SOMEWHAT STRANGE:

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEXT AND MUSIC

IN ENGLISH SONG

1588 - 1759

Though my songs be somewhat strange
And speaks such words as touch thy change
Blame not my lute.

Sir Thomas Wyatt

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Text and Music in English Song 1588-1759

PREFACE

ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the ways in which linguistic texts combine with music to form song, essentially an art of relationship. It argues that the relationship has never been a very stable one outside folk song, and traces the development of the relationship in English song from the appearance of the first English madrigals in 1588 to the death of G F Handel in 1759. The different sorts of relationship during this period are discussed in detail, with particular attention being paid to the sort of lyric poetry that is most suitable for musical setting. The conclusion is reached that, in the art of setting a poem to music, the late Elizabethan masters, Thomas Campion and John Dowland, were supreme in the period under discussion. After them, the development of a new system of tonality and of denser textures of accompaniment resulted in music's assumption of a more and more dominant role in the relationship, to the neglect and detriment of poetic text.

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PROCEDURAL NOTES

1   The system of referencing used in the text is the Harvard System, giving the author's name, year of publication, and, if necessary, the page referred to. For further biblio-graphical information, the Bibliography should be consulted.

2   All references in the text to Primary Sources have the year of publication printed in **bold**, e.g. (Yeats, **1950**, 36); works referred to in ordinary type, e.g. (Boas, 1955), can be found among the Secondary Sources in the Bibliography.

3   All Shakespeare quotations have been taken from **The Riverside Shakespeare.** And all Ben Jonson quotations have been taken from the edition of C H Herford & Percy & Evelyn Simpson.

4   The holdings of South African libraries in English music before Handel are meagre, with the consequence that I have not always been able to make reference to recent scholarly editions of the music. This is regretted.

Umtata
St Cecilia's Day 1984

1
SONG: A RELATIONSHIP

The English words "charm" and "enchant" have a set of linked
etymologies through French and Latin, including words such as
chanson, chanter, carmen, canere, cantare. Other derivatives
in English, like "chant", "cantata" and "cantor" are inclined
to be used in more learned or technical contexts; "charm" and
"enchant", perhaps commoner, have shed their histories so far
that they are no longer commonly associated with song and singing
but rather with magic or seduction or with a combination of
seduction and magic. But if we take linguistic history as a
mirror of culture, we can see a remarkable reflection of an
age-old association between song, and by metonomy all music,
and the dionysian, a recurrent theme of the social history of
music. Extraordinary powers, far beyond rational explanation,
have been attributed to music. The capacity to soothe a fretful
child is the mildest of these; music has been used to instil
martial courage, to lull supermarket shoppers into an acquisitive
stupor, to train touch-typists, to induce religious fervour,
to increase industrial productivity, and to stimulate sexual
desire. It has been damned at various times as a hindrance to
pious devotion, as a dangerous encouragement to licentious behaviour,
and as an inhibition to rational thought. Yet it survives its
detractors: during the Second World War the BBC chauvinistically
banned the music of Wagner, but the British 8th Army appropriated
a German song, "Lili Marlene", making it virtually a signature
tune.

The tendency of the music of a song to assimilate the linguistic
meanings, emotion and significance of its text can be seen somewhat
simplistically as a triumph of Dionysus over Apollo. Certainly
a good song is something different from, and something more
than its text; and certainly the "language of music" is less
denotative than is human speech. This study is concerned with
the strange relationship between text, more particularly poetic

text, and music. Song is, in fact, that relationship, although the assumption that the music is primary has led many a commentator to treat song simply as part of music. Any such study must concern itself with a number of questions that are, in one sense, highly theoretical: what sort of communication is song? how is it made? what sort of experience is it to perform a song? what sort of experience to hear a song? what transformations are wrought in the nature of linguistic experience and of musical experience in song? But the approach taken here towards such questions will be to explore them in relation to a particular time and a particular place: the study will focus analytical attention on the period of English musical and literary history between the rise of the Elizabethan madrigal and the death of Henry Purcell. We shall return to this choice, and the reasons which govern it, but I want first to try very briefly to place the discussion in some sort of anthropological and cultural perspective.

The metaphor that music and literature are original contracting members of a relationship is an analytical convenience, reflecting a condition of European culture since the Renaissance. The fact that one can analyse song into its literary and its musical components, and then analyse each of these, must not be assumed to be evidence of a liaison of two established art forms somewhere in history. For song is one of the most primitive - using the word in its technical anthropological sense - of all man's aesthetic activities. In a seminal study, **Primitive Art**, Franz Boas claims,

> The only kind of music that is of universal occurrence
> is song; and the source of music must therefore be
> sought here. (1955, 340)

He named song and story as the two basic forms of literature, adding that song is much the older (**ibid**, 301). Poetry divorced from song, he claimed, is a less primitive art form and invariably develops later; without music, therefore, poetry cannot develop. What we know of the development of folk song in Europe, and of the activities and influence of minstrels would seem to confirm Boas's conjecture. The pattern repeats itself: minstrels precede

Homer — indeed Homer may have been a group of minstrels (see, e.g., Finnegan, 1977, 58-60). By the time a society produces a Dante or a Chaucer there must already be a substantial poetic literature in the form of song.

But why should song precede poetry? Not because the linguistic component is insignificant. Song is perhaps man's earliest attempt at ontological exploration, and it needs language. The Eskimo hunter sustains his spirits and celebrates his kill in song; Hebridean women sing mournfully of love and death; African cattle-herds sing of their cattle and of the weather; convict labour gangs sing their hardships and injustice; football fans celebrate their tribal loyalties in song. At work and in play, in urban communities and in rural, alone and in groups, men, women and children sing a great range of human predicaments and emotions. The universal appeal of song is no doubt connected with the accessibility of its means: a single voice will suffice, indoors or out, in light or in dark, and, short of extreme physical exertion, song may accompany and even assist other activities. But why song rather than poetry? Possibly because musical rhythms are more insistent than linguistic rhythms; it is certainly a very common feature of song that its musical rhythms predominate over and assimilate its linguistic. Probably then, the combination of rhythm and melody assists memory, and aids the oral preservation of the poem. It is common experience that one learns the words of a song without conscious effort. Then again, we can observe that children show a remarkable skill at producing new and topical texts to favourite old tunes. This suggests that a tune offers a firm framework into which new poetry may be cast. It is an aid which poets as different as Jonson, Burns, Blake and Yeats have not scorned.

But I believe there is a deeper reason for the primacy of song. Boas has observed (**ibid,** 301),

> In simpler cultural forms the music of language alone

does not seem to be felt as an artistic expression, while fixed rhythms that are sung occur everywhere.

Literature employs materials far more intimately common than those of any other art form. Language is a common human function, so common that it is taken as much for granted as walking. But it is in fact a basic defining characteristic of **homo sapiens.** It is a commonplace of modern linguistics that language is fundamentally creative. Almost every sentence we utter is original, and yet to communicate, it must be constrained within a very complex and demanding set of rules. The enormous variety of linguistic rules, features, levels and functions affords considerable opportunity even to the common user in everyday situations to exercise creative choice even beyond the norms of usage. There are universally popular acts of linguistic play: puns, alliterations, incongruous collocations and the like. In such play lies a fundamental impulse towards literature: it harnesses the patterns already used in language to make yet other patterns. Further steps towards literary art could formalise the superimposed patterns, establishing an eloquent conflict of patterns. But this conflict always threatens the ordinary communicative function of language. In poetry, meaning may be extended and compounded even to breaking point. One way of looking at the Romantic movement in poetry is as an assertion of connotation over denotation. The Romantic preoccupation with the sweetness of unheard melodies survives, and poets like Edith Sitwell, Dylan Thomas and E E Cummings seem often to be reaching through their aural sensuality for a significance behind linguistic meaning, as if they longed for a language without denotation, a "language" such as music tends to be. It is this dangerous disjunction that I believe song mollifies. Song ritualises language, thus making the disjunction between the familiar and the aesthetic clearer and more acceptable.

At this point, the argument returns to the opposition between Dionysus and Apollo. It has been suggested, on the one hand, that the assimilation of language into song can be seen as a

triumph of Dionysus over Apollo; on the other that that assimilation alleviates the threat of the irrational - the Dionysian - in language. The contradiction is only apparent, for the claim is not that the irrational in language is removed in song, but that its threat is diminished. Certainly language does contain irrational elements, and it can be made to serve at the temple of Dionysus. Such service is profoundly disorienting, perhaps because it casts doubts on the rational validity of any linguistic discourse. Consequently, it seems easier to accept song as something beyond rationality than to accept purely linguistic literature. A splendid example can be found in the history of Beaumarchais' play, **Le Mariage de Figaro**, first banned and later heavily censored by the **Ancien Regime** in France on the grounds that it was dangerously subversive of social order. Transformed by the genius of Mozart and of Lorenzo da Ponte into the opera, **Le Nozze di Figaro**, the social comment was more profound, more challenging and more disturbing, and yet no government felt threatened enough to ban it. Early in this century, however, a standard history of music sought to dissociate the music of that opera, and of **Don Giovanni**, from their meanings with a revealing piece of critical nonsense (Stanford and Forsyth, 1925, 253):

> It is no small tribute to the artistic purity of Mozart's work that two plays which, in the hands of a less refined and high-minded composer, might have been made impossible, became so clarified and elevated in his, that no Mrs Grundy could find it in her heart to protest against a bar of them.

It is not simply the quaint prudery of this remark that makes it interesting, but the fact that Sir Charles Stanford, friend of Brahms and Cambridge Professor, could so far ignore the meaning of the works while acknowledging their greatness. The music functions and is loved at a level beyond linguistic meaning. Mrs Grundy might not protest at a single bar, but every scene indicts the sexual exploitation under which Grundyism flourishes. We have here one of the fundamental problems of song: how can we appreciate a song without an appreciation of its text? The phrasing of the question implies the author's answer, but it should be

noted that a great deal of song is performed before an audience that does not comprehend the linguistic message involved, either because the message is lost in the music or because it is in a language foreign to the audience. This state of affairs, like so much else in song, is a consequence of cultural history.

Let us look at a simple example of what is involved in the relationship between text and music. John Bunyan's famous Pilgrim's hymn has been set to a splendid tune adapted by Ralph Vaughan Williams from a traditional melody. The tune matches the forthrightness of Bunyan's language. However, in **The English Hymnal** and some other hymnbooks Bunyan's vigorous poem has been emended without apology, the text being attributed to "J Bunyan, 1628-88, and others" (Dearmer, **1933**, 546). The abuse is strange, since Vaughan Williams, a great admirer of Bunyan, and as we shall see a careful matcher of text and music, was the original musical editor of **The English Hymnal**!

The tune and the two versions follow, Bunyan's original (Bunyan, **1965**, 354) on the left.

Who would true valour see
Let him come hither;
One here will constant be,
Come wind, come weather.
There's no discouragement,
Shall make him once relent,
His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim.

Who so beset him round,
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound;
His strength the more is.
No lion can him fright,
He'll with a giant fight,
But he will have a right,
To be a pilgrim.

Hobgoblin nor foul fiend
Can daunt his spirit;
He knows he at the end
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies fly away,
He'll fear not what men say,
He'll labour night and day,
To be a pilgrim.

He who would valiant be
'Gainst all disaster,
Let him in constancy
Follow the Master.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent,
To be a pilgrim.

Who so beset him round
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound;
His strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might,
Though he with giants fight:
He will make good his right
To be a pilgrim.

Since, Lord, thou dost defend
Us with thy Spirit
We know we at the end
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies flee away!
I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labour night and day
To be a pilgrim.

Vaughan Williams used Bunyan's careful rhythmic parallels between the first pair of lines and the second pair in each stanza to repeat the musical phrase. Bunyan's syntax supports this; **The English Hymnal** version cuts across it. The contrast is the stronger since, in the second half of the stanza, the lines are not paired, but lead on to the climactic last line, a syntactic and semantic pattern reinforced by the triple rhyme. In the tune, the phrase allocated to lines 7 and 8 answers its predecessor; and the triple rhyme is accommodated by the dotted minims of its first two instances, but they run on into the upbeat of the next line. The infelicity of "'Gainst all disaster" deserves no comment, unless it is a particularly subtle preparation for the disaster of the powerful emphasis placed by the tune on the last syllable of "constancy". The tune moves in an easy four-in-a-bar measure, so that Bunyan's fairly regular metric ictuses fall on the odd beats of the bar. The two minims of the third bar, which are repeated in the seventh, provide the only variation to this

pattern. With Bunyan's words the variation is functional, because it permits the displacement of stress in the second line: **"Let him..."**, a deft touch, emphasising the challenge to the witness. At the same time, the more regularly stressed fourth line, and the corresponding lines in subsequent stanzas are not disrupted, and careful singing will place the emphasis accurately. This freedom of stress does not work in the fourth line of **The English Hymnal** version, with its resounding false emphasis, "fo...llow". Perhaps the reason is that in Bunyan the second minim of the pair and the following crotchet all fall on separate words. It is interesting that the crucial last line of every stanza, whose melody echoes that of the second and fourth lines, is written in crotchets throughout, permitting no ambivalence or variation of emphasis. The powerful concrete image of Bunyan's fifth line in the second stanza is reinforced by the splendid assonance in the text and the higher tessitura of the melody, an effect **The English Hymnal** destroys. **The English Hymnal** mis-match is an instance of a typical pattern in hymnbooks, and only a congregation immune to the meaning of the text could endure it.

The music for this simple example has been discussed only at the level of melody. The underpinning provided by a Dowland lute part, or by a Bach ostinato expands the expressive range of song tremendously. The interweaving of the vocal line with the string ostinato in the tenor chorale, "Zion hört die wächter singen", or Bach's Cantata no. 140, **Wachet auf**, is a famous example. In Schubert's songs the piano assumes an even more pervasive and prominent part in the whole effect. Accompaniment, and a host of other features, offer the song-writer the opportunity to exploit the expressiveness of the harmonic dimension of music, another matter that has not yet been commented on. Moreover hymns are sung in blocked harmonies; polyphony enormously complicates the relationship between text and music and obscures or obliterates many of the most important features of poetry.

The relationship between text and music has been discussed by several critics in terms of various marital metaphors (see Stevens, 1958), often without irony. The relationship has been a particularly tense one, each member girding at times against the restraints of relationship and seeking independence. Even when strain is not apparent, one member tends to dominate. In Classical times literature reached a far greater degree of sophistication than did music, and enjoyed a dominance until the development in Europe of polyphony. But with the spectacular development since the Renaissance of the resources of expressiveness in music, it has been the text that has had to struggle for adequate recognition. The point, then, of the historical dimension of this study is to analyse and account for the shifting patterns of domination during that period of development in music. These shifting patterns of domination are radically affected by changes both in the language of poetry and in the resources of expressiveness of music. The period of English musical and literary history chosen for study saw a most remarkable set of transformations; notwithstanding the subsequent development of the resources of harmony and musical texture, all the great problems of song are apparent in some form during our period. The main themes we have mentioned - the opposition between Apollonian and Dionysian modes of expression, and the tendency of either text or music to dominate - manifest themselves against rapid change in social attitudes towards them and against a set of dramatic changes in the language of poetry and in the "language" of music.

Two vital prolegomena to the period study constitute chapters two and three. First, an examination of the formal resources, particularly the phonetic resources, of the English language as it is used in poetry. It may seem surprising that no corresponding examination of the formal resources of music, melody, harmony and rhythm, is undertaken. However, most of the critical literature on song is the work of musicians, and shows a fair degree of sophistication in musical analysis. Perhaps because the fundamental

means of literature are such common human property, acquaintance
with them is taken for granted. But there is no warrant for
this: the analytical linguistic knowledge of the average educated
man is a set of superstitions. Among the most pervasive of these
is the belief that the word is the fundamental unit of language;
another is the belief that meanings inhere in the words rather
than in their intricate network of syntactic and semantic relation-
ships. It is significant that two of the most important figures
in this study, Purcell and Handel, are renowned for their "word-
painting" abilities. One of the contentions of this study is
that it is precisely their word-painting that so often betrays
the literary integrity of their texts. It will already be apparent
that the conventional dichotomy of song into "words and music"
has been studiously avoided here. A concern for "words" is not
an adequate concern for literature, and the term "text" will
be used throughout for the linguistic component of song. Only
where words alone are under discussion will that term be used;
except, alas, where other scholars are quoted! The second pro-
legomenon to the historical study is a glance at the relationship
of text and music in folk song. Folk song underpins all other
vocal music. In the form of lullaby and nursery rhyme it is,
for many of us, our earliest experience of music. Folk song
is the bed-rock of experience and of common sense in the union
of music and literature. Part of the success of **The Beggar's
Opera** (1728) is attributable to the reminder it contains of
this fact, with its parodies of baroque opera: the florid vocal
lines, the fatuous lyrics, the thin plots, the heroics.

An important premise of the whole study emerges here. Many studies
of the relationship that is song confine themselves to a particular
sort of vocal music: art-song, for instance. While this limitation
is a useful analytical convenience, it will not suit our purposes.
The terms "song" and "vocal music" are used here more or less
interchangeably, for this study is concerned with the whole
problem of relating text to music, whether the text is charm

or poem or liturgy or drama. Wagner may very well have been right in seeing opera as the most complex and sophisticated of human aesthetic expressions, but its Dionysian charm is part of the same continuum as a lullaby. As Edward T Cone puts it,

> If every song is to a certain extent a little opera,
> every opera is no less an expanded song. (1974, 21)

Opera cannot be excluded here, although only **Dido and Aeneas** is to receive detailed examination.

Our historical survey of English song begins in chapter four with the English Reformation. The reason is apparent in a trenchant observation about that movement by John Stevens:

> It was... part of an intellectual revolution manifested in **an intense concern with words,** and above all, with God's words as revealed in Holy Scripture... One of the most striking effects of the intellectual revolution (of which the Reformation in the Church was part cause, part effect) was to enhance the status not merely of the Bible but of language as such. (1979, 75-76, emphasis Stevens's)

In a cultural milieau in which language is paramount, song falls sooner or later under suspicion because of its Dionysian associations. Thus we find repeated complaints by religious reformers that church music is far too ornate in character, and that the message of the text is being obscured by the sensualities of the music. Hus, Wyclif, Savonarola, Erasmus, Cranmer and Queen Elizabeth I all condemned the tendency. Erasmus, for example:

> Modern church music is so constructed that the congregation cannot hear one distinct word. The choristers themselves do not understand what they are singing, yet according to the priests and monks it constitutes the whole of religion. Why will they not listen to St Paul? In college or monastery it is still the same: music, nothing but music. There was no music in St Paul's time. Words were then pronounced plainly. Words nowadays mean nothing.... If they want music let them sing psalms like rational beings, and not too many of these. (quoted in both Robertson and Stevens, 1963, 43 and Le Huray, 1978, 11)

Or Cranmer:

> The song that shall be made for the English service would not be full of notes, but, as near as maybe,

for every syllable a note, so that it may be sung
distinctly and devoutly. (Letter to King Henry VIII,
1544, quoted by Pattison, 1970, 84)

Such resistance to the Dionysian in music has a long and continuing
history in the Church. But the musicians have a habit of asserting
their art. Two Tudor composers, John Taverner and Christopher
Tye wrote parody masses based on the popular love song, "Westron
wynde when will thou blow?" There is a great tradition behind
the ingenious organist I once heard respond to a hell-fire sermon
with a lugubrious improvised fugue on

O du lieber Augustin
alles ist hin!

Elizabethan culture paid homage to both Apollo and Dionysus,
for ambivalence was a vital part of its character. When its
church music was being established, the dominating figure was
William Byrd, a recusant Catholic. When its vernacular literature
burst into self-assertive bloom, one of its most powerful influences
was Petrarch. And when its music liberated itself from church
patronage, it was by means of the madrigal, a form imported
from Italy via the Low Countries, which owed a great deal to
the Petrarchan conventions. The Elizabethan madrigal is the
subject of the fifth chapter. In chapter six, the lute song,
an assertion of a more native tradition, is dealt with, and
we see, especially in the work of Thomas Campion, a concern
with the issue of domination. Here and in the following chapter,
that on Cavalier song, the nature of Elizabethan and early Seven-
teenth Century lyric poetry is a major issue. In the Sixteenth
Century, lyric poets knew that there was a possibility that
their work might be used for song, although John Stevens (1979
and 1982) has demonstrated that it is not true that their lyric
poetry was invariably written for music. The conversational
rhythms of Skelton and of some of Wyatt's lyrics from early
in the Century were revived at the end of the Century by Shakespeare
and Donne. These rhythms were not amenable to song setting,
whereas something like "It was a lover and his lass", which

obviously was written to be sung, was written in a definite
and artful convention.

The changes in poetic fashion in the early Seventeenth Century
coincide with changes in harmonic structure in English music. The
development of **stilo recitativo** was determined by the search
for a more stable tonal system. With few exceptions, the accompani-
ments to Cavalier songs are pallid, merely providing a harmonic
underpinning for the melody. In mid-century, the trauma of the
Civil War and the Commonwealth experiment make a fundamental
break in stylistic continuity. After the Restoration a disjunction
is apparent between music and good poetry. As chapter eight
demonstrates, virtually the only texts set by Henry Purcell
that can be read without embarrassment are the biblical and
liturgical texts, prose texts, in other words, of his anthems. Nahum
Tate would surely have been deservedly forgotten if he had not
authored some of our most popular hymns and many of the texts
set by Purcell. Dryden wrote some appalling verse for Purcell;
King Arthur is typical, where patriotic warriors are found,

> Honour prizing,
> Death despising,
> Fame acquiring,
> By expiring. (**1958**, 567)

The remarkable gifts of Purcell flourished in an England, and
more particularly in a court, in which French and Italian manners
and dress and music and language were much admired. Dryden himself
excused "our uncouth numbers" in his preface to **Albion and Albanius**
(1685) by declaring the unfitness of English as a singing language
(**1912**, 175-182). The early death of Purcell, the arrival in
London of George Frideric Handel, and the accession of the Elector
of Hanover to the English throne left English music, not least
English vocal music, under an overwhelming foreign presence.
Chapter nine looks briefly at the consequences of this accident. For
nearly two centuries thereafter English music laboured under
a sense of innate inferiority to Continental. The revival of

English song at the end of the Nineteenth Century, and the relationships between English music and English poetry in the Twentieth are material for another book. Stephen Banfield makes a start on this in his **Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century** (1984). We close our study with a glance beyond the Eighteenth Century.

