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Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium, 1770–1790

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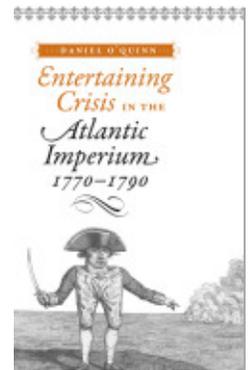
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Days and Nights of the Living Dead

Handelmania

It is the winter of 1784. The American colonies have been irrecoverably lost. There is widespread understanding—sometimes stated explicitly—that Britain’s political and martial elites were to blame. The damage to the British economy is extensive, yet disturbingly unclear. War in India is going poorly and, in many eyes, is turning into another potential humiliation. The East India Company’s bellicosity and the excesses of Warren Hastings are eerily reminiscent of the errors leading to the reverses in North America. Ireland is beset with unrest. The Fox-North coalition has generated great ill-will, and the king’s interference in the passage of Fox’s East India Bill has elicited one of the worst constitutional crises in British history. The ensuing election of 1784 is the most divisive and fractious of the eighteenth century. What better time for a grand celebration.

The State of Denial: The 1784 Handel Commemoration

By any standards, the five-day Commemoration of Handel staged in the spring of 1784 ranks as one of the three or four most significant performance events in the eighteenth century. It was originally scheduled as a three-day celebration with concerts in Westminster Abbey on the first and third days and a concert at the Pantheon on the second day, but the king and queen commanded repeat performances of the first and third days’ programs, thereby turning the Commemoration into a five-day event. The staging of *Messiah* in Westminster Abbey on the third day involved more than five hundred performers and drew an audience of over forty-five hundred people (fig. 6.1). As Claudia Johnson has argued, the Commemoration was very much about size: it involved the largest orchestra and largest choir ever convened.¹ And it was widely held that the vast numbers

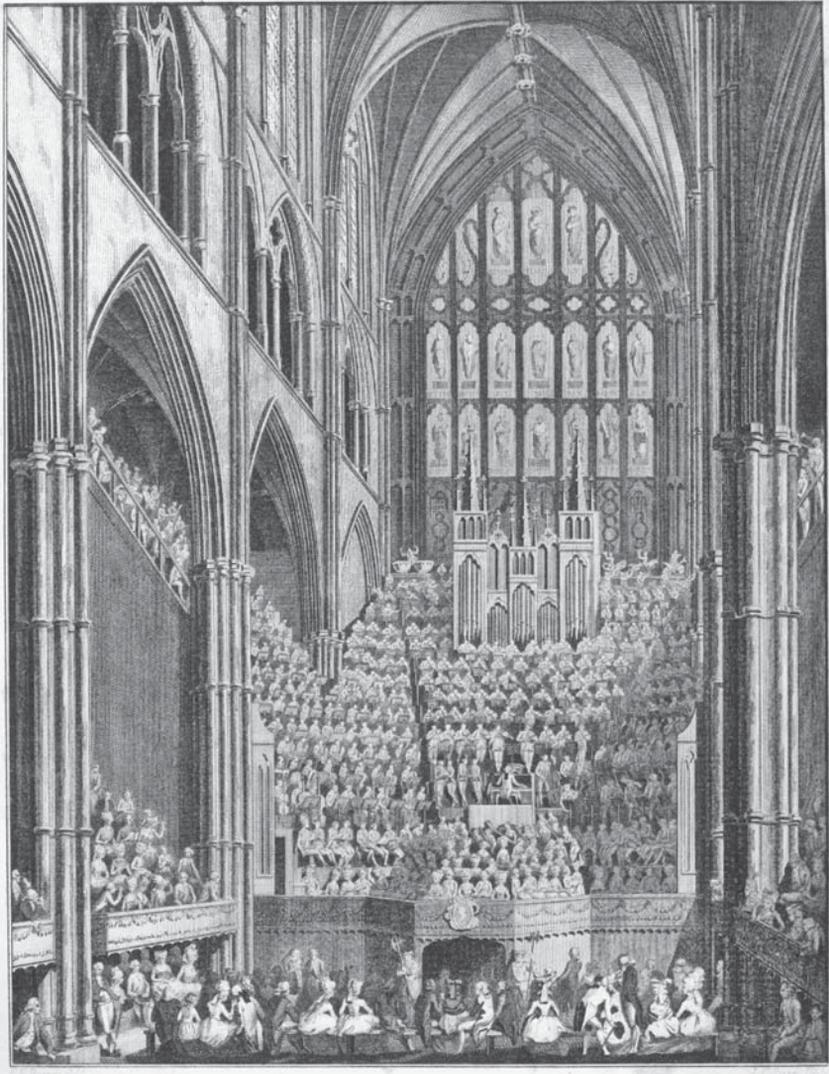


Figure 6.1. “View of the Orchestra and Performers in Westminster Abbey, during the Commemoration of Handel.” From Charles Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon . . . in Commemoration of Handel* (London: Payne and Robinson, 1785), 107. Y.4.286. Department of Prints and Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.

of performers, the immense audience, and the grand settings were particularly suited to the sublimity of Handel's music. Nothing had ever been attempted on this scale before, and its effect was to all accounts extraordinary. The musical sublime, which was so clearly the object of the performances, prompted the papers to indulge in increasingly sublime rhetoric. One could argue that the concerts provided a testing ground for the political effectivity of the sublime.²

The Commemoration generated highly detailed day-by-day discussion across the press and a book-length commentary by Charles Burney, which offered an account of Handel's life and described the genesis of the event and the effect of every piece performed on the program.³ Burney wrote under the explicit patronage of George III, who did everything possible to align himself with Handel's music in this period. As many commentators have noted, Burney's text is a partisan account of an extremely important political ritual, which used the power of a vast array of performers to proclaim the emergence of a new era. As William Weber has argued, the Commemoration turned Handel into a national icon and instantiated a string of celebratory programs of Handel's music well into the 1790s.⁴ For enthusiastic observers of musical culture such as Anna Seward and her circle, "Handel's oratorios stood for national music, and for the ecstatic possibilities of the religious sublime—as well as its opposite, lyric sensuality."⁵

Even reports skeptical of the Commemoration's aesthetic and political significance described the entire affair not only as the highest attainment of musical art but also as the most remarkable social gathering in living memory:

We cannot in any adequate terms describe the grandeur of this festival. Habituated as we are to public exhibitions, and having had the opportunity of beholding whatever has engaged the notice of the metropolis for many years, we may be allowed to speak from comparison—on experience, therefore, we say, that so grand and beautiful a spectacle, with, at the same time, a feast so rich and so perfect, has not been presented to the public eye within our memory. The *coup d'oeil* infinitely surpassed that of the trial of the Duchess of Kingston in Westminster-hall—and the Jubilee of Garrick, from which the idea of the present was taken, though it filled the bosoms of men with equal enthusiasm, fell greatly short in the execution. On the trial of the Duchess of Kingston there was a heavy grandeur—the robes and etiquette of rank, aided by the gloom of the Hall, prevented us from enjoying the beauties of variety. Here we had all the youth, beauty, grandeur and taste of the nation, unrestrained by the regulations of a

court of law, and grouped in all the natural and easy appearance of the *pele mele*. The ladies were without diamonds, feathers, or flowers, and thus, in our mind, their charms were embellished.

—For beauty

Needs not the foreign aid of ornament;

But is, when unadorn'd, adorn'd the most.⁶

The lack of distinction between the events discussed here—all notable for their capacity to draw elite society into close quarters—is revealing. For the correspondent to the *London Magazine*, the Handel Commemoration was more aesthetically satisfying than the Shakespeare Jubilee and preferable to the trial of the Duchess of Kingston because fashion, and thus the exhibition of female beauty, was given more free rein.⁷ That the trial in question was one of the scandals of the age does not even warrant commentary, but significantly the verse cited here, derived from James Thomson's *The Seasons* and made famous by its deployment in Joseph Addison's remarks on fashion in *Spectator*, no. 265, places the question of the exhibition of female virtue on the same plane as the cultural work necessary to crystallize Shakespeare and Handel as the iconic artists of Britain.⁸ In this context, the word *foreign* in Thomson's lines carries ethnocentric connotations that permeate the press coverage of the Commemoration. What interests me here is that the correspondent is marking a historical difference from both the trial of the Duchess of Kingston and the Shakespeare Jubilee: in his eyes, both women and art—and, by extension, the nation—had changed since 1776 and 1769 respectively. And this change is figuratively linked to a supposed curtailment of ornament, here applied first to the women in attendance, but later—rather more incongruously—tied to the music of Handel.⁹ This hypostatization of nature in both society and music comes to play a key role in the legacy of the Commemoration, for it had a significant impact on how virtue was conceived and culturally mediated in the period after the American war.

Music and Governance

The press focused its attention on three interrelated concerns: the sublimity of the music in this unusually grand setting, the demonstration of national pride as exemplified primarily in the royal family, and the capacity of the event—and specifically of Handel's music—to inculcate the virtue necessary for the renovation of the state. This last point is particularly important because it suggests that the entire event was both conceived and received as more than mere

entertainment. William Weber has carefully demonstrated the relationship between the directors of the Commemoration and the emergence of an ostensibly “new order” led by the government of William Pitt. As he states, “The Commemoration put in ritual form the culmination of the country’s political development over the previous three decades. The new harmony seen in the grand event suggested the reunion of Tories with Whigs and the growth of a new political community—a kind of establishment—that, despite the conflict over the war and the constitution, was broad-bottomed in its inclusion of faction and opinion.”¹⁰ Weber’s analysis of the event is attentive to its immediate proximity to the constitutional crisis arising from George III’s interference in the passage of Fox’s East India Bill in early January 1784 and to the ongoing dispute over the Westminster election.¹¹

If one consults the press coverage of the Handel Commemoration, one finds it often interspersed with the political wrangling over Fox’s contested seat and with satirical remarks either on the king’s abuse of his prerogative or on the Whigs insolvency and lack of patriotism.¹² Both of these issues are crucial to how we understand the reception of the Commemoration, because they are linked by a shared concern over the relationship between virtue and governance that ultimately impinges on the stylization of masculinity. If, like many Whigs, one was deeply troubled by George III’s flirtation with absolutism, then one was sensitive to the recurrent deployment of tropes of despotism in this period. Figured as the despot, the monarch became simultaneously the embodiment of arbitrary power and effeminate lassitude. Some papers directly invoked the king’s infringements on the constitution: “Under the patronage of his Majesty a most *harmonious meeting* will re-assemble on Saturday in the Abbey;—it is to be lamented that a similar spirit of *concord* cannot be diffused through *two* buildings in the *neighbourhood*:—but *secret influence* has seized upon the Government, and the safety of the State requires vigilance from the honest representatives of the people.”¹³ But the *Morning Herald*’s less-than-subtle excoriation of Pitt and the king and its invocation of Fox as the “man of the people” were in many ways minority opinions: the press was replete with anti-Whig sentiment. If, like many Tories, one was horrified by the ambition and immorality of Fox, then there was no shortage of satirical materials attacking Fox for his gaming, his profligacy, and his libertinism. The combination of excessive sexual and financial expenditure was most potently activated in tropes that figured the entire Fox-North coalition as voluptuaries running the nation into bankruptcy in order to pursue their pleasures and to cover their gambling debts. It was another version of the tropology of despotism that sig-

naled a widely held belief that the notion of King-in-Parliament had devolved into a parody of itself.

In this context, some of the papers singled out specific individuals desperately in need of moral and political reform. Not surprisingly, the Duchess of Devonshire, who was widely satirized for campaigning for Fox in Westminster, figures prominently here.¹⁴ The *Public Advertiser* reviewed the seating arrangements in the Abbey and indicated its desire for a new political order as follows: “The Duchess of Devonshire was close to Mr. Pitt; which we hope, presages a Contiguity to more decorous Politics.”¹⁵ A few papers gently chided the Prince of Wales for his Whig affiliations by dutifully reporting that he was not present at any of the sacred performances in Westminster Abbey and that he appeared at the Pantheon concert “incognito” or as “a private gentleman” separate from the royal entourage.¹⁶ Aside from implying his distance from both the Church and the Crown, there is also a subtle critique of his dissipation in the suggestion that he is masquerading in the Pantheon like any other young blade. Fox is conspicuous by his absence. And the more factionalized papers are replete with reports of the frustration of “the Blue and Buff Division”; my favorite is a brief account of a “Chevalier d’Industrie,” who, having already ruined the country, pathetically steals tickets for the Pantheon performance while other members of his “Order” steal watches “in order to be punctual to the proper Hour of returning.”¹⁷

But there was more at stake than simply satirizing Foxite society. Perhaps the most revealing report takes aim at John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich, who was one of the principle leaders of the Commemoration. A man of exceedingly bad personal and military reputation—he was a notorious libertine, and his term as lord of the Admiralty during the American war was disastrous—his involvement in the affair became exemplary for the *Morning Post*:

The Earl of Sandwich shews the first good example to the ruined adherents of the [Fox-North] Coalition, in betaking himself to an honest industrious calling.

When the vigour of mind and body, and appetite for vicious indulgences are flown, mankind have recourse to devotion! So *Jemmy Twitcher*, after failing in every worldly pursuit, is now raising his eyes to Heaven; and, driven from the Admiralty and the Parks, is glad to take refuge at the foot of the altar!¹⁸

The correspondent is particularly interested in the toll vice has taken on the body of the Earl of Sandwich and, despite the mildly satirical gibes regarding his

desperation before the altar, has an investment in the renovation of bodily and mental vigor. This investment is constitutional in both senses of the term because this particular manifestation of Handel's music, according to many of the papers, not only has the hygienic capacity to cure both the aristocracy and the Crown but also promises to curtail corruption and to return government to its past dignity. This capacity is explicitly articulated by the *Gazetteer* right after the first full rehearsal in the Abbey:

Such entertainments as the ensuing musical feasts in commemoration of Handel do the highest honour to the nation where they are encouraged, and give superior dignity to the Monarch who patronizes them, as well as those of the nobility and gentry who follow so laudable an example. How much better is the money so spent employed than that which is laid out in debauchery, dissipation, and luxury! The latter practice tends to enervate the mind, to enfeeble the constitution, and to waste the fortune; while the former exalts the soul, improves the judgement, and delights the ear of taste. Let reason and prudence make their choice.¹⁹

The choices presented here take the form of a historical ultimatum, which needs to be read in a broader frame than the immediate context of the constitutional crisis of 1783 and the election of 1784. These contemporaneous events represented a significant threat to the nation, but they were on the way to being resolved. What looms over this utterance is the failure of the state to retain the American colonies and the unresolved recalibration of the national and imperial economy. The person described in the penultimate sentence—enervated, enfeebled, and financially embarrassed—is a figure for the nation itself at this historical juncture, and the illness that has generated these symptoms did not come on overnight. The emasculated voluptuary here—and it was clearly formerly a man—has destroyed himself, and the readers of the *Gazetteer* are being hailed on the eve of the first performance into a new form self-stylization that turns on a combination of moral and aesthetic judgment. In fact, it is in the fusion of these forms of judgment that the vigor of the nation will be reconstituted. As we will see, this narrative of self-destruction and renovation is a crucial dynamic in the program of the Commemoration.

