

Eighteenth-Century British Patriotic and Political Cantatas

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The present paper is part of larger study of the solo, secular cantata in eighteenth-century Britain. This repertoire has been little studied, yet contains many musical riches and reveals much about changing musical styles in eighteenth-century Britain.¹ The financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada is gratefully acknowledged.

For a nation which gave lip service to expressions of patriotism in other areas, it is surprising that so few of the solo secular cantata texts contain either patriotic or political content. Figure 1 outlines the known surviving works, some 29 works in total. This represents less than 5% of the repertory of the solo, secular cantatas which appeared in Britain during the eighteenth century. It is possible to categorize these works broadly, with some works appearing in more than one category.² The list presents some surprises: there are fewer generally patriotic works than those which refer to specific political events. While more general works would not have dated so quickly, the eighteenth-century interest in matters of the moment was strong, and it is those works with specific political references that dominate. Practical considerations, however, appear to have dictated that most orchestrally-accompanied works were published in short score. Works for home use were usually presented with only a *basso continuo* accompaniment, although obligato instruments are sometimes found. Such formats were both cheap and fast to produce, and allowed for publication lengths of four pages or less, thus making their purchase price attractive.

Works in Praise of Britain

Surprisingly few works were set to texts which praise Britain generally. The first cantata listed in Figure 1, Pepusch's early work, *The Island of Beauty*, begins his 1710 collection of works. Hughes' text presents Britain as the "fairest Island in the Sea," where even the gods would be happy to dwell. This text was an ideal vehicle for a foreign composer to present his musical calling card and to ingratiate himself to a new audience. In the present case, Pepusch moved to London from Berlin around 1704.³ That the work was intended for home performance is demonstrated by the vocal range of only two notes over an octave (making it possible for a modestly endowed singer), and an accompaniment restricted to a figured bass.

Some 50 years later (in the 1760s), the blind composer, John Stanley, set *The Power of Music*, a work which remains in manuscript in the Rowe Music Library at King's College, Cambridge. The anonymous text for *The Power of Music* suggests that music is a "celestial science" which can inspire peace and love, and dispel grief. All Britons are encouraged to raise their voices in songs of praise. This work was likely meant for concert or celebratory use, yet there is no record of it having been performed.⁴

Works Dealing with Civil Unrest

The earliest work dealing with civil unrest is Pepusch's "While pale Britannia pensive sate," found in his second volume of cantatas from 1720. Colley Cibber's text refers to the first Jacobite rising of 1715, following the importation of a Hanoverian monarch, George I. The

work begins with a lament about civil unrest, but ends with a portrait of King George as the guardian of Britannia. Perhaps it is not surprising that Cibber occupied the post of poet laureate for 27 years after 1730.

A recurring figure in the works under discussion is the Duke of Cumberland, the second son of George II, who won great respect for his command of the allied forces against Charles Edward, the Jacobite pretender to the throne in 1745.⁵ Cumberland was the subject of a set of six cantatas collectively called *The Trophy*, set to music by Maurice Greene in 1746. Each text presents an aspect of Cumberland: as a volunteer, poet, painter, musician, shepherd and religious leader (Goodall, 1989). These works were never published, and only the literary texts remain—a surprising situation given that Greene was likely the most influential musician in London after Handel.⁶ Michael Festing's *An Ode upon the Return of His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland from Scotland* was published, however, and in full orchestral score covering 15 pages. This may be seen as a mark of confidence by the publisher that Cumberland's prestige was sufficient to sell such an expensive full score.

A more subversive kind of cantata dealing with civil unrest is *The Pay-Master*, for which neither poet nor composer is mentioned. Indeed, even the publisher, Longman & Lukey, saw fit to shorten the company's name to "L. L. & C°." None of this is perhaps surprising, especially since the work is an attack on Henry Fox, the first Baron Holland, who enjoyed support from the Duke of Cumberland early in his career. Fox was given the position of Paymaster-General in the 1750s; however, his unsavoury reputation resulted in a stormy political career, which proved to be an embarrassment to George III, especially in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War (Langford, 1989). In the cantata, Fox is referred to as "Reynard, the Fox." The text alleges that the cash reserves of England have been depleted, and that Lord Holland would likely flee to France rather than pay back what he has taken. Dire results are predicted for the English public.