The Romantic movement, which falls outside the period we have chosen, nevertheless casts a retrospective light of which the student of the earlier period cannot help being aware. Two interdependent features of this light concern us here: first, the declared attitudes to song of composers and poets since Purcell's time, and secondly the example of German **Lieder**, more particularly, the work of Schubert. What links them is the light thrown by Schubert's practise onto the nature of the relationship.

Composers have taken many different attitudes to the texts they have used for vocal music, and some have been men of acute literary sensibility while others have not. Yet vocal music is a vital part of the repertoire and it is difficult to think of an important composer who has not taken it seriously. Some, like Schubert, have been able to derive great inspiration alike from great poetry and from worthless doggerel, shaping any text to the needs of their music. Others, like Britten, have displayed a powerful literary discrimination, yet have still sought to fit the text, by violence if necessary, into a musical matrix. A few, Wolf and Finzi for example, have approached very carefully chosen texts with great care for poetic integrity and have sought to fit the music to the poem rather than the other way round. On the other hand, major poets of the last three centuries have shown little enthusiasm for providing song texts. Because of the changes we shall be exploring, lyric poetry since the Seventeenth Century has meant "song-like" poetry, not poetry for singing; during the same period, a "language of music" has been created, as Deryck Cooke (1959) has demonstrated, that can claim independence

of natural language, and that is inclined to dominate any text used with it. As sensitive and literate a composer as Sir Michael Tippett has said (1970, 462),

> As soon as we sing any poetry to a recognisable melody we have at that instant left the art of poetry for the art of music.

"The art of music", says Tippett, not the art of song. He adds that chanted recitation of poetry permits the listener to strain after the poem, but "once the chanting has gone over into song, then our appreciation of the words virtually ceases" (**ibid**). If it is clear that not all song writers would agree with Tippett, it is also apparent that the struggle of the text against total domination by the music is real enough. The caution - to put it at its mildest - of so many poets about having their poetry set to music undoubtedly springs from the conviction that they have, in writing a poem, spent a great deal of craftsmanship on "musical" effect; that the poem is, in its sound patterns, as in other respects, self-contained. Stanford recognised this.

> The secret of the harmony of [Tennyson's] verse lay in his incomparable ear for the juxtaposition of vowels and the exact suitability of each consonant. This makes it difficult to set his poems adequately to music. The music is so inborn in the poetry itself that it does not ask for notes to make incompleteness complete, and music is set to it rather for additional illustration than from inherent necessity. (**Studies and Memories**, 1908, quoted by Banfield, 1979, 54)

Such a conception of poetry was rare before the Seventeenth Century. It is a function of an increasing specialisation of professional skills after the Renaissance. Yeats's experiments in reciting his poetry to harp and drum accompaniment may be seen as ambivalent evidence of independence. Musicians in the Twentieth Century have experimented with the use of **Sprechstimme**, the spoken voice with music, and Heitor Villa-Lobos made notable use of textless human voice in his **Bachianas Brasileiras.**

At least two great poets have gone out of their way to praise minor composers for their song settings: Milton paid tribute

to Henry Lawes's "tuneful and well measur'd song" in a famous
sonnet (Milton, **1966**, 174); and Goethe praised Carl Friedrich
Zelter's song settings at the expense of Schubert's (Stein,
1962). Why? Surely because Lawes's airs for **Comus**, and Zelter's
settings of Goethe lyrics did no violence, in the poets' views,
to the essential structures of the texts. Given the terms in
which he praised Lawes, it is inconceivable that Milton would
have approved Handel's settings of **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**
had he lived long enough to hear them. Goethe objected very
specifically to Schubert's settings of poems such as "Erlkönig",
"Gretchen am Spinnrade" and "Wanderers Nachtlied" for their
repetitions and for the liberties they took with the lineation
and rhythm. He was not the last poet to resent the domination
of music; Yeats employed a censor in his old age to examine
all settings of his poetry prior to publication, and permission
to publish was not easily given.

> I am a poet, not a musician, and dislike to have my
> words distorted or their animation destroyed even
> though the musician claims to have expressed their
> meaning in a different medium. (Yeats, quoted by Clinton-
> Baddeley, 1941, 48; see also Banfield, 1984)

It is possible that song-writers were included among, or represent-
ative of "the fools" in "The Coat" (**1984**, 127):

> I made my song a coat
> Covered with embroideries
> Out of old mythologies
> From heel to throat;
> But the fools caught it,
> Wore it in the world's eyes
> As though they'd wrought it.
> Song, let them take it,
> For there's more enterprise
> In walking naked.

And just as poets have often shown a preference for cautious,
respectful settings of their poetry, so musicians have often
chosen rather pallid poetry to carry their musical inspirations
aloft. Friedrich Müller owes most of his fame to musical settings
of his work. And in English, Newbolt and Masefield have had

some decidedly inferior poems preserved by settings. As an interest
in Stanford's music has revived in recent years, we have been
far more willing to take seriously his plangent Brahmsian harmonies
and his gift for melody than his not always convincing posture
as a professional Irishman, or his jolly tarriness in, say,
Songs of the Fleet. An age more cynical of nautical xenophobia
must find it more difficult, however fine the music, to tolerate

> If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' heaven,
> An' drum them up the Channel as we drumm'd them long ago.
> (Newbolt: "Drake's Drum" in Quiller-Couch, **1912**, 839)

Schubert presents an enthralling perspective on the problems
of song. In a fascinating work on German **Lieder,** Jack M Stein
argues that, before Schubert, melody and harmony were a modest
embellishment to a poem. The point is perhaps overstated for
German **Lieder;** certainly overstated if we move outside Germany
or outside **Lieder;** into Purcell or Bach or Mozart, for example. But
few would quarrel with his evaluation of the effect of Schubert's
work on the **Lied:**

> ... the poem became, in a sense, embattled, by virtue
> of the fact that music had developed more precise
> and also more powerful means of extending poetic ideas
> into its own more abstract sphere. (1971, 17)

Though a few composers since, like Wolf, Debussy and Finzi,
have sought to rescue the poetic text from total subordination
to music, Schubert's genius for remaking a poem set a trend. First,
Schubert was notoriously undiscriminating in his choice of poems
for musical setting. Two of his major song cycles, **Die Schöne
Müllerin** and **Winterreise,** are inspired by the insipid pastorals
of Friedrich Müller. Secondly, many critics have argued that
he misses Heine's characteristic irony in **Schwanengesang** (Stein,
1971, 80-91), although Edward T Cone has queried this argument
(1974, 39-40). But thirdly, and more important, he adopted a
proprietorial attitude towards the text, being prepared to reshape
even the greatest of German poetry to suit his musical purpose. It
was no doubt this that so distressed Goethe.

Two of his Goethe settings deserve brief comment in this respect. In "Wanderers Nachtlied" (Schubert, n.d., 74) Schubert contrives a remarkable musical analogue to the mood of the poem, while totally destroying its internal structure. (For Goethe's text, see Forster, 1957, 208.) The line, "Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde", is broken into two complementary musical phrases to the words, "Die Vögelein schweigen, schweigen im Walde". Thus the word "schweigen" becomes a key-word in the atmospheric nocturne that Schubert constructs. And Goethe's conclusion,

> Warte nur! Balde
> Ruhest du auch.

is subtly transformed so that the admonitory exclamation "Warte nur!" is softly repeated to a rising musical phrase climaxing on the word "Balde" which is held on a pause, before dropping again on the final phrase, Goethe's last line, which is given one simple, four-note bar. The whole conclusion is then repeated. Goethe emphasizes "Balde..." only by its placement and function as a rhyme-word. Schubert's setting transfers emphasis from the rest promised the addressee to the immanence of that rest.

The interesting question arises whether the poem is destroyed, or re-made, or, in George Steiner's term, translated. Steiner admits the manifold distortions of the translation process, but argues that they are essentially similar to the distortions that operate even - or especially? - between intimately acquainted speakers of the same language. He extends this argument to song.

> The composer who sets a text to music is engaged in
> the same sequence of intuitive and technical motions
> which obtain in translation proper. (1975, 415)

The argument is a powerful one, but there are problems. Since language has a more precise semantics than music, the "cultures" might be said to differ in this respect, and the possibilities of misunderstanding arising out of the translation process to be multiplied. In any case, changes to such features of the poetic message as lineation, rhythm and parallelism of sound or syntax are changes of meaning. The efficient translator knows

where and how he is distorting meaning, and tries to keep such distortion to a minimum; the composer, on the other hand, may well use the text as a starting point for a meditation on a similar theme. An insistence that recognisable distortion does occur is not incompatible with the recognition that the composer is setting, not **the** poem, which is an abstraction, but a reading of it (see Cone, 1974, 19-20). The critic must reserve the right to distinguish valid from invalid readings.

But if the poem is an abstraction, so is the song. It is a performance that we react to and comprehend. The story is told of the aged Goethe being reconciled to at least one of Schubert's settings of his work, "Erlkönig", because of the performance of a particular singer (Istel, 1928, 221). Would he have forgiven Schubert the distortions of the first stanza of "Gretchen am Spinnrade" (Schubert, n.d., 10) if he had heard Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Edwin Fischer perform it (recorded on EMI ALP 3843). Most performers seem to treat this product of Schubert's teens as a rather bland declaration of young love. Neither Goethe's diction, nor the dramatic context of the lyric in **Faust** will permit such a reading. Miss Schwarzkopf sings the song with a palpable awareness of its context in **Faust**, as Schubert, no doubt, wrote it. The performance is Dionysian, proclaiming the alienating power of the libido; the three sections of the song, marked off by the repetitions of the opening stanza, are sung with rising intensity, moving from bewilderment to defiant desperation. To some extent this must be seen as Miss Schwarzkopf's own interpretation, in the urgency of her singing, and in the deliberate articulation she gives to the consonant clusters in such lines as

> Mein armer Kopf
> Ist mir verrückt,
> Mein armer Sinn
> Ist mir zerstückt.

But she is guided by the song, by Schubert's reading of Goethe, in other words. The famous accompaniment imitating the movement of Gretchen's spinning wheel has a relentlessness in which we

may hear the relentlessness both of Faust's fate and of the fate of Gretchen. And the magnificent climax on the line "Und ach, sein Kuss!" is written into the music. Part of Miss Schwarzkopf's contribution is to break one of the rules of good singing by prolonging the pause on the final consonant and hissing its sibilance. Schubert's reading of the poem, therefore, and Fischer's and Miss Schwarzkopf's reading of the song make them remarkable statements of that characteristic Romantic conflation of love and death; an early exploration of **Liebestod.**

Nevertheless, the "intense concern with words" (**supra,** 11) reasserts itself from time to time through subsequent history, and in more secular contexts. In the last decade of the Sixteenth Century members of the Florentine Camerata, in seeking to recapture what they took to be the principles of performance of ancient Greek poetry, developed a new art form. Thus opera has its origins in a very emphatic assertion of the dominance of text. Yet if the members of the Camerata could have seen the textual subordination commonly characteristic of the magnificent art form they originated, they would have been horrified. Even so attempts are made in opera from time to time to redress the balance. In the Nineteenth Century Wagner's insistence on opera as drama was, in its way, an assertion of the importance of text; although his libretti created scope for some of the most extravagantly Dionysian gestures in European cultural history. Strangely enough, a similar insistence on drama in **opera buffa** enabled Gilbert and Sullivan to help British theatre out of one of its worst doldrums. Yet the celebrated rifts in that partnership were dramatisations of the struggle between text and music. In 1942 Richard Strauss paid eloquent tribute to the memory of his greatest librettist, Hugo von Hormannsthal, in **Capriccio,** an operatic allegory of the struggle between poetry and music.

POETIC FORM:
AN ANATOMICAL STUDY IN THE ELEMENTS OF LINGUISTIC PATTERNING

Not only is language one of man's defining characteristics,
but also, even in the simplest communicative situations, its
use is creative. The notion of simple communicative situations
is, in fact, highly suspect. There are so many alternative ways
to communicate simple needs that the choice made is a highly
complex function of specific personality in specific situation.
Any linguistic choice not only proclaims personality, it also
modifies situation by that proclamation. Yet language is necessarily
rule-based, the rules being complex interlocking systems established
by convention not by decree. Using language is thus making con-
ventional patterns with speech sound. When the user derives
pleasure from playing with these patterns and making further
patterns, we have the beginnings of literature. Such play leads
readily to ritualistic and ecstatic incantation and thus establishes
its own conventions as well as creating an aura of magic about
the activity; hence the enchantment - in so many senses - of
literature.

Most theories of literary language try to account for it in
terms of its differences from a normal or standard language. But
those theories that posit an absolute difference do not survive
close examination. In an essay on "The music of poetry" T. S. Eliot
implies a tendency in poetry to strain against the constraints
of normal linguistic rules, yet he asserts

> ... the law that poetry must not stray too far from
> the ordinary everyday language which we use and hear.
> Whether poetry is accentual or syllabic, rhymed or
> rhymeless, formal or free, it cannot afford to lose
> its contact with the changing language of common inter-
> course. (1970, 110)

Eliot is vague about what constitutes a loss of contact or a
straying too far, but his assertion is founded on the premise
that "the music of poetry" - an analogical term, of course -

"must be a music latent in the common speech of its time" (**ibid.** 112).

In the past few decades a number of scholars have attempted to characterise the language of poetry by theories or linguistic deviation. Poetry, the argument runs, is not "normal language"; it derives its meanings and its impact by poetic license from its deviations from a linguistic norm. Apart from the obvious difficulty of establishing a linguistic norm, this theory flounders when it is applied to poetry without obvious quirks of usage. Certainly it is a theory that can account partially for the highly idiosyncratic language of a poet like Hopkins: his elliptical syntax, his shiftings of word classes, his dialect words, his neologisms. But this is to select those features as the most significant in Hopkins's poetry, a move for which there is no logical warrant. It also suggests that Hopkins's poetry is inherently more poetic than, say, the narrative poetry of Robert Frost. And how do we account for the difference between Hopkinsian deviation, which tends to be personally idiosyncratic, and the more convention-alised deviations of a large number of Hopkins's contemporaries? Is deviation a necessary condition of poetry? Is it a sufficient condition of poetry? Is it even a significant condition of poetry? The theory of deviation is not a very useful analytical tool for poetry; on the contrary: there is no single device, whether deviation or anything else, that is found in poetry and not in prose, though one might argue that poetry is marked by a high incidence of certain specifiable features. But it is possible also to specify the linguistic features characteristic of fields or discourse like law, science and religion; and these features could be described as deviations from a norm. The relationship between standard language and poetic usage is not exactly analogous to the relationship between standard language and such a field of discourse, for in addition to a number of its own characteristic features such as rhyme, alliteration, metaphor, rhythmicality, repetition and parallelism - many of which it shares with other

fields of discourse like advertising, preaching and liturgies
- poetry reserves the right to assimilate the features of any
other field of discourse and to use them for its own purposes. And
in this eclecticism, it is not the features themselves, but
the purposes to which poetry puts them that is significant.

A more useful analytical approach to poetic language therefore
is one which, recognising the linguistic features, can account
for their function. For our present purposes I should like to
refer to an approach developed in the first quarter of this
century by a number of Czech scholars, notwithstanding the tremendous
eruption of new work in theoretical poetics by scholars such
as Jakobson, Culler, Riffaterre and Barthes. While this is an
avowedly conservative approach, it is determined by considerations
of practical utility at the level of detailed textual explication. In
any event, there is, through Roman Jakobson, a direct line running
from the work of the Prague School to recent work on poetics. Like
Eliot, scholars of the Prague School saw poetic language as
straining against the standard, but insisted that the standard
language constitutes the background against which any departure
is reflected and measured. In a famous essay on "Standard language
and poetic language", (Garvin, 1964, 17-30) Jan Mukarovsky developed
this idea, pointing out that the more normal and unremarkable
a text, the more automatic is the transmission of its message. Any
abnormality is foregrounded against the normal, commanding conscious
attention for itself. "The function of poetic language," said
Mukarovsky, "consists in the maximum of foregrounding of the
utterance" (**ibid.**, 19). Every nuance in poetry therefore has
its significance. Now this is admittedly a highly subjective
analytical tool. One reader may differ from another in his judgement
of the norm, or he may have his attention seized today by one
foregrounded feature, tomorrow by another. But the virtue of
the mode of analysis is that it reflects the way a text is read. The
inter-relationships of the features, foregrounded and backgrounded,
are again extremely complex. Departure from a norm may be minimal

or extreme, and may take place on the phonological, orthographic, morphological, syntactic or semantic levels of communication, or simultaneously on any combination of these. Again, a text or a genre may establish its own set of norms, and then departures from these norms will be foregrounded, but all the time the foregrounding is seen in relation to its background.

As a relatively simple example we may take a single feature from Yeats's poem, "Lapis Lazuli" (1984, 294). The key-word, "gay", first occurs in line 3. It is foregrounded by being the first rhyme-word in the poem, but is otherwise unremarkable. The word's common connotations of joyous frivolity are explicited by its linkage with "fiddle-bow", and their contrast with "Aeroplane and Zeppelin", "bomb-balls" and "beaten flat". That the whole contrast is suspect is hinted by the attributive "hysterical" of the first line, and by the presence of the clichés "everybody knows" and "if nothing drastic is done"; but this hint does not modify the reader's reaction to "gay". However the word reappears rather startlingly at the end of line 16. Again it is a rhyme-word, and its importance has been heralded not only by two occurrences at line-endings of the word "play", but also by "they" tucked away inside line 12, and by a set of prominent assonances, "great stage" and "break". And it is not simply sound that foregrounds "gay" at its second occurrence; it is also semantics, for the attribution of the word to Hamlet and Lear is startling, breaking down the contrast with which the poem had begun. Line 17 sees the word transformed into the noun "gaiety" and, by its collocation with "transfiguring", being accorded a set of moral and religious meanings in powerful contrast to the connotations of frivolity. The reader is now aware that this is idiosyncratic usage since the normal connotations are being violated by strange collocation and the violation made prominent by phonological patterning. This foregrounding now forces the reader to demand of the poem that it justify so idio-syncratic a usage. In passing, it can be observed that since

the poem was written, the word "gay" has acquired other connotations
than the poet can have intended, which the reader cannot ignore
since they are part of "the changing language of common intercourse"
but which he must censor out. The word does not reappear until
line 36, prominently placed at the end of the third stanza,
a rhyme-word clinching the poem's central statement and simul-
taneously offering the sought-for justification:

> All things fall and are built again,
> And those that build them again are gay.

The poem now switches its attention to the carving in lapis
lazuli from which it takes its name. The word "gay" occurs once
more, at the very end of the poem, foregrounded again by rhyme. The
connotations of frivolity have now gone, though the sense of
joy remains, contrasting significantly with the "mournful melodies"
of line 53. Yeats has made his central point about the affirmative
functions of art partly through a disconcertingly abnormal usage
skilfully foregrounded. All the heroic endurance of the "two
Chinamen" is now declared in the fact that "Their ancient glittering
eyes, are gay."

Anticipating the discussion that is to follow about the sort
of poetry suitable for musical setting, it is interesting to
wonder whether this level of linguistic sophistication could
have anything added to it by music, or whether music could do
no more than provide a symbolic analogue to it.

The theory of foregrounding, then, is a rudimentary attempt
to account for the ways in which a literary utterance is perceived
and interpreted. Such perception and interpretation are necessarily
refinements and extensions of the interpretive procedures that
take place in non-literary discourse. The aesthetic patterning
of a language employs features of that language. Attempts to
transfer feature-patterning from one language to another are
likely to fail if the target language does not employ the particular
feature in its normal communicative systems. The duration of

a vowel sound in English, for example, can be affected by many
factors, but duration is never the major criterion of differentiation
between one vowel and another, vowel quality being the crucial
factor in this differentiation. Thus the rules of Ancient Greek
scansion do not apply to English because quantity is not a sys-
tematised feature of English. There is even some doubt about
whether the rules of Ancient Greek quantitative scansion applied
very consistently to Latin (see Beare, 1957). Experiments in
quantitative verse in English, therefore, tend to look for analogous
features in English and not always to find them. Such experiments
create, at best, a highly abstract and artificial pattern, not
a pattern that is aurally perceptible.

Let us look fairly briefly at some of the main systems of patterning
employed in English poetry as foregrounding against the background
fabric of the whole English language. It is convenient to divide
the systems into two general categories: those that are manifested
as obvious patterns of sound, and those that are more purely
semantic. This is, however, only an analytical convenience,
for the features of language are inter-dependent in their ultimate
cohesion in meaningful communication. Caesar's "Veni. Vidi. Vici!"
employs alliteration, obviously, and a parallelism of syllabic
structure in the three words. Each is also a self-contained
sentence, employing the same verb inflection for tense, mood,
aspect, person and number. These features converge in the semantic
parallels which make "Vici!" so triumphant a climax by contrasting
it with the other two words. It is instructive to consider how
many of these features are lost in the usual English translation,
"I came. I saw. I conquered!" Even the parallelism of verb form
is obscured by the irregular character of the past tense forms
of the first two verbs. Musical setting of poetry being, in
Steiner's term, a sort of translation (supra 16), tends to similar
distortion.

Let us look first at the more exclusively semantic end of the

spectrum. Narrative exposition is among the oldest techniques of literature. Traditionally it has used ballad form as its vehicle in poetry; a prosodically simple, repetitive structure of no fixed length. Folk literature moralises in parables, generating moral argument out of narrative; ballad form accommodates such moralising easily in its stylised openings and closures and in its refrains. This is why ballad form has also been used for formulaic poetry like riddles and epitaphs. English poets have also used blank verse and heroic couplets extensively for narrative purposes. Only rarely have they used more complex stanza forms, as in **Troilus and Criseyde** and **The Faerie Queene.**

More abstract argument, however, thrives on complex prosodic forms, even the most exacting, like the sonnet and the villanelle. Even where the form chosen is more flexible, the structure of a poem is determined by the extent to which it sets out to tell a story or to construct an argument. Those love-poems, for example, that seek to persuade a lover to bed are typically syllogistic. Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress" is structured by its three verse paragraphs beginning **(1952, I, 26-27)**

> Had we but world enough and time
> This coyness, Lady, were no crime...
> But at my back I always hear
> Time's winged chariot hurrying near...
> Now therefore while the youthful hue
> Sits on thy skin like morning dew...

