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NAVIGATING VOICES:

SONG, HISTORY, AND HUMANITY IN THE BRITISH IMPERIAL PROJECT, 1770–1836

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De tanto lamentarse, Ti Noël había olvidado que los blancos también tenían oídos.
(From all the lamenting, Ti Noël had forgotten that the whites also had ears.)

Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo* (1949)

"What did the white man say before they killed him?" asked Uhendu.
"He said nothing," answered one of Obierka's companions.
"He said something, only they did not understand him," said Obierka. "He seemed to speak through his nose."

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

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And lastly, my sweet Puck, fluffy and faithful companion, helped get me through some very low points by living up to his sylvan namesake:

Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck,
You do their work and they shall have good luck.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the cultural context and implications of British colonial elites and metropolitan musicians engaging with song as a material practice and an object of knowledge at the end of the long eighteenth century. Both socially embedded and fully embodied, singing has long been imagined through the lens of Western metaphysics as revealing the essential qualities of a person or people—a critical index of the body and the special purview of humanity. More recently, scholarship across music studies has demonstrated the centrality of listening to the colonial projects of classification and control. The present study is thus situated at the convergence of voice studies and global music history, employing ideas and methods from decolonial theory, early modern critical race studies, and queer theory, to articulate the work of song and the discourse of musical voice in the production of colonial modernity and its emergent categories of humanity. To underscore the intimacies and intricacies of vocal practice and identity in this period, it focuses on socially liminal figures—West Indian Creoles, East Indian nabobinas, Italian castrati, and English Jews—in moments of intimate performance and vocal–aural exchange between England and Jamaica, Scotland and India, and Italy and Australia.

The dissertation locates the production of modern global/colonial knowledge at the nexus of aurality and vocality—an ephemeral site of bodies in sonic contact—as the definition of music among elite Europeans underwent an aesthetic constriction and definitive shift towards the instrumental, the monumental, and the literate (and therefore infinitely reproducible). Through an archive of historical and pedagogical treatises, personal accounts, and operatic repertoire, this study moves between public and private spaces, metropole and colony, and singer and listener, highlighting the connections between aesthetic production and consumption, human difference, and imperial domination. Over four chapters, it considers practices of listening to, performing,

documenting, and teaching song as they informed racial hierarchies, defined practices of desire, and disciplined bodies in contact. Reevaluating the singing cultures of late Georgian and Regency Britain and its colonial empire, it illustrates how the embodied engagement between voice and ear engendered new epistemological frameworks and discursive constructions of humanity and history.

INTRODUCTION: VOCAL AESTHETICS OF EMPIRE

> The virtues of your Majesty are universally confessed; and however the inhabitants of the British empire may differ in their opinions upon other questions, they all behold your excellencies with the same eye, and celebrate them with the same voice.
>
> Dedication to Queen Charlotte
> Charles Burney, *A General History of Music* (1776)

Nationalizing Voice

Apropos of introductions, let me begin with a dedication—namely, the address to Queen Charlotte that opens Charles Burney's *General History of Music* (1776). As the rare upwardly mobile musician—a teacher and composer, thus a practical musician—successfully "rebranding" himself as a critic and historian, Burney must have been anxious to strike the right tone, because he enlisted his friend Samuel Johnson to ghostwrite the address for him.[1] The choice was unconventional since Johnson, England's preeminent man of letters, was well-known for his lifelong aversion to music. All the more striking, then, is his rebuke of those "professors of severer wisdom" who cast music as "a momentary and fugitive delight," as is his vicarious confidence that "the hours … bestowed upon music have been neither dishonourably, nor unprofitably spent."[2] Johnson's closing lines, seen in the epigraph above, are especially interesting for a present-day reader. By invoking the beholding eye and the celebratory voice, they conjure for us Lacan's additions to the Freudian partial-drive objects of the gaze and the voice.[3] Needless to say, Johnson was hardly alluding to such illusory objects of desire. He

[1] K. C. Balderston, "Dr. Johnson and Burney's History of Music," *PMLA* 49 (1934): 966–68.
[2] Samuel Johnson, Dedication to the Queen, in Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* (London, 1776–89), 1: iv.
[3] On the voice as partial-drive object in Lacanian psychoanalysis, see Alice Lagaay, "Between Sound and Silence: Voice in the History of Psychoanalysis," *E-Pisteme* 1 (2008): 58–61; and Martha Feldman and Judith T. Zeitlin,

offered them up to the Queen as a consolation prize, enjoining her to forget that "the inhabitants of the British empire" not only "differ in their opinions," but that some were already in open rebellion against the crown. Representing those inhabitants as a single, corporate body singing to Queen Charlotte, Johnson reframes the cacophonous voices of revolutionaries, abolitionists, and dissenters as the collective *vox populi*—God's affirmation of the monarch expressed "through the voice of the people, who had no say."[4] If this voice did represent some unattainable desire, it was the fantasy of a politically, racially, and indeed musically homogenous Britain.

What follows, however, is not a psychoanalytic exploration of voice. My purpose in citing the dedication of Burney's *magnum opus*, a founding text of the modern musicological discipline, is instead to suggest how we might hear, sense, and discern vocal meaning even from this seemingly throwaway line. First and foremost, the voice conjured by Johnson is raised in celebratory song and, as such, is both social and embodied.[5] It is at once illusory and audible, an object of desire and a vector of carnal meaning. Earlier in the same passage, the famous music-hater even describes music as "the art that unites corporal with intellectual pleasure."[6] And so too historical voices. Rather than standing for something neutral, unmarked, or purely decorative, voice in all its materiality—including the corporeal materialities of lungs, throats, tongues, and teeth—has been enlisted over time to catalogue, even mediate, human difference.

Following from this are two central contentions of the current project. Firstly, the sounding voice is implicated in both the most intimate and the most expansive delineations of

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eds., "The Clamor of Voices," in *The Voice as Something More: Essays toward Materiality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 4–6.

[4] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 111–12.

[5] By contrast, the Lacanian object-voice does not signify beyond itself, nor could it "in and of itself act as a kind of substitute" for the imperial, and material, fantasy referenced above, see Feldman and Zeitlin, "The Clamor of Voices," 6; and Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 35–36.

[6] Johnson, *General History of Music*, iv.

humanity. This includes the construction of individual bodies in relation to one another and the largescale processes of racial formation. Secondly, and relatedly, aesthetics—specifically the aesthetics of voice and song—cannot be separated from the project of empire. To be sure, colonial domination relies on the enactment or threat of material violence. At the same time, aesthetic considerations permeate the work of exploration, settlement, and expropriation, from composing and illustrating travel narratives to reshaping the natural landscape and classifying peoples by phenotype. Hence, Walter Mignolo relating the Renaissance "concept of Man" to "the perfection of geometric forms" immortalized in da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (ca. 1490). "The correlations in this image," he explains, "between the Human body and the universe hide the fact that the body depicted and the experience upon which Leonardo was relying was a Greco-Roman concept of the human figure."[7] In this way, Mignolo shows, European notions of the beautiful and the good—descended from classical antiquity and reinterpreted through Judeo-Christian cosmology—were naturalized and exported to the rest of the world at the onset of modernity.

The role of aesthetic judgements in defining and delineating the human extend beyond the realm of the visual. Responding to the tendency for scholars to privilege sight in theorizing race, Jennifer Lynn Stoever argues that "listening operates as an organ of racial discernment, categorization, and resistance in the shadow of vision's alleged cultural dominance."[8] One need only note the frequent comments made by European explorers, settlers, and travelers on the singing practices of non-Europeans—especially the sensuous qualities of their voices. Among the earliest examples is Jean de Léry's account of Tupinambá singing near Rio de Janeiro in his

[7] Walter D. Mignolo, "Sylvia Wynter: What Does It Mean to Be Human?," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 109.
[8] Jennifer Lynn Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 4–5.

Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre de Brésil (1578). For the Swiss Huguenot, the "howling," "trembling" voices he heard as part of an indigenous ceremony indicated demonic possession.[9] Over the next two centuries, a cosmopolitan (in the truest sense) singing culture developed in the colonial city of Rio de Janeiro, with Metastasian opera staged alongside indigenous and African diasporic performances. Rogério Budasz points to a chronicle of the festivities from 1762 that makes explicit the connection between the practice of song and the production of difference:

> They have shown that the taste of things was also constrained by the limits of opinion. Among those barbarians, antipodes of Europe, less for their site than their customs … Egissielli [castrato singer Gioacchino Conti, or Gizziello], rather than applause, would receive only disdain. Beauty is of another kind there, and what is considered good singing, very different.[10]

Similarly, Ana María Ochoa Gautier draws attention to colonial listening practices in nineteenth-century Colombia. She presents, for instance, the travel diary of Prussian explorer Alexander von Humboldt, who interpreted the vocalizing of the Afro-Indian *bogas* (oarsmen) on the Magdalena River as meaningless howling, which he took to be an audible manifestation of their animalistic nature.[11] As these examples demonstrate, the space of the colonial encounter was one not just of visuality but centrally of vocality and aurality—a region filled, in the most literal sense, with competing voices. The musical voice proved to be a powerful tool for differentiating bodies and peoples and placing them in discrete categories while at the same time folding them all under a single imperial banner. Moreover, as we shall see, song straddled one of the eighteenth century's most important lines of demarcation: that between nature and culture.

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[9] On Léry's account, see Gary Tomlinson, *The Singing of the New World: Indigenous Voice in the Era of European Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 45–48; and Olivia A. Bloechl, *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 44–47.

[10] Quoted in Rogério Budasz, "Music, Authority and Civilization in Rio de Janeiro (1763–90)," in *Music and Urban Society in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Geoffrey Baker and Tess Knighton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 152.

[11] Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening & Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 31–33.

British Singing Culture

As a political entity, the Kingdom of Great Britain came into being with the Treaty of Union (1706) between England and Scotland. Following a century of dynastic upheaval and ethno-religious conflict, the neighboring kingdoms hoped to avoid a succession crisis upon the death of their joint monarch, Queen Anne, who was without a direct heir. When she died eight years later, in 1714, the crown passed to her closest Protestant relative, the Elector of Hanover, now George I of Great Britain and Ireland. The subsequent Georgian period (1714–1837) to which he and his descendants give their name was a time of political consolidation, commercial growth, and imperial expansion for the new kingdom. Additionally, as Linda Colley has shown, it witnessed the emergence of a coherent British identity out of shared anti-Catholic and anti-French values and a sense of cultural and racial superiority over their colonial subjects.[12] Defined by what they were not, the idealized Briton—whether English, Scottish, Welsh, or even Irish—was also the eighteenth century's quintessential WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant). The advent of Britishness did not, however, erase or eclipse older national identities. Richard Newton's "National Characteristics" (1795) caricatures various British "types," depicting each as physically, sartorially, and vocally distinct (see figure 0.1). A "Welsh Cheesemonger" proudly displays a leek in his hat, proclaiming to no one in particular "Cot bless the Prince and Princess of Wales." Meanwhile, the red-faced "Irish Chairman," perhaps a local politician, scratches his head in confusion while he laments the state of Dublin with someone named Pat. As for explicit vocal difference, the clearest example comes with the lanky "Highland Laird" dressed in a tartan kilt and taking a pinch of snuff. The honor of his ancestral *clan* evidently having been impugned, he warns his assailant in an accent that leaps off the page, "In geud troth you dinna consider the

[12] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 5.

antiquity o' my Family!!" The conspicuous lack of any English character may have less to do with Newton's "National Characteristics" having been published in London than with England's continued cultural and political hegemony within Great Britain.

Figure 0.1 Richard Newton, detail of *National Characteristics* (plate 1), 1795. Hand-colored etching. Source: The British Museum. *https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2001-0520-18.*

A companion plate of "National Characteristics" that includes representations of an "American Republican," a "Philadelphian Friend," and an "Italian singer" brings the problematic diversity of Britons to a finer point (see figure 0.2). Strictly speaking, none of these were British. Rather each represented a different perceived threat to British hegemony. In the case of the two American figures, the worst version of that threat had already come to pass with the revolution, though they still represented the symbolic threat of anti-monarchal rhetoric and Quaker pacifism. As for the Italian singer, his Catholic decadence, foreign effeminacy, and Southern European barbarity all loomed large in the British imaginary. Indeed, the problematic excesses of his voice

are so pronounced that he cannot even muster his own words, instead singing a well-known aria from Francesco de Majo's *Montezuma* (1765).[13] Of all Newton's characters, he is certainly the farthest afield from an idealized Briton. We can get a better idea of how he would stack up against a similarly stylized Englishman in another cartoon published a little over a decade later. In Thomas Rowlandson's "John Bull at the Italian Opera" (1811), the stout English yeoman scowls from his box as an attractive and larger-than-life singer in neoclassical garb mugs for the audience (see figure 0.3). Historian Tamara Hunt explains that, for Georgian Britain, the character of John Bull embodied "the qualities that distinguished Englishmen from other nations [and] contributed to Britain's greatness," including love of liberty, unwavering loyalty to King and country, and distrust of foreigners.[14] In Rowlandson's cartoon, the national personification of England is contrasted with the polarizing Italian musician and the rowdy audience by remaining pointedly silent—stoically guarding his words while still managing to communicate his disapproval of non-British vocal aesthetics.

And yet, elite Britons invested substantial time and money over the long eighteenth century growing and sustaining a cosmopolitan singing culture. Here the global ambitions of the island nation took the form of elusive and highly subjective knowledge necessary for aural discernment. In 1713, the Hamburg composer Johann Mattheson expressed his well-known view that, when it comes to music, "the Italians surprise, the French like to charm, the Germans study and the English reward." Less cited are some of the other distinctions he draws:

> The Italians execute the best (generally speaking), the French entertain the best, but the Germans compose and work the best, and the English are the best judges. … The first serve music, the second make a partner of it, the third analyse it and the fourth are served

[13] Pierpaolo Polzonetti, *Italian Opera in the Age of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 129.
[14] Tamara L. Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003).

> by it. The first have a lot of inventiveness, but diligently apply little diligence, and the second do not apply theirs to their utmost, the third have a lot of inventiveness and extraordinary diligence, but the fourth have the best taste.[15]

Mattheson's friend and sometimes rival, George Frederic Handel, seems to have agreed with this assessment. Having settled in London the previous year, he soon encountered (and fueled) an endless appetite for Italian *opera seria* among the Georgian elite. Over the next few decades, fortunes were made and lost as rival opera companies were founded and then went bankrupt. By the time George II (r. 1727–60) succeeded his father, opera was a robust industry—the source of near-constant controversy in matters of sex, money, and politics—that could encompass both Handel's *Giulio Cesare* (1724) at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket as well as its send up in Gay and Pepusch's *Beggar's Opera* (1728) at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Figure 0.2 Richard Newton, detail of *National Characteristics* (plate 2), 1795. Hand-colored etching. Source: The Library of Congress. *https://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b11735.*

[15] Johann Mattheson, *Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre* (1713), trans. Margaret Seares in *Johann Mattheson's Pièces de Clavecin and Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre: Mattheson's Universal Style in Theory and Practice* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 19.

Figure 0. 3 Thomas Rowlandson, *John Bull at the Italian Opera*, 1811. Hand-colored etching. Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. *https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/388770.*

With the ascendence of the long-reigning George III (r. 1760-1820) the operatic landscape had again changed. Public taste shifted from *bravura* pyrotechnics or long-winded pathos, hallmarks of the Handelian *da capo* aria, toward a sentimental mode inspired, on the stage at least, by the naturalistic approach of David Garrick. In 1764, Italian writer Giuseppe Baretti puzzled over the peculiar way that a nation so enthusiastic actually engaged with song:

> The English have a mania for singing, and for listening to singing, and pay their masters dearly; and in England, they want, despite its poor quality, music to be a part, and sometimes the most cultivated part, of a feminine education. And to top it all off with absurdity, they then listen to music with such indifference, and judging by my eyes, their faces stand firm as masks of marble even when our best *Musico* sings.[16]

By way of contrast, consider the experience of Frances Burney's provincial heiress, Cecilia, in her 1782 novel of the same name. Upon first attending the opera, she is "astonished to find the inadequate power of written music to convey any idea of vocal abilities," which causes her to lend "the whole Opera an avidity of attention almost painful from its own eagerness."[17] Her near agony can be read as the consequence of maintaining appropriate deportment in a social milieu marked, as Baretti implies, by cool detachment. Burney's heroine nevertheless finds herself "enraptured" by the "sweet" and "impassioned" singing of the castrato Gasparo Pacchierotti. She was not alone. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, a stream of renowned singers and composers from Italy ensured that the King's Theatre was not only a "prestigious cultural asset" for Londoners but "the most prestigious house in Europe."[18]

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[16] Giuseppe Baretti, *La frusta letteraria* no. 19 (1764), partially quoted and translated in Susan Rutherford, "Vocal Pedagogy and Italian Musical Migration in London, 1664–1914," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 26 (2021): 19.
[17] Frances Burney, *Cecilia, or, Memoirs of an Heiress* (London, 1782), 108–10.
[18] Ian Woodfield, *Opera and Drama in Eighteenth-Century London: The King's Theatre, Garrick, and the Business of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2; Curtis Price, "Italian Opera and Arson in Late Eighteenth-Century London," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 42 (1989): 55.

At the same time, the moral philosophy of Adam Smith, especially his essay "On the Imitative Arts," was laying the groundwork for understanding taste as culturally and socially contingent.[19] Implicit in this construction is the belief that the English consumers would naturally experience the "unproductive labor" of music differently than those living in less industrialized nations. Indeed, as Nicholas Mathew writes, this was "a moment in which it made no sense wholly to separate the demands of art from the demands of the market and when the language of aesthetics was not yet separate from the language of economics"[20] By the middle of the eighteenth century, Britain's economy was unrivaled in Europe and, as Kenneth Pomeranz has argued, across the rest of the globe.[21] This naturally bled into its cultural institutions and its aesthetic engagement with the rest of the world. An imperial aesthetic of song—and, we might say, colonial hunger for it—was fashioned through singers and audiences, disseminated from teachers to students, and circulated through an expansive republic of letters. The institution of the Grand Tour attests to the provincializing attitude toward Catholic Southern Europe as a land of cultural treasures suited to be scavenged for the edification of an elite few. The sentimental ballads of the Scottish Highlands, reproduced in collections of "national" songs, were popular enough that the castrato Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci brought his unique talents to concert performances in the 1770s and 80s of Scotch songs.[22] Around the same time, in the East India Company Raj, Anglo-Indian settlers grew so enamored of Indo-Persian songs associated with Mughal rule that they began to transcribe, arrange, and sing them in the style of concert airs.

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[19] Catherine Labio, "Adam Smith's Aesthetics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Adam Smith*, ed. Christopher J. Berry, Maria Pia Paganelli, and Craig Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 124.
[20] Nicholas Mathew, *The Haydn Economy: Music, Aesthetics, and Commerce in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 8.
[21] Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
[22] Andrew Alexander Greenwood, "Mediating Sociability: Musical Ideas of Sympathy, Sensibility, and Improvement in the Scottish Enlightenment" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012), 136–51.

This, in turn, led to the London publication of so-called "Hindustani airs" as keyboard pieces and quartets for middle class homes. Notably, these fashions took place during prolonged periods of military occupation in both Mughal India and Highland Scotland.

Distinctions of voice, song, and music were also a means through which Britons sought to dehumanize Africans and confirm slavery as a natural institution. In *The Music of Black Americans*, Eileen Southern noted that "few of the white [seventeenth-century] writers liked the sound of the African voice," which they experienced as "too loud, high-pitched, and harsh."[23] In 1790, a Jamaican slaveholder named Bryan Edwards wrote: "An opinion prevails in Europe that they possess organs peculiarly adapted to the science of musick; but this is an ill-founded idea. In vocal harmony they display neither variety nor compass. Nature seems in this respect to have dealt more penuriously by them than towards the rest of the human race."[24] Bonnie Gordon traces a similar link between the racialized "noise" of the Haitian Revolution in the policy of the early national republic and Thomas Jefferson's more localized desire to block out the "noise" of his slaves' singing with recently invented pane glass windows.[25] In both cases, the point of controversy revealed by the sources is not the sound of enslaved song per se, but the reluctance of wealthy, white, slaveholding listeners to acknowledge Black singing as music—something tantamount to recognizing the enslaved singers as fully human. Song thus assumed a place among those countless threads of culture brought together to weave a coherent narrative of British dominion, both within the ethos of Europe and across the globe.

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[23] Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971), 14.
[24] Roger D. Abrahams and John F. Szwed, *After Africa: Extracts from British Travel Accounts and Journals of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries Concerning the Slaves, Their Manners, and Customs in the British West Indies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 291.
[25] Bonnie Gordon, "What Mr. Jefferson Didn't Hear," in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. Olivia Ashley Bloechl, Melanie Diane Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 115–16.

Decolonial Perspectives

Western metaphysics has long correlated the concept of voice with identity, personhood, and presence. For Aristotle, it was among the defining features of humanity ("nothing that is without soul utters voice"), yoked to language ("voice is a sound with a meaning") and therefore to civilization.[26] Brian Kane explains that, for Aristotle, "to call a sound a voice is already to invoke the addition of meaning, of representation, of intention—of that additional something that permits a sound to cross over the threshold of *logos*."[27] Having voice meant the power to judge, to decide, and to rule over those without. We see the stakes of this distinction in the *Politics*, in which non-Greek "barbarians"—so called for their speech, which to Greek ears sounded as if they were mumbling "bar, bar, bar"—are deemed "by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master."[28] But as the power of the singing voice illustrates, while voice denotes political agency, it cannot be reduced to a metaphor. In the *Republic*, Socrates levels a severe critique against music and its destabilizing role in society. In Mladen Dolar's gloss, "the core of the danger is the voice that sets itself loose from the word, the voice beyond *logos*, the lawless voice."[29] The Platonic mandate that "the music and the rhythm must follow the speech" (later adopted by Claudio Monteverdi to drastic ends for the trajectory of vocal music) works by reaffirming the linguistic, and hence semantic voice, even in song, as inherently civilized. This is the voice of the Muses, the oracles, and indeed all the children of Apollo, whose songs enlighten as they entertain. Thus, the fundamental tautology in classic

[26] Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 2.420b; see also Shane Butler, "What Was the Voice?," in *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies*, ed. Nina Sun Eidsheim and Katherine Meizel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 6–7.
[27] Brian Kane, "The Voice: A Diagnosis," *Polygraph* 25 (2015): 95.
[28] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1252b.
[29] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 45, 105–6.

theories of voice: only the singing of humanity is musical (i.e., meaningful) and only through this mode of song can we recognize the human.

From a decolonial perspective, of course, there is nothing pre-determined or natural about this conception of voice. For example, the Anlo-speaking peoples of Ghana and Nigeria have an intensely material sense of what it means to experience voice. Anthropologist Kathryn Geurts explains that, unlike most Westerners, for whom "speaking and sensing belong in different categories," Anlo speakers "emphasize similarities and relationships in the experiences of speaking, eating, drinking, breathing, kissing, regulating saliva," as part of a sense called *sesetonume*, or "feeling in the mouth."[30] Through *sesetonume*, "disrespectful, wicked, or evil things" said by others, as well as one's "own bad speech," can cause illness in pregnant women, who suffer not from the meaning of the words but "the sensory power contained in the sounds themselves." Indeed, as Geurts points out, "the Anlo term for speech and talking (*nufofo*) contains the morpheme *fo*, which means to strike, beat, or blow." Exploring voice as an aspect of *sesetonume* thus challenges the naturalness of the Western notion of voice as something hovering between the linguistic and the material. In Mignolo's words, "to delink and decolonize means to adumbrate what was hidden and ignored—and to do this is to recognize, extend, and invent new concepts."[31] Bringing decolonial theories and methods to bear in re-imagining voice thus promises new perspectives on the history of racial formation, constructions of humanity, and musical sound under the regime of modernity.

[30] Kathryn Linn Geurts, "Consciousness as 'Feeling in the Body': A West African Theory of Embodiment, Emotion and the Making of Mind," in *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. David Howes (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2005), 175–76.
[31] Mignolo, "What Does It Mean to Be Human?," 110–15.

Over the past decade, historians of early modern music culture have begun investigating processes of racialization in earnest, especially as they relate to the historical conditions of empire, coloniality, and modernity.[32] Olivia Bloechl urges early modernists to engage with questions of racial formation and undertake their own critical analyses. Her challenge remains relevant, especially in light of the significant body of literature dealing with music's role in nineteenth-century ideologies of race and imperialism.[33] To this end, I take a cue from early modern critical race studies, which holds that "colorblind" readings of the past ultimately reify race as a set of immutable characteristics rather than an ongoing series of negotiations formed around inherited, phenotypical traits.[34] Regarding the utility of applying critical race theory to the early modern world, Noémie Ndiaye reminds us that "race is not the same thing in the fifteenth and in the twenty-first centuries, or in Spain and in India, but it *does* the same thing: it hierarchizes difference in the service of power."[35] In historicizing the singing voice as a site of practice and as an object of knowledge, I show how Britons employed practices of vocality and aurality, as well as discourse relating to song and singing, in what Aníbal Quijano describes as the "naturalization of colonial relations between Europeans and non-Europeans," but that we can name as the social constitution of whiteness.[36]

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[32] A model approach can be seen in Maria Ryan's dissertation on Black music-making in the British colonial Caribbean, which employs visual depictions of Black performances to circumvent the dearth of sources in the written archive of Black women musicians, effectively situating the realities of racial difference (in this case exemplified by skin color) at the forefront of her study, see Maria TN Ryan, "Hearing Power, Sounding Freedom: Black Practices of Listening, Ear-Training, and Music-Making in the British Colonial Caribbean" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2021).

[33] Olivia A. Bloechl, "Race, Empire, and Early Music," in Bloechl, Lowe, and Kallberg, *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, 77–107.

[34] On the origins and directions of early modern critical race studies, see Peter Erickson and Kim F. Hall, "'A New Scholarly Song': Rereading Early Modern Race," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 67 (2016): 1–13.

[35] Noémie Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 6.

[36] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1 (2000): 533-34.

Running parallel to this trend is the gradual move toward global music history. In *What Is Global History?* Sebastian Conrad offers a comprehensive sense of the field and its influences. To address the question of his title, he differentiates between several related approaches, including comparative history, transnational history, and postcolonial studies, each of which attempts to move beyond the "container" thinking that he sees as endemic within the modern historical discipline.[37] Conrad thus advocates global history as a solution to the twin problems he sees at the root of the modern historical discipline: its default focus on the nation-state as a category of analysis and its pervasive eurocentrism, by which he means both a fixation on Europe as a locus of study and the mutually reinforcing ethnocentric mindset.[38] These are, of course, problems that have traditionally plagued music studies, as well—musicology and music theory most obviously, but also ethnomusicology—which is why David Irving has advocated for music historians to embrace global history as "the study of large-scale patterns and processes that elucidate the actions and structures underpinning localized or shared practices."[39] Conrad goes further, though, by defining the global–historical approach in terms of perspective rather than scope, with the express interest of integration between the macro and micro levels. A relevant example here is Emily Wilbourne and Suzanne Cusick's recent co-edited *Acoustemologies in Contact*, which brings together works that collectively span the globe but all remain bound by a dual commitment to the intimate and the transnational, the vibrational force of a sounding body and the tectonic shocks initiated in the colonial encounter.[40] Central to this approach, then, is

[37] Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 45.
[38] Conrad, *What Is Global History?*, 3–4.
[39] David R. M. Irving, "Rethinking Early Modern 'Western Art Music': A Global History Manifesto," *IMS Musicological Brainfood* 3 (2019): 7–8.
[40] Emily Wilbourne and Suzanne G. Cusick, eds., *Acoustemologies in Contact: Sounding Subjects and Modes of Listening in Early Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2021).

"the need to treat the voice as a historical and anthropological object: something locatable within a particular time and place."[41] In keeping with their disposition, I draw on methods from microhistory, pioneered and modeled in the work of scholars like Alan Taylor, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, and Carlo Ginzberg in the 1980s and 90s, but adopted (and adapted) widely in the intervening decades. Despite critiques of such methods as unrepresentative, historian Jill Lepore maintains that by focusing on the individual as an exemplary case, the microhistorian brings a unique perspective to larger, equally elusive questions.[42]

Navigating the Voice

Contemporary debates over the ontology of voice can be traced to the psychoanalytic poststructuralism of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida in the mid-twentieth century. Derrida's extended critique of "phonocentrism," the promotion of sounded over written language, argued that venerating the voice (as opposed to the written word) served only to reify what he understood to be a false dichotomy between written and spoken language. This view pushed against the Rousseauian tradition of thought that celebrated the primordial vocal utterance. Derrida thought the phonocentric tendency that he identified in modern philosophy was little more than a vain search by modern society for an "authentic" means of expression. Alice Lagaay explains the Lacanian voice as *objet a* as "the empty placeholder that represents the limit of that which is thinkable or expressible in discourse," not entirely separate from "the actual physical processes to which they owe their abstract existence."[43] In this work, voice exists almost entirely

[41] Amanda J. Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 9.
[42] Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *The Journal of American History* 88 (2001): 141.
[43] Lagaay, "Between Sound and Silence," 60.

apart from the body—or, to the extent that it may be embodied, as the extension of a universalized white, male subject.[44] For Dolar, building on what he terms Lacan's "object-voice," voice proves frustrating precisely in its status as an ethereal, even acousmatic, entity untethered from the body.[45] Concerned primarily with the unattainability of the voice as *objet a* (beyond language, both excess and residue), his field-defining work *A Voice and Nothing More* attempts to construct a coherent philosophy of that object-voice. Dolar's ideas have had a profound impact on scholarship concerned with the uncanny nature of a voice apart from its source, whether ventriloquized or more generally acousmatic.[46]

Music scholars began to engage with the musical voice as an object of study and critique at the turn of the century, though the stage was set for them by Roland Barthes, who had reintroduced the voice to music—and to the body—in his oft-cited essay "The Grain of the Voice."[47] Extending musical criticism beyond "the adjective," he reflects on the embodied nature of the singing voice, offering up memories of his own teacher, Swiss baritone Charles Panzéra, and the ubiquitous (though more abstract) Russian bass as exemplars of the "materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue." Barthes savors the phonic elements of song, what he terms the "geno-song," following Julia Kristeva. His search for what he terms "the body in the voice" thus anticipated the eventual turn to the body in mainstream writing on voice. In *For More than One*

[44] For an embodied (and race-conscious) reading of voice in psychoanalysis, see Clara Hunter Latham, "Rethinking the Intimacy of Voice and Ear," *Women & Music* 19 (2015): 125-32; Latham traces a lineage from earlier orgasm-inducing treatments for "female hysteria," in which doctors laid hands on their female patients, to the Freudian "talking cure." She argues that the role of voice as an embodied connection between doctor and patient arose out of Freud's own fraught position as a Jew in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. The voice thus appears as both the psychoanalyst's answer to racially based sexual panic and an early form of respectability politics.
[45] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 103.
[46] Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[47] Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice" (1977), in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012), 504–10.

Voice, Adriana Cavarero presents voice as a thoroughly embodied phenomenon, the complex interplay of lungs, larynx, and lips resulting in what she calls a "vocal ontology of uniqueness."[48] At the same moment in which Dolar and Cavarero appeared, music studies began to embrace voice, adumbrated by Carolyn Abbate's "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women"; her later meditation on "drastic" and "gnostic" meaning is concerned with the performed—which is to say, embodied—musical event as it unfolds over time.[49] A moving event, rather than static object, the moment of musical (vocal) production for Abbate is self-contradictory. Relatedly, Laurie Stras has shown how voice offers not only semantic but also sensual meanings. Her study of vocal disability and its relationship to notions of personal authenticity presents the case of Maria Callas, whose vocal damage in later years marked her as a tragic figure for many opera fans. As was the case with the gay "opera queens" explored elsewhere by Wayne Koestenbaum, Callas's most ardent devotees latched onto this sound, identifying with what they perceived as an inner turmoil made audible through her singing.[50] Stras demonstrates how the physical body is strongly implicated in the reception of a singing voice, but also how those meanings are manipulated by professionals to artistic and economic ends.

With the advent of what Kane has dubbed the "vocal turn," theories of voice have increasingly been attuned to materiality, even as they continue to draw from and engage with the Aristotelean metaphysical voice and the Lacanian object-voice.[51] In *Sensing Sound*, Nina Sun

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[48] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 173–74.
[49] Carolyn Abbate, "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women," in *Musicology and Difference*, ed. Ruth Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 225-59; Carolyn Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 505–36.
[50] Laurie Stras, "The Organ of the Soul: Voice, Damage, and Affect," in *Sounding Off: Theorizing Disability in Music*, ed. Joseph Straus (New York: Routledge, 2006), 173–84; Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001).
[51] Kane, "The Voice: A Diagnosis," 91.

Eidsheim re-imagines the experience of voice as multisensorial, and specifically vibrational.[52] While her study is limited by its arcane methods (singing underwater) and emphasis on high modernist art music, it nevertheless significantly expands the possibilities for voice beyond the realm of hearing and toward a more fully embodied phenomenon. More than just a sensible connection, though, voice imparts sensual as well as semantic meaning. Eidsheim turns to the racialized voice in *The Race of Sound*, theorizing the "vocal moment" as a "thick event," the result of multivalent and highly contingent vocal-aural processes. In this way, she counters long-held assumptions (as typified in Cavarero's writing) about the interiority of voice.[53] As in Katherine Meizel's *Multivocality*, vocality is thus relocated as knowledge within and between bodies, expressed and experienced through and beyond sound.[54]

At this point, nearly a decade has passed since Martha Feldman cogently summarized the emergent voice studies as a capacious field of interdisciplinary inquiry in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* Fall 2015 colloquy entitled "Why Voice Now?":

> Not just fully embodied, [voice] transcends the conventional body to reveal what is most intimate and nuanced in nonconforming bodies, post-human bodies, even holographic bodies, such that the boundaries of the voice are themselves without evident limit. More material and technological, the voice now participates in speech and exceeds it. … Voice is nothing if not boundless, furtive, and migratory, sometimes maddeningly so.[55]

Feldman puts many of these ideas into play with her wide-ranging study *The Castrato*, in which she masterfully constructs an archeology of a voice type lost to history.[56] She marshals a

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[52] Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).
[53] Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 5.
[54] Katherine Meizel, *Multivocality: Singing on the Borders of Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
[55] Martha Feldman, convenor, "Colloquy: Why Voice Now?," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68 (2015): 656.
[56] Martha Feldman, *The Castrato: Reflections on Natures and Kinds* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

sprawling archive—including live accounts, fiction writing, training manuals, and even some early recordings—alongside adept readings of psychoanalytic, anthropological, and gender theory though, importantly, her argument remains tethered to the specific bodies from which those original voices emerged. The result is a sophisticated account of the circumstances under which the castrato emerged, flourished, and withdrew into memory. Apropos also is James Davies's contribution to the colloquy noted above: "we build worlds around voices, worlds at once cultural-technological and natural-biological. … Voices do not only come from bodies or nature; bodies—our very natures—also come from voices."[57] These ideas follow from his pursuit of the musicking body as a historically contingent collection of muscles and techniques, of nature and culture, in *Romantic Anatomies of Performance*. Davies focuses on the sites of sound production (singers and pianists, voices and hands) and the unavoidable political implications of music produced in the transnational networks between London and Paris during the 1830s.[58] By framing the trials of the body—the trauma of shattered bones and fragile cords—as transformative points of degeneration and regeneration, he complicates the idea of an essential, unchanging vocal identity as representative of a person or public persona.

In their recent volume *The Voice as Something More*, Feldman and her co-editor Judith Zeitlin offer a follow-up that suggests the breakneck pace with which the small field is developing: "Voices nowadays are caught up in fundamentally different realms of discourse, to say nothing of practice and culture: between sounding and nonsounding voices (phonic and "aphonic"), material and nonmaterial ones, between voice as a literal phenomenon and voice as a

[57] James Q. Davies, "Voice Belongs," in "Colloquy: Why Voice Now?," convened by Martha Feldman, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68 (2015): 681.
[58] James Q. Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

metaphorical one."[59] Now trending away from the metaphysical, beyond embodiment, current research positions voice as culturally and historically contingent yet recognizable (if not always legible) across time and space. In their recent articulation of "Cantologies," Michael Denning and Gary Tomlinson have critiqued voice studies for an approach that "recaptures the expressive and embodied elements of sounding practices" by reducing song "to the body, to affect, and to a performing present."[60] My approach to voice is inherently tied to bodies and to the ephemeral moment of song as something produced and consumed in real time, but in keeping with the spirit of Denning and Tomlinson's implicit injunction, it also situates voice as something betwixt and between, both of and beyond the "performing present."

The title of this dissertation, *Navigating Voices*, plays on two metaphorical meanings of navigation. Firstly, in addition to the position of voice as betwixt and between embodiment and ephemerality, the voice itself performs navigations itself. Navigation or management of the *passaggio* between head and chest voices is an essential aspect of *bel canto* singing, the goal of which is ultimately to naturalize and neutralize the break between voices—to make vocal liminality imperceptible. The second metaphorical usage refers to the way that the historical subjects of this project, all of whom occupied socially or racially liminal spaces within the British Empire, used vocality and aurality as a means of traversing the social landscape of late Georgian Britain. For these figures, song was not purely a source of entertainment or an object of study. As this dissertation shows, singing constituted a social relationship enacted between voice and ear and, as such, engendered social categories including race, gender, and class. In turning to global studies, then, it not only broadens the scope for cultural histories of voice by considering

[59] Feldman and Zeitlin, "The Clamor of Voices."
[60] Michael Denning and Gary Tomlinson, "Cantologies," *Representations* 154 (2021): 114.

singing culture in London as only one (albeit central) node in a larger, transregional network that was by necessity also discursive and detached from the body. I find a methodological model in Amanda Weidman's anthropological work on voice in modern India. Specifically, I adopt her approach of seeking out "moments when self-conscious discourse about the voice arises" in order to "consider the way [that] sounds and material practices of voice are put into service in the creation of ideologies about the voice."[61] Applying these methodological insights from voice and decolonial studies within a global perspective, this dissertation traces the discursive and embodied networks engendered by singers, teachers, audiences, and writers in Jamaica and Edinburgh, London and Lucknow, Naples and New South Wales.

Overview of Chapters

The following chapters reveal how discourses and practices of voice were put to work in defining the human, delineating the self, and navigating distinctions of race, nation, and power. The first part of the dissertation, "Global Intimacies," focuses on two separate instances of Britons listening to and engaging in foreign vocal practices. Delving into the aesthetics of Camp and Orientalism, these chapters elucidate the cultural work of vocality and aurality. Chapter one, "Imperial Camp," re-evaluates the listening practices of the writer William Thomas Beckford, who descended from a powerful slaveholding family in Jamaica, to examine the colonial implications of his fixation with the castrato voice. To mark his twenty-first birthday, Beckford's custodians commissioned an occasional cantata from Venanzio Rauzzini and enlisted Gasparo Pacchierotti and Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci to sing. *Il tributo* (1781) was a didactic work aimed at "straightening out" the young man's perceived effeminacy and apathy over the business

[61] Weidman, *Singing the Classical*, 12.

of empire, both of which were especially problematic given his fraught position as a racialized "white Creole." Ultimately, I argue, *Il tributo* failed to enforce imperial race/sex proscriptions because Beckford's Camp mode of aurality undercut its moral imperatives.

The second chapter, "Colonial Ventriloquy," turns to the East India Company Raj, offering a new reading of Anglo-Indian Sophia Plowden's performances of Awadhi courtly songs, what were known to Europeans as "Hindustani airs," in late Mughal India. My approach takes into account the imbalances and ambivalences of singing across cultures in the colonial encounter as well as the Orientalist policies of the colonial government. In contrast to the hereditary courtesans who sang and danced to the diverse repertoire of Indo-Persian songs, Plowden's process of acquiring, learning, and singing them was heavily mediated by local musicians, teachers, and other interlocuters. As I show, the resulting practice of song enacted a colonial ventriloquy--the inverse of colonial mimicry--that failed to capture the necessary gestural, bodily, and social elements.

The second half of the dissertation, "Transnational Exchanges," shifts focus to the contribution of musical voice in constructing historical knowledge and new racial frameworks. Chapter three, "Musical Notes & Planter Histories," considers the ideas of a different William Beckford (cousin to the subject of the first chapter) on the enslaved singing practices on his Jamaican plantations in relation to the music-historical research of his friend and mutual patron, Charles Burney. The two had originally met in Rome in 1770, and Burney was among the few who continued to visit Beckford as he sat in Fleet Prison upon returning from Jamaica heavily in debt. In his *Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica* (1790), written in an attempt to pay off his debts, Beckford aestheticizes Black voices vis-à-vis what he calls Burney's "elegant and learned" *General History of Music* (1776–1789). He attempts to delineate humanity through

song in order to both re-consume enslaved Black singing into the British imperial soundscape and reveal the "superiority" of white European civilization. While Beckford's and Burney's respective works on music stand a world apart in scope, method, and aim, both, I claim, were grounded in projects of colonial modernity and the ongoing, racialized construction of the Human that lie at the origins of modern musicology.

The final chapter, "Global Journeys & Vocal Pedagogies," looks at the pedagogical and global-historical writing of Isaac Nathan, an English Jew (later Australian émigré) in light of his cantorial training under his father as well as his lessons under the Anglo/Scots-Italian music master Domenico Corri. Although Nathan never converted to Christianity or abandoned the cultural ethos of Judaism, transitioning from *meshorrer* (cantor's assistant) training to the Italian (*bel canto*) school he acquired a second vocal patrimony, not by birth but by study. The chapter considers this new lineage through Corri's ballad opera *The Travellers* (1806), which traces the supposed birth and evolution of music from East to West, alongside Nathan's vocal treatise-*cum*-global history of music, *Musurgia Vocalis* (1836). It re-imagines the decolonial notion of "border thought" as a praxis of "border song" to better understand Nathan's multilocal legacy of voice amid Britain's expanding intra-European dominance during the Regency era. Together, these latter two chapters trace out a genealogy of early modern "global" musicology that highlights the narrative trajectories and strategic silences of those late Georgian histories that aim for completeness in historical or geographical scope.

PART I

GLOBAL INTIMACIES

CHAPTER 1. IMPERIAL CAMP

This our dear Youth is a Son worthy of such a Father. To his chaste Ear sweet Song (whether in heroic or pastoral Measure) in equally acceptable.

Published translation of Rauzzini's *Il tributo* (1781)

Of course, not all seriousness that fails can be redeemed as Camp. Only that which has the proper mixture of the exaggerated, the fantastic, the passionate and the naïve.

Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp" (1964)

Taming the Hippogriff

In early March 1781, the celebrated soprano castrato Gasparo Pacchierotti wrote from Venice to the "Gentilhomme Englois" William Thomas Beckford, who was then on the Parisian leg of his Grand Tour: "I have finished my duties, and I would like, without the help of the Hippogriff, to fly to your side, if I could, then continue the journey with you as far as London, but my duties in Mantua (already contracted) forbid me, so that yearned for moment will have to be deferred until next Summer."[1] The singer had only left London the previous July after two successful seasons (1778–1780) at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket.[2] Now back in his native Italy, he had just completed one premiere at the Teatro San Benedetto and was moving on to another. Beckford, for his part, echoed the sentiment in a letter from Paris around the same time,

[1] "Io ho terminare qui le mie incombenze, e sarei voglioso senza l'aiuto dell'Ippogrifo di volarmene al suo fianco, se potessi, indi proseguirei il viaggio con Lei sin a Londra ma l'impegno di Mantova già contratto, me'l vieta, quindi converrà differire sino l'Estate prossima il sospirato momento." Pacchierotti to Beckford, 3 March 1781, fols. 7–8r, MS Beckford c. 34, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries. Incorrectly dated 1782 in the collection. The letter is one of five pieces of extant correspondence between the two from October 1780 and June 1781, a period corresponding roughly to Beckford's Grand Tour in the year leading up to his twenty-first birthday. See appendix.

[2] Stephen A. Willier, "Gasparo Pacchierotti in London: The 1779-80 Season in Susanna Burney's 'Letter-Journal,'" *Studi musicali* 29 (2000): 251–91.

urging his friend to "relinquish [his] journey to Mantua & return without delay, to England."[3] It was an easy request for the young milord to make, having already enjoyed Pacchierotti's singing and company in Lucca and Venice. Besides, only six months from becoming one of the wealthiest commoners in Europe, he surely failed to grasp the need for a working musician to honor his contractual obligations. Pacchierotti would allude to that fortune, and the lifestyle it enabled for those in its orbit, in his last missive to Beckford before leaving Italy in June, by thanking his host for such "benevolence" as promised him a "new way of living" in England.[4] Beckford could remain content in the knowledge that the castrato would soon depart for England, magical help or none.

In shunning the hippogriff, Pacchierotti may have recalled the troubles it had caused for the Saracen knight Ruggiero in Ariosto's colonial epic, *Orlando furioso* (1516/32).[5] Promising the romance of far-off places, the creature offered a species of enchantment designed for a global age, but as the hybrid of a lion, eagle, and horse, it also symbolized inescapable bodily difference—a fantastic birth issuing from a timeless and exotic land—much the same role played by the Italian castrato in England.[6] By September, Pacchierotti had arrived at Fonthill Splendens, Beckford's estate located about one hundred miles outside of London, where he was slated to

[3] I have been unable to establish if Beckford's letter is a response to Pacchierotti's correspondence from March 3rd or if he sent it prior to receiving that letter. Beckford to Pacchierotti, 12 March 1781, fol. 4v, Bodleian MS Beckford c. 34; a few weeks earlier, Beckford had wondered: "Why cannot I mount the Hippogriff and fly with my volumes [of "oriental literature"] to Naples?" Beckford to Lady Hamilton, Paris, 20 February 1781, in *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill*, ed. Lewis Saul Benjamin (London: W. Heinemann, 1910), 103.

[4] "La sua Benevolenza mi promette in Londra questa volta: un nuovo modo d'esistere, ed io la conto già, come la massima delle mie felicità." Pacchierotti to Beckford, 17 June 1781, fol. 9r, Bodleian MS Beckford c. 34.

[5] Over the course of the tale, the creature is tamed by a Muslim sorcerer in Africa before carrying Ruggiero—raised by the same sorcerer but born of the forbidden love between a European Crusader and an African princess—around the world, including the mystical Indian island on which he is imprisoned and the realm of a sea monster to rescue a Chinese princess. The story was a perennial subject for *opere serie* like Johann Adolph Hasse's *Il Ruggiero* (1771), in which Pacchierotti had sung the titular role in 1772, see Stephen A. Willier, "A Celebrated Eighteenth-Century Castrato: Gasparo Pacchierotti's Life and Career," *The Opera Quarterly* 11 (1995): 111.

[6] Colin Jager, *Unquiet Things: Secularism in the Romantic Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 146–147.

premiere a work decidedly different from the usual Metastasian fare. In the Palladian great hall of Fonthill he was joined by famed alto castrato Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci to present *Il tributo*, a cantata composed by a third eminent castrato, Venanzio Rauzzini, in honor of their patron's twenty-first birthday. The spectacle would have been out of reach for many aristocrats, but it must have seemed eminently reasonable for Beckford, who was enamored of castrato voices. More to the point, such a costly affair was probably expected from the heir to a massive colonial fortune in sugar and slaves.

While Beckford never set foot on Jamaican soil, for generations his family had presided over the island as "sugar barons" in a global empire.[7] Over time they shaped the colony's nascent economic, political, and racial systems to their benefit. When the youngest Beckford reached his majority and gained full control of his inheritance on 29 September 1781, he claimed ownership of more than two-thousand enslaved Afro-Caribbeans toiling across 22,000 acres in Jamaica.[8] To be "as wealthy as a West Indian," as the saying went, was to have unprecedented access to capital only attainable through the Caribbean sugar industry. But with West Indian wealth came a social hazard—the racialized taint of slavery and the colonies—that made the money less-than-completely respectable, if not less spendable. Consequently, metropolitan Britons tended to consider members of the *nouveau riche* planter class—interchangeably called West Indians or white Creoles—less-than-fully English, whether at home or abroad.[9] White

[7] On the use of "sugar barons" to describe the planter aristocracy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Matthew Parker, *The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire, and War in the West Indies* (New York: Walker & Co., 2011); and for an overview of the Beckford family's ascent to power in Jamaica, see Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister of the London Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 10–23.
[8] Gauci, *William Beckford*, 148.
[9] Creole in the eighteenth-century British context does not refer to mixed-race parentage, as in the modern American context, but a person of European (i.e., "Old World") descent born or living in the Americas, specifically the Caribbean. The term came from the distinction, applied by Portuguese slavers, between enslaved peoples born from Africa and the Americas. In either case, it was theoretically a neutral descriptor but often with negative

consternation over their place and influence in the empire was predicated on a contemporary understanding of "human variety" that was not principally located in skin color or other phenotypical traits, but readily perceived via temperament, civility, and other socio-cultural distinctions. As Roxanne Wheeler has shown, well into the eighteenth century, what would later constitute racial difference was largely correlated to the classical notion of complexion, a holistic category resulting from the effect of regional climate on one's internal humors. Individual complexion, therefore, was subject to change depending on geography, station, and a host of other factors.[10] Neither black-skinned nor of African descent, white West Indians nevertheless underwent a process of racialization within metropolitan Britain that left them occupying an indefinite zone outside modern whiteness, an emergent category they themselves had pioneered in order to distinguish themselves from those they enslaved.[11] Not unlike the position of the castrato, the white West Indian occupied a fraught social position contingent on a combination of geography and gender performance. And both served as proxies in a culture war over Britain's desire for global dominance and racial homogeneity.

Because the younger Beckford was born in England to Maria Hamilton, who descended from the Scottish Earls of Abercorn, he was not derided in the same way as his émigré father, and posterity has largely relegated his connection to Jamaica to a biographical footnote. His

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connotations. It is best distinguished in the Spanish context: a *criollo* referred to a Spaniard born in the New World, whereas a *mestizo* (like the French *métis*) was a person of mixed European and indigenous American parentage. For a brief overview of the history of creolization in the Americas, see Ralph Bauer and José Antonio Mazzotti, eds., introduction to *Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas: Empires, Texts, Identities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 3–7.

[10] Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 21–28.

[11] Trevor Burnard, "West Indian Identity in the Eighteenth Century," in *Assumed Identities: The Meanings of Race in the Atlantic World*, ed. John D. Garrigus and Christopher Morris (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 71–87; and Gikandi, "Unspeakable Events: Slavery and White Self-Fashioning," chap. 3 and "Taste and the Taint of Slavery," chap. 4 in *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*.

present-day infamy stems instead from his architectural follies and the scandal of his sexuality following his notorious "outing" by his young lover's uncle.[12] When reckoned as a global figure, it is typically in the role of amateur Orientalist: pioneering author of the gothic novel *The History of the Caliph Vathek* (1782), eccentric collector of Asian art and artifacts; re-enactor of Eastern fantasies.[13] But his Creole ancestry and the colonial source of his wealth remain essential to understanding how his behavior toward Italianate music and the castrato voice was marked as excessive, effeminate, and inherently un-English. Throughout his life Beckford diligently avoided the reality that his wealth was produced by the continued forced labor of enslaved Jamaicans. Simon Gikandi reads this as a pattern of colonial disavowal, arguing that "colonial origins aggravated [his] sense of cultural isolation and alienation as much as his sexuality and behavior did."[14] The specter of transatlantic slavery haunted Beckford's place, and influenced the meaning of race in England.

This chapter confronts that legacy dialectically through what Gikandi names as the eighteenth century's "culture of taste."[15] It unravels the threads between Beckford's intimate auditory relationship with the castrato voice and his tenuous relation to Englishness and to the British Empire. In contrast to most previous writing on Beckford, it takes his biography as a jumping-off point, positioning him as a meaningful vector from which to explore the relationship between whiteness, music, and empire in late eighteenth-century Britain. Starting from Emily

[12] The first biographical study of Beckford was Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill, Author of "Vathek"* (London, 1859), compiled partly through interviews with an aging Beckford. The subsequent historiography is littered with rumors and apocrypha that can often be sourced to Beckford's self-mythologizing. Famously, he claimed to have taken early music lessons from Mozart, to whom he gave the idea for "Non più andrai" from *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786).
[13] For a recent take on Beckford's Orientalism and West Indian slaveholding, see Laurent Châtel, *William Beckford: The Elusive Orientalist* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2016), 46–49.
[14] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, 133.
[15] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, 17.

Wilbourne's elucidation of *melophilia*, which she reworks as the desire for musical voice, the chapter teases out the competing "drastic" and "gnostic" meanings (to borrow from Carolyn Abbate) of the 1781 performance of *Il tributo*.[16] It also takes up the project begun in a recent special issue of the journal *Aphra Behn Online*, critically applying the notion of Camp to instances of eighteenth-century cultural production and consumption.[17]

In making recourse to Camp, I mean to invoke a mode of aestheticism that is notoriously difficult to define but lucidly articulated by Susan Sontag, in her influential essay "Notes on Camp" (1964), as a quality of *failed seriousness* on an outrageous scale, sensible to those ("mainly homosexual") with a particular "way of seeing."[18] To inhabit the demi-monde of Camp is to sustain a love for the artificial and the unnatural, to understand all of life as an exercise in transvestitism, and to believe that the character of a person or thing is wholly discoverable at its surface. Thus, the Camp allure of the actor *en travesti* does not depend on the degree of verisimilitude on stage but is rooted, instead, in the knowledge that their performance consists of an elevated version of everyday life. While the cultural phenomenon of Camp may have reached a saturation point in the mid-twentieth century, its origins have can be traced back two centuries earlier, in what Sontag calls the English taste for "Gothic novels, Chinoiseries, [and] artificial ruins."[19] Consistent with her world of reference, my analysis of eighteenth-century Camp taste

[16] Emily Wilbourne, "The Queer History of the Castrato," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Queerness*, ed. Fred Everett Maus and Sheila Whiteley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 448–49; Carolyn Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 505–36.
[17] Ula Lukszo Klein and Emily MN Kugler, "Introduction," in "Eighteenth-Century Camp," special issue, *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts 1640-1830* 9 (2019): 1–10.
[18] Throughout this chapter, I follow Sontag's convention of treating Camp as a proper noun to distinguish it from the verb form "to camp." Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp" (1964), in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 53–65.
[19] Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 56; Mark Booth finds one origin of Camp style in the ethos of the Duke d'Orleans (brother to Louis XIV) at Versailles, see "Campe-Toi! On the Origins and Definitions of Camp" (1983), in Cleto, *Queer Aesthetics,* 76–79.

attends to the global–colonial reach of Great Britain, which stretches from the artifice of Orientalism to the melodrama of the Scottish Highlands and the exaggerations of the castrato-filled *opera seria*. I view Camp as a product of colonial modernity, an aesthetic of the fantastic and the foreign that constitutes, to varying degrees, the non-normative, the un-masculine, and the queer. Camp functions in this chapter as a theoretical prism refracting both coloniality and queerness to adduce Beckford's unique "way of hearing" castrato song. It emerges as a mode of engagement with the Italian castrato and with the British Empire, an aesthetic forcefield within which Beckford could hold the contradictory meanings of *Il tributo*, as both written "work" and enacted musical performance, in the same space as they supported his rite of cultural initiation.

Effeminacies of Empire

Georgian England enjoyed unprecedented commercial growth and imperial expansion leading to increased (though unevenly distributed) wealth and power on the global stage. In light of colonial encounters, continental conflicts, and scientific developments—all contributing to a general remapping of the human body and traditional divisions of labor—Britons expended a great deal of energy reevaluating social codes governing behavior and identity. Between the Restoration and the Regency, Britons continually pointed to masculinity as a site of crisis. Then as now, definitions of the masculine, and proposed solutions to its deterioration, often began and ended by condemning the effeminate. Defined exclusively by what it lacked, effeminacy was "stable … in its designation of deviance [from masculinity], yet mutable in the content of its deviation," writes Sally O'Driscoll.[20] As many scholars have shown, only under certain

[20] Sally O'Driscoll, "The Molly and the Fop: Untangling Effeminacy in the Eighteenth Century," in *Developments in the Histories of Sexualities: In Search of the Normal, 1600-1800*, ed. Chris Mounsey (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 148.

conditions was it linked explicitly to sodomy, although those conditions swelled as the eighteenth century wore on.[21] Pamphleteers and polemicists denounced the effeminacy they perceived in modern consumer culture and in the manners, clothing, and trends imported from the continent or the colonies. They agonized over the emergence of a tamer society that produced soft boys with an excess of sensibility. And they perceived many of these faults at the Italian opera.[22] With classical Rome serving as the model of civic virtue and an historic warning against cultural decline, effeminacy threatened to shake the very foundations of the empire by undermining its values, weakening its defenses, and softening its population.[23] Anathema to the national character, it blurred the boundaries separating the free and hardy spirit of England from the decadence, self-indulgence, and tyranny endemic to Catholic southern Europe and the Orient.

Two major trends marked the changing landscape of manhood over the long eighteenth century, both observable in the Italian opera house. First was the dramatic reorientation from a masculine ideal founded in rough-and-tumble pugnacity and rakishness toward one of politesse and sensibility. The latter archetype was embodied by the refined gentleman of culture, more

[21] A classic example of conflating same-sex desire with effeminacy is found in the erotic novel known as *Fanny Hill*, in which the eponymous heroine spies two young men in the throes of passion and learns from her employer "*that* whatever effect this infamous passion had in other ages, and other countries, it seem'd a peculiar blessing on our air and climate, that there was a plague-spot visibly imprinted on all that are tainted with it, in this nation at least … that, in fine, they were scarce less execrable than ridiculous in their monstrous inconsistency, of loathing and contemning women, and all at the same time, apeing their manners, airs, lisp, skuttle, and, in general, all their little modes of affectation, which become them at least better, than they do these unsex'd male-misses." John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (London, 1749), 2: 182. Recent queer readings of this passage include George E. Haggerty, "The History of Homosexuality Reconsidered," in Mounsey, *Developments in the Histories of Sexualities*, 9–12; Thomas Alan King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750: Queer Articulations* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 2: 28–38; and David M. Robinson, *Closeted Writing and Lesbian and Gay Literature: Classical, Early Modern, Eighteenth-Century* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 37–47.