The next morning the *Public Advertiser* offered an even more explicit politicization of the Commemoration, which, despite its predictable ridicule of Whigs bankrupting the nation, in its language suggests that the event itself was generated by the British Constitution:

The Patronage of Genius in such Magnitude as this unrivalled Composer is well worthy of such a Constitution as Great Britain!—and when some Historical Narrative of the Arts shall refer to the Publications of the Times, for the Accounts of this memorable Transaction, let the The PUBLIC ADVERTISER record, that it was little less than what may be called the Constitution which accomplished this great Effort—That his Majesty's Assent, spontaneous and hearty Assent was with it—That the Aristocracy also supported it—at least those among them who are not reduced to Bankruptcy by Gambling, and the yet more extravagant Villainy of bringing Beggars into Parliament—And last, not least in all Matters of Entertainment and Expense, by the *Majesty of the People*.²⁰

Here the Commemoration is figured as a parliamentary bill that, unlike Fox's East India Bill, has received the support of the people or Commons, the aristocracy or Lords, and has been given royal assent. Fox's East India Bill received an overwhelming plurality in the House of Commons but was killed in the House of Lords after the king made it known that anyone who supported the bill in the upper house would be deemed his enemy. George III's interference directly precipitated the constitutional crisis and the fractious election of 1784. Read in this way, the Handel Commemoration becomes a surrogate governmental action: one that not only puts ongoing crisis in abeyance but also indulges in the fantasy of an abstract agent—the Constitution—generating its own recuperation.

Not everyone was so easily drawn into the fantasy of conciliation in part because those responsible for the perceived decline of British society were present in body if not in soul. William Cowper was deeply disturbed by the “canonization” of Handel in the Abbey and saw the entire event as the “profanation of a sacred building.”²¹ As H. Diack Johnstone has argued, Cowper's critique of the Commemoration was aimed primarily at the clergy, but his overall position is that the entire event is a further symptom of the decline of national morality.²² This kind of diagnostic was not confined to evangelicals such as Cowper. The most biting critique comes in the pages of the *St. James Chronicle*, and I am particularly interested in the correspondent's notion of the “mingled Expression” elicited by the hypocrisy of the audience during the performance of *Messiah*:

But all murmurs were silenced by the commanding, perhaps terrifick, Manner in which the Chorusses were performed.

Agitated and affected as we were by them, we could not keep out of our Minds Ideas of Regret and sometimes Disgust, arising from the Nature, Character, and Views of the Assembly, and the awful Subject of the Entertainment. It has been the diligent Study of men in Power in this Country for Twenty years, to discredit every principle that can render Man useful or respectable. Almost all the active Instruments of publick and private Vice were in our Eye when the Band broke out into—"Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." And such a Scene would baffle the Skill of Homer; though the Finger of Heaven traces legibly the Characters of Iniquity on the human countenance. The Assent given to the Excellence of the Performances and the Resistance made to the terrifick Truth of the sublime Sentence, formed a *mingled Expression* more unpleasing and hateful than can be well imagined. This Circumstance has long induced us to avoid Oratorios, as they are performed exactly in the Manner of Parodies, to ridicule and insult the moral and religious Sentiments they were meant to promote; and it will make us deem the Commemoration of Handel as *signal Proof of the musical Proficiency, and the abandoned Profligacy of the present Period.*²³

The correspondent here, unlike the writers for the *Gazetteer* and the *Public Advertiser* previously cited, is all too conscious of how vice inheres in the "countenance" of the nation and how the staging of Handel's sublimity is lost on those who have not the capacity to hear it in spite of the "terrifick" power of choruses more than two hundred singers strong. The face figured forth here is remarkable not only because it is disfigured by a long history of iniquity but also because its "mingled expression" intersperses assent to musical pleasure with resistance to religious and moral sentiment. The implication is that what has remained constant among the elite audience assembled in the Abbey is a commitment to pleasure. In light of the preceding notices in the press and the passage's own explicit critique of the political health of the state, it is difficult to hear political overtones in the words "Assent" and "Resistance." From this perspective, the Commemoration's very size and the sublimity of Handel's music become signs of the moral deafness and hypocrisy of the "Instruments of publick and private Vice." As the last sentence in the passage emphasizes, aesthetic judgment has broken with moral judgment, and the latter remains foreign to the assembly. Significantly, the correspondent does not mark the party affiliation of these assembled "Instruments" but rather forcefully implies that they have not only ruled for the last "twenty years" but also remain in power. It

is a universal indictment of the elites who have ruled and continue to rule Great Britain.

Although the *St. James Chronicle's* correspondent is the most vituperative of the commentators, his recognition that musical consumption may not lead to any kind of moral reform in the listeners marks a certain anxiety associated with music itself that appears elsewhere in the press. That anxiety has to do with the enervation and emasculation conventionally associated with the reception of Italian music and specifically opera. And these anxieties had a notable influence on overall arc of the Commemoration's program. Handel's formidable operatic works were represented by brief selections at the Pantheon, and that performance was sandwiched between two "sacred" concerts at Westminster Abbey. Furthermore, when the king and queen commanded repeat performances of the Commemoration, the program of Handel's Italian arias was conspicuously absent.

In order to counteract conventional wisdom that associated musical pleasure with dissipation, much of the press made explicit links between musical reception and fantasies of governmental prowess, between aesthetic pleasure and virtuous rule. The most extreme instance of this kind of rhetoric was articulated immediately preceding the first day of the Commemoration, and it argues that music, and specifically Handel's music, constitutes a fundamental component of martial and political subjectivity:

His is the muse for the English character. He writes to the masculine genius of a free people, and it was only by such an execution that the true majesty of his composition could be demonstrated. It has been attributed to music that it enervates the mind. How far this may be true of the refinements of the Italian school, or even of simple melodies, we do not think ourselves competent to determine; but the most refined and most martial people of antiquity, the inhabitants of ancient Greece, whose achievements both in arts and in arms fill the mind with astonishment and incredulity, were so enamoured of the charms of harmony, that they deemed a proficiency on some musical instrument an essential embellishment to the character of the statesman, the general, and the orator. And surely, if any thing can more than ordinarily invigorate the mind; if anything can arouse the faculties, and coagitate the masculine passions of the soul, it is the music of Handel, performed by such a band as are now engaged in his commemoration.²⁴

Again there is a predictable antithesis between "the masculine genius of the free people" of England and the enervation associated with the Italian school. But

there is a more complex argument here as well—a very tendentious antithesis proffered between melody and harmony. Melody is very subtly aligned with Italian refinement, enervation, and emasculation. In contrast, harmony is forcefully aligned with the martial prowess of ancient Greece, and it is this elevation of harmony over melody that makes musical proficiency essential to the statesman, the general, and the orator. With the invocation of this triad of masculine leaders, the correspondent is attempting to articulate the specific importance of Handel to the state and that seems to lie in harmony's capacity to bring disparate elements into an apt arrangement of parts. Handel's genius for harmony is being put forward as a figure for or as a model for the right disposition of men and things: in other words, as a trope for military and political governance.

How Haven't the Mighty Fallen

That this argument is so strongly affiliated with martial achievements from the ancient world is significant, because, as the correspondent for the *London Magazine* was well aware, the "sacred" concert scheduled for the next day was an exceedingly bellicose affair. The program for the first performance was widely published, and it carefully interweaves some of Handel's most famous anthems with fragments from the oratorios.²⁵ All of the chosen compositions explicitly praise the king and the Hanoverian line, but it is worth attending to which works were presented in their entirety, which were abridged, and the overall order of the program. As Ruth Smith has persuasively demonstrated, the reception of Handel's music, and particularly the oratorios, was extraordinarily attentive to topical allegory. There is no reason to assume that the audience's tendency to read Handel's music for political allegory would have abated from the midcentury or earlier; if anything, the explicitly political motives of the directors, well documented in the press, would have prepared the audience for a complex negotiation with history mediated through the words and music of the selected works.

After the king and the royal family were greeted with the *Coronation Anthem of Zadok the Priest*, a very specific historical narrative unfolds. Part 1 adds the overture to *Esther* to a full performance of the *Dettingen Te Deum*—the only work, aside from the performance of *Messiah* on the third and fifth days, given in its entirety. The *Dettingen Te Deum* is not a conventional Te Deum but a grand martial panegyric that "celebrated the national success against the forces of Catholic absolutism."²⁶ In June 1743 George II led an alliance of British, Austrian, and Hanoverian troops to a decisive victory over the French in the War of

Austrian Succession. It was the last time a reigning British monarch led a British force into battle, and importantly it was a war with little or no colonial theatres or consequences. As “Composer of the Musick to the Chapel Royal,” Handel was commissioned to compose a *Te Deum* and an anthem for a day of public thanksgiving on George II’s return from the Continent. As one might expect, it is martial in almost every sense of the term. Charles Burney’s account of the Commemoration gives a hint of its most prominent features by listing the chief instruments: “I shall only observe that as it was composed for a military triumph, the fourteen trumpets, two pair of common kettle-drums, two pair of double drums from the Tower, and a pair of double-base drums, made expressly for this Commemoration, were introduced with great propriety; indeed, these last drums, except the destruction, had all the effect of the most powerful artillery.”²⁷

Within the closed space of Westminster Abbey, the effect of the drums in the first chorus of the *Te Deum* must have been almost overwhelming. But there was more than a figural link between these drums and artillery. Hypernationalist elements in the press stressed that they came from the ordnance stores, and their provenance is revealing:

On each side of the Organ . . . are the Kettle Drums, a pair of which was made of unusual dimensions, in a very spirited manner, by Mr. Aspridge at his own expence on this occasion; and another pair of equal fame with the circumstance they are now produced to celebrate; they were brought from the Tower yesterday by permission of his Grace the Duke of Richmond, being a part of the ordnance stores, and the instruments taken from the French at the battle of Malplaquet, by the Great Duke of Marlborough.²⁸

Everything here would appear to be overdetermined. The drums used to rehearse George II’s victory at Dettingen turn out to be material artifacts from Marlborough’s earlier victory at Malplaquet. Two historical instances of heroic British victory over the French on the Continent are brought together in the Abbey, but the act of remembrance here is aimed at forgetting the more recent and pressing defeat in America. This is surrogation in its most basic form: a form of denial predicated on the mobilization of compensatory narratives.

But the problem here is that surrogative narratives are always already unstable either because they do not adequately cover the historical wound or because their excessive visibility draws attention to what is hidden below. The bandage either does not fit or draws too much attention to itself. The former problem is

made evident by the press's interest in the material provenance of the drums. On 11 September 1709 the allied forces of Britain, Holland, and Austria under the command of the Duke of Marlborough defeated the French at Malplaquet, but they lost twenty thousand men, almost twice that of the enemy. It was the bloodiest battle not only of the War of Spanish Succession but of the entire eighteenth century. And it may well have been a strategic victory for the French, in that the loss of life prevented an allied assault on Paris. News of the carnage and of the inconclusiveness of the battle traumatized the nations of Europe. These particular drums are evidence of Pyrrhic victory and have the potential to activate as much anxiety as triumphalism. Alternatively, one could argue that their deployment is folded into an overarching strategy of surrogation aimed at assuaging a whole constellation of traumatic events in Britain's recent military past. If the musical sublime has the potential to generate a revisionist history where Britain only ever wins over the French, then why not throw in the disturbing slaughter outside Mons for good measure. The two events—the American war and the Battle of Malplaquet—are linked by the disturbing fact that martial superiority does not necessarily translate into victory or divine election.

A correspondent for the same paper that invoked the memory of the "Great Duke of Marlborough" on the eve of the first performance recognized both the stakes and the potential for surrogation to go awry when it came time to report on the repetition of the same program on the fourth day: "We cannot help thinking that the drums were by much too powerful for the other parts of the band.—They stunned and dumbfounded, but did by no means fill the mind with those sentiments of terror which are the effect of the musical sublime. They were least offensive in the Dead March in Saul, where perhaps their sepulchral tones were most admissable. The *thunder of music* should always be proportioned to its *still small voice*."²⁹ This suggestion that the drum parts in the performance of the *Dettingen Te Deum* stunned audience members rather than terrified them is crucial because it is through terror that the sublime opens onto awe and reverence. To be stunned is to be returned to the moment of historical trauma, and, in this case, the affiliation between the carnage of Malplaquet and the humiliation of Yorktown only deepens the sense of powerlessness. The key distinction here lies in the temporality of these aesthetic effects. Sublime terror carries with it a certain futurity that is folded into the act of reverence; being stunned keeps one in a damaged state, waiting for some kind of release.

The directors' choice of the *Dettingen Te Deum* was, I believe, aimed at avoiding precisely these kind of connotations, and the fact that the press nevertheless makes these connections is significant. Handel's decision to employ battlefield

instruments to enhance the sense of jubilation and the emphatic treatment of the opening six verses is not subtle. As Donald Burrows argues, “Handel’s style in the more extrovert sections of the *Dettingen Te Deum*, as with all such powerful rhetoric, requires the listener to share rather uncritically in the emotions of the moment. . . . Celebration and judgement are the two topics that remain in the memory of the listener at the end of the *Te Deum*.”³⁰ Nevertheless, Charles Burney felt it was necessary to specifically obviate the potential for a sorrowful interpretation of what should have been a fairly straightforward passage:

There is some reason to suspect that Handel, in setting his grand *Te Deum* for the peace of Utrecht, as well as this [the *Dettingen Te Deum*], confined the meaning of the word *cry* to a sorrowful sense: as both the movements to the words—

To thee all angels cry aloud,

are not only in a minor-key, but slow, and plaintive. It contrasts well, however, with the preceding and subsequent movements. Indeed, the latter glows with all the fire and vehemance of Handel’s genius for polyphonic combinations and contrivances.³¹

Drawing the reader’s attention to the “fire and vehemance” of the surrounding movements is not surprising, as this is precisely what the *Te Deum* itself does; but worrying over the meaning of “cry” overemphasizes its sorrowful connotations in order to dispense with them. As Burrows argues, this verse’s potential for plaintiveness was already well contained: “Even in the more lyrical and restrained, ‘To thee all Angels cry aloud’ [Handel] was unusually careful to avoid any possible ambiguity by marking the voice parts ‘tutti’ at the opening accolade and the first entry: he wanted *all* the angels on duty.”³² “Cry” here is an occasion for unifying utterance, not sorrow. Burney’s prophylactic remarks on the performance reveal the other problem with surrogation: it requires vigilant surveillance and containment of possible divergent readings. It is as though sorrow must be kept at bay, because it is everywhere threatening to permeate the proceedings. This is perhaps why part 2 of the first performance not only turns explicitly to the question of death but also so stringently manages the work of mourning.