Donne's lyric "The Flea" **(1912, I, 40)** has an implicit narrative behind its spurious argument, as the flea that is taken to symbolise the lovers' union is considered, pleaded for, and then executed. Both narrative and argument can be coloured by emotion: not only the initial mood adopted by the narrator or arguer, but also his various attitudes towards persons places and events. Narrative, including description, and argument very obviously carry implications of intention: the famous strictures of W K Wimsatt on "the intentional fallacy" (1954) are linguistically absurd.

It is clear that, at this, the semantic level of patterning, music can provide a dimension of expression that works parallel to a text, without working against the linguistic devices that control the overall form of the poem. Obviously a composer may mistake or deliberately modify the emotional approach of a poet; and obviously a song will have its own emotional dimensions different from those of the text, however faithfully the composer strives to match his mood to that of the poet; but the musical component of the work need not necessarily swamp the textual design. In strophic song the reiterated melody may serve to establish a fundamental mood which can be modified as the narrative or argument progresses. In fact, melody and accompaniment can do this far more explicitly than the text. Schubert's accompaniment in "Gretchen am Spinnrade" has already been mentioned (**supra,** 19) in this regard. Another famous example is Purcell's beautiful elegaic falling figure of the ground bass of Dido's final aria in **Dido and Aeneas.** Where the range of emotional expression of a poem is extensive, a composer may choose instead to make a throughcomposed setting.

One of the attitudes that composers have often found difficult to express is satire, or its gentler form, irony. Heine, for example, has been badly served by composers who failed to grasp or failed to express his characteristic irony. It is not surprising that irony and satire are difficult to express in song; they so often depend for their effect on the sequence in which a writer conveys information or on the selection of information that he offers. The point of such a song as Mahler's "Lob des hohen Verstandes" is partly made by the donkey's having the last word! Mahler also makes use in this song, as in others from **Des Knaben Wunderhorn,** like "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt", or grotesque harmonies, both simultaneously and consecutively. A composer may also rely on a disjunction of mood between the accompaniment and the melody or between the melody

and the text. Britten does this in some of his folk song arrange-
ments, "The Plough Boy", for example, where the jaunty melody
is accompanied by a pulsating bass and occasionally commented
on by a frivolous trilling figure in the treble. Another example
is Puccini's lugubrious aria "O mio babbino caro" from **Gianni
Schicchi**, in which the protestations of filial devotion in the
aria are at variance with the dramatic actions of the characters.
Often the wise composer will rely on the quality of the text
and the clear enunciation of the singer to express the disjunction
of mood. Early examples abound in Campion. The gently lulling
melody of "It fell on a summer's day" emphasizes the archness
of the text, the apparent alarm of the somnolent Bessie at Jamie's
bold advances being offset by her readiness to be thus alarmed
every afternoon. It is to be regretted that the directors of
the Savoy operas are often less trusting of the power of incon-
gruity. Ko-ko, for example, in **The Mikado** is almost invariably
required to burlesque his songs in a somewhat cracked voice,
whereas "Tit Willow" would much better rely for its humour on
the discrepancy between its melodic pathos and its dramatic
situation. Such effects require attentive listening. In song,
as in the theatre, additional indications of attitude are possible,
since different voices, whether human or instrumental, can create
different sequences. But this possibility is fraught with danger,
for the effect can very easily be spoiled when the logic of
sequence is pointed up by additional gestures, and subtle irony
may be reduced to crude burlesque.

Lexical choice is yet another area of patterning on the semantic
side of the spectrum. This is not to deny that many lexical
choices in poetry are motivated by considerations of qualities
of sound, but let us for the moment consider meaning alone. Words
are known by the company they keep. Thus any lexical items that
seem incongruous or surprising in relation to their context,
are foregrounded. We have seen that in "Lapis Lazuli" the serious
semantic appraisal of the word "gay" occurred at its second

appearance by virtue of its strange collocation with "tragedy", "Hamlet", "Lear" and so on. And the strength that the word bore in the rest of the poem accumulated from its previously foregrounded uses; it had seemed to belong to a different field of discourse, and the poet's convincing us that it did not, was an important part of the point he was making. A word thus foregrounded might be significant because of its incongruity to the regional, social or historical dialect employed by its context, or because it is commonly associated with another field of discourse than the text has established, or because it infringes normal customs regarding formality and informality of discourse, or because it has multiple meanings as used, or because it has metaphorical or symbolic significance in an otherwise literal context, or even because the word is of the poet's own coining. But since foregrounding is a subjective perception, it should not be assumed that only surprise and contrast can foreground a word; some words may impress for their very consistency and appropriateness in the text. In Wilfred Owen's poem "Futility", (Owen, **1946**, 73) the climax is the agonised outburst at the end,

> O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
> To break earth's sleep at all.

Here the vital word, "fatuous", is foregrounded both by its absolute appropriateness to the theme of wastage and futility in war, and by its startling collocation with "sunbeams". The resigned sadness of the poem is thus transformed into outrage. Britten grasped the significance of the word, and, when setting the poem as part of his **War Requiem**, chose repetition as his main musical analogue to the word's linguistic foregrounding. But the word does not require repetition; its force is sufficient and proper in its context, and repetition destroys its sense of controlled outrage, as well as destroying the metrical pattern.

Here we can see one of the major problems of song. It is perhaps too easy for composers to create musical analogues for important individual lexical items. The musical repertoire is full of

beautiful instances, like the enormous crash on the final word
of "Und es ward Licht!" at the beginning of Haydn's **Die Schopfung**.
Purcell and Handel were great masters of the art of "word-painting"
with English texts. But word-painting often disrupts the text
by repetition or other excessive foregrounding of a well-chosen
word. Popular consciousness of language is often concentrated
exclusively upon words. "He has a way with words" goes the cliché.
But language and literature employ patterns far more complex
than words. Previous discussions of the problems we are concerned
with here have all too frequently been about "words and music";
but such labelling involves serious distortion. A concern for
the words of a song is not a deep enough concern for its language.
Ferdinand de Saussure made a very accurate analogy between language
and a game of chess: a single move of a single piece alters
all the relationships of all the pieces to each other (1966,
88-89).

In context, words cohere in syntactical patterns. A great deal
has been written and said about poetic licence, and some scholars
have suggested that poetry has its own grammar and that it is
the stylistician's business to describe that grammar. While
this view recognises that poetic licence itself is rulebound
and that there are thus clear and describable limits to poetic
licence, it misses the point that any abnormality of grammar
in poetry must derive its meaning from a perception of its abnorm-
ality, a consciousness of the normal possibilities, and thus
from a theory about the semantic motivation of the departure. One
obvious sort of departure from the standard is dialect: regional,
social or historical, which can manifest itself on the syntactical
level as well as on the lexical. But more interesting and more
common is the poetic manipulation for aesthetic effect of the
syntactical structures of the standard language itself. Many
of the figures of rhetoric so ably described by the ancients
are manipulations of this sort. One of the commonest and most
effective is parallelism. "Make love, not war!" is a fine slogan

because it is literature, making its semantic point through a coincidence of phrasal verb structure since "love" and "war" both collocate, quite fortuitously, with "make" in our everyday language. Poetry thrives on such coincidence, often foregrounding material through "abnormal" parallelism of perfectly normal structures. Bunyan's great hymn (**supra**, 7) makes extensive use of parallelism. "Come wind, come weather" is an interesting example, since it employs two successive abnormal conditional clauses. The abnormality is, however, conventionalised, and may have been a normal feature of Bunyan's dialect. It differs from ours in its inversion of subject and predicate as well as in its ellipsis of the normal conditional prepositions. Both inversion and ellipsis are common syntactical devices of poetry, with or without parallelism. In the second stanza Bunyan parallels two more clause types, and makes an inversion of verb and object that effectively foregrounds the verbs. The effect is reinforced at the phonological level by rhyme.

> No lion can him fright,
> He'll with a giant fight...

And in the third stanza a negative and a positive clause are contrasted in parallel, with an inversion in the negative, again to foreground the verbs.

> He'll fear not what men say;
> He'll labour night and day...

These parallelisms are bound together by another, on which the structure of the entire poem depends: the sentence structure of the second halves of all three stanzas, concluding with the phrase

> To be a pilgrim.

In the first two stanzas this phrase stands in direct apposition to the nouns "intent" and "right"; in the third stanza it is an adverbial modifying "labour".

It is very obvious that such syntactical parallelism, whether it repeats words or not, has rhythmical and intonational correlates and is thus an intimate part of the phonetic patterns of the

poetry as well. This device is very readily accommodated by music. It is of enormous importance in strophic song setting. Campion, as one would expect of a poet-composer, exploited the device very successfully. Gerald Finzi frequently set poems by Hardy that used inter-stanzaic parallelisms. Even in through-composed song parallelism is an important device for the composer, because he can exploit the parallels either with direct repeats of musical phrase or with complementary phrases. The tune Vaughan Williams set to Bunyan's hymn is particularly effective in this respect over the second half of the stanza. Indeed in the final stanza a semantic parallelism is emphasized by the setting although no syntactical matching is apparent until the words "he'll labour..." But the three lines linked by the rhyme represent successive triumphs of the Pilgrim's calling:

> Then fancies fly away,
> He'll fear not what men say,
> He'll labour night and day
> To be a pilgrim.

We must now turn our attention to the remaining prosodic features of poetry, the very core of "the music of language." The analogical nature of that term must once more be stressed. Music and language appear to share many features of sound patterning: variations of rhythm, tempo, pitch, duration, loudness, quality and harmonic relation. But a moment's consideration will reveal how differently music and language use these features. The contrasts in music are stronger, and the variety of pattern far greater. Two features particularly, pitch movement and harmony, have been developed by Western music into an expressive system of enormous power, but quite independently of language, and defying linguistic explanation, let alone equivalence; although Deryck Cooke (1959) has shown that the system does have its recurrent and predictable patterns. The music of language must include the whole range of sounds produced by the human vocal tract. There is an astronomical number of combinations of features of sound. For example, with the vocal cords vibrating, we can produce a large number of

the sounds commonly called vowels and consonants; each of these can be uttered at any pitch within the speaker's range, and this pitch can be constant or moving; the loudness can be varied; the vowels can be nasalized to whatever degree is desired; the sounds can succeed one another in a host of combinations at different speeds, and so on. The music of any particular language is necessarily more restricted, as many features and combinations are not employed by that language. In English, for example, we do not use the consonant with which the Scots terminate the word "loch", nor the initial consonant of such Welsh names as "Llanberis". Again, the terminal consonant of the word "song" is a common enough English sound, but it never occurs at the beginning of an English word, and English speakers have difficulty with those words in African languages which do start with the sound. Despite these restrictions, the choice of sound effects available in any language is very large. It includes, first, the set of vowels and consonants of that language, and their permitted clusters; secondly, it includes the stress and intonation patterns of that language; and thirdly, it includes features dependent upon the personal psychology, physiology and situation of the speaker, which features include general pitch level and range, softness and loudness, tempo variations, and characteristics of special resonance or aspiration or nasality. The literary artist makes extensive use of features in the first two of these classes, but not in the third, although the personality and situation of a character and the meaning of what he or she utters will certainly carry some implications of what tempo and pitch range and loudness are appropriate and what are not; however, such matters fall, strictly, into the realm of interpretation by a reader, since we do not employ any system of orthographic notation for these features. It is characteristic of song that it controls pitch, tempo and loudness much more tightly, its control over pitch being almost absolute.

The segmental sounds of a particular language, its vowels and

consonants, are necessarily a small selection from the whole range of such sounds producible by the human vocal tract. Different native speakers of that language may vary their pronunciations, particularly of the vowels, within quite wide limits and still be perfectly intelligible. This is made possible partly by the very high degree of redundancy in natural language. It is also just as well, for the speakers of a language differ widely from one another not only in their linguistic environments during the years in which they are learning the language, but also in the individual characteristics of their vocal tracts. The obvious difference between the average pitch ranges of male and female speech is only one sort of individuating speech characteristic. The fact of variation has important implications for singing, as we shall see, but it must be emphasized there are limits to the variation tolerable by listeners; more so in speech than in song.

Poetry employs the qualities of segmental consonantal sound in a variety of ways. Perhaps the simplest foregrounding device is alliteration, the repetition of a consonantal sound. An extension of this is the repetition of a number of consonants sharing the same feature: nasality, for instance, or plosion. Many poetry readers are inclined to ascribe particular qualities of mood to particular consonantal sounds. We should be sceptical about this, as the readers invariably know the meaning of the phrase in which such sounds occur, but it is a plausible theory that a large accumulation of plosive sounds may suggest aggression or anger. We may remember Fluellen's outburst "Kill the poys and the luggage!" (H5, IV, vii, 1). Similarly, repeated sibilants may be used to create a hushing effect, though we have already noted the anguish of Miss Schwarzkopf's hiss in "Gretchen am Spinnrade" (supra, 20). The possibility of much distortion of consonantal patterns in song is small; serious distortion would result in serious loss of intelligibility. It should be pointed out, though, that some singers misunderstand the nature of normal

speech and introduce unnatural juncture into phrases such as "put down"; the normal speech pattern would be for the terminal plosive of the first word to be assimilated by the initial plosive of the second. In singing this assimilation has the added advantage that the vibrations of the vocal cords are interrupted once not twice. While clarity of diction in singing depends very largely upon clearly enunciated consonants, quality of tone depends largely upon sustained and stable vowels. The sounds that intrude most awkwardly upon that quality are probably the sibilants, which tend to last longer than other consonants and upon which no sonorous quality is possible. Miss Schwarzkopf's defiance of this fact for a specific emotional effect is a triumph.

With regard to vowels, even the most obvious foregrounding devices, like assonance and rhyme, are not always as clear as they seem. The vowels of English vary from region to region and from age to age. Thus, while the prestige of that dialect that we call standard ensures a certain measure of stability, the subtler effects of vowel music should be cautiously discussed. On the other hand, we have the evidence of poets themselves that vowel sounds are among their most carefully calculated effects. In theory at least, any articulatory feature of vowels may be used in patterning: tenseness or laxity, openness or closeness, diphthong-isation, and so on. In practice in English, probably the only features extensively used are openness and closeness. Classical scansion has forced upon us a concern for duration as well, but some of the accepted notions about vowel length have no foundation in physical fact. Spectrographic evidence suggests that factors like emotional and semantic emphasis play the major roles in determining vowel length rather qualities inherent to the vowels themselves, so that, say, the vowel in "beat" is not necessarily longer than that in "bad", the conventions of some systems of phonetic transcription notwithstanding! Vowel quality is, as we shall see shortly, a vital factor in the rhythm of English.

But first there is an important point to be made about the inevit-
ability of distortion of some vowel sounds when speech is transformed
into song. In the first place, every singer knows that there
are certain positions in which his or her particular vocal tract
produces its greatest richness of tone, and that these positions
may vary within his or her entire pitch range. Naturally enough
these positions tend to be those associated with open vowels
and a certain amount of lip-rounding. It follows that singers
will tend to find those positions in singing, particularly on
sustained notes, so that a compromise is necessary between the
sounds indicated by the text and the quality sought by the singer.
English vowels can sometimes be a cruel trial for a singer. A
close front vowel like that in "sweet" is particularly difficult
on a sustained high note. The compromise sometimes used is to
round the lips somewhat, producing a rather un-English sound
close to the French vowel in **lune** or to the first vowel of the
German word **über**. In order to maintain quality, someone singing
in English has to use rather more tenseness than is customary
in English speech. Such compromises are hardly noticed by the
listener, especially if the singer is meticulous about consonants,
but they do affect slightly the vowel patterns written into
the text. Diphthongs are another source of difficulty, and English
has many of them. It is very easy to lose quality in the glide
from one vowel sound to the other, particularly when the second
is further from the positions of optimal richness. Consequently
singers learn to minimise the second component of any diphthong,
sometimes turning the sound into a pure vowel. In the great
bass aria "The trumpet shall sound" from **The Messiah** a great
deal of singing is done on the two verbs in the text, "The trumpet
shall sound and the dead shall be raised", both verbs containing
diphthongs. The sonority needs to be maintained on the first
element of each diphthong, whether the word is set to a prominent
sustained note, as is "sound", or is the focus of elaborate
melismatic decoration, as is "raised". Particularly ugly is

the habit of some ill-trained singers who glide early onto the second element of the diphthongs in words like "rise" and "praise". The habits of English speakers in introducing diphthongs where they do not belong in another language are inimical to good singing. English choirs often make things more difficult for themselves by singing the Latin vowels in **credo** as if they were diphthongs.

Another sort of vowel distortion in song has nothing to do with a search for beautiful singing sound, but derives from acoustics. In speech the main acoustic determinant of vowel quality, and therefore of vowel differentiation, is a reinforcement of energy at certain harmonics, known as vowel formants, above the fundamental frequency of the voice. It is because this reinforcement affects harmonics and not the fundamental frequency, that both men and women, whether they have high speaking voices or low, can be perceived as uttering the same vowel sounds. In speech, pitch movement, called intonation, plays an important part in conveying meaning, but while the direction of the movement is vital, its extent is variable according to individual mood, circumstance and vocal habit. In song, however, pitch differences are very precisely controlled. If the fundamental frequency demanded by a musical melody is higher than the frequency of the lowest formant of the vowel to which it is sung, then the vowel will be distorted beyond recognition. This can happen on any note higher than the E above middle C. The greater part of a soprano's range is therefore affected, a substantial part of a contralto's range, about the upper fifth of a tenor's range, and the top notes of a bass's. It should be remembered that a tenor part scored in the treble clef is actually sung an octave lower than written. The English vowels in the words "sweet" and "sit", having particularly low first formants, are particularly vulnerable to distortion. The A above middle C has a frequency of 440 Hz; the mean first formant frequencies of the vowels in "sweet" and "sit" are 300 Hz and 360 Hz respectively (Fry, 1979, 79; the whole chapter, pp 71-81,

is relevant). There is a sublime passage in the **Credo** of Beethoven's **Missa Solemnis** in which the sopranos are required to sing the words "Et vitam venturi" on a top B flat: 932 Hz. The sound is magnificent, but only someone familiar with the text could have any idea what they were singing. The adjustment necessary by a singer to compensate for such a loss of textual intelligibility is fortunately similar to the adjustment of quality for beautiful singing sound, though at the very top of the soprano range vowel sounds are difficult to distinguish anyway. Nevertheless physicists have observed the phenomenon of formant tuning:

> Experienced sopranos have learned how to tune their formants over a reasonable range of frequency in order to make a formant coincide with the fundamental or one of the overtones of the note being sung. (Rossing, 1982, 321)

We turn now to rhythm. In European poetry rhythm is at the heart of the prosodic systems. Rhythm depends upon a pattern of prominence of some sort. In acoustic phonetics rhythm is very difficult to account for, partly because the prominence is determined by a number of factors whose interrelationship is intricate, partly because the perception of rhythm is psychological as well as physical: because a prominence is expected, it is perceived. Yet rhythm is a feature of all language, and a strong rhythmicality is a powerful reinforcement of emotional conviction whether in poetry or pulpitry or politics. European languages can be divided into those like French, Spanish and Italian in which the occurrence of the prominence is related to the number of syllables, and those like English, German and Russian in which the recurrent prominence tends to be independent of the number of syllables; these two groups create syllabic and accentual prosodies respectively. However the cross-currents in European cultural history sometimes introduce syllabic prosodies into literatures whose natural rhythmic system is accentual, and vice versa. Thus, the rhythms of Shakespeare's plays, particularly those of his maturity, are accentual, although the great majority

of lines are decasyllabic. In discussing the rhythms of English poetry, a great deal of unnecessary difficulty can be avoided if we look first at the basic rhythmical system of the language, which system must underpin literary rhythms and metres if they are to function as audible and comprehensible patterns. Our concern here is, after all, the extent to which song settings reinforce or supersede the rhythms of the texts, and not the abstract system which the poet used or supposed he was using.

The regular prominence that determines the rhythmicality of English speech is stress. It is potential in all English speech, though no particular stretch need be markedly rhythmical. Poetry, however, is expected to be rhythmical, and its rhythmicality can be conventionalised into metre; metre is the abstract system, rhythm the patterned realisation. The stress upon which English rhythm is founded is immediately recognisable by native English speakers, but presents problems in description, and phoneticians are a long way from agreement about its nature. It functions within the intonation system of English and conveys both crude meaning and information about the attitude of the speaker. The prosodic systems of the language have often been called supra-segmental to distinguish them from segmental sounds, vowels and consonants, and because intonation contours operate over short phrases of language in conformity with breathing patterns as well as with syntax, although they carry the additional inform-ation about attitude. A stretch of written language, for example, carries implications of appropriate intonation, but several valid readings may be possible, some surprising. "Suprasegmental" is therefore an approximate term at best, because the prosodic systems inter-penetrate the other systems of language so.

Stress functions both within words, where the disposition of stress is a necessary and invariable feature of pronunciation, and within sentences, where it links into the intonation system. It is recognisable as the feature that distinguishes the noun "contract"

from the verb "contract". But what is it acoustically? There is a strong disposition to describe the stressed syllable as louder than the unstressed, but experiments in acoustic phonetics have established that increased amplitude, though a common correlate of stress, is not an invariable correlate, and that an increase in amplitude on unstressed syllables will not shake informants' convictions that they are unstressed. It might be argued that, in the given example of two different stress placements in the word "contract", the stressed syllable is likely to be lengthened. This is probably true of the two versions of the first syllable, but not of the two versions of the second. Moreover syllable length in English is affected more by the consonantal structure of the syllable than by the vowel. In laboratory experiments, duration has been shown to be a less reliable guide to stress than amplitude. The American linguist, Dwight L Bolinger, has argued (1958) that pitch movement is an important correlate of stress, but he has not succeeded in showing a consistent systematic relationship between perceived stress and fundamental frequency. There clearly is a connection, in that no unstressed syllable will ever initiate a new pitch movement, and conversely that the nuclei of intonation groups will invariably be the stressed syllables in the words that are thus foregrounded. But it has not been demonstrated that a lack of pitch marking disqualifies a syllable from stressed status, and it is unlikely that it will be.

