's catching cold, ciel'd after
 the manner of the Oratorios."
 16-Mar Samson
 17-Mar Venice Preserv'd
 18-Mar L'Allegro ed il Penseroso
 19-Mar The Orphan
 23-Mar Messiah
 24-Mar The Conscious Lovers
 25-Mar Messiah
 26-Mar Venice Preserv'd
 29-Mar Messiah
 31-Mar Samson
 4-Apr Othello
 8-Apr Richard III
 11-Apr Measure for Measure
 12-Apr The Fair Penitent
 13-Apr The Distrest Mother

14-Apr Love's Last Shift
 15-Apr The Provok'd Wife
 20-Apr The Country Wife
 25-Apr The Conscious Lovers
 27-Apr Venice Preserv'd
 29-Apr The Orphan
 2-May The Old Batchelor
 17-May Othello
 18-May The Fair Penitent
 Repeated: May 20
 20-May The Fair Penitent
 30-May The Fair Penitent

SEASON 1743-44: Cibber was away this season at Bath.

SEASON 1744-45

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = DL)</u>
17-Oct	The Distressed Mother Note: Press touted that this was Cibber's "1st appearance at Drury Lane in 9 years."
23-Oct	Venice Preserv'd
25-Oct	The Conscious Lovers
27-Oct	The Orphan
3-Nov	Deborah (KT)
13-Nov	The Orphan
24-Nov	Deborah (KT)
20-Oct	The Fair Penitent
31-Oct	The Fair Penitent Note: A letter in the <i>Daily Gazetteer</i> on this date called for Garrick to play Lothario. At the next performance, he did so. (See entry for 7 Feb., 1745) This letter also urged him to play Jaffier in Venice Preserv'd.
2-Nov	Love's Last Shift
3-Nov	Deborah (KT)
5-Nov	Tamerlane Repeated: Nov. 10
15-Nov	Venice Preserv'd
17-Nov	The Conscious Lovers Note: Charles Fleetwood's price hikes caused riots at this performance.
19-Nov	See <i>General Advertiser</i> . A Pamphlet entitled <i>An Impartial Examen of the Present Contests</i> by "Mr Neitherside" complained about Fleetwood's practices, including Cibber's salary.

22-Nov Tamerlane
 Repeated: Nov. 30
 3-Dec The Orphan
 28-Dec The Conscious Lovers
 5-Jan Hercules
 Note: Premiere
 11-Jan The Distressed Mother
 12-Jan Hercules
 14-Jan Comus
 Note: Coincided with a performance of the same masque at Covent Garden.
 15-Jan Comus
 2-Feb The Orphan
 5-Feb The Conscious Lovers
 7-Feb The Fair Penitent
 Note: First time against Garrick as Lothario
 13-Feb The Country Wife
 14-Feb Love's Last Shift
 20-Feb Papal Tyranny
 Repeated: Feb. 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28
 Note: "Not acted in 50 years." See the introduction to LS's chapter on this season for information on the role of this play at DL and Colley Cibber's adaptation of the play at CG in the rivalry between the theaters.
 1-Mar Samson (KT)
 2-Mar Papal Tyranny
 7-Mar Othello
 Note: Garrick joins cast
 9-Mar Othello
 11-Mar The Fair Penitent
 13-Mar Saul (KT)
 16-Mar The Provoked Husband
 18-Mar Tancred and Sigismunda
 Repeated: Mar. 19, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, Apr. 1, 2
 6-Apr The Fair Penitent
 16-Apr Venice Preserv'd
 22-Apr The Conscious Lovers
 24-Apr The Orphan
 25-Apr Othello
 23-May The Orphan