If the drums generated equivocal associations in the *Dettingen Te Deum*, they were universally praised in the Dead March from *Saul*, which opened the second part of the first performance, in part because there is a demonstrable shift from matters of war to a more complex—and perhaps mystifying—political narrative.

Part 2 takes two of Handel's most famous treatments of death, segments them, and sutures them together. The program unfolded as follows:

Overture, with the DEAD MARCH in SAUL
 Part of the FUNERAL ANTHEM. [for Queen Caroline]
When the ear heard him.
He that delivered the poor that cried.
His body is buried in Peace.
 GLORIA PATRI, from the JUBILATE [for the Peace of Utrecht].³³

At one level, this sequence simply features some of Handel's best-known and best-loved compositions. Winton Dean notes that "the Overture and Dead March . . . were among the most popular of Handel's instrumental pieces and appeared frequently in concert programmes."³⁴ The *Funeral Anthem of Queen Caroline* was redeployed by Handel under a different title—"The Lamentation of the Israelites for the Death of Joseph"—as the first part of *Israel in Egypt* and thus, like the excerpts from *Saul*, operated in the patriotic economy of the Israelite oratorios. And the Gloria Patri from the Utrecht Jubilate was not only frequently performed as church music throughout the century but also prefigures a similar passage in *Messiah*.³⁵ So listeners would have been on exceedingly familiar ground.

But with familiarity comes knowledge, and this particular grouping lends itself to a political reading because each element was widely understood either as part of a grand patriotic allegory or as an explicit statement of national election. In the ensuing paragraphs, I want to explore at least one reading of how these allegories operate, and everything I would argue flows from the selections from *Saul*. Charles Jennens's libretto takes a rather confusing and repetitive narrative from Samuel and refashions it into a highly dramatic tragedy. Act 1 opens immediately after David's victory over Goliath. King Saul first welcomes David to court and even offers him the hand of his daughter Merab. But this period of admiration is short-lived, and Saul is eventually overwhelmed by jealousy. Significantly, his son Jonathan recognizes this as a return of Saul's "old disease" but can do nothing to stop Saul from repeatedly attempting to murder David. As act 2 unfolds, Saul descends further into violent madness and eventually kills his own son. In the third act, Saul regains sanity, recognizes his hubris, but nonetheless continues to pursue David, this time with the assistance of the Witch of Endor. The witch summons the ghost of the prophet Samuel, who foretells Saul's death at the hands of the Amalekites because he disobeyed God in an earlier conflict with the Amalekites in which he was enjoined to slaughter

the remaining survivors as a sacrifice to God. Saul is killed in a battle on Mount Gilboa, and the bodies of Saul and Jonathan are carried in to the strains of the Dead March. The march is followed by a remarkable elegy for both Saul and his son Jonathan. David is declared the new king and the final chorus urges him to “retrieve the Hebrew name.”

Winton Dean’s discussion of the libretto’s thematic coherence underscores the overall arc of the narrative from rejoicing to mourning. He emphasizes that

the finest achievement of this remarkable libretto is its handling of the great central theme—or themes, for there are two: the moral tragedy of Saul himself and the religious and political struggle of a small people beset by enemies. The progressive deterioration of Saul’s character, confused and halting in the Bible account, is admirably clear. We are shown in turn the noble and generous King; the onset of jealousy and mental derangement (its suddenness mitigated by the information that it has happened before); the resort to physical violence. . . . culminating in a public assault on his own son at a religious festival; and a final ironical return of sanity when the obsession has played itself out, leaving him no remedy save the invocation of evil. But though morally this is his lowest point, artistically it ennobles him. A dangerous lunatic is repulsive; a man who refuses to bow when fate has him beaten is a tragic figure.

With Saul’s decline is bound up at all points the fate of the Jewish people, as the chorus remind us at intervals. Here lies the significance of the great scenes of rejoicing and mourning that frame the oratorio, and of the turning from past to future in the final chorus.³⁶

The narrative is tragic in the fullest sense of the term because it dramatizes the purging of the nation and the figuring forth of a new covenant. For our purposes, it is important that we recognize the significance of Saul’s public assault on his son: it is the lowest point of Saul’s violent frenzy and carries with it the most disturbing allegorical potential for the audience of the Commemoration, because it so forcefully raises the question of violence directed toward the family and the nation.³⁷

Sitting in the Abbey in 1784, one hears only the Overture and the Dead March: the overall movement is from rejoicing to mourning. But it is a form of mourning that opens onto a new and ostensibly virtuous future. But for whom or what is one expected to be mourning? In the immediate political context, George III was widely excoriated for contravening the law of the land in his interference in the India Bill. The entire constitutional crisis of 1783–84 turns on

the question of the king's relation to the law, and charges that his lawbreaking autocracy threatened the legacy of the Glorious Revolution were commonplace. There was also no shortage of rhetoric describing the war with America not only as a sign of derangement but also as an instance of the father's taking up arms against the son.³⁸ In a number of disturbing ways, George III bears resemblance to Saul, and the war on Mount Gilboa can be read as a figure for the war in America.

Now, I recognize the tendentiousness of this reading. As William Weber has argued, the directors of the Commemoration were explicitly interested in countering Whig factions and their support for the king and a broad-bottomed establishment was explicit. But what if this set of associations is part of a larger allegorical gambit that focuses on the transition from the past to the future? What we may be seeing here is the parsing of George III's kingship into two parts. We have a pre-1784 period where his bellicosity and his desire for autocracy were justifiably punished by God by a series of military losses and political crises. In this allegory, the entire period from the triumphant victory in the Seven Years' War, leading up to the conflict in America, is understood as a period that moves, as *Saul* does, from rejoicing to mourning. The death of Saul at the hand of the Amalekite now takes on very specific resonances, because in scripture the Amalekites, like the French, are the eternal and permanent enemies of Britain's proxy, the Israelites. But in this case, Saul's wounds are largely self-inflicted: the Amalekite only finishes off the job, and his function is to fulfill Samuel's prophecy. The upshot here is that, as Ruth Smith argues, "even God's anointed cannot escape the consequences of breaking God's Law."³⁹

Such an allegory then opens the possibility for a renewed kingship for the post-1784 era, and specifically for the era following the constitutional crisis, that threatened to bring the disintegration already evident in the colonies home to the metropole itself. It is here that *Saul's* other topical allegory kicks in, because the oratorio was written at the height of the opposition's attempt to bring down the Whig Ministry of Robert Walpole. Saul's madness springs from envy, and it was one of the vices most frequently associated with Walpole himself. As Smith argues, "For a contemporary audience the Saul-Walpole parallel would have been unmistakable. . . . It is worth noting in this connection that according to opposition writers, David is not only Saul's righteous successor; being the chief poet of the Scriptures, he is the archetype of all virtuous (that is, opposition) writers. It is of course *while he is singing and playing* that Saul tries to kill him, and this incident forms a central episode of the libretto."⁴⁰

What I would suggest is that many of Saul's qualities are also those associated with another Whig minister routinely assailed for corruption and immorality. In the spring of 1784, Charles James Fox was regularly lampooned for envying the king's and Pitt's power. Even the daily reporting of the Commemoration cannot help joking about his destitution and his jealousy following his temporary defeat in the Westminster election. In this context, Fox is the dead leader and Pitt and the king emerge as the new David ready to reinvent the nation. This helps to explain why both the press and the king himself, through his patronage, affiliate themselves with both virtue and music in the Commemoration. In this figural economy, one George III is put to rest and another is called forth as his own successor. George III becomes the surrogative figure for himself and sits through a Dead March that consigns to oblivion not only his past self and all the attendant shortcomings of elite rule during this period but also Fox's challenge to the monarchy in the turbulent postwar years. And it is from here that we can retroactively understand the performance of the *Coronation Anthem of Zadok the Priest*, which opened the performance, as a reinauguration of the monarchy.

But this complex maneuver requires a very important supplementary gesture. The Dead March cannot be followed by Handel's remarkable elegy from *Saul* because it would demand not only a fundamental separation between the "dead" and the living king but also a reckoning with the death of the son. The opening chorus of the elegy is too much about the cost of war:

Mourn, Israel, mourn thy beauty lost,
 Thy choicest youth on Gilboa slain!
 How have thy fairest hopes been cross'd!
 What heaps of mighty warriors strew the plain!

And Michal and David's lamentations over the death of Jonathan lend themselves all too readily to the antiwar rhetoric that consistently figured American patriots as sons and brothers who were acting on the very sense of political liberty that defined the parent country. In lieu of the elegy on the death of Saul and Jonathan, the audience is presented with three verses of the *Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline* that focus on the mourned royal figure's enactment of virtuous government. Some sense of the importance of the anxiety concerning the death of Jonathan can be gleaned from the fact that it is doubly avoided, both in the suppression of the elegy from *Saul* and in the cutting of key verses from the *Funeral Anthem*. The repeated refrain "How are the mighty fallen," which is the

emotional linchpin of the *Funeral Anthem* and which is derived from David's lament over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel, is consistently elided from the Commemoration performance.

Ruth Smith has argued that the *Funeral Anthem* was the greatest collage anthem of Handel's time and that the strategic selection of fragments of scripture with little concern for context or even textual integrity prefigures Handel's practice in the oratorios.⁴¹ Ranging across scripture with little concern for order, tense, or even person, the power of the anthem derives from the way the collage brings disparate elements of the Bible together in new and sometimes startling ways. For example, much of the patriotic spine of the anthem derives from an adaptation of verses from Lamentations that refigures the captive City of Jerusalem as the dead queen.⁴² This gesture, along with the repeated invocation of the death of Jonathan from 2 Samuel, affiliates the particular loss of the queen with national crisis. Some sense of the allegorical force of tying the fate of the biblical nation of Israel to that of Britain via the dead body of the queen can be gleaned from the opening two choruses:

CHORUS:

The ways of Zion do mourn and she is in bitterness. [Lamentations 1:4]; all her people sigh [Lamentations 1:11] and hang down their heads to the ground [Lamentations 2:10].

CHORUS:

How are the mighty fall'n [2 Samuel 1:19]. She that was great among the nations, and princess of the provinces! [Lamentations 1:1].
How are the mighty fall'n—⁴³

It is in this second chorus that Handel links the queen and the City of Jerusalem, and the sense of mourning activated throughout this minor key section is quite complex. As Donald Burrows emphasizes,

At the end of the first section the voices, gathered together, descend into gloom as they "hang their heads to the ground": the reaction in "How are the Mighty fall'n" comes as a protest as much as a lamentation. This text must have needed careful treatment, if the minds of the original listeners were not to be diverted towards a more worldly interpretation relating to Caroline's constant political support for Robert Walpole. . . . The fallen city from the Book of Lamentations perhaps bore some comparison with the passing of Queen Caroline, as a general parallel could be made in relating present desolation to the recollection of past glories.⁴⁴

Both the specific and the general political interpretations are significant, because in the Commemoration virtually all of these passages in minor keys are elided. In other words, the sense of political and national desolation that Handel was so at pains to construct through his selection of scripture and through his complex movement from minor key to minor key is avoided in the Commemoration program. And this elided segment would have been exceedingly familiar to listeners because it constitutes the opening of the first act of *Israel in Egypt*.

The Commemoration program enters the *Funeral Anthem* immediately after this intense expression of specific and national loss. The focus now is resolutely on the celebration of past glory, but through a series of careful modifications, these same glories lose their pastness. Here is the section of the *Funeral Anthem* with the performed verses highlighted in italics:

SOLI & CHORUS:

When the ear heard her [him], then it blessed her [him], and when the eye saw her [him], it gave witness of her [him] [Job 29:11].

CHORUS:

How are the mighty fall'n [Samuel 2, 1:19]. She that was great, great among the nations, and princess of the provinces! [Lamentations 1:1]

CHORUS:

She [He] delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him [Job 29:12]. Kindness, meekness, and comfort were her [his] tongue [Ecclesiasticus 36:23]; if there was any virtue, and if there was any praise, she [he] thought on those things [Philippians 4:8].

CHORUS:

How are the mighty fall'n [2 Samuel 1:19]. She that was great, great among the nations, and princess of the provinces! [Lamentations 1:1]

SOLI & CHORUS:

The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance [Psalms 112:16], and the wise will shine as the brightness of the firmament [Daniel 12:3].

CHORUS:

Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth evermore [Ecclesiasticus 44:14].

The elisions here are crucial not only because they suppress any direct expression of loss—"How are the Mighty fall'n" is elided twice as are past-tense

expressions of former greatness—but also because they keep almost the entire sequence in the major key. This is mourning in the major key, and the paradox inherent in that statement speaks to the strange alteration in the pronouns. With the switch from her to him throughout, the performance not only more firmly invokes *Israel in Egypt*, where this transposition had already taken place in order to focus attention on the death of Joseph, but also invokes the king. In light of our earlier reading of the deployment of the Dead March from *Saul*, what emerges here is an act of mourning for someone—and, by extension, something—who remains alive, because only his past is in the process of being buried. This is why there is little need for the minor key: in this rendering of the anthem, the mighty quite literally *have not* fallen.

The two verses from Job, which are now the focus of the performance, are those in which Job rehearses his past rectitude and the universal regard in which he was held as political official before he was stripped of everything. With the broader context of desolation and loss eliminated from the anthem, the verses and the music celebrate virtuous government. The tension now lies in the inherence of two key problems: Job is afflicted in spite of his virtue; and even if this virtue could be unequivocally celebrated, it has to be linked to the present to prevent the entire performance from lapsing into nostalgia for past glory. This is why the shift to “Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth evermore” from Ecclesiasticus is so important. It both recognizes and contains this problem by transmuting the bodies of the dead (in this case, the forefathers of the nation) via the figural capacity of language—and, in this case, music—to move the listener from grief over a particular body to a generalized abstract notion of peace. The first section of this verse is the only section of the entire adaptation of the anthem that operates in a minor key. It is the carefully contained moment of grief, now rendered so general that it is politically safe, necessary for getting beyond mortality and all the implied, but never directly elicited, sense of loss. In the original text, this chorus “functions as a transitional stage in the subject and mood of the anthem. Although the subsequent movements are in minor keys, the cloud of mourning has lifted: ‘How are the Mighty fall’n’ does not occur again.”⁴⁵ It should perhaps then come as no surprise that in the Commemoration program this transitional gesture opens not onto an elegiac minor key meditation but directly onto the Gloria Patri from the Jubilate celebrating the Peace of Utrecht, a passage that not only gives thanks to God for British imperial supremacy but also expansively resonates with one of the most famous sections of *Messiah*. Through careful selection, segmentation, and suturing, the work of mourning has been transformed into a remarkable declaration of national elec-

tion that attempts to suppress the recent history of loss in the empire and surrogatively refigure the Paris Peace Treaty of 1783 as the Peace of Utrecht. Not only has loss has been tendentiously refigured as gain, but the political and economic turbulence of the present peace has been figuratively quelled.