Works with Pro- and Anti-Hanoverian Sentiments, and Anti-French Sentiments

There is only one surviving example of a cantata expressing anti-Hanoverian sentiments, and even that, Samuel Howard's *A Favourite Hunting Song*, masquerades as a work celebrating the hunt with muted political references.⁷ If other works were composed, they appear to have been kept away from the general public. Late in the century, England, like other European countries, was shocked by the events leading up to the French revolution, and the treatment of the royal family, and Marie-Antoinette, particular. A surprising amount of vocal music dealing with this reaction (in different genres) was composed, works which expressed great sympathy for the French monarchs.

Earlier in the century, however, strongly anti-French texts were the norm. Of these, the *Roast Beef Cantata* had the longest publication history. The association of roast beef with England was almost emblematic, and recent outbreaks of mad cow, and hoof and mouth diseases have once again brought this symbol to international attention. The work is remarkable on several levels, not the least in that it has a direct reference to Hogarth's painting, *The Gate of Calais, or the Roast Beef of Old England*, from 1748. The cantata text first appeared around 1752 as a broadside sheet published by Sayer⁸, and the first version with music was published around 1765. Figure 2 gives the text as found in the 1765 publication.

The music was published again at least four more times during the eighteenth century, and two much-revised editions were released in the mid-nineteenth century.⁹

The name of the composer/arranger remains unknown, although one early source states that the music had been composed by "Signior Carbonado," an obvious pseudonym (Paulson, 1965). Theodosius Forrest (1728-84), a friend and travelling companion of the artist, is named as the author of the text in the early printings. Hogarth's painting appears to result from real life events; in particular, his visit to France in 1748, when he was arrested in Calais as a spy because he was making drawings of this very gate. To say the least, this experience only made the artist's already negative impressions of France worse. Such negative feelings were typical at this time, however, since France and England had not been allies since the beginning of the century. The sight of the people in Calais shocked Hogarth, and he was struck by the "Extreem different face things appear with at so little a distance as from Dover." Hogarth found the soldiers to be "rag[g]ed and lean" and dining on "scanty french fair in sight [of] a Surloin of Beef a present from England which is opposed [to] the Kettle of soup meagre."¹⁰ In the cantata, it is the appearance of this roast of beef, ordered for Madame Grandsire, who ran a hotel for English patrons in Calais, which causes much excitement by all who witness it.

If the painting by Hogarth is totally concerned about food or the lack of it, then Forrest's cantata text politicizes food so that it become a symbol of cultural and political identity. The text is strongly anti-French, attacking both the French political system and the clergy. There are several narrative voices in the text, including those of a French Priest, a French Soldier, and expatriate Irish and Scottish soldiers. In addition there is an unspecified voice, perhaps that of Britannia herself, who begins and ends the work and who also introduces each of the named characters in the recitatives. The French soldier, described as being half-starved, is awe-struck by the sight of the beef, something which he has not seen before. An Hibernian [Irish] soldier, who had escaped to France to avoid being hanged at home, states that he would have been better off facing the gallows in Ireland than slowly starving as a French soldier who must serve a "hard hearted" king. Sawney, an expatriate Scot, wishes that the Devil had plucked out his eyes rather than having taken up with the French. England is praised as the place where "Health and Plenty socially unite; where smiling Freedom guards great Georges throne, And whips and chains, and tortures are not known." The work ends with a moral about the frog [France] who attempts to puff himself up as large as an ox [England], and who bursts in the attempt.

There are humorous elements in the work, but more interesting is the musical depiction of the various nationalities of the characters. While the recitatives were newly set, the airs appear to have been borrowed from folk sources in the main. An exact concordance has not been found for the French Priest's music in the first air; however, the melodic outlines of the opening bear family resemblances to two folk tunes, "La fille qui se tue pour garder son honneur" and "Mon père m'a donné mary."¹¹ The mock-solemn qualities of the air are appropriate to the depiction of the priest's nature. Similarly, the origins of the second air (sung by the French soldier) have not been identified; however, the music suggests an origin in art music. Here, the suggestion of courtly dance is at odds with the text, and points out the great disparity between the social classes. It was this music that was replaced in both of the nineteenth-century publications of this score. The original text was retained, but the different musical

setting contained even more parodistic elements, with the result that the music took on the character of a drunken dance in these later editions.

