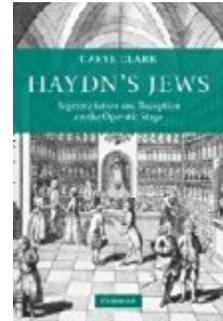


Caryl Clark. *Haydn's Jews: Representation and Reception on the Operatic Stage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xviii + 244 pp. \$99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-45547-3.

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Is There Jewish Content to Haydn's Characters?

In this cultural music-historical study, Caryl Clark seeks to inaugurate a discourse about how the presence of both Jews and theatrical representations of Jews figures in the interpretation of selected liturgical and operatic works by the Austrian composer Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809). Concerning the liturgical works, the second chapter amplifies her previous article about “conversion masses” that Haydn composed under the auspices of a local monastic order.[1] What is new, comprising most of the book, is an exploration of two Haydn operas, intended as court entertainment, that served as vehicles for popular gentile performers whose stock-in-trade was ethnic parody, including stereotypes of Jews. The two operas are *Der krumme Teufel* (The Limping Devil) (c. 1751, not extant), libretto by Johann Joseph Felix Kurz, and *Lo Speziale* (The Apothecary) (1768), libretto by Carlo Goldoni, and are covered at length in the first and third chapters. But the story does not end there. In 1895, Dr. Robert Hirschfeld revised *Lo Speziale* for revival in Dresden as a one-act comedy under its German title *Der Apotheker*. A protégé of the anti-Wagnerian critic Eduard Hanslick, Hirschfeld later collaborated with Gustav Mahler in 1899 on a revival for Vienna. Clark devotes chapter 4 to Hirschfeld's revisions, and an epilogue to later revivals, in particular, a 1930 production sponsored by the largely Jewish Organization of German Apothecaries. The arc of the book's narrative takes us then from a few works by Haydn, allegedly colored by an antipathy toward Jews, to a later Jewish generation's appreciation of Haydn and enthusiasm by the Jewish apothecaries, at least, for *Der Apotheker*. Haydn's sterling repu-

tation represents a measure of cultural prestige in which enlightened Jews were stakeholders. But as for Haydn, while he lived near Jewish communities, relations were at best oblique. Can we know by inference in what regard Haydn held Jews? Is there a basis to the claim that Haydn represented Jews in a negative light or harbored negative attitudes toward Jews?

At the heart of the discussion of *Lo Speziale*, the author contends that the eponymous apothecary, Sempronio, is a representation of a Jew. Sempronio's two arias, to which I shall return, are musical linchpins of this argument and used to gauge Haydn's attitudes toward Jews. Taken by Clark as unflattering ethnic representations, these arias are offered as significant to both Haydn's opera and his reputation. Moreover, the author takes Sempronio's character as a link in a chain of representations of Jews in opera that predates Haydn and extends to the Wagnerian and fin-de-siècle eras. Clark maintains that the two Haydn operas, *Lo Speziale* and its lost predecessor *Der krumme Teufel*, upheld theatrical traditions that promulgated and perpetuated anti-Jewish caricatures, paving the way for what many writers perceive as Richard Wagner's anti-Semitic representations on the operatic stage. This claim about Haydn's role in the historical continuity of stage representations exceeds any made by such writers.

To support the view that the two Haydn operas were essential for the transmission of anti-Semitic representations, Clark leverages a great deal on conjecture. Chal-