So much for loudness, length and pitch; a fourth possible acoustic correlate to stress is vowel quality. Once again there is a direct but ambivalent connection. Stress is not the only feature that distinguishes the noun "contract" from the verb: the vowels in the first syllable of each word differ. The verb "contract" uses in its first syllable the commonest of all English vowels, a neutral vowel in a central position, neither front nor back, neither open nor closed, with neutral lip position. It is the vowel of the common unstressed and so-called weak words such

as "a", "an", "the", "to", "for", "but", "or" and "and", as well as of the final syllables of words like "river" and "singer", all of which are phonetically close enough to be regarded phonemically as the same vowel, known to phoneticians as shwa. In standard English it never occurs in a stressed position, a fact which accounts for the awkwardness in song of such false emphases as that on the first word of "For unto us a child is born" in **The Messiah**. Very similar to shwa is the slightly closer more fronted vowel of the last syllables of words like "feckless", "necklace" and "parted" which tends towards centralisation, unlike its stressed counterpart in words like "bid", "sit" and "lick". Far from being evidence of sloppy speech as some elocutionists have maintained, these vowels are the natural components of a rhythmical system going back over a thousand years through modern English into Anglo-Saxon (see Strang, 1970, 290). In this system, syllables not stressed are marked at least as much by quality, all tending towards the neutral centrality of shwa, as by diminished amplitude; and the weakening increases as the tempo of speech increases. Diphthongs resist this tendency with the consequence that they rarely occur in unstressed positions, though the first syllables of "divest" and "maintain" may be cited as exceptions and therefore anomalous. Verse prosodists are inclined to classify syllables containing such vowels as instances of secondary stress. But secondary stress seems to me an unnecessary confusion of an already complex issue: insofar as stress in English contributes towards a perceived regular rhythmicality, it must be a binary system, either-or, not graduated. This is not to deny other sorts of prominence, but simply to place them in analysis on the periphery of the rhythmical system. Such an analysis is supported by the work of Peter Ladefoged (1967), who established correlatives between perceived rhythmicality in English speech and a regular muscular pulse in the air-stream mechanism. Other scholars concerned with the function of stress in English include D B Fry (1958 and 1979), David Crystal (1969 and 1975), J D O'Connor (1973) and Derek Attridge (1982).

Acoustic cues to stress are therefore present but ambivalent. There must surely be physiological and psychological cues as well. The great Renaissance music theorist, Gioseffe Zarlino, claimed "The human pulse is the measure of the beats in music" (quoted by Colles, 1928, 1), and recent researchers have begun to explore the physiological bases for rhythm. The work of David Abercrombie (1965 and 1967) and Peter Ladefoged (1967) looks at the rapid contraction and relaxation during speech of the respiratory muscles. This contraction imparts to breathing a pulse which is the physiological basis for the syllabification of utterance. Stressed syllables are attributed by Abercrombie and Ladefoged to the regular reinforcement of some of these chest-pulses, a more powerful contraction of the lung walls. Such an increase of pressure may manifest itself to the ear as increased loudness, but need not. But speakers who have long since embedded such a system in their speech habits will, as listeners, respond empathetically to any utterance with marked rhythmicality. It can also be observed that a speaker's head and hand gestures are integrated with the stress system. This chest-pulse theory offers a convincing reason why so many diverse acoustic cues should contribute to rhythmicality without being invariable determinants of it.

The inadequacies of traditional accounts of English poetic rhythm and metre should be apparent. The "new rhythm" that haunted Hopkins into writing "The Wreck of the Deutschland" was, as he suspected, not new at all, but the native rhythm of the language obtruding through iambs, trochees and anapaests; all English rhythm is sprung rhythm! But Hopkins, for all his prosodic insight, introduced into the critical vocabulary a most unfortunate term. In a famous letter of 1878 to Canon Dixon (1953, 182-185) he writes of sprung rhythm being "counterpointed" against traditional scansion. It is not a helpful analogue nor a close one. In music counterpoint is a simultaneous contrast between two or more

melodies; simultaneous contrast of rhythms is syncopation. But where in poetry can we hear a second voice? The displacement of an expected pattern is not a simultaneous sounding of two patterns. We do not have to deny the influence of a prosodic tradition on a poet to assert that the number of stresses per line are what determines his rhythm; the number of intervening syllables is of far less importance. The distinction between iambic and trochaic rhythm surely has no basis in perceived sound pattern, especially as masculine line-endings are much commoner than feminine, even in unrhymed verse. Given lines like

> This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
>   Every nighte and alle,
> Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,
>   And Christe receive thy saule.
>   (Anon: A Lyke-Wake Dirge)

we should not need to glance at succeeding stanzas to deduce that it is ballad form, that is, a quatrain alternating four-stress lines with three-stress. Whether it is iambic or trochaic is irrelevant. The knowledge that a poet is writing to an iambic matrix is derived from both text and context; it becomes important when it is required to help decide the placing of a stress that appears to be optional. The urgency of Marvell's importunity is part of his rhythmic scheme in "To his Coy Mistress", and, in the opening couplet, dictates the placing of stress on "were" rather than on "no", in conformity with a metrical pattern.

> Had we but world enough, and time,
> This coyness, Lady, were no crime.

The rightness of such a placing is confirmed by the syllogistic structure referred to earlier in this chapter (**supra**, 27).

The last example raises the question of choice in reading the rhythms of a text. Though a tightly organised form like the sonnet tends to make most of our choices for us, options remain, like which of the first two syllables to stress in the opening

> Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Again, notions of secondary stress fudge the issue, since the rhythmical system is binary. The reader must choose one of two significantly different readings. A strongly stressed "Shall" leaves an unstressed diphthong, which is phonologically odd as we have seen, though its intonation pattern is acceptable. Unstressed "Shall", on the other hand, involves the weakening of the vowel, and by establishing a pattern of simple alternation, gives an impression of metrical regularity. And what of "to" in the same line? If the line is read naturally it will contain four stresses with "to" weakened; but poetry is artificial, as the Elizabethans, who delighted in artifice, well knew.In less tightly organised forms than the sonnet, choices multiply. Hardy's "Snow in the Suburbs" (1930, 694) is a rhythmical **tour de force** which I have examined elsewhere (Hutchings, 1980, 32-34). The lines are paired, but no two consecutive pairs have the same number of stresses. Matching the lines in each pair, which I believe was the author's intention, is a fascinating exercise in ingenuity. Even so choices remain. The first couplet may be read as two-stress or three-stress lines: either

> Every branch **big** with it,
> **Bent** every **twig** with it...

or

> Every **branch big** with it,
> **Bent every twig** with it...

As a final example of this sort of choice, we may cite "La Belle Dame sans Merci" in which Keats gives us ballad form dynamically modified by the truncated fourth line of each stanza (1977, 334). In the first stanza the line is

> And no birds sing.

which, despite its four syllables, can be read as a three-stress line, fitting it into its ballad matrix with little difficulty. But it can also be read as a two-stress line. And in at least two stanzas, the sixth and the eighth, the last line can only be read with two stresses:

> A faery's song.

and

With kisses four.

Stanford's splendid strophic song setting (**n.d.**) makes the choice to render the last line of every stanza as a three-stress line.

When European music started using bar lines in its transcriptions it sacrificed, or made more difficult, a rhythmic flexibility, and it moved further away from the rhythms of speech. This was probably necessary in order to expand and develop the "language" of instrumental expression. From the account given here of the rhythmical structure of English it will be clear that the moment song emerged from chant into melody difficulties arose. The freedom that music demands in pitch movement works against the rhythm and intonation of English. The limited number of tunes in the English intonation system, and their simplicity, are far too restrictive for music. Here is a respect in which any musical setting of a text is going to obliterate the patterns of the language. Even a sensitive recitative, like Handel's "There were shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night" in **The Messiah**, though it imitates the rhythms of the text fairly convincingly, imposes a tune utterly different from that of normal speech intonation. Thank goodness. If it did not, there would be no need for song. The weakening of vowel quality upon which English rhythm is founded is also a source of difficulty in song, since the neutralised vowels are the least sonorous. A careful singer is unlikely to neutralise the vowels fully, keeping closer to the sound suggested by the orthography. But if he or she is too meticulous about the quality of vowels that would normally be weakened, or if the setting forces him or her to sing prominent or sustained notes to words like "and", "of", "the" and "to", then too much of the linguistic pattern will be destroyed.

There remain some elements of patterning closely associated with rhythm and intonation, but analytically separable. The first is tempo, which is often treated by critics as if it were

unmistakeably given by the text. It is not. It is possible to
read any text at any speed, though the mood and the subject
matter may indicate what tempo is the most appropriate. Tempo
is thus an interpretive choice in poetry; it is only slightly
less so in music, despite the subheadings composers insert into
their scores and the occasional metronome counts. The difference
between the tempi of a Furtwängler and those of a Von Karajan
is well known. In poetry as in music, however, there are technical
factors which govern a reader's preference for fast or slow
reading. In Macbeth's weary cry (V, v, 19)

> Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day...

The clear semantic indications of tempo are powerfully reinforced
by the repetitions and by the three distinct intonation groups
of the first line. A similar effect is apparent in the first
line of the following extract from Hopkins (1953, 51):

> Degged with dew, dappled with dew
> Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through.

Here the second line asks to be read faster. This is a function
both of the lack of internal punctuation, making the line one
tone group, and of the high number of unstressed syllables.

So far we have ignored the crudest means of distinguishing poetry
from prose: its layout on a page. This is a matter of orthographic
convention, but it reflects important and audible elements of
patterning. The line of poetry functions as a basic unit of
phonological pattern and as such it bears a semantic weight
as well. But it is not always the same sort of unit. It is possible,
for example, to see the limerick as a sort of ballad stanza
with the first line rather brutally end-stopped, missing a stress,
and the third line split, for emphasis, into two two-stress
lines. End-stopping confers a neatness and formality of design
common in folk poetry, like the opening of "Helen of Kirconnell":

> I wish I were where Helen lies;
> Night and day on me she cries;
> O that I were where Helen lies,
> On fair Kirconnell lea!

And this is clearly used in song where a line so often corresponds
to a musical phrase. Incidentally, it may be the greater length
of the five-stress lines that makes a sonnet so much less amenable
to musical setting. Even run-on lines, however, have important
functions. Occasionally the line-period can be used to make
a subtle point not otherwise discernable. In "After a Journey"
(1930, 328) Hardy's third stanza opens

>I see what you are doing: you are leading me on
>To the spots we knew when we haunted here together...

If the lines were set out as prose and read accordingly, an
ambiguity of attitude in the speaker would be lost. The pause
at the end of the first line, however, though it should not
destroy the reader's intonation contour, introduces the possibility
that the woman addressed is leading the speaker on, a different
activity from leading him on to something. Lineation can also
heighten the effect of a very old rhetorical trick, the periodic
sentence, in which the predicating resolution of a subject is
suspended.

>No handiwork of Callimachus,
>Who handled marble as if it were bronze,
>Made draperies that seemed to rise
>When sea-wind swept the corner, stands.
>   (Yeats, "Lapis Lazuli", 1984, 294)

Stanza form is an extension of line-patterning. It, too, helps
to organise a poet's thought. The musical implications are well
known. Since ballad form is fundamental to folk song, it was
probably originally dictated by the appropriateness of the unit
for musical expression rather than for purely literary reasons.
Sternfeld (1979, 20) tells us that Goethe, Herder and Schiller
were particularly offended by any through-composed setting of
a strophic poem. In such verse they felt they were reaching
back to an original bond between poetry and music.

FOLK SONG: TUMBLES IN THE HAY

It was one of the commonplaces of Nineteenth Century music criticism that England had no folk song. It is a devastating commentary on the great rifts between social classes in England that English musicians should have accepted this absurd slur no less readily than those from the Continent. The work of Bishop Percy, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns and George Thompson no doubt left the impression of a tradition in Scotland, but English arrogance could discount such evidence of cultural regression where it was only to be expected. Whether it is cause or effect, the lack of contact between professional musicians and a native musical tradition coincided with a remarkable decline in English music between Purcell and Elgar; a period during which as much good music could be heard in London as anywhere else in Europe; when, inter alia, Handel, J C Bach, Haydn and Mendelssohn offered much of their finest work to English audiences. The renascence of native music coincided with the great work of collecting folk song - just before it would have been too late - by Cecil Sharp and his colleagues. But if the importance of Sharp's work has been handsomely acknowledged by musicians in the Twentieth Century, literary critics have, with honourable exceptions, largely ignored it. Since the early Seventeenth Century, relatively few British poets have given the impression that they have been intimately acquainted with folk literature. Those that have done, like Gay, Burns, Blake, Keats, Clare, Hardy and Yeats, have not been the victims of the most prestigious of Britain's schools, and have not had the ambivalent benefit of a university education. The point is significant: until very recently, a standard formal literary education has been built upon Classical foundations, and even now it does not include folk literature. For many scholars the very phrase "folk literature", like "oral literature", is a barbarism, "real" literature being something written. This was fundamentally the point Eliot was making in a famous essay on Blake in which he had the impertinence to

sneer patronisingly at the "home-made furniture" of Blake's mind (1953, 171)!

In folk song we clearly have a very interesting case of the relationship between text and music, perhaps the most unself-consciously balanced we shall find. We shall not do the subject justice if we approach folk songs as crude artefacts on archaeological exhibition. We can afford to underestimate neither the seriousness nor the intrinsic quality of the best of folk songs. For folk song is living literature: it explores and tries to make sense of human experience, and it preserves and propagates folk wisdom down the generations.

"The Recruited Collier", an Eighteenth Century song from the north of England grapples with the grim fact of the press gangs (Lloyd, 1978; the song is sung, unaccompanied, by Anne Briggs on a record called The Iron Muse, Topic 12T86).

Oh, what's the matter wi' you, my lass,
An' where's your dashin Jimmy?
The sowdger boys have picked him up
An' sent him far far from me.
Last pay-day he went off to town,
An' them red-coated fellows
Enticed him in an' made him drunk,
An' he'd better gone to the gallows.

The very sight of his cockade
It sets us all a-cryin;
An' me, I nearly fainted twice,
I thought that I was dyin.
My father would have paid the smart
An' he run for the golden guinea,
But the sergeant swore he'd kissed the book,
So now they've got young Jimmy.

When Jimmy talks about the wars
It's worse than death to hear him.
I must go out an' hide my tears
Because I cannot bear him.
A brigadier or a grenadier
He says they're sure to make him,
But aye he jibes an' cracks his jokes
An' bids me not forsake him.

As I walked over the stubble field,
Below it runs the stream,
I thought of Jimmy hewin there
But it was all a dream.
He hewed the very coals we burn,
An' when the fire I's leetin,
To think the lumps was in his hands,
It sets my heart to beatin.

So break, my heart, an' then it's over,
So break my heart, my dearie,
An' I'll lie in the cold green ground
For of single life I'm weary.

The press gangs must have excited fear and loathing wherever
they operated, the more so in times and places of full employment.
But the focus of this subtle song is not indignation at injustice
and at the abuse of power; it is rather the seductive corruption
of a particular victim of that injustice and the consequent
predicament of his beloved. The song is thus a disturbing excursion
into the corruption within ourselves, and has far more resonance
than any mere protest song that attributes misfortune entirely
to external agency. The first stanza uses a stereotyped question
and answer device to establish the situation. The young woman's
anger is directed both at "them red-coated fellows" and at young
Jimmy, who, we notice, was dashing before the red-coats got
him. The second stanza begins with the cockade, phallic symbol
of a new drive and new potency in Jimmy which terrifies his
beloved. His kissing the book is not simply the formal ceremony
of contract but a sign of his own transfer of allegiance beyond
what money can buy. In fact, "... they've got young Jimmy" soul
and body. The third stanza confirms Jimmy's collusion in his
enslavement, and his vanity is put into perspective by the pro-

tagonist's sublime indifference to military rank and the promises of a splendid career.

> A brigadier or a grenadier
> He says they're sure to make him.

We may possibly read Jimmy's naivety into these lines too. The stanza ends with Jimmy's conventional plea not to be forsaken by his love set off against her complaint of his insensitivity. In the fourth stanza and its poignant envoi her longing is put into the sort of cosmic context which escapes young Jimmy's imagination. Jimmy's inescapable connection with the earth is a living, working connection with both heat and cold, life and death. His denial of it is a denial both of life and of death. Thus, whether he has, at the time of singing, already left for the wars or not, he has travelled a tremendous psychic distance "far far from me."

The tune is a simple lament made up of two complementary ballad strains reflecting the semantic pairing of the ballad stanzas; the first quatrain needs the second to resolve it, in text as in music. The short final stanza functions as an envoi, being sung to the climactic second half of the tune. The tune, in other words, is inseparable from the stanza structure, providing a fitting vehicle for the text without any conflict between musical rhythm and textual. The virtues of the tune are not merely negative, however, because it is integral to the effect of the whole song, intensifying the emotion. The final cadence of each stanza is all the more telling for the unresolved musical ending of the first quatrain, and for the rising melody of the penultimate line of each stanza. It is as if the cadence drags the song sadly to earth at each stanza. The text alone does not convey the heroic and passionate stoicism of the song.

At least two important features of expression in song have emerged here. The first is the independent capacity of the music to signal what elements of argument or plot are unresolved, and

conversely to signal resolution. In folk poetry, much of which is written for singing, the incidence of end-stopping is very high. It is especially rare to find run-on lines ending a stanza. Almost certainly the reason for this is that, in strophic song, run-on lines work against the cadences of the music. It is interesting that Goethe, whose objection to through-composed settings of strophic poetry we have noted, did not always end-stop his stanzas. "Gretchen am Spinnrade", for example, contains two run-on stanzas.

The second feature emerging from our examination of "The Recruited Collier" is its use of symbol. Folk song, folk literature as a whole, is particularly rich in symbolism, because it confronts the deeper problems of existence through symbol and through symbol expresses its grasp of them. A patronising view of this characteristic is an inaccurate view because it tends to the sort of reductionism by which simple equivalences are set up, and symbolism is thus seen as a quaint or tiresome veil between the viewer and truth. Jung complained of this sort of reductionism in Freud and claimed rather that "... the true symbol... should be understood as an expression of an intuitive idea that cannot yet be formulated in any other or better way" (1971, 70). As Jung insisted, the richness of symbolism in all art is that it vigorously resists such reduction and that its true meaning can be explored, but not expressed in any terms other than itself. This is as true for Blake's sick rose as for Melville's white whale. Folk literature uses its symbols almost as unselfconsciously as the psyche dreams; although, in another sense, dreaming, like folk literature, is a state of acute self-consciousness. One of the reasons for this prevalence of symbol is obviously that it provides a means of approaching ethical judgement and metaphysical speculation without the abstraction of argument that folk literature, and perhaps all literature, abhors. Song has an extra motive for such abhorrence: the listeners' ability to concentrate on details of plot, argument and musical expression, and to comprehend

these during the time the song takes to sing is limited. Certainly
music can cope with profound emotion, but not very easily with
intricate emotion, that is, emotion showing subtle changes or
gradations of mood. And profound argument, or even merely intricate
argument, takes time and repeated reading to follow. Donne's
"The Exstasie", or "Goodfriday 1613" are neither, prima facie,
promising song lyrics, nor are Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"
or Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn". Finzi, it is true, tried
to set the "Immortality Ode", omitting large chunks of it, but
his life-long devotion to Hardy's poetry showed better song-writing
sense. Britten's settings of Donne's "Holy Sonnets" are not
among his most admired songs. The issue will arise again and
again in this discussion; what is important here is the general-
isation that song lyrics are simple, often unvarying in plot
or argument. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Hymn" is a fine example, as
is Burns's "My love is like a red red rose" and Yeats's "Down
by the salley gardens". The latter two are skilful exercises
in folk song technique, perhaps even reworkings of old songs. (See
the editorial discussion of the Burns by James Kinsley in Burns,
1968, 1454-1456.) Symbol is the means of drawing out of such
simplicity a significance beyond the immediate occasion for
the writing. The symbol may be conventional, like the lamb or
the rose, or it may be a detail from the text imbued with particular
significance for the occasion, like an item of dress. Thus the
bride of Bonnie George Campbell laments (Grigson, 1975, 188; the
amendment of "baby" to "bairn" is mine):

> My meadow lies green and my corn is unshorn,
> My barn is to build and my bairn is unborn.

Her lover has ridden out to his death:

> Saddled and bridled and booted rode he,
> A plume in his helmet, a sword at his knee.
> But toom cam his saddle all bloody to see;
> Oh hame came his guid horse, but never cam he.

One of the greatest of song-lyric writers in English is clearly
Robert Burns, whose poetic instincts were those of a folk singer,

for he amended, adapted and created new lyrics for tunes that
he knew. Literary criticism in English has not coped very well
with him - or with any song-lyric writer - usually considering
the texts without the music. David Daiches attributes this to
a failure "to see the object in itself as it really is, and...
account for its appeal as honestly and sensitively as possible"
(1952, 298). It is important to recognise that the quality of
that object depends to a very large extent on the skill with
which Burns responded to a tune for its overall mood, and then
fitted his lyric to that tune. A glance at the Eighteenth Century
tunes in James Kinsley's edition of Burns (Burns, **1968**) reveals
that they are sometimes totally different from the tunes we
now associate with particular lyrics, and that at other times
they vary significantly from the versions now popular. Detailed
comment would thus require a great deal of historical research
which might very well not produce clear answers anyway. What
is clear is that the continuing appeal of the songs lies in
an integration of mood between text and current tune, for neither
is likely to have survived without the other. For example, "The
de'il's awa wi' the Exciseman" (Burns, **1968**, 655-656) does not
read very well as poetry, but when it is incorporated into the
exuberant reel of its tune it is a fine song with a satirical
bite. Likewise, the energetic amours of the harvest festivities
"Amang the rigs wi' Annie" are splendidly caught in the jaunty
rhythms and awkward intervals of "It was upon a Lammas nicht"
(**ibid**, 13-14). These in turn contrast with the longing tenderness
of "The Lea Rig" (**ibid**, 664-665) and "Ca' the Yowes" (**ibid**,
738-739). In the latter, the old song of a shepherd survives
in the text of the refrain to set the conventional scene of
pastoral love, and in the tune to set the tenderness of mood
of the song. What Burns added is without distinction, judged
simply as poetry:

> Fair and lovely as thou art,
> Thou hast stown my very heart;
> I can die - but canna part,
>   My bonie Dearie.