The third air is given over to the Irish guard who graphically describes how the sight of the beef makes his stomach to rise and his eyes to weep. Here, an exact folk source has been identified, and the setting makes use of an altered version of the Irish tune, "Erin, the Tear and Smile" (Olson, 2001).¹² The rising melody of the opening phrases (followed by sudden descents) proves appropriate for the "rising stomach" mentioned in the text. The alterations to the original folk melody are largely in the second half of the air, and they tend to emphasize the comic nature of the text.

The fourth air is sung by Sawney, the sad Scot, and it may be familiar to some. Once again, the source is folk music—the Scottish song, "O thou Broom! Thou Bonnie Bush o' Broom!" The tune is likely very old, predating its first appearance in print in Playford's *Dancing Master* of 1651. The version in the cantata, however, more closely resembles that found in the *Orpheus Caledonius* of 1725 (reprinted in 1733). The version in the cantata contains several elements that are associated with Scottish folk music: the melodic flourishes in mm. 3 & 5 are typical, as are the use of the pentatonic scale in the melody and mixolydian cadences which end on the second degree of the scale, as opposed to the first (Graham, 1900). The melody is not completely pentatonic in the cantata setting, however, for it has been "regularized" to make it more diatonic in several places.

The final air is given five verses which contain the fable of the frog who tries to puff himself up to the size of an ox, and bursts in the attempt. Once again, the source of the music is readily identifiable since it is a resetting of Richard Leveridge's well-known song "The Roast Beef of England" of 1735.¹³ With this borrowing, we come full circle, for Hogarth may have taken the subtitle of his painting from Leveridge's well-known song.¹⁴ Leveridge was dead by the time of the cantata's publication, and the anonymous composer/arranger of this cantata appears to have felt secure in the borrowing of such a well-known melody. Certainly, this borrowing provided a musically- and textually-satisfying close to the work for the British audiences of the day; not only did it cast the French in a bad light, it also did so with a tune that had become an audience favourite.

Conclusion

The cantatas set to patriotic and/or political texts are representative of public sentiment in Britain at the time of their composition, and can act as a barometer for such feelings. Although they are little known today, the study of such works will lead to a fuller understanding of the relationship between the performing arts and the public's reaction to political events in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, these works, and the solo cantata repertory in general, reveal much about audiences' tastes and changing musical styles during the eighteenth century.

Figure 1: Eighteenth-century British Patriotic and Political Cantatas listed by Category.

I. Works in praise of Britain

- J.C. Pepusch (1667-1752): *The Island of Beauty*. No. 1 in *Six English Cantatas* . . . [Book 1.] London: I. Walsh, P. Randall & I. Hare, [1710], fol., pp. 1-3. Poet: J. Hughes.

J.C. Pepusch: "To joy, to triumphs dedicate the day," unpublished manuscript, copies found in Royal Academy of Music, London, Ms. 89, and Royal College of Music, London, Ms. 1097. Poet: J. Hughes.

John Stanley (1712-86): *The Power of Music*, unpublished manuscript, at King's College Library, Cambridge, Rowe Music Library, Ms. 7; Poet: anonymous.

II. Works dealing with civil unrest

J.C. Pepusch (1667-1752): "While pale Britannia pensive sate," No. 6 in *Six English Cantatas . . .* [Book II.] London: J. Walsh & J. Hare, [1720], pp. 37-46. Poet: C. Cibber.

M.C. Festing (d. 1752): *Ode Upon the return of His Royal Highness the DUKE of CUMBERLAND from SCOTLAND*. London: J. Simpson, [1746.], fol., pp. 2-16; Poet: "Mr. Havard."

Anonymous: *The Pay-Master*. London: L[ongman] L[ukey] & Co., [1770?], fol., 2 pp. Poet: anonymous.