[22] Helen Berry, "Gender, Sexuality, and the Consumption of Musical Culture in Eighteenth-Century London," in *Remaking English Society: Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England*, ed. Steve Hindle, Alexandra Shepard, and John Walter (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2013), 65–87.

[23] On this point, see Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

inclined to conversation at the coffeehouse than a brawl at the public house.[24] Above all else, a polite and sensible man could maintain self-control, body and soul. His sober conduct echoed the condition of *sophrosyne*, or masculine temperance, idealized in Hellenistic Greece. Sophrosyne, according to Anne Carson, also implied a degree of "verbal continence" to which women could not be expected to rise.[25] Yet the modern gentleman did not shun the company of women, nor did he need them to remain silent. Rather, he sought out their increased presence in polite society for its civilizing effect. In addition to a patriotic love for country and the liberty of the "good Protestant kingdom," this new sentimental masculinity was defined by sensitivity and self-discipline. Exemplifying Britain's higher order of civilization, it necessitated deep feelings that took inspiration from sensibilities intrinsic to women as cultivated at the opera.[26]

Simultaneously, the meaning of effeminacy shifted. From signaling an overattachment to women or womanly pursuits (resulting in weakness and lack of manly vigor) it began to signal male-male attraction and sodomy. In this guise, it further implied the existence of a kind of "third sex" between male and female. Epitomizing the shift was the Camp figure of the "molly," an openly effete sodomite whose own network of underground clubs were subject to frequent police raids that occasionally led to executions.[27] And yet music culture in England had long been laden

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[24] Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2001).
[25] Anne Carson, "The Gender of Sound," *Thamyris: Mythmaking from Past to Present* 1 (1994): 17.
[26] Juliet Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity, 1745-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 56.
[27] For brief overviews of some of the masculine and effeminate archetypes during this period, see Karen Harvey, "The History of Masculinity, circa 1650–1800," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005): 296–311; Declan Kavanagh, *Effeminate Years: Literature, Politics, and Aesthetics in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2017), xvi–xxv; and O'Driscoll, "The Molly and the Fop." For the seminal discussion of the molly, see Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982); and Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); all roads here lead back to the premodern sodomite, adumbrated by Foucault as a transgressor and sinner but not a fixed social role until the advent of modern medical science in the later nineteenth century: "As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them." Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 43.

with charges of effeminacy. Linda Austern has shown, for example, that seventeenth-century Puritans understood music-making to have an effeminizing effect on men, causing them to become womanly, weak, and unsuited for masculine pursuits.[28] The full arrival of Italian *opera seria* early in the next century newly aroused old Protestant suspicions over all things luxurious, decadent, and popish in music. By the 1770s, Italy came to rival France as the major cultural foil for England's natural masculinity, with the Italian language itself implying an un-English musical effeminacy at the center of what Gillen D'Arcy reads as a relentless "anti-virtuosic discourse" in late Georgian culture.[29] Charges of effeminacy, together with fears of its threat to the nation, were increasingly and explicitly linked to the excesses of the operatic voice. For listeners to dwell on *legato* phrasing and melismatic *passaggi* at the expense of linguistic legibility meant they were elevating the carnal pleasure of music over any possible moral lessons. But as the meaning and stakes of effeminacy transitioned from indexing a nation of womanish men to an empire of effete sodomites, critics found a target for moral failure in the alluring class of castrated male singers.

Already reminiscent of the cross-dressed boys of the pre-Restoration English stage, the "baroque" bodies of castrated singers were condemned for enticing men to sodomitical acts. As Jessica Peritz has recently shown, the indefinitely extended boyishness of castrati awakened listeners not just to loci of fleshly desire but to the frozen marble figures of antiquity, views that converged in the stylized neoclassical aesthetic championed by art historian Johann Joachim

[28] Linda Phyllis Austern, "'Alluring the Auditorie to Effeminacie': Music and the Idea of the Feminine in Early Modern England," *Music & Letters* 74 (1993): 350.
[29] Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain, 1770-1840: Virtue and Virtuosity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 88–117.

Winckelmann and by the antiquarian (and Beckford's own relation) Sir William Hamilton.[30] In this sense, the musicking body of the castrato served its audience as both an object of lust and an aesthetic ideal. Within this dual perspective is the pæderastic inheritance of Western aesthetics, traceable from Socrates's belief that beautiful boys were earthly manifestations of the eternal Forms, through Winckelmann's transparently erotic description of the Apollo Belvedere.[31] The anonymous *Plain Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy in England* (1728)—later reprinted in *Satan's Harvest Home* (1749)—associated men dressing foppishly and kissing one another with the impulse to "suffer [one's Soul] to be sung away by the Voices of *Italian Syrens*."[32] Alluding to the female monsters who lead sailors to watery graves, the author acknowledges the pleasure of listening to the castrato voice but warns that it should he avoided at all costs. Also important to their argument is the essential foreignness of such threats, like the fashion for men kissing each other, "brought over from Italy, (the Mother and Nurse of Sodomy)."[33] Just as it claims that Rome "sank in Honour and Success, as it rose in Luxury and Effeminacy [from] Women Singers and Eunuchs from Asia," *Plain Reasons* reminds the reader that the arrival of musically alluring eunuchs from the East or the South signals dramatic cultural shifts that portend imperial decline.[34] Effeminacy and sodomy may have pervaded the masculine landscape, but they remain scourges from without, ever-present but extrinsic.

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[30] Jessica Gabriel Peritz, "The Castrato Remains—or, Galvanizing the Corpse of Musical Style," *The Journal of Musicology* 39 (2022): 371–403; see also Roger Freitas, "The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato," *The Journal of Musicology* 20 (2003): 210–23

[31] James N. Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love: A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), 267–68; and Philip Core, "Camp: The Lie That Tells the Truth" (1984), in Cleto, *Queer Aesthetics*, 83.

[32] *Satan's Harvest Home: Or the Present State of Whorecraft* (London, 1749), 56.

[33] In France, "the Contagion is diversify'd, and the Ladies (in the Nunneries) are criminally amorous of each other, in a Method too gross for Expression. I must be so partial to my own Country-Women, to affirm, or, at least, hope they claim no Share of this Charge." *Satan's Harvest Home*, 51; see also Michèle Cohen, "Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England," in *English Masculinities, 1660-1800*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (London: Longman, 1999), 44–61.

[34] *Satan's Harvest Home*, 56.

Works like *Satan's Harvest Home* conveniently locate the sources of effeminacy in Italy, France, Asia, even the West Indies—anywhere but Britain itself. In doing, they betrayed a conception of national identity that was grounded in masculine gender performance. The correct forms and practices of masculinity functioned like a racial shibboleth for Englishness, which Kathleen Wilson argues "had emerged … as a nascent ethnicity" by the 1770s.[35] By contrast, the inability of white Creole men to govern themselves epitomized colonial effeminacy. Those who left the British Isles for the West Indies had effectively relinquished their claim to culture, nation, and race—their own contrary claims notwithstanding. They occupied a threatening middle-ground between Englishness and foreignness, revealing the fragility of racial identity outside of the metropole. Most Britons believed that prolonged exposure to the tropical climate had resulted in a population of savage, lecherous, and tyrannical planters. The constant heat of the Torrid Zones could reduce sturdy Englishmen to indolence and effeminacy, leading to a white population concerned only with the fleeting pleasures of food, sex, and violence.[36] And since *Creole* had come to signify anyone who had been born or emigrated to the West Indies, anyone could fall prey to the trap of racial degeneration. Some writers went so far as to posit that over several generations, white Britons inhabiting the West Indies would gradually transform into black Africans.[37] More commonly, they blamed the loss of masculinity on comingling and cohabitation with people of color, especially the enslaved women who were, themselves, targets of ubiquitous sexual violence perpetrated by their enslavers. Satirists in England mocked such

[35] Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire, and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13.
[36] Natalie A. Zacek, "'Banes of Society' and 'Gentlemen of Strong Natural Parts': Attacking and Defending West Indian Creole Masculinity," in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 116–33.
[37] "Human beings were now seen like plants, entirely dependent on their climate and soil." Bauer and Mazzotti, *Creole Subjects*, 5–6; see also Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 4; and Burnard, "West Indian Identity," 79.

"unnatural" attractions, portraying Creole men and Black women as animalistic and misshapen. Such representations, writes Trevor Burnard, suggested that West Indian men were "weak and probably effeminate … symbols of Britons who had lost sight of what constituted British manly behavior, especially self-control over one's appetites."[38]

The moral turpitude of white Creoles was only exacerbated by their place at the top of a slave society, a hierarchy that had not only enabled their concentrated wealth but had also granted them power over life and death for those they held in bondage. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot observes, "sugar islands" like Jamaica and Barbados "were not simply societies that had slaves: they were slave societies. Slavery defined their economic, social, and cultural organization: it was their raison d'être."[39] Even if most Britons were unbothered by the wretched conditions under which enslaved Africans were forced to live and die, they nevertheless feared the prospect of absentee planters using their considerable means to enter Parliament and reshape the country's laws to their benefit. Such anxieties were fostered by a caricature of the Creole as ill-mannered and uncharitable, as seen in comedies like Samuel Foote's *The Patron* (1764) and Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian* (1771). By the end of the century, West Indian slavery conjured in the colonial imagination the same unchecked despotism and decadence long associated with the Orient. Timothy Touchstone's moralistic verse critique, *Tea and Sugar, or the Nabob and the Creole* (1792), offloads the shame of colonial exploitation of the East and West Indies onto the simplified villain types of its title. Amid a web of anxieties over

[38] Trevor Burnard, "'A Compound Mongrol Mixture': Racially Coded Humor, Satire, and the Denigration of White Creoles in the British Empire, 1784-1834," in *Seeing Satire in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Elizabeth C. Mansfield (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013), 157; on the supposed effects of the Torrid Zones on white women, see Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 225–33; and Burnard, "West Indian Identity," 77–82.
[39] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 18.

consumerism, sovereignty, and national identity, the pseudonymous author introduces the Creole as a racial amalgam:

> Now in his native pride the Creole view,
> Slavery's *Prime Minister*, of swarthy hue
> And sickly look; of various tints combin'd,
> A true epitome of a jaundic'd mind.
> By whom the plunder'd, from Old Afric's shore
> Are made to sweat, nay bleed through every pore;
> Whom every generous feeling hath defy'd
> To whom, sweet, social love, is unally'd;
> Whose flinty heart, but more obdurate mind,
> No Woe can penetrate—No Virtue find;
> Who, under *British* Laws,—with grief I speak,
> A greater tyrant is, than *Algier's* Chief.[40]

Touchstone's villainous Creole exhibits multiple complexions—he is both "swarthy" (dark) and "sickly" (pale), and his "jaundic'd mind," signifying his embittered mental state, implies the yellowing skin associated with unbalanced humors. His outward appearance is thus symptomatic of internal degeneration, a moral illness that has sapped his empathy. In its place has grown a genius for plunder and tyranny against which even the rule of law is useless so long as chattel slavery is sanctioned by the government. Notably, the figure of the African is invoked as both victim and aggressor, first as "the plunder'd" and later as the Algerian "tyrant" with whom our main villain is compared, another nod to the Creole's racial otherness.[41] This is by no means to defend West Indian slaveholders, but to point out that their marginalization in Georgian Britain played out as a process of racialization, one predicated on a belief in the inherent superiority of English culture and of Englishness, a category in which the white Creole did not fit.

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[40] Timothy Touchstone [psued.], *Tea and Sugar, or the Nabob and the Creole; a Poem, in Two Cantos* (London, 1792), 11–12; on Touchstone's poem, see also Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 82.

[41] On the popular image of Ottoman Algiers, see Linda Colley, "The Crescent and the Sea," chap. 4, in *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600–1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002).

In fact, it was Beckford's father and namesake who best personified metropolitan concerns that wealthy planters, constituting a dangerous foreign influence, would seize political power at the heart of empire. William Beckford Sr. (1709–70), commonly called the Alderman, was born into one of Jamaica's wealthiest and most powerful families, with his father having been for a time Speaker of the island's assembly, but at nine he was sent to be educated in England. Throughout his early adulthood, he traveled between England and Jamaica, but by 1747 had entered the British Parliament for Shaftesbury.[42] Seeking ever greater influence, he accomplished a feat of political alchemy, parlaying colonial wealth into imperial power by becoming first an Alderman (1752) and then a Member of Parliament (1754) for London. In 1762, he was elected Lord Mayor of London and recorded an income of £33,600 (approximately £3.5 million today) from his sugar plantations in Jamaica, where he was the island's largest slaveholder and landowner.[43] Within one generation of establishing a base in England, he had become a widely admired politician in the heart of the empire, and all but guaranteed ennoblement for his English-born son. But his rise was not without controversy. His critics dubbed him Alderman "Sugarcane" and "Rumford," ridiculing him for his Jamaican accent and for his hypocrisy in championing the English poor while keeping thousands of Africans in bondage. In 1762, an attack in the *Auditor* wondered "what regard" he could have for the "prerogative of a King" in England after enslaving "black princes for his menial servants, and princesses for his concubines?" Falling back on a potent gastronomic metaphor that encompassed both the soil and bodies of England, the writer warned that "the sugar-cane [would

[42] Gauci, *William Beckford*, 56.
[43] Gauci, *William Beckford*, 153; modern day equivalences derived from "National Archives Currency Converter," now defunct, originally accessed 6 February 2018, http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/default0.asp#mid.

soon] triumph over the hop-pole, and barbecued hog over the roast-beef of the English."[44] While money had gained him education, political power, and marriage to the daughter of a Scottish lord, the dignity of England's ancient gentry—achieved, in part, through their social distance from commercial or political concerns—continued to elude the grasp of a colonial upstart.

Melophilia & Masculinity

Engaging in the kind of effeminized excess associated with Catholic Europe and the Caribbean colonies would prove risky for a man of Creole stock, even one born in England. In his extravagant spending, all-consuming love for Italian opera, and defiance of compulsory heterosexuality, the younger Beckford typified the metropolitan association between conspicuous consumption and the *nouveau rich*e planter class. But he went farther than his Jamaican forebears by showing little interest in business or politics, pouring his money instead into the pursuit of aesthetic beauty. His consuming habits prompted an eccentric masculinity whose perils were keenly perceived by those around him. Already at thirteen he was forced to burn several Oriental drawings that his godfather William Pitt, Lord Chatham, deemed a corrupting influence.[45] Beckford's writing is full of sumptuous descriptions of music and the sonic environment, lingering on spectacles of voice with an erotic focus that colors his entire practice of listening. Writing from Lucca in 1780 to Frances Burney, he waxes lyrical on their mutual friend, Pacchierotti:

> [His] declamation … breathes such exalted heroism, that, forgetting my peaceful schemes, I start up, grow restless, stride about and begin to form ambitious projects. Musick raises before me a host of phantoms which I pursue with eagerness. My blood

[44] The *Auditor* quoted in Gauci, *William Beckford*, 110–11; on attacks against Alderman Beckford, see also Burnard, "West Indian Identity," 75.
[45] Laurent Châtel, "The Lures of Eastern Lore: William Beckford's Oriental 'Dangerous Supplements,'" *XVII-XVIII. Revue de La Société d'études Anglo-Américaines Des XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles* 67 (2010): 133.

> thrills in my veins, its whole current is changed and agitated. I can no longer command myself, and whilst the frenzy lasts would be willingly devoted to destruction. … You see how perfectly our modern Timotheus is my sovereign, and therefore as my friend advise him to change the louder tones of his harmony for such arcadian measures as persuade to the enjoyment of a rural life. If he takes your Council, we shall pass many an hour in the Woods and mountains, devoted to the worship of the good old Sylvanus.[46]

Luxuriating in aural submission, Beckford produces himself as Alexander the Great and Pacchierotti as the ancient singer who stirred the emperor to war. But he re-calibrates the balance of power between conqueror and musician: Pacchierotti (as Timotheus) is made sovereign while Beckford, relinquishing his crown, returns to nature at his behest. His musical writing thus displays the kind of "self-conscious eroticism" that the writer David Bergman identifies in Camp, calling into question "the naturalization of desire."[47]

One way to describe these moments is through the notion of *melophilia*, the all-consuming, even excessive, love for the voice in song. Beckford was not the only enthusiastic auditor of opera in general, nor of Pacchierotti in particular. Lady Mary Duncan, for example, was mocked and caricatured for her singular devotion to the singer. Beckford himself described her as "more preciously fond of [Pacchierotti] than a she-bear of its suckling" and Charles Lorraine Smith's "A Sunday Concert" shows a hulking Lady Mary exchanging a lustful glance with the singer, whose gargantuan form towers over his fellow performers (see figure 1.1).[48] Meanwhile, Burney describes the eponymous protagonist of her novel *Cecilia* (1782) lending Pacchierotti's performance "an avidity of attention almost painful from its own eagerness," resulting in "a sensation not more new than delightful."[49] Yet the level and tenor of scrutiny reserved for Beckford's interest in music and voice during his lifetime and since is singular.

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[46] Beckford to Burney, Lucca, 1 October 1780, in Benjamin, *Letters*, 92–93.
[47] Bergman quoted in Cleto, *Queer Aesthetics*, 4.
[48] Beckford to Lady Hamilton, Fonthill, 14 October 1781, in Benjamin, *Letters*, 122.
[49] Frances Burney, *Cecilia, or, Memoirs of an Heiress* (London, 1782), 108–10.

Commentators have drawn connections between his love of opera and his same-sex desire or, more precisely, his attraction to the boyish caste of castrati and his near obsession with the young William Courtenay, eight years his junior.[50] More than unproductive, such work often reads as prurient psychopathology of music and sex that tells us little about either. Yet taking seriously Beckford's deep emotional investment in voice does not reduce him to a single sexual type (the melophile) but rather acknowledges the contingencies of desire. Attending to the erotic possibilities engendered between voice and ear offers a novel means for understanding the role of music, voice, and desire in fashioning an imperial subject.

Melophilia has recently been employed by Wilbourne in reference to early modern Italy's "melody-dominated" or operatic genres—the new monodic style of the early *seicento* and the bravura and declamatory styles associated with eighteenth-century *opera seria*—especially in reference to the vocal arts of the castrato. Observed from our present vantage point, the phenomenon of melophilia proves especially problematic in the context of eighteenth-century England, where opera was already intimately associated with the foreign decadence and effeminacy of Italy. Such forbidden pleasures signified in relation to an imperial framework in which the world outside of England (including the rest of Great Britain) was recast as a series of cultural scavenging fields for the edification of a select few. Excessive love for castrato singing amounted to a racialized desire for the exotic pleasures of Catholic southern Europe—pleasures derived from typically barbarous methods that recalled those practiced in the West Indies. The "castrated voice," explains Serena Guarracino, has long inhabited a geographical as well as a

[50] At the age of nineteen, Beckford met the eleven-year-old Courtenay, the future Earl of Devon, at his home of Powderham Castle. He instantly desired the boy and initiated what was at least an epistolary relationship. Six years later, after another visit to Powderham with his new wife Margaret, née Gordon, Beckford was publicly accused of sodomy by Courtenay's uncle, Lord Loughborough. No formal charges were ever brought forth (no witnesses would come forward) but Beckford's reputation was ruined and his impending peerage lost.

bodily South in the Anglophone imaginary: the mystical Italian landscape, birthplace of the castrato, and the grotesque site of the *norcino*'s incision, origin of his voice. Both regions exist apart from the Hegelian epicenter of rational thought—Italy from England, the genitals from the head—and of historical progress.[51]

This imagined South, argues Walter Mignolo, has since the eighteenth century been "simultaneously constructed with the Orient" as a collection of "[places] of 'slow speed'" in contrast to the progress-oriented North.[52] At the same time, the collective schema of global climate zones was being remapped to reflect increasing Northern European hegemony and to center Britain in the temperate zones—believed to be home to the most advanced civilizations and racially superior peoples—and thereby displace Italy and Greece into the southern climate regions, only one degree of remove from the Caribbean's supposedly uninhabitable Torrid zones.[53] The result was a nebulous South caught, from the perspective of the British Empire, in the selfsame web of coloniality as—albeit in vitally different ways than—the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Beckford's own writing on the Italian and Iberian peninsulas represents both warmer climate regions as distant but familiar worlds where the rules and strictures of English society are, if not entirely absent, generally avoidable. The voices arising from this South, from Catholic Italy's operatic tradition, are similarly recognizable but ultimately unknowable. Despite their seeming ubiquity—and unlike sugar, whose violent manufacture was hidden by its location across an ocean—the unavoidable presence of a mutilated body polluted them enough to prevent

[51] Serena Guarracino, "Voices from the South: Music, Castration, and the Displacement of the Eye," in *Anglo-Southern Relations: From Deculturation to Transculturation*, ed. Luigi Cazzato (Nardò, It.: Salento Books, 2011), 40–51.
[52] Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 173.
[53] Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 23–24.

such voices from fully assimilating into the English aesthetic palate. Overindulgence represented a significant breach of masculine conduct, one that undermined the imagined racial and cultural homogeneity of the nation.

Figure 1.1 Charles Lorraine Smith, *A Sunday Concert*, 1782. Etching and aquatint.
Source: National Portrait Gallery, London. *https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw68327/A-Sunday-concert*.

At the aesthetic level, we could say that the virtuosic display of control and affect—embodied practices associated with breath, mouth, and throat, which had marked solo singing at least since their articulation by Giulio Caccini in *Le nuove musiche* (1602)—awakened melophilia in listeners. More than a passion for vocal music, song, or melody (as the Latin *melos* might imply), melophilia is a mode of active, even distracting, focus on the voice in action. While the connotations of the Latin (and thus Italian) root are only musical in nature, the Ancient

Greek *mélos* (μέλος) broadly suggests one part of a whole: the melodic essence of a song, member of a group, limb of a body.[54] The envoiced melody—object of melophilic desire—stands on its own while also implying the corporate body. Endowed with meaning beyond itself, voice as *melos* is transmuted into a fetish object.[55] Thus, melophilia works well as a term that "describes patrons who spent more money on operatic and chamber singing than can be easily explained by reference to appearances or prestige … who lingered longer in musical pastimes than they ideally should have—stealing time from business concerns and familial obligations." Most central, though, melophilia "takes its delight [in] … the central role of the listener, and thus, by association, the expression of emotions."[56] It describes a form of vocal-aural exchange, grounded in the body, wherein the listener maintains control by foregrounding their own subjectivity.[57] Melophilia reorients listening from a passive experience to an active choice.

At the heart of melophilic controversy lies a much older debate over aural agency. In one well-known example, it is the central bone of contention in Saint Augustine's view of liturgical music in his *Confessions*. As the most famous of all "reformed" listeners, Augustine takes seriously the danger inherent in liturgical music, namely the danger that the medium will occlude the message, that human voices will overshadow the Word of God. In Book X, he portrays his

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[54] Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), s.v. "μέλος"; modern Greek retains the meaning of *mélos* as a limb of the body or member of a group (one part of a larger whole) but not as a melody or song.

[55] The sense of fetish I use here is adduced in William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, I," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 9 (1985): 5–17; and "The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13 (1987): 23–45; see also Valerio Vareli, "The Fetish" (1979), trans. Sarah Hill, appendix 3, in *Rituals and Annals: Between Anthropology and History*, ed. Rupert Stasch (HAU Books, 2014), 417–34.

[56] Wilbourne, "Queer History of the Castrato," 316.

[57] On singing and listening as physical engagement, see Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); for an application of this idea to the early modern context, see Emily Wilbourne and Suzanne Cusick, eds., introduction to *Acoustemologies in Contact: Sounding Subjects and Modes of Listening in Early Modernity* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021); for a critique of Eidsheim's concept, cf. Nicholas Mathew, "Listening(s) Past," *Representations* 154 (2021): 143–55.

younger self as one for whom "the delights of the ear had enticed [and held] in their grip."[58] Writing from the perspective of a penitent, Augustine describes his sonic encounters in terms of rape or abduction ("me inplicaverant et subiugaverant") rather than as a desire he pursued. Yet he continued to struggle with the temptations of song after his conversion, admitting to *allowing himself* some pleasure of submission ("aliquantulum adquiesco") to the sound. Still, he understands this as the delights of the flesh overshadowing Holy Writ:

> I still surrender to some slight pleasure in those sounds to which your words give life, when they are sung by a sweet and skilled voice, but not so much that I cleave to them, unable to rise above them when I wish. … Sometimes it seems to me that I grant them [chants] more honor than is proper, when I sense that the words stir my soul to greater religious fervor and to a more ardent piety if they are thus sung than if not thus sung, and when I feel that all the diverse affections of my soul have their own proper measures in voice and song. … But the gratification of the flesh—to which I ought not surrender my mind to be enervated—frequently leads me astray. … I sin thus in these things unknowingly, but afterwards I do know.[59]

Augustine's aural reticence lays bare the danger to the soul in even passive listening. Mladen Dolar can thus conclude his metaphysical gloss of the passage by observing that "voice is both the subtlest and the most perfidious form of the flesh."[60]

That subtlety is largely due to the fact that, given the nature of alluring sound, no one, not even the pious, can shut their ears. The best that Augustine can do is to reject the bodily delights ("delectatio carnis") of song *ex post facto*. His tactic—to cast himself as the unwitting victim rather than the sinner in pursuit of his own pleasure—set the tone for an anxious aurality for centuries. Andrew dell'Antonio tells us, for example, that elite men in early modern Italy turned to a contrasting ideal—a "spiritual practice" of listening—to combat the dangers of erotic

[58] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, in *Source Readings in Music History*, ed. W. Oliver Strunk and Leo Treitler (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 132.
[59] St. Augustine, *Confessions,* 132–33.
[60] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 48.

"abandon" posed by the passive reception of music.[61] With active listening as a devotional enterprise, the listener could retain agency through the act of relinquishing control, permitting themselves to enjoy sound within reason. For Augustine, lending too much focus to the voice sounding the liturgy (let alone enjoying it) was already to sin; in the wake of post-Tridentine reforms and the creation of a professional class of virtuosic singers, dell'Antonio's "active receptivity" functioned both as an affective devotional practice and a defense against the effeminizing effects of music.[62] Ironically, the same sense of active listening overlapped with contemporary melophilia, whereby the listener embraced the carnal delights of voice that both Augustine and his *seicento* lineage would seek to avoid. In her recent work on female voice in contemporaneous Medici Florence, Suzanne Cusick offers a cogent model for this kind of listening. She tackles melophilia most explicitly in a close reading of judicial proceedings following the discovery, in 1620, of an unsanctioned male incursion into a Florentine nunnery. Working from contemporary testimony, Cusick reconstructs an illicit musical encounter between a highly favored (and cloistered) singer and the man who snuck into her quarters for the sole purpose of hearing her sing. For Cusick, such melophiles participate in "an erotic economy of aural and vocal exchange [as] their primary source of pleasure."[63]

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[61] Andrew Dell'Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 9.

[62] Dell'Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice*, 71, 77–82.

[63] Cusick goes on to explain that the nuances of such pleasure were obscured for a culture in which female singing was tied so directly to female sexuality. The intimacy of voice had grown no less dangerous since Augustine, and even careful listening was quickly overindulged. With Tuscan authorities perplexed by the precise nature of their crimes, but nevertheless assured of their ultimate deviance, both Ottieri and Frescobaldi were duly condemned to confinement and solitude. Suzanne G. Cusick, "He Said, She Said? Men Hearing Women in Medicean Florence," in Bloechl, Lowe, and Kallberg, *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, 70; see also Suzanne G. Cusick, "'There Was Not One Lady Who Failed to Shed a Tear': Arianna's Lament and the Construction of Modern Womanhood" *Early Music* 22 (1994): 21–44; and Bonnie Gordon, *Monteverdi's Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

As a mode of material or vibrational engagement, an intimacy between voice and ear, melophilia recalls Cusick's flirtation, explored elsewhere in her work, with the notion that "music *is* sex," a non-penetrative (but deeply embodied) avenue for mutual erotic gratification—even *jouissance*.[64] Thus, upon hearing soprano castrato Girolamo Crescentini in 1782, Beckford wrote: "the slender Creature of eighteen seems to possess a great deal of feeling; but the accents of Pacchierotti still vibrate in my ears and prevent their attending much to any other."[65] What begins as homoerotic yearning for the queer body of the castrato is soon overshadowed by an embodied connection between voice and ear. Both singers that Beckford mentions inclined stylistically toward what Martha Feldman adduces as the sentimental "Orfeo line" (favoring a nuanced sensibility over "flamboyant" *passaggi*) of the later century, though Pacchierotti dominated in this regard.[66] Whereas the singing of the handsome young Crescentini exuded the "feeling" that some critics felt was lacking in the vocal pyrotechnics of singers like Marchesi, the disarmingly simple "accents" of (the older and less physically attractive) Pacchierotti nevertheless continued to echo months later, preserving a metaphorical as well as physical bond with Beckford's ear.[67]

The queer implications of such devotional, embodied attachment to a voice were clear even to Beckford's contemporaries, for whom such wanton displays of sentiment went beyond good taste. Years later, Elizabeth Carter would mourn what she felt to be squandered potential:

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[64] Suzanne G. Cusick, "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Gary C. Thomas, and Elizabeth Wood (New York: Routledge, 1994), 78–79.
[65] Beckford to Lady Hamilton, 1782, in the "Red Copy Book," MS Beckford, e. 1, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries.
[66] Martha Feldman, *The Castrato: Reflections on Natures and Kinds* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 188–89, 217–24; Frances Burney summarized Pacchierotti's style thus: "The plaintive and beautiful simplicity with which Pacchierotti uttered the affecting repetition of *sono innocente!* his voice, always either sweet or impassioned, delivered those words in a tone of softness, pathos, and sensibility." Burney, *Cecilia*, 109–110.
[67] On Crescentini's style, see Feldman, *Castrato*, 217–24.

> I had received an account of [Beckford's] horrid behaviour … This young man at his first setting out, appeared to have such uncommon parts, and so much knowledge, that it might have been reasonably hoped, that when the coxcomb was outgrown, he would have made a very distinguished figure in society. When he afterwards so extravagantly and ridiculously addicted himself to music, all prospect of his becoming great or respectable was over; but till this last sad story, I never heard that his conduct was vicious. I have been told that Mr. Burton, though he had himself been a professor of music, had the good sense, and good nature to remonstrate very strongly with [him] against his absurd and excessive fondness for it.[68]

Her comments come in the wake of Beckford's fall from grace (upon the revelation of his affair with Courtenay) and are invariably colored by them. Avoiding the word sodomy itself, she opens the door to it by beginning the passage with reference to his "horrid behavior" and later pronouncing his "conduct [to have been] vicious." But his "excessive fondness" for music constitutes its own pathology—an addiction for which he alone is found responsible. Mind that the nature of music itself is not at issue—John Burton, who played piano at Beckford's twenty-first birthday, had the wherewithal (or so we are told) to dissuade the young man from such passions.[69] Rather, it must have been Beckford's own choice to exceed the appropriate displays of sentiment in pursuit of decadent feeling, a move that read to Carter as a crime unto itself.

Melophilia, therefore, was directly related to the national threat of sodomy formulated in works like *Satan's Harvest Home*, in which the castrato's siren song entices men to same-sex desire. Carter's outrage takes a similar tack to those frequent denouncements against a seeming tide of sodomy in England.[70] For the melophile, the voice of the castrato holds no enticement

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[68] Elizabeth Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, Deal, 19 December 1784, in *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, to Mrs. Montagu, between the Years 1755 and 1800*, ed. Montagu Pennington (London, 1817), 233–34; partially quoted in Andrew Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 45.

[69] Burton's supposed remonstration against music seems unlikely, as he not only played memorably at Fonthill in 1781 but ultimately died in Naples the next year as part of Beckford's entourage.

[70] Around the same time, Hester Thrale described Beckford's exclusion from polite society as a quarantine, thus figuring same-sex desire as an infection—and a catching one at that, see Max Fincher, *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age: The Penetrating Eye* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 31; see also Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 99.

beyond itself, though this is not to say that melophilia precludes other overlapping forms of desire. Lying outside the boundaries of companionate marriage and familial love, melophilia challenged the naturalization of heterosexual desire along with the reproductive logic of English masculinity. Emerging from our contemporary vantage point as a distinctly queer practice, it suggests the analytical value of decoupling sentiment from sexuality.[71] As the onstage avatar of this excessive love, the castrato hero typically came out on top because the culmination of his desire reaffirmed the patriarchal order.[72] Beckford's off-stage engagement with voice, however, was irreconcilable with the expectations of his custodians. Not even the monstrous women of myth, invoked elsewhere in relation to castrati, could scare him: "The Sirens have been propitious," he wrote happily while in Naples, "and granted me … some few of their persuasive accents."[73] In contrast to his father, who, despite his West Indian origins, had distinguished himself in England commercially, politically, and (in siring a son with aristocratic blood) dynastically, the younger Beckford seemed almost determined to fail.

Georgian Camp

In the autumn of 1780, Beckford traveled down the peninsula to visit his relations, Sir William Hamilton, British emissary to the Neapolitan Court, and his wife, Lady Catherine. There, at the Villa Angelica, Beckford met and bonded with Lady Catherine over their shared love of music. In her, he found not only a kindred spirit, but a confidante and a confessor. Over their short time together, spent mostly singing at the keyboard, she became a surrogate mother to

[71] Julie Beaulieu, "Sterne's Sentimental Temptations: Sex, Sensibility, and the Uses of Camp," in Klein and Kugler, "Eighteenth-Century Camp," 1; see also Paul Kelleher, *Making Love: Sentiment and Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century British Literature* (Lanham, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2015).
[72] Feldman, *Castrato*, 45–46, 149–50.
[73] Beckford to Alexander Cozens, Naples, 7 November 1780, in Benjamin, *Letters*, 95.

the young man.[74] On returning to Venice at Christmas, Beckford frantically wrote to her of the city's attractions:

> Should I find my langor [sic] coming on again & that I could not resist the insinuating whispers of a soft but criminal delight—I [would] hurry to England … Our Opera is the most enchanting of compositions & Pacchierotti beyond himself; but I almost fear attending to it—Such Musick—O Heav'n it breathes the very soul of voluptuous effeminacy & has already corrupted. … what would I not give for you to hear this dangerous melody & tell me again of its influence … were it not for the [Opera] might stand a chance of being perfectly reestablished.[75]

The letter, referring to Bertoni's *Armida abbandonata* performed at the Teatro San Benedetto, offers a candid picture of Beckford on the brink of manhood. His invocation of Pacchierotti evinces a self-consciously effeminized practice of listening—the abandonment of self-control to the vocal erotics of the opera that epitomizes melophilia—yet its tone hovers between longing for moral support and trawling for moral outrage from a favored guardian. What comes through clearly is his obvious lack of interest in being "reestablished" away from the opera. Naples, of course, had not been without its own distractions: Sir William was known for his Camp habit of hiring naked fisherboys to splash around his seaside villa, staging a Greco-Roman tableau vivant for his guests. As Ersy Contogouris argues, peeking out from its neoclassical framing was a venue offering Englishmen aesthetic cover for the desirous gaze aimed at the dark-skinned youths of the South.[76] Such exploitative theatrics elevated the economic realities of the Neapolitan peasantry to a timeless *mise en scene* of Arcadian splendor. Readily discernable in Beckford's letter is a similar web of homoerotic signifiers: classicism, Camp, and the forbidden

[74] On Beckford's time spent with Lady Hamilton, see Otto Erich Deutsch, "The First Lady Hamilton (Part I)," *Notes & Queries* 197 (1952): 540–43; and John Jenkins, *Mozart and the English Connection* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1998), 75.
[75] Beckford to Lady Hamilton, Venice, 29 December 1780, fol. 4r, MS Beckford c. 14, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries.
[76] Ersy Contogouris, "Neoclassicism and Camp in Sir William Hamilton's Naples," in Klein and Kugler, "Eighteenth-Century Camp," 14–15.

desire for racialized bodies at the core of what Thomas Waugh calls the "intra-European imperialism of the North-South tourist industry."[77]

Figure 1.2 David Allan, *Sir William and the first Lady Hamilton in their villa in Naples*, 1770. Oil on copper. Source: Compton Verney Collection, Warwickshire, England. *https://www.comptonverney.org.uk/cv_collections/sir-william-and-the-first-lady-hamilton-in-their-apartment-in-naples*.

Scholars and biographers alike have often treated the letter as a smoking gun. Historian Helen Berry and historical fiction writer Linda Kelly each cite his mention of Pacchierotti's singing (breathing "the very soul of voluptuous effeminacy") as an example of the castrato's musical prowess and erotic draw.[78] In their examples, Beckford stands in for practically the

[77] Waugh quoted in Contogouris, "Neoclassicism and Camp," 14–15.
[78] Helen Berry, *The Castrato and His Wife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 70; Linda Kelly, *Susanna, the Captain & the Castrato: Scenes from the Burney Salon, 1779-80* (London: Starhaven, 2004), 34; a note written in

whole of the English listening public, hopelessly enamored of the Italian opera and its decadent, foreign temptations. Meanwhile, literary theorist Andrew Elfenbein and biographer Timothy Mowl have used the letter to reconstruct its author's elusive sexuality. Both read it as evidence of a causal relationship between the opera and his sexual attraction to boys, suggesting that Pacchierotti's voice broke down Beckford's resistance to "the insinuating whispers of a soft but criminal delight," which Elfenbein views, reductively, as "the lures of pedophilia" preventing his transformation into a "sturdy heterosexual."[79] These are just the tip of Beckford's emergence, after more than a century of biographical silence (or denial) around the topic of his sexuality, as a historical touchstone in queer historiography and, specifically, the "history of homosexuality."[80] At the birth of a poststructuralist "gay and lesbian studies," Eve Sedgwick dubbed him "in some significant sense homosexual … notoriously," while acknowledging that the "public scandal [was] created, and periodically revived, to keep his newly rich family from a peerage!"[81] Some fifteen years later, George Haggerty argued that Beckford's self-fashioning forged a modern sexual identity under the sign of pæderasty, one that acknowledged the possibility of male lovers

French on the flip side of the leaf details how "Bertoni's voluptuous music, supported by the artistry of the world's finest singer, makes me more than ever effeminate [m'effémine]," see Elinor Shaffer, "William Beckford in Venice, Liminal City: The Pavilion and the Interminable Staircase," in *Venetian Views, Venetian Blinds: English Fantasies of Venice*, ed. Manfred Pfister and Barbara Schaff (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 80.

[79] Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius*, 45; Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford: Composing for Mozart* (London: J. Murray, 1998).

[80] Equally telling is the conspicuous absence of this (or similar) letters from earlier biographical studies, as in Saul Benjamin's *Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill* (1910), which he compiled under the pseudonym Lewis Melville. His study excises all but the most oblique references to the scandal, which he dismissed as "rumours, started no one knows how, of grave misconduct on Beckford's part" that "endured through [his] life" but for which "there seems to have been absolutely no ground." Benjamin, Letters of William Beckford, 110–11; the same letter appears in a collection published two decades later, see John Walter Oliver, *The Life of William Beckford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), 54.

[81] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 92–93.

in a contemporary sense.[82] But in a more recent take by Max Fincher, such descriptors miss the mark, leading him to suggest "queer" as best able to "[describe] the emotional complexity of Beckford's sexual desires, [suggesting] a more individualist position that has resonances with [our] contemporary understanding."[83] I contend that Beckford's continual draw as a puzzling yet recognizably queer figure rests on what critics have read as a clear-eyed understanding of his own marginality, complete with its hallmark Camp sensibility.[84] Camp thus offers insight into Beckford's sense of self, of song, and of his place within the empire.

In "Notes on Camp," Sontag notoriously asserts that Camp is "disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical" since "to emphasize style is to slight content.[85] But that claim rests on the metaphysical belief that style and content are separable in the first place—emphasizing style can only slight that content which is reducible to language. Claiming that voice carries no meaning beyond the linguistic ignores the possibility of carnal or sensual expression, whether understood as emerging directly from the body (Adriana Cavarero's "vocal ontology of uniqueness") or in the ear of the beholder (Eidsheim's "vocal moment [as] thick event").[86] Ultimately, Sontag's dismissal of politics is the logical result of her privileging the critical gaze (the kismet discovery of "naïve" Camp) over authorial intent ("deliberate" attempts at campiness) as the source of Camp. Novelist Christopher Isherwood had earlier drawn a similar distinction between "High"

[82] George E. Haggerty, "Beckford's Pæderasty," chap. 5, in *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Kavanagh conjures a generalized pederasty in politics in the years leading up to the Powderham Affair, what he calls "an interpersonal dynamic of effeminate subjection between one man and another man that may, or may not, be erotic," in *Effeminate Years*, xii.
[83] Fincher, *Queering Gothic*, 34.
[84] "To be camp is to present oneself as being committed to the marginal with a commitment greater than the marginal merits." Booth, "Campe-Toi!," 69.
[85] Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 54.
[86] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 173–82; Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 5.

("expressing what's basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance") and "Low" ("in queer circles they call that camping but its utterly debased in form") forms of Camp.[87] For both writers, setting out with the goal of seeming campy was all well and good, but true Camp always lacked self-awareness. The key, of course, was to maintain a sensibility, a "way of seeing," attuned to over-the-top disasters and catastrophes of artifice.

By now, Sontag's jottings are well-trodden ground in a dense corpus of queer-theoretical literature grappling with the place, power, and personae of Camp. Mark Booth, for example, argued in *Camp* (1983) that his subject was "primarily a matter of self-presentation rather than of sensibility."[88] The most vociferous challenge, however, came in Moe Meyer's edited collection *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (1994), which sought to reclaim an authentic Camp as "queer parody." Meyer reads "Notes," written at the cultural crest of Camp's mainstream appeal, as peddling a counterfeit "Pop camp" catering mostly to a (straight) bourgeois public. In his defiant introduction, and throughout the assembled essays, the hallmark of Camp is repeatedly revealed to be, quite literally, its gay agenda. This Camp is not something discovered by a cadre of tasteful arbiters but a carefully crafted pattern of behavior, an embodied code, with its permanent referent being an originary (and essentialized) "homosexuality."[89] Hence the core debate at the heart of Camp discourse: is it the product of the self-conscious clown or the unintentional flop?[90]

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[87] Christopher Isherwood, "From *The World in the Evening*" (1954), in Cleto, *Queer Aesthetics*, 51.
[88] Booth, "Campe-Toi!," 69.
[89] Moe Meyer, ed., introduction to *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 5; for an astute critique of Meyer's use of "queer" and "parody," see Cleto, *Queer Aesthetics*, 16–22; in the same volume, King demonstrates a similarly essentializing viewpoint in his attempt to locate the origins of Camp in the early eighteenth-century appropriation of the erstwhile aristocratic akimbo posture by the effeminate molly subculture. While this archaeology of gesture follows Meyer's lead in invoking the expansiveness of "queer," his argument is also premised on a pre-existing homosexual identity that requires self-conscious enactment in the first place. The unfortunate result is that he inadvertently produces what Sontag warned against in defining Camp: "a very inferior piece of Camp," see Thomas A. King, "Performing 'Akimbo': Queer Pride and Epistemological Prejudice," in *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, ed. Moe Meyer (New York: Routledge, 1994), 23–50.
[90] Mel Brooks's madcap *Producers* or Bialystock and Bloom's so-bad-it's-good *Springtime for Hitler*? The opera queens who love Maria Callas or the life of *La divina* herself?

Recognizing the futility of attempting to fit Camp entirely into either extreme, Fabio Cleto took up the project of reconciling these seemingly opposing views. His recursive but highly serviceable definition presents Camp as: first, a "mode of perception" stressing the object's "failure in performance" and the subject's performance in perceiving; and, second, a "'style' of performance" aware of its own perception and the inevitable "failure of intentions."[91]

In his correspondence, Beckford continually constructs himself as an over-the-top character, exuberantly effeminate and devoutly irreverent, but in so doing he displays a canny understanding of what Sontag calls "Being-as-Playing-a-Role."[92] At times, this took the form of sneering determination "to be happy in defiance of glory and reputation." "Why," he asked Alexander Cozens, the tutor who introduced him to Orientalist aesthetics, "should I desire the applause of Creatures I despise?" Rejecting the biblical mandate to put away childish things, he "resolved to be a Child forever," seeking only the "innocence and tranquility" of "that primaeval period when Force and Empire were unknown."[93] In a macabre letter to Lady Hamilton two months later, he was less sanguine—but equally flamboyant—about his prospects:

> At this disastrous moment, too, when every individual is abandoned to terrors and anxieties, which way can I turn myself? Public affairs I dare not plunge into. My health is far too wavering. Whilst I write my hand trembles like a paralytic Chinese. Strange colors swim before my eyes and sounds keep ringing in my ears for which I can hardly account. This whole morning I have been condemned to the perusal of Jamaica letters filled, as you may imagine, with ruin and desolation. No language can describe the situation of that unfortunate colony Savannah le Mar which has felt the force of the hurricane. … Happily for me the power of the storm and earthquake fell upon those villages in which I have least concern. … Both the Indies are convulsed and we are much in a similar state at home. … For ambitious spirits this is not the period to shrink out of the way. Danger and difficulties are their pavements. But I no longer feel myself bold enough to tread such monsters under foot. Once upon a time I fancied myself filled with ambition. I looked this very morning and could not find a grain.[94]

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[91] Cleto, *Queer Aesthetics*, 26.
[92] Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 56–57.
[93] Beckford to Cozens, Naples, 7 November 1780, in Benjamin, *Letters*, 96.
[94] Beckford to Lady Hamilton, Strasburg, 28 January 1781, in Benjamin, *Letters*, 100–101.

Figure 1.3 Thomas Rowlandson, *Italian Affectation. Real Characters.*, 1786–91. Hand-colored etching. Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. *https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/392677*.

In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Jack Halberstam describes the aesthetic of negativity surrounding certain twentieth-century queers for whom "failure can be a style." Beckford, focusing on his isolation, anxiety, and illness, inhabits something like this "ethos of resignation to failure, to lack of progress and a particular form of darkness."[95] To be sure, Halberstam's general focus is on contemporary artistic counternarratives, lines of rebellion that took the form of anticapitalist or anticolonial struggle. Such practices map tenuously, if at all, onto an eighteenth-century slaveholder whose profits can be traced to sugar factories at the forefront of capitalist management. Yet Halberstam also acknowledges the absurdity (if ubiquity) of attributing progressive politics or intrinsic moral good to all queer sex as inherently revolutionary or liberatory, pondering the historiographical fate of "gays and lesbians who collaborate with rather than oppose politically conservative and objectionable regimes."[96] Similarly, it would be a mistake to assume that queer failure (as with Beckford's melophilia) leads in all cases to class solidarity or abolitionist sympathies. Camp can just as easily support as subvert hegemonic ideologies, indifferently or purposefully. Beckford's letter reads to us now as a clear example of the cruelty of the slave system, melodramatic ravings of a callous colonizer with little regard for the lives of those he enslaved. But this does not preclude the possibility that

[95] Judith [Jack] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 96.
[96] Halberstam refers, specifically, to the erasure of the taboo "gay Nazi" in queer narratives of the twentieth century—the fascist skeleton in the closet—and recalls the homosocial ethos of the Third Reich, from the celebrations of virile masculinity to the marginalization of women and effeminate men, that led to and informed the discourse of queer persecution, see Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 149–51; we could similarly turn to eighteenth-century Prussia during the absolutist reign of Frederick the Great (himself a practitioner of "Greek love"), during which Berlin was noted for its culture of *warme Brüder* (male lovers) among the garrisoned soldiers, men fighting to acquire the province of Polish Prussia, eliminate the native population, and settle Germans on the land, see Robert Deam Tobin, *Warm Brothers: Queer Theory and the Age of Goethe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 26–43.

his words were crafted, in part, as an aspect of his Camp self-mythologizing. "In true camp fashion," writes Halberstam, "the queer artist works with rather than against failure."[97]

The aesthetic cultivated by Beckford could, in other words, disrupt modern codes of masculinity and expectations of "natural" desire while benefitting from and upholding systems of colonial exploitation. Indeed, a major precondition for the Camp devotion to artifice was the emergence of global consumerism, fueled by racial capitalism and undergirding the rise of the individual subject—modernity by any other name. Beckford encapsulated the scope of eighteenth-century global consumerism by fostering an Anglo-Catholic style (a Camp fixture, according to Booth) based in England but drawn from Southern Europe, and incorporating major strains of Orientalism, all paid for with the profits of Caribbean slavery. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Adam Smith argues that cultural consumption is central to the work of social distinction, with one's sense of taste ultimately signifying one's degree of remove from the trend-setting aristocracy.[98] By constructing a personal aesthetic outside Britain's "civilizing" temperate zone, Beckford risked drawing attention to his Creole roots, jeopardizing his place in an emergent system of white racial hegemony, but he also staked a claim among what Sontag terms Camp's "self-elected … aristocrats of taste."[99] Hence, Elfenbein refers to Beckford's "genius [for] consumption," a dedication to excess that distanced the self-styled "virtuoso collector" from the industrial legacy of his father and from the rational endowment of British civilization, and instead toward defiant failure that "freed collecting for true pointlessness."[100]

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[97] Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 3.
[98] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Edinburgh, 1759).
[99] Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 64; Andrew Ross cheekily terms this group as the "cognoscenti" of Camp, see "Uses of Camp," *The Yale Journal of Criticism: Interpretation in the Humanities* 2 (1988): 316.
[100] Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius*, 45; on pointless collecting as a characteristic of traditional sovereignty, see George Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. II & III*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

And at the apex of his pointless collecting was music, song in particular, falling under Smith's category of "unproductive labor" as that which results in no lasting economic value. At least that other gentile collector, the bibliophile, sought out something tangible—the result of writing, printing, and bookbinding; in contrast, when the aria is finished, the melophile is left with nothing to show for their expenditure.

How might we understand Beckford's uniquely extravagant devotion to the castrato, even as the homoerotic consumption of these "voices from the South" was commonly practiced within the British soundscape? As we have seen, Beckford was well-versed in operatic sound as performer and audience member, one dedicated to the cause of eternal youth and self-mythologized as a fantastic and quasi-foreign creature. His persona recalled the stylized attitudes of the *seria* stage so associated with the figure of the castrato, as seen, for example, in Thomas Rowlandson's exaggerated depiction of Pacchierotti on the stage in "Italian Affectation. Real Characters." (see figure 1.3). Viewing Beckford's continued dedication to Italianate or *bel canto* singing through a Camp lens acknowledges that he was, in Isherwood's words, "not making fun of it [but] making fun out of it."[101] The Italian eunuch's gender troubles (on- and off-stage) had long been among his most alluring, if controversial, qualities, but from the last quarter of the eighteenth century they were increasingly untenable as new emphasis was placed on rigid sexual dimorphism. From this perspective, the musical body of the castrato is the pinnacle of the Camp style Sontag describes:

> As a taste in persons, Camp responds particularly to the markedly attenuated and to the strongly exaggerated. The androgyne is certainly one of the great images of Camp sensibility. … What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine [and] allied to the Camp taste for

[101] Isherwood, "From *The World in the Evening*," 51.

> the androgynous is something that seems quite different but isn't: a relish for the exaggeration of sexual characteristics and personality mannerisms.[102]

Thus, if the castrato can be understood through the lens of Camp, then it is not for any perceived effeminacy. On the contrary, he is often depicted, in Feldman's words, as a "fantastical exaggeration of maleness" and "an overdone male that can bleed into femaleness."[103] He represents a surplus of masculine gender signifiers enclosed in an irregularly boyish and innately foreign body, standing on stage for the power of the patriarchal order but envoicing the barbarity of the slow Catholic South and the decadence of the timeless Orientalized East.

Of course, this multifaceted in-betweenness was not restricted to the Italian castrate of the 16th–18th centuries. Building on Mary Douglas's classic anthropological study of pollution and purity, Orlando Patterson argued in *Slavery and Social Death* (1983) that the eunuch's "defiled" body was uniquely suited to the task of mediating between the sacred and the profane because of its symbolic association with dirt. The bodily effects of castration (the seeming combination of male and female secondary sex characteristics as well as the commonly noted putrid smell given off) signified the eunuch's totalizing marginality and, Patterson claimed, made him the "ultimate slave."[104] Of course, one of the main differences between the Byzantine court eunuchs of Patterson's analysis and the early modern Italian *musico* was their respective professional trajectories, the latter being constructed expressly for the performance of florid song. On the stage, the unique qualities of their bodies—their above average height and elongated limbs, enhanced lung capacity, and, of course, naturally high vocal register—were front and center as

[102] Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 56.
[103] Feldman, *Castrato*, 25.
[104] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 322–25; and Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966).

they took on the roles of mighty kings, brave heroes, and sentimental lovers. And here, their social role overlaps powerfully with the unsettling political potentialities of Camp. As Ingrid Hotz-Davies, Georg Vogt, and Franziska Bergmann show in the introduction to the edited collection, *The Dark Side of Camp Aesthetics* (2018), Camp contains the power to "meld the precious to the filthy," to contaminate the center with what is otherwise trapped in the margins.[105] Camping, like castration, is a dirty business. Amplified by exotic roles and a frequently caricatured likeness, such connotations could shade a vocal and performing style from refined sentimentality into the arch, at times even gauche or grotesque, sensibilities of the Orientalist and the Gothic. Beckford's aesthetic identification with the castrato may have constituted the ultimate gesture of eighteenth-century Camp—an act with queer and racial implications for the colonial scion at odds with the commercial and political aspirations of his family and empire.

Camp Aurality

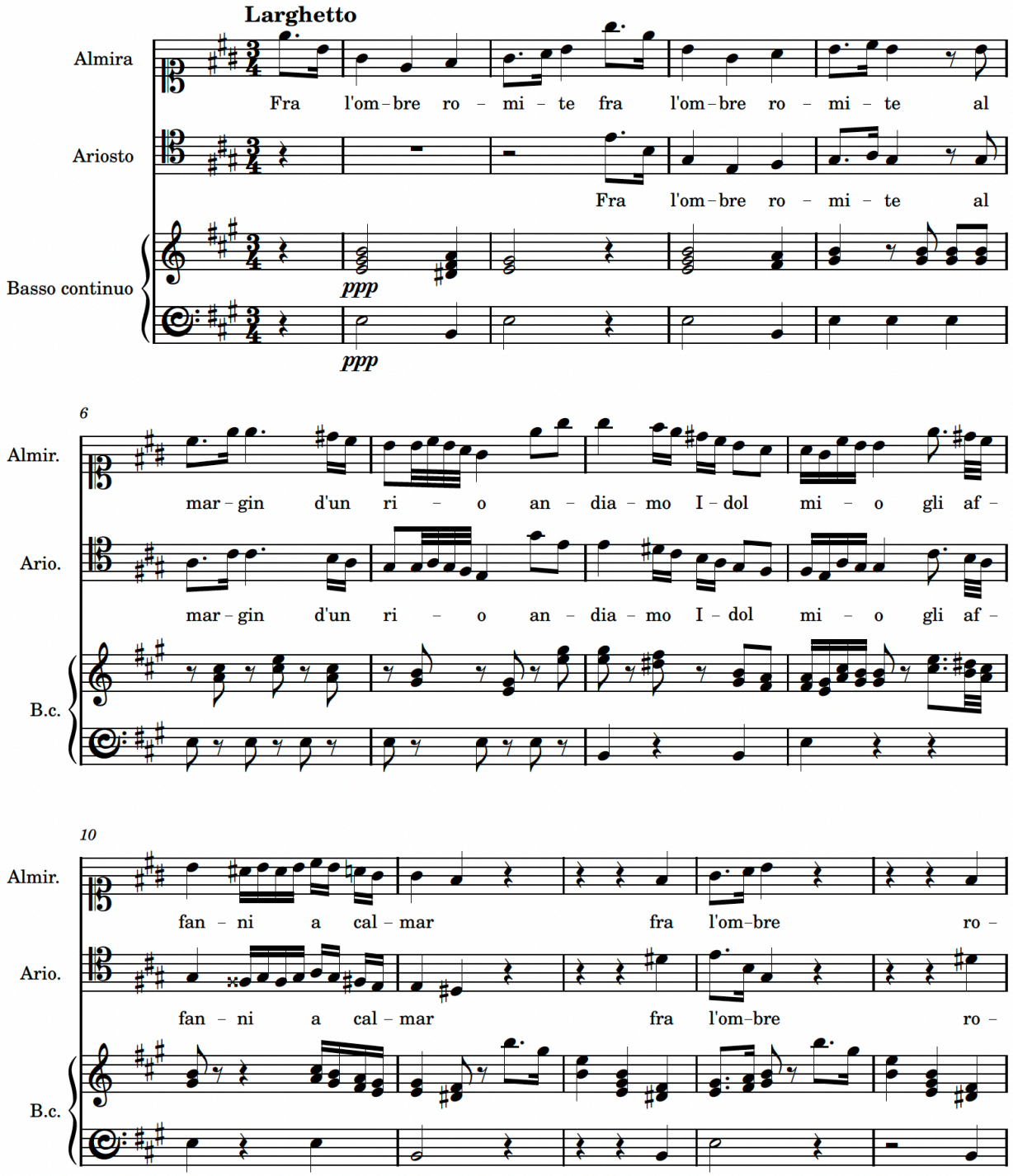
The birthday festivities for William Thomas Beckford were held over three unseasonably balmy autumn days at the end of September 1781. The following Monday, the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* gave a glowing account, especially of the Saturday performance of "a Pastoral Cantata, written by Sig. [Girolamo] Tonioli, and set to music by Sig. [Vincenzo] Rauzzini, purposely for this occasion," which, "being a most elegant composition, [was] met with universal applause."[106] When Beckford wrote to Lady Hamilton of the "fine frenzy" that

[105] Ingrid Hotz-Davies, Georg Vogt, and Franziska Bergmann, eds., introduction to *The Dark Side of Camp Aesthetics: Queer Economies of Dirt, Dust and Patina* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 2–6.
[106] "Salisbury, October 1," *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 1 October 1781; republished in *Royal Gazette*, 22 December 1781.

had poured over his lawn, he recalled the "tumult of balls, concerts and illuminations" and the fact that Burton "played [at the keyboard] like one possessed, and all the world danced like demoniacs." But chief among the glittering entertainments was the "little opera composed upon the occasion" in which Pacchierotti and Tenducci "sang like superior beings."[107] The piece was *Il tributo*, a musical panegyric in which the aptly named shepherds Philenus and Thirsis celebrate their patron, praise the virtues of his parents, and attempt to prepare him for his impending majority. Under most circumstances, bestowing custodial guidance on the eve of adulthood would not raise an eyebrow, but here were perhaps the most famous singers in Europe, pinnacle of the eighteenth-century star system, doling it out in the private hall of a non-titled youth descended from the colonies. Accompanying the castrati was an illustrious band made up of "the best performers from London, Bath, [and] Salisbury," including the violinists Johann Peter Salomon and Giuseppe Soderini, the centenarian cellist Giacobbe Cervetto, keyboard virtuosi John Burton and Mary Jane Guest, as well as composer Ferdinando Bertoni and tenor Joseph Corfe, both of whom probably played on Fonthill's organ. The expense and planning of the bespoke opera performance marks it as singularly extravagant; to expect its motherly advice to be heard, let alone followed by its problematic addressee, suggests a work lacking in guile. As Sontag reminds us in the epigraph to this chapter, "not all seriousness that fails can be redeemed as Camp. Only that which has the proper mixture of the exaggerated, the fantastic, the passionate and the naïve."[108] Amid a weekend of frivolity meant to usher Beckford into manhood, the performance of *Il tributo* was a major focal point—a pivotal moment in which cultural norms and structures around English masculinity were reinforced and, ultimately, destabilized.

