

ing the latter's "friendship and attention to my interest" were later expressed in his account of his second Worcester visit, quoted above.

The two or three weeks subsequent to the last letter to Swift were the most critical in the history of the *MT*. Dibdin's next letter signals a general redirection by being addressed "To the Public" and emphatically stating "I shall address no more letters to T. S. Esq." (42). Dibdin reports, a little accusingly, that Swift "very lately told a particular friend of mine that my *seven* first letters—I use his own words—'are wonderfully well written'" (42). He wants to insist, then, that Swift had received and approved the letters, even though he only answered one. On a more extenuating note, though, he also refers to "chance having thrown this gentleman [Swift] and I such a distance from each other" (42–43)—a probable reference to Swift having returned to Ireland. The biggest question Dibdin faced at this juncture was whether he should replace Swift with some other correspondent. The second letter subsequent to the Swift letters, dated from Hull on 4 November, was initially addressed "To Mr. Boyton" in the Winchester manuscript, but the "oyton" was then crossed out to leave "The Mr. B." which appears in the published *MT*.<sup>12</sup> This was the exceptionally obscure William Boyton, a music teacher, harpsichordist (one of the best in the country, according to Dibdin), and minor composer.<sup>13</sup> Dibdin clearly had an excellent relationship with Boyton, who is mentioned eight times in the *MT*. The 4 November letter ends on a rather ambiguous note, and it is not clear whether Dibdin intended to make Boyton a regular correspondent or not: "As to the musical taste of BRISTOL, the treatment at inns, and other indispensable [*sic*] matters, I shall mention them when I return; for I will not give you pain by speaking truth of your neighbours" (49).

Immediately after this, the whole concept of the still largely unwritten book was rethought. The next letter, dated 6 November, is addressed *to* Dibdin:

WHEN I had the pleasure of witnessing your performance, I said but the truth when I assured you it would be no trifling satisfaction to me to promote whatever you should consider as your interest. As to your request of addressing your public letters to me, I embrace with great satisfaction an opportunity of receiving an earlier entertainment from them than the rest of your friends. Nobody can be more zealous in your cause. There is, I confess, one consideration that will make me read them with reluctance—every succeeding letter will be one approach nearer to your departure, which you know I never cordially liked—though I own you have conquered every scruple but one. Answer me. What will the people of INDIA say of you, when they see in your book that you make a visit to them, your *forlorn hope*? You see I begin the office of a friend by treating you with freedom. My remarks, however, will not be very troublesome to you. Your career is brilliant, and it were pity to stop it. Adieu. I have read thirteen letters, and be assured I shall make a perusal of the rest supercede every other consideration of business or pleasure—being

Your sincere friend,

And obedient servant. (50)

12. Letter 13.

13. Roger Fiske estimates Boyton's dates as *c.* 1750 to *c.* 1800 in *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 651. I suspect he was the "Mr. BOYTON sen." who was given a benefit concert in Bristol in 1816, however: see "Assembly-Rooms, Prince's Street," *Bristol Mirror*, 9 November 1816, 2. Boyton's son Richard, also a teacher of music in Bristol, was active by the 1810s and died in 1846.