

write on the subject of the latter's "advertising . . . at BIRMINGHAM." His presence on the second visit may have something to do with it coinciding with "the race week" (56), which in 1787 ended on 7 August.⁹ More importantly, the 16 October letter establishes that Dibdin was on terms of correspondence with Swift before summer 1787.

Worcester, a city with a population of around 11,000 at the time, was a regional shopping centre with substantial gloving and porcelain industries. A theatre had been opened in 1781, but Worcester was not known for its culture. Swift, though mostly resident in Dublin, owned a house there. His father, Deane Swift, died at Worcester in 1783, and the dedication to *The Temple of Folly* is dated "Worcester, April 12th, 1787."¹⁰ It is easy to imagine an eccentric Irishman with strong literary interests being glad to welcome the diversions Dibdin offered. Dibdin stayed in Worcester a full two weeks on his second visit, considerably longer than he usually stayed at one place on his tour; there was thus plenty of time for him and Swift to see each other. It is possible Dibdin had already conceived the idea of publishing an account of his tour in a series of letters; but, even if this were the case, it was the conversations with Swift that prompted him to start work. Given the dates, though, it is more likely that the whimsical, "visionary" Swift came up with the idea of a *Musical Tour*—perhaps in response to Dibdin's lively stories about his experiences—making him, given what I have suggested above, a vital influence on Dibdin's career, though one which has gone entirely unrecognized.

Dibdin directed a first *MT* letter to Swift on 16 August, just two days after leaving Worcester. It can certainly be called "visionary" in the plans it lays out. Dibdin, now in Hereford, promises that, in addition to a basic narrative of his movements and experiences, the planned book will

give the public some useful hints relative to inns, manufactories, natural and artificial curiosities, the state of the country as to cultivation, and such other particulars as have cursorily struck me. . . . Having also had many opportunities of conversing with men of genius, I shall communicate my remarks on those conversations; in which, in particular, will be comprised my sentiments on MUSIC in all its points of view. . . . Another object which peculiarly demands my attention is the THEATRE. Nor will a fair exposition of its arcana come by any means improperly through the medium of this publication. An account of the motives which induce me to quit my native country are a part of my compact with the public, and they cannot be enumerated without relating many theatrical transactions. . . . These matters, together with a prodigious number of observations, both of my own and others, on all general subjects—anecdotes, and the essence of what I have delivered, at different places, under the title of READINGS and MUSIC, will make up a series of letters. (2–4)

Importantly, this first letter shows Dibdin envisaging a much more dialogic work than that which eventually emerged. He describes Swift, remarkably, and with a good deal of flattery, as "the best judge I know of all general subjects, whether natural or acquired" (1). And crucially, in the conclusion, he expresses a hope that the letters "with the advantage of your [Swift's] sentiments on each separate letter, [will] be found to excite and satisfy public curiosity" (4). This suggests that

9. *Baily's Racing Register, from the Earliest Records to the Close of the Year 1842*, 3 vols. (London, 1845), 1:617.

10. *The Temple of Folly* (London, 1787), x.