III. Works with pro-Hanoverian sentiments

J.C. Pepusch (1667-1752): "While pale Britannia pensive sate," No. 6 in *Six English Cantatas . . .* [Book II.] London: J. Walsh & J. Hare, [1720], pp. 37-46. Poet: C. Cibber.

Thomas Davis (?fl. mid-18th century) *A Cantata* ["Albion of all Nations"], *A Cantata in praise of Victory gain'd by the English at Dettingen*. [London: 1750?], fol. 2 pp.

George Berg (c. 1730 - 1771): CANTATA ["All in her Fair Sequester'd Cell"]. *A Collection of new English Songs Sung by M' Beard & Miss Formentel at RANELAGH . . .* Book VI. London: John Johnston, 1759, fol., pp. 1-7. Poet: anonymous.

Anonymous [text by Theodosius Forrest]: *The Roast Beef Cantata*. London: T. Straight and Skillern, [c. 1765]. fol., 4 pp. [This work was frequently reprinted up to 1851.]

IV. Works with anti-Hanoverian sentiments

Samuel Howard (1710-82): *A Favourite Hunting Song* ["The chase is o'er"] in *Calliope or English Harmony . . .* Vol: the second. [London: Henry Roberts], 1739, pp. 7-10. Poet: anonymous.

V. Works with anti-French sentiments

John Worgan (1724-90): CANTATA ["Awak'd by the Horn"]. in *THE SONGS AND BALLADS Sung by M'. Lowe and Miss Stevenson at VAUX HALL. . .* Book the VIII. 1759. London: John Johnson, [1759.], fol., pp. 18-25.

Charles Dibdin (1745-1814): *Liberty*. in *A COLLECTION OF ENGLISH SONGS and CANTATAS...Opera Primo*. [London:] Printed for the author [1761], fol., pp. 12-15. Poet: anonymous.

Henry Heron (fl. 1760-1790?): *A CANTATA* ["Immortal Jove from thy blest seat"]. [London: 1770?], fol., 3 pp. Poet: Mr. Potter.

Charles Thomas Carter (c. 1735-1804): *Neptune and Britannia*. London: Printed for G.S. Smart, [c. 1780], fol., 3 pp. Poet: not known for certain, but possibly the composer.

VI. Works dealing with Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette

James Hook (1746-1827): *The Royal Orphans Dream. A Favourite Cantata*. London: A. Bland & Weller, [1793], fol., 7 pp. Poet: William Palmer.

Wm. E. Miller (?fl. late 18th century): *The QUEEN of FRANCE, her Lamentation before her EXECUTION*. [London]: Longman and Broderip, [1793?], fol., 4 pp. Poet: attr. to the composer.

Wm. E. Miller (?fl. late 18th century): *The QUEEN of FRANCE*. [London]: Longman and Broderip, [1793.], fol., 4 pp. Poet: the composer. This work is different to the above.

John Percy (1755-97): *The Captive*. [London]: Printed for the author, [1793?], fol. 4 pp. Poet: "Said to be written by Maria [sic] Antoinette, Queen of France in the Temple after the Execution of Louis the XVIth. (translated from the Original)."

Thomas Rawlings (1775 - c. 1850): *A Cantata On the Death of the late unfortunate Marie Antoinette*. . . [London]: Published by the Author, [1793.], fol., 4 pp. Poet: "A Lady."

VII. Miscellaneous works

Maurice Greene (1696-1755). *Great Ruler*. Unpublished manuscript found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, (Ms. Mus. E41), no date. Poet: anonymous.

Maurice Greene. *The Trophy*, six unpublished cantatas which portrayed the Duke of Cumberland in the characters of Volunteer, Poet, Painter, Musician, Shepherd and Religious Leader. The texts were either by John or Benjamin Hoadly, and were published in *Dodsley's Collection of Poems* (1763 ed.). Unfortunately, Greene's music is lost.

? Carter (?fl. mid-18th century). *An Ode on the late Earthquakes*. London: William Smith, [1756?], fol., pp. 1-6. Poet: anonymous.

Anonymous: *ODE In Honor of Earl Cornwallis's Victory Over General Gates at Camden, South Carolina on the 16th of August 1780*. [London]: J.Blundell [1780?], fol., pp. 1-3. Poet: Anonymous.