Season 1745-46

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = CG)</u>
24-Oct	Note: Cibber writes letter to Garrick on this date (quoted in full in LS), proposing a new theater under their direction.
9-Dec	Note: After a long absence from the press, Cibber's name crops back up in an announcement about Covent Garden: "There will be no play 'till tomorrow on account of one to be performed this evening at the other theatre; the receipt of which is to be subscribed to the Veteran Scheme at the Guildhall. We hear Mrs Cibber is soon to perform the part of Polly, three nights at CG, and the Proprietor has agreed to lend his house, free of all charges; and we hear the company will contribute their pay on those days, that the performance may be entirely charge-free; the receipts of each night to be subscribed to the Veteran's scheme at Guildhall"
14-Dec	The Beggar's Opera Note: "Being the 1st time of her appearing in that character" [in England; she first played Polly in Dublin during the spring of 1742.]
16-Dec	The Beggar's Opera
17-Dec	The Beggar's Opera
10-Apr	Note: A Letter from Theophilus Cibber to the General Advertiser complains that Susanna Cibber would not act benefits to save him from debtors' prison since their separation. He also responds to claims that his move to Drury Lane was chiefly "to impede Mrs Cibber in her performance there."
12-Apr	The Orphan Note: Benefit Thomas Augustine Arne

Season 1746-47

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY TITLE (THEATER = CG)</u>
11-Nov	The Orphan
14-Nov	The Fair Penitent Repeated: Nov. 15
17-Nov	The Conscious Lovers
19-Nov	The Fair Penitent Repeated: Nov. 20, 21, 22, 27, 29
1-Dec	The Fair Penitent
11-Dec	The Beggar's Opera Repeated: Dec. 15
16-Dec	The Fair Penitent
17-Dec	Jane Shore
23-Dec	The Orphan
28-Dec	Othello Repeated: Dec. 31

3-Jan Jane Shore
Repeated: Jan. 5, 6, 8, 9, 10

16-Jan Jane Shore

20-Jan The Siege of Damascus
The Beggar's Opera (afterpiece)

9-Feb The Beggar's Opera

10-Feb The Siege of Damascus

11-Feb The Country Wife
Repeated: Feb. 26

27-Feb The Beggar's Opera

28-Feb The Conscious Lovers
Note: *The Museum, or Literary and Historical Register* 25 (on this date) reports, "Rich has . . . got Quin, Garrick, Mrs Cibber and Mrs Pritchard to the new house. The consequence has been, that the stage was never, in my memory, so fashionable. . . . A good taste both of acting and of plays themselves, is much more general than I ever expected to have seen it."

7-Mar The Spanish Fryar, or, The Double Discovery

10-Mar The Beggar's Opera

12-Mar The Country Wife

23-Mar Jane Shore

30-Mar The Fair Penitent

4-Apr The Distressed Mother

6-Apr The Spanish Fryar, or, The Double Discovery

7-Apr The Distressed Mother

9-Apr Venice Preserv'd
Note: On this date, Garrick signed an agreement to become a new partner manager at DL. He soon moved his troupe, including Cibber, back to DL

21-Apr The Beggar's Opera

22-Apr The Conscious Lovers

25-Apr The Spanish Fryar, or, The Double Discovery

27-Apr Jane Shore

1-May The Distressed Mother

7-May The Fair Penitent

27-May The Fair Penitent

29-May Jane Shore

SEASON 1747-48

Note: Cibber's Salary this season given as £315 in LS 4:1.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLAY (THEATER = DL UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED)</u>
20-Oct	Venice Preserv'd
22-Oct	Othello
31-Oct	Venice Preserv'd
3-Nov	Tamerlane
	Repeated: Nov. 5
7-Nov	The Conscious Lovers
10-Nov	The Provoked Wife
	Repeated: Nov. 11
13-Nov	Comus
14-Nov	King Lear, and Amelia wishes when she dies
18-Nov	The Orphan
	Repeated: Nov. 19, 20, 21
19-Nov	The Orphan
27-Nov	Venice Preserv'd
28-Nov	The Provoked Wife
30-Nov	The Orphan
3-Dec	The Conscious Lovers
11-Dec	Othello
	Note: On this date, there was also an announcement in the <i>General Advertiser</i> that Cibber and Clive would finally appear together in the Beggar's Opera: "As the Publick has often desir'd to see Mrs Cibber in the Part of Polly, and Mrs Clive in that of Lucy, the Beggar's Opera will be perform'd (with the usual Dances) Tomorrow at Drury Lane."
12-Dec	The Beggar's Opera
	Repeated: Dec. 14
15-Dec	The Provoked Wife
19-Dec	The Orphan
22-Dec	The Beggar's Opera
23-Dec	King Lear, and Amelia wishes when she dies
30-Dec	The Conscious Lovers
2-Jan	Jane Shore
	Repeated: Jan. 5, 8, 9, 11
13-Jan	The Provoked Wife
	Repeated: Jan. 14
15-Jan	Othello
20-Jan	The Orphan
26-Jan	The Conscious Lovers
29-Jan	Jane Shore
1-Feb	The Fair Penitent
	Repeated: Feb. 4, 6
8-Feb	Venice Preserv'd