Yet its aptness for the tune is perfect, and the two together convey feeling from a deeper level than the text would suggest. This depth of feeling is consistently displayed in Burns's songs. That he knew the difference between song and poetry is immediately apparent when we read the vigorous poetry of "Holy Willie's Prayer" (ibid, 74-78), which was not written as a song.

When we look at folk song proper, we find the same inter-dependence that transforms apparently undistinguished poetry into exquisite song. But in Burns the processes of transmission and transformation of folk song leave us with coherent texts. It is not always so; occasionally the poetry is defective or meaningless as it stands, and we need to ask how its forms and meanings are affected by the accidents of transmission and preservation and change. It is ironical that, while the preservation of story and of any concomitant moral is a well-known function of oral literature, the changes inevitably suffered by a song in the process of transmission sometimes render the song unintelligible. A song may have several different versions, either by divergence as it travelled through time and space, or even by convergence, two or more songs being conflated in a singer's mind. The results are well-known: verses of great and mysterious beauty will occur alongside mere spacefillers with only the most tenuous connection. A fine example is known to us as "O Waly Waly" (Reeves, 1958, 218-220), its title deriving from a conjecture by Cecil Sharp that the song has a Scottish origin. The tune is well-known, both from Sharp's version, (Karpeles, 1975, v 1, 15) and from a fine arrangement by Britten, which was widely sung by Kathleen Ferrier. Sharp collected it in Somerset, and other versions were gathered in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset, none making very coherent sense, though all are about betrayal in love. The discovery that two of the stanzas occur in one of Bishop Percy's Scottish ballads did not make the song more intelligible. The reaction of folk singers puzzled by an anomalous text was to yoke in a few of the standard formulaic quatrains about lost love. By

contrast, there is in another of the stanzas a striking image having no connection whatever with the rest.

> I had two dogs under my father's table
> They do prick their ears when they do hear the horn.

These suggest a ballad narrative lost somewhere. Much more recent, and less appropriate to the solemn dignity of the tune is this stanza from one of the versions.

> I'm often drunk but seldom sober
> I'm a rover in every degree
> When I'm drinking I'm always a thinking
> How to gain my love's company.

The song survives, of course, because of its tune,

and because of at least one stanza of extraordinary beauty:

> There is a ship sailing on the sea
> But it's loaded deep as deep can be
> But not so deep as in love I am
> I know not if I sink or swim.

Reeves's conclusion to his interesting discussion of the song (1958, 38-40) is worth quoting in full because it is a plausible account of the scramble.

> To sum up, it seems that there was in existence during the seventeenth century - and how long before we do not know - the lament of a slighted woman, lyrical in character, but possibly with some narrative strain. About the end of the seventeenth century the woman became popularly identified with Lady Barbara Erskine, and the lament was partially incorporated in the Scottish **Lord Jamie Douglas** ballad. Either the lyrical stanzas became once more dissociated from the ballad, and gathered around themselves other elements of the same emotional character; or the original lament pursued an independent existence. In either case it subsequently emerged in the West of England, in the confused and even fragmentary forms handed down to modern folk singers. By this time there was scarcely any pretension

to coherence, and quite irrelevant material had accrued
to it from the traditional stock. The only quality
which much of this material had in common was a general
concern with various aspects of despair in love. (**Ibid**,40)

If this is an extreme example of a textual scramble, we need
to bear in mind that folk literature operated independently
of written text and that such problems are inevitable, being
rooted in the medium itself, and in the social conditions in
which the literature flourished. But this does not imply that
the linguistic element of folk song lacks importance in the
minds of its singers; similar textual problems occur in relation
to plays like **Dr Faustus**, **Macbeth** and **Pericles**. Sharp asserts,

> It is a well-known fact that the folk-singer attaches
> far more importance to the words of his song than
> to its tune; that, while he is conscious of the words
> that he is singing, he is more or less unconscious
> of the melody. (Quoted by Reeves, **1958**, 11)

Sharp's evidence, or hunch, is impressive, even if we wonder
how he established a measure of consciousness of text or music. What
he suggests about folk song supports a theory advanced earlier
in this study: that text is the more Appollonian feature of
song, music the more Dionysian.

It is apparent from a study of "O Waly Waly" that tune and ballad
form provided the matrices by which shattered memory attempted
to restore order to the song. Let us now look a bit more closely
at the elements of form in folk song, beginning with the text. Ballad
form is certainly the most popular stanza form in all folk song
in English; indeed, it is not easy to find a piece of genuine
folk poetry that is not clearly derivable from ballad form. The
basic English ballad form, I believe, is the quatrain with four
stresses per line. Rhyme is almost invariably used, often in
alternating lines only.

> I am a man, upo the lan,
> An I am a silkie in the sea,
> And when I'm far and far frae lan,
> My dwelling is in Sule Skerrie.
> ("The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry")

More common than this basic form, however, is the quatrain with alternating four- and three-stress lines. This, however, is a derived form with a stress dropped from alternate lines, emphasising end-stopping. We can see the process operating in "Helen of Kirconnell" in which only the fourth line of the stanza has three stresses. This overall pattern permits run-on lines, even across couplets.

> O Helen fair, beyond compare!
> I'll make a garland of thy hair
> Shall bind my heart for evermair
> Until the day I dee.

It is instructive to see how the rhyme scheme supports the overall stanza form. Ballad form is thus far from rigid. It can be doubled to give an eight-line stanza as in "The Recruited Collier", or lines can be halved, especially where the underlying form has internal rhyme:

> Dance to your daddy,
> My little babby,
> Dance to your daddy, my little lamb;
> You shall have a fishy
> In a little dishy,
> You shall have a fishy when the boat comes in.
> (Opie, **1973**, 140)

Ballad form is fundamental to all English folk poetry from epitaphs to skipping rhymes to riddles to hymns to ballads, which is why we can conflate here the categories of ballad and folk song. It has even been suggested that the quatrain with four prominences or beats to a line is a fundamental poetic form across languages and cultures (see Burling, 1966). Certainly it was known to the troubadours and it was used for Medieval Latin carols like "Quem pastores laudavere". The widespread use of this form for so long suggests a natural compatibility of elements: musical and syntactical phrase, breath span, the ability of the listener to follow and absorb, and the capacity of the whole unit to accommodate a very wide range of variation without losing its character or coherence. Like all enduring popular art forms, it delights by balancing satisfied against surprised expectation. Put

another way, ballad form affords ample scope for foregrounded and backgrounded effects both in text and in music. This capacity depends to a great extent on stereotypic and formulaic patterns. Bertrand Harris Bronson, whose insistence on the interdependence of ballad music and text has been the basis of magisterial editing and criticism, accounted for the strength of the ballad as follows:

> But clearly, the traditional ballad music operates against narrative effect and acts to reinforce the level impassivity of the characteristic style. And this is a source of its peculiar power. Although it intensifies the emotional (and lyric) effect of the words as they pass, it de-individualizes and objectifies their stated content. It regularizes and levels out the hills and valleys of narrative interest and reduces the varying speeds of travel to its own constant pace.
>   (1969, 129)

But for this to happen, there must be what Bronson calls a "semantic flexibility" to the tunes, so that they can be adapted to the joys and griefs alike of the texts. We are all familiar with the feeling that a particular tune is absolutely right for a particular text. Several of the critical comments already made in this chapter spring from such a conviction. Yet study of the history of folk song will shake our favourites with the continual discovery of different tunes; "original" or older tunes or borrowed tunes or regional variants, some of which, we must own, have a similar rightness. Folk tunes, as Burns well knew, are conventional enough to withstand judicious borrowing. While Bronson is profoundly aware of the interdependence of tune and text, he is rightly sceptical of the ascription of particular emotional colourings to particular tunes out of context, and still more sceptical of the traditional semantics of modality. Certainly a particular tune performed on a particular instrument in a particular key at a particular tempo has a particular character, but it must also be acknowledged that sound quality, key and tempo are further modified by a text. If accompaniment is added, the change can be very startling indeed: the chorale with which Bach so movingly plumbs the depths of grief throughout the **St Matthew Passion**, notably to the text, "O Haupt voll Blut und

Wunden", occurs also in the **Christmas Oratorio**, transformed with a brilliant trumpet obbligato into a paean of praise to a text beginning, "Nun seid ihr wohl gerochen". That Bach intended a reminder of the Passion in celebrating the Nativity is incidental to the transformation. If less dramatic, borrowings and adaptations are much more common in folk song.

Adaptability is a necessary feature of folk song, for simplicity of text and tune are very important to the narrative purpose of a great many ballads. The verse must employ the simplicity of diction, syntax and imagery that will permit the thread of the story to be held through a single telling; the tune must not be so idiosyncratic that it will impair the continuity of the narrative. Nor can the music indulge in attempts to illustrate specific images in the text, other than the symbolic and archetypic images of refrains, since it is a hazard of strophic song that such a musical figure might be totally inappropriate to a subsequent stanza. The elements cohere as participants in a ritual, each having a characteristic role, but each operating within recognised rules. The narrative or argument is one dimension of the basic framework, the ballad form of text and music the other. The syntax and diction contribute one set of colours to the picture, the melody and harmonic mode another set. Bronson remarks perceptively of the diction that

> ... the stereotyped epithets augment the statuesque impassivity of the narrative by continuing in use beyond the point permitted by verisimilitude. (1969, 132)

The tune sets a fundamental mood for the text and maintains it with only small variations. In traditional performance the variations are small indeed, contributing

> ... an incantatory masklike aloofness that apparently makes no concessions to ordinary fluctuations of human sympathy or excitement, nor shows any awareness of audience, but tacitly acknowledges, throughout, its allegiance to a higher court, the strangely abstract, impersonal law of tradition. (**Ibid**, 132)

The weakness of strophic song lies in its inability to make detailed musical statements about the nuances of the text; its strength especially evident in ballad form is its power of ritualistic incantation. The typical ballad tune consists of four short phrases- the first two complementing one another, and standing in turn in antiphonal relationship to the second two. Sometimes repetitions of phrase occur giving, for example, an ABAC pattern, but ABCD is more common. The climax occurs either at the cadence at the end of the second line which is usually on the dominant note of the key, or in the third line, the fourth line resolving itself back to the tonic The melodic range of the tune is almost invariably an octave; either the octave from the lower tonic to the upper- called an "authentic" melody; or the octave from the dominant to dominant, called a "plagal" melody- So-called "qapped" scales are often used, notably the pentatonic, which is quite common in Scottish song. Accidentals and chromatic passages are very rare in folk song The metrics of the text can be easily accommodated in duple or triple rhythm. Obviouslv anapaestic lines like those of "Bonnie Georqe Campbell" accommodate to triple rhythm with an easy syllabic flow while the alternate syllable stress of "O Walv Waly" is accommodated into a musical triple rhythm by having a longer note imposed on every second metrical ictus- The deliberate tempo and solemn dignity of "O Waly Waly" are largely attributable to this accommodation

It is instructive to see these typical musical features in a famous tune like the current most popular variant of "Barhara Allen" (Bronson, 1976, 223).

This can be compared with a composed hymn tune in ballad form, Jeremiah Clarke's splendid tune "St Magnus"- commonly associated

with the hymn "The head that once was crowned with thorns", dating, incidentally, from about the same time as "Barbara Allen" (Dearmer, **1933**, 209).

Clarke's tune, a classic plagal melody, is distinguished from folk song by its augmented fourth leading to the dominant chord at the mid-way cadence, otherwise it follows the principles set out above. It is interesting that the melody starts on the lower D, the dominant, though the chord is a tonic G major. The last line begins with a triumphant octave leap from D to D before resolving downward onto the tonic G.

The discussion of ballad form so far has ignored the rich possibilities of repetition of parts. We shall examine these as they occur in the song texts, bearing in mind that any textual repetition intimately involves the melodic structure. Repetitions of words, phrases and lines for emphatic effect is one of the oldest of rhetorical devices. The simplest such effect involves no modification of line or stanza structure. In folk poetry there is always the possibility that such a repetition was originally a transmission fault caused by the singer's loss of memory. Even so, the repetition might be creative, since lines forgotten might be superfluous or otherwise inferior. "Helen of Kirconnell" is so full of telling emphatic repetition we must assume it is deliberate (Read & Dobree, **1952**, 9).

> I wish I were where Helen lies;
> Night and day on me she cries;
> O that I were where Helen lies
>   On fair Kirconnell lea.

Curst be the heart that thought the thought,
And curst the hand that fired the shot,
When in my arms burd Helen dropt,
    And died to succour me!

O think na ye my heart was sair
When my love dropt down and spake nae mair.
I laid her down wi' meikle care
    On fair Kirconnell lea.

As I went down the water-side,
None but my foe to be my guide,
None but my foe to be my guide,
    On fair Kirconnell lea.

I lighted down my sword to draw,
I hacked him in pieces sma',
I hacked him in pieces sma',
    For her sake that died for me.

O Helen fair, beyond compare!
I'll make a garland of thy hair
Shall bind my heart for evermair
    Until the day I die.

O that I were where Helen lies;
Night and day on me she cries;
Out of my bed she bids me rise,
    Says, "Haste and come to me!"

O Helen fair! O Helen chaste!
If I were with thee I were blest,
Where thou lies low and takes thy rest
    On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish my grave were growing green,
A winding sheet drawn over my een,
And I in Helen's arms lying,
    On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish I were where Helen lies;
Night and day on me she cries;
And I am weary of the skies,
    Since my Love died for me.

Refrains will be discussed shortly in other contexts. Here we simply note the use of "On fair Kirconnell lea" as a partial refrain. Another repetition device that has direct stuctural implications for the whole ballad is the use of a modified form of the first stanza to end the poem. Perhaps the most famous

instance of this is the opening and closing stanzas of Blake's "The Tyger", which differ by one word only.

The remaining repetitions, what we might call the non-structural ones, are a major feature of the poem, because they contribute to the terrible contrast and the ... offers between inconsolable grief and savage hatred. The repeated exclamations and wishes, the apostrophes to the coal heaven, and the other utterances of her name constitute a litany for her, and contrast powerfully with the repetitions of the fourth and fifth stanzas: first the implacable threat of "None but my foe to be my guide", and then the frenzy of 'I hacked him in pieces and...'. After this, the litanies are a confession of the impotence of rage, in which lies the logic of the last stanza.

Repetitions with structural implications, on the other hand, are an important means of varying, ... form in both text and music. In the nature of strophic song, any repetition in the music has structural implications for the ballad as a whole. The music, unlike the text, cannot repeat a line for the stanza only, and if the music extends itself to a five or a six-line tune, it commits the text willy-nilly. Some such repetitions are determined by the song's use as dance music, which obviously has enormous ramifications through the entire scope of this study. We know that carols have intimate connections with dance (see Dearmer's preface in Dearmer et al, 1928) and the additional element of a carol like "I saw three ships come sailing by" probably has its origin in dance figures. Whether as dance or simply as ceremonial song, such a carol unfolds its content in deliberate ritual. The tune of "I saw three ships come sailing by" has an ABAC structure, its repetition matching the repetition of the single new line in each stanza, while the even-numbered lines in the text are refrains. Such forms are common also in skipping rhymes, where the dance element is obvious. In "Scarborough Fair" the new material in each stanza is given in the first

and third lines. The second line is the enigmatic

> Parsely sage rosemary and thyme.

And the last line clinches the set of impossible tasks set out
stanza by stanza with the mocking refrain

> And she shall be a true lover of mine.

The connection with dance and ritual explains the apparent emptiness
of many of these refrains. In Elizabethan times madrigals that
employed ballad stanzas interspersed with "fa-la-la" refrains
were called "ballets", thus making a fascinating etymological
link between narrative folk poetry and dance. A typical ballet,
such as Morley's "Now is the month of maying" set the verses
in blocked harmonies, and introduced the counterpoint only for
the semantically empty refrain. It is ironical, or perhaps inevit-
able, that "fa-la" acquired rudimentary suggestive connotations,
if not denotations. One of John Bennet's most famous madrigals
(Fellowes, 1967, 159) begins

> All creatures now are merry merry minded.
> The shepherd's daughters playing,
> The nymphs are fa-la-laying,
> Yond bugle was well winded.

The rhymes are significant!

Ballad form may thus be varied by refrains incorporated within
the stanza structure, sandwiched in among the narrative lines,
or it may be expanded by refrains one or two lines long, or
by a complete stanza refrain. These in turn may be accommodated
into the line in a variety of ways, both by repeating melodies,
as in "The holly and the Ivy" (Dearmer et al, 1928, 80-81),
or by new melodic material, as in "Here we come a-wassailing"
(ibid, 32-33). The well-known "Cockles and Mussels" provides
an instance of a street-vendor's song being incorporated into
a text, making up the second half of a simple ballad tune and
repeating to form a refrain. Such repetitions help structure
the song, both music and text. The simplest structure of all
perhaps is the ritual counting song, used both for children's

games and for religious purposes. "The Seven Joys of Mary" (Dearmer et al, 1928, 152-153) is such a song, though the number of joys varies with the version. Each stanza, complemented by a refrain, offers us one line only of unpredictable text.

A further extension of this form is one that breaks right out of the ballad: the cumulative song. It is a very fundamental form of play with language. Among nursery rhymes we have "This is the House that Jack Built", but the pleasure of the cumulative song is not confined to children, as the continuing popularity at sing-songs of "One Man Went to Mow" and "I'll Sing you One, O" indicates, even if their meanings are no longer grasped by communities that call themselves sophisticated. Among the more profound is the remarkable cyclical song called by Reeves "The Everlasting Circle" (1960, 101) and found in many versions; in fact, while the tunes vary, the theme and the form are spread throughout Europe. It begins

```
All in the greenwood there growed a tree,
So fine a tree as you ever did see
And the green leaves flourished around around around
And the green leaves flourished around,
And all on this tree there growed a branch,
So fine a branch as you ever did see
And the branch was on the tree
And the tree was in the wood
And the green leaves flourished around...
```

It continues through a nest, an egg, a bird, a feather, a bed, a lad, a maiden, a baby, a boy and an acorn back to the tree, tracing a chain of environmental inter-dependence long before such things stopped being taken for granted and became the subject for frenzied scientific discussion.

Though the one-line refrain is more simple, it can, however, be used with great skill. In "O No John" the meaning of the refrain shifts teasingly as the seduction develops, though its words remain constant. Sharp, who was very scrupulous about transcribing tunes and texts accurately, published a modified version of this lovely song in deference to the susceptibilities

of his contemporary readership. The full riches of what he gathered remain little known, which justifies quoting it in full (Reeves, 1958, 162).

On yonder hill there stands a creature
Who she is I do not know
I'll go and court her for her beauty
She must answer Yes or No.
    O No John, No John, No John No.

On her bosom are bunches of posies
On her breast where flowers grow
If I should chance to touch that posy
She must answer Yes or No.
    O No John, No John, No John No.

Madam I am come for to court you
Whether your passions I can gain
Come and set yourself down alongside of me
Fear I should never see you again.
    O No John, No John, No John No.

My husband he was a Spanish Captain
Went to sea but a month ago
And the very last time we kissed and parted
He always bid me answer No.
    O No John, No John, No John No.

Madam in your face is beauty
In your bosom flowers grow
In your bedroom there is pleasure
Shall I view it, yes or no?
    O No John, No John, No John No.

Madam shall I tie your garter
Tie it a little above your knee
If my hand should slip a little farther
Would you think it amiss of me?
    O No John, No John, No John No.

My love and I we went to bed together
There we lay till the cocks did crow
Unclose your arms my dearest jewel
Unclose your arms and let me go.
    O No John, No John, No John No.

The repetition of material is also a way of coping with the perennial problem of strophic song: the appropriateness of the tune to all the stanzas. Here is the famous riddle song collected

in Dorset early this century by H E D Hammond (Reeves, **1960,** 161). A much older version was later collected by Sharp in the Appalachians.

I will give my love an apple without e'er a core,
I will give my love a house without e'er a door.
I will give my love a palace wherein she may be
And she may unlock it without e'er a key.

My head is the apple without e'er a core,
My mind is the house without e'er a door,
My heart is the palace wherein she may be
And she may unlock it without e'er a key.

It can be expanded to three stanzas by asking questions beginning "How can there be an apple?..." The speech rhythm of the text is rather rough, though if one knows the tune it imposes its own rhythms on the text - even in songless recollection. The tune moves gently in its triple measure, and, in the singing, the varying number of syllables per line does not affect the smoothness of its flow. There is no false emphasis at all, the slightly odd emphases on the words "without" and "wherein" being functional in that they reinforce the mystery of the riddle. The sense of the riddle must be allowed to express itself to the listener without the tune's seeming to intrude; in fact, the tune richly enlarges the sense, with the syntactic parallels of the first three lines complemented by subtle musical contrast. The key words, "apple", "house" and "palace", are all perfectly placed for emphasis within their lines, and this emphasis is augmented by a movement of the musical intonation. But that intonation has a curious ambivalence. Is it major or minor? Its range is between middle C and the E in the octave above, two notes more than the octave. Its intervals are those of the scale

of C major. But the tune is built about C, E and A, the components of a simple A minor chord, and both the mid and final cadences are on A. Ears attuned to the tonal system of Western music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries will hear these cadences as ambivalent. This tune derives from an older tonal system, however, a modal system, its particular mode being the Aeolian, a predecessor of our minor scale but without the "correction" of the leading note that the use of vertical harmonies was to make necessary. The lovely climax in the third line works up to the top E and down through the octave, suggesting a plagal melody. The tune perfectly balances phrase against phrase, grouping the lines two and two. But this cuts across the syntax and immediate sense of the text which groups them three and one. This again is an enrichment of sense, since the text responds to such cross-grouping. When the riddle is being unfolded in the second stanza, the parallel repetitions have a most powerful unifying effect, the tune repeating its relationship to the text. There is a difference, however, in that the key words, "head", "mind" and "heart", are differently placed from the key words of the first stanza, that is, on the first ictus of the line, not the second. Here surely, the skilful singer will change his emphasis from stanza to stanza, and the tiny point that in the second stanza the key words are preceded by only a single syllable up-beat will reinforce such a rendering. Is it fanciful, notwithstanding the song's affirmations, to hear in the tonal ambiguity echoes of a perennial folk wisdom recognising with Yeats that

> A pity beyond all telling
> Is hid in the heart of love.   (1984, 40)

Possibly there is a textual ambivalence about "key", a common phallic symbol in folk song. In any event, there may not be in the entire repertoire of song a more satisfying union of music and text.