[107] Beckford to Lady Hamilton, Fonthill, 14 October 1781, in Benjamin, *Letters*, 121.
[108] Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 59.

Example 1.1 Vocal reduction of the larghetto (middle) section of Rauzzini's "Troppo paventa e palpita." Note the largely syllabic, and often homophonic, setting that emphasizes words while maintaining space for virtuosic displays of voice. Source: Royal College of Music Library, London (GB-Lcm): MS 522/5. Transcription by author.



Example 1.1 cont'd

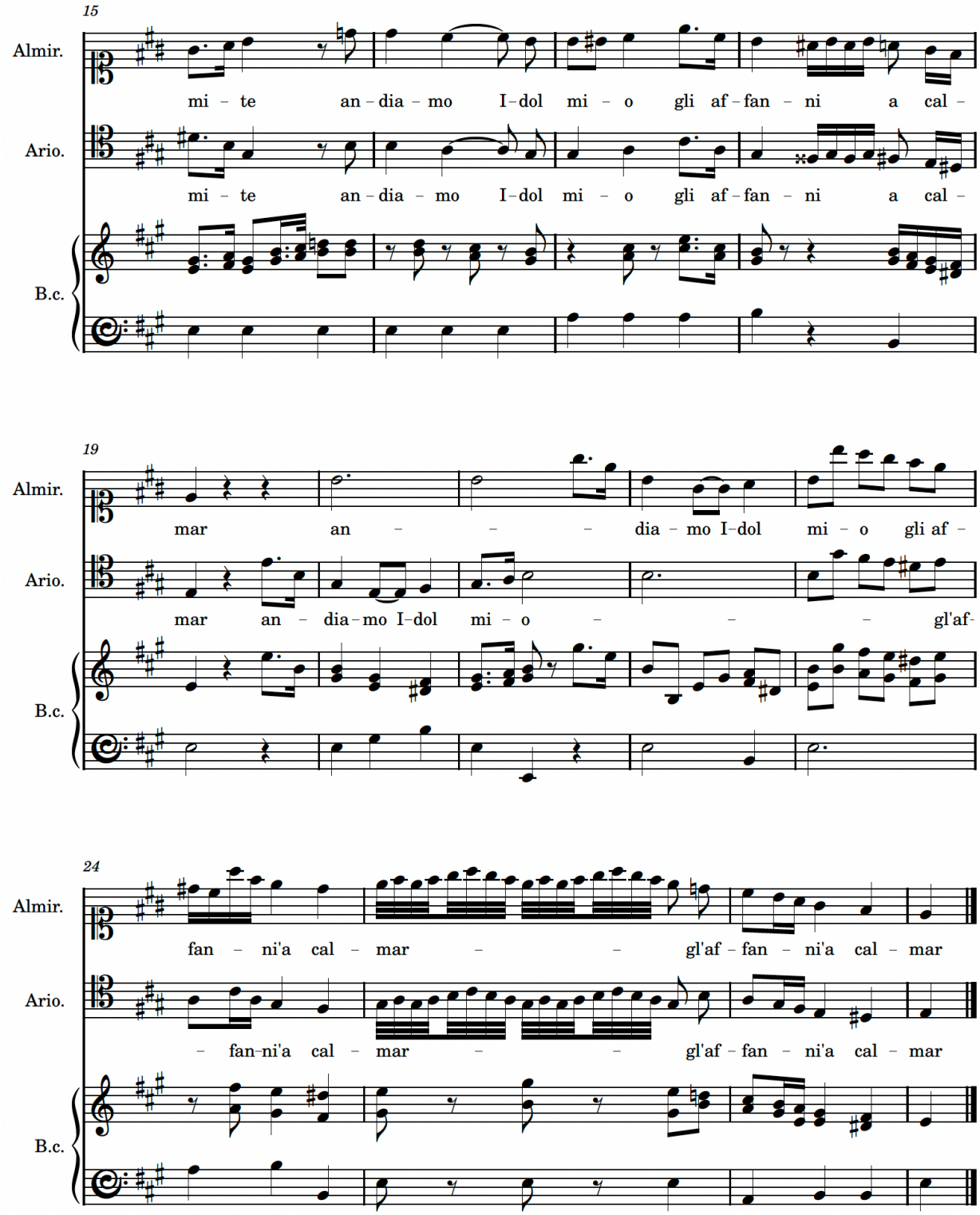


Figure 1.4 Sir Joshua Reynolds, *William (Thomas) Beckford*, 1782. Oil on canvas.
Source: National Portrait Gallery, London. *https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw07093/William-Thomas-Beckford?LinkID=mp05070&role=sit&rNo=0.*

Today *Il tributo* survives only in the form of a libretto, translated into English "from the Original ITALIAN of Sig. GIROLAMO TONIOLI," presumably published as a memento for the occasion.[109] Curiously, the formatting choices of the published libretto, especially the high proportion of lines translated prosaically, suggest that the cantata was almost entirely made up of recitative, the only exceptions being two duets bookending the cantata and a midway chorus. The opening duet, for example, is typeset like prose but written in (slant) rhyming verse near enough to the form of a ballad quatrain:

> BEHOLD yon Morning-Star!
> with what peculiar Lustre does it rise,
> and usher in this festive Day!
> the Day so much wished-for is arrived.[110]

We can get some sense of its music in looking to the "charming Terzette," also by Rauzzini, programmed alongside *Il tributo*, for which the composer joined Pacchierotti and Tenducci to sing.[111] Paul Rice has suggested that this may have been "Troppo parventa e palpita," the concluding trio from the cantata *La sorpresa* (1779).[112] In particular, the B section duet (see example 1.1) suggests the kind of setting—largely syllabic, and often homophonic—called for

[109] Girolamo Tonioli, *Il tributo*, music by Venanzio Rauzzini (Salisbury, 1781), 1; on Tonioli's career, see Susanna Burney, *The Journals and Letters of Susan Burney: Music and Society in Late Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Philip Olleson (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012), 86, 164.

[110] Tonioli, *Il tributo*, 3; ballad quatrains typically consist of alternating lines of iambic tri- and tetrameter with an ABAB or ABCB rhyme scheme, but here the first and third lines are tri- and tetrameter, respectively, and the second and fourth lines are in iambic pentameter; the "Morning-Star" refers to Venus during the part of the year in which it precedes the sunrise; its mention here fixes the occasion astrologically.

[111] "Salisbury, October 1," *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 1 October 1781.

[112] Paul F. Rice, *Venanzio Rauzzini in Britain: Castrato, Composer, and Cultural Leader* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 100; another potential model is Rauzzini's *Piramo e Tisbe* (1775), which he wrote and performed (in the role of Piramo) for the King's Theatre. Rice compares its generally syllabic, declamatory setting to the reform operas of Gluck, with Rauzzini placing a high value on the legibility of the words (foregoing in his own arias the *fioratura* for which he was often praised as a singer) and balance between singers and orchestra. The opera was revived in 1776 and in 1781, the latter time with Francesco Roncaglia singing the role of Piramo. The last performance of the second revival (21 June 1781) was a benefit for Rauzzini, in which the composer took over his original role from Roncaglia. As it took place only three months before Beckford's party, *Piramo e Tisbe* may well have been on Rauzzini's mind as he was writing *Il tributo*; for a modern edition of the score, which was only published as an abbreviated cantata, see Venanzio Rauzzini, *Piramo e Tisbe, a Dramatic Cantata* (1775), ed. Paul F. Rice (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

by the word-heavy libretto of *Il tributo*. While Rauzzini had originally written the higher role of Ariosto for himself, on that occasion the most prominent part of the trio may well have been taken by Pacchierotti, whose own star had by then surpassed those of both his fellow singers.

Nominally, the inciting incident of *Il tributo* is the shepherds' realization that their "amiable Youth WILLIAM" has reached adulthood and come "into the full Possession of his ample Inheritance."[113] From the start, such a conceit conjures the conspicuous consumption and general vulgarity expected of the *nouveau riche* absentee planters, though the line may have been intended to advertise Beckford's new marriageability to an audience full of aristocratic young ladies. This initially festive mood quickly sours, however, as the duet lapses into recitative. Now Thirsis, the simpler of the two shepherds, heaves a vocative sigh that provokes his companion to press him and eventually command him to "Speak." The emphasis on vocalizing his concerns is met with a generically pathetic explanation from Thirsis: "Wretched, abject, obscure Shepherd as I am, how can I appear,----how speak,----before the noble Train of Nymphs and Heroes here assembled!" Within the narrative, Thirsis's anxiety stems from his knowledge of the social hierarchy and the necessary deference required of him: in what manner is a simple rustic meant to speak before such an assembly? Approaching the question in the most literal sense, he need not speak at all—he was already singing. To understand the performance this way, of course, is to elide the singer Tenducci with his character, a musico-dramaturgical collapse that, at the King's Theatre, would have constituted the razing of what Feldman calls the regulatory "frame" that cordoned off the opera's "performative events" (e.g., the da capo aria) in order to distance the experience of the audience from the dramatic action on stage.[114] But the performance of *Il*

[113] Tonioli, *Il tributo*, 3–4.
[114] Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 95–96.

tributo was not taking place within the sanctioned space of the opera house. On the contrary, the formal structure of the cantata, lacking any arias, does not follow the temporal ebb and flow of *opera seria*. Direct reference to, and interaction between, the performers and audience, and the subtle alignment between characters and the performers obviated the conceptual (and perceptual) role of the "frame." The situation raises more questions in relation to voice, specifically about the possibility of personal agency for, and the political implications of, certain (classed, racialized, or gendered) bodies sounding in a given space. Most pertinent: authorial intent notwithstanding, who was really being envoiced through *Il tributo*?

As a narrative consequence of Thirsis's question, the cantata positions Pacchierotti's Philenus as the more worldly—thus closer to Beckford—of the two rustics by cannily reminding Thirsis and the audience of their patron's "GREAT FATHER [whose] eminent Fame has surely reached thy ears." Thirsis's affirmation ("Whose ears has it not reached, *Philenus*?") subtly shifts the conceptual emphasis of their conversation from vocality to aurality, setting up a rhetorical arc that will soon lead back to the young Beckford. Presently, the shepherd continues: "In him Magnanimity was conspicuous, and virtuous Principles regulated the Affections of his Heart---- To his Country he ever proved himself the true Patriot, to his Family the affectionate Parent."[115] His words tidily reinforce the party line on the late Alderman, at least to those assembled. His Jamaican origins, his cruelty as a slaveowner, his numerous illegitimate children—all fall away in Tonioli's biographical gloss. As presented here, he is a paragon of racial purity and modern masculinity: servant to England, patriarch to his wife and son, the metropolitan zenith of regulated sensibility and commercial civilization. Finally, Philenus reveals his purpose in raising the elder Beckford, explaining that their own "dear Youth is a Son worthy of such a Father. To

[115] Tonioli, *Il tributo,* 5.

his chaste Ears sweet Song (whether in heroic or pastoral Measure) is equally acceptable."[116] The line completes a progression beginning with the foreign and suspect ears of the castrato ("thy ears") through the hardy English ears of the nation ("whose ears") and finally resolving with praise for Beckford's own "chaste Ears." It was no secret, of course, that his ears hewed much closer to promiscuity than chastity, and to deviance than conformity. To listen chastely here is to self-regulate or, failing that, to cultivate a sense of Augustinian shame. Philenus clarifies that the "chaste Ear" appreciates both "heroic" and "pastoral" measures, understood through their generic representatives of Italian *opera seria* and Scottish folk ballads, respectively.[117] But—herein lies the paradox—only so long as they are carried by the "sweet Song" of the castrato. The final irony, then, is that Beckford's audience learns of this in a foreign language that most could not fully understand, especially not when carried by "sweet Song."

At this point, an aptly timed chorus of shepherds reorients the action. Philenus charges his counterpart to "Behold [the] splendid Assembly of beautiful British Nymphs! With what Joy, what Delight do they crowd round our happy Youth!"[118] Perhaps there was a contingent of shepherdesses among the chorus, though without stage directions, such choreographic possibilities remain opaque. Thirsis observes, for example, how Mrs. Beckford "tenderly clasps our Youth in her Arms [and] impresses on his Cheek the dear Marks of her Affection!" Later, the two shepherds approach Beckford as he "courteously beckons [them] with his Hand."[119] We might also imagine an equally strategic seating plan—central to the complete performance—in

[116] Tonioli, *Il tributo*, 5.
[117] On Tenducci's association with sentimental Scottish ballads, see Andrew Alexander Greenwood, "Mediating Sociability: Musical Ideas of Sympathy, Sensibility, and Improvement in the Scottish Enlightenment" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012), 136–51.
[118] Tonioli, *Il tributo*, 6.
[119] Tonioli, *Il tributo*, 6–7.

which the most eligible young women are positioned around the young Beckford for the singers to amusingly observe. They would surely have consisted of the fairest isle's well-bred daughters, those whom historian Felicity Nussbaum describes as the "designated guardians of their country's distinctive complexion."[120] Complexion in this context included, but was not reducible to, skin color, though there was a growing acknowledgement, according to Wilson, of "the greater aesthetic beauty of the 'pink and white complexion,'" a racial aesthetic on full display in Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of a ruddy-cheeked Beckford (see figure 1.4).[121] In a scene of make-believe (Italian) shepherds herding real (English)women—brood mares under the sign of "British Nymphs"—Beckford and his guests witnessed a dynamic display of compulsory heterosexuality as patriotic virtue and racial necessity.

Yet, with the imperatives of English masculinity filtered through the voice of Italian effeminacy, the queer implications of the medium would draw attention away from the sentimental love of fair maidens and the propagation of the English race, at least for the melophile. Amid these instances of dramaturgical conflict, a pattern of audio-sensorial experience emerges that stretches the earnest sentimentality with which the work was crafted, and was meant to be performed, over the line of good taste—beyond the proper masculine balance of feeling and reserve, into a grotesque parody and excess of sensation. While the character Thirsis praises Beckford's "Sensibility the most refined," in truth, the sensibility Beckford cultivated was far from the structured emotionality of an idealized masculinity.[122] At issue was the tension between semantic and sensual meaning in the cantata's characterization of

[120] Felicity Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12.
[121] Wilson, *The Island Race,* 13.
[122] Tonioli, *Il tributo*, 8.

Beckford, with melophilia serving as the tipping point. Centering voice over words, the cantata would have sounded at the core of the Camp penchant, not for style at the expense of substance, but for the substance of style. Beckford's melophilia not only precluded any hope for a "Chaste ear" but set the conditions for a Camp ear, able to distinguish between what Tonioli's libretto wanted to say and what Pacchierotti and Tenducci could actually envoice. To hear in this way was to perceive beyond words into the embodied meanings expressed in their "sweet Song." More than that, hearing this way could allow Beckford to delight in the doubleness of the self-defeating Anglo-Italian framework. Casting the narrators as Arcadian shepherds overlaid the homoerotic garb of the (Greco-Roman) neoclassical onto the (British) pastoral and suggested the Camp slippage between pædagogy and pæderasty in *Il tributo*.

At the dénouement of *Il tributo*, Philenus introduces Beckford's "amiable MOTHER," and boasts of having been "a happy Witness" to her labor in fixing those "most rare and exalted Sentiments that can adorn the human Heart … in the Breast of her dear and only Son." He recounts her frequent instructions to her son, beginning with a somewhat ironic reaffirmation of patriarchal authority:

> Suffer me, my dear Son, to point out to you your chief Good. In every Stage of Life, let your Father's bright Example be your Guide. First, reflect, that in vain does Man pretend to conceal his Actions from the Eye of Heaven. Next, that to your Country and to your King, the strictest Loyalty is due. But, rather than to commit one base Action, Die, first, my Son, and your Death will be a Subject of Envy.[123]

Encapsulated in these lines is the message of the whole cantata. The mother's words condense those qualities that Linda Colley memorably identifies as the hallmarks of the ideal (especially male) eighteenth-century Briton: adherence to the values of stark *Protestantism* over "depraved" Catholicism, self-sacrificing *patriotism* to the liberal monarchy of Great Britain, and assiduous

[123] Tonioli, 6–7.

avoidance of the bad behavior associated with the colonial *peripheries*.[124] But leading from the lines was also the starkest demonstration of the cantata's failure in performance, which returns us to the tension between the possibilities of hearing and the limits of speech. While the character Philenus explains that he has frequently overheard "the Mother thus instruct her excellent Son," in Pacchierotti's eroticized voice (due to no fault of his own) her moralistic advice becomes, simply put, Camp.

Il tributo sounded as the symbolic endpoint of Beckford's transition from boy to man, heir apparent to colonial baron. Such rites of passage, as described by Victor Turner, require the "neophyte" to be separated from society and inhabit a terrain "betwixt and between" both states before acceding to communal authority and being reborn in a new social role.[125] At first blush, the cantata (and its surrounding party) may seem to be the culmination of that transition, but on closer examination its words betray a custodial anxiety over failure to inhabit the proper modes of genteel English masculinity. Rather than celebrating Beckford's accomplishments, *Il tributo* represents a guardian's last-ditch effort to remedy a case of arrested development. More than good behavior, the masculine conduct outlined in *Il tributo* enacted racialized and classed values that could untether Beckford from his West Indian lineage (and its supposed racial degeneration into Blackness), distinguishing him as legitimately English and wholly white. "How perfect must be that Son," concludes Thirsis wistfully, "in whom is united such maternal Advice, with such hereditary paternal Excellence!" The problem, of course, was not that Tenducci's lines contradicted the geohumoral belief, surely accepted among Beckford's guests, in the

[124] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 5.
[125] Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 94–95, 102–105; on the Grand Tour as rite of passage, see Bruce Redford, *Venice & the Grand Tour* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 15–16; and for a critical consideration of Turner in relation to *opera seria*, see Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 13–14, 17–18.

degenerative effects of the tropical climate on white Britons. Rather, the problem stems from earnestly entrusting any hope for claiming a pedigree of English purity to two Italian singers—sex-symbols who envoiced the indolence, decadence, and barbarism associated with the climate of the European South. As I have argued, Beckford was attuned to such instances of *failed seriousness*, elaborately crafted and high-stakes mythmaking that collapsed into irony at the moment of its performance. Unwilling or unable to embody the "chaste ear" of *Il tributo*, his Camp ear reframed his relationship to empire, simultaneously challenging the expectations of English masculinity and celebrating his colonial wealth through cultural accumulation. And this Camp aurality could strip the cantata of its British moral gravity to revel in the self-conscious eroticism of Southern voices. Still, while *Il tributo* constituted a failure of metropolitan proscriptions around English masculinity, it remains a celebration of unprecedented wealth amassed through colonial exploitation and enslaved labor, an ambivalent sonic artifact of the English planter class at the summit of their power.

Encountering Modinhas

Only after being finally and completely cast out of polite society did Beckford seriously consider crossing the transatlantic boundary from his metropolitan seat to visit the colonial source of his wealth. After his affair with William Courtenay came to light in 1785, he and his new wife Lady Margaret Gordon resolved to wait out the scandal at Fonthill. They eventually transferred their self-imposed quarantine to Switzerland, where Lady Margaret died in May 1786, shortly after giving birth to their second daughter. Encumbered by English rumormongering—a dead wife following sodomy with a young aristocrat was a situation rife for gossip—Beckford's family decided that he would finally make the trip to his holdings in

Jamaica. Beckford himself was unenthusiastic about the plan, expressing "dread" that the tropical climate would "wither [his] health away."[126] Moreover, only one generation removed from the West Indies, integration into planter society would further erode his already tenuous link to Englishness. Resigning himself to failure had not necessarily meant complete ostracism and exile across the ocean. No doubt the promised daily interaction, even intimacy, with the enslaved Black population and the slave system itself also troubled the absentee planter, who risked having his illusions of happy slaves shattered. Sailing from England in March 1787, he undocked at the ship's first stop in Lisbon and never re-boarded. There he would remain almost through the end of the year before moving on to Spain. He never made it to Jamaica.

Prior to his abortive journey, Beckford had never crossed the psychic, let alone physical, boundary that cordoned off his aesthetic world from the violent systems of racial slavery that funded it. Instead, he had mitigated the devastating realities and expectations of empire by pursuing and collecting foreign beauty: Oriental art and antiques, Catholic-leaning architecture, and the vocal art of the castrato. He thus surpassed the limit of sentimental feeling—a necessary civilizing influence in moderation but, in excess, a failure of masculine proscriptions—to cultivate a Camp sensibility. Beckford's Camp, as a way of engaging with the world through artifice and sincerity, was epitomized by a practice of listening that embraced the eroticism of voice. But his approach necessarily excluded the voices of Black Jamaicans whom he held in bondage. While castrated voices could be indulged in as luxuries from the South, the voices of the enslaved could not register in the aesthetic paradigm to which his ear was tuned. To take them seriously as music would have posed an existential threat to his sense of cultural superiority

[126] William Beckford, *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain, 1787–1788*, ed. Boyd Alexander (London: Hart-Davis, 1954), 14–15.

and aspirational racial purity. And to go so far as to hear them in person could only collapse the conceptual distance between their worlds.

Figure 1.5 The *Chafariz d'El-Rey* in the Alfama District, Lisbon, ca. 1570–80.
Source: The Berardo Collection, Lisbon, Portugal (via Walters Museum). Wikimedia Commons. *https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chafariz_d%E2%80%99El-Rey,_c._1570-80_(Colec%C3%A7%C3%A3o_Berardo).png*.

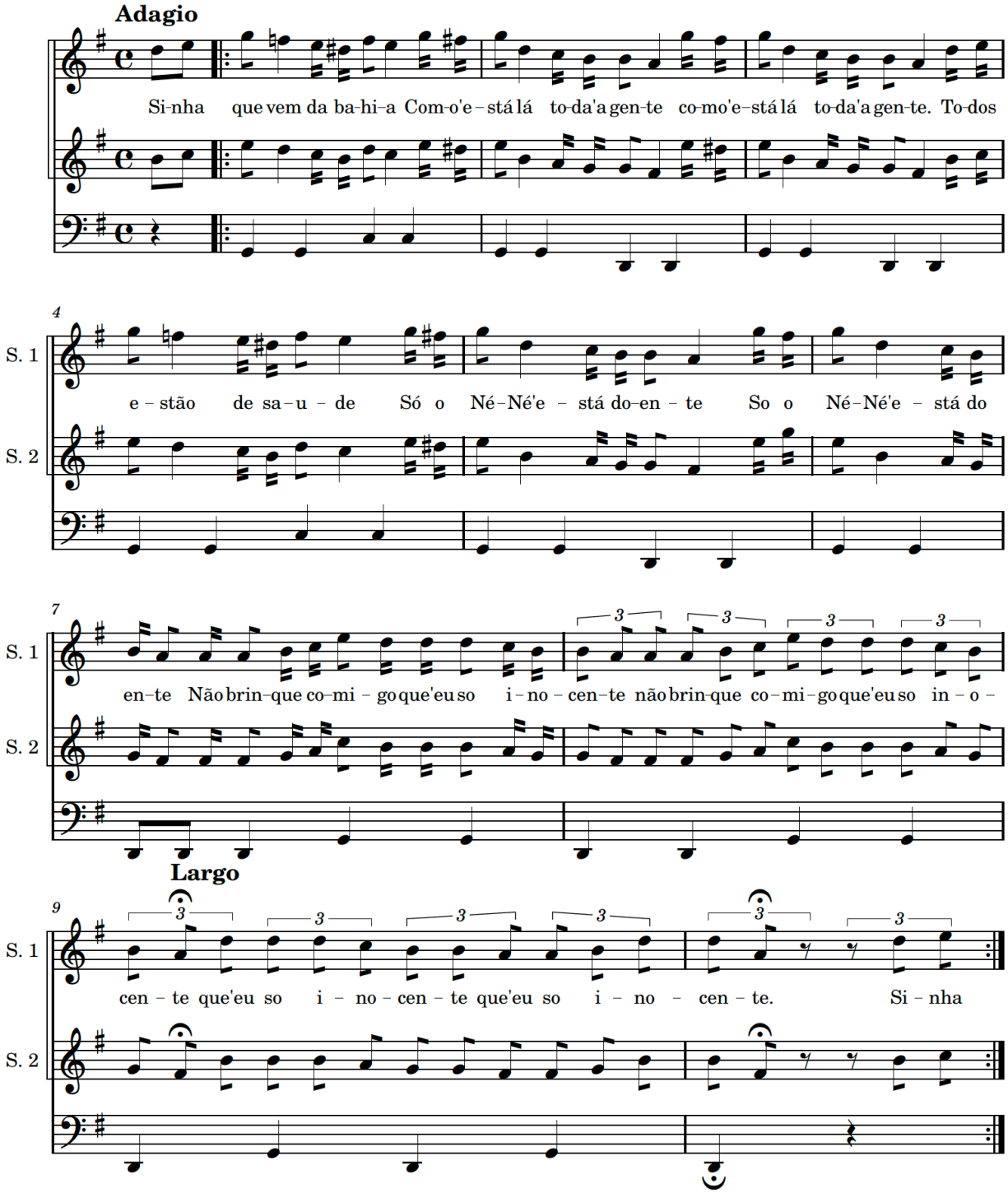
Ironic, then, that his last opportunity to avoid Jamaica was Lisbon. Perhaps even more so than Italy, Portugal stood for the "slow time," lack of progress, and co-constitution with the Orient endemic to the European South. Iberia had been the stronghold of Islam in Europe until 1492 and Portugal's pioneering role in the Atlantic slave trade had the unintended effect of a racially diverse population (see figure 1.5).[127] Lady Craven consequently advised Beckford

[127] Imtiaz H. Habib writes that early modern "English experiences of black people emanated from and followed the cultural experiences of the Iberian peninsula." *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (London: Ashgate, 2008), 165; see also Stefan Halikowski Smith, "Lisbon in the Sixteenth Century: Decoding the Chafariz d'el Rei," *Race & Class* 60 (2018): 63–81.

against intermarriage with a noble Portuguese family, imploring him not to "taint yourself with Jewish, Moorish blood [and to] never tie yourself to Negro Land."[128] But in retreating to Portugal, he avoided the work songs of the sugar plantation and found a new genre of creolized arietta, the *modinha*, lately arrived from Brazil. A quintessentially colonial genre, they had been imported in the 1770s by Domingos Caldas Barbosa (a mixed-race, or *pardo*, musician born in Rio de Janiero to a Portuguese father and Angolan mother) who played the ten-string *viola caipira* to great acclaim. While displaying both Afro-Brazilian and European influences, *modinhas* were nevertheless associated, at least in Europe, primarily with sonic Blackness. Stylistically, they resemble Italian *galant* arias inflected with modal mixture and syncopations in the vocal line (see example 1.2). A syncretic product emerging from the colonial crucible of the Portuguese slave trade, the *modinha* betrays the influence of enslaved musicmaking on the European voice and ear, just as sugar, cultivated by enslaved Africans, reshaped the European palate.[129] And in their novelty and popularity throughout Lisbon, they recall the material and symbolic dependency of Old World consumption upon New World exploitation. Perhaps even more than the plantation songs of countless travel narratives, the *modinha* expressed Western Europe's restructure and reallocation of the world and its peoples.

[128] Lady Craven quoted in Jill H. Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 72.
[129] Peter Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil* (Hanover, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 142–45.

Example 1.2 Untitled *modinha* duet from Beckford's private collection. Note the implied syncopation of the vocal line, which Maxwell Steer likens to early jazz notation. Source: Bodleian Library, Oxford: MS Beckford f. 3, fols. 1v–2. Published in Maxwell Steer's *Beckford Edition* (1998). Transcription by author.



Beckford first heard *modinhas* following the public festivities for *Corpo de Deos* (the Feast of Corpus Christi) in June. Having spent the evening at the home of his agent, Thomas Horne, he heard "[Dona] Luisa de Almeida and her music master, a little square friar with green eyes, [sing] Brazilian *modinhas*," which he described as "an original sort of music different from any I ever heard, the most seducing, the most voluptuous imaginable, the best calculated to throw saints off their guard and to inspire profane deliriums."[130] In familiar language ("voluptuous effeminacy") he describes not a singular voice but an abundance of rhythmic and harmonic idiosyncrasies—racialized sonic signifiers of colonial origins—in a form recognizable enough for him to experience and evaluate as music. Compare this experience to his impressions of the Procession of the Host through town earlier in the day:

> [The slow descent] to the sound of choirs and the distant thunder of artillery, [it] lost itself in a winding street decorated with splendid hangings, and left me with my senses in a whirl and my eyes dazzled like those of a saint just wakened from a vision of celestial splendor. My head swims at this moment and my ears tingle with a vibration of sounds—bells, voices, and the echoes of cannon prolonged by mountains and wafted over waters.[131]

For all its cacophony, the urban soundscape that Beckford describes left the proverbial saints with heavenly visions, whereas the evening's *modinhas* had, as if by design, offered the exact inverse: "profane deliriums."

When they reappear in an October entry in Beckford's journal, the *modinhas* have not lost their effect. They are "the most voluptuous and bewitching music that ever existed since the days of the Sybarites" and to hear them is to "fancy you are swallowing milk [while actually] swallowing poison."[132] This time "voluptuous" has a specific referent, the downfall of the

[130] Beckford, *Journal*, 69.
[131] Beckford, *Journal*, 69.
[132] Beckford, *Journal*, 228–29.

ancient Sybarites, spurred by their excessive preoccupation with pleasure. In contrast, the comfort of milk may refer to the promised land of the ancient Israelites, the Land of Milk and Honey, reserved for the morally righteous. Arousing his desire, the performance as he describes it recalls the deep feeling Beckford had for the singing of Pacchierotti and Tenducci. Though surely not up to the snuff of the best castrati, here were "two young fellows, one dressed as a girl and very becomingly, [who] sang an enchanting *modinha*" as part of a play. The occasion for theatrical cross-dressing resulted from the ban, instituted by Queen Maria I, the Pious, of women from the stage. The absence of women's voices leaves open the possibility that young men enhanced the epicene spectacle by singing in falsetto. Beckford also pinpoints their "languid interrupted measures" of syncopation, sounding "as if the breath was gone with excess of rapture, and the soul panting to fly out of you and incorporate itself with the beloved object. A childish carelessness they steal into the heart before it has time to arm itself against their enervating influence." Lack of breath in any other genre would prove, at best, an unwanted distraction—a direct fault of the singer threatening to dampen the whole performance. Here, Beckford identifies the singers' seemingly stolen breath with his own somatic response, a rare kind of bodily homology between affects on and off stage.

Most surprising of all, the *modinhas* raised for Beckford the possibility of returning to the colonial source of transatlantic creolization:

> As to myself, I must confess I am a slave to *modinhas*, and … cannot endure the idea of quitting Portugal. Could I indulge the least hopes of surviving a two months' voyage, nothing should prevent my setting off for Brazil, the native land of *modinhas*, and living in tents, decorated like those the Chevalier de Parny describes in his agreeable little Voyage, and swinging in hammocks and gliding over smooth mats with youths crowned with jasmine and girls diffusing at every motion the perfumes of roses.[133]

[133] Beckford, *Journal*, 228–29.

Beckford's use of "slave" here is telling, as he willingly places himself in thrall of a kind of Creole song. Song had conjured idle comments of far-off travel before. He had longed to follow the path of the sunset alongside Pacchierotti to "the other hemisphere, there to remain on the banks of Oronooks, or at the base of the Andes."[134] The Orinoco River and the Andes Mountains are, of course, on opposite sides of the continent. His thoughts of Brazil are similarly suffused with exotic attractions: Parny's fine Chinese curtains and rare wines alongside crowned youths and perfumed girls from his own Orientalist sensorium. These cartographic and cultural collapses amount to what Jill Casid calls an "empire of fantasy," the British Empire (necessary for his income) overlaid onto an imagined space of racial purity that "neither exacts responsibilities nor implicates subjects."[135] In *modinhas*, Beckford found a place apart from English strictures and imperial responsibilities where he could safely indulge his own fantasies of enslavement, a mythical South suffused with a colonial soundscape but free from any threat of racial degeneration.

[134] Beckford to Frances Burney, Lucca, 1 October 1780, in Benjamin, *Letters*, 92.
[135] Casid, *Sowing Empire*, 67.

CHAPTER 2. COLONIAL VENTRILOQUY

The airs of Cashimere and Rohilcund are most perfect and regular; but
even those, on their being sung, need the grace of a Chanam, and the
expression of a Dillsook, to render them pleasing.

William Hamilton Bird, Preface to *The Oriental Miscellany* (1789)

God has given you one voice. If you start changing it around,
it stops being singing and turns into mimicry.

Karnatic singer interviewed by Amanda Weidman (2006)

The Bilqīs of Her Age

On 26 July 1788, Sophia Elizabeth Plowden recorded that she had "heard from Major [William] Palmer that he had got my title from the King, the patent making out."[1] Although Plowden was a citizen of Great Britain, the king to whom she refers was not George III but Shah Alam II, Mughal Emperor of India, and the promised title was *Begum*, typically reserved for royal dowagers and other women of high status throughout the Islamic world. Referring to Shah Alan as "King" hints at the fractured state of his empire, which by that point barely extended beyond his palace in Delhi.[2] Still, to receive such a distinction was a substantial honor for an Englishwoman—all the more so for the wife of an official with the East India Company, a foreign entity that two decades earlier had usurped control of Bengal province for their new

[1] Sophia Elizabeth Plowden, *Diary of Mrs. Richard Chicheley Plowden (Sophia Elizabeth Prosser)* (British Library, London, MSS EurF 127/94, 1787–1789).

[2] Just a few days after Plowden's entry, Shah Alam II was briefly deposed (and blinded) by his Grand Vizier, only to be reinstalled in October as a client of the Marathas (who had already seized most of his lands but honored his lineage and position). This explains why the imperial *firmān* granting Plowden the title of *Begum* was issued in July 1789, a year after she mentioned it in her diary. When her great-granddaughter, Jane Maria Strachey, recounted the story decades later, she wrote that "the then King of Oudh bestowed the rank of Begum upon Mrs. Richard Chichele Plowden, on account of her having made this collection." While it is possible that Sophia Plowden was referring to Asaf-ud-Daula, *nawab* of Awadh, in her diary, the proclamation nevertheless came from Shah Alam II, as she was surely aware; see the introductory note to Sophia Elizabeth Plowden, *Album*. 2 vols. (Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. MS 380, 1787–88).

capital.[3] Plowden had arrived with her husband a decade earlier in Lucknow, capital of the princely state of Awadh, where she developed an interest in the diverse repertoire of courtly songs known to Europeans as "Hindustani airs." Over time, she amassed an impressive collection—devoting special attention to light *ghazal*s in Persian and Urdu (called *rekhta*s), intricate Panjabi *tappa*s, and Arabic-based *tarānā*s—which she compiled into a sumptuously illustrated album, ca. 1787–88.[4] She also took to singing her favorites at social gatherings, sometimes in the dress of the elite Mughal courtesans, or *tawā'ifs*, who performed them at private dance performances knowns as *nautches*. While Plowden was not the only Englishwoman to collect or perform Hindustani airs—her friend Margaret Fowke was also instrumental in popularizing them—she was the only one ennobled by the Mughal court. To wit, in July 1789 Shah Alam issued an imperial *fīrmān* (decree) making her a *Begum* in recognition of her "exceptional devotedness, and rare fidelity," but among her "high titles and honourable address," the strangest was the designation as "the Bilqīs of her Age."[5]

On its face, the comparison to Bilqīs, the Islamic name for the Queen of Sheba, reads as a simple affirmation of the Englishwoman's inherent nobility. And yet, the ambivalent portrayal of the legendary monarch in Islamic culture suggests that there may have been more to the unique allusion than straightforward praise. The Quran introduces the unnamed Queen of Sheba as the

[3] Shah Alam II granted the *diwani*, or right to collect imperial taxes on his behalf, over Bengal Subah to the East India Company in the Treaty of Allahabad (1765) following his swift defeat the previous year at the Battle of Buxar. That was, in turn, a rehashing of the Company's previous victory at the Battle of Plassey (1757). For a slightly different perspective on Shah Alam's rationale in granting the *diwani*, see Sonal Singh, "Micro-History Lost in a Global Narrative? Revisiting the Grant of the 'Diwani' to the English East India Company," *Social Scientist* 45 (2017): 41–51.

[4] Katherine Butler Schofield, "'Words without Songs': The Social History of Hindustani Song Collections in India's Muslim Courts, c.1770-1830," in *Theory and Practice in the Music of the Islamic World: Essays in Honour of Owen Wright*, ed. Rachel Harris and Martin Stokes (London: Routledge, 2017), 183–86.

[5] For the English translation of the *fīrmān*, see Walter F. C. Chicheley Plowden, *Records of the Chicheley Plowdens, A. D. 1590–1913* (London: Heath, Cranton & Ouseley Limited, 1914), 173–75; see also India Office Library and Records and M. Z. A. Shakeb, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Miscellaneous Persian Mughal Documents from Akbar to Bahadur Shah II* (London: India Office Library and Records, 1982), 10–11.

wise and just leader of a prosperous nation of sun worshippers. As both a woman and a pagan, though, her sovereignty presents a fundamental challenge to the patriarchal authority divinely ordained in King Sulaimān (i.e., Solomon)—a problem only solved when she accepts the God of Abraham. Subsequent Muslim scholars found that she defied easy categorization, speculating that one of her parents was *jinn* (spirit) and that she had the legs of a donkey. Even naming her Bilqīs, likely derived from the Greek and Hebrew words for concubine, served to reinforce her eventual domestication by Solomon.[6]

Why, then, would such a woman be invoked in Plowden's grant of Begum? For one thing, European women in Mughal India occupied a space of social liminality. As they were neither subject to Muslim prohibitions on entering male spaces nor numerous enough to constitute their own class, they often found themselves among the only women at court or at semi-private gatherings.[7] Add to this Plowden's propensity for envoicing the *tawā'if*—a class of female performers who were able to move freely in male spaces but were barred from the confines of the *harem*—which may have confused courtly mores regulating music, gender, and rank more than usual.[8] Whether or not by design, "the Bilqīs of her Age" was thus an apt description for a woman who transgressed cultural and social boundaries between Georgian Britain and Mughal India, elite courtesan and middle-class wife, and artist and dilettante.

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[6] Shahla Haeri, *The Unforgettable Queens of Islam: Succession, Authority, Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 30–32.

[7] In November 1787, for example, Plowden "was invited to a dinner with 'a party of gentlemen' that included Capt. William Palmer, Col. Antoine Polier, and the painter John Zoffany. There were no other European or Indian women present, although all three of these men had Indian companions in Awadh." Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 78.

[8] Katherine Butler Schofield, "The Courtesan Tale: Female Musicians and Dancers in Mughal Historical Chronicles, c.1556–1748," *Gender & History* 24 (2012): 157–58.

The Plowdens left India in 1790 with a small fortune, but back in England their newly acquired wealth was more likely to occasion suspicion than celebration.[9] White Anglo-Indians who returned to Britain with a great treasure in tow were mocked as "nabobs" after the Persian title *nawab* held by imperial governors and independent princes in Mughal India. The *nouveau riche* nabob was thus the eastern counterpart to the white Creole of the West Indies.[10] In both cases, time spent in the blistering heat and long-term intimacy with native or enslaved peoples made them an ideal canvas onto which metropolitan Britons could project imperial anxieties. But while both were shunned by polite society, the characteristics ascribed to the white European inhabitants of the East or West Indies were dependent upon a colonialist mindset that represented the Black African as the ultimate racial Other.[11] Whereas Europeans generally viewed Africa as a place without history or culture, early Orientalists like Sir William Jones celebrated classical Indian civilization—its fantastical pantheon, Sanskrit epics, and complex unfamiliar ragas—for its affinity with Greco-Roman antiquity.[12] As a result, portrayals of Anglo-Indian nabobs generally focused on their effeminate consumerism and their cruel exploitation of India, mirroring the trope of the "decadent Oriental despot," rather than concerns about "racial

[9] "When [Richard Plowden] left India he possessed, in the hands of his bankers, William Mills and George Chamberlayne of London, £33,550, invested in Consols and East India Stock; not a bad little fortune after ten years' service in India." Plowden, *Records of the Chicheley Plowdens*, 161.

[10] As with the descriptor "West Indian," the term "Anglo-Indian" referred to a place of origin or habitation rather than mixed-race parentage, see James Mulholland, *Before the Raj: Writing Early Anglophone India* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021), 35–36. The term in its original context—the Persian *nawab*, coming from the Arabic *naib*—did not imply a negative value judgement; nabob came into popular use as a pejorative for certain white Britons in the eighteenth century. The best-known East Indian nabob is probably Jos Sedley in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848), see Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 86.

[11] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *The New Centennial Review* 3 (2003): 266. On the figure of the Black as dialectical negation of whiteness, see Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); and on the lasting effects of that trope, see Frank B. Wilderson, *Afropessimism* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2020).

[12] Sharada Sugirtharajah, *Imagining Hinduism: A Postcolonial Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1–37; and Gerald Barr, "Sir William Jones: A Neoclassical Hinduism," *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 34 (2017): 43–53.

degeneration." And if nabobs threatened the lofty ideals of British liberalism and restrained masculinity, their wives and daughters endangered the sanctity of the British family. Historian Tillman Nechtman argues that the tendency of so-called nabobinas to wear the pilfered wealth of India, specifically in the form of diamonds, rendered them "material manifestations of an imperial presence in domestic Britain."[13] In reality, very few white women actually made the trip to India, where they supposedly risked physical and moral deterioration due to the heat of the South Asian climate and the influence of Muslim and Hindu culture.[14] But for Sophia Plowden, India was an opportunity to perform an "unorthodox femininity," a far-off space where she could impersonate a sexually autonomous courtesan in dress and voice and find herself ennobled.[15]

The story of the "Hindustani air," and Plowden's prominent role in its construction, has been told and retold in recent decades by scholars searching for formative moments in Europe's historical engagement with Indian music. As a self-contained category of music, the Hindustani air was a British colonial invention of the 1780s, a catchall term representing various Indo-Persian song forms that appealed to the contemporary taste for "the picturesque" and lent themselves to performance by European musicians.[16] In an explicitly anti-Saidian take on the practice, Nicholas Cook has argued that the popularity of Hindustani airs during this period should be viewed as "evidence of an innocent openness to non-European culture" and not in

[13] Tillman W. Nechtman, "Nabobinas: Luxury, Gender, and the Sexual Politics of British Imperialism in India in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Women's History* 18 (2006): 10.
[14] Onni Gust, *Unhomely Empire: Whiteness and Belonging, c. 1760-1830* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 145.
[15] Felicity Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 176.
[16] Ian Woodfield, "The 'Hindostannie Air': English Attempts to Understand Indian Music in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 119 (1994): 189–211; Ian Woodfield, *Music of the Raj: A Social and Economic History of Music in Late Eighteenth-Century Anglo-Indian Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 149–54; and Gerry Farrell, *Indian Music and the West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 28–44.

terms of postcolonial critique.[17] In this way, he aims "to rehabilitate cross-cultural listening" from what he felt was a dogmatic acceptance of the tenets of *Orientalism*, which he glosses as "representation through appropriation" within the field of musicology. In practice, however, Cook appears more interested in absolving eighteenth-century Anglo-Indians from accusations of cultural appropriation, stressing music's ability to "[bypass] linguistic, cultural, and … racial barriers."[18] This is not to say that a more nuanced picture of Anglo-Indian musical relations is unwarranted. Recent work by Katherine Butler Schofield and Margaret Walker considers Plowden's actions within the wider landscape of late-Mughal music culture, positioning the Hindustani air as a potential site of cross-cultural musical collaboration.[19] And yet, to obscure the "material and historical conditions" that first brought women like Plowden to India risks what Indira Ghose describes as "colluding" in "the myth of women's non-involvement in colonialism."[20] In adding nuance, then, we should remain cautious of painting too rosy a picture.

This chapter turns away from reductive debates that situate themselves between innocence and appropriation to reimagine the Hindustani air as an ambivalent mode of Anglo-Indian music-making. It frames Plowden's practice of song as colonial ventriloquy, a term I adapt from Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry in order to highlight the social and political dimensions of her imitation. To unravel the contradictions inherent within her vocal

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[17] Nicholas Cook, "Encountering the Other, Redefining the Self: Hindostannie Airs, Haydn's Folksong Settings and the 'Common Practice' Style," in *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s to 1940s: Portrayal of the East*, ed. Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 17–18.
[18] Cook, "Encountering the Other," 37.
[19] Margaret E. Walker, "The 'Nautch', the Veil and the Bayadere: The Indian Dance as Musical Nexus," in *The Music Road: Coherence and Diversity in Music from the Mediterranean to India*, ed. Reinhard Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 213–35; and Schofield, "Words without Songs."
[20] "By constructing themselves as busy collecting picturesque scenes or curios or flowers … looking on while men managed the dirty business of politics, women travellers epitomize the stance of British women in empire—as located outside of historical and material conditions." Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9; by contrast, Cook conjectures that, "given the prominent role of women on both sides of the encounter, one might also see it as exemplifying what has been called an 'alternative female discourse' on the Orient." Cook, "Encountering the Other," 17.

performance, this chapter compares the status of an Englishwoman in the Company Raj to the classical station and training of hereditary female musicians such as the much-admired Kashmiri performer Khanum Jan. It then re-imagines Plowden's performance of Hindustani airs at a Calcutta masquerade through the aesthetics of Camp (as introduced in the previous chapter), arguing that the native persona she envoiced was received so well by white partygoers because it employed an overabundance of cultural signifiers and failed to produce a convincing facsimile. In ventriloquizing the *tawā'if*, Plowden also emphasized her own foreignness to Mughal culture. The result was a performance that her audience could appreciate as (paraphrasing Bhabha) almost the same, but *still* white.[21]

Ambivalence in the Company Raj

The Plowdens' time in India (1777–90) roughly coincided with what historian P. J. Marshall calls the "age of plunder" that produced many of the private nabob fortunes and led to increased Parliamentary control of the East India Company.[22] Created by royal charter in 1600, the joint-stock company held a monopoly over all English (later British) trade in Asia. From 1717, it had the right to trade duty-free throughout Mughal India, though it still required cooperation from various semi-autonomous regions, of which there were several by the middle of the century. After the Company's decisive victories at the Battle of Plassey (1757) and the Battle of Buxar (1764), it held *de facto* control over the lucrative province of Bengal. Not only did it command a significant private military from its capital of Fort William, out of which grew the colonial city of Calcutta, but it held the legal right to collect regional taxes (*diwani*) on behalf

[21] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 127.
[22] P.J. Marshall, "British-Indian Connections, c. 1780 to c. 1830: The Empire of the Officials," in *Romantic Representations of British India*, ed. Michael J. Franklin (London: Routledge, 2006), 50.

of Shah Alam II. With the Regulating Act of 1773, the British Parliament established the Presidency of Bengal as the colonial capital, with Warren Hastings as its first Governor-General. Thus, the government of Great Britain was able to assert nominal control over India while farming out the actual governing to a private corporation. The early years of the Company Raj, however, proved disappointing back in London. Government coffers were not yet overflowing with the riches of the Orient and the Company, whose ostensible *raison d'être* was still to make a profit, teetered on the verge of bankruptcy. In fact, the only ones who seemed to be getting any richer were the rare individuals who were well-placed and shrewd enough to expropriate the wealth of India *en masse*.

Unsurprisingly, those who did return with vast treasure in tow were not readily welcomed into polite society. Anglo-Indians seeking to parlay their new fortunes into status and influence were lampooned in popular works like *The Nabob* (1772) by Samuel Foote, who had previously skewered the unmannered Creole in *The Patron* (1764). E. M. Collingham describes the general perception of the East Indian nabob in the late eighteenth century:

> Neither British nor Indian but a particular blend of the two, he was identifiable by his dry yellow skin; his liver complaint and consequent biliousness; his propensity to drink large quantities of wine and eat copious dinners; his extravagant attire, which generally included a white waistcoat; is fondness for smoking a hookah and, when in India, his enjoyment of nautches which he would attend wearing the loose clothing of the natives.[23]

Foremost among the nabob elite was Robert Clive, the infamous Clive of India, responsible for winning the Battle of Plassey and obtaining the *diwani* of Bengal. He had also secured several sources of income for himself and returned to England with a tidy fortune, which he used to buy his way into Parliament and nobility. He was also widely blamed for instigating the Great Bengal

[23] E. M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001), 13.

Famine of 1770 that killed up to ten million Indians.[24] Through such stories of bribery, theft, and the general exploitation of India, the public came to associate nabob wealth with the uncomfortable excesses of empire. This was exacerbated by the material, consumerist form that nabob wealth tended to take. In Europe, respectable money was traditionally imagined in terms of land, not things. In imitation of the landed gentry, *nouveau-riche* nabobs wore fine clothing, ate well, and commanded a retinue of servants, but for aristocrats, such trappings were merely signifiers of an inherited status that was—or had previously been—regularly supported by an estate. Anglo-Indians understood this, of course, but they first needed to transfer the assets acquired in India back to England, preferably off the books, for which diamonds proved especially convenient. This freed enterprising nabobs from tax obligations, but involvement with the diamond trade led to their being labeled as "effete dandies."[25] Little wonder, then, that the English public came to believe that "Indians were being despoiled and the Company and that nation were being cheated."[26]

The condemnation of nabobs as fortune-hunters and upstarts profiting off of India sits at the forefront of the anti-colonial polemic *Tea and Sugar* (1792). The pseudonymous Timothy Touchstone begins his verse by absolving the "Indian born" nawabs of Mughal India, whose right to rule flows from the Mughal Emperor, from the ensuing critique.[27] By contrast, "*British* NABOB's" are revealed as social climbers who covet seats in Parliament:

> 'Tis not of NABOB's who, are Indian born,
> Such as fam'd TIPPOO, or old ALI-CAWN,
> I mean to sing----No! let their action's sleep

[24] Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 14–17.
[25] Nechtman, "Nabobinas," 18.
[26] Marshall, "British-Indian Connections," 46.
[27] Touchstone seems to be referencing Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore and major antagonist of the EIC during these years, as well as (presumably) Muhammad Ali Khan Wallajah, Nawab of the Carnatic, a longstanding British ally.

Upon their native plains or in the deep;
'Tis *British* NABOB's claim my tuneful verse,
My Country's shame, and poor Hindostan's curse
Such, who from very nothings have begun;
Some *Borough-Lawyer's* or some *Barber's* son;
Whose Sire's eloquence, or low chicane
Can, with the help of gold, election gain
For some rich plunderer, from eastern climes,
Of which, we have many seen, in latter times;[28]

The "Country's shame"—the exploitation that delivered large quantities of cheap consumer goods like Indian tea and Caribbean sugar—is thus offloaded onto a stock villain. By downplaying the systemic machinery of empire, the poem clears readers of any responsibility while leaving the colonial markets from which they benefit intact. Touchstone ends the first stanza by bringing his argument back home:

Men, who bring *Britain's* edicts into shame,
And make its MAGNA-CHARTA, *merely* name.[29]

That the nabob also threatened the liberty of native Britons made him all the easier to fear and to revile. With even the foundational tenets of *Magna Carta* (1215) on the line, Britain is positioned as much a victim as India itself.

Not coincidentally, *Tea and Sugar* was published in the middle of Warren Hastings's protracted impeachment trial (1788–95) for alleged embezzling, extortion, and general mismanagement. Lead prosecutor Edmund Burke enflamed anti-nabob sentiment by painting the East India Company and its employees as corrupt fortune hunters exploiting an innocent people for personal (rather than public) gain. It was through the trial that London observers heard firsthand of the inner workings of British India under Hastings (who had retired as chief

[28] Timothy Touchstone [pseud.], *Tea and Sugar, or the Nabob and the Creole; a Poem, in Two Cantos* (London, 1792), 1.
[29] Touchstone, *Tea and Sugar*, 1.

executive of the Company Raj in 1785) and of his expressly Orientalist approach to governance.[30] Indeed, Hastings recognized that the British had the opportunity to "become the interpreters of India as the French and other European Jesuits had been the interpreters of China."[31] More than the academic study of the East, though, Orientalism here implied aesthetic and intellectual passion for, and ostensibly sympathetic interest in, India. As Governor-General, Hastings downplayed notions of European cultural superiority and adopted local costumes like keeping a set of nautch performers on the Company payroll. He argued that importing British civil law would be a mistake, and instead enacted a judicial plan according to which Muslims and Hindus would be subject first and foremost to their own, pre-existing legal codes.[32] He also promoted intercultural understanding through the study and interpretation of language, religion, and the arts, both writing an introduction for Charles Wikins's 1785 translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* and directly encouraging Margaret Fowke to collect Hindustani airs, which he had been known to sang.[33] Crucially, though, his Orientalist policies need to be contextualized within his role as an agent of the East India Company, and therefore the British interest in India. As Michael Franklin puts it, "Hastings knew that it was information, rather than military superiority, that enabled a comparative handful of Europeans to subdue and administer vast subcontinental territories."[34] Back in London, the decision to uphold traditional legal, cultural, and administrative structures may have seemed overly indulgent, suggesting that he had "gone

[30] Noel Chevalier, "Redeeming the Nabob: Frances Burney, Warren Hastings and the Cultural Construction of India," *The Burney Journal* 2 (1999): 24–39.
[31] Marshall, "British-Indian Connections," 47.
[32] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 65–66.
[33] Fowke wrote to her father in January 1785: "I am likewise informed that Mr Hastings sings the Hindostannie Airs perfectly well, but as I never inclined to listen to his voice, which I shou'd judge to be a hollow one, I never laid myself out to hear him," quoted in Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, 175–76.
[34] Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746–1794* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19–20.

native."[35] And yet, James Mulholland has recently argued that "the two categories of 'going native' (ostensibly benign, appreciative colonialism) or rigidly maintained Britishness (cultural superiority and orientalism) are insufficient to describe how [Anglo-Indians] interreacted with the environment and the varied populations" of late Mughal Hindustan.[36] For Hastings in Calcutta, embracing Indian culture was politically expedient in establishing British authority, which he felt to be justified by "right of conquest."[37]

The administrative policies of the early Company Raj exemplified the ambivalent desires inherent within colonial discourse. In his role as Governor-General, Hastings was an enthusiastic student of Indian culture who not only sang Hindustani airs but claimed to have "always protested against every Interpolation of European Taste in the Recital of the Music of Hindostan."[38] He also believed that practicing this kind of "cultural empathy" would best serve the interests of the Company by easing the transition to, and facilitating native acceptance of, British colonial rule.[39] A similar assessment could be made of Sir William Jones's tenure on the Supreme Court of Judicature in Calcutta, from 1783 to his death in 1795. As the founder of the Asiatick Society, Jones spent his years in India studying sacred Vedic literature and producing extensive scholarship and effusive poetry on the topic of Indian religion. Still, as Jessica Patterson observes: "The tendency of some scholars to emphasise the culturally sensitive attitudes expressed by Jones thus often sidesteps … the networks of Company power and patronage within which he operated. These conditions did not mean that Jones' attraction to

[35] Saree Makdisi, "Romanticism and Empire," in *A Concise Companion to the Romantic Age*, ed. Jon P. Klancher (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 44.
[36] Mulholland, *Before the Raj*, 35–36.
[37] Kathleen Wilson, *Strolling Players of Empire: Theater and Performances of Power in the British Imperial Provinces, 1656–1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 175–76.
[38] Warren Hastings to Margaret Fowke, Calcutta, 9 January 1785, quoted in Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, 174.
[39] Wilson, *Strolling Players of Empire*, 176.