lenged by limited evidence from Haydn's time and locality, and with no direct evidence of Sempronio's identification as a Jew, the author admittedly attempts the impossible: "no matter how much suggestive evidence is here presented, it is impossible to prove that [in *Lo Speciale*] the apothecary Sempronio is Jewish in the same sense that Shylock is" (p. 12). Unlike "Shylock, a Jew," who is listed as such in the *dramatis personae* of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Sempronio is nowhere identified as a Jew. A character every bit as ridiculous as Sempronio, but whose identity as a Jew is indisputable, is Isaac Mendoza. His role is pivotal in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's contemporaneous opera *La Duenna* (1775) with music by the elder and younger Thomas Linley. In the course of the opera, Mendoza is identified variously as a Jew, a Hebrew, and an Israelite. Wealthy, old Mendoza, a recent apostate, but one not yet able to cut his beard and accept Christianity, hopes to wed the young Louisa. Yet on account of his neutral status, neither Jew nor gentile, he is to her "like the blank leaves between the Old and New Testament."^[2] While Mendoza is the only character to have his full name appear in the *dramatis personae*, where its ethnicity—Portuguese Jew—rings out, his character is generic, anodyne, and easily adaptable to other likewise aged personas; it stands at quite a remove from Wagnerian representations and their mythic circumstances. Indeed, the more one peruses the literature that Clark arrays of representations of Jews, the less Sempronio seems to bear the traits suggestive of his being one; he appears to be a generic *vecchio sporcaccione* (dirty old man). It is Carlo Goldoni's *Il Filosofo di Campagna* (The Country Philosopher) (1754) not *Lo Speciale* that has been considered the analogue work to *La Duenna*.^[3] Ultimately, it is not entirely clear if the author wishes to identify Sempronio as: an obviously Jewish Jew; a non-Jewish Jew;^[4] a non-Jewish, non-Jew who borrows Jewish ethnic traits; or a gentile who is to be decoded through Yiddish concepts, primarily *schlemiel*. But in striving to see and hear Sempronio as Jewish, Clark sets forth her argument on often thinly suggestive and fragmentary evidence, but of multifaceted kinds: evidence from the score and libretto with reference to the conventions of opera and Haydn's sacred and secular oeuvre; evidence from Haydn's milieu in Vienna and the Esterházy estate at Eisenstadt, where he spent most of his career, possibly interacting with Jewish merchants or tradesmen, though officially discouraged from doing so; historical and cultural evidence about attitudes toward Jews from better documented times, before and after Haydn's, that by inference might illuminate the cultural context; and evi-

dence of Haydn's later reception by Jews.

Turning to musical details, there are two solo arias that afford an unvarnished sense of Sempronio and his character: "Questa è un'altra novità" (Here is another novelty) and "Ragazzaccie, che senza cervello" (Impudent girls, without a brain). Yet, in these musical settings, it is hard to wring any indication of the character's Jewishness. Sempronio sings the first of these as if reading a news item. It concerns a competition between the arena of Verona and the tower of Cremona, in which ostensibly the two vie for seniority and nobility on the question of width versus length; it is up to the Roman Coliseum to decide. Sempronio's vocal line makes great runs and leaps to capture the vast scale of these structures; the vocal gymnastics are comical and proceed in a moderate tempo throughout. But is the "overly loquacious effeminate voice of the Jew ... unmistakable here" (p. 118)? The humor over Italian monuments does not strike an obvious chord with Jewish humor. Nor does Goldoni's original text, which Clark provides. Originally, the aria concerned a hanging, and has little in common with the kinds of ultimate tests of cleverness or expressions of irony typical of Jewish gallows humor. Moreover, there is no parallel between the extreme vocal antics that Haydn wrote for Sempronio and anything Linley wrote for Mendoza. Had a comparison with the vocal writing in *La Duenna* been attempted, it would probably have negated the premise of Sempronio's Jewishness and/or effeminacy. Hirschfeld omits this aria in his revision entirely.

The other aria, "Ragazzaccie, che senza cervello" is described by Clark as being in the style of an *alla zoppa*, an uneven, syncopated rhythm that would suggest limping and match Sempronio's need of a cane on account of bad feet—the theatrical infirmity ascribed to Jewishness and syphilis. But *alla zoppa* does not capture the character of this assertive music. There is no syncopation in this duple-meter *allegretto*, and certainly none in Hirschfeld's edition, which speeds the tempo to *presto*. An authentic *alla zoppa* occurs in Haydn's Symphony no. 58 (1768), the *Menuet alla zoppa: Un poco allegretto*; this is a classic example of comical teetering and hobbling, composed the same year as *Lo Speciale*. Clark describes the aria better when she associates it with "Sempronio's stubborn and unwavering resolve" (p. 125). Indeed, the kind of marching dotted rhythm that Haydn wrote for Sempronio is emblematic of resolve. Igor Stravinsky, using dotted rhythms to convey resolve, emulated the style of Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in *The Rake's Progress* (1951), and encoded the dotted rhythm

upon Tom Rakewell's "resolve" to entrust himself to Fortune (act 1, "Here I stand"). The reading of *alla zoppa* in this aria is one among numerous musical details that fails to gain traction; consequently, the interpretation falters in its efforts to recruit other discrete characteristics that might otherwise coalesce in a persona that could represent a Jew.