Like the form, the imagery of folk song is simple and often conventional. We have seen that occasionally folk song will

throw up highly original imagery of great beauty, but since
the images derive from the common environment of both singers
and listeners, and since, in the nature of the societies in
which folk song lives and grows, that environment is severely
circumscribed, most of the imagery comes from a common barn. Some
of our commonest songs have meanings hidden to us, but plain
as day to the peasantry from whom they come. Such songs celebrate
both the sacred, like "Mary had a Little Lamb", and the profane,
like "One Man Went to Mow". James Reeves has pointed out most
elegantly (1960, 17ff) that the cluster of images around the
theme of fertility must be understood in their relationships. It
is the very opposite of coyness that associates human fertility,
as a matter of course, with the fertility of the soil. The image
of the garden as the place of love, and associated images of
hillocks and thickets and streams and perfumes run right through
European literature of all social classes. The beery back-slapping
and winking that accompanies rugby club sing-songs is dependent
upon texts often highly corrupt in more senses than one, and
a good deal less explicit than folk song. Reeves's discussion
of "The Foggy Dew" (1958, 45-57) is very entertaining. The connota-
tions of virginity associated with the word "dew" throughout
folk poetry, and in other English poetry as late as the Seventeenth
Century, carry the image to the verges of symbol. This is precisely
what we would expect of archetypal imagery.

A very beautiful West Country song, "The Streams of Lovely Nancy",
uses both topographical and architectural imagery to conjure
the beloved's body (Vaughan Williams & Lloyd, 1959, 98).

> At the top of this mountain, there my love's castle stands.
> It's all overbuilt with ivory on yonder black sand,
> Fine arches, fine porches, and diamonds so bright.
> It's a pilot for a sailor on a dark winter's night.

Some of these images are multivalent in that they are left to
work in as many ways as the listener cares to take them. Two
stanzas later the narrator sings longingly of a creek at the
foot of the mountain where once his ship was anchored.

> At the bottom of this mountain there runs a river clear.
> A ship from the Indies did once anchor there,
> With her red flags a-flying and the beating of her drum,
> Sweet instruments of music and the firing of her gun.

Such marvellously explicit and apt imagery is a celebration, not an act of voyeurism.

Any consideration of the imagery of folk song will eventually demonstrate the thematic comprehensiveness of the genre. Work, play, love, betrayal, death, judgement, Heaven and Hell are celebrated. Even the lurid: during the trial in 1910 of Dr Crippen the street balladeers were active with the latest grisly facts and rumours. Scarcely less sensational events have given us lovely songs in the past: "Helen of Kirconnell" or "Mary Hamilton" (Bronson, 1976, 320-322). Mary Hamilton was apparently one of the ladies-in-waiting to Mary, Queen of Scots. She bore a child to Lord Darnley, murdered it, was tried and executed. The story is plausible enough, and the circumstantial details are accurate, down to the names of the other ladies-in-waiting, but Mary Hamilton's story has been expunged from all the historical records except ballad. There are few thematic taboos if any in folk song, certainly not adultery or infanticide or libel.

Exactly how open and comprehensive folk song can be is shown when we look at its treatment of religious experience. For those who make folk literature, religion is life, not a Sunday abstraction. Nor is it controlled by "priests in black gowns". They accept in religion, as in life, cross contradictions and paradoxes. One of the greatest of Medieval carols demonstrates this (Brown, 1939, 120):

> Adam lay y-bowndyn, bowndyn in a bond;
> Fowre thowsand wynter thowt he not to long;
> And al was for an appil, an appil that he tok,
> As clerkis fyndyn wretyn in here book.
>
> Ne hadde the appil take ben, the appil taken ben,
> Ne hadde never our Lady a been hevene-qwen.
> Blyssid be the tyme that appil take was!
> Therfore we mown syngyn Deo Gracias!

The whole massive cycle of creation, sin, suffering, atonement and redemption is accepted here, and comprehended too, in a way, though it is not the way of the clerks and their books. Like the cycles of nature, it is a cycle to be accepted and celebrated. The cycle of natural dependence that is the theme of "The Everlasting Circle" has its religious significance, and such songs may well have been incorporated into ritual in that synthesis of pagan and Christian religion that flourishes so naturally in peasant communities, for the sense of the pagan roots of Christianity is powerful and everywhere apparent in folk literature and custom. The recurrent disapproval of the ecclesiastical authorities for yule logs and Easter eggs did not prevent the incorporation of pre-Christian feasts into Christian observance.

"The Seven Joys of Mary" (Dearmer **et al, 1928**, 152-153) has already been referred to. It also demonstrates a comprehensiveness of religious vision. Among the joys of the birth and miracles of Jesus, celebrated in that lovely, gay, skipping tune, we find very startlingly

> The next good joy that Mary had it was the joy of six:
> To see her dear son, Jesus, upon the Crucifix.

Only by the perspective of the promise of redemption that is implicit in suffering could people sing of it like this. In some versions of this carol, and in other carols, notably "The Holly and the Ivy" there is a refrain beginning "O the rising of the sun..." which explicitly relates Christian belief to a consciousness of the cycles of both the natural and the super-natural, though folk wisdom fuzzes the distinction between the two.

It is perfectly logical, therefore, that we should find in folk song a merging of the notions of sacred and carnal love. The tradition is an old one, even within Christianity, with a history of ecclesiastical uneasiness which condemns it in one breath, and accounts in the other for **The Song of Solomon** as an allegory

of Christ's love for his Church. There may be a pagan origin to the famous dance carol, "Tomorrow shall be my dancing day" (Dearmer et al, 1928, 154-155).

> Tomorrow shall be my dancing day
> I would my true love did so chance
> To see the legend of my play,
> To call my true love to my dance.
>> Sing o my love, o my love, my love, my love;
>> This have I done for my true love.

The simpler theory is that it is a natural conflation. The tune dances with swift gaiety through the text's narration of the Christ story: Nativity, Temptation, Trial, Crucifixion, Resurrection, the Harrowing of Hell and Ascension. The refrain is most poignantly used throughout, with the narrative being borne in the first three lines of each stanza and the fourth line a variation on the theme of the dance. The effect on the text of the light, limpid tune is once again to declare a unity of hope and suffering and joy. But here that unity is accompanied by an urgent sense of longing need that we associate more commonly with carnal love and with Dionysus rather than Appollo. This carol belongs in a tradition with

> Lully, lulley, lully, lulley
> The falcon hath borne my make away

a strange love carol orthodoxed into "Down in yon Forest" (Dearmer et al, 1928, 126-127). The carols plumb the mystery of song and dance, evoking the ritual in which both originate. They have their counterparts ouside folk literature in the ecstasy of devotional poetry such as that of Donne, Herbert and St John of the Cross, or in the great Saint Teresa altarpiece by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. In music this ecstasy is explored by Bach in the two thrilling sensual-spiritual duets of the Cantata no 140, **Wachet Auf!**

ELIZABETHAN DECORUM: COSMIC DANCE

"Tomorrow shall be my dancing day" is fundamentally a carol
about Creation. The dance it celebrates is that cosmic dance
which, in Tudor times, became a commonplace symbol not only
of the Creation, but of the continuance of life, of existence. As
early as 1531 Sir Thomas Elyot wrote a vigorous justification
for dancing in his famous work, **The Book Named the Governor**. It
was a work written self-consciously under the influence of Plato's
Republic, and like **Republic**, intended to present a coherent
moral, political and educational theory. Elyot saw in the orderly
movement of the dance the "necessary conjunction" of man and
woman in matrimony; their physical contact and mutual participation
in a pattern of steps he felt "betokeneth concord"; in "the
dignity and commodity" of sacramental dance extremes were purged;
"shamefastness joined to appetite of generation maketh continence,
which is a mean between chastity and inordinate lust" (Hollander
& Kermode, **1973**, 80-81). T S Eliot, casting a nostalgic eye
from his war-torn Twentieth Century Waste land, summed up the
point his ancestor was making ("East Coker", **1974**, 197).

> ... Keeping time,
> Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
> As in their living in the living seasons
> The time of the seasons and the constellations
> The time of milking and the time of harvest
> The time of the coupling of man and woman
> And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
> Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

In dance was seen beauty, measurement, rhythm, dignity and propriety,
all endlessly renewable. Each participant had an ordered role
within the ordered whole. Dance was a microcosm of the natural
world, and of the macrocosm that surrounded it, which were seen
as miracles of mathematical beauty.

In 1596 Sir John Davies, like Sir Thomas Elyot an eminent lawyer,
published his long poem, "Orchestra, or a Poem on Dancing". It
no longer requires the missionary zeal of Elyot to justify dancing,

for Davies is offering us, not a far-fetched allegory on a personal theme, but an elaboration of Elizabethan commonplace (Bullett, 1947, 320-342).

> Dancing, bright lady, then began to be
> When the first seeds whereof the world did spring,
> The fire air earth and water, did agree
> By Love's persuasion, nature's mighty king,
> To leave their first discorded combating
> And in a dance such measure to observe
> As all the world their motion should preserve...
>
> For lo, the sea that fleets about the land
> And like a girdle clips her solid waist
> Music and measure both doth understand,
> For his great crystal eye is always cast
> Up to the moon and on her fixed fast,
> And as she danceth in her pallid sphere,
> So danceth he about the centre here.

The relationship of this to the Elizabethan world picture drawn by Tillyard (1943) is obvious. Dancing was only part of the symbolism of music for the Elizabethans. Tillyard demonstrated how in Elizabethan cosmology space was filled with moving spheres whose friction produced a music of absolute perfection. Their man-centred universe was governed by a celestial harmony which only man, inspired by Satan, could corrupt, and music was thus a glimpse of divine perfection. It is, in a way, misleading to describe as imagery the rhetoric of "Orchestra", or lines like Shakespeare's famous

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark what discord follows...
>   (Tro, I, iii, 109-110)

Imagery implies separable vehicle and tenor, but it is impossible to say how literally the Elizabethans accepted their symbolism of music. Certainly the mathematics of natural harmony was seen as a direct manifestation of divine order. Nowadays we use "harmony" as a technical term in music and derive from it a set of metaphors; there was no such clear-cut distinction in Elizabethan times: harmony was seen as a principle governing all creation, as Lorenzo explains to Jessica in that exquisite nocturne in The Merchant of Venice:

> ... Look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.
> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins;
> Such harmony is in immortal souls,
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.
> (V, i, 58-65)

We cannot discuss Elizabethan music without an appreciation of its central significance in the thought and values of its society. The philosophical basis of Elizabethan ideas about music can be found in Boethius; it has received a great deal of attention in recent scholarship, for example from John Hollander (1957), M C Boyd (1962) and Paul Kristeller (1980). But this musical theory is "speculative" rather than "practical", dealing not with the actual sound of the music, but with its metaphysical characteristics. The terms derive from a distinction made by Thomas Morley in his important teaching treatise, **A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke**, of 1597:

> Speculative is that kind of music which, by mathematical helps, seeketh out the causes, properties, and natures of sounds, by themselves and compared with others, proceeding no further, but content with the only con-templation of the art. Practical is that which teacheth all that may be known in songs, either for the under-standing of other men's, or making of one's own... (Morley, **1952**, 101)

Speculative music is thus part of the context of practical music. But our concern here is not with the abstractions of musical metaphysics, "content with the only contemplation of the art", but with "all that may be known in songs".

The factors that determine the conditions of composition and performance of Elizabethan music are more social than philosophical. The immediate importance to us of the speculative theories is the increased interest in music that they reflect, and the liberation they help to justify from the stiff decorum of Reformation church music. It is customary when people discover or extend sensual

pleasures that they find moral justification for doing so. Just
as Elyot's advocacy for dancing clearly implies a history of
puritanical condemnation of it, so even the confident philosophising
of Davies and Shakespeare reflects a recent release from inhibition
in musical expression. The consolidation of religious and political
reform and of economic expansion that marked the reign of Elizabeth
brought in its train an expansion of public and private entertain-
ment, and a vitality of expression, notably in the theatre and
in secular music. 1588 was the year in which the defeat of the
Spanish Armada removed any immediate external threat to England's
prosperity and power. It was also the year in which a City merchant,
Nicholas Yonge, edited and published **Musica Transalpina**, a set
of Italian madrigals with English translations of their lyrics.
Clearly the taste for Italian madrigals was there, but Yonge
created a market, almost a minor industry. William Byrd was
the only English composer represented in **Musica Transalpina**,
and that by a setting of a text translated from Ariosto. But
in the same year Byrd put together a group of his own vocal
works and published it, his first collection of **Psalmes Sonets
and Songs of Sadnes and Pietie**. In addition to ten psalm settings
it contained a number of madrigals, including "Though Amaryllis
Dance in Green", which was to become a great favourite. Reflecting
Byrd's fundamental Englishness, the texts included poems by
Sidney, Dyer, De Vere and Ralegh.

But Byrd did not, as it happened, set a fashion in vocal music
for texts by England's leading poets. As we shall see, he was
little concerned with either madrigal or lute song. His greatest
direct influence was on his pupil, Orlando Gibbons, who shared
his taste for serious poetry, but whose own secular vocal music
was neither representative nor influential. The madrigal in
England was a fashion briefly adopted from the Continent. Its
composers eagerly explored the madrigalian techniques and conventions
by means of English texts, and they rarely used bad verse, but
their preference was for formulaic light verse, the sort of

thing any educated person of the time could produce, and they frequently used translations. The madrigal was undoubtedly "Englished", but more by the musical originality of men like John Wilbye and Thomas Weelkes than by any fine English verse texts.

One rather obvious social factor in the madrigal's brief popularity was the need for light secular music to offset a still austere tradition of church music. Yonge had guessed shrewdly at his market. Morley's **A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke** was another stage in popularising music and cashing in on the popularity. For Morley's oft-quoted story about the discomfiture of the young man who could not read music (**1952, 9**) is surely an advertising gimmick rather than evidence of widespread musical accomplishment in the Elizabethan upper and middle classes; his powerful motive for such advertisement emerged in 1598 when he inherited the music printing monopoly that had originally been granted to Tallis and Byrd. So leisure and prosperity gave the Elizabethans the opportunity to take their musical philosophising with practical seriousness; more people could participate in the musical culture of the time. Such participation also reflects the characteristic Renaissance secularisation of culture. At the time of Elizabeth's accession the Church was still the major patron of music. Many prominent musicians were members of the Chapel Royal choir, and had originally received their musical education as choirboys. John Stevens, to whose meticulous research (1979) and judicial weighing of evidence all students of the period are deeply indebted, finds little evidence for a widespread cultivation of music in country houses in early Tudor times, nor does Woodfill (1969). But Stevens traces signs of change from the last decade of the reign of Henry VIII, when the cultural influence of the Italian Renaissance began at last to make its impact on England. It is a mixture of irony and logic that this accompanied the English Reformation. By the end of the Sixteenth Century the popularity of the madrigal and lute song, the demand from the theatre - and later from

the masque-writers - for music, and royal and private patronage
had greatly diversified the musical profession.

The greater part of the demand was for vocal music, and for
the reasons we must go back to the Reformation. The natural
and necessary association of poetry and music which was discussed
in the first chapter had broken up, according to Stevens, by
the Fourteenth Century (1979, 35).

> Poetry had become a branch of **ars rhetorica**; that
> is, it was concerned with style and stylistic devices
> to the exclusion of almost everything else. Music,
> too, was entering upon a phase of unparalleled complexity,
> in which abstruse systems of notation played a leading
> part. It follows that the talented amateur, who in
> the troubadour period could set his own poems, was
> outreached.

The notion of "a changeless union of the two arts, music and
poetry, from the troubadours up to the Elizabethans" can not,
according to Stevens (1979, 31), be sustained by the evidence. When
the two arts again came into intimate contact they were both
much more sophisticated, and they were brought into contact
by a major upheaval in European culture.

Songs continued to be written and sung in the Fourteenth and
Fifteenth Centuries, but the relationship between text and music,
Stevens argues, was conventional.

> Certainly the method of continuous emotional commentary
> on the sense and feeling of the words was very rare
> indeed, even abroad, before the sixteenth century. (1979,
> 37)

In church music the texts were in Latin, and therefore to the
majority of persons either known by rote like the Ordinary of
the Mass, or more or less unintelligible. The composers of the
Fifteenth Century developed a dense, brilliantly ornamented
polyphony. One of the greatest of Tudor composers, Robert Fayrfax,
wrote **Magnificat Regale**, a setting that is occasionally sung
today. Each section is introduced by a plainsong line sung by
the cantor, before the intricate five-part polyphony with elaborate

melismata on syllable after syllable of the text. Though the sound is thrilling, it is utterly impossible for the listener to decipher the text until he or she is signposted by a cadence to the next plainsong phrase. Indeed, the parts have such an independence that many a performer must also have been relieved to find his place once more at the cadences.

Both Protestant and Catholic reformers reacted against such ebullience. At the protracted Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Catholic Church condemned the use of lascivious and impious music in church and insisted on the priority and intelligibility of the text. The Protestant reformers all over Europe were concerned to place the word of God more and more openly before the common people. Tyndale's English New Testament, though banned in England, circulated covertly after its publication in Worms in 1526. Coverdale's Bible, whose lovely rendering of the psalms was to survive in **The Book of Common Prayer**, followed openly in 1535, and the first authorised English translation was published in 1537. Other translations followed, as well as separate versions of the psalms, and litanies and liturgies, and, in 1549, the first **Book of Common Prayer**. All of this activity was part of that "intense concern with words", enhancing the status of language that John Stevens commented on (**supra, 11**). The church music of the time had of course to reflect this status. A more sober musical style was evolved in conformity with the new standards of decorum. This was part of the price paid by composers for the continued patronage by the Church of their art. The sobriety we can hear not only in the work of the greatest English composers of the period, Tallis and Byrd, but also in the work of Palestrina, coming from Rome itself.

But it was not only a more sober style that was demanded; the vernacular liturgies demanded new music, and this raised again the question of intelligibility in a particularly urgent way. John Merbecke, a singer and organist of St George's Chapel, Windsor,

produced in 1550 **The Booke of Common Praier Noted**, a monophonic
setting of the Ordinary of the Mass. This was a practical response
to the crisis that arose on Whitsunday 1549 when choirs throughout
England had to sing the services in English for the first time.
Merbecke was not a theorist, but a singer, well-versed in plainchant,
and with a great instinct for the native rhythms of English
speech. His melodies are dignified and unremarkable, but he
scored them in his own notation, adapted from plainsong, in
"strenes" and "squares" and "pyckes", which have sometimes been
transcribed by editors as minims, crotchets and quavers, but
more often with square symbols on a modern stave, leaving the
note values to the discretion of the performer (see the examples
below). This is, however, a rough approximation only, for Merbecke's
intention was to provide, not a metronomic formula, but a guide
to the declamation of English in song. If, for example, we take
a passage from the Creed (Merbecke, **n.d.**, 7),

Who for us 'men, and for our sal - 'va - tion came 'down from 'hea - ven,

And was in - 'car-nate by the 'Ho - ly Ghost of the 'Vir - gin 'Ma - ry, And was 'made 'man,

we find that the tendency of English speech rhythm towards isochronic
stress patterns permits us to render the first line as if it
were in 3/8 time, with the accents as marked in the text, and
crotchets on "men", "down" and on the first syllable of "heaven". On
the other hand, the second of the lines quoted is not so neatly
isochronic in its speech rhythm. Of course it would be possible
to arrive at a plausible regular musical accentuation, but this
would be unnecessarily ingenious, and would defeat Merbecke's
intention. The liturgical rhetoric at this important moment
in the Creed thrives on the irregular rhythms of the text. Merbecke's
melodic climax on the word "Ghost", and his reverential cadence
at "And was made man", are beautifully appropriate to the ritual

drama. The Kyrie, in keeping with the incantatory repetitions of the text, is much simpler rhythmically, with each phrase having approximately isochronic stresses (**ibid.**, 4).

Lord, have mer-cy up-on us. x 3   Christ, have mer-cy up-on us. x 3   Lord, have mer-cy up-on us. x 3
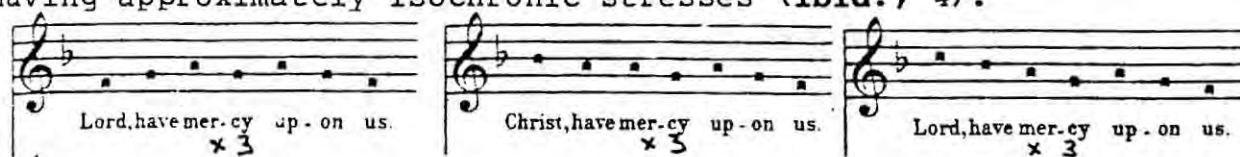
The musical rhetoric is simplicity itself: the rise in the major scale from tonic towards dominant, and the fall from dominant back to tonic that Deryck Cooke characterises as typical of "outgoing" and "incoming" musical emotion respectively (1959, 115, 130). The appropriateness to the text is obvious.

The importance of Merbecke was that he did provide a guide to the treatment of English texts for much more talented composers. One of the immediate developments proceeding from Merbecke was the exploitation of the wonderful speech rhythms of Coverdale's psalms in what was to become known as Anglican Chant. But he also had an influence on the development of song proper. It was a native growth totally different from the chorale-singing tradition that took root in the Lutheran Church, and it came to fruition half a century later in the delicacy of phrasing of the lute songs and madrigals of the likes of Dowland and Wilbye. H C Colles has championed Merbecke's role in the development of English song. As he says (1928, 32),

> Comparatively few have recognised the existence of the syllabic groups which can bring an infinite variety of subsidiary rhythms into a melody set to English words whether poetry or prose. John Merbecke was the first to do so; his **Booke of Common Praier Noted** was a preliminary reconnaissance of the language for the purposes of song.

Possibly Queen Elizabeth's own well-attested musicality was responsible for the insistence by the Church of England that music, even elaborate music, was to be retained in religious observance. A very remarkable passage in the **Injunctions** of 1559 bears witness to this, and helps explain why and how Elizabethan

music was so firmly founded in the work of the great church composers of the Century, Tallis, Byrd and Gibbons.