Indian culture was insincere, but then neither was his investment in the Company and its interests."[40] To wit, his decision to learn Sanskrit was spurred by his desire for a digest of Hindu law to improve the functioning of the Supreme Court. While he may have felt that translating and codifying the principles of the *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* would benefit non-Muslim natives under the colonial administration, the fruits of his labor also supported British hegemony. An ardent defendant of American independence who decried English dominion over his native Wales, Jones had initially viewed his appointment as an opportunity to improve the lot of Indians under colonial rule, though he later came to the racist conclusion that the indigenous population was "incapable of civil liberty."[41] For Jones, the revelation was regrettable but evident from his understanding of Indian religion, which he viewed as a sublime expression of mystical philosophy but essentially irrational in nature.[42] Like Hastings, he perceived no conflict between his passion for the culture of India and his demeaning (and paternalistic) views toward the native Indians.

This view of colonial relations represents a major shift in scholarly discourse from a focus on the political and economic dimensions of colonialism to the pervasive system of coloniality, a shift originating in the postcolonial turn initiated in part by the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978. As noted earlier, among Cook's central concerns in his article on the Hindustani air is the degree to which Said's work has become "more or less an orthodoxy" within music studies, resulting in a lack of engagement with what Cook calls "the

[40] Jessica Patterson, *Religion, Enlightenment and Empire: British Interpretations of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 267.
[41] Mulholland, *Before the Raj*, 104–7.
[42] Patterson, *Religion, Enlightenment and Empire*, 299.

empirical dimension of cross-cultural encounters."[43] Given this focus on *Orientalism*, it is worth recounting Said's core thesis, which can be separated into three meta-arguments: firstly, the creation of knowledge is imbricated within structures of political power; building on this, the popular idea of the Orient in the West is a self-reinforcing fantasy constructed by (mostly English and French) Orientalists; and, most controversially, this Orientalism was one way by which the West sought to dominate the East. This last point reveals the stakes of the first two, namely, that the operations of empire extend beyond the material realities of settler colonialism (e.g., military conquest, land theft, forced labor) and into the coloniality of knowledge, being, and power. What does this mean for music studies? To paraphrase a slogan contemporary with *Orientalism*, the musical is political. By necessity, then, Cook's defense of Plowden is premised on the belief that imperialism is enacted exclusively by conspicuous villains. The effect is an absolute boundary between the agents of empire (the fortune-hunting nabob) and the bystanders (his music-loving wife), malicious appropriation and "innocent openness." This false dichotomy has continued to crop up in scholarly discourse on the Hindustani air phenomenon. In a 2018 podcast on the topic, for example, Schofield declares: "It is easy from this distance to write such mimicry off as a blatant case of Orientalism but Plowden's Indian hosts clearly found her efforts

[43] Cook, "Encountering the Other," 15; Since its publication in 1978, *Orientalism* has been legitimately critiqued for its unwieldy scope, factual errors, and tendency to oversimplify East and West, though mainstream scholarship also recognizes its important theoretical contributions. By contrast, the most vehement critiques of Said's essentially Foucauldian thesis "on the affiliation of knowledge with power" have notably taken the form of racist *ad hominem*, US State Department propaganda, and fundamentally unserious demagoguery, see Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 183–215; and Tahrir Khalil Hamdi, "Edward Said and Recent Orientalist Critiques," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 35 (2013): 130–48; Cook's claim is also ironic given that, at least at the time of his writing, applications of Orientalism more often than not took the form of musical analysis of the same kind he presents in the article, see Sindhumathi Revuluri, "'Orientalism' and Musical Knowledge: Lessons from Edward Said," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 141 (2016): 206–7; Cook also refers to "a Saidian 'staging' of the orient" as "postcolonial orthodoxy" in Nicholas Cook, "Anatomy of the Encounter: Intercultural Analysis as Relational Musicology," in *Critical Musicological Reflections: Essays in Honour of Derek B. Scott*, ed. Stan Hawkins and Derek B. Scott (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012), 103–4.

both sincere and affecting."[44] Here, too, benevolent intent (perceptible as sincerity and empathy) is positioned as incompatible with the colonial implications of Orientalist (mis)representation, which is assumed to be marked by cynicism and obvious chauvinism. But Plowden's practice of song was not so easily delineated along these lines. Indeed, the colonial phenomenon of the Hindustani air expressed the ambivalence of Anglo-Indian society toward Mughal culture.

Of Nauchting & Nabobinas

The daily lives of Anglo-Indian women in the early Company Raj were punctuated by acts of transgression, hybridity, and theatricality. In England, nabobinas represented a version of white womanhood tainted by the climate, manners, and (in some cases) music of South Asia. They also bore a disproportionate amount of the blame for the rampant colonial exploitation of native Indians. Nabobinas were thus imagined to be corrupted by and corrupting of India, even as they were far more populous in the colonial imaginary than the colonial empire. But Calcutta offered a degree of "social fluidity" for respectable British women that would have been impossible in London.[45] As foreigners, they inhabited a liminal space with regard to gender. Mughal women, for example, were excluded from public life and could not circulate within mixed-gender spaces, and the notable exceptions who were permitted at court, like female musicians, were consequently barred from the seclusion of the harem. In theory, at least,

[44] Katherine Butler Schofield, "The Courtesan and the Memsahib: Khanum Jan Meets Sophia Plowden at the 18C Court of Lucknow," 1 June 2018, in *Histories of the Ephemeral*, produced by Chris Elcombe, podcast, 38:43, https://soundcloud.com/user-513302522/the-courtesan-and-the-memsahib-khanum-jan-meets-sophia-plowden-at-the-18c-court-of-lucknow; see also Schofield, "Words without Songs," 184–85; by contrast, Walker makes a similar point about Plowden's sincerity without drawing conclusions as to her intentions: "I nevertheless find myself agreeing with Cook that the musical expressions of early colonial experience seem to have more social sincerity than is often credited to them, and at the very least, deserve a more nuanced interpretation," in Walker, "Indian Dance as Musical Nexus," 224.

[45] Mulholland, *Before the Raj*, 33.

Christian Englishwomen, could enter either space. Moreover, despite their relative scarcity in India, or perhaps because of it, they played a major role in shaping Anglo-Indian society. They were tastemakers importing the latest fashions from London while also adopting the luxurious styles, fabrics, and accessories that India had to offer. They likewise served as organizers who "presided over the mixed-sex sociability of sultry Calcutta, without breaking a sweat, always ready for the next *nautch* or masquerade."[46] In both roles, Anglo-Indian women led the charge in affirming the sense of "commensurability" between English and Indian culture that was the cornerstone of the Company's early Orientalist policies. This is what I take Kathleen Wilson to mean in characterizing one of Plowden's costumed performances of Hindustani airs as "colonial mimicry … elevated to ethnography, and put into circulation … for the delectation of English, European and Indian interpreters."[47] In other words, by interpreting the music of the Lucknow and Delhi courts for an audience in the colonial city of Calcutta, Plowden offered a live example of what officials like Hastings and Jones were advocating through writing, patronage, and (probably in a less alluring manner) musicianship.

While this was certainly the case, describing Plowden's performance as "colonial mimicry" misrepresents her relationship to the native *tawā'if* and her overall position within British India. As articulated by Bhabha, the concept of colonial mimicry refers to the native's imitation of the colonizer, the "process by which the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined."[48] Noting the difference is more than terminological pedantry, for the partial inversion of roles that mimicry entails emerges from the continued autonomy of natives under colonial rule and instigates a breakdown of the colonial system. In his influential

[46] Wilson, *Strolling Players of Empire*, 177.
[47] Wilson, *Strolling Players of Empire*, 180.
[48] Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (1984): 129.

essay, "Of Mimicry and Man," Bhabha emphasizes that the identity of the native is not fully subsumed within the imitation, but rather remains as a trace of their lingering alterity. As an act of cultural imitation by the colonized native, mimicry produces "its slippage, its excess, its difference"; as a disciplinary strategy by the colonial administration, it inevitably leads to the erosion of imperial authority.[49] Indeed, Ghose describes the goal of the civilizing mission in India as "reform [of] native populations into mimic Englishmen, a strategy that served the function of colonial regulation and discipline," but in practice it also revealed cracks in the regulatory and disciplinary veneer of the colonial state. Thus, "the mimic native only serves to parody colonial rule."[50] The performance of the mimicking native is shaped by their simultaneous feelings of desire and disgust for the colonizer, an ambivalence that manifests for the colonizer as a "double vision" in which mimicry is also mockery, "at once resemblance and menace."[51] Colonial mimicry, we might say, is defined by its relationship to failure.

In order to shed the disruptive implications of mimicry on colonial discourse, but retain the sense of ambivalence that informs her imitation, I understand Plowden's performance in terms of colonial ventriloquy. Mimicry, according to Jacques Lacan (from whom Bhabha drew in conceiving colonial mimicry) is "not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled."[52] The ventriloquist therefore represents the inverse of the mimic, concerned with displacement rather than camouflage. In the broadest terms, ventriloquism describes the experience of audio-visual dissonance between a voice and a

[49] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 126.
[50] Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India*, 147.
[51] Lacan quoted in Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 127. Lacan takes up the question of mimicry from the theory of biological adaptation, and he enumerates its contexts as camouflage, travesty, and intimidation; see Jacques Lacan, "The Line and the Light," in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 91–104.
[52] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 125.

body. The ventriloquist implies the voice of another through or against their own body, obscuring its "true" source from view. For this reason, sound studies generally considers ventriloquism to be an example of acousmatic sound, though the ventriloquized voice differs from an acousmatic voice in its focus on the body as an originary site. In Brian Kane's diagnostic model of the voice, for example, questions of the *acousmêtre* involve the relation of *topos*, the site of vocal emission, to *echos* and *logos*, respectively the voice's sound and meaning.[53] His choice of *topos* over *soma* ("place" rather than "body") is therefore a deliberate nod to the possibility of a disembodied voice. As film theorist Michel Chion has shown in the case of cinema, the acousmatic voice does not necessarily refer back to a specific body, although that may be where it originated from, so much as an intermediary object that holds it.[54] Alternatively, in Mladen Dolar's conception, ventriloquism describes the nature of the voice as always already acousmatic: "Ventriloquism pertains to voice as such, to its inherently acousmatic character: the voice comes from inside the body, the belly, the stomach—from something incompatible with and irreducible to the activity of the mouth."[55] In theorizing colonial ventriloquy, I take my cue from Steven Connor's notion of the "vocalic body" as the unifying dimension of a practice originally associated with oracular wisdom and spiritual possession. In his cultural history of ventriloquism, *Dumbstruck*, he imagines "a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the

[53] Brian Kane, "The Model Voice," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68 (2015): 673; for an elaboration on these, see Brian Kane, "The Voice: A Diagnosis," *Polygraph* 25 (2015): 91–112; on acousmatic sound generally, see Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[54] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[55] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 70.

voice."[56] To take seriously the production of "autonomous voice-bodies" is to understand ventriloquy as an act of interpretation and, therefore, of creation.

An especially relevant example can be found in the "racial ventriloquy" born of the Golden Age of radio. Coined by comedy critic Mel Watkins, racial ventriloquy describes the practice of white radio entertainers voicing Black characters in early radio shows, imitating stereotypical Black "dialect and intonation" for comedic effect.[57] William Barlow later defined this as "the audio dimension of the [minstrel] stereotype," the legacy of Blackface minstrelsy adapted to a new medium that hid the speaker's body from view.[58] Crucially, though, the practice was not confined to spoken dialogue. Laurie Stras explores a similar phenomenon in popular music of the early and mid-twentieth century. Though she does not call this racial ventriloquy, she points to the propensity for white crooners and singers of blues and jazz—genres traditionally associated with Blackness, slavery, and the American South—to cultivate Black-coded vocal characteristics. Notable examples include Bing Crosby leaning into the hoarse quality caused by nodules on his vocal folds and female jazz trio the Boswell Sisters embracing "southern" diction and low tessitura in their vocal arrangements.[59] While this of course differs from the explicit mockery of Black speech patterns, these singers engaged in a similar act of "love and theft," profiting from the perceived "authenticity" of their performances and crowding

[56] Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 35.
[57] Mel Watkins, *On the Real Side: Laughing, Lying, and Signifying—The Underground Tradition of African-American Humor That Transformed American Culture, from Slavery to Richard Pryor* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).
[58] William Barlow, *Voice over: The Making of Black Radio* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 3.
[59] Laurie Stras, "White Face, Black Voice: Race, Gender, and Region in the Music of the Boswell Sisters," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 1 (2007): 207–55; and Laurie Stras, "The Organ of the Soul: Voice, Damage, and Affect," in *Sounding Off: Theorizing Disability in Music*, ed. Joseph Straus (New York: Routledge, 2006), 180.

Black musicians out of the industry.[60] In these examples, recording and broadcasting technology enabled the ventriloquizing body to remain out of sight, and put in its place a Black vocalic body for the entertainment of their listening audience. From the earliest days of radio, racial ventriloquy proved a viable means of monetizing the ambivalence of white audiences toward Black music and musicians. Barlow identifies a precursor to this practice on the late-eighteenth-century stages, in plays with Black stock characters like "Sambo" who proved popular to white audiences in Boston and New York.[61] A similar situation prevailed in London. Roxann Wheeler shows that throughout the 1790s, "popular actresses and young actors singing Negro songs in blackface makeup could be heard at Covent Garden, Drury Lane, the Haymarket, and the Royal Circus in Lambeth."[62] But did such performances really constitute ventriloquy? In his further elaboration of the vocalic body, Connor implies that they can. Specifically, he suggests that the sound of voice is so imaginatively productive that, even in the presence of its obvious source, a vocalic body may still emerge given the right circumstances:

> In fact, so strong is the embodying power of the voice that this process occurs not only in the case of voices that seem separated from their obvious or natural sources, but also in voices … that have a clearly identifiable source, but seem in various ways excessive to that source. This voice then conjures for itself a different kind of body; an imaginary body which may contradict, compete with, replace, or even reshape the actual, visible body of the speaker.[63]

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[60] Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); see also Matthew D. Morrison, "Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72 (2019): 781–823.
[61] Barlow, *Voice Over*, 3; such performances anticipated the emergence of Blackface minstrelsy as a distinct genre in the United States, specifically the industrialized North, half a century later, see Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and their World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[62] Roxann Wheeler, "Sounding Black-Ish: West Indian Pidgin in London Performance and Print," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 51 (2017): 63.
[63] Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 36.

Situations in which voice exceeds the nominal boundaries of a particular body thus prove as fertile as when the voice is acousmatic. In such cases, the result is an illusory body that challenges the naturalness of the material voice as a product of human muscle and tissue.

Figure 2.1 Mihr Chand, *Ladies in the zenana during Holi*, ca. 1780. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper. Source: *Polier Album*. Wikimedia Commons. *https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27Ladies_Celebrate_Holi_on_a_Pleasure_Pavilion%27_attributed_to_Mihr_Chand.jpg*.

The vocalic body is, therefore, especially useful in theorizing historical processes of vocal-aural exchange in the colonial encounter. The precise difference between this racial ventriloquy and what I am calling colonial ventriloquy are not my primary concern here, though if an essential difference does exist it can probably be found in the unique social and political circumstances of a given example. What matters more is that, as an amateur musician in colonial India, Plowden did not envoice the figure of the Mughal courtesan for profit or as ridicule. Her

imitation did, however, draw upon and contribute to an Orientalist portrayal of Indian music and musicians, and it supported the policies of the Company administration in establishing long-term authority in the region. It should also be noted that the term courtesan is used in reference to any number of minute designations for female performers across time and space.[64] Here it denotes an elite class of mostly hereditary performers known in earlier centuries as *kancanīs* and, by the end of the eighteenth century, as *tawā'ifs*.[65] These women were trained in music, dance, and courtly etiquette. They also exercised a great deal of personal and professional autonomy, deciding for whom they performed and with whom they engaged in sexual relationships. For these reasons, their status contrasted with that of the respectable ladies of the *harem* or *zenana*—as well as the female musicians designated to perform there—who lived under male authority and were secluded from public life (see figure 2.1).

In European records, the *tawā'if* appears primarily in the context of the nautch (or notch), from the Sanskrit *nāc* meaning dance, another catchall term for various kinds of private entertainments. Nautches or nautch parties were ubiquitous in late-eighteenth-century Anglo-Indian society, and were hosted and attended by both Mughal noblemen and Company officials (and in the case of the latter, often their wives, as well). Some Europeans—like the Swiss engineer and quintessential "white Mughal," Colonel Antoine Polier—even kept full-time nautch sets in their household after the fashion of elite Indians (see figure 2.2).[66] In 1767, an Anglo-Indian woman named Jemima Kindersley described the "performance of the dancing girls" that

[64] On the numerous incarnations of the courtesan throughout time and space, see Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon, eds., *The Courtesan's Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[65] "The exclusive use of the Arabic plural *tawā'if* ('tribes' or 'peoples') to designate a unitary meta-community of elite female performing artists in North India appears, in fact, to be quite late; it was probably only widely co-opted for this purpose around 1800." Schofield, "The Courtesan Tale," 152–57.
[66] On the white European men who lived in the style of the Mughal elite, see William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002).

she witnessed in Allahabad as "the favorite and most constant amusement of the great, both Mahomedans and *Hindoos*, and indeed all ranks of people." Her impression was one of typical European fascination and revulsion toward Indian culture:

> It is difficult to give you any proper idea of this entertainment; which is so very delightful, not only to black [Indian] men, but to many Europeans. A large room is lighted it up; at one end sit the great people who are to be entertained; at the other end are the dancers and their attendants; one of the girls who are to dance comes forward, for there is seldom more than one of them dance at a time; the performance consists chiefly in a continual removing the shawl, first off the head, then off again; extending first one hand, then the other; the feet are likewise moved, though a yard of ground would be sufficient for the whole performance. But it is their languishing glances, wanton smiles, and attitudes not quite consistent with decency, which are so much admired; and whoever excels most in these is the finest dancer.
>
> The girls sings, while she is dancing, some Persian or Hindostán song; some of them are really pleasing to the ear, but are almost entirely drowned by the accompaniments: several black fellows stand behind, who likewise sing with all the strength of voice they are masters of, making, at the same time, the most ridiculous grimaces; some of them playing upon a sitar, which is something like a guitar, but greatly inferior even to that trifling instrument; others on a sort of drum, or tamborin, usually called tomtom; but all this, loud as it is, is drowned by those who play with two pieces of bell-metal, which they work between their fingers, and make the same noise as braziers at work upon a large copper.[67]

Most commonly in European novels, travelogues, and diaries they appear as the exotic and erotic figure of the "nautch girl," symbolizing all the sensual pleasures and moral depravity conjured by the Orient.[68] Through these sources, metropolitan readers came to incorrectly conflate the courtesan with the concubine.

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[67] Jemima Kindersley, *Letters from the Island of Teneriffe, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, and the East Indies* (London, 1777), 228–32.

[68] Walker, "Indian Dance as Musical Nexus," 216; Prasannajit de Silva, *Colonial Self-Fashioning in British India, c. 1785-1845: Visualizing Identity and Difference* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 108–16; on the courtesan in precolonial India, see Doris M. Srinivasan, "Royalty's Courtesans and God's Mortal Wives: Keepers of Culture in Precolonial India," in *The Courtesan's Arts*, ed. Feldman and Gordon, 161–81.

Figure 2.2 Mihr Chand, *Colonel Polier watching a nautch*, ca. 1780.
Source: Collection of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan. Wikimedia Commons.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colpolier.jpg.

In *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, Amanda Weidman recounts the twentieth-century effort to re-define the tradition of Karnatic (South Indian *rāg*) music in the model of the European "classical" tradition while remaining distinctly Indian. Framing the narrative largely around discourses of fidelity that shaped the new tradition, she begins by recounting her time in Madras studying violin under a *guru*, to whom she becomes a disciple, or *shishya*. This form of extended apprenticeship, in which the student is fully integrated into their teacher's household and learns over years of passive observation, is known as *gurukulavasam*.[69] Its goal is to instill the master's embodied knowledge within their disciple, who over time becomes "a reproduction

[69] Amanda J. Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 3.

that is faithful without being exact."[70] Described in this way, *gurukulavasam* sounds something like mimicry, resulting in a copy that is "almost the same, *but not quite*." In this sense, the commitment to fidelity recalls the proclamation from Shah Alam II in celebration of Plowden's "exceptional devotedness, and rare fidelity." This is not to actually compare the *guru–shishya* dynamic to one of coloniality; to the contrary, my point is that, even though they both begin with imitation, they are distinct from one another not only in method but also in their social, political, and ethical dimensions. One seeks the preservation and development of knowledge through faithful but inexact reproductions, while the other copies the hegemonic culture in order to undermine it. If colonial mimicry can be understood as the flawed imitation of authority, then *gurukulavasam* is a practice focusing on the authority of one's faithful imitation.

While Weidman's focus is on Karnatic practice, the pedagogical method of transmitting knowledge through gradual absorption is not confined to the music of South India. Matthew Rahaim, for example, turns to the concept of *guru-shishya-parampara* (the lineage of master and disciple) to get at the gestural, bodily, and social dimensions of Hindustani vocal music:

> Unlike the elaborate systems of postures and hand shapes mastered by Indian dancers, movement in Hindustani music is not explicitly taught, deliberately rehearsed, or linked to specific meanings. Melodic gesture embodies a special kind of musical knowledge, transmitted silently from body to body alongside the voice: a knowledge of melody as motion.[71]

In order to understand a process of teaching and learning that is by and large non-verbal, he develops a tripartite model of the musician's body. He distinguishes the materiality of the "flesh-body" from the "musicking body" (the body engaged in song) and the "paramparic body" (the body expressing musical lineage). While the musicking body usefully describes combined effect

[70] Weidman, *Singing the Classical*, 249–50.
[71] Matthew Rahaim, *Musicking Bodies: Gesture and Voice in Hindustani Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012), 2.

of training and the work of muscle memory, the paramparic body conveys Rahaim's major insight that "even in solitary practice, the musicking body of a singer is always already social: it bears the imprint of its training."[72] What this all amounts to for an individual musician is a unique practice of song, or *gayaki*, that is not reducible to a single source and encapsulates the technical dimension of singing as well as musical aesthetics and ethical values.[73] These traditions are not static, and the ethnographic descriptions and definitions offered by Weidman and Rahaim can only tell us so much about how they worked in the past. Still, they give us some insight into the training received by the *tawā'ifs* on whom Plowden based her performances. Performers of this kind, for example, typically "hailed from matrilineal groups" that can at least be likened to the *gharanas*, meaning "house" and implying musical lineage, of Hindustani musicians today.[74]

By contrast, Plowden's musical education in England would have consisted chiefly of intermittent singing lessons in her home, perhaps from a fashionable Italian music master. A portrait of her with her sister, surely painted before either girl would have been married, shows her playing an English guitar (or *guittar*), a kind of modernized cittern, from notated music (see figure 2.3). For a young woman of good marriage prospects, demonstrating musical competency at private gatherings in the home was a social necessity.[75] Naturally, many women discontinued playing music after they were married, though this was obviously not the case with Plowden. Of course, the process by which she acquired and performed the courtly songs of Hindustan was heavily mediated. She employed a Goan musician named John Braganza to sit in on private

[72] Rahaim, *Musicking Bodies*, 5.
[73] Rahaim, *Musicking Bodies*, 110.
[74] Walker, "Indian Dance as Musical Nexus," 215; on *gharana*, see Rahaim, *Musicking Bodies*, 110.
[75] Richard D. Leppert, *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology, and Socio-Cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 57–61; see also Brianna E. Robertson-Kirkland, *Venanzio Rauzzini and the Birth of a New Style in English Singing: Scandalous Lessons* (London: Routledge, 2022).

performances by her favorite singers, where he would pluck out the tunes from the harpsichord. Already a great deal of expression and melodic nuance was lost forcing minutely inflected pitches into a diatonic scale, though he also simplified the melody and standardized the rhythm into a simple meter. Finally, to complete the transition into a European idiom, he added a thoroughbass accompaniment to be realized in performance.[76] That she did not speak the language in which she sang hardly mattered—like many middleclass Englishwomen, she was probably used to singing but not fully understanding Italian or German songs. After learning the tune, probably by rote from Braganza, she was taught the correct pronunciation of the words by her language tutor, or *munshi*.[77] Her learning process mirrors how the eventual album she commissioned was dependent upon the largely invisible labor of local musicians, artists, and domestics. As described in a note to the collection in Cambridge, notation was "fairly written by John Braganza," words "collected by her Moonshee," and while she apparently "designed" the decorative borders, they were "executed by her own painters," as were illustrations and staff lines. If most European collectors of Hindustani airs were primarily interested in acquiring tunes, Plowden's focus on the lyric poetry attached to the songs not only set her collecting practice apart but also enabled her to sing them on her terms.[78]

[76] Schofield, "Words without Songs," 184.
[77] Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, 171–72.
[78] Schofield, "Words without Songs," 184.

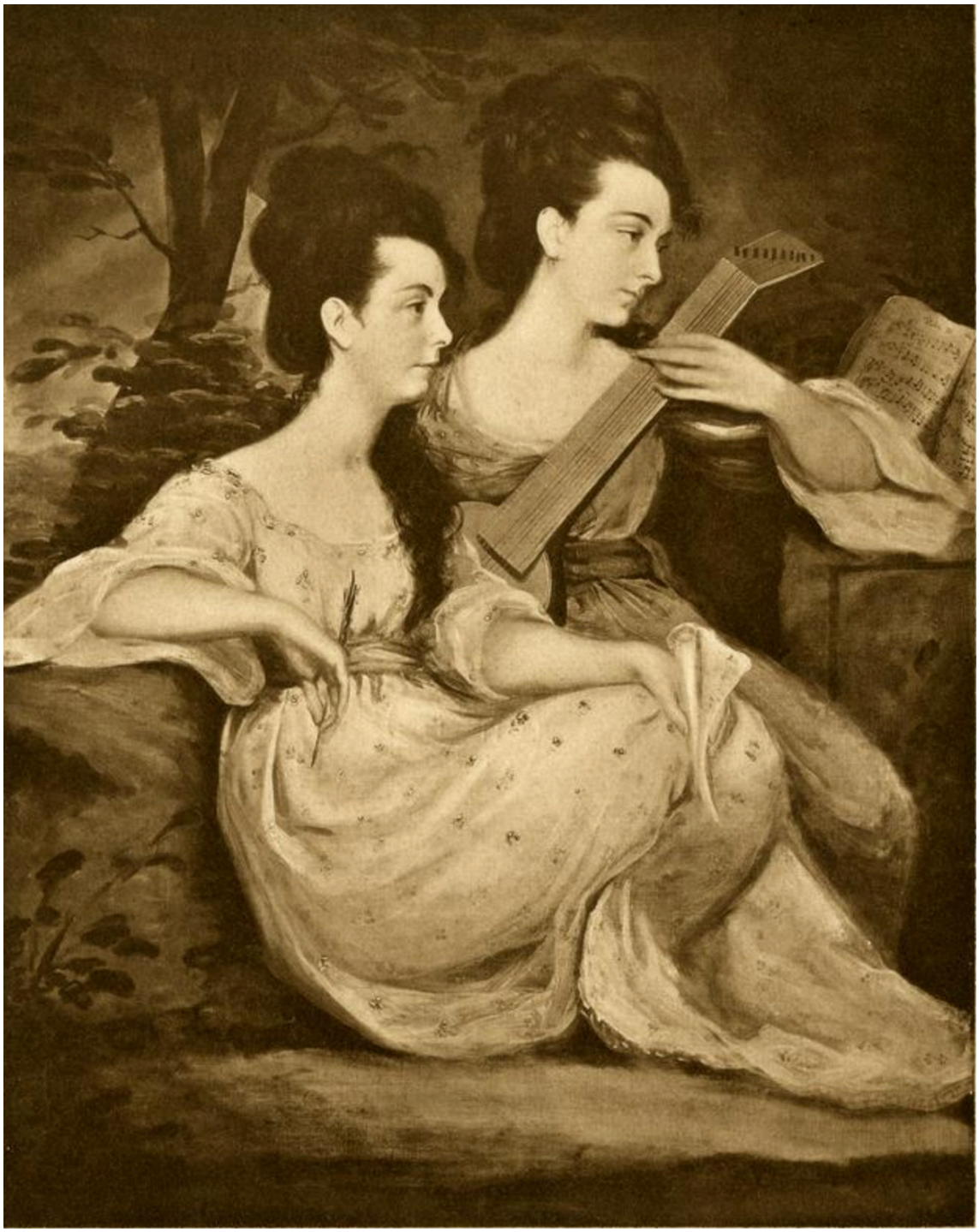

Figure 2.3 after Francis Cotes, *Sophia and Lucretia Prosser*, (ca. 1775) 1919. Photogravure. Source: The British Museum. *https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1919-1114-4.*

The vocalic body that emerged in Plowden's singing represented the differently raced and socialized body of the *tawā'if*. Missing, though, was an accompanying paramaparic body, with its innate sense of melodic gesture developed over years of close training. She thus envoiced a cultural border separating England and India that we can read in terms of a "gender frontier"—what Kathleen Brown defines as "the meeting of two or more culturally specific systems of knowledge about gender and nature."[79] For example, metropolitan Britons incorrectly imagined Indian nautch performers in terms of hereditary prostitution, not least of which for the European association of female public vocality with loose morals. At the same time, they saw nothing untoward about advertising their daughters to single men through domestic performances. As we have seen, the nautch was an intensely physical performance consisting of dance as well as song, quite different from the recitals of Italian arias or pastoral songs taking place in London, or even Calcutta. And yet, as Walker notes "the performances of Hindustanee Airs by colonial residents in India omitted the gestures and movements that were integral parts of the nautch."[80] Ironically, she probably spent the remainder of the Calcutta ball engaged in social dance, a practice in which Mughal women of comparable rank would not and could not partake. If her enthusiastic embrace of Indo-Persian courtly song contributed to a discourse of commensurability, her approach to capturing, learning, and singing Hindustani airs highlighted colonial difference.

[79] Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 33.
[80] "The centrality and immediacy of the nautch in Anglo-Indian encounter notwithstanding, there is nothing that points to any physical emulation of the dances or gestures themselves." Walker, "Indian Dance as Musical Nexus," 232–33.

Ventriloquizing the Orient

Shortly after her husband was relocated to Calcutta in early 1783, Plowden attended a masquerade in the costume of a Mughal courtesan. In a letter to her sister Lucy from early April, she explains: "I had long had it in idea that a set of Indostanie or Cashmerian singers would make an excellent Groupe for a masquerade. It had never been attempted & therefore had the recommendation of Novelty."[81] Plowden had hoped to recreate a performing group of the kind that she and her contemporaries often enjoyed at nautch parties, styling herself in the manner of a *tawā'if* of the Lucknow court (see figure 2.4). Such groups may have been privately retained or hired freelance, and typically consisted of one to three female singers and three to five male instrumentalists. While singing, the women might sit, "using graceful gestures and alluring eye contact to illustrate the evocative text of her song," before rising to dance, or stand with dance breaks organized between stanzas.[82] Plowden was certainly aware of the scandalous reputation of the so-called "nautch girl" in England, clarifying to her sister that the dress she wore was "perfectly decent," though she did not express any suspicion or disdain herself.[83] Indeed, the next year she wrote to Fowke from Calcutta asking her to obtain "a few Dolls dress'd in different Characters—a Notch group or any thing of that kind that you fancy" for her daughter.[84] Thrilled by the chance to fully embody the celebrity musicians she so admired, Plowden formed a "band of Musicians" who would dress "in Musselman's dresses" and accompany her singing on Indian instruments. She was able to locate "a sufficient number of [her] Lucknow acquaintances in

[81] Sophia Plowden to Lucretia Hamilton, Calcutta, 4 Apr 1783 (British Library, Mss Eur. B187).
[82] Walker, "Indian Dance as Musical Nexus," 217.
[83] Nechtman, "Nabobinas," 14.
[84] Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, 153.

Calcutta" who were willing to join. By the end of the night, she could boast "an infinite number of fine compliments," reporting that "many people insisted on our being really Indostanies."[85]

Historians of the Company Raj have been drawn to Plowden's letter as a narrative of British colonial self-definition by appropriating the material culture of India. She describes her costume at length, reveling in the transgressive aspect of each element. Her outfit consisted of a fine *peshwaj*, the elegant robe associated with the Mughal court, which she wore over a long-sleeved bodice called a *choli* with "the waist so shamelessly short that it terminates immediately at the pit of the stomach."[86] Her nails and hands had been decorated with red henna and she was adorned with gold and jewels quite literally from head to toe: earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings, and bells on her feet. What probably shocked Lucy the most, though, was the "gold ring ornament with beads thro' the nose of my mask." Based on this description, art historian Tara Mayer suggests that this was probably not the same outfit that she wears in a portrait of her and her children with an Indian servant painted after her return to England, though it was probably similar enough to be instructive (see figure 2.5). The painter John Russell depicted Plowden in "an amalgam of Eastern and European styles," with her sari "sewn into a European style dress" and a turban more indicative of Ottoman Turkey than Mughal India. Mayer thus argues that the outfit was "not intended to imitate life" or suggest "authentic Indian-ness, but rather to perform, and convey, a European image of Eastern exoticism to a European audience."[87] For Nechtman, the whole scene was "less an act of cultural admiration for South Asian dress than it was a

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[85] Plowden to Hamilton.

[86] Her description recalls Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, several decades earlier, explaining to her sister the specifics of the Turkish outfit she had just bought for herself in Adrianpole, see Jill Campbell, "Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Historical Machinery of Female Identity," in *History, Gender & Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Beth Fowkes Tobin (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 81.

[87] Tara Mayer, "Cultural Cross-Dressing: Posing and Performance in Orientalist Portraits," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 22 (2012): 290–91.

cultural appropriation by a highly placed and influential British woman in Calcutta society. … an Orientalist representation of Indian identity."[88] Ironically, though, and despite the handwringing expressed by Cook and others, this appears to be the only instance of someone leveling the charges of cultural appropriation and Orientalism. His sentiments are more or less shared by Wilson, who presumes that Plowden saw her successful masquerade as "a cause for self-congratulation for the ability of the English to outdo the native at their own game."[89]

Although the letter offers next to nothing by way of performing practice, it remains the best-documented instance of Plowden (or anyone for that matter) singing Hindustani airs. Naming specific pieces would probably have gone over Lucy's head, but Plowden assures her sister that the songs she sang were "very pretty ones." Interestingly, she does list the instruments that accompanied her, along with their perceived European cognates. Her friend Mr. Taylor took the lead on the sarinda (the "fiddle of this Country") while a Mr. Turvey played the sitar ("something like the guitar but inferior to it"). Lastly, "young Playdele" covered percussion on the tabla, which Plowden found especially fascinating:

> The Taballa or Tam Tam … is something like a tambourine or small drum which 'tis the Etiquette to play with a wonderful deal of grimace, twisting the face in to all kinds of forms, keeping the head shaking and inclining on one side and at every turn of the tune which is supposed to be more harmonious than another to cry out in extasy Waw! Waw! In short, my dear Lucy, you would with all your powers of mimicry be an excellent hand on the Taballa.[90]

Plowden may even have felt that young Playdele's performance was subpar, inasmuch as she cast her sister as the mimic *par excellence*. Reimagining the evening with Lucy symbolically merges the sisters' vastly different social worlds, suggesting that Plowden had a sense of pride in

[88] Nechtman, "Nabobinas," 11–14.
[89] Wilson, *Strolling Players of Empire*, 182.
[90] Plowden to Hamilton.

Anglo-Indian society. Woodfield highlights their shared novelty of adopting unfamiliar social roles by comparing the scene to "the adoption of 'peasant' instruments such as the hurdy-gurdy in the Versailles court."[91] But of course the Anglo-Indian masquers were not roleplaying folk performers but highly trained musicians of elite status.

In a broader sense, though, Woodfield is arguing that Plowden's primary concern was capturing the aesthetic of the *tawā'if* rather than accurately reproducing her nautch performance: "Matters of authenticity in dress, behaviour, performance style (even including accessories such as the hookah) were obviously treated with the utmost seriousness, and yet the intention was to present a good *appearance*. Provided that the show was convincing and the characters realistic, complete faithfulness to the music of the Indian original could be dispensed with."[92] We might conceive of this as Plowden prioritizing style over substance, though this fails to take into account the effort she exerted in achieving what was (to Anglo-Indian ears) an authentic reproduction of the songs of the nautch. Authenticity can serve as an apt descriptor here. Because it is a floating signifier; its discernment relies on feeling and memory, not empirical observation. The most authentic version of a Hindustani air, a nautch, or a dancing girl—all Anglo-Indian interpretations of late Mughal culture—lay very much in the ears and eyes of the beholder. In recreating them, Plowden drew on the most legible aspects of various sources, resulting in a complete package that felt truer to an imagined source than any individual instance ever could. Thus, it would be more accurate to say that in preparing her songs, coordinating the group, and

[91] Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, 173.
[92] Woodfield, "The 'Hindostannie Air,'" 205; in his monograph from six years later, he softens this sentiment a bit, writing that "faithfulness to the music of the Indian original was probably of minimal significance." He further acknowledges: "Presentation was all important, with particular attention paid to details of dress and accessories. Mimicry can be used to belittle, to express contempt, but it can also express a sense of the value and even the importance of what is being parodied. At the height of the fashion for the 'Hindostannie' air, a certain sense of respect does seem to inform such activities as this masquerade." Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, 173, 177.

imagining her costume, she was concerned not with style over substance *per se*, but with the substance *of* style.

In the previous chapter, I aligned this preference for "instant character" with Camp, an aesthetic of extravagant failure enabled by global consumerism that challenges normative expectations surrounding gender/sex performance.[93] To be clear, in this instance I am not claiming that the masquerade represented a deliberate attempt at camping the nautch, but rather that it took place under a set of historical conditions—the Orientalist milieu of the Hastings regime, the everyday theatricality of Anglo-Indian society, the transregional networks that made collecting, learning, and singing "Hindustani airs" possible in the first place—that supports a retrospective Camp reading. And at the core of Camp is what Susan Sontag describes as a sense of doubleness, of "the thing as meaning something, anything, and the thing as pure artifice."[94] As an act of colonial ventriloquy, Plowden's performance manifested this doubleness as bodies, real and imagined. One body was middle-class and English, made of flesh and muscle that gave away its social and geographical origins, and adorned so extravagantly with the trappings of India that its foreignness was made all the more evident; the other was a vocalic body, giving a sonic illusion of a *tawā'if* as "real" in ways its listeners could conjure through their auditory imaginations. Conceiving the Calcutta masquerade as a kind of Camp pastiche helps explain why other attendees "insisted on [their] being really Indostanies" despite all the evidence they had to the contrary. Here was a nautch performance that felt authentically Indian but looked and

[93] "What Camp taste responds to is 'instant character' (this is, of course, very eighteenth century); and, conversely, what it is not stirred by is the sense of development of character. Character is understood as a state of continual incandescence – a person being one, very intense thing. This attitude toward character is a key element of the theatricalization of experience embodied in the Camp sensibility." Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp" (1964), in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 61.
[94] Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 57.

sounded emphatically English. As a "heightened" version of everyday life, it represented an inversion of the "flawed colonial mimesis" described by Bhabha, "in which to be Anglicized, is *emphatically* not to be English."[95] That this act of colonial ventriloquy also failed at producing a faithful copy was partly the point—it allowed Plowden to fully commit to the character and sing in something close enough to a native idiom without being perceived as "going native."

Looking at how Plowden filled out the remainder of her set with traditionally essential but non-musical roles, we find more evidence for a Camp reading. A Mr. Shaw, for example, "carried a most elegant small gold Hookah," an essential accessory for anyone of elite status, be they *tawā'if* or *nawab*, that had been fully integrated into Anglo-Indian life.[96] In fact, hookah-smoking and betel nut-chewing were prime examples of the "unorthodox femininity" adopted by many white women in colonial spaces.[97] India offered them freedom to engage in audacious, athletic, or generally androgynous behaviors, from racing phaetons *en travesti* to attending riotous parties at which *hijras* (sometimes called eunuch or third-sex) performed.[98] Importantly, this degree of public independence differentiated Anglo-Indian women not only from their metropolitan counterparts but also from respectable Mughal women. For women like Plowden,

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[95] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 128; consider the hyperbolic commendation applied to the colonial subjects who have been deemed sufficiently civilized, which is to say, grateful to their colonizers: they are "more British than the British." By contrast, for anyone to appear "*as* British as the British" would threaten the fragile conception of British national identity—supposedly forged in the unique circumstances of the island's history—and encroach upon a finite racial landscape (e.g., the educated elite of Calcutta crowding out the working poor of Manchester). But to be "more British" implies an excess of British-coded qualities, surpassing the original perhaps even to the point of absurdity. The result is an oversaturated facsimile that may appear fantastic but is nevertheless unfaithful.

[96] De Silva, *Colonial Self-Fashioning*, 100–106.

[97] Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones*, 176.

[98] Wilson, *Strolling Players of Empire*, 178–79; on *hijra* performance, see Sandeep Bakshi, "A Comparative Analysis of Hijras and Drag Queens: The Subversive Possibilities and Limits of Parading Effeminacy and Negotiating Masculinity," *Journal of Homosexuality* 46 (2004): 211–23; and Jeff Roy, "Remapping the Voice through Transgender-Hijra Performance," in *Remapping Sound Studies*, ed. Gavin Steingo and Jim Sykes (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 173–82.

this meant pursuing the limelight through unconventional theatrics. Hence her choice to forgo another singer in her group, enshrining herself as the unquestioned star:

> As I could not attempt to teach any one the Songs in the Time I had allow'd me to get ready, I gave that point up and only look'd out for such as would have a good appearance in the Characters I design'd. For my companion I got a boy who had dark hair & eyes & look'd a Cashmerian, & for the Mother of the set a Mr Graham who is perfect Master of the Persian and Indostan Languages & was dress'd admirably. He knew the stile he should appear in having been much up the Country.[99]

Although her wording is somewhat vague (perhaps intentionally so), there is every reason to read this as a reference to two Anglo-Indian men donning gender and cultural drag to appear as Mughal women. As Wilson has recently shown, the lack of white women in colonial Calcutta meant that theatrical cross-dressing was common in the 1770s and early 1780s.[100] In all likelihood, when Plowden refers to a "companion," she means another "nautch girl," though in this case one who would not sing. She therefore chose a boy with dark enough features—and presumably light enough skin—to make a convincing North Indian woman. As for the "Mother of the set," she probably had in mind an older female chaperone. How pleased she must have been to find a gentleman (probably the Scottish banker James Graham) who "knew the stile he should appear in" and "dress'd admirably" for it. She even mentions his credential as a "perfect Master of the Persian and Indostan Languages" to underscore their commitment to the characters.

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[99] Plowden to Hamilton.

[100] In the 1770s, for example, residents enjoyed all-male productions of Nicholas Rowe's popular tragedy *The Fair Penitent* (1702), Arthur Murphy's comedic afterpiece *The Apprentice* (1756), and, perhaps fittingly to its Elizabethan origins, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The fact that male drag performance was commonplace is further evidenced by the eagerness with which Lord Cornwallis, upon taking up his appointment as Governor-General in 1786, put an end to it, see Wilson, *Strolling Players of Empire*, 172–74, 192.

Figure 2.4 Tilly Kettle, *Dancing Girl of Lucknow*, 1772. Oil on canvas.
Source: Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection. *https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/tms:872.*

Figure 2.5 John Russell, *Mrs. Elizabeth Sophia Plowden and her Children*, 1797. Oil on canvas. Source: The Birla Museum, Rajasthan, India.

All told, Plowden's nautch set represented a kind of Camp Orientalism only possible in the early days of the Company Raj, where it enacted the cultural policy of the colonial state. Her letter to Lucy thus ends with a return to the status quo: "After wearing my Mask about 2 hours [I] was glad to take it off & speak in my own Language." Unlike Graham, however, she was not a "perfect Master of the Persian and Indostan Languages" and we can safely assume that she never ceased speaking in English. In equating her "Mask" with a language, and probably a voice, other than her own, Plowden acknowledges her act as a form of ventriloquism—the projection of a vocalic body that spoke only Persian and Urdu. Of course, her "Mask" also anticipates Frantz Fanon's description of mastery of the French language in terms of *masques blancs* adopted by the Black professionals of the Antilles to conceal their *peau noire*—his interpretation of the "double consciousness" earlier identified by W. E. B. DuBois.[101] For Fanon, this mask represents their desire for (self-)recognition as human and at the same time reveals their colonially imposed self-hatred. It recognizes that in this system, "the more the black Antillean assimilates the French language, the whiter he gets—i.e., the closer he comes to becoming a true human being."[102] In describing colonial mimicry, Bhabha distinguishes it from the "narcissistic identification" described by Fanon, insisting that "mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask."[103] The true "menace of mimicry," in other words, always lies at the surface in its simultaneous function as mockery. But, as is clear from her letter, Plowden could discard her mask at will because it represented the freedom of transgressive play available to her in India. By contrast,

[101] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008); W. E. B. DuBois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," chap. 1 in *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903); see also Katherine McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?: Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 46–53.
[102] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 2.
[103] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 129.

Fanon describes the mask of the Black Antillean in France as a source of paranoia: "On the lookout for the slightest reactions of others, listening to himself speak and not trusting his own tongue, an unfortunately lazy organ, he will lock himself in his room and read for hours—desperately working on his *diction*."[104] In drawing attention to the artifice of her costume and performance, Plowden reaffirmed her racial and cultural difference from the imagined Kashmiri singer she ventriloquized.

Capturing Hindustani Song

Around the same time that Plowden was settling into her new life and first experiencing the nautches of Awadh, a folksong collector in Central Europe was fleshing out his ideas on the nature of song in human history and culture. In his essay on *Volkslieder* (1778/79), Johann Gottfried Herder muses on the unique challenge of capturing the minute expressions of the voice in motion: "It is most difficult … to translate this sound, this sound of singing, to capture the sound of song from a foreign language, as we witness in the case of hundreds of failed attempts to draw songs and lyrical vessels to the shores of our own and other languages."[105] A song, for Herder, consists of more than the static combination of words and music—it is a living thing representing the spirit of the people who first brought it to life. As such, it can only be understood in motion. To attempt a transcription without being attuned to the idiosyncrasies of a language or the sense of musical direction was akin to anatomical dissection:

> The essence of song is singing … its perfection lies in the melodic path of passion and sensibility, which one can only appropriately call melodic manner. If this is absent in a song, it has no true sound, no poetic modulation, no sense of movement and progress. It may possess an image and pictures as much as it wishes, even with colors that fit together

[104] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 5.
[105] Johann Gottfried Herder, "Volkslieder" (1778/79), quoted in Philip V. Bohlman, *Song Loves the Masses: Herder on Music and Nationalism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 60–62.

> with beauty and charm, but it is no longer a song. Should something disrupt a melody, should someone foreign to the tradition attempt to improve it … such that we lose the sound of the singer or the melody of the song for just a moment … [t]he song is gone, and so too is the joy it brings![106]

Critical to Herder's folksong project, then, was what Philip Bohlman glosses as "the dynamic nature of singing," the imprint of a human voice or, more accurately, the many human voices in which it had sounded over time.[107] And this is why collecting songs, to say nothing of editing or arranging them, is so difficult. Each new idiom represents a greater or lesser degree of abstraction from a source that is itself unfixed and everchanging.

From the start, the Hindustani air represented a major abstraction from the body of Indo-Persian courtly song that had inspired it. On the most basic level, Braganza's transcriptions consigned Hindustani airs to Western notation, erasing nuances of pitch, straightening out rhythmic complexity, and fixing them tonally. And these songs—really now airs in the European sense, and effectively new compositions—were further abstracted from the context of the nautch through Plowden's performances. Although they were well-received by Anglo-Indian audiences, with Fowke writing in 1783 that she "sings her little collection very frequently and always with applause," they lacked the sense of gesture and movement that informed the nautch.[108]

By the end of the 1780s, Plowden's personal repertoire of Hindustani airs had further diverged into two contrasting approaches to transcription. The first approach was her opulent presentation copy (1787–88), which consisted of illuminated folios with lyric poetry written out in *nastaʿlīq* calligraphy. The other was a collection of arrangements for fortepiano called *The Oriental Miscellany* (1789), published in Calcutta by Anglo-Indian music promoter William

[106] Herder, "Volkslieder," 60–62.
[107] Bohlman, *Song Loves the Masses*, 47.
[108] Margaret Fowke to Francis Fowke, Calcutta, 5 August 1783, quoted in Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, 171.

Hamilton Bird. In his introduction, Bird stresses the alterity of the original songs and the fidelity of his reproductions:

> He has strictly adhered to the original compositions, though it has cost him great pains to bring them into any form as to time, which the music of Hindustan is extremely deficient in. The airs of Cashimere and Rohilcund are most perfect and regular; but even those, on there being sung, need the grace of a Chanam, and the expression of a Dillsook, to render them pleasing.

What might Plowden have thought of Bird's insistence that only "the grace of a Chanam" (Khanum Jan) can "render them pleasing"? Bird was certainly familiar with the European performance of Hindustani airs, especially by Plowden, from whom he acquired several of the pieces he arranged.[109] And yet there is no inkling that his parlor arrangements once existed in an intermediary form between the nautches of Lucknow and *The Oriental Miscellany*.

Bird's arrangements take the thoroughbass accompaniment of Hindustani airs to their logical conclusion, adding in thirds and fifths that he "never heard" over the course of his nineteen years in India. Indeed, he explains that "the greatest imperfection [of] the music in every part of India, is the total want of accompanyments" and offers a book full of them. But in further abstracting Plowden's airs into pieces for the middle-class parlor, he stripped away more than melodic interest and lyrical meaning. In fact, Schofield conjectures that even in the context of the nautch, the actual words were probably of secondary concern:

> It is hard to believe that even in the multilingual environment of early-modern North India many patrons could have fully understood lyrics in all of Persian, Brajbhasha, Urdu, Purabi, Marwari and Panjabi, let alone the wordless vocables of *tarānā* and *sargam* that only have rhythmic and melodic meaning. Rather, their pleasure for the listener lay more in the combination of melody, mood and *general* sense of meaning than in the actual lyrics.[110]

[109] Nowhere in *The Oriental Miscellany* does Bird make mention of Sophia Plowden or Margaret Fowke, another major source of the pieces he arranged; Woodfield, *Music of the Raj*, 176.
[110] Schofield, "Words without Songs," 177.

To this "*general* sense of meaning," which can only be perceived in performance, I would add the paramparic body of the singer as "always already social."[111] We can thus liken the Hindustani airs that developed between Awadh and Bengal in the 1780s to the neoclassical Hinduism that emerged from Sir William Jones's poetic and scholarly publications in those same years. Just as Jones's hymns to Hindu gods celebrated but misrepresented the Vedic scriptures of Indian religion, Plowden's practice of colonial ventriloquy conjured but ultimately razed the musicking body of the Mughal *tawā'if*.

[111] Rahaim, *Musicking Bodies*, 5.

PART II

TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGES

CHAPTER 3. ENCHANTING SONGS & NATURAL HISTORIES

> Anciently, the only way of preserving the memory of great and noble actions, was by recording them in songs; and, in America, there are still people who keep their whole history in songs.
>
> Charles Burney, entry on "Song" in Rees's *Cyclopædia* (1816)

> And it is in this history, in which the idea of humanism, of its de-godding of our modes of self-inscription first erupts, where Man and its human Others—that is, Indians, Negroes, Natives—are first invented.
>
> Sylvia Wynter, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism" (2000)

Mercury's Oracle

In 1777, the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (later the Society of Arts) commissioned the Irish-born painter James Barry to decorate the Great Room of their new headquarters in London.[1] The result was a series of six murals, completed in 1783, entitled *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture* and depicting "the complete history of the human mind in its various stages from barbarity to refinement."[2] The first three imagine milestones of human culture. In the opening *Orpheus*, the eponymous hero enchants the savage Thracians with song, his voice lifting them out of their animalistic state. The next two celebrate the achievements of the Neolithic Revolution and the political innovations of the Olympic Games. Taken together, these scenes represent the early socio-cognitive development of humanity—a category known by the Greeks as *Anthropos*, lately remade through the Linnean taxonomic schema as *Homo sapiens*—that had set the historical preconditions for the emergence

[1] Known as the Royal Society of Arts since 1908, the organization was founded in 1754 to stimulate creative industry throughout Great Britain. It later spawned the Royal Academy of Arts (1768), which left the Society of Arts to focus primarily on scientific innovation, with an eye toward the promotion of international trade.
[2] Edward Fryer, "The Work of James Barry" (1809), quoted in William L. Pressley and David Goddard, "A Chapel of Natural and Revealed Religion: James Barry's Series for the Society's Great Room Reinterpreted," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 132 (1984): 543.

of "Homo economicus," the enlightened man of reason. The fourth picture therefore skips forward three millennia to trace a direct path from the classical origins of Europe's humanist legacy to the present industrial achievement of the British Empire. In *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames*, the patriarchal embodiment of London's great river steers his barge toward allegories of the four continents as Mercury, guardian of travelers and trade, heralds his arrival (see figure 3.1).[3] Mercury, as the most industrious member of the pantheon—inventor of the lyre, overseer of wealth, and trickster god of thievery—was a fitting choice as spiritual patron of the Society and of Britain's capitalist expansionism. Indeed, his uncharacteristic use of the salpinx, an instrument meant for calling soldiers to arms, suggests deception rather than good faith negotiations.[4] Providing support from the water are the late, great conquerors of the empire attended by sea sprites and joined, arrestingly, by the music historian Charles Burney.[5]

Burney's dip in the Thames certainly vexed those close to him, who were shocked to spy the respectable (and very much alive) gentleman floating among dead mariners and nude nereids. According to his daughter Frances, the painting "caused no small diversion to the friends of the Doctor; and, perhaps, to the public at large; from the Hibernian tale which it seemed instinctively

[3] Barry's allegory of the continents as mature men (as opposed to youthful maidens) is unconventional. He differentiates them by the color of their skin but distinguishes each through his masculine virility and relative positioning within the frame. Europe and Asia sport ample beards, though the latter is more elaborately coiffed and decadently attired; beardless America is effeminized through a basket of food placed (in classically feminine style) on his head; Africa is receding into the margin and can be identified by his metal collar, an icon of slavery.

[4] On the salpinx as an instrument of war, see Sarah Nooter, "The Prosthetic Voice in Ancient Greece," in *The Voice as Something More: Essays toward Materiality*, ed., Martha Feldman and Judith T. Zeitlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 286; Mercury was also an ideal figure for legitimizing Britain's claim as cultural heir to ancient Rome. In *De bello Gallico* (58–49 BC), Julius Caesar laid the groundwork for such a connection by interpolating him into the belief system of the Northern Celts, claiming Mercury as the primary deity worshipped by the Druids, Lugus, inventor of all the arts and overseer of wealth.

[5] The sailors depicted are Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh, Elizabeth I's "Sea Dog" privateers and North American colonial investors; Sebastian Cabot (probably mixed up with his father, John Cabot), who led England's first voyage to North America; and the late Captain James Cook, credited with "discovering" Oceania. Together, their cohort represents British colonial dominance across the Atlantic and Pacific worlds. In the background of the painting looms a titanic observation tower, a reminder of Britain's panoptic, imperial might.

to unfold of the birthplace of its designer."[6] Ever protective of her father's genteel legacy, she emphasizes the artist's colonial difference—in this case, the association of Catholic Ireland with pagan superstition and faerie stories—to dismiss the potentially scandalous scene as little more than a flight of Celtic fancy.[7] For Barry, however, including "a native so eminently distinguished for his musical abilities" was crucial to his larger statement in *Commerce*. Their contrasting explanations for Burney's presence in the painting depend on a shared sense of cultural superiority. But whereas his child relies on the latent chauvinism of the English toward their oldest colony, his portraitist invokes a broader British nationalism built on an emergent intra-European hierarchy of North over South. In his *Account of a Series of Pictures*, published upon their completion, Barry bemoans the popularity of "Italian operas [sung] in a language unintelligible to the many, and even but ill understood by the few," and scolds those who would "disgrace [their] country by recurring to foreigners" for "the retinue of the Thames."[8] Notably, though, he does not depict Burney actually playing music, nor does his rationale focus on his reputation as composer, performer, or teacher half as much as on his "admirable history of music" and ambitious (though ultimately failed) plans for a national conservatory. Evidently, the capacity in which Burney could best serve the mercantile pursuits of Father Thames and the British imperial project was not as a practical musician, but as listener, interpreter, and narrator, a modern oracle of the nation's musical past and future.

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[6] Frances Burney quoted in Percy A. Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney: His Life, His Travels, His Works, His Family and His Friends* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 2: 14.
[7] On Frances Burney's role in crafting her father's legacy, see Kerry S. Grant, *Dr. Burney as Critic and Historian of Music*, (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 1–4.
[8] James Barry, *An Account of a Series of Pictures, in the Great Room of the Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, at the Adelphi* (London, 1783), 59–65; in choosing Burney for his painting, Barry dismissed a more obvious choice like Handel, a foreign-born composer of *opera seria*, but one who died a naturalized citizen and had been fully canonized in the British musical imaginary.