Figure 2. Text for *The Roast Beef Cantata*

Recitative:

'Twas at the gate of Calais, Hogarth tells, where sad despare and Famine always dwells. A meagre Frenchman, Madame Grandires Cook, As home he steer'd his Carcase that way took. Bending beneath the weight of fam'd Sirloin, On whom he'd often wish'd in vain to dine. Good Father Dominick by chance came by, with rosy Gills, round Paunch and greedy Eye: Who when he first beheld the greasy Load, his Benediction on it he bestow'd, and as the solid Fat his Fingers press'd, He lick'd his Chaps and thus y' Knight address'd.

Air [Priest]: tune: family resemblance to several French folk songs

Oh rare roast Beef, lov'd by all Mankind,
 If I was doom'd to have thee,
 When dress'd and garnish'd to my Mind,
 And swimming in thy Gravy,
 Not all thy Country's force combin'd
 Should from my fury save thee.

Renown'd Sirloin, oft times decreed,
 The theme of English Ballad;
 On thee e'en Kings have deign'd to feed,
 Unknown to Frenchmen's Palate:
 Then how much more thy taste exceeds,
 Soup, meagre Frogs and Sallad.

Recitative:

A Half stav'd Soldier, shirtless, pale and lean, who such a sight before had never seen, like Garrick's frighted Hamlet gaping stood. And gaz'd with wonder on the British food. His mornings Mess forsook the friendly Bowl, and in small streams along the Pavement stole. He heav'd a sigh which gave his heart relief. And then in plaintive Tone declar'd his grief.

Air [French soldier]; tune: French art music?

Ah sacre dieu vat do me see yonder
 Dat look so tempting red and vite?
 Begar it is the roast Beef from Londre,
 Oh grant to me von litel Bite.

But to my Guts if you give no heeding,
 And cruel fate dis boon denies,
 In kind Compassion unto my Pleading,
 Return and let me feast mine Eyes.

Recitative:

His fellow Guard, of right Hibernian Clay, Whose brazen Front his Country did betray, From Tyburns fatal Tree had thither fled, by honest means to gain his daily Bread, soon as the well known Prospect he descry'd, In blubb'ring Accents, dolefully he cry'd.

Air [Irish Guard]; tune: Irish folk song, "Erin, the Tear and the Smile"

Sweet Beef that now causes my Stomach to rise,
 Sweet Beef that now causes my Stomach to rise,
 So taking thy sight is my joy that so light is,
 To view thee by pails full run out of my Eyes.

While here I remain my life's not worth a farthing,
 While here I remain my life's not worth a farthing,
 Ah, hard hearted Lewy, [Louis XVI]
 Why did I come [to] ye,
 The Gallows, more kind, wou'd have sav'd me from starving.

Recitative:

Upon the ground hard by poor Sawney sate, Who fed his nose and scratch's his ruddy Pate. But when old England's Bulwark he espy'd, his dear lov'd mull, alas! was thrown aside: With lifted hands he blest his native place; Then scrubb'd himself & thus bewail'd his case.

[Sawney: "Sandy," a Scotsman; mull: likely a reference to a snuff box; gang = go; De'el = devil]

Air [Sawney]; tune: Scottish song, "O thou Broom! Thou Bonnie Bush o' Broom!"

How hard, O Sawney is thy lot,
Who was so blithe of late,
To see such Meat as can't be got,
When hunger is so great.

[refrain] O the beef! the bonny, bonny beef,
When roasted nice and brown,
I wish I had a slice of thee;
How sweet it would gang down.

Ah Charley! hadst thou not been seen,
This ne'er had happ'd to me:
I wou'd the De'el had pick'd mine ey'n,
E'er I had gang'd with thee.
[refrain] O the beef, etc.

Recitative:

But see my Muse to England takes her flight Where Health and Plenty socially unite. Where smiling Freedom guards great Georges throne, And whips and chains and tortures are not known. That Britain's Fame in loftiest strains should ring, In rustic fable give me leave to sing.

Air [narrator], tune: Richard Leveridge's "The Roast Beef of Olde England"

As once on a time a young Frog pert and vain,
Beheld a large Ox grazing on the wide Plain,
He boasted his size he cou'd quickly attain.
[refrain] O the roast Beef of old England,
And O the old English roast beef.