> And that there be a modest distinct song, so used in all parts of the common prayers in the Church, that the same may be as plainly understood, as if it were read without singing, and yet nevertheless, for the comforting of such that delight in music, it may be permitted that in the beginning, or in the end of common prayers, either at morning or evening, there may be sung an Hymn, or such like song, to the praise of Almighty God, in the best sort of melody and music that may be conveniently devised, having respect that the sentence of the Hymn may be understood and perceived. (Quoted in Le Huray, 1978, 33)

The dominant figure in English music in these early years of the Reformation was Thomas Tallis (c. 1505-1585). He formed his musical habits writing for the Latin rite, and continued a preference for composing to Latin texts to the end of his long life. His contribution to the development of an Elizabethan musical idiom is considerable, for his harmonic language is no longer that of the early Renaissance, but makes telling use of tonal modulation and discord; his melismatic writing is much more restrained than that of such predecessors as Fayrfax, and is put to more specifically expressive use. The strict control of his imitative writing may in some senses be referable to Reformation notions of decorum, but musically it derives from the development of a language of tonal harmony that looks forward to the Seventeenth Century. His beautiful five-part motet, "Salvator Mundi" (Le Huray, 1982, 14-19) has a quality at once austere and ethereal that reminds one of his much younger contemporary Tomas Luis de Victoria. The quality is perfectly suited to this text, a petitionary antiphon from the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross during Holy Week. The opening phrase is picked up in imitation by each of the voices in turn. The underlay is scrupulous: only when text is repeated against the background of the next entry is any syllable given more than one note. But the piece maintains thereafter a dense polyphony, swamping the text, and relying for expressiveness on eloquent discord, notably

in the phrase, "...qui per crucem et sanguinem redemisti nos"; and on its shifting minor tonalities, resolving eventually through an exquisite suspension in the first alto part into the major.

music continued to be written to Latin texts because the Latin rite continued until the Civil War to be used in the Church of England in specific communities like universities where it was presumed Latin was understood. Thus, not only were Tallis's apparent high church sympathies tolerated, but the Church of England was able to use the talents of his greatest pupil, William Byrd, an avowed Roman Catholic. Nevertheless, there seems to have been a need for English motets, since many of the Latin motets by both composers were adapted to English texts. The fate of "Salvator Mundi" was particularly unfortunate, as if so "Roman" a text for so "Roman" a feast were not palatable in the vernacular. It was badly adapted to a limp prayer to the Holy Trinity (Le Huray, 1978, 194), suggesting that the nuances of expression went largely uncomprehended and that such intricate polyphony was heard as pure music.

A marked contrast is apparent if we look at one of Tallis's English motets, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Le Huray, 1982, 11-13), the text from John 14, 15-17. Here the opening phrase is set entirely without polyphony and with one note to a syllable. The second phrase begins in the top part and is imitated in turn by each of the voices with subtle variations of harmony and rhythm before the parts converge again on a cadence. Two more brief imitative phrases follow, each neatly cadenced. At no time does the polyphony move beyond simple canonic imitation and syncopation. There are few verbal repetitions and very few words have more than one note to them. Yet the motet is a simple model of its kind, for the interest never flags. It is well known that Tallis was master of both simple and complex forms, since he is remembered both for a forty-part motet, "Spem in alium", and for perhaps the most famous canon ever written, the hymn tune known as "Tallis's Canon" and associated with the words "Glory to Thee my God this night". But it is significant that most of the music Tallis wrote to English texts is in the more sober style of "If ye love me". It is probable that a more

sober decorum was forced upon music with English texts, and also that they tended to be used where the more sober decorum was enforced. Also, the greatest demand for music with English texts probably came from choirs with modest means and talents. Certainly "If ye love me" is similar in style and sobriety to other works dating from about the Edwardian period, for instance, "Lord, for Thy tender mercy's sake" (Le Huray, **1982**, 48-49), ascribed by Le Huray to Richard Farrant, but also sometimes ascribed to John Hilton the elder.

Another work from this period is the anonymous "Rejoice in the Lord alway" sometimes ascribed to John Redford (**A 16th Century Anthem Book, 1973**, 1-7). It deserves our attention not only because of its obvious merits, and because of a text far more exultant than those we have been discussing, but also because it invites comparison with Henry Purcell's great verse anthem on the same text written over a century later. Here the opening phrase is given to each of the voices in strict imitation. It is built on rising fourths, and is an instance of another of Deryck Cooke's "basic terms of musical vocabulary", the leap from dominant to tonic and thence to the major third "expressive of an outgoing emotion of joy" (1959, 119). Whole phrases are repeated in individual parts, not words, but the polyphony creates imitative repetitions of the words in "...and again I say rejoice..." The quavers on the unstressed syllables of "and again" simulate natural speech rhythm very convincingly, and the polyphony contrives to make consecutive the different voices' repetitions of the words. The first cadence, at the end of the tenth measure, heralds the convergence for a single homophonic repetition of the title phrase, after which the parts diverge again into multiple repetitions of "...and again I say rejoice..." That last key word, "rejoice", echoes throughout the texture, like "again", but with a variety of note-values, so that, while the phrase is broken in no one part, the words are heard simultaneously, consecutively and in syncopation. The underlay follows the rule of one note to

a syllable with few exceptions, again simulating speech rhythm.

The barring of modern editions should not tempt performers to over-emphasize the first syllable of "rejoice", since the musical flow of the phrase requires the emphasis on the second syllable and on "Lord", where it would fall in speech. Again we should remind ourselves that the original singers were using part-books without barring, so that each singer's sense of the shape and dynamic of the phrase was determined largely by the speech rhythms of the text, guided, no doubt, by his experience of Merbecke. This principle was to form the foundation of the rhythmic structures in English madrigals.

The second, more meditative, section begins with the phrase, "Let your softness be known unto all men", given twice in blocked harmonies. The phrase moves towards the relative minor key momentarily, but resolves on the major chord of the dominant, after which imitations and repetitions resume in the original key on the phrase "The Lord is e'en at hand". But almost immediately the parts converge once more into a homophonic section beginning "Be careful for nothing", the last word being surprisingly but charmingly decorated with a falling quaver figure in the top part; almost the only time that any syllable is given more than one note, an impressive foregrounding of the startling nature of the Pauline injunction. The phrase "...let your petitions..." is given a falling melody in strict canonic imitation, and some very simple polyphony concludes the section. The final section begins with the lovely "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding..." It is polyphonic throughout, being built on a rising five-note figure that is thrown from part to part, and decorated occasionally with quaver figuring. A five-measure "Amen" closes the work in rich polyphony, based still upon the rising five-note figure introduced at the words "And the peace of God..."

This little jewel of an anthem is a fine example of how the composers of the early Reformation used liturgical reform, with its severe demands for textual clarity and a modest decorum, to develop a new musical idiom tailored to the forms of the English language. It should be borne in mind that the English texts we have so far discussed in this chapter have been prose, though prose of great vigour in rhythm and imagery. The metrical texts of the time, such as the metrical psalter of Sternhold and Hopkins tended to be much poorer material, often sacrificing the rhythmical vigour of Coverdale and the other Bible translators and of **The Book of Common Prayer**. The madrigalists had no great tradition of verse-setting to call upon when they began their

labours in the last decade of the Sixteenth Century. John Stevens
has argued (1979) that this is as true of solo song writers
as of madrigalists. Hence the importance of Merbecke: the celebrated
union of poetry and music at the end of the Elizabethan age
was developed by the musicians upon the sure foundation of the
rhythms of the English Bible and of **The Book of Common Prayer.**

The role played by William Byrd in this development is not easy
to specify. He was the greatest of Elizabethan composers and
the most versatile. The major part of his output was vocal music,
and the major part of that, church music. The works with English
texts include liturgical settings and numerous anthems songs
and madrigals as well as adaptations of motets originally written
to Latin texts. His greatest works, though, were those with
Latin texts, for his musical habits were formed as a church
musician, and his Catholicism gave him an apparent preference
for the Latin rite. Despite this he served the Church of England
well, from his appointment at the age of twenty as organist
at Lincoln Cathedral through to his death in 1623 at the age
of about eighty, and including more than fifty years as a Gentleman
of the Chapel Royal. He was also associated with the madrigal
boom from the outset, both as composer and as printer, and his
were the first published madrigals with texts by English poets. If
his style was both more varied and less sombre than that of
his master, Tallis, it was always decorous, even in the secular
music.

There is no direct evidence that he ever suffered any personal
persecution for his recusance, and yet the predicament of the
Catholics in Elizabethan times, especially after 1570, when
the Pope excommunicated the Queen, always held a threat of per-
secution. Byrd, who was reported together with his family throughout
his life for recusance, must have known some of the anxiety
so memorably described by Donne.

   I had my first breeding and conversation with men

of suppressed and afflicted religion, accustomed to
the despite of death and hungry of an imagined martyrdom.
(Quoted by Grierson, 1921, xvii)

No composer in early Reformation England could have been unaware
of text; Byrd in his ambivalent situation least of all, and
a study of his vocal music demonstrates his sensitive concern. Joseph
Kerman has argued very convincingly (1962b) that Byrd's obsession
with sombre motet texts on the themes of captivity and exile
has direct reference to the predicament of his church in England. The
masses and motets show a passionate faith with highly individual
powers of musical expression at its service, while his madrigals
are often witty and inventive in their treatment of text; but
he exercised this musical expressiveness in response to overall
semantic content rather than to any particular nuances of rhythm
or diction. His vocal music springs from the text and from the
ideas contained in the text, but the text gets absorbed into
a musical framework in which its significance as language is
superseded. And this supersession was more easily achieved with
Latin texts. Among his English motets are four adaptations of
the sombre and powerful Latin motet, "Ne irascaris" (Le Huray,
1982, 87-95). The original setting involves some very lovely
treatment of the text, for example, imitative convergences of
the voices on the words, "Ecce, respice...", followed by dense
and intricate polyphony for "...populus tuus omnes nos", as
if emphasising the interdependent diversity of all God's people. Yet
in three of the adaptations Byrd is content simply to match
an English text with something like the same mood as the Latin. The
fourth adaptation is to a completely inappropriate text, "Behold,
I bring you good tidings". Given Byrd's intimate association
with music printing we must assume that these things were done
with his consent.

Byrd's **Mass for Five Voices** is, like all great settings of the
Mass, a profound meditation upon the meaning of Christian faith. Its
musical architecture is based on an interrelationship of motifs
binding the five sections together. From the opening **Kyrie** onward

a curious shifting of the tonality is apparent, often through poignant dissonance. Modern editions (like Byrd, **1968**) transcribe the work in D minor, but it veers constantly towards the relative F major. The **Kyrie** is subdued, in keeping with its character as a prayer for mercy, but is lit up by its cadences. The first "Kyrie eleison" ends in D major; the short "Christe eleison" resolves in startling beauty on G major; while the final "Kyrie eleison" closes in A major, the dominant major of the basic D minor. In the **Gloria** and the **Credo** another characteristic shows itself: Byrd's inventive contrasts between different com-binations of the five voices, top three against bottom three, three against two, and so on. And these combinations in turn contrast against the dense intricacy of five-part polyphony. The forces are deployed with great rhythmical variety. The musical devices are used in sensitive response to the shifting moods of the text, and occasionally to foreground particular words or phrases with telling effect. In the **Credo**, for example, the proclamation of the Incarnation is a moment of great ritual drama.

> Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem
> descendit de Caelis, et incarnatus est de Spiritu
> Sancto ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est.

The section is written for three parts, starting with alto, tenor and bass. The polyphony is restrained and the decoration spare. The word "descendit" is repeated in a falling three-note figure shared by bass and alto, and contrasted in its spareness with the melismatic colouring on "Caelis". The central phrase, "et incarnatus est", comes mysteriously out of the dying chord on "Caelis", with a different set of three voices, soprano and two tenors. Each new phrase of the sentence, each new facet of the drama, is adumbrated by the tenors in imitation and then commented on by the soprano, cantabile. Despite its mere three voices, the texture seems very dense; everything is interconnected, leading to the final phrase of this section of text, "et homo factus est", which is floated by the soprano above the other voices, and the mystery of the movement is emphasized by a resolution

into the major. The effect is emphasised by a return to the minor so abrupt it rings dissonantly against the previous chord as all five voices take up the opening word of the new section, "Crucifixus".

After this, the dramatic movement of the **Credo** from burial to resurrection is fully exploited by Byrd with a joyful "Et resurrexit tertia die" beginning in the lower voices and rising through the parts. The voices ponder the phrase "secundum Scripturas" as if reminding Renaissance man that the whole programme is laid out for him in Scripture. "Et ascendit in Caelum" is explicitly

contrasted with the falling "descendit" of the earlier section; not only is it set to a rising figure thrown joyfully up through the voices, but its dotted rhythm, in marked contrast with the even note-values of the previous sections, makes it a triumphant leap upwards. Towards the end, after much rich polyphony, Byrd very pointedly declares his faith in "unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam" with a powerful convergence of voices into chordal declamation.

The concluding movements have their own special qualities: the lovely meditative treatment of "in nomine Domini" in the **Benedictus**, an emphasis on the divine commission; the contrast in the **Agnus Dei** between the dissonance of "miserere nobis" and the rapt mysticism of "dona nobis pacem"; and much else. If we see in this great work an affirmation of abiding Catholicism, it is nevertheless a work that comprehends Renaissance experience, and looks forward, not back.

Byrd's characteristic skill at contrasting different combinations of voices played its part in the development of the verse anthem, one of the great achievements of Elizabethan church music, which exploited greater textural contrasts than works for unaccompanied vocal ensembles could do. In particular, by its use of solo declamatory passages, it forced composers back to the problems of declamation that Merbecke had worked at, and that dense polyphonic writing to Latin texts had side-stepped. The assumption that the verse anthem was created by Orlando Gibbons has been demonstrated by le Huray to be false (1978, 217-225); long before Gibbons was born, the verse anthem was developing naturally out of the liturgical requirements and the musical preoccupations of the English Reformation. Gibbons's verse anthems undoubtedly have a place in the history of English text-setting, but they are preceded chronologically by the sudden rise of the Elizabethan madrigal, to a consideration of which we must presently turn. Gibbons was five years old when Yonge published **Musica Transalpina**,

and his only collection of madrigals was not published until 1612. It is at that point in the narrative that we shall consider his verse anthems as part of the interaction between madrigalian technique and church music.

This chapter has been concerned with the context in which the great Elizabethan composers came to face the problems of setting texts in their native language. With the development of the madrigal, and, shortly after, of the lute song, they came in earnest to the problems of setting English poetry. Their flirtation with English poetry, so the cliché has it, resulted in a perfect marriage, though Frank Kermode (1949) elegantly questioned the aptness of the metaphor in a considered review of the first edition of Bruce Pattison's **Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance** (2nd ed 1970). A consideration of chronological sequence alone supports Kermode's scepticism. The Elizabethans, like English composers ever since, showed a marked preference for contemporary texts. The only setting of a Wyatt lyric listed in Fellowes's great anthology **English Madrigal Verse 1588-1632 (1967)** is by John Attey in 1622; otherwise the poetry does not go further back than Spenser. But by the time that the madrigalists started work, Spenser's only published work was **The Shepherd's Calendar** of 1579. In the theatre, Kyd's **The Spanish Tragedy** was put on in 1587, and the earliest works of Marlowe and of Shakespeare in the years immediately following. The first three books of **The Faerie Queene** were published in 1590, and the next three in 1596; **The Rape of Lucrece** dates from 1594; and the great Elizabethan sonnet sequences from the 1590s, Sidney's **Astrophel and Stella** from 1591, Daniel's **Delia** from 1592, Drayton's **Idea** from 1593, Spenser's **Amoretti** from 1595, and Shakespeare's **Sonnets** were written in the 1590s and not published in full until 1609. The earliest work of Donne and Jonson dates from the 1590s as well.

These dates must provide some clue as to why the greater Elizabethan

poets were so neglected by composers. Although it is clear from, say, **Love's Labour's Lost**, that there was a tremendous amount of Italianate verse circulating in the last decade of the sixteenth century, the literature for which the Elizabethan Age is so renowned dates almost entirely from the last decade of Elizabeth's long reign. It was a spectacular eruption of native talent that very quickly came to question and parody the foreign models from which it drew inspiration. Amid such ferment it is probable that the literary tastes of musicians lagged a decade or so.

In the course of the next two chapters, as we examine first the madrigal and then the lute song, we shall find many different sorts of relationship between poetry and music. In general, it was the musicians who sought the relationship, for, outside the theatre, there is little evidence that prominent poets wrote lyrics for music. Pattison claims that "... the general quality of sixteenth-century poetic style is very suitable for music" (1970, 142). We can accept this statement fairly readily, although, as we shall see in Chapter Seven, it does not apply to the Elizabethan sonnet, a more argumentative verse-form than music can usually cope with. Pattison later argues (**ibid.**, 158),

> If the Elizabethan lyrics have a singing quality,
> it is because their authors deliberately set out to
> prepare them for the composer.

For this statement he offers no evidence, and John Stevens's work (1958 and 1979, 110-135) contradicts him. Musicians in this, as in any other age, took their lyrics where they could find them, and if there is a better accommodation between poetry and music in the madrigals and lute songs of the end of the sixteenth century, it can be attributed largely to that "intense concern with words" (**supra**, 11) that the Elizabethan composers inherited from the Reformation. Certainly we shall find between poetry and music at this time a basic mutual respect which is one of the necessary conditions for a good marriage. But we shall find also, especially in the madrigal, a tendency by composers to anatomize the poetry into its constituent words, so that

the poetry's integrity is superseded by the music's. We shall find some composers deliberately choosing trivial or silly poetry the more easily to suppress its integrity. And we shall find, in the end, that the madrigal's polyphony is incompatible with poetry, reducing poetry to prose. The tendency is made very clear in the work of Thomas Tomkins who sometimes used an extensive and mature madrigalian technique on prose texts.

In the lute song, however, we shall find a few instances where poetry and music arrive at a joint mutual integrity that subsumes their individual integrities without destroying them. Even so, we shall find in Dowland some of the same longing for prose that is apparent in the madrigalists. The relationship between poetry and music, whatever marital metaphor we use, is never stable, rarely peaceful, and in constant need of re-discovery. Its intimacy is constantly breaking down.

THE ELIZABETHAN MADRIGAL: CONVENTIONAL COURTSHIP

The Elizabethan madrigal was an extraordinary cultural phenomenon. On the one hand, it was a reaction against the sombre decorum of Reformation church music, on the other, it was integral with that "intense concern with words" by which John Stevens (**supra**, 11) characterised the English Reformation. It coincided with the greatest period of English literature, and yet it made extensive use of slight and ephemeral poetry, often translated. Its evolutionary growth from an Italian verse form ended by shattering verse form. It began by reaching outside English culture for a model, subsequently asserted its essential Englishness, and shortly after, disappeared virtually without trace. At the height of its popularity it was a distraction from care, at the height of its greatness it was expressive of a profound melancholy.

Students of the English madrigal are deeply indebted to Canon Fellowes's pioneer studies written during the first quarter of this Century (1925, 1948a). In the 1940s Alfred Einstein (1943, 1944, 1949) published important studies in English of the Italian madrigal. Joseph Kerman's more recent study, **The Elizabethan Madrigal** (1962a), focusses on an issue barely touched on by Fellowes: the process of transplantation of the madrigal from the Continent to England. In 1972 Jerome Roche published a very good overview entitled simply **The Madrigal**. The more recent studies complement Fellowes's work very neatly, for the brief story of the English madrigal is part of the larger story of the absorption of the Italian Renaissance into English culture, and the naturalisation of some of its features. In the metaphors of Jerome Roche (1972, 157):

> It was not so much a case of manufacturing Italian music under licence, more one of transplanting carefully selected Italian roots on to English soil.

While it is undoubtedly helpful to see the English madrigal in the context of its models, it must, in the end, be judged

as and for itself, like the verse forms which Surrey and Wyatt imported and Sidney and Spenser later developed. Byrd, like Wyatt, tried the Italian forms like five-finger exercises, and in response to specific requests, but like Wyatt's, his best work reverts to a more native idiom. It was, appropriately, left to Byrd's Chapel Royal colleague and successor to the music-printing monopoly, Thomas Morley, to make the most comprehensive exploration of the Italian style in England. Although, as both Kerman and Roche point out, Morley mastered only the lighter forms of the Italian madrigal; the English madrigalists with the greatest range were John Wilbye and Thomas Weelkes; while Thomas Tomkins and Orlando Gibbons wrote very lovely madrigals styled rather like secular motets. Each one of these six composers had his own special genius, and his own contribution to make to the problems of treatment of text.

Kerman is so taken up with the question of influence that he is inclined at times to suggest that the nearer to the Italian models, the better the work. He sees Weelkes and Wilbye as the authentic inheritors of the great Italian tradition, and dismisses Byrd's madrigalian experiments a little too easily.

> ... although Byrd was the greatest and most famous composer in England, he was the one who most stubbornly resisted madrigalism, the Petrarchan fashion in music... the conservative master maintained his own antiquated style, which contradicts the premises of madrigal writing at every step. (1962a, 10)

This is surely to underestimate both the diversity and the English-ness of English madrigals. The madrigal was manifestly not a favourite form of Byrd's; neither time nor temperament permitted that. But his influence on the madrigals of his younger contemporaries was enormous, as Kerman acknowledges. In those great sombre madrigals of Gibbons, "The Silver Swan" and "What is our life", the influence of the master is apparent, even down to the introspective choice of text. And if Gibbons's treatment of text is more characteristically madrigalian than Byrd's, this is true also, as we shall see, of his anthems and motets. A

different emphasis can be placed on the evidence marshalled by Kerman, which is simply to say that Byrd's treatment of madrigal verse is similar to his treatment of liturgical text in its response rather to overall mood than to textual nuance and in its undoubted subordination of text to musical effect. The similarity is not affected by Byrd's more passionate involvement in the church music. We shall begin our examination of text and music in the madrigal, therefore, with Byrd.

The lyric of "Though Amaryllis dance in green" (Ledger, 1978, 324-329), one of the earliest of Byrd's madrigals, is conventional Elizabethan pastoral, competently made, but undistinguished in either form or content. Like so many song lyrics, its form derives from the ballad. Its pastoral setting is conventional, not functional. It affects a male insouciance in the face of unrequited love, the sort of theme that Suckling, in "Why so pale and wan, fond lover?", could turn into fine poetry.