As that other musical oracle Orpheus had before him, Burney took song as the measure of humanity—a yardstick between animal and human (and between human and divine) as well as the medium of its enunciation. Indeed, Vanessa Agnew links the ancient "archmusician" to the Enlightenment historian through their shared legacy of travel and the possibility of music as "an index for categorizing people."[9] Yet the presence of Mercury in *Commerce* (to which Agnew gestures but does not comment upon) signals an epochal shift from the Apollonian musician–messenger envoicing civility to the music historian as herald of British global dominance. Thus, the Orphic legacy begun in ancient Thrace, the "barbaric" northern region to which the name *Europa* was originally applied, reaches its terminus in the commercial civilization of modern Europe. With the narrative arc of *Progress*, then, Barry draws the evolutionary trajectory posited by the Scottish Enlightenment "four-stages" theory of history. According to the conjectural scheme, human societies develop through pre-determined ages defined by their primary mode of acquiring resources, from hunting and shepherding to agriculture and, finally, commerce. Framing civil society as a function of economic production, the theory sought to explain what British observers understood to be the uneven development of cultures—from the *Haudenosaunee* Confederacy to the Highland *clan* system and the Chinese *Huangdinate*—as well as Britain's own "savage" past as part of an ongoing cycle of progress and decline. And as a system for categorizing humanity, four-stages theory proved most useful in conjunction with geohumoral theory, which attributed the appearance and temperament of a people (their distinctive "complexion") to the interaction of local climate and internal humors. The result was a comprehensive racial schema that, as historian Roxann Wheeler shows, could account for

[9] Vanessa Agnew, *Enlightenment Orpheus: The Power of Music in Other Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14.

"bodily, intellectual, and cultural differences," from skin color to relative artistic faculty.[10] By the time Burney began the research for his *magnum opus* in the 1770s, the act of writing music history for popular consumption could serve alongside the mercantile and expansionist ventures of empire, serving a unified narrative of England's cultural, aesthetic, and racial superiority.

Figure 3.1 James Barry, *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames*, 1777–83. Oil on canvas. Source: Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce. ArtUK. *https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/commerce-or-the-triumph-of-the-thames-218503.*

After years of delays, Burney released the long-awaited first volume of *A General History of Music* at the beginning of 1776. His timing was fortuitous. No comprehensive history

[10] Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 33–38, 183–88.

of music had yet been published in English but by the end of the year Sir John Hawkins was offering his own five-volume *General History of the Science and Practice of Music* in its entirety. Burney publicly dismissed his competition as a tedious antiquarian and musical dilletante whose facts were often as wrong as his taste was passé.[11] Over three subsequent volumes (published 1782 and, for the final two, 1789), Burney marshalled archival sources and ethnographic accounts to paint a vision of the musical past that extolled the aesthetic virtues of the present. He was, as described by Howard Brofsky, "a product of the Enlightenment [who] believed in the 'progress' of music (with its culmination in eighteenth-century Italian opera)."[12] And in his effort to establish contemporary England at the end of music history, he wrote with a self-reflexive ear toward the rest of the world. The result, as Kerry Grant observes, was "an English history of music for Englishmen."[13] Burney's role as England's mercurial oracle in *Commerce* exemplifies how, in Lisa Lowe's words, "the archive that mediates the imperatives of the state subsumes colonial violence within narratives of modern reason and progress."[14]

This chapter excavates the racial and imperial logics beneath the Enlightenment production of music–historical knowledge, through which the nascent category of whiteness was neutralized and naturalized. It situates Burney's seminal project along the lines of modernity articulated by Walter Mignolo: "a narrative … that builds Western civilization by celebrating its achievements while hiding [its constitutive] coloniality."[15] To that end, it reads his work against

[11] On the major similarities and differences between the works of Burney and Hawkins, see Maria Semi, *Music as a Science of Mankind in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012), 133–51; and Grant, *Burney as Critic*, 108–15.
[12] Howard Brofsky, "Doctor Burney and Padre Martini: Writing a General History of Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 65 (1979): 339–40.
[13] Grant, *Burney as Critic*, 287.
[14] Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 2.
[15] Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2–3.

contemporary historiographical trends and in transatlantic counterpoint with his friend and patron William Beckford of Somerley (1744–1799), a white Creole planter who, unlike his younger cousin, moved physically and aesthetically between Jamaica and England. The chapter locates Beckford's writing on song at the juncture of the political economy of slavery and the "culture of taste" in order to reveal the material and ideological motivations he shared with Burney.[16] Proceeding from the decolonial thought of Sylvia Wynter on what it means to be human, it marshals natural history, moral philosophy, and satire to reveal what I term the "coloniality of song" inherent within Burney and Beckford's contributions to musical modernity and its constituent modalities of race.

Beckford's written observations on enslaved singing in the West Indies are an ideal source from which to interrogate the silences upon which Burney's modern scholarship is predicated. Those silences contributed to what Anibal Quijano coined as the *coloniality of power* to describe the conceptual structure by which the salvational and civilizing missions of empire instantiate systems of control within both colonial and metropolitan society.[17] Before the disenchantment of the world, Orpheus sang of the gods; in the secularizing Enlightenment, Burney wrote of the invisible-because-unnamed protagonist of modernity, whom Wynter nominates as "Man—overrepresented as the generic, ostensibly supracultural human."[18] Thus, if modernity describes the ideological and material conditions under which Man first emerged in the Renaissance as a political subject of the state, then the racial, economic, and subjective factors by which those conditions are maintained constitute the coloniality of power. During the

[16] Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
[17] Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1 (2000): 533–80.
[18] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *The New Centennial Review* 3 (2003): 287–88.

eighteenth century, Man refined himself again, now as a bio-economic subject and hegemonic "ethnoclass" of humanity. Through this latter process, he also "overrepresented" his local practices of song (e.g., opera, sonatas, symphonies) as the universal standard, Music. As a monolithic category, Music was "redolent of European spiritual superiority," writes Gary Tomlinson.[19] It quickly assumed its place as the codified set of literate practices belonging to elite Western European society, which meant that it could only be recognized as a historical phenomenon where there existed a written record, thus restricting attempts to document its history to social and geographical spaces in which writing is the dominant mode of transmission.[20] Despite Burney's original outline for the *General History* proposing a chapter on "the national music [of] Africa, Asia, and America," the published version limits such engagement to the ancient world.[21] Under the epistemic conditions of musical modernity (i.e., coloniality of song) the successor of Orpheus need not extend the Apollonian mantle of civilization beyond the anxiously guarded borders of Europe. Following the global–colonial pathways of Mercury, Burney wrote the story of Music, contributing to the ongoing Enlightenment project of a secular ("degodded," in Wynter's terms) theogeny of Man.

[19] Gary Tomlinson, "Musicology, Anthropology, History," *Il Saggiatore musicale* 8 (2001): 25; see also Gary Tomlinson, "Vico's Songs: Detours at the Origins of (Ethno)Musicology," *Musical Quarterly* 83 (1999): 344–77.
[20] With historical progress as the measure of technical advancement, and Western Europe as the primary space of development, correlating historicity with literacy meant that traditions and practices understood as primarily oral/aural were systematically devalued and dismissed.
[21] Burney had hoped, at least, to include the music of China, which he ranked only slightly lower than the nations of Europe regarding civilizational progress, see Grant, *Dr. Burney as Critic*, 54–55; Thomas Irvine argues that Burney's eventual "[engagement] with the sophistication and antiquity of Chinese music" ultimately "[left] unchallenged the idea that Western music was superior and more cultivated, see *Listening to China: Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770–1839* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 150; Burney also made studies of Polynesian and African instruments, see Agnew, *Enlightenment Orpheus*, 150.

Natural (Music) History

The oracular mandate to "Know Thyself" has been integral to the heritage of Western metaphysics since its earliest articulations in Hellenistic Greece.[22] Hovering above the entrance of the Temple of Apollo, the maxim cautioned petitioners at Delphi, kings and peasants alike, to remember their place in the cosmic order and to temper their appetites accordingly. For Socrates, self-knowledge was the necessary precondition of all other forms of knowledge, a journey inward to plumb the depths of the soul and learn one's own limitations. During the sixteenth century, as the unifying ethos of Christendom gave way to the shared conceptual space of Europe, the authority of self-knowledge passed from the philosopher to the scientist. Knowledge of the self now constituted recognition of oneself in anatomical and artistic renderings of the body, idealized forms upholding the standard of the human. With the words of the oracle thus disenchanted, the secrets of the body were likewise demystified. When Carl Linnaeus first introduced his classifications for humans in *Systema naturae* (1735), he followed the generic marker *Homo* with a Latinized version of the familiar instruction *Nosce te ipsum* before listing four subvarieties associated with each continent: white Europeans, red Americans, tawny Asians, and black Africans. In this new epistemic regime, proverbial self-knowledge included an awareness of one's own humanity, defined primarily against a global hierarchy of not-quite-human others.[23]

[22] The West here constitutes "a set of political and epistemic projects of invasion and intrusion throughout the planet since the sixteenth century." Walter D. Mignolo, "The South of the North and the West of the East," in *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 352.

[23] "In a single stroke, Linnaeus thus produced a universal scheme of naturalized human difference while at the same time highlighting that such a classification is the supreme product of human self-reflection." Staffan Müller-Wille, "Linnaeus and the Four Corners of the World," in *The Cultural Politics of Blood, 1500–1900*, ed. Kimberly Anne Coles, et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 191–92; see also Lorraine Daston, "Type Specimens and Scientific Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2004): 153–82.

Linnaeus kept the Latin motto front and center in his taxonomic overhaul of his tenth edition (1758), wherein the standardization of binomial nomenclature reified the species *Homo sapiens* as those with the capacity to know themselves. Also expanded were the previously sparse descriptions of each group (including only color and origin) into a systematic accounting of physical and cultural traits. These ranged from descriptions of general physique that could be found in classical or medieval texts on the different peoples of the world, to the forms of civil structure that preoccupied eighteenth-century thinkers, as well as phenotypical markers like hair texture and face shape that anticipated nineteenth-century classifications of biological racism. But while Linnaeus (like his contemporaries the Comte de Buffon and Johann Blumenbach) understood many of these characteristics to be hereditary in nature, he did not believe them to be genetically pre-determined. Implicit in such work was the assumption that the particularities of regional climate interacted with medical humors to effect everything from coloring, mental disposition, and overall health, collectively termed as "complexion." Over many generations, this geohumoral interaction would have resulted in the unique national characters of people around the world. This meant that, while complexion was heritable, individual bodies remained porous—not closed systems but spongy sites subject to change over a lifetime—so that as one's environs change, so too could their (and their descendants') racial makeup. As a means of measuring and defining the nuances of human variety, conventional wisdom about the effectual power of climate on the body had constituted a major system of race-making since classical antiquity. In the eighteenth century, it fueled colonial anxiety around British settlers in the extreme climates of the East and West Indies.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, geohumoral theory was overlaid with contemporary observations about the nature and development of civil society. Among the most

influential proponents of geohumoral theory was Charles-Louis de Secondat, the Baron de Montesquieu, who refined it as a scientific explanation for social and cultural difference. His major work of political history and legal theory, *De l'esprit des loix* (1748), argued that the best way for the state to ensure individual liberty was through diffuse authority, a government comprised of separate branches, each with its own function and with the ability to "check" one another. The midcentury treatise had a long-lasting influence on Anglophone law and letters, most notably the US Constitution, but this legacy also obscures the philosopher's core assumptions about the critical role of climate in shaping human bodies and the body politic. Montesquieu was especially interested in the lessons to be gleaned from historical and comparative music cultures. Believing that music "influences the mind by means of the corporeal organs," he deploys the example of operatic listening to illustrate the relative effects of cold and warm air on the nervous system:

> In cold countries they have very little sensibility for pleasure; in temperate countries they have more; in warm countries their sensibility is exquisite. As climates are distinguished by degrees of latitude, we might distinguish them also, in some measure, by those of sensibility. I have been at the opera in England and in Italy, where I have seen the same pieces and the same performers, and yet the same music produces such different effects on the two nations; one is so cold and phlegmatic, and the other so lively and enraptured, that it seems almost inconceivable.[24]

In specifying England's cold climate and its people's phlegmatic temperament, Montesquieu draws on an understanding of human difference that originated in the ancient East Indies and flourished in Greco-Roman texts on natural history. In medieval and early modern Europe, the native environment—including factors like sun exposure, sea level, and soil quality—were still

[24] Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1750), trans. Thomas Nugent (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1900), 267–68; see Lorraine Daston, "Attention and the Values of Nature in the Enlightenment," in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed., Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 100–126.

broadly understood as working with the body's humors to produce groups that were primarily sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic in nature, medical categories that further implied a great deal about their physique and skin color.[25] Seemingly innocuous observations about the relative effects of music on the Catholic South and the Protestant North are neither neutral nor superfluous to his argument. For Montesquieu, sensory affect is a physiological process, in this case the vibrations of the voice echoing in the cochlea organ and producing an emotional reaction. His musical premise, in other words, implies an embodied source for national categories of difference.

As Keith Johnston shows, Montesquieu's writing was popular among English music critics during the 1770s.[26] The period was, among other things, a peak moment in the century's long clash between proponents of the ancients and of the moderns. Like Burney, Montesquieu had been interested in, though remained skeptical of, the testimony of classical authors concerning the power of music in moving the passions. Dismissing the abstract notion that it "inspired virtue" among the Greek legions, he nevertheless acknowledged its efficacy as a tool of the state. Since music "influences the mind by means of the corporeal organs," he reasoned that it could moderate the tempers of elite men who, free from the labor of the working classes, spent the majority of their leisure time in the gymnasium. Music, he concluded was the ideal medium to have thus served the polis since, "of all the sensible pleasures, there is none that less corrupts

[25] What changed between the classical models and those of eighteenth-century Europe was the shifting location of the idyllic temperate climate region that produced the most beautiful and well-balanced complexion in its population. Unsurprisingly, classical Greek writers located this zone around Greece and Italy, with the cooler, northern climes of Britain producing a chalky-white people best suited to manual labor and less intellectually creative than the darker-skinned inhabitants of the southern regions. Over the course of the eighteenth century, British writers remapped these regions to better reflect increasing northern hegemony, displacing the Mediterranean into the South, and Africa (and the newly incorporated West Indies) into the supposedly uninhabitable Torrid Zones, see Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 22–24.

[26] Keith Johnston, "Music and Montesquieu's Climate Theory in the Criticism of Joseph Baretti and His English Contemporaries," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 40 (2016): 36–67.

the soul." Naturally, when Burney sought to elevate himself from a workaday teacher to a genteel scholar, he turned to the French aristocrat who held music in such high esteem that he had applied it as an organizing principle of the world's peoples. "Perhaps," he concedes in his first major literary venture, *The Present State of Music in Italy and France* (1771), "the grave and wise may regard music as a frivolous and enervating luxury; but in its defense, Montesquieu has said that 'it is the only one of all the arts which does not corrupt the mind.'"[27] Loosely paraphrasing for his intended effect, Burney frames music as both a non-essential and non-harmful aspect of human life.[28] Embedded within this argument is the additional implication that the prevalent role of music in society can make it a barometer of civil advancement. Burney thus carves out a niche for himself, through the study of music, as an aspiring man of letters and of leisure, able to devote his time to an "innocent luxury," as he would later define it, but consequential enough as to merit scholarly attention.

A passage in his next book, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces* (1773), suggests the continued influence of Montesquieu's conjectural history, especially the influence of climate, in Burney's own approach: "Climate contributes greatly to the forming of customs and manners; and, it is, I believe, certain, that those who inhabit hot climates, are more delighted with music than those of cold ones; perhaps, from the auditory nerves being more irritable in the one than in the other."[29] For Burney, the history of music was the story of humanity's steady advance toward aesthetic perfection through the gradual

[27] Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy* (London, 1771), 3.
[28] According to Damien Mahiet, Burney's "misquotation—whether intended or accidental—effectively salvaged music from any association with moral disorder," see "Charles Burney; or, the Philosophical Misfortune of a Liberal Musician," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 10 (2013): 53.
[29] Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces* (London, 1773), 3–4; partially quoted in Agnew, *Enlightenment Orpheus*, 138; and in Johnston, "Music and Montesquieu's Climate Theory," 55; neither Agnew nor Johnston make any reference to the racial implications of climate theory on Burney's thought.

improvement of taste—which he would later document through the evolving *passaggi* of famous castrato singers over the preceding fifty years—though this progress was uneven across societies.[30] Early in *A General History of Music* (1776), he foregrounds the role of climate as a natural law governing the development of music cultures around the globe.[31] The preface opens by offering up a paean to the universality of music, which he justifies—then qualifies—by way of the modern world's foundational colonial difference:

> The love of lengthened tones and modulated sounds, different from those of speech, and regulated by a stated measure, seems a passion implanted in human nature throughout the globe; for we hear of no people, however wild and savage in other particulars, who have not music of some kind or other, with which we may suppose them to be greatly delighted, by their constant use of it upon occasions the most opposite: in the temple, and the theatre; at funerals, and at weddings; to give dignity and solemnity to festivals, and to excite mirth, chearfulness [sic], and activity, in the frolicsome dance. *Music, indeed, like vegetation flourishes differently in different climates; and in proportion to the culture and encouragement it receives* [my emphasis].[32]

Drawing an analogy between music and flora, Burney directly invokes the power of the natural environment to shape national character, as expressed through a society's collective creativity and artistic infrastructure. True, "lengthened tones and modulated sounds" bloom everywhere, but the degree to which they will thrive depends upon the proverbial soil of its people and their qualities of temperament imparted by the climate. In other words, while the practice and enjoyment of music is a universal phenomenon, the precise form and function it takes in a given culture (whether or not its people can develop rudimentary song into something of lasting artistic

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[30] "Virtuosic singing was the vocal aestheticization of fashionable discourse, and the aural equivalent of fashionable dress." Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain, 1770–1840: Virtue and Virtuosity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 64.

[31] By contrast, the rival history of Hawkins—whose technological determinism and preference for Baroque counterpoint ("ancient music") over modern *galant* opera undermined a historical narrative built on the progression of taste—gives no credence to climate determinism, see John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, 5 vols. (London, 1776).

[32] Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* (London, 1776–89), 1: vii.

value) comes down to racial difference. Presenting the immense variation of musical forms, styles, and aesthetic value across the globe through the lens of geohumoral theory, Burney grounds the racial logic of European musical superiority—as well as the subordinate status of all Other musics—in the supposedly universal truths of natural history.

Climate-based explanations proved thornier in defining intra-European musical hierarchies, which were not readily distinguished through broad classifications of humanity.[33] In the case of England, for example, the precise nature of climate was reinterpreted over the century, suggesting more favorable traits in its inhabitants—from a frigid northern zone characterized by weak mental faculties to a more temperate region, imported from the Mediterranean, indicative of physical beauty and artistic creativity—reflecting its increasing global hegemony. Perhaps inspired by Burney, the Italian castrato Giovanni Battista Mancini, singing master at the Imperial Court in Vienna, addressed the issue in the expanded second edition of his book on singing, newly titled *Riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato* (1777). In his preface, Mancini presents a distinctly southern perspective on the global history of music:

> The larger part of the arts, however, that have had their birth in a favored and beneficial climate, have had with hardly any exception their prosperous life from Africa to Europe, from Egypt to Greece, and were brought from Athens to Rome. But the northern people's desire for pillage and devastation broke and destroyed the Roman dominions, and laid the veil of ignorance over the Constantine Empire, burying in their barbarism the arts, their founders and supporters. They annihilated the stores of knowledge and attainments, and many original products of the talents and industries of our great ancestors.[34]

Calling into question the suitability of the northern climate and its inhabitants to artistic production, Mancini launches a preemptive invective against what Hegel would later call the

[33] On the issue of applying climate theory within a single region, see Agnew, *Enlightenment Orpheus*, 138–39.
[34] Giambattista Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, trans. and ed., Edward Foreman (Champaign, Ilinois: Pro Musica Press, 1967), 11–12.

"heart of Europe," which was just then emerging as a transregional entity.[35] To be sure, Burney agreed that Italian song was superior and that ancient Celts were barbaric, though he likely would have taken issue with what Mancini is implying, namely, that present-day Britain falls toward the bottom of the cultural hierarchy with Italy at the top. Such claims may, however, have influenced the Italians then living in London. In a 1780 letter to Frances Burney, Pacchierotti evinces a similar sentiment about his own native Italian sensibility: "Madam, I thought always that the cold climate of England had positively impaired my natural feeling, but I experienced the contrary when I was oblig'd to leave you & my Friends I cannot describe the state of my poor soul in that moment of my departure."[36] Ironically, Barry, the Irish-born artist, would offer an impassioned defense of English musical sensibility, opining that their "musical feelings" seem "very superior to those of the Italians," as they appear at the opera "in as much extacy from the mere sensation of hearing" without understanding the language.[37]

Decades later, contributing to Abraham Rees's *Cyclopædia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, Burney the horticulturalist intervened again to address the apparent incongruities between England's cool climate and its advanced state of civilization. In these articles, he continues to hold his previous position:

> Climate seems to operate so much on music, however its influence may be disputed in manners and government, that what is admired in one country is detested in another. In cold climates *labour* is necessary to circulation; in hot, *ease* is the grand desideratum.

[35] In any case, Burney and Mancini were on good terms, at least as of 1772, when they met in Vienna, see Burney, *Present State of Music in Germany*, 332–35.
[36] "Gasparo Pacchierotti to Frances Burney," Spa, 16 July 1780, RP 2666, London: The British Library; ironically, in Burney's fawning biography of Pacchierotti, he concedes that the singer was "not gifted with a very robust constitution, nor was his chest proof against the rude and sudden attacks of our climate." Charles Burney, "Pacchierotti, Gasparo," in *Music Biography Articles from Rees's Cyclopædia by Dr Charles Burney*, ed. A. P. Woolrich (2018), 338.
[37] "Tis odd enough, that on the banks of the Tyber and the Arno, music should necessarily require words for an exponent, and to be enforced by the language that was intelligible and familiar to all; whilst we on the banks of the Thames, from our superior sensibility and greater quickness of apprehension, should stand in no need of any such requisition." Barry, *Series of Pictures*, 63.

> This principle is carried to such excess in Italy, that whatever gives the hearer of music the least trouble to disentangle, is Gothic, pedantic, and *scelerata* [wicked].[38]

At other points in his entries, there are signs that the increased prominence of conjectural or philosophical historiography has influenced his thinking. Since Burney's Italian and German tours in the 1770s, for example, four-stages theory had gone from being "influential" to registering as "orthodoxy" among Britons.[39] In a series of lectures (1762–63) given at the University of Glasgow, Adam Smith argued that the "four distinct states which mankind pass thro" are brought on by an increasing population. But progress is also tied to climate (environmental factors like the fertility of soil or average temperatures), factors that could either goose or stall a society's development from nomadic hunters and shepherds to resident farmers and traders, from "traditional" ways of life to those of modern civilization.[40] The increasing investment during the last quarter of the eighteenth century in structural behavior as an essential category of difference did not diminish the emphasis placed on phenotype in delineating humanity. Noémie Ndiaye argues that the enduring power of race as a conceptual store of essentialized, heritable difference (what she terms the "racial matrix") is founded in "its ability to keep generating new paradigms without terminating older ones."[41] In other words, the integration of civil society into national character resulted in an all-encompassing racial paradigm that

[38] Burney, "Jomelli, Nicolo," in Woolrich, *Music Biography Articles*, 211–12.
[39] Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 182; on conjectural history, see Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740–1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 171–90.
[40] According to Smith, when a society grew large enough that intermittent hunting was no longer a tenable means of supporting the whole of the population, it would begin to domesticate animals. As numbers again increased, they would begin to cultivate land and, eventually, would have accumulated enough of a surplus to sustain international trade, see Nathaniel Wolloch, "The Civilizing Process, Nature, and Stadial Theory," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44 (2011): 252–55.
[41] Noémie Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 6.

epitomized the Enlightenment translation of spatial distance into temporal difference, of foreign "barbarians" into traditional "primitives."

In his extended entry on "Song," for example, Burney places some limitations on the role of climate in defining (certain) national music cultures. Toward the end of the article, he adumbrates the general claims made in John Aikin's "Essay on Ballads and Pastoral Songs" (1772), including that "pastoral poetry is a native of happier [warmer] climates [and] like the fine fruits of the south [it] will never be so far naturalized to our soil as to flourish without borrowed warmth and forced culture."[42] Without actually quoting Aikin, Burney retorts:

> With regard to pastoral songs, though the Sicilian pastoral is not natural to our climate, yet we produce better fruit for the table in our hot-houses, than the southern continent of Europe can boast. An opera song is a hot-house plant [and] the Siciliana movement has been happily treated more frequently by Handel, and many of our best national composers, such as Arne and Boyce, than any other.[43]

In evaluating the climatological claim, Burney accepts the basic premise that the cooler climate had a demonstrable effect on the development of English music, but he also rejects nature's ability to dictate its destiny. England is the hothouse of empire, and its native (and naturalized) artists are as gardeners capable of sustaining and improving upon imported delicacies. Like the costly and fashionable practice of cultivating exotic southern produce—oranges from Asia, pineapples from America, grapes from the Mediterranean—in artificial environments, adapting foreign song—pastorals from Italy, airs from Scotland, *ghazals* from India—was simply a matter of northern ingenuity overcoming and manipulating nature for the betterment of society.

Burney is even more explicit in his article on "Arabian Music," in which geographical distance is transmuted in historical regression: "Music in Europe has been cultivated with so

[42] John Aikin, *Essays on Song-Writing* (London, 1772), 31–32.
[43] Charles Burney, "Song," in *General Music Articles from Rees's Cyclopædia by Dr Charles Burney*, ed. A. P. Woolrich (2018), 525.

much more success than that of any other quarter of the globe [that] to abandon or neglect [its harmonic, melodic, and instrumental advancements] for any refinements or properties which the music of Asia, Africa, or America could furnish, would indeed be letting our cornfields lie fallow, and feeding on acorns."[44] Corn here is meant in its original sense, a generic term for cereal grains like wheat, barley, or rye, rather than maize, the indigenous grain of the Americas.[45] For this reason, Maria Semi has recently read this passage as a straightforward analogy of corn to polyphony.[46] To be sure, Burney conjures the harvesting of cornfields to signify the superiority of European Music over what he imagined to be the primitive (and definitionally non-musical) sounds heard elsewhere around the world. As a staple crop, corn signified the advanced stage of English civilization, feeding both people and livestock, fueling markets, and forming the base of the native beers and whiskeys so entangled with national identity. (Recall the 1762 attack on Alderman Beckford, warning that "the sugar-cane [would soon] triumph over the hop-pole, and barbecued hog over the roast-beef of the English.")[47] By contrast, foraging for acorns recalled the primitive state of the simplistic hunter–gatherers, remnants of the past yet present throughout the world. To leave Europe and its artistic achievements in favor of "other" musics was akin to travelling back in time, relinquishing sophistication for passing novelty. More than fodder for saccharine wordplay, then, the comparison of musical corns and acorns exemplified a racial

[44] Burney, "Arabian Music," in *General Music Articles*, 26.
[45] Based on the Taino word *mahiz*, meaning "life-giving seed," corn was the staple crop of many pre-Columbian societies. For this reason, it eventually acquired (and retains) the name "Indian corn," so named for its uncivilized connotations, see Betty Fussell, "Translating Maize into Corn: The Transformation of America's Native Grain," *Social Research* 66 (1999): 42.
[46] Maria Semi, "Writing about Polyphony, Talking about Civilization: Charles Burney's Musical 'Corns and Acorns,'" *Music and Letters* 103 (2022): 71.
[47] The *Auditor* quoted in Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister of the London Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 110–11.

hierarchy born of aesthetic distinctions between *us* and *them*, *here* and *there*, and most importantly, *now* and *then*.

The Coloniality of Song

In the myth of Orpheus, song and history are born from the same revelatory spark. It was through song that the half-mortal son of Apollo recounted the story of his divine forebearers to the Thracians, catalyzing their ascent from barbarism to civility. By weaving tales of the past and prophecies of the future, Orphic song enchanted its savage listeners—not merely captivating them with beauty but, in the original sense of the Latin *incantare*, consecrating them with his voice—and raising them to the level of human. Dating to Classical Greece, such tales were among the most culturally significant fragments of ancient learning to be reinvigorated within Renaissance Humanism. By the eighteenth century, the story of Orpheus had become a medium for exploring the meanings and possibilities for music within Western society, past and present, as well as the fundamental alterity of those outside the boundaries of civilization.[48] Thus, Barry's portrayal of *Orpheus* (1777–83) imagines the eponymous hero holding a tribe of half-naked hunters rapt with his voice (see figure 3.2). Barry explains that he "endeavoured that the song may appear the principal, [with] the music of the lyre but as an accompaniment and accessory." Wading into the eighteenth-century debates over music and language, his *Account* dismisses the efficacy of primitive song, calling the Rousseauian "state of nature" "far short of the golden age

[48] Agnew, *Enlightenment Orpheus*, 7–9; Olivia Bloechl has critiqued Agnew's postcolonial framing as inappropriate to the eighteenth-century Anglo-German relationship, which involved neither imperial domination nor colonial expropriation, though she does not go so far as to claim that "Burney or his writings about music were untouched by imperial ideologies or institutions of music," see Olivia A. Bloechl, "Review of 'Enlightenment Orpheus: The Power of Music in Other Words' by Vanessa Agnew," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 7 (2010): 106.

and happiness some have unwisely imagined."[49] For Barry, following Burney's narrative *telos*, any music powerful enough to "operate upon the mind" must have been "more substantial than sonatas, or mere inarticulate tune, which generally reaches no farther than the ear." As he would have it, the power of Orpheus to tame rocks and elicit pity from the gods through song was not the effect of any primaeval simplicity, but the cultural inheritance of his mother Calliope, muse of epic poetry, to deftly balance linguistic authority and aural pleasure.

Figure 3.2 James Barry, *Orpheus*, 1777–83. Oil on canvas. Source: Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce. ArtUK. *https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/orpheus-218500.*

Outside of mytho-history, the legendary skills ascribed to ancient song reflect what Mignolo calls, in decolonial terms, "the growing [evolutionary] complexities of oral/verbal

[49] Barry, *Series of Pictures*, 43–44; for Burney's discussion of Orpheus, see *General History*, 260–67; on Rousseau's state of nature applied to the music, see Olivia A. Bloechl, *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 191–94.

languaging," the socio-cognitive construction of meaning through abstract ideas expressible only through language. The process of languaging, therefore, is a distinctive feature of being human, shared by all human communities—indeed, it is the cultural consequence of being human *in community*. Simultaneously, Mignolo gestures to a singular act of languaging: the historical moment in which a small sector of the human species (localized to the European Renaissance) would name itself Human or simply Man, a new category of being apart from and above what is putatively called nature, and thus "destitute to lesser status [other, newly subordinated] humans by creating racial and sexual colonial differences."[50] Here, the history of languaging—of humanity's creation and imposition of linguistic meaning onto the world—takes place on two parallel planes and in two vastly different time scales. In the first, humanity evolved over millennia to arrive at its present form, physiologically and cognitively adapted for language, as a self-representing species; in the second (around 1500 AD) a small minority of the species employed the tools of languaging (in what Wynter calls, after Fanon, the "sociogenic principle") to forge a new "elite" position by assuming the mantle of the Human for themselves.[51] This latter moment has been described by Foucault as the "Invention of Man," which Wynter adapts and glosses as the "Renaissance humanists' epochal redescription of the human" from "theocentric" (a "sinner by nature," beholden to the Church) to increasingly "de-godded" terms (both a rational self and political subject of the state).[52] In contrast to his ancestors, Man (as Human) comes into being through a process of modern disenchantment and out of the rupture that Mignolo calls the "colonial difference," resulting from the initial spread of the West, as such, across the globe.

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[50] Walter D. Mignolo, "Sylvia Wynter: What Does It Mean to Be Human?," in *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 422.
[51] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 318; on this, see also Gary Tomlinson, *A Million Years of Music* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 34–47.
[52] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 263.

For Wynter, then, the story of humanism is the story of the colonial difference and the resulting "genres" of the human, instantiated in the modern world through the logic of race:

> And it is in this history, in which the idea of humanism, of its de-godding of our modes of self-inscription first erupts, where Man and its human Others—that is, Indians, Negroes, Natives—are first invented. And this … is the history of the expansion of the West from the fifteenth century onwards, and an expansion that is carried out within the terms of its own cultural conception of its own origins. [An] ethno-culturally coded narrated history … in whose now purely secular terms we are all led to imagine ourselves as Man, as purely biological and economic beings. The *history* for Man, therefore, narrated and existentially lived as if it were the *history-for* the human itself.[53]

Thus, the emancipation of Man from world-cosmology, his ascendency to rational being and superior genre of the human, is accomplished through the colonial subjugation of the "irrational Indian" and "sub-rational Negro" after 1492. And this is the major discursive work of humanism. What Wynter calls *history-for*, the founding myth of and by Man through the Renaissance and Enlightenment, exported and naturalized as the *history* of all humanity.[54] And it is through this *history-for* that the white racial signifiers with which Man came to identify were neutralized as the invisible defaults of the human. As Olivia Bloechl and Nicholas Till have both shown, the early modern "discovery" of darker-skinned peoples inhabiting the Americas reinvigorated the story of Orpheus and his enchanting voice.[55] Within the modern episteme, he no longer offered humanizing song, as he had for the savage Thracians, but rather colonizing *song-for* the Human. The voice of Orpheus came to emblematize Man's transcendence above his subaltern Others and

[53] David Scott and Sylvia Wynter, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 8 (2000): 198.
[54] Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Before Man: Sylvia Wynter's Rewriting of the Modern Episteme," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 90–105; and Mignolo, "Sylvia Wynter: What Does It Mean to Be Human?," 118–22.
[55] Bloechl, *Native American Song*, 15–18; and Nicholas Till, "Orpheus Conquistador," in *Opera Indigene Re/Presenting First Nations and Indigenous Cultures*, ed. Pamela Karantonis and Dylan Robinson (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 15–29.

final domination of nature, resulting in its imbrication within the colonial matrix of power with the modern envoicing of the Human, as Man, constituting an Orphic mode of history.

Like Orpheus, Burney had a keen understanding of the relationship between song, history, and the Human. As the medium of history, song had been necessary for the preservation of human knowledge through subsequent generations: "Anciently, the only way of preserving the memory of great and noble actions, was by recording them in songs; and, in America, there are still people who keep their whole history in songs." In drawing a parallel between the Homeric and bardic traditions of Europe and what he imagined as the present-day practices of indigenous cultures in the Americas, he forges a coeval link between the savage past and the primitive present, both of which reside beyond the Orphic domain of civilization. With the advent of a robust system of writing, sung history became obsolete, resulting in a division of labor between voice and writing as separate spheres of knowledge—thus the *General History* was not sung in metered stanzas but printed in a series of volumes. The consequence, for those "who [still] keep their whole history in songs," is to become remnants of the past who must preserve their stories "anciently." Eliding the supposed state of music among the indigenous peoples of America with those of the ancients, Burney adumbrates by comparison the cultural progress achieved by civilized Man. He can thus be said to enact the coloniality of song, which functions in tandem with what Quijano first called the coloniality of knowledge but better describes the effect of the colonial difference on global musics/European Music as a product of Enlightenment Man's interest in cataloguing musical practices across the world as objects of knowledge. Put another way, it is the colonization of the culturally specific ways that people perform and experience song, both aurally and conceptually. If the coloniality of knowledge/being/truth/freedom together describe the overrepresentation of Man, then the coloniality of song contributes by naming the

systems upholding and exporting what was, by the middle of the eighteenth century, his most prized cultural heritage.

Quijano originally envisioned a colonial matrix of power ("patrón colonial de poder") that reveals the effect of imperial domination, outside the expropriation of lands and peoples, through the propagation of hegemonic systems of economic, political, epistemic, and subjective control through the authoritative (and thus naturalized) discourses of (Christian) theology/(Western) philosophy and patriarchy/racism.[56] The coloniality of song celebrates the idealization of Music as purely aesthetic as being supremely rational while impoverishing all other ways of doing and knowing *with and through* song (e.g., oral history) as anti-modern. As Tomlinson shows, from the second half of the eighteenth century, the discursive category of Music (which he capitalizes to emphasize its locality within elite European culture) came to denote a set of qualities—literacy, instrumentality, monumentality—that were increasingly prized in the concert halls of London and, therefore, overrepresented as the universal standard.[57] One way in which the coloniality of song works at the aesthetic level can be seen in Burney's assessment of Pierre-Jean Burette's reconstruction of ancient Greek songs: "with all the advantages of modern notes and modern measure, if I had been told they came from the Cherokees, or the Hottentots, I should not have been surprised at their excellence. There is music that all mankind, in civilized countries, would allow to be good; but these fragments are certainly not of that sort."[58] Finding the songs to be unsalvageable by the standards of "[M]ankind, in civilized countries," he consigns them to a place among his archetypal human Others. Through

[56] Mignolo, *Darker Side of Western Modernity*, 8–10.
[57] Gary Tomlinson, "Musicology, Anthropology, History," *Il Saggiatore musicale*, 2001, 21; see also Michael Denning and Gary Tomlinson, "Cantologies," *Representations* 154 (2021): 113–28.
[58] Burney, *General History of Music*, 1: 103–104.

the coloniality of song, the hegemonic musical practices of elite Europeans (Western Art Music) are consolidated and universalized under the banner of Music, while Other musics are provincialized as "native" and "savage" or de-historicized as "primitive" or "traditional." Such distinctions of humanity—musical differences that simultaneously traverse time and space—are at the core of Burney's progressive historiography.

A third example can be found in Burney's introductory "Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients" of the first volume, the final section of which deals incredulously with the supposedly fantastic effects attributed to ancient music. On the matter of music's medicinal powers, Burney again cites the work of Burette, a physician and scholar of ancient music, who "allows it to be possible, and even probable, that music, by reiterated strokes and vibrations given to the nerves, fibres, and animal spirits, may be of use in the cure of certain diseases." While this scientific explanation initially seems to support the claims of ancient writers on music's somatic efficacy, it takes on a historical skepticism that effectively rationalizes their power away:

> He by no means supposes that the music of the ancients possessed this power in a greater degree than the modern, but rather, that a very coarse and vulgar music is as likely to operate effectually on such occasions as the most refined and perfect. The savages of America pretend to perform these cures by the noise and jargon of their imperfect instruments; and in Apulia, where the bite of the tarantula is pretended to be cured by music … it is by an ordinary tune, very coarsely performed.[59]

Conflating historical time and geographical distance again, he equates the musical cures performed by "savage" Americans and Southern peasants to feats of musical healing claimed by ancient authors. In both contemporary cases, he does not deny such accounts outright, but is happy to demystify their curative power. Yet a disparity remains between the "ordinary tune" of Apulia and the "noise" and "imperfect instruments" of Amerindians. Note that in each of the

[59] Burney, *General History of Music*, 1: 185–86.

preceding examples, indigenous peoples of America are made living referents for the ancient past. If the unschooled peasantry of southern Italy constitutes a civilizational halfway point in between the advanced commercial society of Man (as an elite, northern European) and the uncivilized tribes of America, then the Amerindian performs a similar function as the evolutionary link between Man (in his second iteration as a purely biological subject) and his ultimate racial inferior: the Black African. The Amerindian may represent the prototypical irrational and, in Burney's time, wholly primitive Other, but is nevertheless more relatable for Burney's readers than the sub-rational African "Negro"—ironically so, given that most Britons had more cause to hear music performed by enslaved Africans than Amerindians.

By the eighteenth century, the idea of the barbarian inhabiting far-off places had been supplanted by that of the primitive, located conceptually in the past and defined by their "traditional" (i.e., uncivilized) way of life.[60] Unlike its "savage" antecedent, however, primitive song could be heard across the ocean as well as in one's own backyard, a situation that Matthew Gelbart describes as "pockets of the primitive within modern Europe" under the sign of folk.[61] In referring to tarantism, then, Burney recalls the "folk" disease of southeastern Italy, in which the bite of a certain local spider is said to result in unbalanced humors.[62] He is vague about the nature of the disease said to be cured through the "ordinary [tunes]" of the *tarantelle*—he calls it a "nervous disorder"—but early modern Italian sources (to which he may have had access on his Italian tour) claim the affliction as either a spiritual or demonic possession that seems to

[60] Mignolo, *Darker Side of Western Modernity*, 155–56.
[61] Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 59.
[62] On tarantism, see Ernesto de Martino, *Magic: A Theory from the South* (1959), trans. Dorothy Zinn (HAU Books, 2015); and David Gentilcore, "Ritualized Illness and Music Therapy: Views of Tarantism in the Kingdom of Naples," in *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy Since Antiquity*, ed. Peregrine Horden (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 255–72.

primarily affect those on the margins of society. Tomlinson surmises that such rites were the remnants of ancient circummediterranean possession cults, aspects of which still endure in the West African Yoruba and Vodun religions and their syncretized derivatives, resulting from the African diaspora and Middle Passage, such as Haitian vodou and Brazilian Candomblé.[63] Burney was almost certainly unaware that the musical cures effected by the peasantry of the European South may have shared a common ancestor with the spiritual rites of enslaved Africans in the West Indies. Still, the implicit connections drawing together America, Africa, and Apulia are reminiscent of his attempt, as described by Gelbart, to "fashion a musical link between the primitive universalism of the Orient or classical antiquity and that of the newly formulated European folk" (Chinese, Greek, and Scottish songs) through an ostensibly shared pentatonicism.[64]

Mapping the course of *A General History of Music* through a decolonial lens, in sum, reveals a narrative arc bending toward the gradual disenchantment of song over the millennia. From this perspective, Burney's is the story of musical epistemes, from the power of song among the ancients, through its domination and standardization with Christianity, concluding with its artistic liberation on the operatic stage. Historian J. G. A. Pocock has identified this, in reference to Edward Gibbon's coterminous *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–89), as the standard "Enlightened narrative" of European history, sketching "the journey from polytheism through monotheism to secularity."[65] For historians like Gibbon, the very premise of

[63] Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 157–70.
[64] Gelbart, *Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music",* 115.
[65] Pocock notes that the "Enlightened narrative" intersected with four-stages theory in their shared focus on commerce clearing the way for "ordered states," "polite manners," and "critical and civil philosophy" out of "ecclesiastical authority." J. G. A. Pocock, "Historiography and Enlightenment: A View of Their History," *Modern Intellectual History* 5 (2008): 93–96.

a history of the West was predicated on the transition (or overthrow) from sacred to secular. In Burney's case, as his original outline reveals, he sought to "cover the discoveries and refinements made in both vocal and instrumental music" from the eleventh century.[66] He was, first and foremost, a critic who openly preferred the modern galant style to the fussy counterpoint of past ages. Thus, while their respective series differ widely in scope, their underlying rhetorical structures belie the shared influence of conjectural history and the Scottish Enlightenment's emphasis on commerce as the driver of human progress. The effort Burney was devoting to the production of the *General History* can be gleaned from his complaint, in its preface, that "posterity has spared us a few ancient histories of empires, republics, and individuals, yet no models of a *History … of Music* [despite] the many that antiquity produced." In crafting a narrative, he understood his chief difficulty to be the fact that "few conquerors ever aimed at *universal monarchy*, compared with the number of authors who have wished to be thought possessed of *universal knowledge*."[67] Knowledge, then, resembles less a mode of engaging with the world than something to be possessed.[68] To attempt universal mastery (or possession) may be folly, but Burney sought a totalizing story ending with the final ascendancy of Music.

Transatlantic Counterpoint

In June 1770, Burney left England on the first fact-finding mission of his proposed history, "determined," as he put it, "to hear with my *own* ears, and to see with my *own* eyes; and,

[66] Grant, *Dr. Burney as Critic*, 51.
[67] Burney scorns Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift for possessing "neither taste nor judgement" in music but still having "contemned" both "music and its admirers," see Burney, *General History of Music*, 1: viii, xvi.
[68] "In the eighteenth century, knowledge was … transformed into an object," hence Orientalism, see Mignolo, *Darker Side of Western Modernity*, 156.

if possible, to *hear* and *see* nothing but *music*."[69] Decades earlier, the French *encyclopédiste* Charles de Brosses had bemoaned the tendency of young English milords on their Grand Tours to congregate together, spend their time playing cards or billiards, and "leave Rome without having seen [nor presumably heard] anything in it except their countrymen [who] do not know where the Colosseum stands."[70] Upon his arrival in Rome, Burney quickly fell in with a contingent of his fellow Englishmen abroad, whose help he would require in gaining access to music in the first place. While Burney's earnest demeanor could hardly warrant an accusation of haughty nonchalance, de Brosses's criticism of the cool English gaze and soft occupation (by means of tourists rather than soldiers) of the eternal city suggests something of the intricate social field and the tripartite relationship of fashion, taste, and class that Burney would need to navigate in completing his research. If, as Smith suggests in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), fashion is the sublimation of class envy reified into market commodities like clothing or music, then taste is, by contrast, the result of intellect and training—the ability to critically evaluate and discern good from bad. Thus, the "man of taste," as Smith dubs him, performs his necessary social function irrespective of any personal wealth or power, but depends upon access to the wealthy and powerful to disseminate this knowledge.[71] With neither fortune nor title, Burney used his musical *bona fides* to launch himself into the role of Smithian tastemaker,

[69] Burney, *Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 7.
[70] Charles de Brosses, *Selections from the Letters of de Brosses*, trans. Ronald Sutherland (London, 1897), 183.
[71] According to Smith, fashion arises from the association between the aristocracy and those objects or trends they hold in favor, which appear desirable not because of any intrinsic value but as a result of the glamourous lifestyle they promise to anyone able to afford them. Of course, glamour is illusory by definition, and the rarified aura surrounding the aristocracy is the irreproducible result of their unbreachable social distance, see Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; see also Craig Smith, "All in the Best Possible Taste: Adam Smith and the Leaders of Fashion," *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 23 (2016): 597–610.

seeking the patronage of fashionable elites like the rakish Duke of Dorset, John Sackville, at whose home he "passed few nights at Rome without hearing music."[72]

While in Rome, Burney also forged a friendship with another prominent music lover—of dubious origin but considerable wealth—the colonial heir William Beckford of Somerley. Like his younger and better-known cousin (William Thomas Beckford, of Fonthill) discussed in the first chapter, Beckford of Somerley would benefit from a large inheritance at a young age, including a Jamaican estate, from which he claimed ownership of around one thousand enslaved Afro-Caribbean persons working across 7000 acres of sugar cane.[73] The circumstances of the Beckfords' births and subsequent childhoods, however, differed immensely. Beckford of Somerley was born in Jamaica, 1744, the natural son of Richard Beckford (brother of Alderman Beckford) and his common-law wife, Elizabeth Hay. And yet, while he lacked the noble lineage of his cousin, he was sent to study at Oxford as a young man. There, the cultural and racial implications of his Creole origins were likely on display through his manners and accent, recalling Rey Chow's audio-visual wordplay of "skin tone."[74] After receiving his master's degree, he began a multi-year Grand Tour with school friends and a travelling tutor. By the time Burney arrived in Rome at the end of September, 1770, Beckford had been resident in the city for at least six months, and had grown familiar enough with the local scene to facilitate musical opportunities for his inquisitive new acquaintance who had recently been honored with a

[72] "I passed few nights at Rome without hearing music at the Duke of Dorset's … his grace had the goodness to contrive to have my curiosity gratified by something new and curious, either in composition or performance, at most of these concerts. It was here that I had an opportunity of meeting the best performers in Rome, at a time when the theatres were shut, and it would have been difficult to have heard them elsewhere." Burney, *Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 274; on Sackville, see Ann Bramley, "A Duke on the Grand Tour: John Frederick Sackville, 3rd Duke of Dorset," *The British Art Journal* 7 (2006): 75.
[73] Richard B. Sheridan, "Planter and Historian: The Career of William Beckford of Jamaica and England, 1744–1799," *The Jamaican Historical Review* 4 (1964): 42.
[74] Rey Chow, *Not like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 1–17.

bachelor's and doctorate from his own alma mater.[75] In *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, Burney fondly recalls an instance just two days after his arrival in Rome:

> This evening Mr. Beckford, to whose zeal for the business in which I am embarked I have infinite obligations, made a concert for me, consisting of twelve or fourteen of the best performers in Rome; these were led by Signor Celestini. There were three voices, Signor Cristofero, of the Pope's chapel, who sing very much in Guarducci' way, and is little inferior to him in delicacy; *il Grassetto*, a boy, who submitted to mutilation by his own choice, and against the advice of his friends, for the preservation of his voice, which is indeed a very good one, and he is, in other respects, a very pleasing singer; and a *buffo* tenor, a very comical fellow.[76]

Clearly Beckford had the means to offer some of Rome's finest and, it would seem, a refined enough sense of taste to meet Burney's high standards.

Back in England, Beckford became a welcome guest in the Burney household. In May 1772, he attended an evening of Anglo-Italian music-making led by their mutual friend, the Roman violinist Eligio Celestini. Also participating were Sir William and Lady Catherine Hamilton, Beckford's relations, who had been a great help to Burney in Naples. According to Frances's diary, "Mr. Beckford brought his flute with him [and] has won all our hearts by the extreme openness, good-humour, and friendly fervency of his manners."[77] Her good opinion of him had not changed by the next year: "My father's friend, Mr. Beckford, is just married; we have not seen him since, though he has called. I should like to be acquainted with his bride, who I think must be amiable."[78] In 1774, Beckford left to personally oversee the operations of his estates—and the enslaved laborers working them—in Jamaica, where he would also serve as magistrate for Westmoreland parish. The impression he made upon his return as a native son and

[75] Leopold Mozart mentions Beckford, whom he had previously met in London, in a letter to his wife from the previous April, see *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, trans. and ed. Emily Anderson (London: Macmillan Press, 1985), 129.
[76] Burney, *Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 258–59.
[77] Fanny Burney, *The Early Diary of Frances Burney, 1768-1778* (London, 1889), 177.
[78] Burney, *Early Diary*, 221.

hereditary member of the local plantocracy can be gleaned from *A Short Journey in the West Indies* (1790) by fellow (absentee) planter Robert Charles Dallas, who describes Beckford as a "real West Indian" of noble character, lately fallen on hard times:

> I am now at Hertford Penn; it is the residence of a West Indian, a man of taste and learning; and a description of European manners, turning all that the climate offers to the best advantage. A classical education, and a course of well-directed traveling, conspired to accomplish the mind of Benevolus [Beckford]; and while that was liberally stored with the beauties of science and of art, and with every delicate refinement, Nature pressed upon his heart all the noble feelings of philanthropy. A princely fortune enabled him to indulge his taste in the patronage of merit, and to enjoy the luxury of doing good. In the bosom of his family, he enjoys true and domestic happiness. As a man of the world, he is accomplished, mild, and pleasing; as a friend, sincere; as a husband, delicate and affectionate; as a brother, warmly attached; as a master, tender and humane; as a man of business, alas! misled by the goodness of his own heart and the villainy of others."[79]

After thirteen years in Jamaica, Beckford returned, heavily in debt, to England. Whereas his millionaire cousin at Fonthill had withstood worse onslaughts of bad weather and financial mismanagement, his own origin in the cadet branch of the family—and being a prolific spender himself—left him with little security and soon landed him in the "mortification and shame" of Fleet Prison.[80] As Frances (echoing her father) would summarize years later: "The unfortunate, but truly amiable and high-minded Mr. Beckford was amongst the greatest favourites and most welcome visitors to Dr. Burney; whose remembrance of the friendly zeal of that gentleman in Italy, was a never failing call for every soothing return that could be offered to him in the calamites which, roughly and ruinously, had now changed his whole situation in life—leaving his virtues alone unalterable."[81]

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[79] Robert Charles Dallas, *A Short Journey in the West Indies, in Which Are Interspersed, Curious Anecdotes and Characters* (London, 1790), 2: 138–146.
[80] Still, he was most definitely wealthy by any measure. Early in 1789, his "capital and well known" art collection was auctioned at Christie's, bringing in £1255, see Jenkins, *Mozart and the English Connection*, 66.
[81] Frances Burney, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney* (London, 1832), 3: 113.

The lasting extent of Beckford's "zeal" is suggested by his decision to subscribe to a generous five copies of the forthcoming *General History*. While a commitment to two copies is not unusual among the subscribers, those down for more were usually involved in bookselling, and thus planned to make a profit, or were colonial elites like Beckford engaging in public-facing cultural patronage (see figure 3.3). [82] Indeed, this latter group included the constituent members of the Supreme Council of Bengal (the body governing the Company Raj in India) as well as its Governor-General, Warren Hastings, and President of the Board of Trade, William Aldersey, who subscribed to three and four copies, respectively. Unlike the names of his East Indian counterparts, though, Beckford's is among the very few names listed with only a title (Esq.) but, though he could claim homes in England and Jamaica, no place of residence. Rather than an oversight, the omission may have been a deliberate choice to "whiten" his colonial ancestry and the source of his income.[83] If so, that would run counter to David Hunter's recent claim that the Beckford family's "engagement with 'the aesthetic' … did not arise from a desire to renounce or overcome their so-called Creole roots or inheritance, to return to being wholly white."[84] Arguing against Gikandi on the role of colonial disavowal in the Beckfords' musical patronage, Hunter dismisses the role of transatlantic lineage in the constitution of whiteness—an always unstable category, but especially so within a racial paradigm based on the local environment—and the

[82] Consider also George Robertson's series, *A View of the Island of Jamaica* (1778), done at Beckford's request and published in London, which offers idyllic scenes with massive trees dwarfing the small (always) Black figures that people the canvas. The result is to aestheticize the island by minimizing the agency of its Black inhabitants, thereby bringing it firmly into the sphere of Georgian taste, see Geoff Quilley, "Pastoral Plantations: The Slave Trade and the Representation of British Colonial Landscape in the Late Eighteenth Century," in *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660–1830*, ed. Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 113–14.

[83] This may also have been done in the hope that readers would confuse him his younger cousin, William Thomas Beckford of Fonthill; for the rest of the named subscribers, see Burney, *General History of Music*.

[84] David Hunter, "The Beckfords in England and Italy: A Case Study in the Musical Uses of the Profits of Slavery," *Early Music* 46 (2018): 293; for Gikandi's original argument, see *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, 137.

possibility of any social agenda on their part. He takes particular issue with their characterization as *nouveau riche*, which he feels serves merely to "to disparage or derogate" them, insisting that its "usage is political rather than analytical," and appealing to "major dictionaries" to defend their hereditary status.[85] But dictionaries are descriptive, not prospective, and being "brought up rich" and "thoroughly integrated into the elite" could not liberate the Beckford dynasty of its West Indian heritage, nor, in the case of the Alderman, could it absolve him of accusations of hypocrisy for championing the rights of commoners while enslaving thousands of Africans and their descendants in Jamaica. The members of Georgian England's much-despised planter class had every reason to follow the lead of the aristocracy and transmute the profits of slavery into social capital.

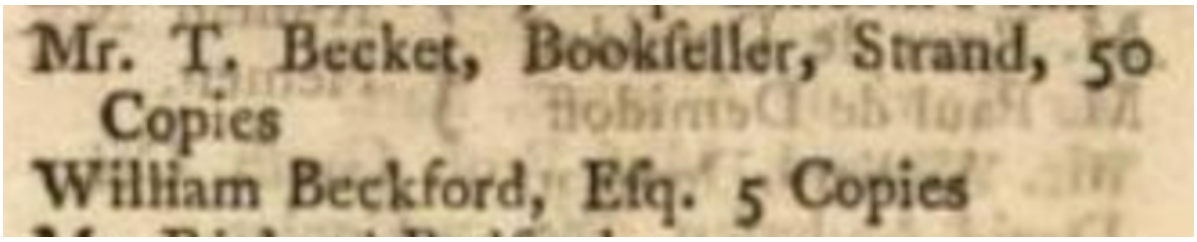
Mr. T. Becket, Bookfeller, Strand, 50
Copies
William Beckford, Efq. 5 Copies

Figure 3.3 Excerpt from the list of subscribers to Burney's *General History of Music*, 1776.