10-Feb Othello
 11-Feb The Provoked Wife
 13-Feb The Foundling
 Note: Cibber also spoke epilogue; *Dramatic Censor* II, p. 206 praises Woffington and Cibber as Rosetta and Fidelia: "... the elegance, the notions of love, and the vanity of admiration, which are united in Rosetta, were natural to Mrs Woffington, so that she had the advantage of looking and speaking in her own character – the softness and pathos, which distinguished Fidelia sat with much ease on Mrs Cibber."
 Repeated: Feb. 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29
 1-Mar King Lear, and Amelia wishes when she dies
 5-Mar The Foundling
 7-Mar Venice Preserv'd
 10-Mar The Distressed Mother
 14-Mar Jane Shore
 15-Mar The Distressed Mother
 17-Mar The Foundling
 21-Mar The Provoked Wife
 22-Mar The Fair Penitent
 28-Mar The Beggar's Opera
 31-Mar The Orphan
 15-Apr The Conscious Lovers
 16-Apr The Foundling
 20-Apr Othello
 21-Apr Jane Shore
 23-Apr King Lear, and Amelia wishes when she dies
 25-Apr The Provoked Wife
 26-Apr The Fair Penitent
 2-May The Beggar's Opera
 4-May The Conscious Lovers
 11-May The Foundling
 25-May Venice Preserv'd

SEASON 1748-49

<u>DATE</u>	<u>Play (Theater = DL)</u>
4-Oct	Othello
6-Oct	The Conscious Lovers
8-Oct	King Lear
11-Oct	The Orphan
15-Oct	The Beggar's Opera
18-Oct	The Provoked Wife
22-Oct	The Fair Penitent

26-Oct King Lear
 31-Oct The Conscious Lovers
 2-Nov Jane Shore
 8-Nov Venice Preserv'd
 10-Nov The Orphan
 11-Nov The Stratagem
 Note: "First time in this character"
 23-Nov Othello
 24-Nov The Fair Penitent
 29-Nov Romeo and Juliet
 Repeated: Dec. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 30
 31-Dec King Lear
 2-Jan The Conscious Lovers
 6-Jan Othello
 9-Jan Measure for Measure
 12-Jan Romeo and Juliet
 17-Jan The Stratagem
 20-Jan The Foundling
 Repeated: Jan. 21
 24-Jan The Fair Penitent
 27-Jan The Orphan
 1-Feb Romeo and Juliet
 6-Feb Mahomet and Irene
 Repeated: Feb. 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20
 27-Feb The Fair Penitent
 2-Mar Romeo and Juliet
 7-Mar Tancred and Sigismunda
 9-Mar Othello
 11-Mar The Foundling
 16-Mar Jane Shore
 18-Mar The Stratagem
 20-Mar The Orphan
 31-Mar The Fair Penitent
 1-Apr Romeo and Juliet
 3-Apr The Conscious Lovers
 4-Apr Jane Shore
 5-Apr The Distressed Mother

APPENDIX 4.1
THOMAS MORELL, "A MODERN CONVERSATION," WITH ANNOTATIONS

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University
GEN MSS 282 box 1, folder 51

Explanatory Note

"A Modern Conversation" is a brief dialogue housed at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. It is filed in Series 3 of their David Garrick Collection and seems to have escaped the attention of anyone else who has written about Thomas Morell.