Then eagerly stretching his weak little frame,
Mamma who stood by like a knowing old dame,
Cry'd, Son to attempt it you're surely to blame.
[refrain]

But deaf to advice he for glory did thirst,
An effort he ventur'd more strong than the first,
Till swelling and straining to hard made him burst.
[refrain]

Then Britons be valiant, the moral is clear,
The Ox is old England, the frog is Monsieur;

Whose puffs and bravadoes we never need fear.
[refrain]

For while by our commerce and arts we are able,
To see the sirlain smoaking hot on our table,
The French must e'en burst, like the Frog in the fable.
[refrain]

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Endnotes

¹ This study has resulted in the formation of an extensively annotated catalogue of eighteenth-century British solo cantatas.

² Excluded from the list are birthday and court odes that were composed for the king and queen. These works were often large in scale and composed for orchestra, soloists and chorus. As occasional music, they were usually not published, and even if they were performed more than once, they were rarely ever heard by the general public.

³ Although remembered today for having arranged the score for *The Beggars Opera* in 1728, Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667-1752) established himself as a performer, composer and theorist. He began his London years as a member of the Drury Lane Theatre orchestra, and contributed a series of successful masques for that theatre. His later years were spent reorganizing the Academy of Ancient Music.

- ⁴ The work is orchestrally accompanied, and ends with an optional chorus. A manuscript note reads that "For want of Proper Voices to perform y^e Chorus, y^e following air may be sung." This may indicate that Stanley had plans for publishing this work as a solo cantata at some future time. If this supposition is true, it is likely that the orchestration would have been much simplified, and that the chorus might have disappeared altogether, especially if the publication was directed towards the home market. This did not come to pass; however, Stanley did revisit this cantata when preparing his final oratorio, *The Fall of Egypt* in 1784, re-using the cantata's overture in the oratorio (Frost, 1972).
- ⁵ By November of that year, Scotland was under rebel rule, and an army of some 5000 troops subsequently invaded England, but were defeated by Cumberland's forces (O'Gorman, 1997).
- ⁶ As organist to several London churches (principally St. Paul's Cathedral), Greene achieved just renown for his religious music. Unfortunately, he quarrelled with Handel, and the rift was never healed. In his later years, Greene showed a considerable interest in secular music, and he took an active role in the Academy of Ancient Music, and the Apollo Academy. With his appointment to the King's Musick in 1735, Greene's influence extended into all of London's major musical activities. If *The Trophy* had been commissioned by the court for their own use, it is possible that Greene did not have the rights to publication.
- ⁷ In this work, Britons are described as being "Honest, Free, and Bold." While the anti-monarchist statements are subdued in nature, citizens are encouraged to be like the Ancient Britons who were not Slaves to Courts." This work seems to have enjoyed some popularity for it saw three different publications before 1750. Whether or not this was because of the nature of the text or Howard's attractive and stirring melodies remains undetermined.
- ⁸ The painting was subsequently reproduced as an engraving in 1749. The engraving was then used to head R. Wither's publication of the cantata text in ca. 1755 (Paulson, 1965, Vol. 1).
- ⁹ The two nineteenth-century versions contain much new music, as well as giving the work accompaniments more in tune with the nineteenth century than that of the previous one. Even the later eighteenth-century publication by Longman, Lukey & Broderip is listed as having "the recitatives new set."
- ¹⁰ Quotes from Hogarth's *Autobiographical Notes* are cited by Paulson, 1965.
- ¹¹ See: *Les Chansons de France* . . . Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1980, p. 11, and Eugène Rolland, *Recueil de Chansons Populaires* Vol. 1. Paris: Éditions G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1967, p. 86, respectively.
- ¹² The song is also known as "Eibhlín a rún" (vulgarily spelled, "Eilen aroon").
- ¹³ Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson (2001). Other dates, as early as 1728, have been suggested elsewhere.
- ¹⁴ Paulsen (1965) states that "Hogarth takes his title from Fielding's song that originally appeared in his *Welsh (or Grub-Street) Opera* (1731)." While this is quite possible, it was Leveridge's song that was the far better known work.
-