In a bid to alleviate his debt, William Beckford of Somerley set about detailing his firsthand knowledge of Jamaica for the public. He did so in his first book *Remarks upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica* (1788) and, two years later, in the natural history for which he is best known, *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica* (1790).[86] By the time of their

[85] Hunter, "Beckfords in England and Italy," 286.
[86] Beckford dedicated his first book to William Parsons, esq., Master and Conductor of the King's Band of Music, see William Beckford, *Remarks upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica Impartially Made from a Local Experience of Nearly Thirteen Years in That Island* (London, 1788); Burney met Parsons on his return from Rome and coveted his position, see Brofsky, "Doctor Burney and Padre Martini," 327 n61; Beckford's second book was dedicated to another mutual friend with Burney, the Duke of Dorset, see William Beckford, *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica with Remarks upon the Cultivation of the Sugar-Cane*, 2 vols. (London, 1790).

publication, white West Indians were widely viewed as tyrannical, cruel, and lecherous—the very antithesis of the idealized sentimental masculinity expected of gentlemen in late-eighteenth-century Britain. Beckford thus fashions himself as an erudite man of leisure whose inheritance has placed him into the role of genteel planter and humane slaveowner. His writing evinces the Aristotelian view that "negroes are slaves by nature" while on the very same page conceding that such a people "of a different complexion, but perhaps of the same feelings" with oneself should be treated with some degree of mercy.[87] What now reads as a hypocritical justification for slavery points to the complex nature of inter- and intra-race relations in colonial Jamaica. Throughout the British West Indies, a shared sense of liberty proliferated among the white population, leading to an emphasis on class solidarity over distinctions of wealth or status, resulting in a society sharply delineated by degrees of skin color, which was the most legible indicator of one's place within a system of racial slavery. The "tendency toward [white] equality" that Christer Petley identifies in Jamaican planter society was one way for the small minority of British settlers to symbolically insulate themselves from the majority Black and enslaved inhabitants of the island.[88] Thus, despite differences of money or attitudes toward enslaved peoples, Beckford counted among his friends such men as Thomas Thistlewood, an overseer (and later slaveowner) whose notorious journals detail his sadistic methods of torture

[87] Beckford, *Descriptive Account*, 2: 382.
[88] Christer Petley, *White Fury: A Jamaican Slaveholder and the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 41; Burnard writes: "White Jamaicans were committed both to egalitarianism and to tyranny; they placed the highest value on independence at the same time that their reliance on slavery made their dependent character ever more manifest." Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 67.

and enumerate, in "brutal Latin phrases," the frequent acts of rape he committed against enslaved women and girls.[89]

That sense of intraracial equality was absent in England, where Beckford had first arrived in his youth as an outsider, and returned after thirteen more years away as a debtor. But unlike his boorish uncle and Camp cousin, he put family money toward two Oxford degrees. His refined but not over-the-top sensibility earned him a good reputation in spite of his colonial origins, leading to the admiration of the Burney family, which never wavered during his time in prison. In October 1791, Charles Burney recorded that he had read both volumes of Beckford's *Descriptive Account* and seems to have held continuing aspirations for his friend's return to polite society:

> How I want Mr. Look [William Locke?] to read it! and how he wants him to see the drawings he had made there,—in Spain, Italy, etc., —that he has preserved from the wreck of his all during the hurricane at Jamaica! "But," says he, "Mr. L. will never think of coming to such a place as this!" (the Fleet Prison).
>
> I intend to try to get Sir Joshua [Reynolds] and Sir Joseph Banks, his old acquaintances, to Visit him there with me. I was with the dear, worthy, and charming man, two hours on Wednesday, and love him and honour him more than ever. What a place—surrounded with fresh horrors!—for the habitation of such a man! … My most worthy and good nephew Charles … goes to him generally once a week, and dines, and plays to him on a miserable pianoforte for five or six hours at a time.[90]

Four months later, Frances recorded that "the good, and much-injured, and most unfortunate" Beckford "is at length released from unjust confinement, but he has an air of dejection, a look, a voice, a manner, that all speak the term of his sufferings to have been too long for his spirits to recruit."[91] In the final years of his life, he relied on the charity of his cousins: William Thomas

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[89] Saidiya V. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 26 (2008): 6; on Thistlewood, see also Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*; Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750–86*, (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1989); and Heather V. Vermeulen, "Thomas Thistlewood's Libidinal Linnaean Project: Slavery, Ecology, and Knowledge Production," *Small Axe* 22 (2018): 18–38.
[90] Quoted in Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, 2: 37.
[91] Frances Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay* (London, 1842), 289–90.

Beckford at Fonthill, who had inherited the better part of their family's fortune, and Richard Howard, Earl of Effingham.[92]

Instrumentum Cantare

At the time of Beckford's arrival to assume personal authority over his estates and enslaved workers, Jamaica had been an enormously profitable sugar colony for over a century. Following the English Civil War and Restoration of the Monarchy, British colonial slavery in the West Indies had bequeathed the modern plantation system, a self-contained world of violent oppression organized, from one end, with the new managerial science and, on the other, with the ordering and control of enslaved people's time and bodies.[93] Creole slave-owners and overseers were generally seen as inhumane by metropolitan onlookers, and they kept men and women alike working year-round to maximize profits and minimize the possibility of rebellion. For those forced to work in and around the sugar fields and factories of Jamaica, the brutal conditions of agricultural labor amid tropical heat and disease were augmented by the eighteen-hour workdays imposed on them during the six months of harvest and manufacture between January and June.[94] As sugar cane begins to spoil quickly after being cut, it had to be immediately processed to make it suitable for mass (European) consumption. Thus, the dangerous machinery used to mill and to boil it was kept running through the night, exponentially increasing the threat of maiming and death. Thus, abolitionist William Fox wrote in 1792 that "in every pound of sugar used we may

[92] While William Beckford Sr. was transmuting colonial wealth into political power, his sister Elizabeth was securing herself an advantageous marriage, becoming the Countess of Effingham.
[93] Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London: Verso, 1997), 260–61.
[94] Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 11–14.

be considered as consuming two ounces of human flesh"; Andrew Burn went even further, stating plainly that "the inhabitants of Great Britain, who use Soft Sugar … literally, and most certainly in so doing, eat large quantities of [blood], as it flows copiously from the Body of the laborious Slave, toiling under the scorching rays of the vertical sun."[95] By the end of the century, the whiteness of West Indian sugar, like that of its owners, was increasingly difficult for some Britons to swallow.

It was in this atmosphere that Beckford released his *Descriptive Account*. over the span of two volumes, he presented a version of plantation life that was far more humane than his metropolitan readers (to say nothing of first-hand visitors) had come to expect, including in his description of enslaved Afro-Caribbean music. In his account of the harvest, for example, the steady rhythms of punishing field work are all-but-muffled by what he hears as a primarily meditative approach to song:

> When the mill is at work at night, there is something affecting in the songs of the women who feed it; and it appears somewhat singular, that all their tunes, if tunes they can be called, are of a plaintive cast. Sometimes you may hear one soft, complaining voice; and now a second and a third chime in; and presently, as if inspired by the solemn impressions of night, and by gloomy objects that are supposed to dwell around, a full chorus is heard to swell upon the ear, and then to die away again to the first original tone.
>
> The style of singing among the negroes, is uniform: and this is confined to the women; for the men very seldom, excepting upon extraordinary occasions, are ever heard to join in chorus. One person begins first, and continues to sing alone; but at particular period the others join: there is not, indeed, much variety in their songs; but their intonation is not less perfect than their time.[96]

Passages like this call to mind the question Saidiya Hartman poses in response to the inadequacies of the archive of slavery: "How does one listen for the groans and cries, the

[95] Fox goes on to quote a French writer who "cannot look on a piece of sugar, without conceiving it stained with spots of human blood" and Benjamin Franklin, who describes sugar as "thoroughly dyed scarlet in grain." William Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum* (London, 1792), 5.
[96] William Beckford, *Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica* (London, 1790), 2: 120–21.

undecipherable songs, the crackle of fire in the cane fields, the laments for the dead, and the shouts of victory, and then assign words to all of it?"[97] The nameless women in Beckford's account appear, briefly, as part of a white slaveowner's musings on colonized Afro-Caribbean song, seeming to anticipate Frederick Douglass's incredulous response, some decades later, to the deficiencies of white listening: "I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. … Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy."[98] What these women actually felt working in the sugar factory is lost to history. In characterizing their singing as wistful and melancholic, between Douglass's two extremes of "contentment" and "most unhappy," Beckford crafts an affective experience in line with how metropolitan readers tended to imagine the state of slavery while trying to disarm their most urgent abolitionist sentiments.

On the sugar plantations of the British West Indies, women made up the majority of unskilled laborers and were generally expected to work as hard as men. As described by Hortense Spillers, these brutal labor requirements effectively transformed the individual bodies of enslaved women, self-sustaining sites of an autonomous subject, into market-ready commodities as fungible "flesh," a process that she glosses as "ungendering."[99] In his first-century BCE agricultural treatise, *Res Rusticae*, the Roman Marcus Varro similarly classifies the slave (*servus*) as a speaking tool (*instrumentum vocale*), a category that points to the inherent paradox of slavery as a state between fungible object and living person. Varro divides the farmer's tools into three classes: those that are mute (*mutum*), those that can merely phonate

[97] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 3.
[98] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (Boston, 1847), 14–15; on Douglass's reception, see Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, 204–7.
[99] Spillers quoted in Saidiya Hartman, "The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors," *Souls* 18 (2016): 168–69.

(*semivocale*), and those that speak (*vocale*). Such divisions are not based solely on their respective abilities to sound, but to think and convey meaning, as established when Aristotle claimed four centuries earlier that "nothing that is without soul utters voice."[100] While the noisy plough may be far from silent, an inanimate object cannot think or sound on its own, rendering it mute; conversely, the lowing of cattle is a physiological process of the lungs and resonating cavities of a living creature, but lacks linguistic meaning.[101] Clearly, Varro's concern was less an attempt to catalogue the noises of the farm than to rationalize the human agency of the enslaved person as a self-envoicing "tool." And if the special focus that Beckford pays to the voices of women, in particular, has the ironic (and unintended) effect of "re-gendering" their singing bodies, of recognizing them as more than "flesh," it is fleeting. As Nicholas Mathew has recently shown in the case of contemporary abolitionist ballads and memorabilia, "the sentimental conferral of voice" upon the slave may have elicited genuine sympathy for the imagined characters being ventriloquized, but such acts could grant neither legal personhood nor political agency to their real-world enslaved referents in any meaningful sense.[102] Indeed, in confirming their status as women, Beckford also reaffirms their dual role on the plantation, as prescribed by the legal dictum of *partus sequitur ventrem*, as re/productive chattel.[103] All told, the enslaved women depicted in Beckford's pastoral tableau appear to perform the labor of agricultural production, economic increase, *and* aural pleasure—tools of sugar, sex, and song.

[100] Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 2.420b.
[101] Varro refers to the *plaustrum*, from *plaudo*, in reference to the clapping or clattering it makes rounding the fields, see Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (London, 1879), s.v. "plaudo."
[102] Nicholas Mathew, *The Haydn Economy: Music, Aesthetics, and Commerce in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 101–106.
[103] Jennifer L. Morgan, "Partus Sequitur Ventrem: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery," *Small Axe* 22 (2018): 3–5; see also Hartman, "Belly of the World," 169.

If the state of slavery could transmute human bodies into tools, Beckford's colonial aurality repackaged their now-disembodied voices as exotic consumables for the English reading public.[104] Historian Roger Abrahams has shown, for example, that "practices [of song] emerged as forms of active resistance" on the slave plantations of the American South. Collective singing offered a means by which enslaved peoples could "maintain alternative perspectives toward time, work, and status [even as it] amplified the rhythms of the work."[105] Again, Douglass explained: "The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. … I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness."[106] From the perspective of the slaveowner, though, the enslaved lived lives "of pure sensation" and their voices indicated no such inner feeling.[107] Beckford assigns the cause to exterior motivations ("gloomy objects … supposed to dwell around") that could elevate a dry anecdote into a romantic *mise en scène*. Even while praising the novelty and affective quality of the singing, Beckford questions whether what he hears can be called "tunes," by which he means self-contained "works" falling within Europe's elite "cantological" category of Music.[108] The acoustemological conditions of coloniality/modernity left no room for him to concede (or even imagine) that the power of artistic expression may exist outside of the creative domain of Man. The already over-embodied Black African is thus

[104] On colonial aurality, see Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening & Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); on the related notion of "white aurality," see Marie Thompson, "Whiteness and the Ontological Turn in Sound Studies," *Parallax* 23 (2017): 266–82.
[105] Roger D. Abrahams, *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African American Culture in the Plantation South* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), xxii, xviii.
[106] Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 15.
[107] Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London: Verso, 2011), 11; compare Beckford's description to the no less romanticized scene of Genevese peasants witnessed some decades later by Mary Shelley: "Nothing is more pleasant than to listen to the evening song of the vine-dressers. They are all women, and most of them have harmonious although masculine voices. … Their tunes are monotonous, but it is sweet to hear them in the stillness of evening." Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland* (London, 1817), 105.
[108] Tomlinson, "Musicology, Anthropology, History," 25.

understood entirely through the performative act of song, yet paradoxically lacking the vocal interiority granted to white Europeans. In such moments, the speaking tool (*instrumentum vocale*) is pushed into the realm of pure voice where, emptied of linguistic meaning in favor of affective beauty, it functions as an Orphic prosthetic, a singing tool (*instrumentum cantare*) for the white slaveowner to self-reflexively adumbrate the generic boundaries of Man and his human Others.

If Beckford's *Descriptive Account* ontologically discounts the musicality of enslaved African singing, it also wants to acquire and insert it into the British imperial soundscape. Whereas Burney locates such music in the distant past, Beckford, like many white observers in the West Indies, describes in detail the various Jamaican instruments of African origin that he has seen and heard. What makes his account unique is the desire to incorporate those instruments into the sonic world of elite European culture: "I have often wished that my friend Parsons had heard, and could have instructed musicians in the execution of these different instruments, as his superior [talent] would have made them valuable, if not in the chaste and spirited accompaniments of his airs, at least in the pathetic episodes, if I may so express it, of his sentimental and learned choruses."[109] No doubt, the line gives Beckford a chance to name drop William Parsons, Master of the King's Musick from 1786, to whom he dedicated his first book. Yet Beckford also shows himself capable of conceptualizing African instruments—not their creators or performers, who remain outside of the Orphic domain of civilization inhabited by full-fledged "musicians" in Europe—beyond the world of the plantation and of chattel slavery, even to their employment within the highest institutions of English culture. The mere suggestion shatters the illusion that the enlightened modernity of England and the colonial violence of

[109] Beckford, *Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica*, 1: 219.

Jamaica could exist as discrete spaces—the very reason, as Gikandi explains, that the "relationship [of enslaved peoples] to objects that would be considered beautiful was … tenuous."[110] By offering a thoughtful assessment, Beckford demonstrates his musical erudition to distinguish himself, even from Jamaica, within the dominant mode of white English masculinity. His desire to cannibalize African song may represent an unconscious effort to reconcile his own self-image as a white Englishman and genteel man of taste with his position as a transatlantic Creole in metropolitan London.[111]

In the same section, he laments the lack of sustained musical scholarship devoted to the West Indies, and not only the traces of music in ethnographic narratives such as his own: "In the elegant and learned work which Doctor Burney has composed and published upon the History of Music, it would, I conceive, have been a matter of pleasure and curiosity, if the description of these different instruments had found a place."[112] His suggestion is far from a decolonial option. Instead, his time in the British West Indies afforded him enough intellectual leeway (underwritten by the strong sense of white solidarity across classes) to acknowledge genuine interest in African song. By contrast, the refined culture in which Burney wrote required an absolute suppression of slavery as an elemental force upholding the modern world—he could hardly entertain the possibility of African instruments in his scholarship, let alone at Court. We can imagine Burney's response from his assertion that "one great impediment to the progress of Music among the Romans was that they wholly abandoned to their slaves the practice of the

[110] Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, 235.
[111] Beckford's desire for cultural (and thus racial) purity through colonial consumption somewhat foreshadows (and inverts) the aims of the Brazilian surrealist poet Oswald de Andrade in championing aesthetic hybridity as the key to New World cultural production, see Oswald de Andrade, "Cannibalist Manifesto" (1928), trans. Leslie Bary, *Latin American Literary Review* 19 (1991): 38–47.
[112] Beckford, *Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica*, 1: 220.

liberal arts," whereas the Greeks had "confined the exercise of those arts … to *free men*, and persons of birth and rank, forbidding their slaves the study and use of them."[113] In the first volume of the *General History*, dedicated to the music of the ancients, Burney spends twice as much time on the music of the Greeks as the Egyptians, Hebrews, and Romans put together. Greece remained the font of modern civilization and the source of the humanistic legacy out of which he was writing—the historical mirror reflecting the institutions of Man and Music—despite popular comparisons between the Roman and British empires. By contrast, Black Africans were conceptualized as the ultimate underclass of humanity, leaving the idea of a *sui generis* African music unthinkable and unhearable in Burney's acoustemological frame.[114]

If the music of ancient Egypt was thus relevant to Burney's larger story, then the music of Egyptians, along with that of Hebrews, was to be found within the white conceptual space of the Greco-Roman world and not as part of, or in reference to, the independent geographical place of the African continent.[115] And yet the figure of the Black African breaks through as a racial specter, the unruly foil to the "civilized" whiteness of Europe. In closing out his section on the decline of music in post-pharaonic Egypt, Burney skeptically cites the dismissive assessment given by Cornelius de Pau in *Recherches philosophiques sur les Egyptiens et les Chinois* (1774). In Burney's rather free translation, de Pau claims that music served in ancient Egypt as "a necessary stimulus to action" for a people as "unable as most of the Asiatics and Africans are at present, to perform any kind of labour, without being excited by screaming and noise, for such is

[113] Burney's claim here forms an interesting contrast to his thoughts on the words of Psalm 134, which he describes as "the natural sentiments and feelings of a people [the ancient Hebrews] but lately fallen from a state of prosperity and happiness, into that of bondage and misery." Burney, *General History of Music*, 1: 490, 270.
[114] Burney, *General History of Music*, 1: 214–26.
[115] Hence the controversy surrounding James Bruce's discovery of the Abyssinian lyre, which his contemporaries incorrectly believed to be imagined, see Roger Lonsdale, *Dr. Charles Burney: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 160.

[their] natural sloth and indolence … Soft tones and graceful melody have no effect upon their obtuse organs; and this is the reason why music never has been, nor ever can be successfully cultivated among them."[116] The present tense suggests the discussion has turned from the subject of the ancients, whom Burney defends against de Pau, to the "primitives" of Asia and Africa. While Burney is translating, he tellingly includes the original text that referenced "les vaisseaux du Japon, de la Chine, de Siam & de toutes les isles de l'Archipélague Indien" [the ships of Japan, of China, of Siam, and all the islands of the Indian archipelago, glossed as "Asiatics"], but made no mention of Africa. True, he may simply have been extending an earlier reference to "Asia and Africa," though Johann Forkel's German translation from two years later has no such erroneous inclusion. Burney seems to have been preoccupied with the musical (and moral) deficiencies of African peoples.[117]

In another such moment, he brings in the figure of the African, this time in the form of the Hottentot, seemingly unprompted by the context. On the subject of the theorist Ptolemy, whom he otherwise describes as "the most learned, close, and philosophical writer upon the subject of Music among the younger Greeks," he cautions that the third book of his *Harmonia* "forms a very striking contrast with the scientific solidity and precision of the two first."[118] He notes specifically Ptolemy's pursuit of esoteric connections between music and the cosmos, including when he "sends the Mixolydian to Greenland, and the Hypodorian to the Hottentots!" What exactly Burney means by "sending" the modes is not clear, except that he refers to polar domains of the supposedly dwarfish "Laplanders" and the southern African Hottentots, the two groups understood to live farthest from the temperate European climate and thus figured at the

[116] Burney, *General History of Music*, 1: 232.
[117] Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Musikalisch-kritische Bibliothek* (Ettinger, 1778), 129.
[118] Burney, *General History of Music*, 1: 450.

bottom of the racial-civilizational hierarchy born from the combination of climate and four-stages theory.[119] In fact, Linnaeus's tenth edition of *Systema naturae* lists below the four continental races a fifth, made up of "monstruous" humans (*Homo sapiens monstrosus*), with whom he groups the "Hottentotti." Strange, then, that when we turn to Ptolemy, we find him engaged only in astrological calculations between "modulations of tonoi" and "stellar crossings in latitude." The "extremes" of the "Mixolydian and Hypodorian" are "compared to those thought of as the most northerly and southerly towards the solstice," but he makes no reference to people of any kind.[120] Evidently, Burney found value—whether humor or shock—in what he perceived as the absurdity of associating the musical innovations of the Greeks with groups he hardly considered to be human.

A starker example comes as Burney again conjures the proverbial "wild" African in a different capacity—that of an animal without voice. He begins with the musical ability of satyrs, offering only that their progenitor is said to be the great musician, Silenus. Said to have fostered Dionysus and challenged Apollo successfully in a contest of song, the rustic Silenus seems to represent the very inverse of the civilized Orpheus, who learned from and devoted himself to the musical gods. Moreover, Burney clarifies that "*Satyr* is a name given by some authors, says M. de Buffon, to the *Orang-outang*, or man of the woods, an animal that differs in form less from man than the Ape, and is only to be found in Africa, and the southern parts of Asia."[121] Here he cites Buffon's research on quadrupeds in *Histoire Naturelle* (1749–89), from which he gathers that "this large species of Ape [is] equal in size and strength to man, and as fond of [human]

[119] Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 23–29.
[120] Ptolemy, *Harmonics* 3:157, trans. Jon Solomon (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 157.
[121] Burney, *General History of Music*, 1: 304–5.

women as of his own females," with a "face and features much resembling those of man." For that reason, he allows it reasonable that:

> Civilized Indians make no scruple of ranking him among the human species by the name of Orang-outang, or wild man; though the Negroes, almost equally wild, and quite as ill-favoured, not reflecting that man is more or less exalted, in proportion as his reason is cultivated, have given them the name of *Pongo*, which implies a beast, and not a man."[122]

In suggesting their behavioral similitude to orang-outangs, Burney offers up Black Africans as the "missing link" between Man and ape, referencing contemporary debates over the "Great Chain of Being" and contemporary racial "science." According to the polygenist theory of descent, as advocated by the philosopher David Hume and the planter historian Edward Long, different races evolved from separate species, with Africans more closely related to apes than Europeans. Opposing this view were monogenists like Buffon and Linnaeus, who still took for granted the biological essentialism of race but nevertheless subscribed to the biblical view that all humans descended from Adam and Eve. Unsurprisingly, then, Buffon's study departs from earlier claims that the orang-outang had command of a voice and the power of speech:

> The tongue, and all the organs of speech, for example, are the same as in man; and yet the orang-outang enjoys not the faculty of speaking; the brain has the same figure and proportions; and yet he possesses not the power of thinking. Can there be a more evident proof than is exhibited in the orang-outang, that matter alone, though perfectly organized, can produce neither language nor thought, unless it be animated by a superior principle?[123]

For Buffon, voice sets Man apart from the rest of nature. Regardless of anatomical similitude, then, observation for Buffon reveals that the orang-outang is devoid of word and thought, of *vox humama*, setting him outside the realm of Man and instead among the beasts. Proven by science

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[122] Burney, 1: 305.

[123] Buffon relates one anecdote of an "Orang-outang" who "seemed to want nothing of humanity but the faculty of speech." Georges Louis Leclerc Buffon, *Natural History* (Edinburgh, 1780), 8: 77–105; on the "great chain of being," see Francis Moran, "Between Primates and Primitives: Natural Man as the Missing Link in Rousseau's Second Discourse," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54 (1993): 37–58.

to lack the enchanting gift of Orpheus and his deeper ties to humanity and civilization, the orang-outang—and, by Burney's syllogism, the Black African—is positioned as a fitting stand-in for Silenus, wild man and non-human outsider.

Colonial Enchantments

"The advent of modernity," writes Saurabh Dube, "insinuates the disenchantment of the world … through powerful techniques of reason."[124] Fueled by the Enlightenment compulsion to catalogue and categorize space and/in time, the respective works of Burney and Beckford mediated contrasting spheres of song—written and oral, functional and decorative, tunes and noise—for white metropolitan readers. In so doing, they contributed to the reorganization of Man from a secular and political subject of the state, as he had been since the Renaissance, into a biological and economic subject of pure reason. The legacy of this transformation, the ultimate colonial metamorphosis, remains fundamental to the history and anthropology of music into the present day but can be detected in the earliest incarnations of modern musicology. As we have seen, Burney dismissed any belief in the medicinal properties of music performed by "primitive" Amerindian "savages" and benighted Apulian "folk" through an appeal to scientific properties of sound.[125] The magic of music rested for him in its aesthetic qualities, gradually perfected over millennia—anything else had to be disproven by mustering rational thought. Beckford, by contrast, took some pleasure in experiencing similar beliefs firsthand. He was amused, for example, by how Black Jamaicans responded to sounds heard in the dark of night:

> The planter, whom suspicion or curiosity may carry out to explore his pens [at night], cannot fail … to hear, from a distance, the shrill and sudden cry of some passing negro intrude upon the silence of the night, and endeavour, by noise and perseverance, to dispel

[124] Saurabh Dube, "Introduction: Enchantments of Modernity," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101 (2002): 729.
[125] Burney, *General History of Music*, 1: 185–86.

> from his thoughts the dæmon of darkness … which, without this superstitious ceremony, he would fancy that he beheld at every turn, and that he heard in every blast.[126]

The "dæmon" to which he refers is probably a duppy—the malevolent, undeparted spirit of a dead person that takes the form of its ghostly former self or, as it seems in this case, of a fearsome beast like the fire-breathing "rolling [roaring] calf."[127] What Beckford hears as "superstitious ceremony" is the triumph of the Black voice over the unfathomable and phantasmic dangers of the slave plantation at night. This "shrill and sudden cry" evokes the subaltern power that Fred Moten identifies in Aunt Hester's scream, the power to resist objectification and the deafening silence of the archive of colonial slavery.[128]

[126] Beckford, *Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica*, 2: 209–10.
[127] MacEdward Leach, "Jamaican Duppy Lore," *The Journal of American Folklore* 74 (1961): 207–15; see also Adom Philogene Heron, "Goodnight Colston. Mourning Slavery: Death Rites and Duppy Conquering in a Circum-Atlantic City," *Antipode* 54 (2022): 1251–76.
[128] Fred Moten, *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 13–14; see also Martha Feldman, "Fugitive Voice," *Representations* 154 (2021): 12.

Figure 3.4 "Habit of the Patagonians in 1764. Patagons.," 1772. Hand-colored engraving.
Source: The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Art & Architecture Collection, The New York Public Library. *https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e4-81d1-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.*

Beckford's (unintended) description of the Black voice defeating the duppy recalls the effect of the Apulian tarantella (what Burney called an "ordinary tune, very coarsely performed") in vanquishing unwanted spirits from bodies at the margins of society. Tilting the colonizing ear to the Black voice raised in horror, he inadvertently summons a subaltern, circumatlantic practice of vocality from the margins of a universalizing humanistic narrative.[129] Despite Enlightenment Britain's pretensions to secular rationality, the techniques of modern disenchantment did not always go as planned. The *Witchcraft Act of 1736*, for example, made it a crime to accuse, place on trial, or execute anyone as a witch. It did not, however, end popular belief in witchcraft throughout Britain. Though the last confirmed executions took place in 1682, prominent episodes and accusations of witchcraft erupted periodically through the end of the century.[130] In this light, the densely layered satire of *The Remarkable Trial of the Queen of Quavers* (1778) takes on a distinctly modern tone in addition to its more obvious nationalist sentiments. As Ian Woodfield has adduced, *The Remarkable Trial* was a final volley in the cold war between David Garrick and the managerial trio of Mary Ann Yates (the eponymous Queen), her husband Richard, and Frances Brooke. It was also a send-up of the craze for Italian *opera seria* in which Burney is tarred as "an insignificant travel-monger" peddling "fulsome elogies founded upon [his] bare *ipse dixit*."[131] Presented as a transcript from the Court of Assizes in the Moon, the pamphlet relates the trial of the Queen of Quavers and her associates for "Sorcery, Witchcraft, and Enchantment." The product of their diabolical mischief is called the "Quavering Itch," a

[129] "The term archival silence entails an irony that is not always appreciated: that is, the very events that regimes of power 'silenced' were, in fact, often noisy activities." Mary Caton Lingold, "Peculiar Animations: Listening to Afro-Atlantic Music in Caribbean Travel Narratives," *Early American Literature* 52 (2017): 623.
[130] Jonathan Barry, *Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England, 1640–1789* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[131] Ian Woodfield, *Opera and Drama in Eighteenth-Century London: The King's Theatre, Garrick and the Business of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 176.

venereal-sounding affliction which, the prosecution claims, dries up one's "ethereal spirit" to cause an irrational desire for deformity—specifically in the mellifluous singing of the "gelded" Italian singers at the King's Theater—over beauty.[132] In fact, the trial takes place in the Lunar county of "Gelding," one of the broader and repeated references to castrati in animalistic terms: they are variously compared to lions, crocodiles, apes, elephants, peacocks, and other such beasts "as the wilds of Africa never produced." Imps, too, were said to take assume the form of animals, in which guise they placed themselves into the service of witches; here the familiar spirit takes the form of a fly to enter its victim's ear and plant the "itch" in the pineal gland, the Cartesian seat of the soul. Spreading an aurally transmitted disease of foreign origin, the impish servants of the Queen of Quavers, and by extension Satan, are clearly Italian castrati.

As the existence of the "Quavering Itch" is not, itself, in question, defending counsel attempts to shift the blame from his client's supposed dark magic onto "those tricking Italian vagabonds [who] brought among us the poisonous spider of Calabria, called the Tarantula, and hit the whole nation."[133] Once again, tarantism is invoked as a primitive, southern practice of song within Europe's borders. But, buzzing flies and poisonous spiders aside, the most powerful comparison made to castrati throughout the satire is not to an animal at all, but to Man's human Others. One particularly virulent passage reads: "It is acknowledged on all hands, that a Castrato is a monster … for he is neither man nor woman, but something betwixt the human species and the brute creation, like a monkey, and may be properly termed an outlaw of nature."[134]

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[132] *The Remarkable Trial of the Queen of Quavers and Her Associates, for Sorcery, Witchcraft and Enchantment* (London, 1778), 6–7; on its original context in the 1770s, see Woodfield, *Opera and Drama in Eighteenth-Century London*, 166–81; and Agnew, *Enlightenment Orpheus*, 161–62; on the cultural work performed by the castrato in the narrative, see Feldman, *Castrato*, 181–83.
[133] *Remarkable Trial*, 41.
[134] *Remarkable Trial*, 9.

Positioning the Italian castrato as a creature between the Human and the ape recalls, of course, the same charge made against the Black African (and implied by Burney) as the subhuman "missing link." Similarly, a refence to Gasparo Savoi (a regular performer at the King's Theatre, whose singing supposedly caused Marie Antoinette to exclaim "QUELLE BETE!") as the "notorious Patagonian castrato" calls up the image of the mythical Patagonian giant.[135] First noted for their great size in an account by Ferdinand Magellan, the Tehuelche people of the southern tip of the Americas quickly gained a reputation as proof of the biblical race of giants. Further encounters with English vessels supported, if tempered, the rumors through the eighteenth century (see figure 3.4). Patagonians were thus included in Linnaeus's midcentury revision among the subvarieties of *Homo sapiens monstrosus,* where they were distinguished by their greatness (*magni*) and slowness (*segnes*). In *The Remarkable Trial*, castrati are explicitly painted as monstrous, bestial, and only incidentally human by likening their well-known bodily anomalies to the non-standard human forms implied by African and far southern Amerindian bodies. Far too inhuman to dwell among civilized Britons any longer, the subjects of the Kingdom of Quavers are sent to "A-merry-key" to perform for the Continental Congress and thereby put an end to the Revolution.

The systems of race-making that took hold after the sixteenth century represent the preeminent fictions of modernity.[136] As Wynter and others have shown, the resulting racial hierarches, so entrenched as to seem natural, are artificial elaborations of the generic dichotomy between Man and his human Others instituted through the colonial difference at the advent of

[135] *Remarkable Trial*, 8–9.
[136] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1252b; "The transformation from blood purity to skin color runs parallel to the transformation from the hegemony of religious discourses grounded in faith to the hegemony of secular discourses grounded in reason." Walter D. Mignolo, "The Enduring Enchantment: (Or the Epistemic Privilege of Modernity and Where to Go from Here)," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101 (2002): 934.

secular humanism. Adds Dube, "processes of modernity also create their own enchantments," from "novel mythologies of nation and empire" to "hierarchical oppositions between myth and history, ritual and rationality, East and West, and tradition and modernity."[137] Burney's *General History* and Beckford's *Descriptive Account* offer converging perspectives on this story of the Human, a modern enchantment sustained through the coloniality of song. Their joint acoustemological project draws a sonic boundary between the melancholy complaint of the enslaved African and the operatic spectacle of the Italian castrato. But with every attempt to distance the world of slavery from the modern culture of taste, the two bled more into one another. In 1793, Beckford's fellow planter Bryan Edwards quipped that "in vocal harmony [Africans] dispaly neither variety nor compass" yet he took note of those "individuals who remember the improvisatore, or extempore bards, of Italy."[138] As Melina Esse has recently written of Italian female improvisers around the turn of the nineteenth century, "to the rest of Europe, the *improvvisatrice* and Italy were simply synonymous."[139] Conjuring the legendary *improvisatori* as the near-analog to the singing slave suggests, then, a shared romantic draw as evanescent remnants of an imagined past. And reverberating in the background always is the enchanting voice of Orpheus, once celebrated for endowing the gifts of learning and civilization and now interpolated into the modern/colonial order, revealing and jealously guarding what it means to be Human.

[137] Dube, "Enchantments of Modernity": 729.
[138] Bryan Edwards, "From *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*" (1793), in *After Africa: Extracts from British Travel Accounts and Journals of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries Concerning the Slaves, Their Manners, and Customs in the British West Indies*, ed. Roger D. Abrahams and John F. Szwed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 291–92.
[139] Melina Esse, *Singing Sappho: Improvisation and Authority in Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 17.

CHAPTER 4. MIGRATING VOICES & GLOBAL PEDAGOGIES

> But recitative may be traced many centuries before its having been heard of in Greece, for it was known, and in general use, in the earliest patriarchal times of the Jews.
>
> Isaac Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis* (1836)

Musurgia Moderna

In the opening pages of *Musurgia Vocalis* (1836), a sprawling treatise on the history of music and practice of song, the composer and pedagogue Isaac Nathan offers a preemptive defense of his grandiose title: "I hope that I have selected the most appropriate: for although some Lexicographers have chosen to confine Musurgia to the vocal department, such is not the full force of the term, as its compound nature amply testifies; it rather means the general practice of music."[1] To underscore his point, he turns to no less an authoritative source than Plato's *Republic*, wherein the category of "*μουσουργία*" (Musurgia) is situated among the "higher Sciences" (e.g., geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy) that make up the medieval quadrivium. So as to avoid confusion, Nathan "rendered [*Musurgia*] definite by the adjunct '*Vocalis*.'" In a corresponding footnote, he offers a precedent for this interpretation (and for affixing a Latin modifier to the Greek noun) in Athanasius Kircher's compendium of world-musical knowledge, *Musurgia Universalis* (1650). Invoking the words of Socrates and a Jesuit polymath, Nathan strategically positions his study of voice as the culmination of classical and Renaissance learning, and for good reason. The son of a *chazan*, or cantor, his early vocal training was in the cantorial tradition, and he remained an observant member of the Anglo-Jewish community

[1] Isaac Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis, an Essay on the History and Theory of Music, and on the Qualities, Capabilities, and Management of the Human Voice* (London, 1836), i–ii.

decades before its full emancipation in Great Britain. As Ruth HaCohen has shown, the unaccompanied voices of the synagogue struck Christian ears as musically, hence cosmologically, unharmonious—not only foreign but non-human noise.[2] Nathan's Jewish ancestry located him conceptually between contemporary Europe and a timeless Orient, leaving him with only a tenuous claim to the aesthetic–intellectual heritage of the modern West. While Nathan faced no legal barrier to collaborating with Lord Byron or tutoring Charlotte, Princess of Wales, such esteemed names only lent him genteel—not Gentile—*bona fides* in Regency Britain.

Within the artistic and literary tradition of Christian Europe, Jews have long been associated with the Orient, especially in negative portrayals of them as culturally backwards or heretical wanderers.[3] Such stereotypes are exemplified in the Judeophobic legend of the "Wandering Jew," dating to the thirteenth century, which tells of a Judean who taunted Christ on his way to the Crucifixion. For this transgression, he was cursed with immortality (and, in effect, exile from human society) until the Second Coming. As a liminal figure—static yet constantly moving, of the past but tied to the future, anchored to Israel though permanently homeless—the "Wandering Jew" embodied the Christian conception of the Jewish people occupying a conceptual space between East and West.[4] The racist trope also reflected how Christians heard the Jewish voice as it traveled across Europe within the interconnected narratives of blood libel

[2] Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel against the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 2–3.
[3] Ivan Davidson Kalmar, "Jesus Did Not Wear a Turban: Orientalism, the Jews, and Christian Art," in *Orientalism and the Jews*, ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 3–31; and Ulrike Brunotte, "The Beautiful Jewess as Borderline Figure in Europe's Internal Colonialism: Some Remarks on the Intertwining of Orientalism and Antisemitism," *ReOrient* 4 (2019): 166–80.
[4] A seventeenth-century broadside ballad called "The Wandering Jew's Chronicle" positioned its narrator as privy to, but excluded from, English history. First published in 1634, the ballad related the monarchs of England and Great Britain from William the Conqueror to Charles I; after the Restoration of Charles II, the ballad was continually updated and reprinted through the reign of William IV in the 1820s. On the Christian Denial of Jewish Coevalness through the trope of the Wandering Jew, see Lisa Lampert Weissig, "The Time of the Wandering Jew in the *Chronica Majora* and the *De Brailes Hours*," *Philological Quarterly* 96 (2017): 171–203.

and noise accusations.[5] In contrast to the clear and smooth, tonal directionality of Latin polyphony, Hebrew chanting seemed to meander aimlessly and unbeautifully across the staff. Moreover, Sylvia Wynter traces the foundations of the European colonial project to two epoch-defining departures from Spain, 1492: the ill-begotten voyage of Cristóbal Colón for the East Indies and the expulsion of practicing Jews from the crown's territories in Iberia and Italy. In the wake of the *Reconquista*, the notions of *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity) that governed Jewish and Muslim converts to Christianity in Europe were easily transposed into the genealogical logic of the *sistema de castas* (caste system) in New Spain. For Wynter, the pivot between medieval ethnoreligious persecution and modern racial classification is the unchanging position of the Jew through the transformation of the "Christian" (a religious subject of the Church) into European "Man" (a political subject of the state) as the dominant category of life in the West.[6]

By the time of the *Decreto de la Alhambra*, however, two centuries had passed since Edward I expelled the Jews from England in 1290. The Edict of Expulsion was hardly the first example of forced Jewish exodus in Europe, but it was unique in that it covered the entire country, as opposed to a specific city or region. As the culmination of Edward's anti-Jewish policies, then, it formed a significant ideological complement to his proto-nationalist campaigns of colonial expansion into Wales and Scotland.[7] Only in the middle of the seventeenth century, under the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, were Jews formally permitted to resettle and worship in England. Across the channel, many Jewish émigrés sought to integrate into English society,

[5] On the noise accusation as an element of the blood libel, see HaCohen, *Music Libel*, 44–52.
[6] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *The New Centennial Review* 3 (2003): 307–8; see also Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London: Verso, 1997), 33–93; and María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).
[7] Edward I, called Longshanks, completed the conquest of Wales in 1283 and in 1291 he formally claimed feudal suzerainty over Scotland, which he would later occupy, eventually leading to the War of Scottish Independence.

though they continued to suffer legal disabilities and general hostility from the dominant Christian population. Unable to vote, sit in Parliament, or take degrees at Oxford or Cambridge without denouncing their faith, English Jews were made to dwell at the symbolic, and often physical, borders of society. "Border dwelling," writes Walter Mignolo, is "an un-avoidable condition" resulting from "the logic of coloniality projected by the … rhetoric of modernity." The ideological incursion of the Christian West upon Jewish life, accomplished through its self-perpetuating narratives of superiority, left Jews of all classes and origins at the conceptual borders of modernity. For Mignolo, dwelling in the border presents three options: "you [can] surrender and want to become a Westerner; you … do not call into question Western intrusion but you oppose and resist it; or you [can] become a … border thinker [with a] border praxis of living, doing, and thinking."[8] For those who find themselves under epistemic occupation, thinking from the border means tapping into modes of language and knowledge that were rejected from the standards of rationality. But border thinking is no antimodern fundamentalism; rather, as Ramón Grosfoguel explains, it seeks to transcend the Eurocentric nature of modernity without rejecting it outright.[9] The possibility of border action thus opens up an enriched spectrum of subaltern agency under what I termed in the previous chapter the coloniality of song.

Nathan was born in Canterbury as a nominal British subject, unlike his émigré father, who could not be naturalized as a Briton while professing Judaism. At thirteen, he was sent to a Hebrew academy in Cambridge, after which he began a music apprenticeship with the Anglo-

[8] Walter D. Mignolo, "The South of the North and the West of the East," in *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 352.
[9] Critical border thinking, in other words, rejects the forced imposition of Western epistemologies but not necessarily utopian ideals originating from (or appropriated by) the West, including the liberatory possibilities of participatory government, social equality, and equitable distribution of resources, see Ramón Grosfoguel, "World-Systems Analysis in the Context of Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 29 (2006): 178.

Italian teacher Domenico Corri in London. In marketing himself as a composer and pedagogue, Nathan cunningly drew on the Romantic appeal of the Holy Land while brandishing royal endorsements that could lend him legitimacy as an Englishman. Historian Todd Endelman framed the swift acculturation of many English Jews during this period as a progressive (i.e., secular) transition from tradition to modernity owing to the uniquely liberal atmosphere of Great Britain.[10] But from a decolonial perspective, the impetus to divide "traditional" and "modern" forms of Judaism stems from the same colonial matrix that first forced European Jews into the conceptual borderlands between East and West. That Nathan's life and career took place at the borders of modernity was inevitable; his embrace of border praxis was a choice. His pursuit of a secular musical career further complicated what were otherwise binary categories. Though he never converted or abandoned the cultural ethos of Judaism, transitioning from *meshorrer* (cantor's assistant) training to the Italian *bel canto* school meant acquiring a second vocal lineage—a patrimony not of the East but of the South.

This chapter discovers that multilocal legacy amid Britain's expanding intra-European dominance and self-proclaimed liberalism during the Regency era. Generally, scholars have discussed Nathan's music and writing exclusively through his Jewish identity and practice, at the expense of alternative contexts in which he was taught (or would later teach his own pupils) to sing. Keeping in mind his wider border positionality, the chapter imagines a praxis of *border singing* to offer a more nuanced understanding of Nathan's circumstances as an Anglo-Jewish musician with Italian training in post-Enlightenment England. It begins with the legacy of the Neapolitan school of singing as it was received by Corri and passed on to Nathan, framing their

[10] Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 292.

vocal lineage through the global–historical narratives presented in Corri's ballad opera *The Travellers* (1806) and Nathan's *Musurgia Vocalis*. It contextualizes theoretical and pedagogical approaches to song in relation to the cosmopolitan intellectual movements of the Scottish Enlightenment and the English *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) as British society was growing more nationalistic and the Empire was further expanding into the East.

Great Britain had complemented its ascent as the dominant imperial power in Europe by welcoming Jews under the guise of religious tolerance, but cast their way of life as the remnant of an Oriental past, incompatible with the secular and therefore chronologically advanced West. In response to the marginalization of Jewish vocal practices as anti-modern and anti-Western through the coloniality of song, Nathan assumed a praxis of border singing. Shifting from the concept of border thought to border song recalls Adriana Cavarero's pithy summation of Western metaphysics: "woman sings, man thinks."[11] Feminist thinkers from Simone de Beauvoir to Donna Haraway and bell hooks have all emphasized the gendered implications of mind-body dualism, a condition in which the category of Woman is bound interminably to her earthly form, while Man is permitted to travel the supranatural plane of pure reason.[12] Cavarero's intervention is to locate this foundational disparity within the uniquely human realm of music and language, with linguistic meaning as the province of Man and Woman confined to the medium of pure voice. Emphasizing the corporeality of voice, her formulation explains why Plato and St. Augustine characterized song as a dangerously feminine practice based more in the ephemeral

[11] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 6.
[12] In biblical terms—later adapted into the rhetoric of secular humanism—Man is made in God's own image as the default of humanity; the over-embodied condition of Woman is the secular consequence of the Curse of Eve.

excesses of the body than the transcendence of the unbound soul.[13] The dichotomy of thought versus song also maps onto what Mignolo terms the "intramural imperial difference" of late-eighteenth-century Europe, amounting, in part, to a singing South and a thinking North. And just as Woman is an imaginary category with real-world implications, the exoticized South represents, along with the Orientalized East, imagined territories caught in the *Realpolitik* of a global–colonial order. Navigating those borderlands required that Nathan triangulate, aesthetically and physiologically, the voice and the ear between England, Italy, and the Jewish diaspora. His border singing disrupted the same colonial categories of space and time that first shaped his earliest praxis of voice.

Vocal Lineages of the South

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the political dynasties of the Iberian and Italian peninsulas had faded from their former glory as Renaissance hubs of imperial control and economic influence. In their stead, Great Britain and France assumed a place at the head of a new global–colonial order, in which distinct political entities—including Italy (itself a smattering of independent, if occupied, states), Spain, and Portugal—congealed into a nebulous South that stood both geographically and conceptually apart from the more "rational" nations of the North. Like its imaginary twin the Orient, the South took on a romantic, if decadent, cast in the (Northern and Western) European imaginary as an exotic plane of warm weather and slow time. To a large extent these views converged on a generalized idea of Italy, perceived to be less commercial and less civilized than its colder neighbors, though generally more conducive to the

[13] Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 127–28; see also Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 43–51.

arts, especially music.[14] To Northerners on their Grand Tour, Italy was the land of the *improvvisatori*, the birthplace of *opera seria*, and a laboratory for florid singing. Voices were among its most prized and lucrative exports—often but not exclusively those of castrated males, with an unmistakable sound that was at once broadly cosmopolitan and acutely local. Even Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who scorned the practice of castration as a barbaric affront to nature, evinced a strong preference for the Italian sound in opera, which recalled for him the unspoiled rhythms and accents he imagined for humanity's earliest vocalizing.[15] For Charles Burney, as shown in the previous chapter, Italian singing embodied Europe's cultural heritage and represented its modern triumphs. In wealthy cities like London and Edinburgh, Italian singers were employed as performers and teachers, bringing the sound of the South not only to theaters and concert halls but to Britain's own native voices who populated their schoolrooms.[16]

Of course, the amalgam of qualities, procedures, techniques, and abilities that we term "voice," adding up to vocal affordances and sounds, cannot be reduced to climate any more than to nationality or language. Some people certainly demonstrate an early predisposition toward

[14] Nelson Moe, "L'Europe finit à Naples: Representations of the Mezzogiorno in the Century Before Unification," chap. 2 in *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 37–81; and Serena Guarracino, "Voices from the South: Music, Castration, and the Displacement of the Eye," in *Anglo-Southern Relations: From Deculturation to Transculturation*, ed. Luigi Cazzato (Nardò, It.: Salento Books, 2011), 40–51, and Jessica Gabriel Peritz, *The Lyric Myth of Voice: Civilizing Song in Enlightenment Italy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022), 100–103.

[15] Rousseau argued that the "primitive tongues" of the south "are bound to be sonorous, accented, eloquent," closer to the originary speech-song of early humans than those of the north, which are "dull, harsh, articulated, shrill, monotonous." Certain of the modern languages, he explains, have retained some of these qualities, even as they have been abstracted from the romanticized "state of nature." He traces this back to climate and conveniently collapses the South with the East: "The passions of the warm countries are voluptuous, relating to love and tenderness. Nature does so much for people there that they have almost nothing to do. Provided that an Asiatic has women and repose, he is contented." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (1781), in *On the Origin of Language*, trans. John H. Moran (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 48–51; see also Gary Tomlinson, *The Singing of the New World: Indigenous Voice in the Era of European Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11–15.

[16] Susan Rutherford, "Bel Canto and Cultural Exchange: Italian Vocal Techniques in London 1790–1825," *Analecta musicologica* 50 (2013): 129–42.

beautiful singing, though voices do not emerge fully formed any more than muscles do. As Bonnie Gordon reminds us with regard to the castrato, "it's not about the cut"—by which she means the grotesqueries and lasting metaphysical or psychoanalytic wounds of castration—but the material construction of voice "by surgeons, teachers, and the singers themselves."[17] What set Italian voices apart from their English, French, and German counterparts was their training, with the most powerful, pliant, and poignant examples crafted through labor-intensive regimens over the course of many years. Giambattista Mancini wrote that "the success of a singer depends mostly upon the science of his teacher and his method of directing him," listing among "the most celebrated schools which have flourished for so long a time in Italy" that of Naples.[18] Often the southernmost stop on the Grand Tour and a synecdoche for the South itself, Naples was well-known for its robust system of conservatories dating to the sixteenth century. The so-called Neapolitan school of singing represented the zenith of Italian vocal technique from the early part of the eighteenth century, and Nicola Porpora (1686–1768) was its undisputed master teacher. According to Burney, Porpora "was long esteemed the best singing-master in Europe" and "so excellent an instructor in the art of singing, that not only Farinelli, Mingotti, and several other theatrical performers, but all his scholars, whether princesses or professors, were proud to own his for their master."[19] During his short tenure at the Conservatorio di Sant'Onofrio (1715–22), he produced some of the greatest singers of the century, including the castrati Farinelli (Carlo Broschi), Caffarelli (Gaetano Majorano), and Porporino (Antonio Uberti). Through his students,

[17] Bonnie Gordon, "It's Not about the Cut: The Castrato's Instrumentalized Song," *New Literary History* 46 (2015): 647–48.
[18] Giambattista Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, trans. and ed. Edward Foreman (Champaign, Illinois: Pro Musica Press, 1967), 27.
[19] Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* (London, 1776–89), 4: 368, 546.

he propelled a culture of "bravura singing and competition" that would dominate for half a century, until prevailing fashion shifted toward a more naturalistic style of delivery exemplified by so-called "castrati of sensibility" like Gasparo Pacchierotti and Girolamo Crescentini.[20]

Having spent a good portion of his life chasing ever more prestigious commissions and positions from Vienna to London, but mainly teaching at the Ospedali Grandi in Venice, Porpora retired to Naples. There he lived in relative poverty and continued to teach, briefly at the Conservatorio though mostly privately. Much to the chagrin of subsequent generations, he left no written curriculum of study, yet his training regimens were essential to the mythology of the castrato and Italian singing in general—what would later become known as the art of *bel canto*.[21] By the time of Burney's visit to the Conservatorio in 1770, the master's heyday had long since passed, though the historian's chaotic account of conservatory life demonstrates that the training of singers remained of paramount importance: "The ears of both master and scholar are respected when lessons in singing are given, for that work is done in a quiet room; but in the common practising [sic] rooms the noise and dissonance are beyond all conception."[22] What little we do know of Porpora's teaching is gleaned from surviving *solfeggi* and the recollections of his students. According to Farinelli, his first year of study was spent on daily exercises that would cement core technique for a smooth tone and clean articulation. (In Caffarelli's dubious recollections, this initial period of foundation-building solfege was lengthened to the full five

[20] Peritz, *Lyric Myth of Voice*, 53–56; and Martha Feldman, *The Castrato: Reflections on Natures and Kinds* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 133–34, 205–208.
[21] Two centuries later, George Bernard Shaw would quip that "every private teacher with whom I am or have ever been acquainted, has rediscovered Porpora's method, can explain it at considerable length, teaches exclusively on it, and is the only person in the world who can do so, all others being notorious quacks and voice destroyers." Quoted in James A. Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), xx.
[22] On his visit, Burney felt that the Conservatorio di Sant'Onofrio had fallen from its former heights, but "since [the Neapolitan conservatories] are subject to fluctuations, after being languid for some time, like their neighbor Mount Vesuvius, they will, perhaps, blaze out again with new vigour." Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy* (London, 1771), 320, 355–56.

years and confined to a single page of exercises.)[23] Control over the breath via the diaphragm and intercostal muscles was paramount, necessary to mastery of the all-important *messa di voce* and seamless navigation of the *passaggio*. Four more years were spent on "theory, sight reading, interpretation, expressive mime, poetic and dramatic literature, and physical exercises performed with lead weights designed to strengthen the chest, and gain control over respiration."[24]

In 1763, a promising young Roman arrived at Porpora's home to begin a five-year course of study that ended upon his master's death. Upon his return to Rome in 1768, Domenico Corri found "the name of my Preceptor Porpora was of great weight and service in my introduction to the first society."[25] Corri was not a castrato, and as a singer was certainly no Farinelli, but as one of Porpora's last students, he was the living heir to a tradition of song made famous by now-lost voices. He made enough of an impression on Burney to be mentioned in his *Italian Tour* (1771) as "an ingenious composer [who] sings in very good taste," along with his student, a Miss Bacchelli, whose singing Burney praised for its "brilliancy and variety of style."[26] Not long after, Corri and Bacchelli were married, their joint artistic pedigree made them a valuable musical commodity on the international stage. They were soon contracted by the Edinburgh Musical Society, a fashionable institution that counted among its members some of the leading intellectuals of the Scottish Enlightenment, including Adam Smith, and Henry Home, Lord

[23] Feldman, *Castrato*, 59.
[24] Joseph Talia, *The History of Vocal Pedagogy: History and Science* (Samford Valley, Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 162.
[25] Corri wrote sparingly of this period: "At Naples, I lived and boarded with Porpora for five years, attended with great expense to my parents, and at his death returned again to Rome." Domenico Corri, *The Singer's Preceptor; or Corri's Treatise on Vocal Music* (London, 1810). Burney later relayed: "Signor Corri, who had studied under him five years, was his disciple at the time of his decease; and he says, that though his friends paid him a considerable sum, not only for his instruction, but board, Porpora kept so miserable a table, that he was frequently driven out of the house, by hunger, to seek a dinner elsewhere." See Burney, *General History of Music*, 4: 546.
[26] Burney, *Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 267.

Kames.[27] During their time in Edinburgh, the pair also contributed to the growing public enthusiasm for folk songs of the British Isles. In 1779, Mrs. Corri sang a memorable program of sentimental Scottish ballads alongside the much-in-demand Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci; around the same time, her husband began publishing collections of "Scotch Songs" amended with the "proper Graces and Ornaments."[28] Corri was no doubt looking to improve his family's economic situation by capitalizing on a recent trend. At the same time, his pedantic placement of ornaments suggest that he may have been staking out a role for himself in Great Britain as an expert arbiter of vocal performing practice (see example 4.1).[29]

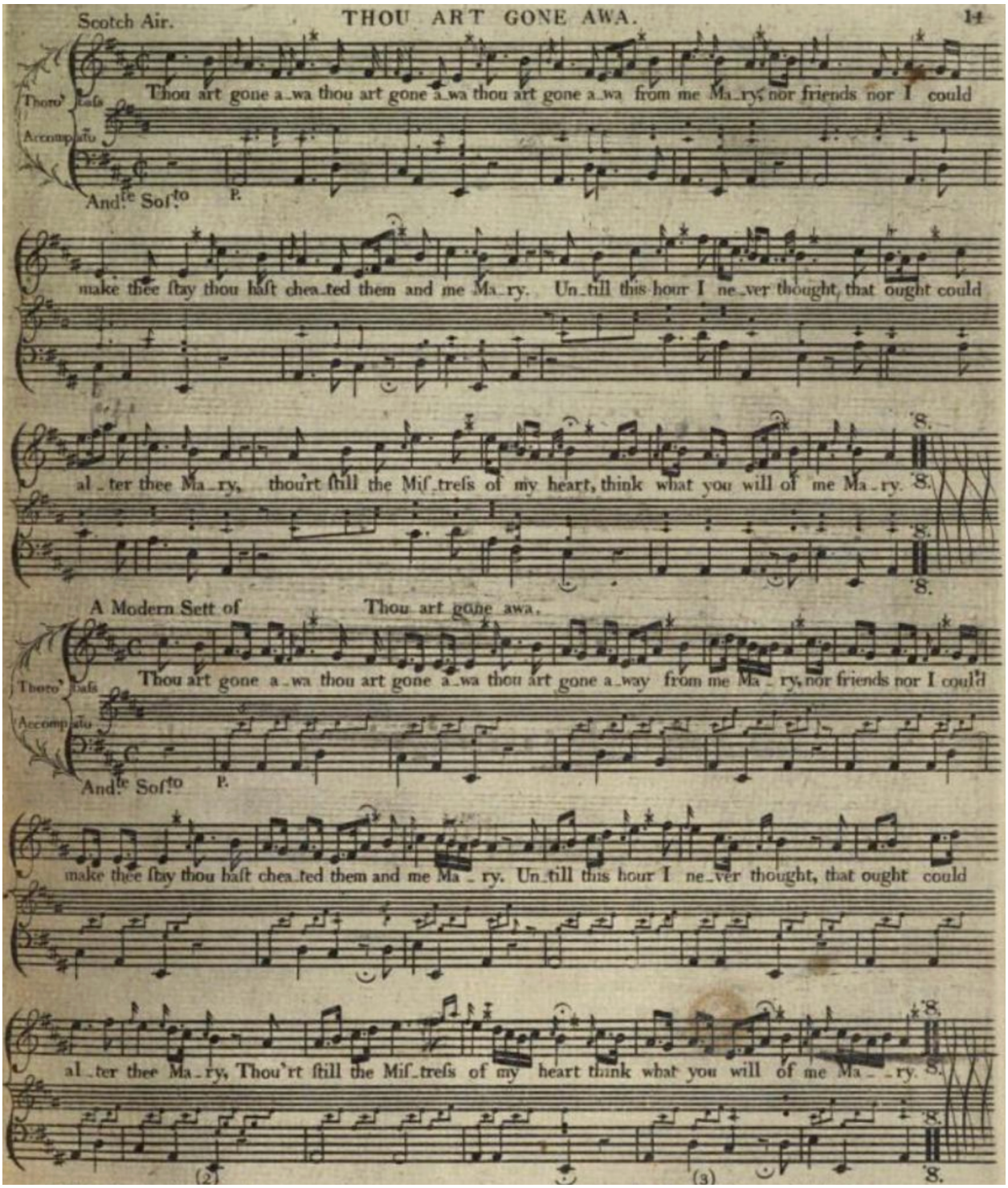
During their first decade in Edinburgh, Corri was also attempting to break into the London market as a composer of serious opera. His setting of *Alessandro nell'Indie* (1774) premiered to less-than-stellar reviews at the King's Theatre, although Venanzio Rauzzini, Corri's childhood friend for whom he had written the main role, received a great deal of praise for his singing.[30] Taking on the Metastasian libretto had been a risky choice for Corri, both artistically and politically. For one thing, it had been set to great success by both Handel, under the title *Poro, re dell'Indie* (1731), and by Porpora, simply as *Poro* (1731), though neither precedent likely meant much to anyone but Corri. The real danger of the opera was metatextual, and offers

[27] For a full list of the Society's members, see appendix C in Jennifer Macleod, "The Edinburgh Musical Society: Its Membership and Repertoire, 1728–1797" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh), 239–54.
[28] Frank Kidson, *British Music Publishers, Printers and Engravers: London, Provincial, Scottish, and Irish, from Queen Elizabeth's Reign to George the Fourth's* (London: W.E. Hill & Sons, 1900), 182–83; and Andrew Alexander Greenwood, "Mediating Sociability: Musical Ideas of Sympathy, Sensibility, and Improvement in the Scottish Enlightenment" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2012), 145; of their time in Edinburgh, see Sonia Tinagli Baxter, "Italian Music and Musicians in Edinburgh c. 1720–1800: A Historical and Critical Study" (Ph.D. diss., University of Glasgow, 1999), 140–78.
[29] In the coming decades, "simplicity and a restrained approach to improvised ornamentation became the most widely recognized markers of a style that sought to be differentiated from the overtly exuberant and passionate Italians." Claudio Vellutini, "Interpreting the Italian Voice in London (and Elsewhere)," in *London Voices 1820–1840: Vocal Performers, Practices, Histories*, ed. Roger Parker and Susan Rutherford (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 6.
[30] Paul F. Rice, *Venanzio Rauzzini in Britain: Castrato, Composer, and Cultural Leader* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 31.

some insight into his precarious situation as an Italian immigrant working across the unified, but culturally distinct, countries of Scotland and England. Originally published in Rome, 1731, the libretto for Handel's *Alessandro* had been dedicated to "James III, King of Great Britain," the Stuart heir and Catholic Pretender who had been deposed forty years earlier as the infant Prince of Wales. It was for this reason, conjectures Graham Cummings, that Handel changed the name (and focus) of the opera from Alessandro to Poro, cleansing any lingering Jacobite sympathies for the King's Theatre. With barely a decade having passed since the Jacobite Rising of 1719, even a German-speaking Protestant felt the need to preclude any possible offense taken by the ruling Hanoverian dynasty.[31] At the time Corri was setting the libretto, three decades after the third and final Jacobite Rising of 1745, he may have felt that the English were no longer concerned by the threat of a Stuart restoration. But he more than likely had a different take on the events at Culloden than the average Briton. Only a few years earlier, he had been living in the household of James's heir, the Bonnie Prince Charlie, who had led the failed rebellion. Whether or not this was public knowledge at the time (he would later print it in *The Singer's Preceptor*), perhaps some in the audience perceived that, as a Catholic living in Scotland, Corri's position was implicitly aligned with the exiled dynasty.