The dialogue consists of a conversation between three men, each of whom Morell based on a real person. He gave them easily decipherable anagrams: Dr. Lle-rom, "a Believer," was obviously Morell himself. D. Kircrag, Esq., "a Moderate," was David Garrick, Esq. (1717–1779), the famous actor and theater manager, who is also the addressee of the work's dedication page. Dr. Schomberg, "an Unbeliever," was probably Ralph Schomberg (1714–1792), physician, playwright, and friend of Garrick. His brother, Isaac (1714–1780), was the presiding doctor at Garrick's death and is another possible candidate. Their father, Meyer Low (1690–1761), was the author of a diatribe against his fellow British Jews; he borrowed language from the deists in critiquing their orthodoxy and their dismissal of "natural religion."¹ The content of the "Modern Conversation" is a debate about the rationality of Christian faith and the illogic of the unbelieving position. (See Chapter 4 for a fuller discussion.)

One can discern that the dialogue is an autograph manuscript by comparing the handwriting with a larger collection of Morell's writing housed at the Beinecke: a poetry collection made for his wife in 1779 (Osborne c395), including preservations of works that were written in the 1720s and 1730s.² Morell's shaky hand in that document matches that in "A Modern Conversation."³ Taken together, these works portray Morell as an old man busily copying his youthful work for preservation.

Although the dedication page is dated Jan. 31, 1733, ascertaining the dialogue's age is no simple matter. Morell was in fact preoccupied with defending the church from deists in the 1730s; he published a much lengthier dialogue with related content in 1739: *Truth Triumphant: or, a Summary View of the Late Controversy Occasioned by a Book, Intituled, The Moral Philosopher* (also forgotten by modern scholars; see Chapter 4). But other details

¹ תנומה נמוא (*Emunat Oman*, Eng. trans. *A Physician's Faith*, London, 1746). Transcribed and translated in H. Levy in *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 20 (1959–61): 101–11. See also Alex Sakula, "The Doctors Schomberg and the Royal College of Physicians: an Eighteenth-Century Shemozzle," *Journal of Medical Biography* 2 (1994): 113–119.

² See Ruth Smith, "Thomas Morell (1703–84) and the Osborn Collection," *The Yale University Library Gazette* 78, no. 1/2 (2003): 39–53.

³ A sample is given in Smith, "Thomas Morell and His Letter," 199, which might be compared with Figure 4.1. An example of Morell preserving old poetry in this notebook can be found in his answer to Kitty Thurston's poem "Woman Born to Be Controuled," first penned in 1725, with a marginal note indicating that it was copied into the notebook in 1779.

about “A Modern Conversation” indicate either that Morell simply absent-mindedly indicated the wrong date or that he initially wrote the dialogue in 1733 and later added the anagrams (and also the discussion on its last page, as made clear by a reference to Capel Berrow, discussed below).

The identity of the dedicatee is the first indication that this copy was prepared decades after the date that Morell gives. In 1733, Garrick was just sixteen years old and had not yet moved to London. Garrick lived at this time in what one biographer has described as “genteel poverty,” caring for his ill mother and younger siblings and acting as head of the family in Lichfield while his father was stationed as a military officer in Gibraltar.⁴ When Garrick arrived in London in 1737, he was almost penniless; the title “Esq.” in the letter’s address would have been inappropriate for the young man’s station in life during this period. Moreover, Morell gives himself the title “Dr.” in his anagram; he did not receive his DD until 1743, which gives a *terminus post quem* for the anagrams. Garrick’s death in 1779 gives them a *terminus ante quem*.

Morell’s mention of the “late writer” Berrow (see p. 219) allows us to date the manuscript more narrowly. Morell refers to the opening paragraphs of Capel Berrow’s “A Few Extracts from a Discourse Concerning Origen and the Chiefest of his Opinions” in his *Theological Dissertations*, published in 1772.⁵ Berrow’s dates, 1715–1782, are puzzling as a *terminus post quem* for the manuscript at Yale, since Garrick died in 1779. The most likely explanation for this discrepancy is that Morell had confused son and father; the author of this dialogue was the son of another theologian, also named Capel Berrow (1674–1751). If this hypothesis is correct, then the father had indeed died before the publication of his son’s *Theological Dissertations*. Working on this assumption, we can posit 1773 as the date of this version of the dialogue, “1733” simply a slip for “1773,” an error that could easily have escaped Morell’s septuagenarian eyes.