Both the necessity and the extremity of this move to the *Jubilate* can be gleaned from Charles Burney's account of audience reaction to the performance of the second part of the first performance:

Each of the three movements from the *Funeral Anthem*, seemed to excite such lively sensations of grief, as reminded all present of the ravages which death had made among their particular families and friends, and moved many to tears. . . . This Chorus, from the *Jubilate*, which Handel set at the same time as the grand *Te Deum*, for the peace at Utrecht . . . being in his grandest and most magnificent style, received every possible advantage in the performance, from a correct and powerful band, and the most mute and eager attention in the audience.⁴⁶

Burney is working directly for the king, but I would argue that this passage reveals more than it conceals.⁴⁷ Despite the careful elision of all signs of desolation in this adaptation of the *Funeral Anthem*, it is the historically specific sense of affliction, the particular bodies of the dead that cannot be so quickly consigned to oblivion, that not only reactivates the sense of individual and political loss that animates the anthem but also demands a return to the overwhelming power of the *Jubilate*. Burney's attempt to make the emotion expressed by the audience simply a matter of familial or personal grief runs counter to the manifestly nationalist allegory in both the selections from *Saul* and the *Funeral Anthem*. Any suggestion that the mourning, even in its celebratory major-key manifestation, is for the nation risks drawing attention not only to the process of surrogation that so permeates this section of the program but also to the fact that surrogation requires constant supplementation and maintenance. What interests me here is that the entire mechanism of part 2 allows for a carefully modulated evocation of past loss but privatizes the affect generated by Handel's allegorical treatment of national crisis. This both separates responsibility for the crises that beset the nation after the triumph in the Seven Years' War from the ruling elites and propels the listener toward a celebration of virtuous rule that is here affiliated with past prosperity. The problem of pastness continues to haunt the entire figural economy, but the crucial task of generating a political future for a reinaugurated king and Ministry, if not completed, is at least put in motion. In this context, the "mute and

eager attention” described by Burney sounds like a desire for future hegemony after a period of disastrous turbulence.

In this light, the third part of the program is all too apt because it is all about turbulent waters. It pairs the fourth Chandos Anthem, a setting of fragments of Psalms 96 and 93, and the concluding sections of *Israel in Egypt*, which dramatize the drowning of Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea from Exodus. Aside from the obvious celebration of the power and righteousness of God, both selections are intimately connected to raging seas and were particularly well suited to the size of the orchestra and the chorus in the Abbey. But the turbulence evoked here moves the primary focus of the program away from the complex negotiation with the past, which preoccupies the first two parts of the performance, toward the relationship between God, the nation, and the future. The fourth Chandos Anthem interrupts its setting of Psalm 96 with a single verse from Psalm 93: “The waves of the sea rage horribly; but yet the Lord who dwells on high is mightier.”⁴⁸ As Burney notes, the music that accompanies this verse is extraordinarily violent:

Handel, in the accompaniment of this boisterous air, has tried, not unsuccessfully, to express the turbulence of a tempestuous sea; the style of this kind of Music is not meant to be amiable; but contrasts well with other movements, and this has a spirit, and even a roughness, peculiar to our author. . . . The solemnity of [the ensuing] movement may, perhaps, seem as much too languid to the admirers of the preceding air, as that may be too turbulent for the nerves of those partial to this. The truth is that both verge a little on the extreme.⁴⁹

The violence of the setting of Psalm 93, verse 5, and the extremity of the transition to verse 9 of Psalm 96 both shocks the audience with the initial storm and provides a moment of intense calm before the full power of the orchestra and choir is mobilized in the final movement. As Burney states, “In the last movement of this Chorus, when all the instruments are busied, such a commotion is raised, as constitutes one of Handel’s most formidable hurricanes.”⁵⁰

But this formidable hurricane is given a very specific interpretation by the usually restrained Burney; he offers the following modified quotation from Addison that ultimately cites a key passage from Dryden’s translation of the *Aeneid*: “Bellowing *notes* burst with a stormy sound. ADDISON.”⁵¹ The cited passage ultimately points to a moment of intense carnage in book 9 of the *Aeneid*, and it is worth a momentary digression. With Aeneas away from the Trojan camp, the Rutulian armies are on the verge of overwhelming the Trojans. The passage from Dryden that Burney cites comes immediately after a particularly horrible

reverse in the Trojan's fortunes in which a tower collapses and the trapped soldiers are slaughtered. Mezentius mocks the Trojans watching from the ramparts by calling them women, and Ascanius responds by killing one of the Rutulians. This reassertion of Trojan masculinity prompts a long intervention by Apollo in which he declares Ascanius

Offspring of Gods thyself; and Rome shall owe
 To thee, a Race of Demigods below.
 This is the Way to Heav'n: The Pow'rs Divine
 From this beginning date the *Julian* line.
 To thee, to them, and their victorious Heirs,
 The conquer'd War is due, and the vast World is theirs.⁵²

In other words, Burney brings us to a moment not only where Trojan masculinity is first put into question and then reconsolidated but also where the transition from Trojan nationhood to the future empire of Rome is prophesied. With this divine intervention, the Trojans unleash a storm of battle that Burney likens to the sound of the final chorus of the fourth Chandos Anthem:

The Trojans, by his Arms, their Patron know;
 And hear the twanging of his Heav'nly Bow.
 Then duteous Force they use; and Phœbus' Name,
 To keep from Fight; the Youth too fond of Fame.
 Undaunted, they themselves no Danger shun:
 From Wall to Wall, the Shouts and Clamours run,
 They bend their Bows; they whirl their Slings around:
 Heaps of spent Arrows fall; and strew the Ground;
 And Helms, and Shields, and rattling Arms resound.
 The Combate thickens, like the Storm that flies
 From Westward, when the Show'ry Kids arise:
 Or patt'ring Hail comes pouring on the Main,
 When *Jupiter* descends in harden'd Rain,
 Or bellowing Clouds burst with a stormy Sound,
 And with an armed Winter strew the Ground.⁵³

The specificity of Burney's citation here is important for two reasons. First, it marks a moment that is simultaneously the lowest point of the Trojan fortunes and the point from which their transformation into the forebears of empire is articulated as a matter of divine election. And it is the specific fact that some of the Trojans go on to found Rome that is so crucial here, because it speaks

directly to the narrative of renewal that permeates the entire first performance. Second, it explicitly casts the resurgent violence of the Trojan forces and the declaration of Ascanius's role in the founding of the Roman Empire as a compensation for the suggestion that the Trojans are, to quote Dryden, "less than Women, in the Shapes of Men."⁵⁴ As we have already seen, this fear of emasculation was a prominent feature of the rhetoric concerning the failed American war, and it surfaced explicitly in the press's discussion of the effect of the music of Commemoration. I would argue that the historical allegory that attends Burney's citation is quite straightforward. At a particularly low point in the fortunes of the British Empire and the nation, the Commemoration is not only figuring forth the generation of a new Rome but also putting allegations of compromised masculinity among the ruling elites into abeyance. This issue of gender insubordination becomes a prominent concern in the second performance of the Commemoration at the Pantheon, but here it is only fleetingly evoked by Burney and then only to be overcome.

As noted earlier, the raging seas of the fourth Chandos Anthem are sutured to the final two choruses and recitatives of *Israel in Egypt* that also use the full potential of the enlarged orchestra and the chorus to render the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. As the audience is moved from one moment of scriptural turbulence to another, the program concludes with some of the most dramatic music in Handel's repertoire, and it is explicitly aimed at reinforcing the notion that Britain, like the Israelites, once in captivity, was delivered because it is God's elect nation. This topos infuses all of the Israelite oratorios, and its appearance here rather directly liberates the reconsolidated nation and points it toward a glorious future. But it is worth considering how the chosen materials not only build on the storm first evoked in the fourth Chandos Anthem but also continue the complex act of historical erasure or revision that we have already excavated in the second part of the program. The storm in the Chandos Anthem is invoked only to demonstrate that God "who dwells on high is mightier" than the raging sea. It is the distinction between the divinity of heaven and the worldliness of the earth that is important here, because Psalms 93 and 96 are explicitly calling for the Israelites to see past worldly or historical events and open themselves to worship their Lord because it is through his awesome power that they will prevail. As a precursor to the selected passages from *Israel in Egypt*, the drowning of Egyptians and the Israelites' rejoicing amount to a specific example of God's awe-inspiring power.

But it is worth noting how the overall trajectory of the program limits the articulation of God's power: the audience is presented with the aftermath of the

Red Sea overwhelming the Egyptians. When we recognize that the segments of the *Funeral Anthem* from part 2 are the major-key components of the first part of *Israel in Egypt* and that the final section of part 3 is the conclusion to the third part of the same oratorio, then it becomes apparent that *Israel in Egypt* plays a vital structuring role in the entire program—and not just for the first day’s performance. What is remarkable is that, in the movement from the elements of “Lamentations of the Israelites for Death of Joseph” to the final elements of “Moses’s Song,” the program elides all of part 2 that narrates both the myriad afflictions with which God besets the pharaoh on behalf of the Israelites and the deliverance of Moses and his people. The verses detailing scenes of affliction are performed during the Commemoration, but in the following program, in the Pantheon where their meaning is radically altered. In this strangely truncated and interrupted performance of the oratorio in the Abbey, one could argue that these signs of God’s fearsome power are replaced by the far more general “raging seas” in the fourth Chandos Anthem which evoke similar sentiments of awe, but which have far less specific resonances in Handel’s music. As Ruth Smith argues, “Moses’ redemption of the Israelites and their passage to the promised land through the Red Sea, like many national myths in the eighteenth century, had a history as contested ground, but in this case the terrain was mainly occupied by the opposition [to Robert Walpole’s Ministry].”⁵⁵

In her reading of the oratorio’s political allegories, Smith argues persuasively that the libretto, and especially the verses that render the period of Israelite slavery, was susceptible not only to patriotic readings aimed at restoring national integrity by ousting the corrupt Whig oligarchy but also to more radical Jacobite readings aimed at wresting the monarchy from the Hanoverian line. In 1784 there is no fear for the succession, but any possibility of allowing the “slavery” figure to migrate toward George III’s absolutist tendencies—in short, any possibility that he could be figured as Pharaoh by disgruntled Whigs, dissenters, and emergent radicals—had to be obviated. Otherwise, it would be all too possible to read the disaster of the American war as a plague visited upon the nation for the autocracy of the king and for the government’s betrayal of fundamental notions of British liberty. In this figural economy, the colonists emerge as the formerly enslaved elect nation, and it is Britain—and specifically the navy—that is consigned to the depths of the sea. Hardly a stretch in this historical setting. Because the librettos to Handel’s oratorios were so consistently read as political allegories, this figural possibility had to be contained. Here this is achieved by simply transferring the performance of verses such as “He smote all the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength” and “He gave them hailstones for

rain; fire mingled with the hail ran along upon the ground” to the Pantheon performance where they become examples of punishment befitting perversions of masculinist notions of national character, and not possible typologies for misrule.

The Palace of Love and the Temple of Mars

With the second performance in the Commemoration schedule came a deeply significant shift in performance space and repertoire. The celebration moved from Westminster Abbey to the most auspicious site of elite sociability—the Pantheon—and the program consisted chiefly of excerpts derived from Handel’s Italian operas and his chamber music. But careful scrutiny of the program also indicates that the airs from often-obscure operas were intercut with extremely famous passages from well-known Israelite oratorios: namely, *Joshua*, *Israel in Egypt*, and *Judas Maccabaeus*. The *London Magazine* noted that “this evening’s entertainment, though perhaps not equal in point of grandeur to that of the preceding day, was in every respect worthy of the occasion. It consisted of Handel’s lighter compositions, with several of his most sublime chorusses.”⁵⁶ The press’s coverage of the second performance is less extensive than the reporting on the performances held in the Abbey, and aside from the repeated acclamation of Madame Mara’s and Mr. Harrison’s singing, comparatively little is said about the music.⁵⁷ But the papers offer detailed discussions of the architect James Wyatt’s decorations, and I would suggest that this intense interest in the space of performance allows one to speculate on the stakes or significance of this performance in the overall Commemoration.

As Gillian Russell has extensively documented, the Pantheon, which opened in January of 1772, was almost immediately celebrated as the most eroticized space in London. Architecturally, Wyatt’s original design for the building was replete with amorous references both to the heathen past and to the exotic East. As she states,

A foreign nobleman was said to have commented that the building evoked “the enchanted palaces of the French romances,” and that it was “raised by the potent wand of some Fairy.”: “In short, the building seemed the Palace of Pleasure, inhabited by the Loves and Graces; all was beauty, gaiety and elegance.” A hybrid of Roman and Byzantine styles, the Pantheon consisted of fourteen rooms in total. Its centrepiece was the rotunda or dome, based on the mosque of Santa Sophia in Constantinople.

Niches below the dome contained statues of heathen gods and goddesses, on the model of the Roman Pantheon, illuminated by numerous lights in gilt vases.⁵⁸

The intersection of the amatory fantasies of classicism and orientalism conveniently figured forth by the great dome was matched by a very particular style of fashionable sociability that was controversial from the outset. The entertainments at the Pantheon were attended by people of fashion, and that meant it was not a site where virtue was always manifest. In fact, it was the presence of demireps and their libertine suitors, along with the remarkable opportunity for erotic display, that constituted the Pantheon's greatest draw. Because it was also run as a commercial operation outside the control of the licensing procedures that regulated other sites of fashionable sociability, such as the theatre or the pleasure gardens, it was always perceived as a suspect site. As Russell demonstrates, the sexual politics of the Pantheon's eroticization of spectatorship needs to be understood within a larger framework where elite women such as Teresa Cornelys, through the sponsorship of musical entertainments in private domiciles, were threatening the highly masculinist economy of entertainment in London. The fact that the Pantheon was modeled on these entertainments opened its original proprietors to charges of effeminacy and vice.⁵⁹ What is important for our purposes here is that all through the 1770s and 1780s the physical elements of the building itself, the conduct of its patrons, and the character of its management were all associated with gender insubordination and sexual misconduct. Therefore, the movement of the Commemoration from Westminster Abbey to the Pantheon amounts to a shift from a rememorative space of national glory to a suspect space of elite dissipation.