[31] Graham Cummings, "From Metastasio's Alessandro to Handel's Poro," in *Music in the London Theatre from Purcell to Handel*, ed. Colin Timms and Bruce Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 116–18.

Example 4.1 "Thou Art Gone Awa," "Scotch Air" with appropriate ornamentation followed by Corri's clarified "Modern Sett" of the song. Source: *A New & Complete Collection of the Most Favourite Scots Songs, including a few English & Irish* (Edinburgh: Corri & Sutherland, 1788).



Whether or not *Alessandro nell'Indie* was meant as a secret homage to the Young Pretender, it was Corri's final attempt at *opera seria* and the last piece he wrote for the London stage until his permanent relocation there in 1788. That move, according to his autobiography, was spurred by the effect of the Scottish climate on his wife's health and the lack of professional opportunities for his daughter. Unsatisfied with Edinburgh, the Italian expatriate was prompted to once more "look towards the south."[32] In London, Corri would establish himself among the most respected teachers in England and eventually publish *The Singer's Preceptor* (1810), the only treatise to be written by a direct student of Porpora. Whereas his old friend Rauzzini, teaching in Bath, frequently sent students abroad to complete their education, Corri's published method had been "calculated to teach the Art of Singing" to anyone "in the absence of a master."[33] It thus promised the vocal legacy of the Italian South—condensed, clarified, and commodified—to a much wider and more popular Anglophone audience. While the exotic South was pushed ever farther from the English fold, as Claudio Vellutini explains, "vocal pedagogy associated with Italian virtuosi was not considered at odds with the English tradition but very much integral to it—the result of a long process of assimilation that stretched back to the seventeenth century."[34]

Artless Strains & Harmonic Spells

Listed the among subscribers to *The Singer's Preceptor* was a Mr. J. [Isaac] Nathan of Mead Row, Corri's pupil and studio assistant. As the son of a *chazan*, Nathan found himself at

[32] Corri, *Singer's Preceptor*.
[33] Corri, *Singer's Preceptor*; on Corri's methods, see Rutherford, "Bel Canto and Cultural Exchange," 136; and on the supposed failings of the treatise, see Talia, *End of the Porpora Era*, 166–70; and on Rauzzini, see Mollie Sands, "Rauzzini at Bath," *The Musical Times* 94 (1953): 108–11.
[34] Vellutini, "Interpreting the Italian Voice," 6.

the borders of musical modernity and, with Judaism often understood through the Orientalist lens of the early nineteenth century, of East and West.[35] Such vocal trajectories are dramatized in Corri's ballad opera, *The Travellers, or Music's Fascination* (1806), which traces "the progress of music" from East to West, and from South to North. Corri's transnational work follows the global–historical scheme of musical development posited in Burney's *General History of Music* (1776–89).[36] The libretto, written by Andrew Cherry, follows young Prince *Zaphimiri* and his companions on an inverted Grand Tour from China to England, a journey taken at the behest of his father, the emperor, "to enlarge his mind, and glean from other states [some] knowledge of their laws and customs." The emperor's openness to reform, however, is positioned in direct contrast to the lingering autocratic sentiments of his Chief Mandarin, who avows: "Thy word is law—thy approbation the great reward of all our toils."[37] The paternal charge to travel thus serves a dual purpose, simultaneously highlighting the backwardness of the "Orient" and positing that its leaders would gladly accept British liberal reforms. Joining the prince is his devoted friend Koyan, who brings along his twin sister, Celinda, the prince's main love interest. Before they leave, they learn that their long-lost father, hitherto a source of shame in their lives, was an Englishman of noble birth. Recalling a common operatic trope pioneered in Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* (1760), the revelation of aristocratic lineage serves to underscore their inner nobility. Here, the situation is pushed to its biological conclusion by retrofitting the twins with

[35] Nathan is given pride of place in the subscriber's list. His is the first name listed under the N heading, before Italian tenor Giuseppe Naldi and Scottish naval officer Charles Napier, both of whom come first alphabetically.
[36] Thomas Irvine writes that, "for Burney, Chinese music's reliance on melody challenged a developmental model of music history in which monody gives way over time to polyphony" in Thomas Irvine, *Listening to China, Sound and the Sino-Western Encounter, 1770–1839* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 4.
[37] Andrew Cherry, *The Travellers, or, Music's Fascination* (London, 1806), 20; the name Zaphimiri is taken from Arthur Murphy's popular play, *The Orphan of China* (1759), see Krystyn R. Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s–1920s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 22.

European ancestry, awakening the audience's racial empathy, as well. In line with Krystyn R. Moon's assessment that the opera "located China on a spectrum with Great Britain rather than presenting it as utterly foreign," Koyan and Celinda embody the cultural scope of the story.[38]

Attending the companions as translator is the character of O'Gallagher, described by Peter J. Kitson as "the trusty Irish servant [who is] used to voice strong British sentiments and yet act as the butt of comedy."[39] To be sure, the stock Irishman's sophomoric witticisms, frequently in the form of freewheeling paraphrases, serve as comic relief throughout the opera. At the same time, O'Gallagher is written as more than a "national stereotype" or a "profoundly loyal" mouthpiece for the recent political entity of the United Kingdom.[40] He was, after all, the creation of an Irish-born playwright and an Italian composer (with seeming Jacobite sympathies), brought to life by a popular Irish comedian and singer, Jack Johnstone, who even provided the words and melody for one of the character's songs.[41] There is something subversive, for example, in his referring to Ireland as "England's eldest daughter," which may suggest anti-colonial contempt as easily as profound loyalty. A harsher critique comes when O'Gallagher describes his situation in China as "cousin-german" to that of a slave:

> But the devils here say it's all right—and I can't bait it out of their thick skulls.—They say I ought to work hard, because I am a stranger;—that I ought not to have much eatables; for fear it should make me lazy;—and that a good bed would spoil my rest, because they do not know whether I have been brought up to sleep upon feathers! As for strapado, and all other sort of pleasant discipline, those they bestow upon me by way of compliment, because, they say, my back is broad enough to bear *that*, or anything else.[42]

[38] Moon, *Yellowface*, 22–23.
[39] Peter J. Kitson, *Forging Romantic China: Sino-British Cultural Exchange, 1760–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 232.
[40] Incidentally, *The Travellers* premiered at Drury Lane on 22 January, 1806, five years to the day from the first meeting of the newly formed Parliament of the United Kingdom.
[41] Cherry, *The Travellers*, 55.
[42] Cherry, *The Travellers*, 26.

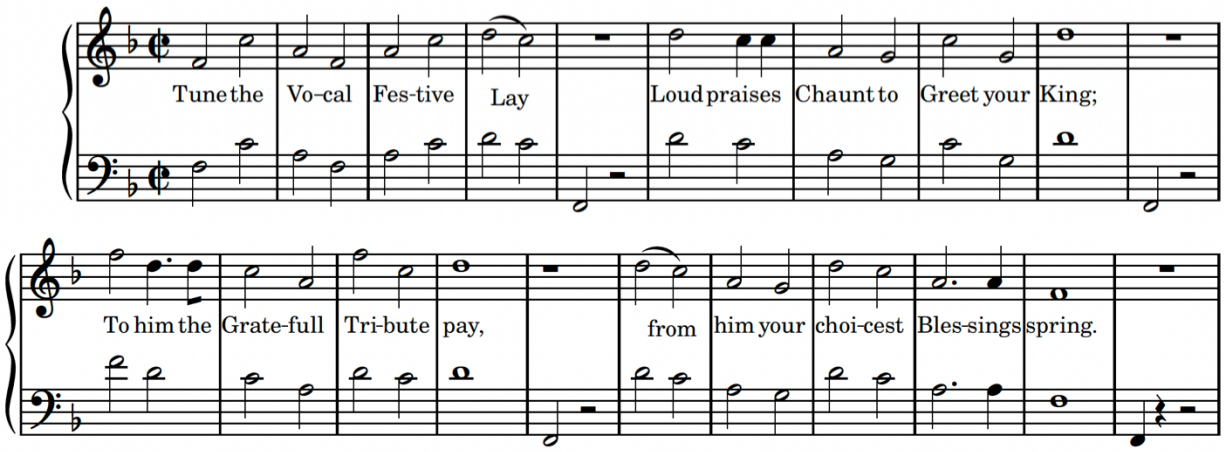
If Koyan's sympathetic response ("You endure the sufferings of a slave, let your denomination be what it may") does not directly acknowledge the largescale oppression of the Irish at home, it at least recognizes the conditions under which O'Gallagher suffers as a foreigner at the margins of society. The exchange also serves to clarify opera's firm stance against the slave trade, which Parliament would abolish the year after its premier.

Although they represent varying degrees of foreignness, the titular travelers are portrayed sympathetically through sentimental and amorous subplots. At the start of the opera, the twins are shown to be ardent admirers of their prince, suggesting a degree of homoerotic tension to his later interactions—with Koyan, who has sworn off the love of women and fusses over the details of the trip, and with Celinda, who travels *en travesti* as a page boy (unbeknownst to all but her brother and mother) to the oblivious Zaphimiri. Their first stop is Turkey, where the prince denounces the slavery of the Sultan's harem. Having nevertheless entered and flirted with an enslaved Christian woman (to the private dismay of Celinda), he is imprisoned by the Grand Vizier for profaning the sacred space. Shortly freed by the bewitching voice of his "page," Zaphimiri declares that they shall "learn to scorn, not profit, by the example of [Turkish] law."[43] The companions escape to the Kingdom of Naples, which they find to be a land of unparalleled musical beauty, but are quickly caught up in the sexual intrigues of hot-tempered aristocrats. Still, having escaped the debauched Orient for Christendom, matters begin to resolve themselves as a less queer love triangle emerges. Apropos of their Neapolitan setting, the travelers find themselves living out an opera buffa plot in miniature. Koyan is immediately taken with a flirtatious marchioness who, in turn, chases after Zaphimiri as Celinda watches, dejected. The prince is nearly assassinated by a jealous duke but again saved by Celinda's enchanting singing.

[43] Cherry, *The Travellers*, 39.

Believing that she has failed to save him, she shrieks and faints but is caught by Zaphimiri, who finally recognizes the voice as that of his beloved. The heteropatriarchal order thus restored, he wryly declares: "Look now, sweet Boy—and see who holds thee in his arms." Their union—he an avowed anglophile, she half-English herself—promises to introduce the customs, beliefs, and government of modern Britain to ancient China. In the last act, they all board a British war ship bound for Portsmouth and celebrate the liberalism of the United Kingdom.

Example 4.2 "Chinese Chorus" (Act I, scene 3), based on the "Hymne en l'honneur des ancêstres" as transcribed by Joseph-Marie Amiot. Built on F pentatonic, with phrases punctuated by the gong. Score instructs "All voices Unison & accompanied by Wind Instruments only." Source: Corri, *The Travellers* (London, 1806). Transcription by author.



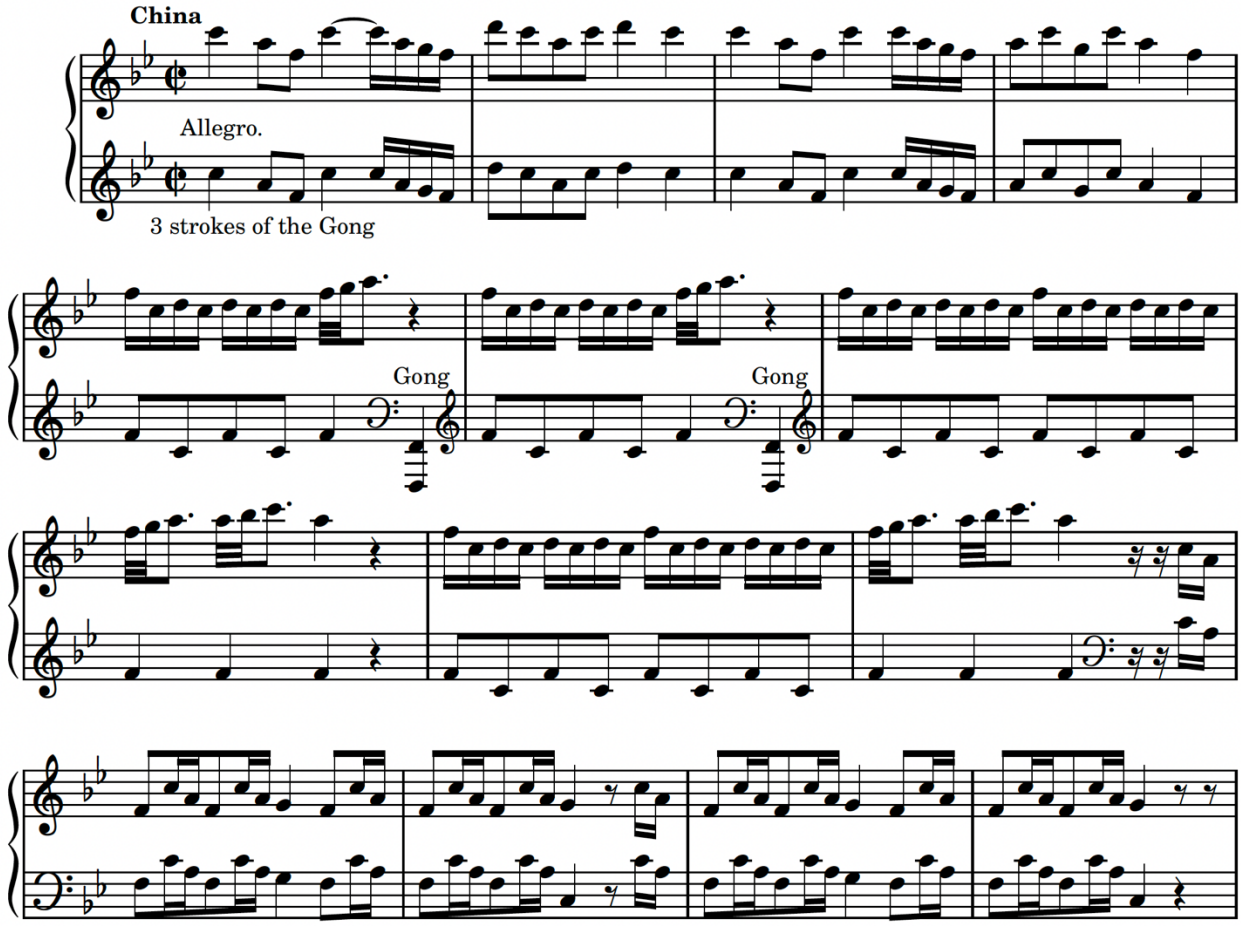
Corri would later recall that, "for a while [the opera was] thought too hazardous" to produce, a situation that "kept [him] in suspense some years."[44] His choice of words bitterly echoes those of Cherry in his preface to the published libretto: "When Mr. Corri suggested to me his wish to have an opera written wherein the national melody of various kingdoms might effectually be introduced … I considered [it] hazardous."[45] According to the Grove Music entry on Corri, such hazards amounted to "the pseudo-Oriental music he indulged in when the action

[44] Corri, *Singer's Preceptor*.
[45] Cherry, *The Travellers*.

moved to China and Turkey," presumably a reference to the grand "Chinese Chorus" of the first act based on a melody described in the score as "2,000 years old" (see example 4.2).[46] Moon is more specific and more situated. The melody, she notes, was first recorded in European notation by Joseph-Marie Amiot, a French Jesuit missionary who would enter the service of the court of the Qianlong Emperor as translator of European languages, and was published in 1779 under the title "Hymne en l'honneur des ancêstres."[47] Approaching Amiot's transcription in the context of Europe's own "national" song forms, Corri interpolated the pentatonic melody into the opera as a choral set piece to complement the elaborate scenery depicting the imperial palace in Beijing. Yet Corri's exotic-sounding music served as more than set dressing. It was the polemical basis of the opera itself. As William Thomas Parke wrote in his *Musical Memoirs* (1830), Corri was "the musical 'cosmographer' of [the] piece."[48] Thus, a libretto-focused reading only gives part of the story. Kitson's claim that "China is depicted as a sophisticated civilization in comparison to that of Islamic Turkey and Catholic Italy" overlooks the significance of song to the opera's argument and plot.[49] While the libretto portrays the Chinese protagonists more sympathetically than their foils in Constantinople and Caserta, the more complex harmonic language used to depict Turkey and Italy implies that they are more culturally developed than China.

[46] Peter Ward Jones and Rachel E. Cowgill, "Domenico Corri," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001).
[47] Moon, *Yellowface*, 22–23; Lee argues that it was through Burney's work with the failed Macartney embassy to the Qianlong emperor that Corri learned of the melody, see Hayoung Heidi Lee, "An Opera about the 'Progress of Music': Charles Burney, Domenico Corri's *The Travellers* (1806), and the McCartney Embassy to China 1792–1794," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 33 (2022), 4; on Amiot, see Zhuqing (Lester) S. Hu, "Chinese Ears, Delicate or Dull? Toward a Decolonial Comparativism," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 74 (2021): 501–69.
[48] William Thomas Parke, *Musical Memoirs* (London, 1830), 5.
[49] Kitson refers, for example, to "Andrew Cherry's musical drama or 'opera' *The Travellers; or, Music's Fascination* (1806)" for which "noted Italian composer Domenico Corri supplied the music." Kitson, *Forging Romantic China*, 231.

Example 4.3 Opening "China" section of the overture to *The Travellers*. Like the "Chinese Chorus," this is also built on an F pentatonic scale (save for the decorative passing tones in the middle section) and puncuated by the gong. Source: Corri, *The Travellers* (London, 1806). Transcription by author.



This can be heard most clearly in Corri's "characteristic" overture, "comprehending the melodies of the different Nations as introduced in the Opera."[50] Signaling the start of the opera, as if opening proceedings at the imperial court, are three gong strokes that lead straight into the opening section marked "China."[51] From the start, Corri attempts to portray China as the ancient birthplace of song. Yet his scant knowledge of Chinese music is laid bare in the fact that, unlike

[50] Domenico Corri, *The Travellers, or Music's Fascination*, libretto by Andrew Cherry (London, 1806), 2.
[51] On the use of the gong and "tam-tam" in European opera of this period, see Gundula Kreuzer, *Curtain, Gong, Steam: Wagnerian Technologies of Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 116–17.

subsequent sections, there is no specific genre of song or dance being invoked—this is the whole of Chinese music distilled into neat, two-measure phrases. The first three themes are, like the "Chinese Chorus" of the first act, built on an F-pentatonic scale, though here he expands his use of intervals to include octaves and open fifths (see example 4.3). Highlighting the limited harmonic language available with only five notes, the music implies that Chinese song uses an incomplete version of the diatonic scale, rather than a separate mode with its own tuning system and intervallic relationships. This idea, too, Corri surely picked up from Burney, whose thoughts on the ancientness of Chinese music (as compared to the Hellenistic Greeks, standing in for modern Europe) were in turn adapted from earlier Orientalist theories developed by Jean-Philippe Rameau and Pierre-Joseph Roussier. It was Burney, however, who sought to connect the music of China to that of Scotland through their shared lack of the fourth and seventh scale degrees, as Matthew Gelbart has shown, thereby distinguishing the local "folk" modes from the "primitive" barbarism of the Orient.[52] Nor was this idea unique to the Northern countries; writing from Italy, Mancini asserted in the preface to his treatise on song, that the arts of China "have not grown beyond a mediocrity [*la mediocrità*], in which state they were born."[53]

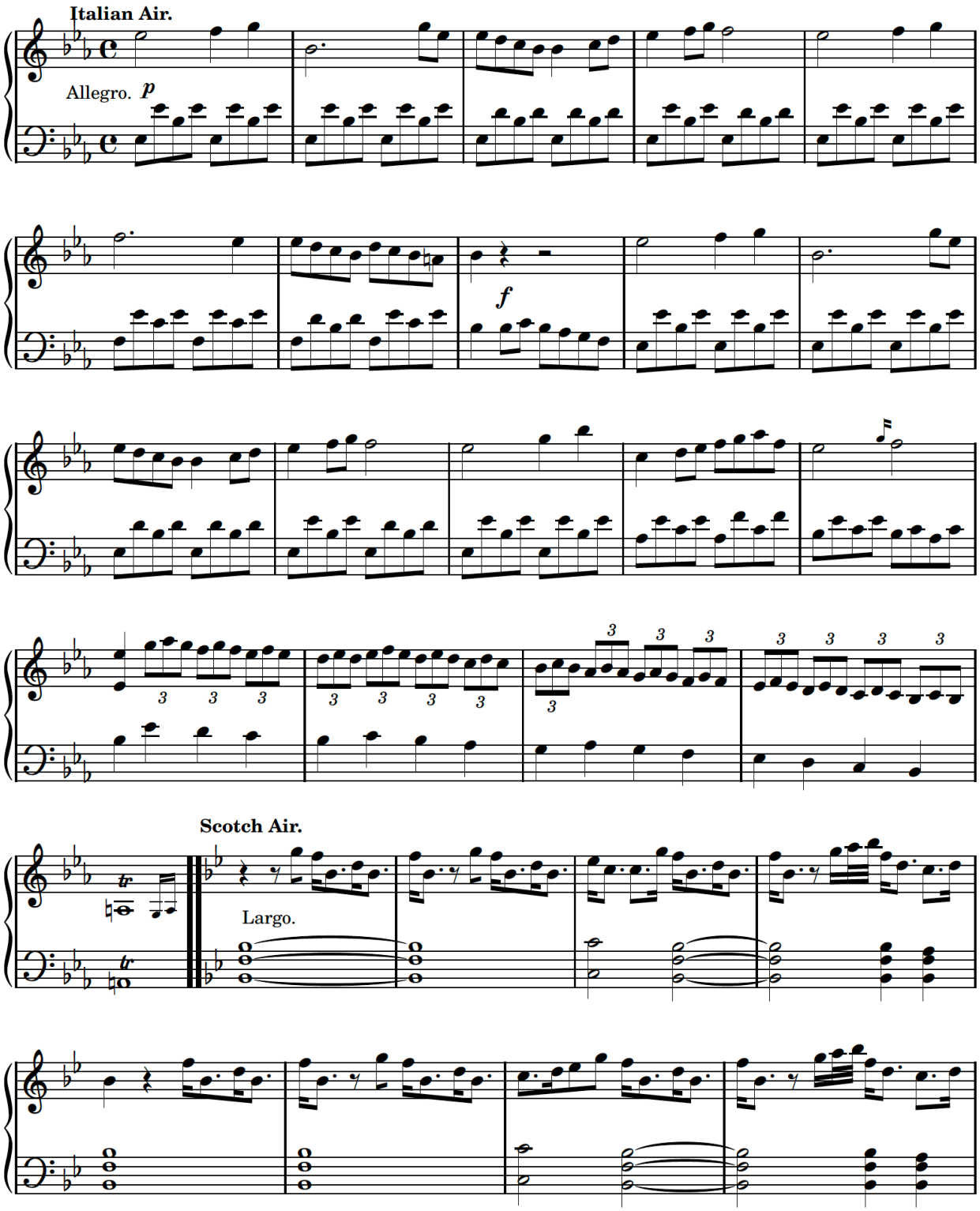
Over the remainder of the overture, Corri fleshes out the story of music's gradual evolution. The next section, labeled "Turkish March," is meant to evoke the Janissary bands of the Ottoman Empire that had long been a fascination for European symphonists from Mozart through Beethoven. It also fills out the "missing" notes of the previous section by introducing the full diatonic scale and chromatic embellishments. The overall texture is softened through a constant flow of thirds rather than a stream of open harmonies. With a fuller harmonic and

[52] Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 124–26.
[53] Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, 11.

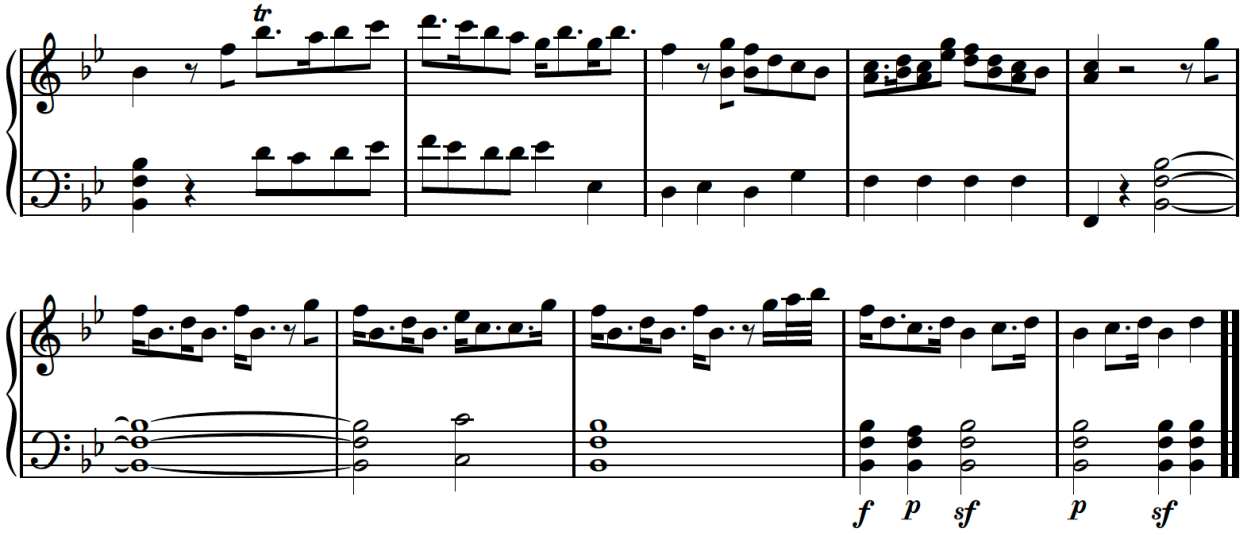
rhythmic arsenal, we cycle through the landscape of European dance from the Arab influences of the South ("Spanish Fandango" with "castagnett" accompaniment) through Central and Eastern Europe (the "Pollacca," "Pas Russe," and "German Waltz") to round out a sense of "exotic" Europe. Finally, we reach the elegant simplicity of the "Italian air," for which Corri crafts a representative, if predictable, galant aria with four-square rhythms and straightforward cadential phrases. A coda, complete with a series of undulating triplets over a harmonically static bassline, nods to his own migratory history by transitioning into a trio of national "airs" from the United Kingdom, beginning with the "Scotch." The section is comprised of scotch snaps (the distinctive short–long dotted rhythm) over a constant drone of open fifths, in imitation of bagpipes (see example 4.4). Here, Corri may have been thinking of Burney's observation that the "Chinese scale … is certainly very Scottish," as he bases the section around B♭ pentatonic but continues to use the subdominant and leading tone for harmonic color.[54] After a dizzying "Irish Air," the overture—and, by extension, the history of music—culminates with a refined and cosmopolitan "British Air." Rhythmically staid and contrapuntally focused, this concluding section demonstrates the achievements of musical modernity through a strikingly punctuated secondary dominant and brief modulation into the submediant before a dramatic rush to the finish.

[54] Quoted in Gelbart, *Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music,"* 126.

Example 4.4 "Italian" and "Scotch" sections of the overture to *The Travellers*. Note the diatonic melody and four-measure phrases, exemplary of the Italian galant style, compared with the distinct rhythmic and harmonic markers of the Scotch song. Source: Corri, *The Travellers* (London, 1806). Transcription by author.



Example 4.4, cont'd "Italian" and "Scotch" sections of the overture to *The Travellers*.



In his prologue to the opera, Cherry frames this all through the personification of Music, who matures over the course of her travels across the globe, a course that mirrors the journey to be taken by the opera's protagonists. With the intent "to trace *sweet Music* from her *infant days*," the author thus "roves from *clime to clime*" for the edification of his audience:

> Yes!—"When Music, heavenly maid, was young,"
> In *China* first—suppose—her lyre was strung;
> Artless the strain—for *Nature* gave the notes,
> Thro' feather'd songsters' sweetly-warbling throats.

Calling the earliest songs of China artless is not necessarily meant as a criticism along the lines of Mancini's "mediocrity," since it is meant to refer to their putative source. Inspired by birdsong, the songs evoke a Rousseauian state of nature, before the advent of art, and register contemporaneous notions of "noble savagery" meant to underscore Europe's uncivilized past. A microcosm of this history begins with the first song of the opera, which musically dramatizes the authors' rationalistic theory of "the origins of melody" through the character of Celinda. The number opens with a mimetic representation of "birds chirping" in the orchestra, elements of which gradually make their way into her vocal line, as her static half notes give way to dotted

rhythms and a stepwise tune that develops before culminating in a brief cadenza (see example 4.5). On hearing her naturalized song, Prince Zaphimiri is so taken as to perceive the flow of inspiration in reverse, declaring that her "native notes charm the warbling choristers of air, and make them borrow tunes from mortal melody."[55] Celinda, whose name bears a striking resemblance to Cecilia, patron saint of musicians, is thus aligned with the allegorical figure of Music, the "heavenly maid" of the prologue now being envoiced and integrated into the plot.

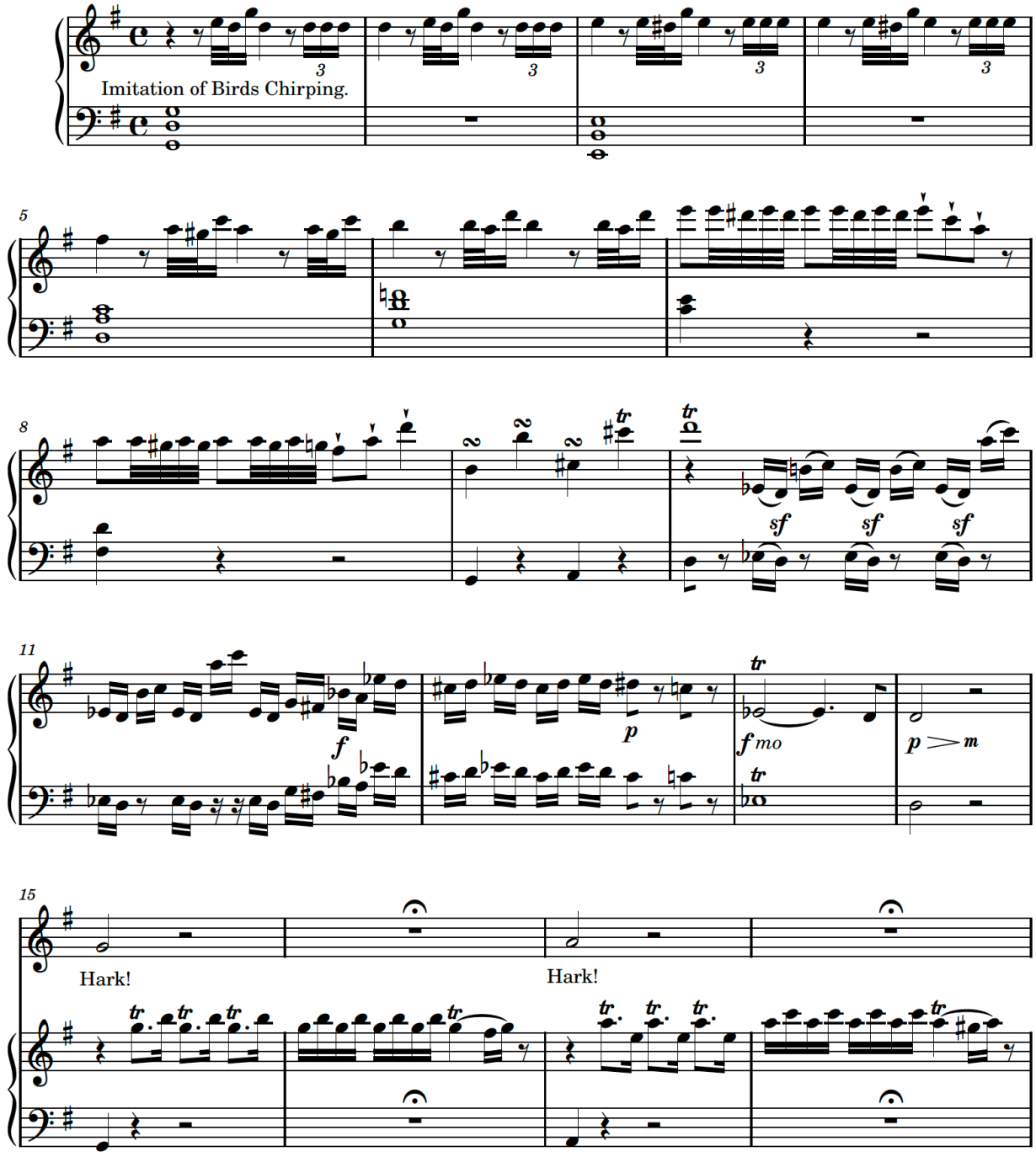
Following the now-familiar pattern, Music's westward travels also take her forward in historical time. Here, sophisticated harmony is reiterated as the hallmark of civil society:

> To *Turkey* next our vagrant Muse takes flight,
> Where the soft science yields improv'd delight;
> Tho' still imperfect in harmonic art,
> It yields such strains as may affect the heart.
> Still wandr'ing forth, the tune-struck Muse is found,
> Chasing the Goddess o'er her classic ground,
> To fair *Italia*, where the Sorc'ress dwells,
> By *Science* gifted with *harmonic spells*.

The sorceress from whom "tune-struck" Music is said to have learned the skill of harmonic transformation is Circe—known for her power of metamorphosis and penchant for trapping men on her enchanted island. The travelers make much of Italy's musical charms, though its feudal landowners are violent, selfish, and dissolute. Fortunately for the Prince, the power of Celinda's singing to enchant its listeners was powerful enough to deliver him from a Turkish prison and from Italian assassins. In finally recognizing her voice, Zaphimiri is able to see past her male disguise to her true form as his beloved.

[55] Cherry, *The Travellers*, 5.

Example 4.5 Opening of Celinda's first act song from *The Travellers*. The orchestra begins by imitating birdsong, which gradually makes its way into Celinda's previously static melody, culminating in the cadential phrase that begins at m. 28. Source: Corri, *The Travellers* (London, 1806). Transcription by author.



Example 4.5 cont'd Opening of Celinda's first act song from *The Travellers*.

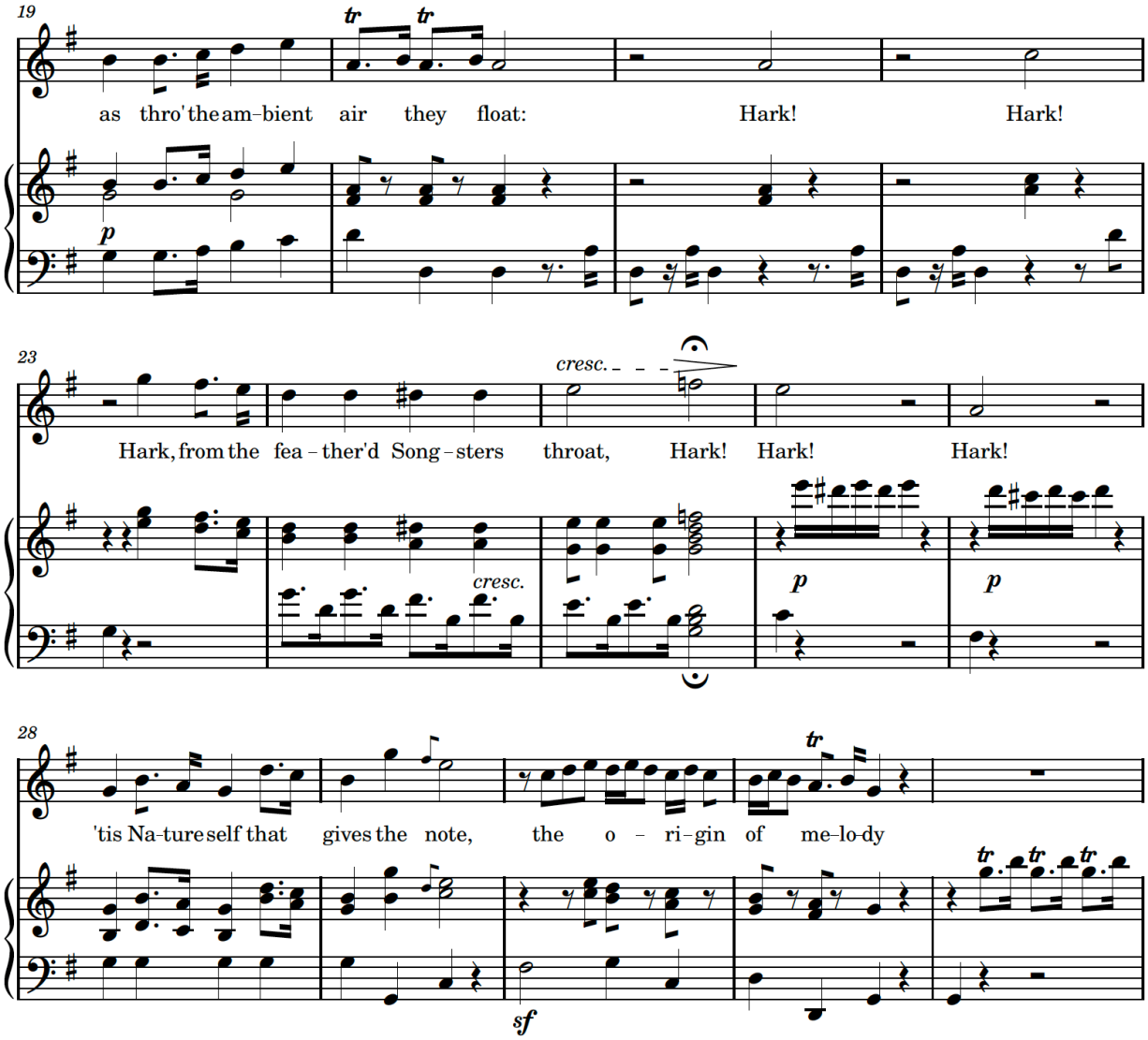


Figure 4.1 T. Cheeseman, *Rosemund Mountain*, 1804. Fine stipple.
Source: John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Libraries. Wikimedia Commons.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rosemond_Mountain_performing_John_Johnson.jpg.

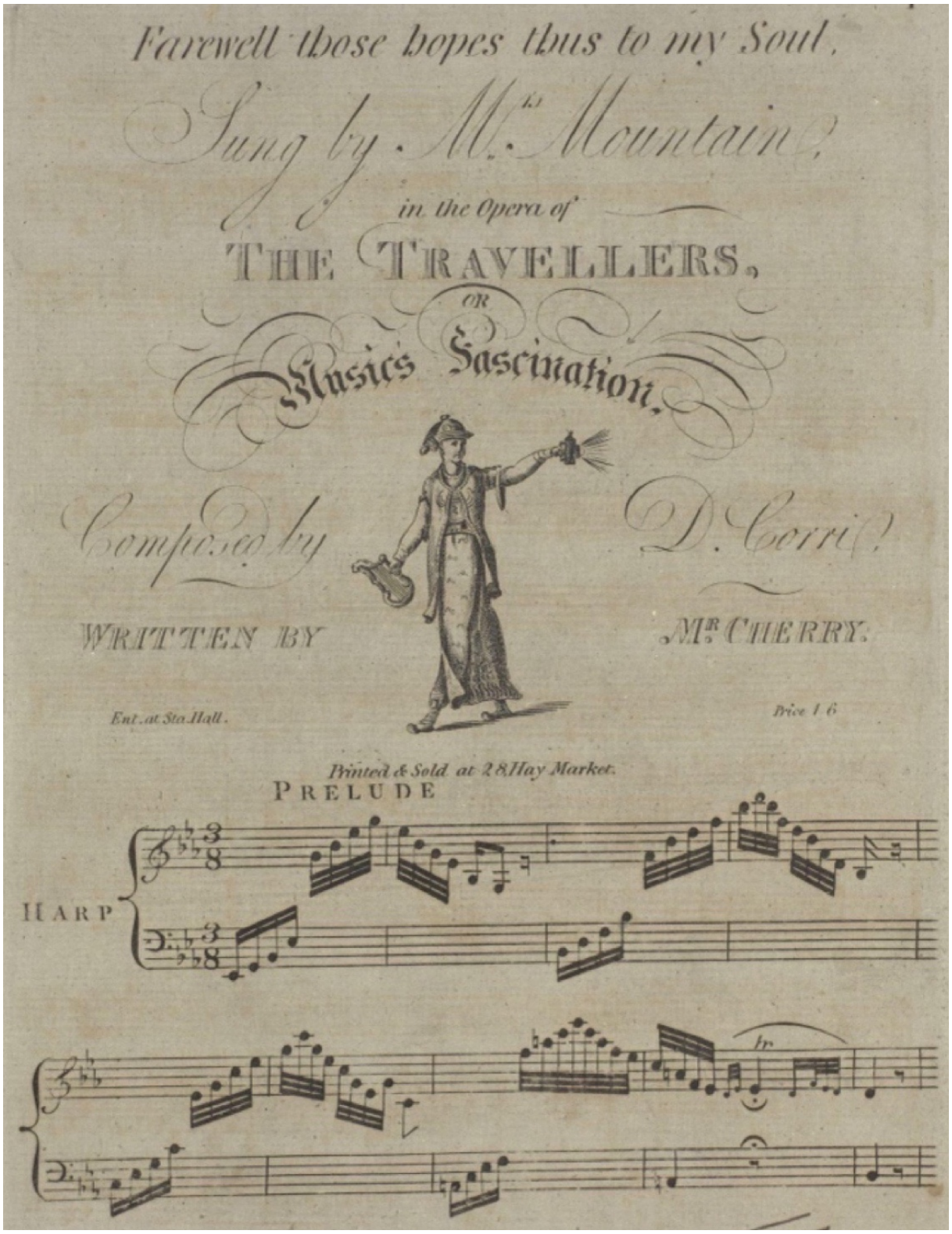


Figure 4.2 Sheet music for "Farewell those hopes thus to my Soul" (London, 1806).
Source: Victoria and Albert Museum. *https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1276802/farewell-those-hopes-thus-to-sheet-music-corri-domenico*.

The centrality of Celinda's "angel voice" to the plot and argument of the story also explains the iconography found on the sheet music for her Act IV finale, "Farewell those hopes thus to my Soul," which she sings to distract the prince's would-be attackers. Emphasizing her role as the embodiment of Music, the image pictures her holding a lyre (see figure 4.2), Orphic emblem of song, as opposed to the "Italian guittar" (probably an early Romantic Neapolitan six-string guitar) called for in the libretto and seen in a contemporary engraving of Rosemund Mountain (see figure 4.1). Nevertheless, Susan Rutherford reads in Corri's ambivalent portrayal of Italy "the need to represent Italian music (and his own skills) as the epitome of artistic achievement but also to give equal due to his British hosts by flattering their nation's democratic principles."[56] Her position is clearly confirmed in the closing lines of the prologue:

> For *England* next, where *Art and Science* meet,
> She sails, the nymph Terpsichoré to greet;
> *There* strains harmonious sweetly float along,
> And *Freedom* reigns with *subject* and with *song*!"[57]

All told, the freedom enjoyed by Britons is equated with their advanced practice of song, which combines the untaught artistry of the East with the harmonic science of the South.

Sweet Singers of Israel

After years of anticipation, Corri finally managed to stage *The Travellers* at Drury Lane in late January 1806. Its smashing success was due in no small part to an all-star cast, which included the popular sopranos Rosemund Mountain as Celinda and Nancy Storace as the

[56] Susan Rutherford, "Vocal Pedagogy and Italian Musical Migration in London, 1664–1914," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 26 (2021): 12.
[57] Koyan once again summarizes the history upon their arrival in Italy, this time set to the Italian Air of the overture: "Thus, through the skies, / With choir of feather'd minstrelsy, / Soft music flies,— / 'Till science fix'd its limit'ry. / And now the godlike maid can range, / But thro' the regions of harmonic change." Cherry, *The Travellers*, 5, 45.

Neapolitan marchioness, both of whom had been trained by Rauzzini in Bath.[58] But the biggest name associated with the opera was, arguably, that of John Braham singing the main role of Koyan. Generally considered to be the finest tenor of the Regency stage, Braham was also a former student of Rauzzini, though he received his early vocal training, like Nathan, in the synagogue.[59] As Uri Erman summarizes, "the dominant public perception of Braham was as a national hero," though that role "usually necessitated omission of his Jewish origins."[60] This was not always successful, nor indeed was it always necessary. One of his first reviews noted, with novel interest, that he had been "derived … from the synagogue," fitting him with the appellation of "sweet singer of Israel," after a biblical description of King David.[61] His rise from *meshorer* at the Great Synagogue to leading tenor on the operatic stage was done under the wing of another famous singer, Michael Leoni—the Italianate alter-ego of Myer Leon, who sang concurrently at the synagogue and on the stage for much of his career—and supported by the prominent Goldsmid family of Anglo-Jewish bankers. Braham's career trajectory exemplified the possibilities for Jewish social advancement, especially for those who had something to offer the public, around the turn of the nineteenth century.

[58] Storace had made a career for herself on the London stage after nearly a decade of training and performing on the continent. The suite of diegetic airs she sang in the fourth act (illustrating Venetian, Neapolitan, and *buffa* styles) represented her trajectory during these years, culminating in her time with the Viennese court opera, where she created the role of Susanna in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786).

[59] Braham's main career spanned roughly the duration of the Regency era, which includes the actual period of regency (1811–1820) but is typically considered ca. 1795–1837.

[60] Uri Erman, "The Operatic Voice of Leoni the Jew: Between the Synagogue and the Theater in Late Georgian Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 56 (2017): 319.

[61] David Conway notes that "the epithet 'sweet singer of Israel' [was] derived from the description of King David in 2 Samuel 23.1" and "[would] be used ad nauseum by writers about Jewish musicians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both in praise and, by their detractors, sarcastically." Review from the *Bath Chronicle* also quoted in David Conway, *Jewry in Music: Entry to the Profession from the Enlightenment to Richard Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 21, 84.

Figure 4.3 Robert Page, Portrait of Mr. Braham as Koyan in *The Travellers*, 1823. Colored engraving. Source: Victoria and Albert Museum. *https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1257937/mr-braham-as-koyan-in-print-page-r*.

At the same time, Braham's "exotic" difference was a topic of unending fascination for (and speculation by) the public, even after his 1816 marriage to a Christian woman initiated his gradual distancing from Judaism. An engraving of Braham in the character of Koyan depicts him with a stereotypically large nose (see figure 4.3). Yet he is also shown with a noble bearing and, in keeping with the character's mixed English and Chinese heredity, a relatively fair complexion (as compared against the whiteness of his shirt collar and robe) and rosy cheeks. The rosy cheeks also invoke David, the musician-king, who is described in his youth as "ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance" (1 Samuel 16:12). Dressed in the costume of a Qing court official—including the *guanmao* (headwear) and *chaozhu* (necklace)—the image of Braham conjures a broad Orient, encompassing both the "Far East" and the Holy Land. Listeners were inclined to hear the results of his early synagogue training more readily than "the standard Italian procedures [he] learnt from Rauzzini or abroad."[62] On at least one occasion, his celebrated performance of Handel's *Israel in Egypt* was the subject of paranoid theorizing by the popular writer Charles Lamb, who heard in Braham's voice the hidden convictions of his "Hebrew spirit" to usurp the modern legacy of Israel. Since the seventeenth century, English and Scottish Protestants had drawn parallels between the island of Great Britain and the biblical Promised Land of Canaan. As Linda Colley has shown, after the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland (1707), the shared sense that they were a chosen people—forced to defend their land and their way of life from heathen invaders (i.e., Catholics)—helped to forge a new national identity. And nowhere was the comparison more powerfully stated than in the sacred oratorios of Handel during the second quarter of the century.[63] Through works like *Esther* (1732), *Israel in Egypt* (1739), and

[62] David Conway, "John Braham—from 'meshorer' to Tenor," *Jewish Historical Studies* 41 (2007): 56.
[63] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 30–33.

Judas Maccabaeus (1747), Britons musically self-identified with the Hebrews of the Old Testament, even as the growth of the actual Jewish population over the same period gradually undermined the fantasy of a racially homogeneous nation and further complicated the definition of Britishness.[64] For Lamb, Braham's Zionist betrayal was most evident "when he sings, 'The Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea!' The auditors, for the moment, are as Egyptians to him, and he rides over our necks in triumph."[65] Within such Judeophobic delusions, Braham's entitlement to the legacy of the Israelites, a legacy that rightly belongs to Lamb and his countrymen, is unfounded because it is rooted in his identity as a Jew, not as a Briton.

As a Jewish tenor trained in the cantorial and *bel canto* traditions, Nathan could well have succeeded Braham as the Davidic voice ("sweet singer of Israel") of the English stage. The precise date he began studying under Corri is difficult to discern, though he was assisting his master with lessons by 1810. In his written work, he makes almost no mention of his time as a student, apart from an oblique reference in *Musurgia Vocalis*, in a chapter otherwise dedicated to the effect of music on animals:

> One morning, while Domenico Corri was giving his able instructions to a lady of my acquaintance, in the course of the lesson, he had occasion by way of example, to swell a note, and its progress being of rather extraordinary length, it particularly affected the aural faculties of a fine cat that had been listening to the previous part with apparent pleasure, stretched out in agreeable indolence by a good fire. As the note swelled into loudness he gradually arose, his tail enlarged, the hairs of his back became erect, and he fixed his eyes, with a look of terror and astonishment, on the object that caused his discomposure; every increase of sound evidently wound the sensations of grimalkin to a higher pitch, and, with the climax of the note, vanished his last spark of forbearance, for he made but one bound to the door, and cried most piteously to be released from listening to the powers of the son of Apollo.[66]

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[64] Michael Hoberman, "Home of the Jewish Nation: London Jews in the Eighteenth-Century Anglo-American Imagination," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 50 (2017): 273.
[65] Lamb quoted in Erman, "The Operatic Voice of Leoni the Jew," 317–18.
[66] Corri is mentioned once more in Nathan's treatise: "Domenico Corri in his Elements on Singing recommends the student to commence by intervals of semi-tones rather than by tones; holding for argument, that 'a child, when first

Characteristically, Corri seems to have been demonstrating a *messa di voce*, which he describes in *The Singer's Preceptor*, following a common line, as the "perfection" and "soul" of vocal music. Despite its peculiar context, and regardless of its veracity, the humorous anecdote suggests lasting respect for his late teacher, whom Nathan portrays in his full power and compares to Orpheus. In naming Corri as "the son of Apollo," he may be referencing their shared vocal lineage as heirs to the teachings of Porpora, along with the "lost" art of the castrato.[67] But in spite of the emphasis that the Neapolitan tradition placed on control of the breath, Nathan's voice turned out to lack the power necessary for the stage, preventing him from succeeding Leoni and Braham.[68]

With any long-term performing aspirations dashed, Nathan carved out a career for himself in teaching, publishing, and writing on song. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the poet Robert Browning recalled Nathan as "the best master of four I have, more or less, practised with," claiming that he "retained certain traditional Jewish methods of developing the voice" in his teaching.[69] Such methods, cemented from his childhood and early training, were but one aspect of Nathan's overall approach, likely folded into the *bel canto* technique he acquired from Corri.[70] Also among his students during this period was music-loving Charlotte, Princess of Wales, until her premature death in 1817. For someone of his background, a royal appointment

attempting to climb up stairs, would find more difficulty in taking two steps at once, than a single one, and would be still more perplexed, if directed to take sometimes one and sometimes two.' I certainly coincide in the impropriety of climbing up two steps previous to knowing how to ascend one with confidence; but I cannot persuade myself into the belief that a child would understand what the half of any thing was, before the article to be divided was first explained to be the whole." Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 60, 127.

[67] Conway suggests that Corri had relatively little contact with Nathan, though this seems unlikely. Conway, *Jewry in Music*, 92.

[68] Talia, *End of the Porpora Era*, 155–56, 168–69.

[69] Conway, *Jewry in Music*, 97–98.

[70] This has not kept commentators like Joseph Talia from questioning the "extent to which [Nathan] represents Porpora's legacy" given his other "influences [including] French, German, and Jewish cantorial music," see Talia, *End of the Porpora Era*, 171; Stark says that *Musurgia* is "the work of a dilettante," see Stark, *Bel Canto*, 66.

of any sort would have constituted a major career coup, but Charlotte was expected to succeed her father, at the time Prince Regent and later George IV, as monarch of the United Kingdom. While Nathan's Anglo-Italian *bona fides* lent him an advantage in obtaining the position, another factor may have clinched it for him: his mother served as one of Charlotte's ladies-in-waiting. A daughter of the Goldsmid family herself, Mary Lewis (as she was known after her divorce from Nathan's father) was born into the upper echelons of British society and had, for a time, been mistress to the Prince Regent, for whom she was accused of spying while in the Princess Royal's employ. Her medial position in the Royal household thus calls to mind another archetypal border figure, the "beautiful Jewess," product of an Orientalist trope who epitomized European Jews' situatedness in contemporary romantic literature between East and West.[71] Like Braham, Lewis's social trajectory demonstrated the possibilities for Jewish social advancement during the Regency, though in both cases their evolving relationship to Judaism played out on the terms dictated by mainstream Christian society rather than their own.

Having recognized how the increase of (ostensibly benevolent) interest in Judaism provided an opening on the musical market, Nathan sought to follow the lead of his teacher in publishing the "national" music with which he was most familiar. In 1813, he placed an advertisement in the *Gentleman's Magazine* announcing a forthcoming collection of "Hebrew Melodies, all of them upwards of 1000 years old, and some of them performed by the antient Hebrews before the destruction of the Temple."[72] Of course, even if the "wildness and pathos" of these songs proved appealing to the English public, young Christian ladies could not envoice the

[71] Brunotte, "The Beautiful Jewess," 173; On Mary Lewis's lineage, see Albert M. Hyamson, "An Anglo-Jewish Family," *Transactions (Jewish Historical Society of England)* 17 (1951): 1–10.
[72] His notice followed that of "Mr. T. Preston," who promised "a Selection of Irish Melodies with symphonies and accompaniments by Beethoven" in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London, 1813): 461.

words of the synagogue in the enclave of domesticity that was the middle-class parlor. Nathan's appeal to, and subsequent collaboration with, Lord Byron is now well-known, frequently trotted out by scholars interested in both Jewish music and romantic poetry.[73] In brief, Byron provided thirty individual settings on sacred and secular topics—often treated with the poet's signature Orientalist flavor—including forbidden love, the history of the Israelites, and proto-Zionist appeals for tolerance and Jewish nationalism. For his part, Nathan undertook a research project that David Conway describes as "a new application of the core task of the meshorrer's training—acquisition of the tunes of the synagogue—to the potential of the new market for music."[74] The published product, *A Selection of Hebrew Melodies, Ancient and Modern* (1815–16), bore little resemblance to what had been sung in the Temple of Jerusalem two millennia earlier. For one thing, much of what was used as part of the contemporary Jewish service had been adapted relatively recently from popular or folk ballads. Nathan's final arrangement further abstracted the tunes by fitting them into fashionable models borrowed from Italian opera, German lieder, and English oratorio. Still, these songs could have been heard in the synagogues of London. He even "adapted cantillatory ornaments and the harmony of chants" into a number of his settings to give a sense of their sound in performance.[75] Ancient or not, in applying the authority of his Anglo-Italian musical education, Nathan was able to suffuse a memory of Judaica into the songs.