The manuscript is a single bibliographic unit measuring 20cm in height and 16cm in width, comprised of four interleaved bifolia. The outer bifolio serves as the dialogue’s cover. The dialogue itself is written on the inner three bifolia (for which Morell gave only two page numbers: 3 and 5), and the dedication page comes on the verso of the front cover. The entire dialogue consists of eleven pages preceded by the dedication page, which is cast as a letter addressed to “D.G. Esq.”

⁴ Jean Benedetti, *David Garrick and the Birth of Modern Theatre* (London: Methuen, 2001), 11-13.

⁵ Berrow “extracted” from George Rust’s *A Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen and the Chief of His Opinions* (1661).

Transcription of “A Modern Conversation”

[p. i (front cover): blank]

[p. ii:]

To D.G. Esq⁶

When I came home this morning and found no particular engagement, I sat me down, reflecting upon our Symposiac of yesterday; This Appellation perhaps may not be so proper for a Fast-day;⁷ but the Subject of Conversation was by no means improper: You will excuse an Addition or two, by

January 31.
1733.⁸

Sir,

y^r most obedient sev^t:
T.M.

⁶ David Garrick, Esq (1717–1779)

⁷ The men met on January 30, which the Anglican Church deemed a national day of fasting commemorating the death of Charles I on that date in 1649.

⁸ On this date, see explanatory note.

[p. 1:]

A Modern Conversation
Between
D^r Bergmosch, an Unbeliever
D^r Lle-rom, a Believer
and
D. Kircrag Esq, a Moderate Man.⁹

B. – All stuff and nonsense, by G—! There never was such a Man as Moses, or David, Solomon, &c or Malachi.

LL. – Well, S^r, so much for the old Testament; but what say you to the New?

B. – Why, I say, by G—, there never were any such men as Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

LL. – Pray, S^r, have you any more nonentities to swear to?

B. – Yes, I have.

K. – The Devil you have!

B. – The Devil, — Ha, Ha, Ha.

LL. – Oh, S^r, I make no doubt but the D^r looks upon him as a Nonentity indeed; but I am enquiring after Beings of another sort.

B. – Why then I swear, there never was upon Earth any such Person as Jesus Christ. ~~upon Earth~~

[p. 2:]

K. – No, no; D^r; That is going a little too far.

LL. – by no means; for I am sure the D^r has as good reasons for disbelieving one as the other. —

B. – Aye, surely.

LL. – However, M^r Kircrag, I think you was in the right, to look upon this as a Pattagonian stride,¹⁰ for it is such a one, I am sure, as hath never been taken by Jews, Turks, or Heretics.

⁹ Dr. Lle-rom = Dr. Morell. Dr. Schomberg = probably Ralph Schomberg (1714–1792). Dr. Kircrag Esq. = David Garrick, Esq. See explanatory note.

¹⁰ A reference to the people of Patagonia (in the south of modern day Argentina and Chile), who were reported by Ferdinand Magellan's assistant Antonio Pigafetta to be giants. (See Pigafetta, *Le voyage et*

— I remember I once saw a large Picture in the house of an eminent Jew at Isleworth, which in the dusk of the Evening, I took to be a Dutch Fair, til the Gentleman's Sister informd me, that it was the History of Jesus Christ, in several Apartments, from his Birth to his Crucifixion. — There is frequent mention of Jesus Christ in the Koran. — And as to Heretics, they certainly never give the Negative to the εἶ ἐστι, whatever disputes they may raise concerning the τι ἐστι.¹¹

B. – Prithee, none of your Aristotelian Quiddities; I tell you there never was any such Man as Moses, &c.

[p. 3:]

LL – Nor are there any Jews now existing! — ¹²

B. – What are they to the Purpose? Have you any Cotemporary writer that speaks of him? —

Ll. – No verily; For the oldest writer now extant lived about 550 years after Moses. But as to later writers, Hermippus affirms that Pythagoras transferred many things out of the writings of Moses into his Philosophy:¹³ and we learn from Numenius that it was a common saying, What is Plato, but Moses Atticising?¹⁴ Nor can there be any doubt of his having received his best and choicest Contemplations, relating to God, his Nature and Worship, the Production of the Universe, the Fall, &c from the Writings of Moses. — Longinus hath quoted the first Chapter of Genesis¹⁵ — And Diodorus Siculus acknowledgeth¹⁶ Moses to be the first Legislator from whom all Laws took their rise: which is likewise confessed by the most diligent & learned Critics in every Age:¹⁷ And tis more than probable that the whole

navigacion faict par les Espaignolz es Isles de Mollucques (Paris, 1524)). A "Patagonian stride" is therefore a huge step, or, in this case, a logical leap.