And that movement required fundamental modifications to the Pantheon itself, which ultimately had to do with the spectacle of the royal family. As the *London Magazine's* description of Wyatt's modifications indicates, the Pantheon on this evening was transformed into a space resembling one of the patent theatres on the night of a command performance:⁶⁰

No exertions of art were wanting to prepare the grand saloon for the most perfect accommodation of the subscribers. A spacious projecting gallery, on painted columns, in imitation of the porphyry ones which support the building, was erected over the great door, for the reception of their Majesties, and the rest of the royal family. In the centre of it appeared a state gallery, with seats for the King and Queen, under a lofty canopy, adorned with crimson and gold decorations, the dome of which was richly gilt, and

relieved by the royal arms. Elegant compartments of the same box were reserved for the Princess Royal, and the junior branches of the family; large piers of plate glass were fixed behind it, which heightened by various reflecting lustres, gave the whole an appearance truly magnificent! . . . A gradual elevation of benches was made in all the galleries, and likewise through all the recesses underneath them. The dome was illuminated with buff coloured lamps, disposed in small squares, which, with the addition of numberless lustres, added peculiar brilliancy to the scene! the orchestra remained in its usual place and form; but in the gallery over it was erected an organ, on the top of which shone in transparency an irradiated bust of the immortal HANDEL!⁶¹

What we have here is a careful layering of the performance space. The introduction of the projecting gallery reorients what was previously a circular space and the introduction of reflecting surfaces literally made the king and the royal family the focus of visual attention. In a gesture reminiscent of the deployment of mirrors in the *Mischianza*, one could also argue that the mirrors and lustrous surfaces intensified the autoethnographic character of the event. Similar optical effects were deployed to draw attention to the transparency of the bust of Handel. If we look at published illustrations of the architectural modifications, it becomes clear that Wyatt effectively concealed eroticized scenes of heathen love by playing up, first, the classical elements of the building—especially the columns—which were themselves a quotation of the Roman Pantheon and, second, the royal arms (fig. 6.2).⁶² There is even evidence in the papers that much of the erotic imagery that decorated the dome and other surfaces was temporarily concealed.⁶³ Out of a space of intense erotic spectatorship formerly associated with elite dissipation and, by extension, national decay emerges a disposition of bodies and architectural elements that cannot help but equate the state of Britain and imperial Rome. The Palace of Love was transformed into the Temple of Mars. And it is this maneuver that allows us to read the program of the second performance. As we will see, this fantasy of renewed empire, which was coded directly into the physical space of performance, also emerged in the performance itself, but in order for this to happen, the corresponding enactment of amorous passion in the music had to be similarly contained.

I would like to suggest that that movement from the first to the second performance, from the Abbey to the Pantheon, is not simply a matter of contrasting sacred and secular music, or—from a slightly different view—war and love, but rather constitutes a strategic gesture aimed at countering allegations of emascu-

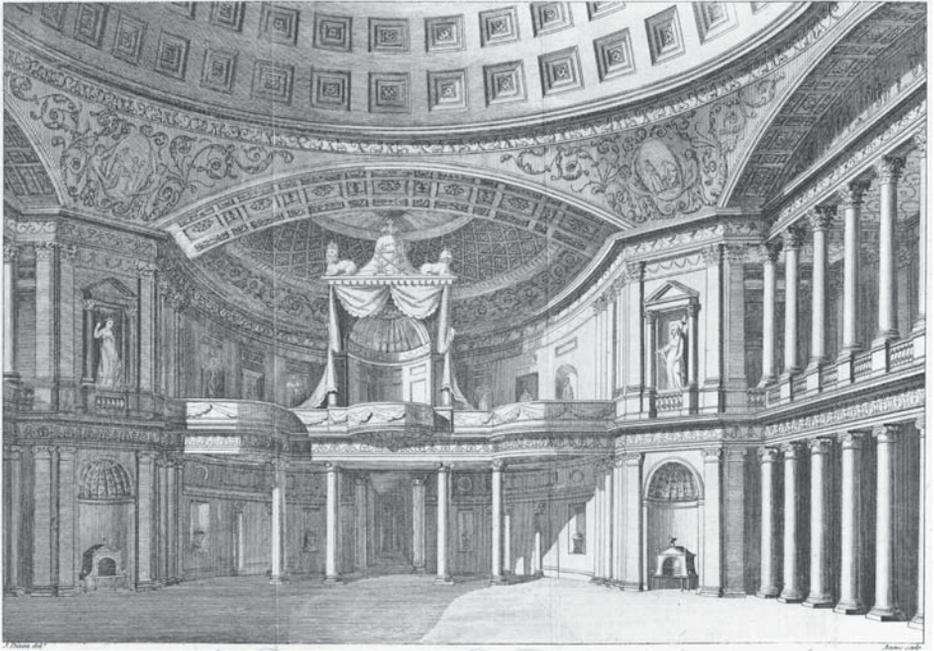


Figure 6.2. “An inside view of the Pantheon exhibiting their Majesties Box &c as fitted up under the direction of Mr. James Wyatt, for the Commemoration of Handel.” From *European Magazine and London Review*, May 1784, 324–25. 1978,U.1911. Department of Prints and Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.

lation that lie at the heart of much of the consternation following the American war. To put this in its most extreme form, the program for the second performance can be read as having a pedagogical imperative whose ultimate aim is prophylactic: it explores suspect sexuality in order to protect an already compromised nation from replicating the sociability that ostensibly contributed to its recent defeat. As we have already noted, the problem of emasculation among the social elites was a recurrent topic in the press coverage of the Commemoration. Here is the *Morning Chronicle* reporting on the announcement of Dr. Burney’s intention to write a history of the Commemoration:

We have heard it asserted that in the same proportion a nation becomes attached to the fine arts, in the same proportion the minds of the people become enervated, and regardless of their political liberty, and that music, more than any other science emasculates the mind. Whether this position be true or false we have not leisure to examine, though we are ready to

grant, that where music becomes the *business* of a people, it may and perhaps does produce the effect alluded to, but where it is taken up as in England by way of relaxation from the more weighty concerns of the statesman and merchant, no evil consequence can possibly (in a national point of view) attend our attachment. On the contrary, Concerts assist in forming the manners of our youth, by giving a polish to their behaviour, not often met with among a people, where music does not constitute part of their public amusements.⁶⁴

The pedagogical imperative that closes this passage seems straightforward, but how are we to understand music's role "in forming the manners of our youth"? The correspondent does not disagree with the assertion that music enervates and emasculates the mind but argues instead that these deleterious effects have to do with dosage. If music is consumed as an intermittent diversion from the demands of the state and the market, then it becomes a valuable tool for the inculcation of civility. Because all of this is staged as a question of national character, English masculinity is here defined by a rationing of pleasure. But this begs the question of the proper balance between policy, business, and entertainment.

Rationing, I would argue, is what the program of the second performance is all about, and this is evident from its structure. The operatic airs are carefully intercut with selections from the oratorios that prevent a coherent narrative of passion from unfolding. Passion instead is fragmented and contained within each air: the audience is not allowed to follow the development of any particular character's desire. The program's refusal of narrative is an argument against the central dramatic tenet of Handel's Italian operas. It would be granting a great deal of force to this one performance, but it is worth noting that, with the exception of an unusual run of a pasticcio of *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* in 1787, Handelian opera is effectively silenced for more than one hundred years.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Pantheon as a site of elite entertainment declined in popularity as the 1780s unfolded. In this context, the oratorio selections become doubly significant because, in form, language, and subject, they exist in contrast to the arias and duets on the program. We could argue that, like the decorations that Wyatt introduced into the space of the Pantheon, the choruses, by virtue of their sublimity and their subject matter, effectively put the Handel of erotic operatic entanglement in abeyance.

The choice of choruses is apt. The choruses from *Joshua* and *Judas Macca-baeus* are among Handel's most direct expressions of national election. The two

choruses from *Israel in Egypt*, referred to in the previous section, detail the plagues that afflict the Egyptians immediately before the Israelites' liberation from captivity. If we understand the deployment of "He smote all the first born" and "He gave them hailstones for rain" as part of the larger tactic of segmenting and reactivating *Israel in Egypt* in the Commemoration as a whole, then these verses from Exodus have the capacity to figure forth God's retribution for disobedience. Disconnected from the overall narrative of the oratorio, they can stand as particularly powerful expressions of God's displeasure. This of course implies that Pharaoh's misrule is being temporarily or strategically affiliated with past instances of British autocracy. It would be an exaggeration to simply suggest that the central allegory of part 2 of *Israel in Egypt* is being decisively reversed in order to critique the political errors and social conditions that led to the American debacle. But in the physical environs of the Pantheon and among the very people often directly involved in these historical events, it is difficult not to at least contemplate the possibility that a program of social and political reform was being articulated for and by the elites themselves.

The nature of this reform can be gleaned from the way two of the most famous airs from Handel's so-called magic operas frame the operatic elements of the program. After an introductory performance of Handel's "Second Hautbois Concerto," the vocal part of the evening opened with Signor Tasca's performance of "Sorge infausta una procella" from Handel's 1732 opera *Orlando*. *Orlando* was the first of three operas Handel derived from Lodovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and its narrative is intriguing in this context. Anthony Hicks's synopsis sets out the key predicament as follows:

The opening scene is the countryside at night, with a view of a mountain on which Atlas is seen supporting the heavens. Zoroastro contemplates the constellations, obscure in meaning to ordinary mortals, but which tell him that Orlando will one day return to noble deeds. Orlando himself appears, torn between conflicting desires for love and glory. Zoroastro rebukes him for his devotion to love, and illustrates the dangers of that emotion by causing the distant mountain to change to the Palace of Love, where heroes of antiquity appear asleep at Cupid's feet. He urges Orlando to follow Mars, the god of war. Orlando, at first shamed by the vision, decides that glory can be obtained in pursuit of love.⁶⁶

Orlando is in love with Angelica, but she is in love with Medoro. After numerous twists and turns, Orlando's pursuit of love ultimately leads him into a state of jealousy and madness from which he is rescued by the necromancer Zoroastro.

In the aria performed at the Pantheon, Zoroastro implores Orlando to accept the betrothal of Angelica and Medoro, and immediately afterward a statue of Mars rises as Orlando “proclaims victory over himself.”⁶⁷ Zoroastro’s aria therefore is explicitly about not only regaining control of one’s passions but also renewing reverence for marriage. It is clear from both the overall narrative of the opera and the immediate context for the song that with control comes martial prowess. Here is Burney’s translation of the aria:

Though furious storms awhile may rage,
 And darkness ev’ry hope deny,
 The Sun, at length, shall fear assuage,
 And calm at once the heart and sky.

So men, endow’d with virtue rare,
 The lures of vice sometimes decoy;
 Yet, freed from such insidious snare,
 Conversion brings unbound joy.⁶⁸

Performed in this space at this historical moment, the audience, even if it was unfamiliar with the narrative of *Orlando*, would have been confronted with metaphorical linkages not only between past stormy darkness and the pursuit of vice but also between newfound calm and the conversion to virtue. It is a song that lends itself to an allegory of recent British history, but more significantly it reiterates in more specific terms the argument of the preceding program in the Commemoration.

Zoroastro’s critique of Orlando’s excesses deploys the same figural economy that animates the storms of the third part of the first performance in the Abbey, only here the argument concerning the lures of vice is more pointed because it is articulated in a space routinely associated with social and sexual misconduct. It is in this context that Burney’s reading of the fourth Chandos Anthem, in which he invokes the scene from the *Aeneid* where allegations of emasculation are the prelude to both renewed martial prowess and the prophecy of future empire, is so resonant. If his reading—or my reading of it—seemed strained in our earlier discussion, then it is only too apt when linked to the performance of this song within a building that was itself modeled on Hadrian’s architectural paean to a syncretist understanding of imperial rule. Could we not argue that both the modifications to the building and the specific import of this opening song constitute a critique of past excesses that both fleetingly recognizes that punishment was due and that future glory nevertheless awaits? What interests

me here is that the critique is aimed directly at the social and sexual excesses of the elites but only indirectly implies that the historical setbacks of the 1770s and early 1780s—conveniently the period of the Pantheon's greatest fame—were the result of errant governmental and military policy. Making that connection relies on an argument that sees bad governance as the result of debased and specifically effeminate masculinity. In other words, vice and effeminacy need to be set aside, and one way of reading the Commemoration's work in the Pantheon is to suggest that the battle against vice is being waged at its source.

Whether the audience was ready for such a conversion is another matter. Burney's analysis of part 2 of the Pantheon performance has to deal with the only instance in his account of the Commemoration where the audience clearly loses interest in the music. The selections throughout this section are various, but with the exception of the final air from *Alcina*, they are unified by themes of honor, virtue, and the restraint appropriate to considering the possibility of departed glory. The central vocal piece in the program, Caesar's accompanied recitative over the ashes of Pompey from *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, was singled out by Burney as "the finest piece of accompanied Recitative, without intervening symphonies, with which I am acquainted."⁶⁹ Its "brooding modulations evoke the cold shadow of departed glory, and give the episode an extraordinary sombre power";⁷⁰ for the audience assembled in the Pantheon on 27 May 1784, however, it generated boredom:

But though delivered by Signor Pacchierotti, with the true energy and expression of heroic Recitative, for which he is so justly celebrated in Italy by the best judges of his poetry and musical declamation of that country, had not the attention or success it deserved here, detached from its place in the Opera, and printed without a translation. Indeed, the audience, fatigued with the struggles for admission, the pressure of the crowd in their seats, and relaxed by the accumulated heat of the weather and company, were neither so attentive to the performers, nor willing to be pleased by their exertion, as in Westminster Abbey.⁷¹

Significantly, he goes on to argue that this lack of interest was not always the case; Burney compares the original performance of this recitative to an earlier Italian performance where the words "occasioned such agitation in all who heard it, they trembled, turned pale, and regarded each other with fear and astonishment."⁷²

These supplemental remarks suggest that the problem is not simply one of audience discomfort and the lack of translation. It suggests that the audience has lost the capacity to fully comprehend the import of Caesar's soliloquy, or that the

historical moment is not right for such a harrowing account of the mutability of power. Here is Burney's translation of the recitative:

These are thy ashes, Pompey, this the mound,
 Thy soul, invisible, is hovering round!
 Thy splendid trophies, and thy honours fade,
 Thy grandeur, like thyself, is now a shade.
 Thus fare the hopes in which we most confide,
 And thus the efforts end of human pride!
 What yesterday could hold the world in chains,
 To-day, transform'd to dust, an urn contains.
 Such is the fate of all, from cot to throne,
 Our origin is earth, our end a stone!
 Ah wretched life! how frail and short thy joys
 A breath creates thee, and a breath destroys.⁷³

In the opera, these lines operate as a cautionary utterance articulated during Caesar's and Rome's ascendancy; in the Pantheon, these lines had the potential to capture quite powerfully the decline of Britain's influence in the world. I think it is symptomatic of the entire program that the selection from *Giulio Cesare* does not partake of that opera's celebrated exploration of the intensity of worldly sexual desire, or its remarkably joyous scene of peace that attends the nonmarital sexual union of Caesar and Cleopatra and the political union of Rome and Egypt. Instead, the program's final negotiation with the problem of love activates a narrative of future vengeance and implies that the current humiliating peace will be followed by a return to war.