Sander Gilman and Marc Weiner have each written about bodily and behavioral markers of Jewishness in a late nineteenth-century or Wagnerian context. Clark attempts to infer Sempronio's Jewishness from a number of these markers: he has poor hearing, pores over newspapers, is out of touch with the world, has an apprentice who does all the work, falls for a get-rich-quick scheme, is an easy dupe—a sign of difference and flaw—and is degenerate in his lust for his young ward, all to comic effect. Compared to Mendoza, who shares some of these traits, Sempronio's relative lack of sophistication is an obstacle to his appearing to be a Jew. Clark furthermore argues that Sempronio is marked as a Jew by his Orientalism, a characteristic that emerges in act 3 when one of the other suitors, Volpino, disguised as a Turk, presents a fake invitation for Sempronio to be apothecary to the Turkish Sultan: "With this action, Volpino singles out Sempronio as the chosen one, further identifying him as Jewish—one of God's chosen people" (p. 134). An exotic aria and dance ensue that distorts normative Western harmonic syntax. A rapport with the Turk might evince Sempronio's ethnicity, but none is evident. In the 2006 *Urtext*, Sempronio does not respond at all to the direct greeting "*Salamelica*" (in German, "*Salem aleikum*"). Contrary to what Clark claims about Sempronio's "interaction with Muslims ... in conjunction with musical attributes," there is no evident musical interaction between Sempronio and the Turk (p. 103).

By the mid-1780s, Mozart had some supporters of Jewish origin. In the 1820s, Ludwig van Beethoven had a Jewish publisher. In *Jewry in Music* (2011), David Conway documents interactions in London between Haydn and Harriett Abrams, a Jewish singer who had converted, but Clark says nothing of London. Clark capitalizes on the obscurities of Haydn's situation. The virtue has been the prominence she gives to some secondary sources on Jewish life in Vienna and Eisenstadt, putting Jewish life on the map, even when her reporting is problematic. How she draws a cultural analysis out of the shadows is a more slippery matter evi-

dent from the first chapter. Clark's identification of Asmodeus as Jewish by "origin" and "coding" begins at the level of association between Jews and the devil. Here she cites the study by Joshua Trachtenberg, but it is not Asmodeus but Satan that is the demon Trachtenberg's Christian sources connect with Jews.[5] The early eighteenth-century work of the Frankfurt-based Johann Jacob Schudt is then cited to identify Asmodeus as Jewish through markers of syphilis—bad feet and yellowish skin. Clark threads in Schudt obliquely by way of a Sander Gilman essay on the revival of Schudt in Hans F. K. Günther's *Anthropology of the Jews* (1930).[6] Without placing the German Protestant work of Schudt in the Austro-Hungarian Catholic world of Haydn, Clark overreaches. And she overreaches further in transferring the specifically late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century framework established by Gilman to an earlier context. Handled in this manner, these sources never gain a foothold in Haydn's world, especially without a sufficiently strong argument drawn from the musical sources. Ultimately, *Haydn's Jews* is too flimsy a platform for the emergence of the kind of discourse Clark attempts to inaugurate. Moreover, we are left with a fragmented Haydn, not entirely understandable as a product of Catholicism or the Enlightenment.

Notes

[1]. Caryl Clark, "Haydn's Conversion Masses," *Journal of Musicological Research* 28 (2009): 189-211.

[2]. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Works of the Late Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (London: John Murray, 1821), 1:217.

[3]. Mark S. Auburn, *Sheridan's Comedies: Their Contexts and Achievements* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 68.

[4]. Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, ed. Tamara Deutscher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

[5]. Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 20.

[6]. Sander Gilman, *Love + Marriage = Death: And Other Essays on Representing Difference* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 69-79.

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