¹¹ "ei esti" = "if he exists;" "ti esti" = "what he is." A reference to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

¹² Isaac Schomberg converted to Christianity in order to receive his degree from Cambridge and gain a license as a physician. Ralph married a Christian woman and baptized his children. Their father's תרומא נמיה included a dismissal of Jewish practices of keeping the Sabbath. The conflation of Jews and Christians by Morell's character may have been an attempt to needle — or even offend — Schomberg.

¹³ Hermippus of Smyrna, *Lives*; see Bezalel Bar-Kochva, "Jewish Influence on Pythagoras According to Hermippus of Smyrna," chap. 5 in *The Image of the Jews in Greek Literature: The Hellenistic Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Lle-rom is citing Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*, 1: 22, which attributes this famous saying to Numenius. See Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-84), 2: 209-11 (nos. 363 a-e).

¹⁵ *On the Sublime* 9.9. See M.D. Usher, "Theomachy, Creation, and the Poetics of Quotation in Longinus chap. 9," *Classical Philology* 102, no. 3 (2007): 292-303.

¹⁶ Morell originally wrote "acknowleg," which he presumably meant to finish as "acknowledged," using the more formal construction as an afterthought.

¹⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library*, book 1, chap. 7.

mythologic Story of Bacchus in the Pagan System is nothing more than the History of Moses disguised as usual.¹⁸

[p. 4:]

B. – I care not what others write or think; I think for myself.

LL. – You are in the right; but I am persuaded you would think otherwise than you do, had you made a proper Enquiry; which every one ought to make before they¹⁹ peremptorily affirm or deny any thing.

B. – I know it to be so, without Enquiry.

LL. – By a sort of Anti-Revelation, for it is impossible you should know it otherwise.²⁰

K. – That is well put; what say you to that, Dr?

B. – Say? Why I say, that all the Nonsense in the World shall ^{never} ^{me} make [^] believe the Story of a Moses, or that there ever was such a Person, as Jesus Christ.

LL. – Or that there ever was such a person as Julius Caesar, slain in the Capitol by Brutus, &c.

B. – The Case is by no means the same; The latter is sufficiently confirmed, by Cotemporary Writers; but where do you read any thing of Christ, except among the Christians, I mean, the Jews, for the First were all Jews, &c so have they all been since their Time.²¹

LL. – You mean Cornelius, and the Thousands converted in his Time, or ^{who} [^] have since professed Christianity? — They were all Jews? —

[p. 5:]

B. – No doubt of it. —

LL. – Jews and Christians the same! Bless me, how one may live and learn! I always thought them as opposite as Yes and No.²² — And as to Cotemporary Writers, I dare not mention

¹⁸ This was a frequent claim among eighteenth-century classicists. See, for instance, François Pomey, *The Pantheon: Representing the Fabulous Histories of the Heathen Gods and Most Illustrious Heroes, in a Short, Plain, and Familiar Method* (London, 1717), 82–3.

¹⁹ Erased here: “affirm or.” The addition of “peremptorily” indicates a correction made while writing, or (probably) copying.

²⁰ The illogic of “Revealed Religion” (as opposed to “Natural Religion”) was a fundamental element of the deist critique of Anglicanism. See chap. 4.

²¹ Deists often referred to members of the Anglican church as “Christian Jews,” a reference to their adherence to ritual religion and “arbitrary” laws as opposed to “pure,” and “natural” religion. See for instance, Thomas Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher. In a Dialogue between Philalethes a Christian Deist, and Theosophanes a Christian Jew* (London, 1737).

the famous passage in Josephus, because controverted;²³ much less the Epistles of Seneca to St Paul;²⁴ or any Christian Writer; but you must allow, that Pliny wrote a long Epistle, concerning the Christians, to Trojan, in whose Time, I think, St John was still living.²⁵

B. – All a Forgery; There was no such person as St John, or his supposed Master Jesus Christ.

LL. – You must excuse me, Dr, but upon my word I cannot think your Judgment herein ~~not~~ much wiser than what Baron Mounteney²⁶ told me of a country Wench.