[73] Among them, Thomas L. Ashton, *Byron's Hebrew Melodies,* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972); Gordon K. Thomas, "Finest Orientalism, Western Sentimentalism, Proto-Zionism: The Muses of Byron's Hebrew Melodies," *Prism(s): Essays in Romanticism* 1 (1993): 51–66; Sheila A. Spector, "The Liturgical Context of the Byron-Nathan 'Hebrew Melodies,'" *Studies in Romanticism* 47 (2008): 393–412; Toby R. Benis, "Byron's Hebrew Melodies and the Musical Nation," in *Romanticism/Judaica: A Convergence of Cultures*, ed. Sheila A. Spector (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 31–44; and HaCohen, *Music Libel*, 171–77.
[74] Conway, *Jewry in Music*, 93.
[75] Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass, eds., introduction to Isaac Nathan, *A Selection of Hebrew Melodies, Ancient and Modern*, words by Lord Byron (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 14.

In pursuing a career in music, rather than the rabbinate, Nathan had reoriented his praxis of song from the insular Jewish community toward the secular world, though he remained keenly aware of his position in the borderlands of Western modernity. He therefore asked his friend, the bibliophile Robert Harding Evans, to compose some prefatory remarks in defense of the biblical authenticity of his *Hebrew Melodies*. Evans argued that "the real character of the ancient Hebrew music is preserved in the East to this day," citing no less authoritative a text on the musical past than Burney's *General History*: "The Persians have derived their manner of singing 'from the ancient Oriental Jews,' and if such manner accords with that of the Germans, the latter must possess the true harmony of their ancestors."[76]

If Burney was an obvious choice to define ancient music, he was a less-than-ideal fit to defend tunes culled from the Ashkenazi service. His scathing report of the singing at an Amsterdam synagogue on his *German Tour* (1773) leans into what HaCohen glosses as the longstanding "noise accusation" against the Jews.[77] His assessment of the *chazan* and his two *meshorerim*, sarcastically labeled "three of the sweet singers of Israel," dismisses their voices as poor imitations of nasal-sounding instruments:

> One of these voices was a falset, more like the upper part of a bad *vox humana* stop in an organ, than a natural voice. … The second of these voices was a very vulgar tenor, and the third a baritone [who] imitated, in his accompaniment of the falset, a bad bassoon … But though the tone of the falset was very disagreeable, and he forced his voice very frequently in an outrageous manner, yet this man had certainly good music and good singing. He had a facility of running divisions, and now and then mixed them with passages of taste, which were far superior to the rest.[78]

[76] Robert Harding Evans, quoted in Ashton, *Byron's Hebrew Melodies,* 35–36.
[77] On Burney's engagement with the singing of the synagogue, see HaCohen, *Music Libel*, 142–45.
[78] For the whole passage, see Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces* (London, 1773), 298–301.

Burney's incredulous reaction is unsurprising given the Judeophobic attitudes of his "enlightened" gentile contemporaries like Voltaire and Herder. At the same time, his acknowledgment of the falsettist's "good music and good singing" recalls the flocks of Christians attending service at the Great Synagogue to hear Leoni (cantor Lyon) sing his "own" music.[79] Still, many English Jews remained on the outskirts of society. By the time of Burney's research trips in the 1770s, the growing Jewish community in London was reputed to be "a font of deviance, conspiracy, and criminality."[80]

In the end, Evans's notes were left out of the *Hebrew Melodies* (they were published the next year as a separate essay) and replaced with a relatively brief preface. Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass claim this to have been the doing of David Kinnaird, Byron's friend who originally convinced him to accept Nathan's request but felt unsure about the composer's "claims for his music's antiquity."[81] In place of the longer essay, Kinnaird penned his own, far more cautious introduction, in which he allowed that "some of these have, in common with all their Sacred Airs, been preserved by memory and tradition alone, without the assistance of written characters. Their age and originality must, therefore, be left to conjecture."[82] Still, in producing the *Hebrew Melodies*, Nathan leveraged the public's growing interest in works from the oral tradition. The first copy of Beowulf in print was released the same year and, despite the fraudulence of Ossian, those works remained popular together with "authentic" pieces from the Orient, especially as related to the Holy Land. Of course, James Macpherson's fictional bard and Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin's seminal transcription offered the public a taste of its own pre-

[79] Erman posits that Leoni's "singing [served] as a sort of a temporary antidote to his people's natural inclination toward noise." Erman, "The Operatic Voice of Leoni the Jew," 301.
[80] Hoberman, "Home of the Jewish Nation," 270.
[81] Burwick and Douglass, introduction to *Hebrew Melodies*, 10.
[82] Burwick and Douglass, introduction to *Hebrew Melodies*, 48.

Christian past by affirming the greatness of Britain's (Celtic and Danish) past. In crafting the *Hebrew Melodies*, however, Nathan was explicitly equating the ancient Israelites with contemporary diasporic Jews through a shared musical inheritance. Like Braham's voice narrating the flight from Egypt, Nathan's Hebrew melodies challenged Britain's longstanding self-image as a second Israel. More importantly, by weaving together scavenged tunes from the Hebrew service into the art music tradition of Christian Europe, Nathan's songs constituted a strain of border thought that centered Jewish vocality.

Border Singing

In 1823, again following the example of his teacher, Nathan published *An Essay on The History and Theory of Music; and on the Qualities, Capabilities and Management of the Human Voice*. The treatise stands out for many reasons, though perhaps most notably for is its emphasis on the ancient Hebrews and their "former greatness in song," as well as the modern Jews of the diaspora, whom "the power of song has not forsaken."[83] In fact, the *Essay* arrives at the very beginning of the period in which Philip Bohlman identifies the emergence of "Jewish music research" as a distinct field of study.[84] A lengthy review in the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* took special note of this: "The third chapter is upon *tone*. Mr. Nathan throws no new light upon this very curious and important ingredient of music. He has, however, introduced some facts respecting the Hebrew chanting and the melodies of the Jewish nation, which may be thought curious by those who are unacquainted with their customs."[85] The cultural landscape in

[83] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 116.
[84] Philip V. Bohlman, "Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[85] *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* (London, 1823), 360.

which Nathan was writing differed vastly from what his father, Menachem Mona, had known in continental Europe. In the decades following Mona's birth at midcentury, a school of thought had formed around the philosophical writings of Moses Mendelssohn and engendered the *Haskalah*, or Jewish Enlightenment in Central Europe. The advocates (known as *Maskilim*) of enlightened reform seized on ideas from the broader Enlightenment in the hope of carving out a Jewish identity and way of life that remained distinct within, but not incompatible with, modern secular society, and they carried this out, by and large, through the revitalization of Hebrew as a written language and medium for exchanging ideas. Historian David Ruderman argues that in Great Britain, fewer barriers to social integration enabled rapid "linguistic assimilation … across all classes of English Jewish society."[86] Anglo-Jewish thinkers and writers, who could now engage with the brunt of liberal political theory in its original language, also had more political leeway in critiquing legal or social policies than did their German-speaking counterparts. A likely unintended effect of widespread acquisition of English, though, was the consequent loss of Hebrew as a common vernacular language. With a largely monolinguistic population, Jewish educators who hoped to preserve their cultural memory embarked on "a massive project of translating the primary sources of their tradition into the language Anglo-Jews could comprehend."[87] By the time Nathan was writing in the 1820s, his early experience of Judaism, centrally including a multilingual household beholden to elite religious authority and formal study of Hebrew language and cantillation, had become a relatively unusual one.

Over a decade later in 1836, Nathan would expand his *Essay*, tacking on the hybrid Greco-Latin title *Musurgia Vocalis* to signify his extensive learning in the classical tradition of

[86] David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7.
[87] Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, 7.

the Christian West. He also more than doubled the number of main chapters on history and the "human voice" (see table 4.1). While he billed this second edition as "enlarged and considerably improved" as compared with the first, the name-change also likely rendered it effectively invisible to anyone looking for an easy primer on the art of singing. Throughout *Musurgia*, Nathan demonstrates his erudition through a wealth of topics and texts relating to music. Like Burney, he begins his history by establishing the fabled power of music among the ancients, from the harp of David healing Saul (a story he will later liken to "the singing of Farinelli" and King Philip of Spain) to the legendary musicians of Egypt, Greece, and China.[88] In contrast to Burney's enlightened skepticism, however, Nathan's effusive writing belies a romantic attraction to mysticism in all its forms. From mythohistory, he takes a brief detour to summarize the present state of music in China before traveling West (à la Corri's *Travellers*) to the British Isles. After an extended history moving through England, Ireland, Scotland, and France, he touches on the musical sophistication of the Hindus, the Italians, and the Germans, before a whirlwind survey of indigenous practices in the Americas, Pacific Islands, Africa, Arabia, and the Tundra. Subsequent chapters are no less capacious. Chapters two and three explore the metaphysics of song with regard to humans and animals, and chapters five and six provide up-to-date explanations on the physical properties of sound and the physiology of voice. All the while, Nathan regularly makes use of Greek and Hebrew (and sometimes Arabic and Sanskrit) script. Yet there is method to this dizzying display. For Nathan, "a knowledge of the world, and a general share of information beyond mere acquaintance with minims and semibreves" were prerequisites for the fully formed singer.[89]

[88] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis,* 52.
[89] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis,* 72.

Table 4.1 Contents (Chapter Titles and Length) of the Editions Compared

An Essay on … the Human Voice (1823)		*Musurgia Vocalis* (1836)	
I. [history of music]	18	I. A short history of music	48
II. Influence of music over the ancients	15	II. On the Effect of Music over the Passions of the Moderns	8
III. Nature of sound	12	III. On the effect of Music upon Animals	8
IV. Qualities of the human voice	22	IV. On the Abuse of Music	13
V. Emphasis	8	V. On Tone or Sound	39
VI. [execution]	6	VI. On the Human Voice, and its general qualities	46
VII. Expression	24	VII. On Articulation	12
VIII. The countenance	6	VIII. On Emphasis and Accents	20
IX. Signification of time	6	IX. Expression	46
X. [musical terminology]	94	X. On the countenance and deportment	18
XI. Effect of modern music contrasted with that of the ancients	8	XI. Execution as applied to music	18
XII. [effect of music on animals]	8	XII. On Time	32
		XIII. On the Origins of the Scale	44

The didactic layout of *Musurgia* modeled a kind of curiosity that Nathan expected in his students. His discussion of the all-important *messa di voce* is case in point. Nathan agrees with Corri, Mancini, Tosi, and nearly every other writer on the topic that "the swelling and dying of the voice" constitutes "the principal art of singing," though he strives for a clearer aesthetic justification for its practice and "judicious" use. The ability of the voice to gracefully grow and shrink in loudness is what "sweetens, enriches, and gives that delicious roundness and fulness [sic.] to the tone, so desirable for every branch of vocal science" and "makes music respond to the various passions, and passes the feeling of one mind to another." He pushes further still, grounding the modern technique within the earliest days of human culture:

> It was this swell and dying of the voice … which animated ancient heroes to the battle, as the Bardic strains recapitulated the deeds of brave ancestors, and urged their bold

> descendants to imitate by personal prowess their noble deeds: to them this *ὀπισθόμβροτον αὔχημα δοξᾶς* ["loud acclaim of renown that survives a man"] was a monument, to the acquisition of which their whole lives were devoted; and it was the softer strain of lyric poetry, which in a great measure civilized life.

Suddenly, what began as simple motivation for a stylistic effect becomes a romantic exhortation to follow in the lyrical tradition of our ancestors. We follow this bardic thread from the first stirrings of civilization through successive ages and nations. We hear of Pindar's ode to Apollo's golden lyre ("*χρυσέα φόρμιγξ κ. τ. λ.*") and its "splendid amplification" ("Awake, Æolian Lyre, Awake, &c.") in Thomas Gray's *Progress of Poesy*.[90] The canon of Homer, Horace, and "the great Hindù Poets" exhibits similar inspiration, and as the harp in Persian poetry is "heart-inflaming" and "heart-enlightening," it is similarly "'כבודי' *my Glory*" in the psalms of David.

Oscillating between mythohistory and poetic exegesis, Nathan weaves a narrative of song across the globe all the while building to a rhetorical *crescendo*, as if to demonstrate the effect of the *messa di voce* through his authorial voice:

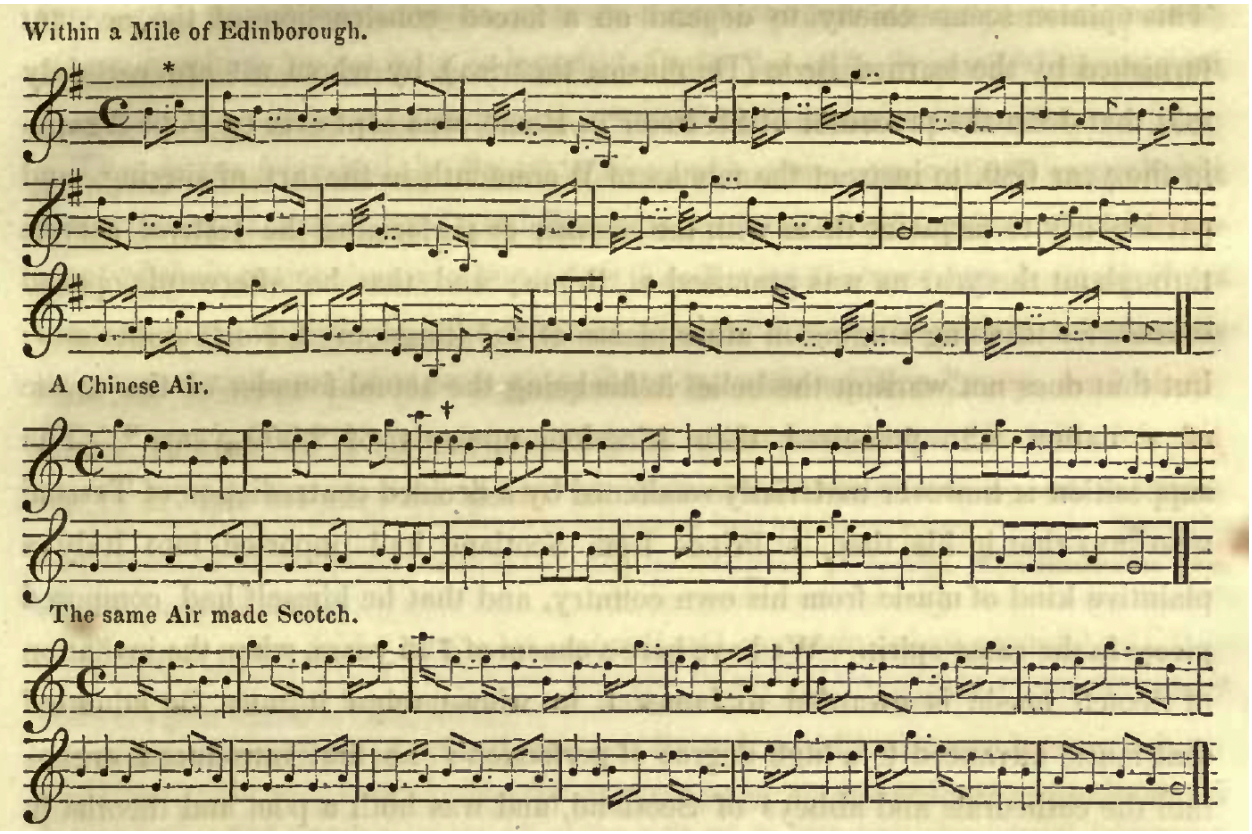
> Music was connected with the Divinity by every Philosophic Nation … Nor have the Muses any where existed without a Deification of their attributes; the classic daughters of the infinite mind and memory, who inhabited Olympus, the pastoral, but divine, attendants on Krishna, the Indian Apollo, and the Northern Nymphs of song, all, prove this very demonstrable assertion. So, the Gods … are represented delighting themselves in melody … and even in the scriptural pages, the beatitude of the future state is depicted to the human mind by the appropriate metaphor of seraphic melody produced by golden instruments and immortal voices, which idea evidently resulted in the effects of harmony transferred from sensations, of which we are positively cognizant, to promised joys and blessings, which we can only anthropopathetically pourtray [sic.] to ourselves under this figure. May we not then say of music, "Est Deus in nobis; spirante calescimus illo" [there is a god within us; his breathing warm us"]?
>
> But to return to my subject.[91]

[90] Both Greek quotations are from Pindar's *First Pythian Ode* (470 BC) and Gray's *The Progress of Poesy: A Pindaric Ode* (1757).

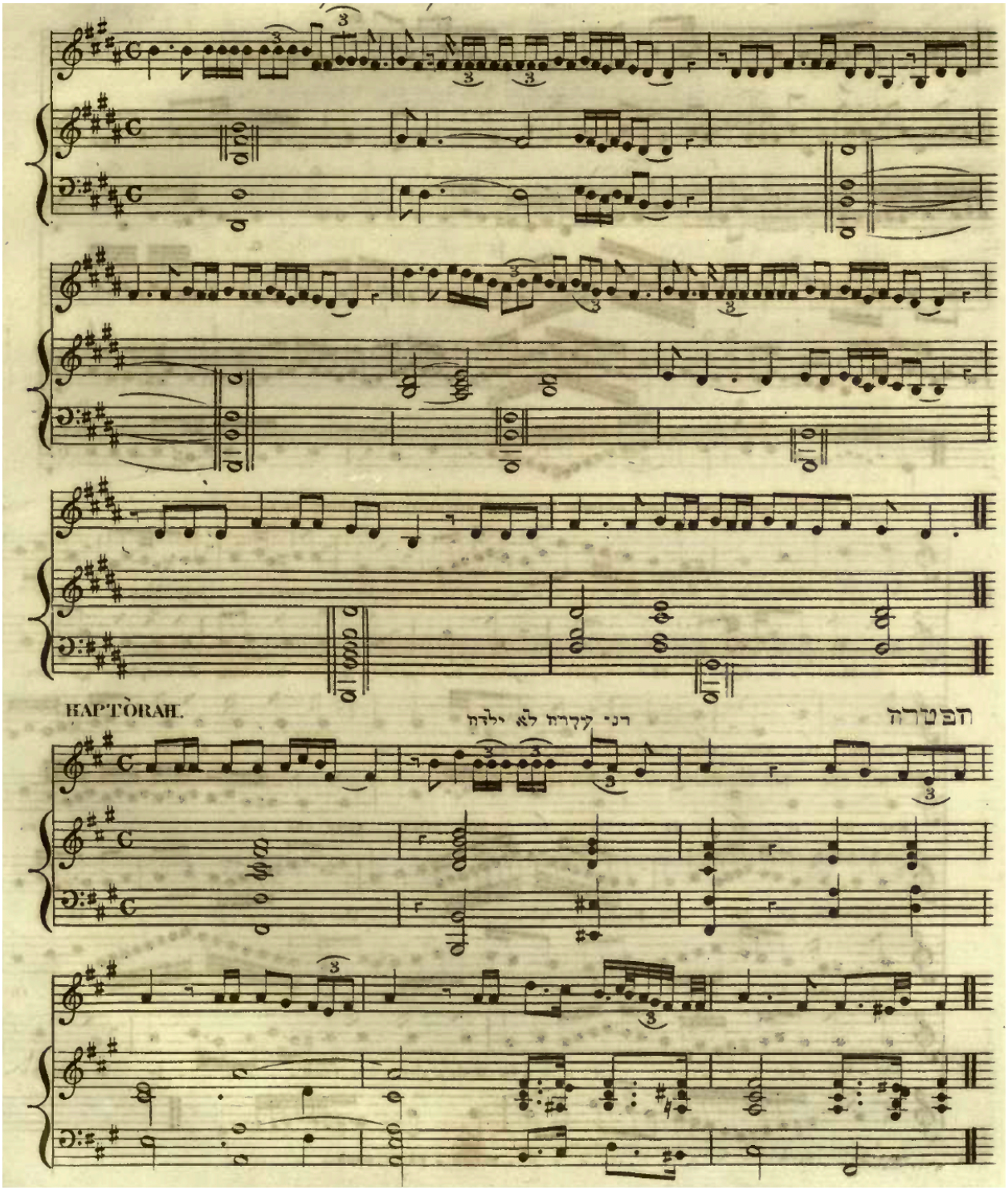
[91] The last line Nathan has adapted from Ovid's *Fasti*, which reads *agitante* (stirring) but he has changed to *spirante* (breathing), Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 150–51.

In this climactic passage, the various personifications of the arts are imagined through what we may call the *interpretatio britannica*. Invoking the Olympian Muses of ancient Greece, Nathan interpolates their familiar form through the attendants of "Krishna, the Indian Apollo" and the Celtic "Northern Nymphs of song." He reaches his fever pitch with the "golden instruments and immortal voices" of his own holy writ, but upon witnessing the angelic choirs, he begins his earthly descent and poetic *decrescendo* to the wisdom of Ovid. Then, roused by his own muse to end the digression, he quietly inserts himself into the text (as if lowering the voice *al niente*) to undercut any lingering tension and round out his didactic performance.

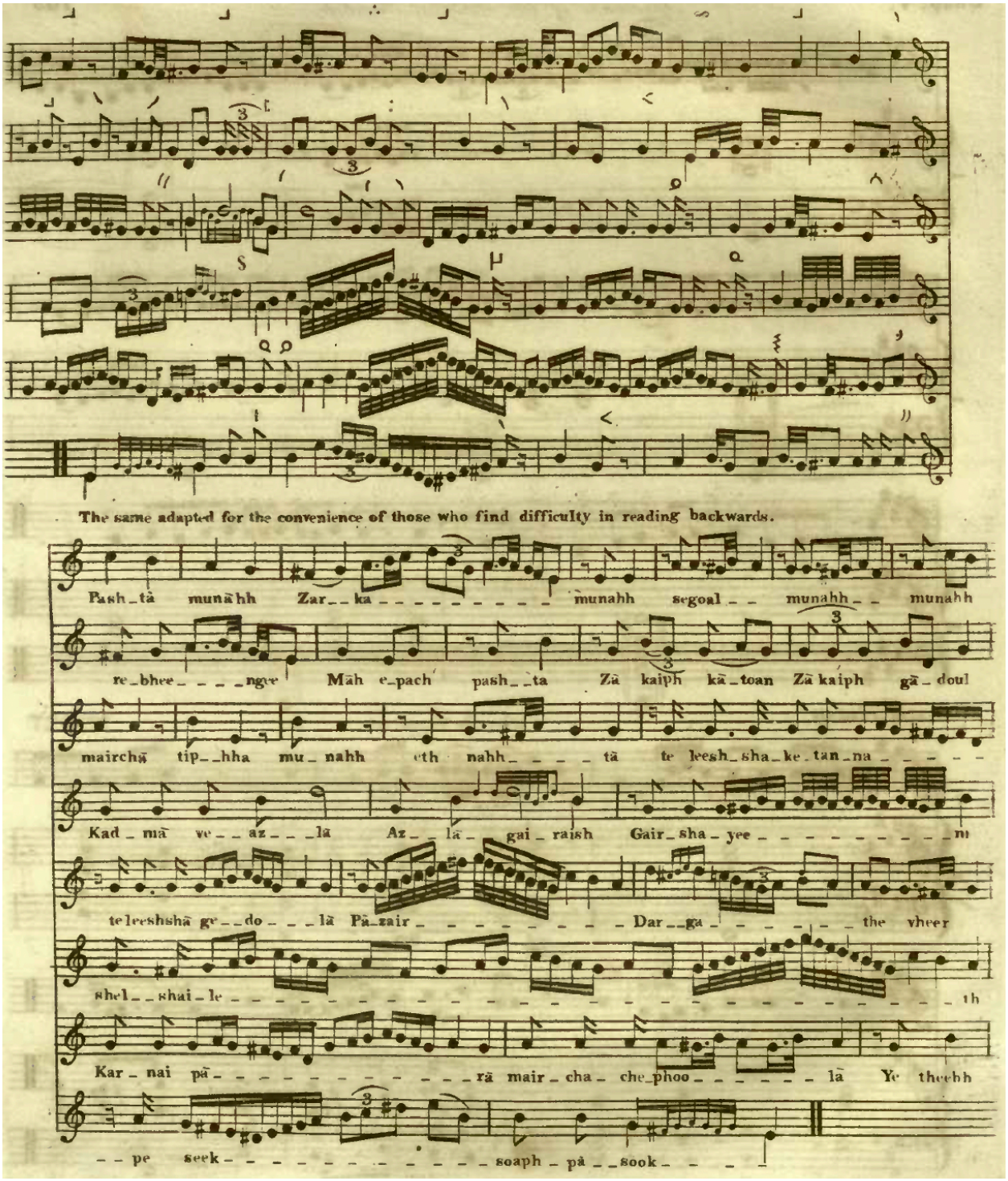
Example 4.6 Nathan's attempt to demonstrate the Chinese origins of Scottish music in the similarities between a "Scotch" song and "Chinese Air," the latter of which he transforms by varying the rhythm with Scotch snaps. Source: Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis* (London, 1836).



Example 4.7 Nathan's attempt at transcribing a "Specimen of the Ancient Recitative," with by the concluding *haptòrah* (הפטרה), or reading from the Book of Prophets. Source: Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis* (London, 1836).



Example 4.8 Nathan's attempt at transcribing "The Hebrew accents, under which are affixed the Notes, forming the long or short phrases they each represent." Source: Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis* (London, 1836).



That such passages require such in-depth analysis to fully understand may explain why Nathan's text has never been included with other texts that make up the main corpus of nineteenth-century voice pedagogy. Martin Bidney has likened Nathan's almost improvisatory style of writing to the "idiosyncratic literary genre [of] the 'anatomy,' an erudite, entertaining compendium, digressive and anecdotal, unified by the narrator-persona's speaking and shaping voice."[92] At the same time, Nathan's time training for the rabbinate meant that he was well-practiced in the close study of text. From the very first page, he establishes the authority of Hebrew scripture. He begins his "short history" with a question on the origins of music: "Was it Apollo or Mercury, was it Orpheus or Amphion, who gave sounds to the extended string, and voice to the excavated tortoise-shell?" The rhetorical move would be recognizable enough to his readers as coming out of the Socratic tradition, and thus echoes his earlier invocation of Plato, at the top of the preface, to legitimize the authorial enterprise of *Musurgia*. His answer, then, is unexpected: "The traditions which assign the honour to either, attest only the immeasurable antiquity of the contrivance; but the more exact record of Moses, traces the invention to a seventh descendant [Jubal] from the great protoplast himself."[93] Brushing away the kind of conjecture to be expected from the Greeks and their intellectual descendants, he turns to Genesis—a book held in common by Christianity and Judaism—for the true accounting of history. He would later expound on this point in a prime example of Talmudic reasoning: "From holy writ … we are distinctly told that Jubal, the sixth descendant from Cain, was 'the father of all such as handle the harp and organ,' this at once established the fact that there were other musicians as well as musical instrument makers, or he could not be styled the father of all who

[92] Martin Bidney, "Motsas' for Lord Byron: The Judeo-British Literary Persona of Isaac Nathan," *The Byron Journal* 25 (1997): 60–61.
[93] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 1–3.

handled the harp and organ."[94] Nathan thus infuses a rabbinic mode of inquiry within an otherwise "secular" study most likely to be read by a majority-Gentile audience.

Moreover, the book is filled with examples of Old Testament heroes, demonstrations of Talmudic logic, and Hebrew quotations. If "border epistemologies subsume/redefine the emancipatory rhetoric of modernity," as Grosfoguel explains, Nathan's praxis of border song challenged commonly held beliefs about Jewish culture, history, and thought from the unique perspective of a rabbinically fluent Anglo-Jew.[95] As with his arrangements of the *Hebrew Melodies*, the various topics presented in Nathan's treatise serve to couch the "ancient" sounds of Judaism within a progressive framework of "modern" music historiography, a move that was similarly authorized by his professional credentials acquired through "foreign" Italian training. In one of his more eccentric passages, he picks up a familiar thread from his teacher's historiographic opera in making sense of "Scotch melody" and "its peculiar adherence to … the Chinese scale." After citing Burney and Rameau on the subject, he presents a composite Sino-Scotch air by incorporating Scotch snaps into the "specimen of Chinese melody" from Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de musique* (see example 4.6). He pushes the argument farther: "What intercourse China may have had with Scotland in the dark ages before the time of Fergus, is difficult to ascertain … I am, however, of opinion that some connexion took place between the Scotch and Chinese, long before that epoch."[96] And this is not the only course of musical exchange he draws between East and West. In the funerary wailing (keening) of the Irish, he perceives a Hebrew antecedent: "Caoinan, pronounced *keenaan*, the name given to the funeral song of the Irish; from the Hebrew קינה derived from the root *Kà-nèh*, a reed, cane, pipe, or tube.

[94] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 108–109.
[95] Grosfoguel, "World-Systems Analysis," 178.
[96] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis,* 30–31.

… The expression is also used for *mourning women*."[97] In Bidney's reading, the musical link Nathan draws from Israel to Ireland reflects his self-conscious Judeo-British literary persona.[98] Such an idea recalls Rutherford's claim that Corri inserted "full definitions of Italian terms as well as drawing other British writers into his narrative [to show] that he was both an Italian and a fully integrated member of the British community."[99] Nathan, however, is less invested in the performance of Britishness than repositioning the place of the Jews in the history of the West.

A striking amplification of this argument occurs in the fifth chapter, "On Tone or Sound," which begins with a surprising etymology lesson: "SOUND, from the Hebrew שאון, a noise, in Latin, *sonus*."[100] That the modern English word "sound" cannot actually be traced back to a Hebrew source (it derives, instead, from the Latin) is beside his point.[101] By heading off the chapter documenting sound, the very stuff of music, with an origin story that foregrounds Hebrew, he submits a small but impactful change to England's linguistic, and vocal, lineage. After a dozen pages rehearsing the nature of sound and the importance of pure tone to both song and the initial development of language, he concludes that "there can be little doubt but that recitative was the first kind of singing either known or cultivated. … [its approximation] to ordinary discourse renders it the most beautiful and affecting species of music."[102] And, unlike Rousseau, Nathan is quite certain by whom it was first cultivated:

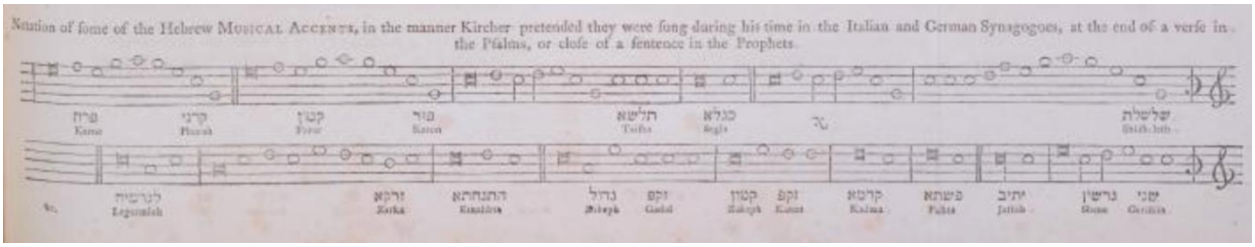
> Greece and Rome claim recitative exclusively as their own … But recitative may be traced many centuries before its having been heard of in Greece, for it was known, and in general use, in the earliest patriarchal times of the Jews; it was then, and still is, materially connected with their religious ceremonies. Every word of prayer offered to the

[97] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 21–22.
[98] Bidney, "Motsas' for Lord Byron," 63.
[99] Rutherford, "Italian Musical Migration," 19–20.
[100] In the published text, the Hebrew is printed incorrectly as שואן, see Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 87.
[101] Descending from the Latin *sonus*, by way of Old French "son," the English word "sound" ultimately traces to the hypothesized proto-Indo-European language. Hebrew, a Semitic language, descends from proto-Afro-Asiatic and is therefore not related.
[102] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 97–98.

> Deity, whether in their private or public devotion, is given in a kind of chant, which, although it may not come under the exact character of legitimate recitative, still bears the sound of song.[103]

As the seed of the operatic tradition, recitative is the musical inheritance of the West. Burney writes in the opening of the fourth volume of the *General History* that "the annals of modern Music have hitherto furnished no event so important to the progress of the art, as the recovery or invention of *Recitative*, or dramatic melody."[104] In tracing the origin of recitative beyond its self-legitimizing *locus classicus* in the Greco-Roman past, Nathan disrupts the standard music–historical narrative for the past two centuries, and he is keen to prove his point. In order to demonstrate this "analogy between the ancient manner of speaking, and our present style of recitative," he presents a generic "Specimen of the Ancient Recitative" (see example 4.7).[105] As Corri and Burney framed it, the contemporary operatic tradition was brought to perfection in the artistic (and commercial) exchange between Italy and England—a journey from the South to the North. Nathan's border intervention is to present a prologue in the East centering his Hebrew vocal inheritance.

Example 4.9 Burney's recreation of Kircher's attempt at transcribing the "Hebrew Musical Accents." Source: Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. 1 (London, 1776).



[103] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 97–98.
[104] Burney, *General History*, 4: 12.
[105] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis,* 100.

Nathan claims that "from time immemorial," the cantillation associated with the Torah has been "known and sung" and remains "invariably the same among the Jews of every country," and he provides a guide (see example 4.8) There is, however, a problem, as "Doctor Burney … implies a doubt of these musical accents being genuine, and observes that 'Kircher *pretended* they were sung during this time'."[106] Indeed, in the first volume of the *General History*, Burney did provide examples of "the Hebrew Musical Accents, in the manner Kircher pretended they were sung during his time in the Italian and German Synagogues" (see example 4.9). Nathan concludes with his wish that "the learned Doctor applied for information to any of the Hebrews" on this point though, as it happens, Burney claims to have done just that: "I have been informed by a Hebrew high priest, that … the little singing now used [in the synagogue] is an innovation, and a modern license … [only] the Germans … preserve some old melodies, or species of chants, which are thought to be very ancient."[107] Thus, we are back in 1815 with the publication of the *Hebrew Melodies* and their antiquity is still at issue. This time, however, Nathan has a direct line to his audience, whom he assures: "Since the captivity of the Jews in Babylon and the destruction of their temple, 606 B.C. … they have, with increased tenacity, preserved their ancient melodies, and bequeathed them by memory from one generation to another, with the same jealous care that a miser would his most valued treasure."[108] Particularly striking here is the re-appropriation of the old anti-Jewish libel, namely monetary greed, to the enslaved and

[106] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis,* 107.
[107] Charles Burney, *General History*, 1: 251.
[108] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 100–101.

displaced Hebrews, flipping connotations of the miserly Shylock on its head by transmuting a usurer's ill-gotten gold into the Word of God, gifted to a chosen people.[109]

Turning again to Burney, Nathan pushes back against the withering appraisal of Jewish music in the *General History*. Ironically, in the previous chapter ("On the Abuse of Music"), he endorsed (or, perhaps, cited as cover) Burney's cutting observation that "our parochial music is more likely to drive Christians out of the church, than draw pagans into it." Nathan, too, offered a harsh critique of Anglican psalmody. If the "Romish church" could boast of "*Stabat Maters, Misereres, and Motets*" written by "the greatest masters of their day," the most that the "Protestant church" could muster for "the exquisite psalms of David" were settings that "are as badly arranged as they are ill sung."[110] The difference, of course, is that Nathan does not dismiss the Christian musical legacy out of hand, whereas the "learned Doctor Burney … has pronounced the music of the Hebrews, 'rough, and deserving of little attention'."[111] He refers here to the historian's contention that:

> the music of the ancient Hebrews must, therefore, have been rough, not only from their language, but … the manner of singing at present in the synagogues, of which the chorus is composed of clamour and jargon. These circumstances must, therefore, have escaped those who have highly extolled the ancient Hebrew music, or they must have been utterly ignorant of the art of singing.[112]

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[109] This can be further attested to by an earlier allusion to *The Merchant of Venice* with regards to imperial Rome: "They who have not 'music in their soul,' and believe the power ascribed to it fictitious, have, as a proof of its not softening the heart, seized on the examples of Nero and Commodus." Neither, he explains, "possessed real genius or love for the science of music," though Nero's desire to be seen as a great singer is enough for him to declare that the emperor "wished the world to believe him unfit 'for treasons, stratagems, and spoils'." Nathan quotes from Lorenzo's Act V speech on the power of music to affect the soul, a point that recalls the Jewish noise accusation and Shylock's frantic desire in Act II to "stop [his] house's ears" from "the drum" and "the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife." Thus he condemns the excesses of Rome, which was only the latest to have occupied the land of Judea and exploit its people, by again reinterpreting a Judeophobic trope. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 8.
[110] Nor are the "Evangelical dissenters" any better, for though "their hymns are anything but dull [they] often breathe too much of amatory feeling for so holy a place." Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 79–81.
[111] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 107.
[112] Burney, *General History*, 1: 250.

This passage actually recalls Burney's trip to the Amsterdam synagogue, discussed above, after which he also described the response of the congregation as "a confused clamour, and a riotous noise, more than song or prayer."[113] In both instances, Burney returns to the noise accusation to confirm for his readers that the sounds of the synagogue are not music at all. This Nathan pronounces as "erroneous," sardonically lamenting that "the beauty and originality of the Hebrew music did not tempt him to enter more warmly into its merits."[114] In his final defense, he returns to present-day England, where, despite the "dispersion and fallen state" of the Hebrews, their "cunning in song" can yet be heard in the streets of London by any who care to listen. Examples abound, of course, in "the sweet strains of Leoni" and "the perfect and masterly tones of Braham," but even the poorest, with "no musical advantages," display a "natural flexibility of voice, and nicety of ear" that may produce such "cadences and complex divisions" as to "shame many of our leading singers."[115] Just as Corri had done in *The Travellers*, Nathan ends his journey in Britain; unlike the music of Italy, though, there are no new heights of scientific perfection that Hebrew song has attained since its arrival.

Vox Orientalis et Australis

In singing from the border, Nathan drew on his cosmopolitan vocal lineage to craft a new narrative of music history and promote his people's "cunning in song." In many ways, the

[113] Burney, *Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, 300–301.
[114] Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 107.
[115] To this list, he eagerly adds some who are decidedly not of Jewish descent, including the tenor Manuel García I (patriarch of the singing dynasty whom he elsewhere claims to have been "the son of respectable Hebrew parents" in Seville) and the violin virtuoso Niccolò Paganini. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, 116; He claims García of Hebrew lineage in the biography of García's late daughter, Maria Malibran, see Isaac Nathan, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran de Beriot* (London, 1836), 2; on the "false mythology" of Paganini's Jewish lineage, see Joshua S. Walden, "The 'Yidishe Paganini': Sholem Aleichem's Stempenyu, the Music of Yiddish Theatre and the Character of the Shtetl Fiddler," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 139 (2014): 89–136.

treatise is singular in the corpus of modern vocal pedagogy. Ostensibly a singing tutor, significant portions of the text are devoted to his musings on the ontology, science, and universality of music. The broad scope covered by its title—history, theory, and voice—is telling. Compared to previous works published in England—Galliard's (translation, after Tosi) *Observations on the Florid Song* (1743), Lanza's *Elements of Singing* (1809), Corri's *Singer's Preceptor* (1810)—Nathan's stands out for its conceptual focus on "the Human Voice" as an object of study. In a way, the title of the *Essay* points to the metaphysical paradox that would emerge from this new approach. On the one hand, by reimagining voice in terms of liberal identity and political representation, writers in the 1830s had metaphorically unmoored the traditional site of speech and song from the body.[116] In the same decade, anatomical studies had revealed the principal role of the larynx (known from then on as the "voice box") in phonation, the early stages of an empirically based pedagogy. Over the first half of the century, writes James Q. Davies, "the singer's object of study was moving ever back: from external instruments or mouths in the early century, to the back of the throat, to the glottis, and then beyond, the voice eventually disappearing from ordinary view."[117] In this post-Enlightenment discourse of voice, equal parts romanticism and biology, the singer's tools were simultaneously lost behind unfamiliar organs of the body and rediscovered as the most authentic expression of the soul.

The publication of the new and improved *Musurgia Vocalis*, in 1836, had appeared at a turning point in the global landscape of song. Also appearing that year was the new *Musical World*, "a periodical that endowed [Anglophone] music criticism with a more professional slant,

[116] Ellen Lockhart, "Voice Boxes," in *London Voices 1820–1840: Vocal Performers, Practices, Histories*, ed. Roger Parker and Susan Rutherford (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 262–63.
[117] James Q. Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 128.

and a 'scientific' interest in music history."[118] In terms of the stage, 1836 saw Thomas Rice bring his infamous "Jim Crow" act, and the Blackface minstrelsy of the antebellum period, to the British Isles. His popularity across class boundaries would inaugurate the American minstrel song as an international phenomenon just as the young Victoria was ascending the throne of the United Kingdom.[119] Meanwhile, in Paris of 1837, the tenor Gilbert-Louis Duprez would alter the trajectory of virtuosic (*bel canto*) singing through his use of the *Ut de poitrine*, a high C supposedly delivered in chest voice.[120] Soon after, Manuel Patricio Rodríguez García published his *Mémoire sur la voix humaine* (1840), sending vocal pedagogy on a decidedly scientific turn. Within four years of publishing his masterwork, however, Nathan once again found himself on the verge of financial ruin. The final straw, according to his twentieth-century biographers, was the denial of payment by Victoria's new government for services rendered to her late father, George IV. In 1831, Nathan had appealed to the Literary Fund Society and received a relief payment of £40, but such a stroke of luck would not hit twice.[121] Completely out of options, the family emigrated to the British colony of New South Wales in Australia, so named for the *Terra Australis Incognita* (Unknown Southern Land) long imagined to exist at the "bottom" of the world.[122] In England, Nathan had cobbled an evocative voice out of the mystique of the Orient and the artistic legacy of the European South, each offering its own set of origins and excesses. In migrating to colonial Australia, he sought a new legacy, this time from the North.

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[118] Roger Parker and Susan Rutherford, eds., *London Voices 1820-1840: Vocal Performers, Practices, Histories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 12.
[119] Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 65–66.
[120] Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance*, 123–51.
[121] Loan 96 RLF 1/693, Royal Literary Fund on Nathan, British Library.
[122] The sailor Matthew Flinders proposed naming the landmass containing the British colony of New South Wales and the Dutch colony of New Holland as a whole. He "ventured upon the re-adoption of the original *Terra Australis*" but ultimately suggesting Australia in keeping with the names of the other continents, see Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis* (London, 1814), iii.

AFTERWORD

Over the course of the long eighteenth century, the engagement between voice and ear, at once material and fictional, generated new epistemological frameworks of music, history, and humanity in the imperial imaginary. Conjecture on the origins of voice, language, and song were, of course, fixtures of eighteenth-century writing on the nature of humanity and human difference. The works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Adam Smith in this vein all offer vastly different takes on early human vocality, though all deal to some degree with the sonic and bodily qualities of language. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), for example, Smith positions song as a central difference between "savage" and "civil" societies:

> Every savage is said to prepare himself, from his earliest youth, for [a] dreadful end: he composes for this purpose what they call the song of death, a song which he is to sing when he has fallen into the hands of his enemies [that] expresses the highest contempt of death and pain. … The same contempt of death and torture prevails among all other savage nations. There is not a negro from the coast of Africa who does not, in this respect, possess a degree of magnanimity which the soul of his sordid master is too often scarce capable of conceiving. … This heroic and unconquerable firmness, which the custom and education of his country demand of every savage, is not required of those who are brought up to live in civilized societies.[1]

For Smith, the contemplative singing practices of so-called "savage nations" evince a degree a humanity that he finds lacking in more "civilized societies." His opinion on slavery thus differs from many of the people surveyed in this dissertation. But like them, he nevertheless locates a vital boundary between Black African and white Briton, and between civilization and savagery, in the work of the sounding voice.

Smith, like his contemporaries, wields a broad brush to gloss the function of song in "nations" and "societies." My account searches instead for what Denning and Tomlinson call

[1] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Edinburgh, 1759), 316.

cantological meanings at the level of individual bodies and their sonic exchanges in real time.[2] William Thomas Beckford's racially liminal status as the English-born descendent of white Creoles found him pitting an extravagant practice of self-fashioning against gendered obligations to business and to Britain. What I have described as his "Camp aurality" was a tool by which he re-negotiated his place within the empire. The castrato voices of Pacchierotti and Tenducci that sang his birthday cantata *Il tributo* necessarily obscured the disciplinary message of the text, designed to bring his sexuality into line, instead producing a conflicting image of English masculinity. Meanwhile, Sophia Plowden's singing of "Hindustani airs" appeared to her Anglo-Indian audiences as masterful reproductions of the Indo-Persian courtly song traditionally performed by Mughal courtesans. But while Plowden's embrace of local culture may have been done in earnest, her performances evacuated the social and embodied context of the *nautch*. Her practice of what I call "colonial ventriloquy" was driven by goals that ultimately served to reinforce the East India Company's continued dominance in the region.

Beckford and Plowden enacted practices of vocality and aurality that contributed to an aesthetic regime underpinning British imperial identity. The other figures I have discussed instead reproduced a set of imperial aesthetics for posterity. The discursive exchange between William Beckford of Somerley and Charles Burney contributed to a cultural order that universalized and naturalized European music while subsuming enslaved singing into the British imperial soundscape. The pedagogical lineage of Isaac Nathan—and therefore of Domenico Corri and Nicola Porpora—ensured a continued practice of vocal pedagogy and performance, the aesthetics of which long informed the future of singing in Britain.

[2] Michael Denning and Gary Tomlinson, "Cantologies," *Representations* 154 (2021).

In the introduction, I noted Davies's assertion that "we build worlds around voices, worlds at once cultural-technological and natural-biological."[3] The vocal worlds of eighteenth-century Britain remain with us today. We can no longer hear *how*—let alone *what*—they heard, but their private letters and published works form a rich archive of the sounding voice. Necessarily bound up in shifting modes of racialization and mediated through complex libidinal desires, the material practice of song served as an embodied technology, a *technê* of empire through which eighteenth-century Britons re-made the very notion of the human.[4] To understand the work of voice in this way is to recognize, as Sylvia Wynter puts it, *being* human as *performatively enacting* "discursive formations, aesthetic fields, and systems of knowledge," that "with being human *everything is praxis*."[5] The goal of my dissertation has been to unearth a few of those formations, found in works of music history or vocal pedagogy, and to highlight the role of song aesthetics in the discursive and material construction of empire. The path forward, in Wynter's view, is "to relativize the West's hitherto secular liberal monohumanist conception of our being human" and "speak instead of our *genres of being human*." In the parlance of this project, we must learn to listen for new *genres of voice*.

[3] James Q. Davies, "Voice Belongs," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68 (2015): 681; on the notion of a "vocalic body," see Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 35.
[4] On voice occupying the "the realm of *technê*" see Bonnie Gordon, "It's Not about the Cut: The Castrato's Instrumentalized Song," *New Literary History* 46 (2015): 654.
[5] Katherine McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?: Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 31–34.

APPENDIX

Gasparo Pacchierotti to William Beckford, 1780–1781

Bodleian MS Beckford c.34

Lucca 9 October 1780[1]

My Respectable Lord,

Having no reason to expect it (with regards to your precious letter), I was nevertheless disposed this day to receive news from you, as I had occasion to return a package, directed to you, and found this post—believe what pleasure Your Lordship's preempting, being honored by you with such distinction, has brought me. Knowing that you are doing well is, presently, my sole joy, although you proclaim yourself possessed of the knowledge of your delirium, which I otherwise believe, without consequence. You owe me nothing; you owe all to yourself and your own merit, which rare times will mean that the world is not enchanted, though I protest that I truly am. Your comic description of the show made me laugh a great deal, though a laughter quite different from your previous stories, which, whatever the subject, always seemed wonderful to me.

I fear I am comfortable, and disappoint the observations of these Argonauts, indefatigable explorers of my conduct: I know I do not have them to guard the Golden fleece over me, yet they take care of a certain canvas that they sell, bringing some profit, an object not indifferent for the state, and I will be free soon. Would you explain how much your residence will be costing, as then I can finally satisfy myself. The house of Nobili sends a thousand compliments, and I return

[1] Beckford's last letter from Lucca (to Fanny Burney) is dated 1 October 1780. In it he writes: "Had I not hopes of hearing Pacchierotti again at Venice during the carnival this would not be my last epistle from Lucca." The performance was presumably Bertoni's *Armida abbandonata* at the Teatro San Benedetto, which premiered 26 December 1780.

thanks on your behalf: the pretty Baby does the same.[2] I, then, among those who know you, am the most anxious for your tranquility, for the honor of following your commands, and for the opportunity to distinguish myself in every circumstance

to my most respectable Lord.

Your most devoted and affectionate Servant,

Gasparo Pacchierotti

Lucca 23 October 1780

Before you leave Florence, I must tell you of a letter that Mr. Bertoni wrote to me, in which he tells me to let you know that in Venice, at the Teatro San Benedetto, there is already a box reserved for you on the third level, no. 24, which is one of the best that was still available. So now, do not wait to claim it for the lovely first performance, lest some Genius more powerful than Music take it away from us. My grief is great for not being able to see you before I leave this place, but still I worry if it is true (as they say) that those who reside in Etruria (that is, the place where you now reside) can suspend your departure for a few days. I will depart from Lucca eight days from now, at which point I will have fulfilled, by duty and for complacence, all of my obligations. Next Sunday, the 29th of the current month, the show ends, after having consented to extend it by six performances, though I do not regret it, as my manner of thinking prevents outrage, and I sometimes take pleasure from other people's confusion.

I would be desirous to accompany you on your trip to the Hermitage, if so doing had increased, or could increase, that devotion which I have for you, but then, as my heart needs it not, I will vow to heaven since the sanctity of that place animates yours with constancy. Your

[2] Written in English in the original.

inspirations do not require sibyllic notices because your sublime insight supplies them, to teach easy and pleasant methods in different circumstances. That which you always do, or think, I will respect blindly, your frankness, itself, I will evaluate if I could discharge it, as I would like to attribute it to that transport that you have always used to help me and make me more worthy of that honor which allows me to deign

myself, Sir, your most respectable, humble, and favored servant,

Gasparo Pacchierotti

P.S. the noble house offers its many compliments, as do I, for Mr. Lettice –

Venice 3 March 1781[3]

My Most Respectable Lord,

I was extremely moved by the last letter you sent me from Paris, in which you were pleased to update me, and of your happy arrival that leading city, as well as your being perfectly healed from your extraordinary agitation: I very much enjoy the news, and I am infinitely grateful for your letting me know. I have finished my duties, and I would like, without the help of the Hippogriff, to fly by your side, if I could, then continue the journey with you as far as London, but my duties in Mantua (already contracted) forbid me, so that yearned for moment will have to be deferred until next Summer. Sarti, the composer of *Giulio Sabino*, was met with universal applause, and his music is truly beautiful. From Livorno, a certain Mister Micali Tincagliere writes me to have you order some Corallo grappa, which are in Venice in the shop of Mister Ippoliti, a merchant of such goods. I have seen them, there are five: two of a dark color, not at all coralline, but perhaps bigger than the other three; if you would have me get them, I will do it willingly, noting that the price assigned for this grappa is 27 of 28 Zechini: I therefore await

[3] Sorted at the Bodleian as 1782.

your wisdom on this. The family Cornera has passed around five weeks in Venice enjoying Carnival, which was rather brilliant although I did not enjoy it. Yesterday my duties had me with them, as they leave for Padua, and the Lady Mother, on the subject, told me to congratulate you very much, but not even a peep from the other one indicating the same; so too from afar they are intended and I rejoice very much. Bertoni imposes upon me to send you his respects; I beg you to remember me to Mr. Lettice and Mr. de Benincasa, and I have the honor of declaring myself

to my most respectable Lord, your most humble and devoted Servant,

Gasparo Pacchierotti

Paris 12 March 1781

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of employing the few moments I have to spare in writing to you my dear Pacchierotti & in beseeching you will not forget your promise of coming to Fonthill: There you will enjoy tranquility in the midst of those who are truly sensible of your excellence, without hearing idle talk & vulgar clamours. Let me intreat you to return once more to me & your good Friend Lady Mary. Abandon that capricious Town of Venice & despise its empty acclamations. Your musical conceptions are far too noble & transcendent for the corrupt, enervate, Audience of San Benetto.[4] A few silly women & their puny Danglers are not calculated to feel the Heroism of Sabinus or Quinto Fabio.[5] Your song is of a loftier nature than that to which Italy for these many Ages has been accustomed. So touching a voice & so sublime a manner would have inspired a second Curtius[6] to have cast himself into the gulph & another

[4] Teatro San Benedetto in Venice, where Pacchierotti had recently sang the eponymous role in Sarti's *Guilio Sabino* on 3 January. He had also, on 26 December, sang the role of Rinaldo in the *Armida abbandonata* of his singing master, Ferdinando Bertoni.
[5] Presumably he references the opera by Sarti, noted above, as well as his role in Bertoni's *Quinto Fabio*.
[6] Legendary Roman who, upon a crevice opening up in the earth and acousmatically declaring that only Rome's most valuable possession would close it up, leapt in, claiming that Rome's most precious item was a brave citizen.

Regulus[7] to leave returned to certain Death for the welfare of his Country. I have always thought you inspired, my dear Pacchierotti & were this the season of, Inspiration a statue would be decreed to your Honour. Ingratitude is but too common, in these modern times — or else what treasures would reward the transports you have occasioned. For my own part I feel the weight of my obligations & I shall never be happy till I have discharged them. Give me an opportunity, my dear friend. relinquish your journey to Mantua & return without delay, to England. I think of settling at Fonthill in June & could you but do the same, I should cease to think myself unhappy. You will find my attachment invariable. It is more than a Day we have past together & every hour increased my good opinion. If you act wisely my dear friend if you value an existence which does so much honor to Humanity if in short you have any regard for me take a firm solution & before two months are elapsed let me repeat to you over & over again how sincerely I am

your most affectionate & obliged W. B.

My best congratulations to Bertoni whom I hope will accompany you & to whom I beg you will present the warmest assurances of my attachment.

Mantua 15 May 1781

My Most Respectable Lord,

I have been forwarded three of your most kind letters from Venice (one dated from Paris and two from London) which are infinitely dear to me, both for the pleasure I have always when receiving news of you, and also because they now tell me that you have had a great trip, are in perfect health, and are calm of mind, which I always desire for my heart since we can never be

[7] Roman consul captured in Tunis after defeating the Carthaginians in the First Punic War who, after being paroled to negotiate a peace with Rome, returned to fulfill the terms of his parole and was tortured to death.

happy without these last two blessed gifts from heaven. I am doing mostly fine here, although the air is not the healthiest; we have already exhibited on this stage our show, which is most pleasant. The Drama is *L'Olimpiade*; the music, all new from a certain Mr. Maestro Gatti, is beautiful, particularly my pieces: we have reduced the book to two acts, and it thus succeeds wonderfully; in sum the ensemble is magnificent, the public is content: thus is the news.

My obligation to remain here is only until early July; I plan to leave with our friend Bertoni at that time. He will certainly take care of your Coralli grappa, which should arrive, I hope, in good condition. Another work is being composed in Venice, for the Ascension, after which, he tells me, they will join us here and we will leave together for London. Please do not fail to send me news while I have the misfortune of being distant from you; I assure you that it would be my sole comfort if you ever wanted to employ me in your command, as I count myself entirely at your disposal. Enjoy yourself, present me as a servant to Your Most Respectable Mother, give my respects to Mr. Courtenay, and Mr. Lettice, and do not fail to believe what I have, so many times, had the honor of declaring myself

to my most respectable Lord, your most devoted and obliged Servant,

Gasparo Pacchierotti

Mantua 17 June 1781

My Most Respectable Lord,

I am more than ever moved by your memory, infinitely so to those affectionate sentiments which I see repeatedly expressed in the last letter you sent, marked on the first day of this current month. My gratitude for such favorable assurances reaches a degree that I cannot express. Your benevolence promises a new way of living in London this time, and I count it already as the maximum of my happiness –

I think I will leave Italy in three weeks, for which reason I have abandoned every party that has presented itself to me to keep me here. The idea that I have made of my journey is to go Geneva, Nancy, Strasburgh, in Holland, and then to arrive in London. Therefore, if you wanted to answer me, please do so in Geneva. And if you could say to Milady Mary Duncan, to add some of your lines, it would please me infinitely, because I have for some time been deprived of your valuable writings, and I am extremely anxious to know if you are well.

I will, therefore, await your news in that capital, which will allow me the custom of updating you on my journey and the exact time when I will be in London. You will receive the music from *L'Olimpiade*, which I will have copied, and will bring with me. Bertoni salutes you, and is equally desirous to see you again with all our acquaintances. I particularly implore you to submit me, Servant, to those most reputable and dear: first of all, to Her Excellency, your Mother, to Lady Mary Duncan, Lady Edgecumbe, Mr. Lettice, and to make certain that nothing can take away the joy of embracing you in September—neither evil, nor death—since it is first in my thoughts to distinguish myself in person as your most profound and invariable,

Most humble and devoted Servant,

Gasparo Pacchierotti

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