Like the opening aria from *Orlando*, the final operatic aria performed that evening in the Pantheon was "Ah! mio cor" from *Alcina*, Handel's last magic opera and the last one based on Ariosto. In other words, the evening opens and closes with songs sung by necromancers. But unlike Zoroastro's correction of Orlando's excessive amorous passion and the ensuing hypostatization of war, Alcina's aria moves from an expression of pathetic desolation at being deserted by her lover to an extraordinary outpouring of rage that explicitly puts grief aside and promises revenge:

But why let grief my soul devour?
 I'm still a queen, and still have pow'r;
 Which power my vengeance soon shall guide,
 If still my kindness he deride.⁷⁴

There is no hesitation over the mutability of power here, but rather an explicit statement of political continuity. As ruler of her own island, Alcina bears comparison to the king in both her desolation and her statement of unwavering rule in spite of the desertion of her lover/subjects. Madame Mara's performance of this aria drew the highest marks of praise from Burney and was the focus of much of the press coverage. The assertion of future vengeance fits nicely with all of the renewed martial vigor figured forth during the first performance in the Abbey; but listeners familiar with the entire opera would have been worried about where this vengeance would lead, because it operates at variance to the pursuit of virtue so insistently called for earlier in the evening. Unlike Zoroastro, Alcina abuses her magical powers and is ultimately undone by those made captive on the island. In other words, Alcina has the potential to signify not only both past and future rule but also the very suspect sexuality and errant femininity with which the Pantheon was associated.

Perhaps it is to keep this insistent problem at bay that the program turns so decisively to yet another Coronation Anthem, this time to Handel's "My heart is inditing," which was composed for the coronation of George II in 1727. This is not the grand anthem of *Zadok the Priest*, which figured so prominently in the first performance, but the anthem that accompanied the coronation of George II's wife, Queen Caroline. It is a remarkable insertion into this secular program because it is a piece of church music. But of all of Handel's Chapel Royal compositions, it is the most insistently concerned with the place of gender normativity in monarchical rule. As Jeremy Summerly notes,

The second movement deals with the king's daughters and is a study in Baroque femininity, graceful and coquettish. In similar vein, the third movement contrasts the transparently textured demure queen with the lasciviously dense king's pleasure. After these gender stereotypes, the fourth and final movement unites kings and queens as nursing fathers and nursing mothers respectively, although Handel still cannot resist giving the highest choral note to the kings rather than to the queens.⁷⁵

Throughout the Commemoration, the press was fascinated by the public display of the princesses' femininity and with the parental qualities of the king and queen,⁷⁶ but it is important to register the effect of verses such as "King's daughters were among the honourable women" and "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers" in this specific performance space. In the very space most famously associated with demireps and adventurers, with fashion and the eroticization of spectatorship, the audience was suddenly presented

with an erotic and political spectacle from the past, which simultaneously put forward the queen and the royal princesses as models of honorable femininity and asserted the king's potency. One can hear the sexual restoration in Burney's closing remarks: "The fourth, and last movement, 'Kings shall be thy nursing fathers' is a full Chorus, big with all the fire, contrivance, rich harmony, and energy of genius, which Handel afterward displayed in his best Oratorio Choruses."⁷⁷

If the first performance reconstituted the king as a martial figure, this recalibration not only of the king's fatherhood but also of his virility in the second performance reconstituted the sexual norms that informed past notions of the state as the patriarchal family. That this should happen on this particular territory is remarkable, but it is important to recognize that, by going into the space of the Pantheon, the stakes would have been that much more evident. At the end of the evening, sitting in the gently raked temporary seats of a now transformed room, one's eyes would be firmly directed toward the royal box above, one's ears would have suffused with music repeatedly associated with the masculine qualities of sublime power, and one would have been directed toward the future: a future of supposedly virile leadership, which may or may not enact revenge for past humiliations; a future ostensibly dedicated to the regulation of dissipation and excessive passion; but a future that certainly included "all the fire, contrivance, rich harmony and energy" of the *Messiah*.

Resurrection

The extended reading of the first and second performances presented in the preceding sections gives a detailed sense of how social and political anxieties were carefully activated and contained through complex acts of surrogation and selection. And it is important to recognize that these two days of performance open with one anthem and close with another, and that both were composed for the coronation of George II. The casting forward of this music, which was also used for George III's coronation, is part of a complex reinauguration of the monarchy necessary after a period of immense political and historical turbulence. As we have seen, in both the Abbey and the Pantheon, the audience was witness to an attempt to ideologically renovate Hanoverian rule, and I hope that both the complexity and depth of that attempt are more tangible following my admittedly speculative readings. But this phantasmatic reinauguration of the martial and political power of monarchy is incomplete without the third performance of the Commemoration: the massive performance of *Messiah* in Westminster Abbey (fig. 6.3). The



Figure 6.3. "View of the magnificent Box erected for their Majesties, in Westminster Abbey under the direction of Mr. James Wyatt, at the Commemoration of Handel." From *European Magazine and London Review*, June 1784, 478. 1867,1012.781. Department of Prints and Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.

return to the Abbey is itself significant for all the reasons I have articulated. With the struggle with the social past of the Pantheon at least temporarily completed, the celebration can return not only to “sacred” music but also to explicit statements of national election and resurrection. As William Weber has demonstrated, the resurrection in question was arguably that of George III himself, and after the Commemoration he assiduously styled himself as the nation’s foremost Handelian.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the return to the Abbey also involved a shift to the performance of a complete choral work, which by this time had “transcended Britain’s religious divisions more universally than any other cultural phenomenon.”⁷⁹ Weber’s analysis of the political valences of the Commemoration indicates the importance of High Church religion to the overall project of the Commemoration, but *Messiah* is important because it had the capacity to speak to a diverse community and thus call forth a renewed nation under a Protestant god. Certainly the press was overwhelmed by the sublimity of the occasion.⁸⁰ This is not to say that everyone was convinced. With Cowper’s encouragement, John Newton wrote a set of fifty sermons attacking Handel’s oratorio. His resistance is one measure of its totalizing force.

But for the rest of the 1780s, Britain was seized by what Weber terms a kind of “Handelmania” that revolved around the person of the king. His patronage of the Concerts of Ancient Music and his part in Burney’s account of the Commemoration was matched by a flood of commercial concerts and performances:

Musical entrepreneurs put together for the theatres long pasticcios of numbers from Handel’s works set to new words of biblical origin. Singers offered more and more numbers from Handel’s operas in concerts. Critics began comparing composers of the time with Handel as the great master of opera. . . . In 1787 the King’s Theatre went so far as to put excerpts from Handel’s operas on stage, the first such production since 1754, in a pasticcio of arias compiled by Samuel Arnold from different operas under the title *Guilio Cesare in Egitto*. George III had not gone to the Italian opera as often as his two predecessors had done, and an aristocrat later claimed that the production was intended mostly to get the king back into the King’s Theatre.⁸¹

These events abated by 1792, but I think it is culturally significant to consider the ways in which the political ritual of 1784 opened the door for the commercialization of Handel’s works, especially in 1786 and 1787. For a brief period of time, Handel’s music was most prominently represented in London by two bi-

zarre pasticcios, both of which were composed by Dr. Samuel Arnold. Arnold was a very successful composer of comic operas for the patent houses—he composed the music for *Inkle and Yarico*—and also produced the first collected edition of Handel’s music. His *Redemption*, which dominated the musical season of 1786 and which was performed well into the 1790s, offered a compilation of Handel’s Israelite oratorios and used every typological possibility at hand to proclaim with nationalist fervor “OUR REDEMPTION” in Christ. Arnold’s and Nicola Haym’s version of *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, although loosely based on Handel’s opera of the same name, radically departs from the original by the “addition of a few fabulous incidents, introduced for the conveniency of the performance” and by the excision of key elements to “give the piece a dramatic consistency.”⁸² That it exhibits neither consistency nor clarity should come as no surprise, but I would like to suggest that the popularity of these two rather strange corruptions of Handel’s work warrants attention and requires that we think about the very notion of pasticcio in a time of political transition and renovation. I will leave that reading for another time, in order to make way for what I take to be a highly symptomatic deployment of pasticcio, but this time staged at a considerable distance from London itself.

Projection, Patriotism, Surrogation: Handel in Calcutta

Unlike the 1770s and 1780s, the 1790s were a period of consolidation in the British Empire. Military victories over Tipu Sultan in Mysore and the establishment of the Permanent Settlement not only confirmed actual British domination in India but also provided an occasion for phantasmatic constructions of global supremacy.⁸³ I have written elsewhere about how these events were staged at Astley’s Royal Amphitheatre and at Sadler’s Wells, but in the concluding section of this chapter I am more concerned with the enactment of masochistic nationalism among Britons in Calcutta—that is, a nationalism that coheres in the pain of its mutilated members⁸⁴—whose dynamics are deeply connected to the recalibration of British subjectivity after the loss of the American colonies. Masochistic nationalism may seem counterintuitive to our normative understanding of national character because masochism carries with it the connotation of perversion, a turning aside from truth or right, and specifically a turning from pleasure to pain. But it helps to explain the allegorical tactics employed in Calcutta on the particular evening I discuss here. Prior catastrophic losses both in Mysore and in America had a lingering effect on future actions in India, not only because the British could not afford further defeat but also because the primary

British actant in the Mysore Wars and the Permanent Settlement, Lord Cornwallis, carried his experience of defeat at Yorktown and other American campaigns to India when he was appointed governor-general of Bengal.⁸⁵ As an icon of both imperial humiliation and domination, Cornwallis plays an oddly double role in the celebration of victory over Mysore. Because the commemoration of Cornwallis's actions in India always carries the threat of reactivating traumatic memories of the American war, the performance of fragments from Handel's oratorios that I discuss in this section compulsively repeat and repudiate scenes of national humiliation. What interests me is the way both the actants and the audience members, who are largely indistinguishable from each other, tie their fantasies of national and imperial election to an unresolved cultural wound.

The checkered history of British conflict with the sultans of Mysore before the early 1790s activated deeply felt anxieties not only about the susceptibility of British subjectivity to Indianization but also about the viability of the imperial enterprise. As Linda Colley has reminded us, news of Britain's spectacular defeat at Pollilur in the First Mysore War reached London at almost precisely the same time as the news of the fall of Yorktown, and there was general consternation that the entire empire was going to collapse.⁸⁶ These anxieties were only exacerbated by heavily contested accounts of British atrocities in India, as well as by widely circulated captivity narratives from the 1780s that revolve around scenes of bodily degradation and mutilation. Many of Tipu's prisoners were enslaved and forced to fight against the British forces. These cheyla battalions were the site of intense anxiety because most of the cheylas, or slaves, were forced to convert to Islam and were circumcised. As Kate Teltscher states, "The British cheylas, marked with the stigma of Muslim difference but otherwise unconverted to Islam, were stranded in a doctrinal no man's land, and the texts reveal their sense of marginalization."⁸⁷ However, she is also quick to point out, following Mary Louise Pratt, that the very fact of the existence of the survival narratives performs a kind of inoculation of their dangerous contents.⁸⁸ Presented within the frame of a survivor's tale, the mutilation of the penis, and by extension of the religious and national subject, can be presented and contained. However, the line separating circumcision and castration is at times hard to discern in these texts because the mutilation, whether partial or complete, seems to instantiate a form of subjectivity that for all attempts at containment continues to inhere in the narratives and haunts even the most triumphant accounts of victory over Tipu in the early 1790s.

Projection, or the Volatility of Paternalism

Like earlier campaigns against the sultans of Mysore, the Third Mysore War did not start well for the British forces. The initial campaigns were conducted under the leadership of General William Medows, the governor of Madras. Medows served under Cornwallis in the American war and, despite his prior experience, made a number of tactical errors that reminded Cornwallis of his own miscalculations in Pennsylvania and South Carolina.⁸⁹ Tipu took almost immediate strategic advantage in the early phases of the conflict and forced Cornwallis to take over Medows's command in mid-December 1791. Cornwallis undertook one of the most massive deployments of men, animals, and artillery in British military history and eventually conquered the strategic fortress of Bangalore. However, insufficient supply lines and uncooperative weather prevented him from successfully taking Tipu's capital Seringapatam. The monsoon and other logistical problems forced Cornwallis to retreat.