K. – What was that? Prithce, let's have it. —

LL. – As the Baron was travelling in Yorkshire, he met a Mawther²⁷ in the road, & looking round him, asked her, whose Seat that was? I don't know not I, quoth she. — Whose is that? I don't know. What do you know? do you know Jesus Christ? There is no swiche Mon lives here. — You may laugh, if you please; but the Inference I would draw, is this;

[p. 6:]

— It might be impossible for this poor Girl to know any thing more than the mode of bare Existence; but for you, supplied with every means of Information, & so very capable of Instruction from Books in various languages, to profess the like ignorance, is to me astonishing — but I ask your pardon, Mr Kirc.²⁸ for engrossing the Conversation.

K. – No, no: go on; I shall have something to say to you presently.

LL. – I really have nothing more to say; for it would be a vain attempt to convince an inveterate and determined Prejudice, supported merely by absolute Negations: But if the Dr will be pleased to give me in writing his objections to the Scriptures, and their Contents; and so state the Proposition he intends to maintain, as to leave no room for quibble and Equivocation; I promise I will answer him to the best of my Abilities. — And so, Sr, you may now catechize me as you please. —

K. – I would ask you, whether you believe the Doctrine of the Trinity?

²² See n. 12.

²³ Josephus refers to Jesus's brother, "James the Just" in *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1.

²⁴ Morell annotated Seneca's Epistles, published more than a half century after the date on the dialogue's dedication: *The Epistles of Lucius Annaeus Seneca; With Large Annotations, Wherein, Particularly, the Tenets of the Antient Philosophers are Contrasted with the Divine Precepts of the Gospel* (London, 1786).

²⁵ Pliny, *Letters* 10, 96-97.

²⁶ Richard Mountney (1707–1768), judge, classicist, and baron of the Irish Court of Exchequer. Also a poet, praised by a verse in the *Gentleman's Magazine* 51 (1768): "Nature, to you more eminently kind, / The wide Extremes of Law and Verse have join'd; / Alike in both you happily succeed, / Resistless when you sing, as when you plead."

²⁷ A young woman.

²⁸ Morell originally wrote "Kirk," and corrected this by writing over the final "k."

[p. 7:]

LL. – Indeed I do; — because otherwise I could scarce understand a single Chapter in the New Testament, or a page in the Common Prayer.²⁹

K. – You old-fashion Fellow!

LL. – I care not what the fashion is, so I do my Duty.

K. – But do you not meet with strange Obscurities and contradictions therein?

LL. – There may be Obscurities and Difficulties, by reason, of the distance of Time, the different Idioms of Languages, the frequent Use of Figures, Metaphors, Allegories, &c but Contradictions there are none.

K. – No Contradictions?

LL. – No, Sr. Some Men are apt to dream of Contradictions, because our Understandings are unequal to the Sublime Subjects therein set forth; but let them read M^r Lock, particularly his chapters On Faith & Reason, and I am persuaded they would alter their opinion.³⁰

K. – But if Providence design'd the Scriptures for the Benefit of Mankind, why were they not made plainer, and level to every Capacity? —

[p. 8:]

LL. – I do not think this a fair Question; because we are not to talk of the Deity, as of one another; but dare maintain, that the Scriptures, to all Persons of a competent Understanding are sufficiently clear and intelligible in all points necessary to Salvation.

K. – But don't you think it strange, that according to the Christian Scheme, so many should be born, if not to be miserable in this Life, yet to be for ever miserable in another?

LL. – I do not rightly understand the Question: Do you think it strange, that Man was born a Free-agent, and not a sinless Angel? or, that it is shocking to think, that Millions should be born into the World, prædestined to eternal misery, according to the foreknowledge of God?

²⁹ The deists and representatives of the church fought major battles over the Doctrine of the Trinity. Morell wrote about it extensively in *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity Justified* (London, 1774).