The anxiety regarding the mutilation of the national subject was partially resolved by Cornwallis's victory over Tipu Sultan at Seringapatam some months later. However, the resolution was partial, because this conflict did not conclude with a decisive military annihilation but rather with an extraordinary diplomatic transferral of money, lands, and two of Tipu's sons as hostages to British rule. That transfer generated three successive performances of patriotism in Mysore and Calcutta, each of which had a supplementary relation to its immediate precursor. On 23 February 1792, Cornwallis himself engineered the first of these when he carefully staged a spectacle outside Tipu's fortress at Seringapatam involving elephants, artillery, and soldiers in full ceremonial costume, in which he publicly received Tipu's two sons, "dressed for the melancholy occasion in muslin adorned with pearls and assorted jewellery," with a gesture of paternal care. The *Gentleman's Magazine's* account of the event is symptomatic:

Lord Cornwallis received [Tipu's sons] in his tent; which was guarded by a battalion of Sepoys, and they were then formally delivered to his Lordship by Gullam Ally Beg, the Sultan's Vackeel, as hostages for the due performance of the treaty. . . . At length Gullum Ally, approaching Lord Cornwallis, much agitated, thus emphatically addressed his Lordship: "These children," pointing to the young princes, whom he then presented, "were this morning the sons of the Sultan, my master: their situation is changed, and they must now look up to your Lordship as their father." The tender and affectionate manner in which his Lordship received them, seemed to

confirm the truth of the expression. The attendants of the young princes appeared astonished, and their countenances were highly expressive of the satisfaction they felt in the benevolence of his Lordship.⁹⁰

Teltscher argues that the representation of Cornwallis's acceptance of Tipu's sons as a scene of paternal benevolence contrasts with the popular accounts of Tipu's alleged mistreatment of British captives. After the defeat of Tipu in 1793, war between the East India Company and Mysore was now refigured as a topological struggle between normative and errant models of paternal care. The wide circulation of visual representations of this scene, on everything from prints to tea trays, achieved the twofold effect of putting the prior atrocities into abeyance and of reinforcing British fantasies of colonial rule as a form of affectionate paternalism.⁹¹

This spectacle of military paternalism outside of Seringapatam was followed by elaborate celebratory performances in Calcutta. A Gala Concert was performed using amateur musicians and singers from the ranks of the East India Company, and an extraordinary number of illuminations or projected transparencies were displayed throughout the town. Precinematic transparencies had been used to powerful effect in other colonial locales, but in this case it is the screens themselves that are most important.⁹² By illuminating the key offices of the East India Company, the celebrations in Calcutta took icons of the bureaucratic regulation of subject peoples and made them contiguous with Cornwallis's paternal care of Tipu's sons:

The Government house as it ought, the swelling of "public cause of pride" surpassed in magnificence grandeur all the rest:—the symmetry and style of the whole building, was particularly favorable to the occasion, and it was seen and embraced by the ingenious contrivers on this occasion with felicitous effect, the balustrades along the wings were ranged with party coloured lights, and intervening pedestals with lamps in festoons. . . . A transparent painting of 32 feet high by 27 completed in its contrast an admirable idea of the whole spectacle; the scene bore a figurative allusion to memorable signature of the preliminary articles; and the introduction of the hostages to Earl Cornwallis on that occasion—three oriental figures in chief were the most remarkably distinguishable, and we think with propriety of judgement in the artist: They were the Vakeel and the Princes hostages presenting to Britannia, or her genius in the usual habiliment, a scroll—she appeared seated and behind her a figure of Hercules, emblematic of the great work so completely and speedily performed: above Fame

appeared with a medallion of his Lordship and in the background a perspective view of Seringapatam.⁹³

The substitution of Britannia and Hercules for Cornwallis in this visualization of the hostage transaction has the curious effect of hollowing out his specific actions in favor of a fantasy of abstract national agency here projected onto the surface of company rule. Removing him from the scene and relocating him into an apotheosis of Fame simultaneously exemplifies Cornwallis and contains his heroism as a subset of Britain's "clement bravery."⁹⁴ But does the eruption of femininity into the scene in the form of seated Britannia reinforce the notion of benevolent rule or undermine the particular significance of paternity to this ideological construct? It is as though each subsequent allegorical gesture calls into question the self-confirming fantasy of benevolent paternalism.

One could argue that Cornwallis's history of defeat and victory in colonial warfare makes him a volatile emblem of patriotic paternalism. That volatility requires not only repeated reassertions of his paternity—as Teltscher demonstrates, this ideological assemblage is highly overdetermined—but also supplementation by a series of more complex phantasmatic constructions that both undo the tight ideological sutures achieved in the initial performance and raise questions about how the nation can be seen at this distance from the metropole. The colonial newspaper accounts devote extensive coverage to the technical achievements of the illuminations and, in so doing, subtly declare the cultural superiority of technological modernity. Throughout the newspaper coverage, there is a fascination with how the illuminations transform the quotidian spaces of Calcutta into "one continuous blaze" of allegorical splendor in which the very loci of formerly precarious rule emerge as classical emblems of virtue. The *Madras Courier* declared that "so general a display of beauty, splendor, and magnificence were combined to render Calcutta, and its vicinity, one of the most superb Coup d'oeil's it has ever exhibited."⁹⁵ This declaration of artifice is to the point because it both invests in the power of representation and recognizes its limitations.

As the papers literally take the reader on a walk about town something strange begins to occur. In attempting to catalog all the transparencies, the loco-descriptive act testifies to divergent visual interpretations of Cornwallis's victory. As the papers turn their attention from the official East India Company buildings to the private houses of its employees, "Cornwallis" is increasingly figured forth by his coat of arms, and the buildings become the surfaces on which a fantasy of pastoral peace is projected:

Messrs Gibbon and Brown's house in the Cossitollah; the whole extent of their house on all sides was laid out in the same style of illumination as the government house, in front before the centre Window was displayed a neatly painted transparency, of his Lordship's arms, the coat of which extended considerably beyond the supporters, and over the crest, displayed the roof of a superb and splendid tent—the allusion was happy, apt, and finely impressive: above the tent was the [Collar?]⁹⁶ and *George* and below the star with Laurels and Palms; the lower story of the house was in a similar style, the Gateway and avenue leading thru shrubbery was converted with great skill into a luminous Vista terminated by an alcove containing a temple dedicated to peace; within which was an urn inscribed to the memory of the brave dead; and without—the motto *Glorious Peace*—the perspective was so happily preserved, that nothing appeared out of proportion, and yet the object immensely distant.⁹⁷

Like other projections of “Fame relinquishing War,”⁹⁸ this image carries out a crucial act of memorialization that simultaneously marks the dead, so that they may be forgotten, and projects the viewer forward into a state of peace that is not only precarious but also not fully achieved until almost a decade later. Tipu would not be killed until 1799.

If we think of Calcutta on that night as a precursor to the image city, then the emphasis on the illusion of perspective in the description of both transparencies is resonant, for it quite literally takes the present historical buildings and ruptures their very contemporaneity by giving them both spatial and historical “depth.” In the case of government house, the view of Seringapatam puts observers in a position of elevated contemplation—quite literally, the lord of all they survey. In the case of the house of Gibbon and Brown, the everyday residence is literally and phantasmatically transformed into a picturesque pastoral scene of the kind that Britons were well acquainted with not only in the Georgic experiments of eighteenth-century poetry but also in picturesque visual representation. James Thomson's “The Seasons” is the most apposite exemplar of this kind of deployment of the prospect as a tool for representing good governance and eliminating all manner of social resistances.⁹⁹ As Beth Fowkes Tobin demonstrates, these same Georgic strategies were vital to William Hodges's almost contemporaneous picturesque erasure of warfare in his illustrations to *Travels in India during the Years 1780, 1781, 1782 and 1783*, which was published in 1793.¹⁰⁰ Significantly, the battles being veiled by Hodges's picturesque representation of captured Indian fortresses are precisely those troubling conflicts of the First

Mysore War, which generated so much anxiety among British observers. To employ John Barrell's resonant phrase, both Hodges's illustrations and the projections in Calcutta manipulate light to hide "the dark side of the landscape," only here it is not the rural poor who are occluded by representation but the ongoing social conflict between British imperial power and native colonial resistance.¹⁰¹

We should not be surprised to see geographically displaced Britons using the representational strategies of an earlier form of patriotic identification to project a rather different imperial vision. But what remains so resonant here is the very duplicity of the image, for the projection of metropolitan fantasy is literally cast on the contours of colonial space. One has the sense that one could look upon the house of Messrs. Gibbon and Brown and see conflicting images of triumph and ongoing struggle, past victory and present strife, the prospect of peace modeled on England's past and the portent of continuing conflict with Tipu that inheres in the very ground on which the viewer walks. And if this overlay of contradictory representations and ideological scenes is not complex enough, it is important to remember that perspective is understood as a technology suited not only to the representation of peace but also to the practice of warfare itself as conducted by Cornwallis. The British ability to effectively target Tipu's fortresses with artillery relies on precisely the same geometric abstraction of physical space as that employed in the transparencies. The very technology of war figures forth the fantasy of peace.

Mrs. Barlow's Songs, or Specters of France

Oddly enough, it is the parallel acts of walking and reading that ultimately give the image city its political purchase, but it is important to remember that this stroll does not climb up to an "eminence" but rather ends up in the theatre. Once inside the doors, the collocation of might, moderation, and precinematic visual wonder was similarly enacted in the Gala Concert held in the Calcutta theatre:

Entering at the west door, the first object that rivetted the attention was a beautiful semicircular temple, of the Ionic order, dedicated to Victory, placed at the east end, whose dome reached within a foot of the ceiling. In this was placed a transparency, representing a bust of Lord Cornwallis on a pedestal, with the Goddess of Victory flying over it, with a wreath of Laurel in her hand, which she was in the act of placing on his Lordship's brows:—on the plinth of the pedestal was his Lordship's motto,

Virtus Vincit Invidiam.

And over the bust

Regna Assignata.

—and on each side of this was a nich,—in one of which a figure of Fortitude, and in the other, of Clemency, was placed. Over these, and extending the whole breadth of the temple, was a transparent painting of the action of the 6th of Feb. 1792, and beneath, the following four lines:

*Still pressing forward to the fight, they broke
Through flames of sulphur, and a night of smoke,
Till slaughter's legions fill'd the trench below,
And bore their fierce avengers to the foe.*¹⁰²

The contiguity of the emblem of Clemency and the images of slaughter encapsulate a specific patriotic style that unites the illuminations and the musical entertainment. The projected lines are from Addison's *The Campaign*, which celebrates the victory of the Duke of Marlborough over the French at Blenheim in 1704.¹⁰³ This comparison is bolstered by other elements of the poem that represent valiant British troops breaching the defenses of hillside forts not unlike those Cornwallis encountered at Bangalore, Nundydroog, and Severndroog.¹⁰⁴ Equating Cornwallis and Marlborough is an extremely important gesture not simply because it consolidates Cornwallis's heroism but because it suggests that Cornwallis's treaty with Tipu, like the Treaty of Utrecht eighty years earlier, will establish a balance of power in the Asian subcontinent that will permanently check French aspirations to commercial and territorial empire. This allusion is effective because Tipu was widely supported by the French, and British observers generally saw war with Mysore as a subset of a larger global struggle with France. What the projection suggests is that with this victory, the British have entered a new phase of imperial domination. However, this involves a misrecognition of both the past and the future that gets played out in the musical celebration.

The accounts of the concert indicate that transparencies were illuminated and extinguished in order to direct audience attention to various patriotic emblems before the performance of excerpts from Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*. Like the mobilization of the prospects in the city itself and the citation of Addison's *The Campaign*, the choice of repertoire here takes arguably the most famous example of patriotic discourse in the eighteenth century and modifies it to suit the present circumstance. Contrary to what one might expect, the members of

the civilian cadre of the East India Company who put on the celebration decided not to perform the famous “liberty airs” or even the more direct celebration of martial victory, but rather focused on pastoral passages that drew attention to the terms of new-found peace. Act 1 takes the audience directly to an ambivalent moment from *Judas Maccabaeus* that both looks back at momentary victory and anticipates a return to war. This return, as well as its attendant anxieties, is averted by a surrogative shift to a passage from *Joshua* that focuses on the Israelite conquest of Canaan. This activation and containment of anxiety is repeated in the second act with even more intensity. Despite the celebration of conquest at the end of act 1, act 2 opens with the overture from *Samson* that calls forth the abject and dispossessed leader of the Israelites. This invocation of national weakness is answered by a return to the closing pastoral scenes of *Judas Maccabaeus*. Thus, like the Handel Commemoration of 1784, the evening’s entertainment both segmented and sutured together often divergent patriotic images, texts, and oratorios into a hybrid performance that engages with and reconfigures the allegorical objectives of the primary source material. The depth of that engagement is breathtaking, for it returns to the very scenes of forced conversion, circumcision, and dispossession that crystallized British imperial anxiety in the 1780s.

Judas Maccabaeus was originally, and continued to be, understood as an allegory for George II’s victory over the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, but as Ruth Smith has argued, it is an exceedingly complex and ambivalent expression of patriotism.¹⁰⁵ James Morrell’s libretto is based on both books of Maccabees, but much of its larger argument is implied. In 175 BC Antiochus Epiphanes ascended to the Syrian throne and was immediately involved in expansionist campaigns against Egypt. The Jews under Syrian rule were divided into orthodox and Hellenized Jews, who were open to the Greek culture of their rulers. Through a series of accommodations between these Hellenized Jews, represented by Jason, and their Syrian rulers, steps were taken to turn Jerusalem into a Greek city with Greek institutions. More orthodox Jews came to fear that these developments would contaminate their religion, and the ensuing conflict between orthodox and reform factions within the Jewish population was interpreted by Syrian rulers as rebellion and brutally put down. Following a massacre of Jews and a profanation of the Temple, Antiochus effectively outlawed Judaism, including the act of circumcision. In 2 Maccabees these events are interpreted as a warning from God not to diverge from traditional religious practice: “Now I beseech those that read this book, that they be not discouraged for these calamities but that they judge those punishments not to be for destruction, but for a chastening of our

nation" (2 Macc. 6:12). As Ruth Smith indicates, this passage is presented nearly verbatim early in part 1 of *Judas Maccabaeus* and needs to be understood as the condition of possibility for the oratorio's patriotism.¹⁰⁶ The period of national, ethnic, and religious division constitutes that which must be overcome to secure the political liberty of the Maccabees and, by extension, their British counterparts. This period of chastisement precedes the action of the oratorio, which focuses instead on the Maccabees' revolt against Antiochus's attempt to enforce pagan sacrifice among them. The patriarch of the family, Mattithias, refuses the edict, flees with his sons into the mountains, and upon his death establishes his sons, Simon and Judas, as the political and military leaders of a rebellion against Syrian rule.

The oratorio begins at this point in the story and the first two parts track Judas's victories over the Syrian forces. Significantly, Morrell and Handel relegate much of the military action to the intervals between the parts of the oratorio and present the audience with retroactive, largely choral, celebrations of victory. The spiritual and political center of the work occurs in the beginning of part 3 when Simon recovers the Sanctuary of the Temple—that is, the events still celebrated at Chanukah. In response to the recovery of the temple and the defeat of his general Lysias, Antiochus withdrew his repressive orders, and Jews could now live in accordance with their own laws. The oratorio thus shifts its attention from the struggle for religious freedom to the pursuit of Jewish independence and concludes with a treaty that guarantees independence for the Maccabees. This structure allows Handel and Morrell to indulge in some of the most resonant celebrations of political liberty in the eighteenth century, while downplaying a whole series of reverses in the historical account of the Maccabees rebellion.

When excerpts of this oratorio were performed in Calcutta in 1792, the audience was confronted with a cascade of allegories, each laid over the top of the other, and like any palimpsest, this act of layering erases as much as it figures forth. At the center of these layers is the counterintuitive allegorical connection between the Maccabees story and the Jacobite Rebellion in Handel's oratorio. In order to understand the allegory, it is crucial to recognize that the Jacobite Rebellion was widely understood to be part of a larger French threat to English political and religious liberty. In this allegory, the Duke of Cumberland maps onto Judas, and the alliance between Scottish Jacobites and the French becomes comparable to the alliance between the Hellenized Jews and their Syrian rulers. As Smith states,

At first sight, it might have seemed that the analogy would have appeared paradoxical or strained to its intended audiences . . . ; the Maccabean story of a successful rebellion in which the rebels were in the right was apparently being used to celebrate the suppression of a rebellion in which the rebels were in the wrong. But Morrell is careful not to transcribe from Maccabees the instances in which the Jewish opposition resembled the Jacobite campaign, and the parallel is not between Syrians attempting to suppress a rebellion by the native Jewish population and Britain suppressing a rebellion by the native Scottish population. Rather, in the light of the contemporary perception of the rebellion as part of France's plan to dominate Britain politically and forcibly to change its religion, Judas unifying a nation disrupted from within by hellenizers who co-opt foreign hellenizing Syrian forces is equivalent to Cumberland unifying a nation disrupted from within by Jacobites who co-opt foreign Catholic French forces. This factual analogy is given vitality by an emotional one: the purgation of hellenistic tendencies . . . parallels British affirmation of loyalty after the upsurge of popular anti-Hanoverian feeling in 1742–4.¹⁰⁷

So in its original context, *Judas Maccabaeus* allegorizes the Jacobite Rebellion in order to repudiate the larger threat of French aggression and to argue for the necessity of purging not only schism but also forms of political reform that threaten to make incursions on traditional notions of English political liberty. As Sudipta Sen argues, this “natural liberty” was not only “enshrined in legislation that reflected the intimate connections between liberty, private property, and law” but also supported by the continuing constitutional investment in the Protestant monarchy.¹⁰⁸ What becomes portable, therefore, in subsequent performances of the oratorio, is its ability to call forth the anxious specter of French aggression and the supposedly dire consequences of political apostasy or reform. And it is precisely this dramatization of disaster averted that fuels the oratorio's most patriotic moments. However, the activation of these anxieties does not always result in their resolution. Their performance has the potential to resuscitate past reversals and humiliations without fully resolving them.

With some sense of the political allegory of *Judas Maccabaeus*, we can now return to the Calcutta theatre and sketch in the remaining allegorical layers. Addison's lines on the Temple implicitly compare Cornwallis's victory over Tipu to the Duke of Marlborough's victory at the Battle of Blenheim. What links the two historical moments, aside from some obviously wishful thinking that the treaty with Tipu will be another Treaty of Utrecht, is the fact that British forces

prevail against alliances between Mysore and France and Bavaria and France, respectively. The inscription on the Temple globalizes the conflict in India by emphasizing French involvement in both conflicts and thus establishes the alliance needed for translating the Maccabean allegory to the Third Mysore War. This is crucial because the Mysorean uprising of the early 1790s, like that of the Scottish Jacobites in the 1740s, needed to be figured not as rebellions but as French aggression carried out by proxy native forces for the allegory to operate properly.

The parallels being drawn between Judas's war against Syria, Marlborough's campaign against the Franco-Bavarian alliance, Cumberland's suppression of the French-sponsored Jacobites, and Cornwallis's victory over Tipu Sultan all revolve around the specter of French interference in British affairs. Impending war with France in Europe is again setting up the political and emotional condition for the Maccabean allegory to have some purchase on the audience. The Calcutta papers were full of the news of revolutionary France, and the palpable evidence of English social and cultural schism in response to the French example was as much a topic of concern in the colonies as it was in the metropole. Just as the adverse incidents that beset the Jews in Syria prior to the Maccabean revolt are interpreted as temporary punishment—or "chastening"—for Hellenization, the staging of *Judas Maccabaeus* in Calcutta plays out the reverses of British fortune in the first two Mysore wars, not only as punishment for comparable prior examples of Indianization, in which some British colonial subjects adopted the cultural and social norms of India, but also as a warning against current sympathy toward the French Revolution among some British constituencies. In both the Maccabees story and the revisionist history implied by Cornwallis's reforms of the East India Company, any deviation from national and racial purity implied by openness to surrounding Syrian or Indian society is punished and then overcome. This historical comparison is crucial because it speaks directly to the current moment of social schism in Britain itself. In the face of increasingly polarized British reaction to events in France, my suspicion is that the celebrants in Calcutta are exorcizing the dangers of social and cultural apostasy by turning the defeat of Tipu into a phantasmatic victory over France. In other words, this performance both chastens the nation by invoking past humiliation in the time of political crisis *and* projects the future triumph of the reconsolidated nation in a larger geopolitical frame.

This fantasy of unification, and its allegorical support, may have had particularly strong purchase because many of the audience members would have been Scots—the East India Company was composed of an inordinate number of

Scottish employees. For these audience members, the entire allegorical economy is predicated on the historical ejection of forms of political affiliation perhaps not at all distant from some audience members' pasts. In very real ways, the loyal Scottish members are the normative counterexample not only to past rebels but also to current factions opposed to the actions of the state. One of the primary objectives of the Calcutta celebration is to crystallize this counter-exemplarity in the very space where previous observers, including Cornwallis, bemoaned the openness of East India Company officials to Indian styles of sociability.¹⁰⁹

In this context, the earlier British losses to Mysore with all their attendant narratives of abjection become evidence of Britain's voluntary descent into faction and apostasy in the late 1780s and early 1790s. The allegory is at its most insistent here because Tipu's forceable conversion of British soldiers to Islam is implicitly compared to Antiochus's demand that the Maccabees take up pagan worship. As noted earlier, the anxiety produced by forced circumcision and the intense resistance to such blurring of religious and ethnic identity is felt throughout subsequent representations of conflict in Mysore, and they mirror the Maccabees story in eerie and powerful ways. But the allegory replaces the Mysorean act of forced circumcision with Antiochus's prohibition of the act: that which is most terrifying is tropologically canceled yet nonetheless activated. This is because, in the chain of allegories, forced Indianization in Mysore is being used to figure the openness of both Whig and more radical British constituencies to French constitutional reform, and thus the voluntary desire for reform among Britons is being recast as French desire for the absorption of British society. The entire figural economy aims to cancel past and present forms of voluntary cultural hybridization that were routinely satirized as an adoption of Eastern and/or French effeminacy by positing an external tormentor who violates the cultural, social, and sexual autonomy of the patriot Briton. Thus, the ostensibly prior hollowing out of masculinity from the inside is replaced by a fantasy of violation that paradoxically reestablishes the "integrity" of the patriotic subject at a future date. Put bluntly, the disturbing evidence of consensual, dare we say seditious, deviation from normative masculinity is replaced by a fantasy of being raped by the other. This ideological manipulation of what Reik in his analysis of Christian masochism refers to as "adverse incidents" allows the audience not only to reconfigure past instances of abjection into prophetic signs of future imperial pleasure but also to effectively subsume the real threat posed by Tipu or France into a masochistic fantasy where the tormented remains fully in control of the scene.¹¹⁰

Because the Maccabean allegory is so concerned with establishing the threat posed by an alliance between an internal other and a larger external force, the entire event is traversed by fantasies of persecution and vulnerability. The Calcutta concert picks at this wound in revealing ways. The first act of the Calcutta performance takes a brief recitative and song from the beginning of the second part of *Judas Maccabaeus* that not only celebrates Judas's first victories over Syrian forces but also precedes a return to war. This return is negated by a sudden shift to a chorus from *Joshua* that focuses not on the contamination of the nation by foreign influence but rather on the triumphant subjection of foreigners. *Joshua*, unlike *Judas Maccabaeus*, is largely about the acquisition of territory—in this case, Canaan—through conquest. The surrogative effect of shifting from *Judas Maccabaeus* to *Joshua* is clarified by remembering the role of Canaan in seventeenth-century British theories of governmentality. In her analysis of *Joshua*, Smith argues:

The partition of Canaan was for Harrington the origin of the Israelite 'agrarian,' the ordering of society based on land ownership which in his view formed the foundation of right government. . . . In other words, the division of Canaan by Joshua under God's direction was the birth of the Israelite nation, and since the division was based on principles of land ownership essential to the prosperity and stability of any society, it was or should be the pattern of all societies—including, for the audience of *Joshua*, their own. According to Harrington their agrarian law was the key factor which saved the Israelites from falling into typical eastern servility.¹¹¹

This hypostatization of landed property as the source of governmental and social security is precisely what underpinned Cornwallis's implementation of the Permanent Settlement after the 1792 treaty with Tipu. And the Permanent Settlement was itself as an allegorical policy—one that utilized one form of social and economic relations to figure forth another.

When, in act 2, Mrs. Elizabeth Barlow, the wife of the very man who would attempt to reconfigure Indian property relations in terms of British notions of landed property,¹¹² and Captain Haynes sing the following lines, one is presented with the aural equivalent of what C. A. Bayly refers to as the Permanent Settlement's "massive effort in wishful thinking":¹¹³

Oh! lovely peace! With plenty crown'd,
Come spread thy blessings all around,
Let fleecy flocks the hills adorn,

And vallies smile with waving corn!
 Let the shrill trumpet cease;
 No other sound
 But Nature's songsters
 Wake the cheerful morn!¹¹⁴

In a significant alteration of Handel's oratorio, this song, originally scored for the Israelitish woman, is transformed into a duet with the countertenor Captain Haynes. Thus, the audience is presented with the civilian and the military wings of the East India Company singing in concert. Would it be too much to suggest that the duet refashions the pastoral moment such that the military man is tamed by the implied domestic relation between male and female singer? It is precisely this sublation of the soldier into the paternal, the military into the familial or bureaucratic, that informs both the treaty ceremony and many of the projections. Thus, the performance supplements the complex reorientation of Cornwallis as imperial icon such that the specter of castration is put into abeyance by the plenitude not simply of the imperial father but of the biopolitical imperatives of the middle classes.¹¹⁵ This supplemental relation is revealing, for it emphasizes that the fantasy of benevolent paternalism and the Permanent Settlement are ineffective in and of themselves and thus require the deep micrological regulation of domestic relations that came to preoccupy British rule in India in the early nineteenth century. As Sen, Collingham, and others have recognized, sexual and racial deployments that the middle classes first utilized to consolidate their own power both at home and abroad became crucial norms for managing colonial populations.¹¹⁶ It is precisely these deployments in the form of the singing conjugal pair that are grafted onto now obsolete figurations of pastoral peace and that reorient the ideological import of this patriotic performance.

The American Ghost

However, the full depth of this reorientation can be understood only when we look closely at how these pastoral lines are deployed. This happy fantasy in which India starts to look like England and the future French threat is conveniently consigned to allegorical oblivion is haunted by an American ghost. Act 2 of the Calcutta performance opens with the overture from Handel's *Samson*. *Samson*, like many of the Israelite oratorios, offers recurrent images of national weakness and opens with its hero collapsed on the ground, dispossessed by a foreign foe. As Smith argues,

Samson and the Israelites, “no longer hero and inferiors but, at the crisis, equally powerless, wait upon God’s aid, and there is no certainty that it will materialize. . . . The nation’s setbacks, its oppression by an alien race, the only partly heroic career of its hero, its absolute dependence on divine favour which cannot be claimed to be merited, and its recognition of divine agency in every success—all these aspects of this oratorio, which recur throughout the librettos of the Israelites, even when taken with the many expressions of faith, strength and confidence which also recur, do not add up to triumphalism.¹¹⁷

Smith is highly attentive to how anxiety works in each of the Israelite oratorios and argues that their patriotism is often shadowed by fundamental moments of doubt regarding British national election. But the performance we are examining in this section fragments these patriotic texts and stitches them together such that “adverse incidents” are located in a very specific temporal structure. For audience members familiar with Handel’s music, the overture would have engaged the anxiety attending Cornwallis’s previous failures in America. Read in this way, the sudden return to the pastoral passages of *Judas Maccabaeus* quoted earlier would amount to nothing less than an attempt to bury some particularly bad memories. But why risk engaging the very nightmare of colonial defeat? As in the previous allegorical cascade, imperial setbacks are mobilized to highlight the act of overcoming them. But there is also something else at stake, which lies deep in the heart of the allegory itself and perhaps explains why everything about this performance seems so overdetermined.

When we consider the historical structure that allows the Maccabean allegory to function, what we encounter is a figure that cannot help but call forth the American disaster. After all, the historical situation that most powerfully resembles the Maccabees story is that of the American colonies in 1776. As Dror Wahrman and others have argued, the key problem for British subjectivity posed by the American crisis is that the people most like them not only take up arms in internecine strife but form an alliance with the French.¹¹⁸ If we run this through the Maccabean allegory, the Americans become the Hellenized Jews, the French remain in the role of the Syrian oppressors, and the English find themselves cast as the orthodox Jews. Only in this story, no unification is effected; the orthodox Britons simply lose and are forced to reimagine Britishness without their American brothers. In this story, Cornwallis is desolate, alone, and dispossessed—a figure not unlike Samson who is in desperate need of recuperation. The nightmare of Yorktown becomes inextricably linked to the dreams

fostered by the Mysorean treaty: a dream of Permanent Settlement and benevolent paternal rule, no less than a dream of global supremacy over France.

Could we not argue that by 1792 this dispossessed figure has finally become politically useful, not only literally in the sense that he has a job to do in India but also figuratively in the way he is invoked in the Gala Concert: as the chastened sign of history whose recurrent pain retroactively anticipates the pleasures of unrealized imperial domination. And it is the ultimate unrepresentability of global supremacy either in fact or in fantasy that allows for its figural presentation in the person of Cornwallis. By invoking Lyotard's reading of Kant's famous notion of the "sign of history," I am trying to suggest that Britons at this moment of patriotic investment see human progress as a form of national election that is not susceptible to direct presentation but rather must operate through a complex temporal game in which patriotic enthusiasm—with all its recollected pain and forestalled pleasure—is itself an as-if presentation of supremacy.¹¹⁹ As a "chastened" sign of history, it is a perversion of the very notions Kant was attempting to explore in the late historical and political writings, but it should not come as a surprise because British patriotic discourse claims "liberty" in a fashion altogether different from Kant's analysis of the French Revolution. Throughout this phantasmatic exchange, the particular term "Briton" trumps any universal notion of the human; English "liberty" overrules any abstract notion of freedom as the tendency toward the moral idea of the Absolute Good; and thus the story inexorably reverts to arrogant attributions of God's will. As Kaja Silverman states, all adverse incidents, all "sufferings and defeats of the fantasizing subject are dramatized in order to make the final victory appear all the more glorious and triumphant."¹²⁰ Imperial Britain's calamities in America and Mysore are transformed into exemplary and necessary punishments that presage a level of future supremacy only God can bestow, because it has not—and, we might add, will not—come to pass. But the supposed deviations from appropriate national character—Britons' flirtations with hybrid forms of sociability whether they be understood as Indianization or Francophilia—for which the nation has been chastened or is to be chastened will become all too evident in the emergent patriotisms of the early nineteenth century. They will become the negative ground from which racialized notions of national election are activated and maintained.

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