³⁰ John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1689/90), book 4, chap. 18, "Of Faith and Reason, and Their Distinct Provinces." Morell annotated the *Essay* for Queen Caroline in the 1730s, although it was not published until the 1790s: *Notes and Annotations on Locke on the Human Understanding. Written by Order of the Queen* (London, 1794).

K. – I mean the latter.

LL. – If you do, I affirm there is no such doctrine taught in the Scriptures, nor is there one Passage, wherein mention or allusion is made, of absolute Prædestination, relating to Eternity.³¹

[p. 9:]

And what says your favourite Milton in this point?³² If I remember him, he introduces the Almighty speaking in this Manner — ³³

— Men therefore, as to Right belong'd,³⁴
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Their Maker, or their Making, or their fate;
As if Prædestination over ruled
Their Will, dispos'd by absolute Decree,
Or high foreknowledge. They themselves decreed
Their own Revolt, not I; If I fore-knew,
Foreknowledge had no Influence on their Fault,
Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.
So without least Impulse, or Shadow of Fate,
Or ought³⁵ by me immutably foreseen,
They trespass; authors to themselves in all,
Both what they judge, and what they choose; for so
I form'd them free, and free they must remain,
Til they enthrall themselves; I else must change
Their Nature, and revoke the high Decree
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordain'd
Their Freedom; They themselves ordain'd their Fall. —

³¹ The last three words are notated in the bottom margin of the page and may have been a late addition.

³² This reference to “your favourite” implies that this last section at least was written specifically with Garrick in mind. Garrick revived *Comus* as a benefit for Milton’s granddaughter, Elizabeth Foster, with a prologue penned by Samuel Johnson and published separately (*Prologue Spoken by Mr. Garrick, Thursday, April 5, 1750, at the Representation of Comus, the Benefit Mrs. Elizabeth Foster, Milton’s Grand-Daughter, and Only Surviving Descendant* (London, 1750)). Garrick also owned from 1767 a painting by William Hogarth, *Satan, Sin, and Death* (c. 1735–40; now in the Tate Gallery, London), which depicted a scene from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. (See Elizabeth Einberg and Judy Egerton, *The Age of Hogarth: British Painters Born 1675–1709*, Tate Gallery Collections 2 (London: The Gallery, 1988). Thanks to Professor Davitt Moroney for bringing this painting to my attention.

³³ Morell here quotes Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 3, lines 111–128.

³⁴ Morell slightly adapts the first line for semantic sense. Milton’s line 111 read “Not me. They therefore as to right belong’d.”

³⁵ The replacement of “aught” with “ought” was common in eighteenth-century editions of *Paradise Lost*. See, for instance, the 1707 edition published by Jacob Tonson (91).

[p. 10:]

Prescience³⁶ or foreknowledge in God, may be considered as an essential Quality in him, somewhat similar to what prophecy is occasionally or accidentally in man. – But who ever supposed the completion of a Prophecy to be the effect of a predetermining, so as to make it an irresistible or over-ruling Power in the Prophet? It is not, that an Event happens because the Omnipotent Mind foresaw it, but he therefore foresaw, or foreknew it, because it would come to pass. But perhaps you will not disapprove the Opinion of a late Writer (Mr Berrow³⁷) who, (after Origen) supposes, that, as it is essential to the Goodness of God, to will the final Happiness of the creatures he brings into Existence, it is no less essential to his Wisdom to contrive, and his irresistible Power to effect the Means proper thereto; and consequently, that, All, after certain Punishments or Trials, will, in the End, [p. 11:] arrive at that state and degree of Happiness for which they were at first created, and the Creator himself be freed from the Necessity of sacrificing to his Justice that more amiable Attribute of his nature Mercy.

Enter a servant.

Gentlemen, Tea is ready.

[pp. 12-14 blank]

³⁶ Before this word, Morell indicates a closed quotation in addition to the dash that concludes the Milton extract at the bottom of his p. 9.

³⁷ The publication referenced is “A Few Extracts from a Discourse Concerning Origen and the Chiefest of his Opinions” in *Theological Dissertations* (1772), by Capel Berrow (1715–1782), theological writer and Church of England clergyman. On Morell’s possible confusion of this author with his father, also named Capel Berrow (1674–1751), see explanatory note.

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