> Though Amaryllis dance in green
>   Like Fairy queen;
>   And sing full clear
> Corinna can, with smiling cheer,
> Yet since their eyes make heart so sore,
> Heigh ho, 'chill love no more.

Four more stanzas of similar stuff follow. To the phonological patterning Byrd, it seems, was indifferent; neither speech rhythm nor rhyme is exploited in his setting. The nature of the music is determined first by the idea of rustic dancing, secondly by the final line, a refrain repeated in every stanza, and thirdly by the short lines which Byrd, like any Elizabethan composer, took as an invitation to develop imitative variations on a short phrase. The rustic dance is immediately apparent from the arresting opening phrase with its displaced beat. These rustics dance the galliard, that most popular of Elizabethan dances, for Byrd's rhythmical scheme is based on a contrast of 6/4 time with 3/2. The opening phrase is given to the lower three voices in blocked harmony, and forms the thematic basis for both rhythm and melody to follow.

As the top three voices repeat the phrase, the bottom two sing
"... dance in green" with a different rhythmical emphasis. For
the second line of text, which takes less than three measures
for all five voices, Byrd contrives no fewer than five rhythmical
figures. "And sing full clear", as one might expect from its
musical reference, gets a slightly more extensive treatment. It
is given prominence in the first soprano, a part whose high
tessitura gives it great prominence throughout, while effectively
obscuring a great deal of the text allocated to it. In fact,
as in so much of Byrd's vocal music, the first soprano functions
like a solo, while the other parts are handled somewhat instru-
mentally. The following two lines offer Byrd little more than
the opportunity to develop in full polyphony the musical ideas
of the opening phrase. They modulate, however, on the words
"...make heart so sore" into a surprising cadence in the super-tonic,
C major to D major. The rest of the madrigal, more than half
the total length, is given to high-spirited polyphony on the
single line, "Heigh ho, 'chill love no more", beginning with
a set of imitative entries and then ringing every rhythmical
variant possible on the phrase. Since this refrain is the thematic
point of the lyric, Byrd's setting has its logic. What the listener
gets from the texture is a set of gaily echoed heigh-hos and
the message, "love no more." Because of their more specific
attention to text, later madrigalists hardly ever made strophic
settings; in fact strophic settings frequently distinguished
ballets and canzonas from madrigals proper. Overall, it is a
work of great charm composed by a master craftsman; if it does

not show the detailed attention to text that marks the madrigals
of, say, Weelkes and Wilbye, it is something more than simply
the sum of its text and its music.

Even Kerman excepts one of Byrd's madrigals, acknowledging his
versatility (1962a, 110).

> "This sweet and merry month of May" shows a complete
> grasp of every principle of the Italian technique;
> it illustrates the text characteristically all along,
> and follows formal, harmonic, and textural arrangements
> that an Italian would have immediately understood.

The final lines of "This sweet and merry month of May" (Ledger,
313-323),

> ...And greet Eliza with a rhyme:
> O beauteous queen of second Troy,
> Take well in worth a simple toy.

are reminiscent of the verses in **The Triumphs of Oriana** - to
which Byrd did not contribute - and suggest a formal occasion
for this madrigal which would certainly account for Byrd's accom-
modation to an uncharacteristic style. The features Kerman singles
out for comment include the canzonet-like treatment of "and
birds do sing" with its descriptive quaver turn on the last
word echoing throughout the texture; the "simple homophonic
effects" used in contrast to light polyphony to emphasize several
phrases of text; and the sharp dramatic breaks. The most obvious
of the latter precedes the final couplet. The name "Eliza" and
the phrase "with a rhyme" are echoed throughout the texture
in numerous polyphonic repetitions and imitations between measures
44 and 58. This is followed by a rest in all the parts, and
the almost entirely homophonic apostrophe "O beauteous queen
of second Troy". In the following section there is a witty contrast
by juxtaposition of the phrases "take well in worth" and "a
simple toy", given the same note-values and balanced against
one another. Byrd's original setting of the lines, probably
by Thomas Watson, was a six-part version published in 1590 by
Watson. In Byrd's 1611 set an inferior four-part version appears,
and Kerman regards the whole exercise as Byrd's "contemptuous

comment on the new fangled Italianate writing" (1962a, 111). Be
that as it may, one may be charmed by Byrd's mastery in this,
his most "madrigalesque" piece - to use Kerman's term - and
yet prefer the more characteristically Byrdian "Though Amaryllis
dance in green".

Thomas Morley must have been a man of prodigious energy. His
life span was the forty-five years of Elizabeth's reign, 1558-1603,
and for the last few years of it he was apparently not in good
health. Yet he was a cathedral organist, first at Norwich and
then at St Paul's, a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, composer
of a good deal of church music, madrigalist, anthologist, music
theorist and music printer. He may also have been involved in
the theatre, for he published in 1600 a book of airs which included
his famous setting of "It was a lover and his lass" which may
have been written for the first performance of **As You Like It**.

But it is as a student of Italian madrigalian style that Morley
concerns us here. Kerman argues very strongly - and Roche agrees
- that it was Morley's comprehensive understanding of the Italian
madrigal that played the major role in translating a foreign
form into English, although Weelkes and Wilbye made greater
music out of it.

> Morley was the first, the most prolific, the most
> popular, and the most important composer of the English
> school, and his influence on the younger men must
> not be underestimated. For five years at the beginning
> of the development his canzonets and madrigals alone
> rivaled Yonge's and Watson's anthologies of Italian
> music. Five years after its conclusion they were still
> in demand for republication - a testimony of popularity
> all the more striking in face of the rarity of such
> reprints with other English composers. The English
> madrigal development, a transplantation and naturalization
> of Continental ideas, could hardly have established
> itself without a strong figure of reputation, skill,
> and enthusiasm. If Morley had favored Italian serious
> music, the English madrigal would have grown differently;
> but if he had been a less able composer, and a less
> shrewd judge of English taste, the school would have
> been even smaller in extent than it turned out to

be. It speaks very highly for Morley that his example could so far sustain this astonishing musical development, in face of the hostilities of various kinds to which it was subjected. (Kerman, 1962a, 192)

In a study of the relationship of text and music, the most signif-
icant point about Morley's madrigals is their derivation from
the lighter side of the Italian repertoire. Morley's popularity
no doubt owes a great deal to his shrewd judgement of English
taste in his time, and the reaction from the austere decorum
of English Reformation church music was a factor in that taste. But
Morley's absorption of musical influences, as well as his own
influence cannot be considered apart from the history of the
development of English lyric poetry. Whereas the Italian madrigal
had its roots in native literary forms and in a literary movement,
the English madrigal had no native literary basis. Italian madrigal-
ists set the lyrics of the greatest Italian poets from Petrarch
onwards, paying tribute to the poets as it were, English madrigalists
called on no native literary tradition. The evidence is impressively
gathered in Fellowes's anthology, **English Madrigal Verse 1588-1632**
(1967), which reveals that hardly any of the great poetry of
the English Renaissance was used, and indeed hardly any of the
verse has any pretension to seriousness, although most of it
is well-made enough. By far the most common author is Anon,
and that ubiquitous writer's finer work is not used. It is,
of course, possible that some of this verse is the unattributed
work of poets well-known to us; but it that were the case, it
would be significant that neither lyricists nor composers noted
the authorship of the lyrics. Remarkably few sonnets were used,
although the great Elizabethan sonnet sequences of Spenser,
Sidney, Daniel, Drayton and Shakespeare are exactly contemporary
with the madrigals. Madrigal texts, whether translations or
imitations, were derived largely from a set of literally outlandish
conventions and were soon parodied by the better poets. The
first half of **Romeo and Juliet** is full of such parody. Romeo
pursues Rosaline in extravagant couplets and discourses on love
with Benvolio in the conventional form of one of the most popular

of English madrigal stanzas, a six-line form corresponding to the sestet of an Elizabethan sonnet. But the seriousness of Romeo's fatal passion is marked in contrast; in the first exchange between Romeo and Juliet at the Capulets' ball, which is a perfect Elizabethan sonnet, a naturalised form (see Watchings, 157).

Morley's familiarity with the verse-forms of the Italian madrigal has been convincingly demonstrated by Kerman. Many of his texts are apparently his own translations, often loose adaptations of an idea from an Italian madrigal. One of his most popular ballets, "Now is the month of maying" (Ledger, 190-191), is a strophic setting of three stanzas of conventional pastoral, borrowed from Orazio Vecchi (Kerman 1962, 140). Morley uses the Italian seven-syllable lines, which he follows with a re-la refrain which bears the piece's only polyphony. Again following Italian models, Morley binds the whole into sixteen measures, excluding the repeats. It is amazing how English a work he makes of it. The verse is certainly light, but it is unerringly well-made. The speech rhythms are crisp and natural. The only syntactic inversion comes in the first two lines of the third stanza, and it trips easily enough off the tongue. The musical rhythm follows the speech rhythms with remarkable accuracy. According to the conventions of the time, even the inverted first foot of the first stanza can in performance be properly accented on "Now". The satire of the longer notes for the rhyming syllables is most effective, as is the masculine rhyme for the second couplet of each stanza, Morley showing here an impressive grasp of the rhetorical force of English speech rhythms. The notes on the first ictus of the second line is introduced for musical reasons to vary the rhythm, but it is particularly effective in the second stanza to the phrase "Doth laugh at winter's sadness". The strophic setting of course denies Morley the opportunity to illustrate the two specific musical images in the lines

and to the bagpipe's sound,
The nymphs tread out their ground.

One cannot imagine Weelkes missing such an opportunity, or the more subtle challenge of "youth's sweet delight" and "Shall we play barley break?" Nevertheless the frenetic quality of spring festivals is caught in the duple-time dance rhythms. Although a Gilbertian precision of diction is required of the singers, the musical phrases shape themselves to the text, a hallmark of the best Elizabethan madrigals. The piece is slight but perfect.

NOW IS THE MONTH OF MAYING

THOMAS MORLEY

"April is in my mistress' face" (Ledger, 24-26) is a simple four-part madrigal. The lyric is based on a canzonet by Vecchi.

> April is in my mistress' face,
> And July in her eyes hath place.
> Within her bosom is September,
> But in her heart a cold December.

Again the commonplace is neatly made; the only violation of common speech patterns being the stress on the first syllable of "July", a metrical necessity in the verse which is vital for the musical rhythm. But the polyphonic treatment here gives Morley the freedom to stretch the basic speech rhythms quite considerably. Each of the four lines is both a syntactic and semantic unit, and each marks off a distinct section of the music, each concluding with a convergence of the voices on a cadence. But within the lines repetitions of phrase are frequent, effectively emphasising the vital semantic contrasts from line to line: "my mistress' face" contrasted with "in her eyes"; "within her bosom" with "but in her heart". And again Morley makes a most skilful use of the contrast between masculine and feminine line endings, "September" and "December" both leading to protracted cadences. The coldness of December is represented in a lovely suspension in the alto part leading to a surprising resolution. Thus the poetic structure is to a large extent buried, though it remains the basis of the musical structure.

Kerman suggests (1962a, 191) that Morley associated five and six part madrigals with a more serious approach than he was inclined by temperament to take. Certainly he wrote very few. And yet the intricate polyphony of some of his three part canzonets is very remarkable. It sustains and symbolises the pastoral pursuit, capture and implicit surrender of "Whither away so fast" (Ledger, 392), for example. And in "Farewell disdainful", the looseness of the lyric permits extensive verbal and phrasal repetition, with splendid harmonic anguish throughout the parts illustrating the lines

O sharp and bitter anguish!
What discord grief assails me!

As Morley inclined away from the denser polyphony of five and six parts, so his younger friend, Thomas Weelkes, favoured more voices, enjoying their challenge to his ingenious musical imagina-

tion. Among English composers, only Wilbye wrote as many six-part
madrigals, and both men far exceeded Morley's output. Weelkes,
clearly inspired by Morley, published three collections in quick
succession, in 1597, 1598 and 1600, as well as a famous contribution
to Morley's anthology **The Triumphs of Oriana** in 1601. The second
and third volumes contain no three or four part pieces. In 1608
he completed his madrigalian work with a volume of three-part
pieces and a fine six-part elegy on the death of Thomas Morley. After
that his musical energies were devoted to church music, some
of considerable merit.

His 1598 volume was devoted largely to five-part ballets, but
he was not content to write homophonic music for the verses
as Morley usually did. It was rather Morley's "Fire! Fire!"
(Ledger, 112-120) that gave Weelkes the idea of breaking up
the homophonic surface of the ballet by crossing ballet and
canzonet forms. One such piece is the charming "Hark all ye
lovely saints" (Ledger, 137-141), which exhibits many of the
characteristics of Weelkes's music, particularly his fondness
for building a musical structure on contrasting tempi: what
the Elizabethans called "note nere" writing, against "alla breve".
The contrast was later used in one of the finest of the 1600
madrigals, "O Care, thou wilt despatch me" (Ledger, 192-199). The
alla breve section of "Hark all ye lovely saints" also contains
some lovely chromaticism which is, however, matched particularly
to the text of the first stanza only.

The seriousness of Weelkes's madrigals is a seriousness of musical
technique, and that musical seriousness was not called forth,
in his madrigals at any rate. by a seriousness of textual material.
In this he differs from Wilbye. Tomkins and Gibbons. Not until
Purcell's time was any major English music again written to
so poor a text as

> O Care thou wilt despatch me,
> If music do not match thee. Fa la.
> So deadly dost thou sting me,
> Mirth only help can bring me. Fa la.
>
> Hence, Care, thou art too cruel,
> Come, Music, sick man's jewel. Fa la.
> His force had well nigh slain me,
> But thou must now sustain me. Fa la.

Indifferent to poetry, Weelkes was the most inventive word-painter
of his time- and without a rival in English music until Purcell The
much-analysed madrigalian **tour de force,** "Thule, the period
of cosmography" (Ledger 339-355). is a catalogue of wonders
from an early age of exploration. This. as all the commentators
have shown was a perfect vehicle for Weelkes's imagination To
cite just one example, drawn from David Brown's biographical
and critical study (1969 114). the weird chromaticism of the
passage, "...how strangely Fogo burns" (the reference is to
Tierra del Fuego)

[How strangely Fogo burns]

Brown points out that this is most unusual in that chromaticism
normally makes its impact "against a firm. perceptible diatonic

background" which is lacking here, hence the superbly evoked sense of "strangeness". As Brown observes elsewhere of Weelkes (1969, 202),

> For him the sound and the sense of the words was not to be savoured together, and then felicitously matched with an apt musical phrase. It was the meaning of the words and any suggestions they offered for musical imagery that alone mattered.

No major Elizabethan musician was as insensitive to poetry as Weelkes. And yet there is no denying the charm of some of his effects. The opening thaw of "Cold winter's ice is fled and gone" (Denis Stevens, **1970a**, 125-130) functions as an integrated phrase. The bare tonic note of the tenor is joined in the first measure by the two other notes of the minor triad, which is then melted down through three measures to the major, and at the end of the fifth measure the process starts again an octave lower. The ice is also symbolised here in the **alla breve** phrases, and the thaw in the **note nere**.

Weelkes's contribution to **The Triumphs of Oriana** was the lovely "As Vesta was from Latmos hill descending" (Ledger, 27-41). The verse is indifferent, but again it offers Weelkes opportunities for almost naive word-painting: the quaver scale passages running down on "descending" and up on "ascending"; the melodic point exquisitely developed over eleven measures on "came running down amain"; the two-voice entry on "First two by two" and the three voices on "...then three by three", and the convergence

of all six parts on the word "together" followed by the single voice "all alone". But if the basic ideas are naive, their development and their unification into a musical scheme is very sophisticated. Brown points out (1969, 109-110) that the madrigal's structure is based on a mirror scheme, beginning and ending with long contrapuntal sections, followed and preceded respectively by short homophonic passages, these in turn followed and preceded by brief antiphonal passages and counterpoint on a descending phrase; at the centre are two balanced sections with related conclusions. This architectural scheme is purely musical, since the loosely constructed text offers no warrant for it other than the concluding peroration,

> Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana
> Long live fair Oriana!

which concludes all the madrigals in **The Triumphs of Oriana.** None of the other composers matched the brilliance of Weelkes's conclusion, a thirty-six measure exploration of a simple seven note figure in which the interest never flags:
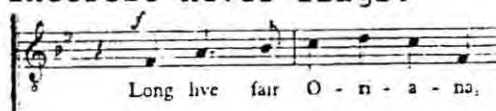
The bass underpins it all in his own splendid pedal version of the figure, interrupted only once, just before the end, by an **a tempo** utterance of the figure. The Queen surely never received a finer tribute.

The instrumental character of this fine music focusses the significance of Weelkes for this study. To an even greater extent than his contemporary, John Wilbye, he forced the madrigal repertoire beyond the abilities of the gifted amateurs who introduced the fashion. And in doing so, he asserted the absolute domination of his music over the texts he set. Wilbye, who was profoundly sensitive to language, never structured his work on such exclusively musical considerations, yet even he was unable to bring his courtly wooing of poetry to a truly satisfying consummation.

On point after point Wilbye makes an interesting contrast with his great contemporary. Weelkes's driving ambition did not succeed in winning him a place among the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal, and the promise of his career up to 1600 was not fulfilled during the next two decades. His move from Winchester College to Chichester Cathedral about the end of 1601 was not happy in its consequences. His last set of madrigals includes some of the most humorous ever written, but, with the exception of the Morley elegy, they lack weight, and his alcoholic decline must already have begun. Wilbye, on the other hand, apparently retired from composition when he was admitted to the gentry about the second decade of the Seventeenth Century. All his adult life was passed in the service of one branch or another of the Kytson family of Hengrave Hall in Suffolk, who were wealthy music lovers. In comfort and security he wrote melancholy madrigals. It was a melancholy characteristic of many of his contemporaries: Shakespeare and Donne in their maturity, John Dowland, John Danyel and sometimes Thomas Campion. "Draw on sweet night" (Ledger, 76-90), if it lacks the deep despair of Dowland's "In darkness let me dwell" (Dowland, 1980, 51), is a profoundly serious call for rest, and carries a deeper emotional intensity than Campion's "Never weather-beaten sail" (Campion, 1969, 70).

In technique Wilbye was as thorough as Weelkes, less brilliant, more assured. Though sharing Weelkes's taste for five and six part settings, Wilbye created many of his finest effects by balancing and contrasting different groupings of the voices, rather than by exploiting the density of protracted tuttis as Weelkes did. As Weelkes's writing tended to be instrumental in style, Wilbye's was more vocal; where Weelkes was a word-painter, Wilbye was master of the felicitous and apt phrase. Yet the manifold contrasts can be over-emphasised. It is probable they learned directly from one another; certainly one frequently comes across passages in one that are reminiscent of the other. Both employ structural and harmonic devices which mark a transition

from Renaissance music to baroque: structured repetitions and recapitulations, and a diatonic, rather than a modal harmonic idiom.

The well-known "Adieu, sweet Amaryllis" (Ledger, 8-11), a four-part madrigal from Wilbye's very assured first collection of 1598, reveals many of these features. The lyric is short and direct, yet it provides Wilbye with both his melodic inspiration and his musical structure.

> Adieu, sweet Amaryllis,
> For since to part your will is,
> O heavy tiding,
> Here is for me no biding.
> Yet once again, ere that I part with you,
> Amaryllis, sweet, adieu.

This is a genre poem whose neutral text Wilbye imbues with a wealth of subtle feeling. The greatest of such lovers' parting poems is surely Drayton's sonnet "Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part", published a decade later, and with which this shares an ambivalent stoicism. The first line proclaims the first subject, first in the tenor, and then in imitation in the bass: a lovely figure falling through an octave G minor. The name and the adieus are then echoed through the text in shifting tonality. The second line is an **alla breve** section ending on an imperfect major cadence, and the first two lines are then repeated. The third line continues the **alla breve** writing, opening on a major triad in the original tonic key. The fourth line moves with greater urgency in a changed tempo underpinned by a pedal bass. The ambivalence of the lover's farewell is emphasised by the impetuous overlapping of this line with the fifth, which ends in a G major chord. A startling D major then reintroduces the musical material and the words of the first line. As David Brown observes (1974, 21),

> This is, of course, a complete reversal of the usual
> major-to-minor shift used to heighten pathos; but
> it works perfectly here, giving the closing music
> a sadness all the more affecting for its aura of resig-
> nation.

Wilbye's 1609 set is the finest set of English madrigals ever
published, and very nearly the last. The only work of importance
published afterwards was by Orlando Gibbons (1612), John Ward
(1613), and Thomas Tomkins (1622). And Kerman sees in all of
this later work a move away from true madrigalian style as it
was inherited from the Italians, back to a native style of part-song
writing in which the influence of Byrd reasserts itself, largely
through the genius of his greatest pupil, Gibbons. Kerman's
view can be accepted without his implicit assumption that the
movement necessarily involves qualitative loss, for the assertion
of a native independence is discernible throughout English culture
at the turn of the century, and was a logical reaction in the
late-blooming English Renaissance against the prestige of Italian
and French models. Wilbye was an organic part of this reaction.

The extended double madrigal "Sweet honey-sucking bees" (Ledger,
266-302) is one of Wilbye's most elaborate and ebullient pieces. The
text, while it lacks the exotic qualities of "Thule, the period
of cosmography", has a lushness which is almost unbearable on
its own, yet there is a homespun quality in the extravagant
images that is typically Elizabethan. David Brown (1974, 46)
claims that it is "derived from the Dutch writer, Jan Everaerts",
which might explain its curious Common Market quality.

>Sweet honey-sucking bees, why do you still
> Surfeit on roses, pinks and violets,
>As if the choicest nectar lay in them
> Wherewith you store your curious cabinets?
>Ah, make your flight to Melisuvia's lips;
> There may you revel in ambrosian cheer,
>Where smiling roses and sweet lilies sit,
> Keeping their Spring-tide graces all the year.
>Yet, sweet, take heed, all sweets are hard to get.
> Sting not her soft lips, O beware of that;
>For if one flaming dart come from her eye,
> Was never dart so sharp, ah, then you die.

It has a looseness that perfectly suits Wilbye's purposes. He
ignores its rhymes, few as they are. Though the pentameters
are generally too long for his musical phrases, he structures

his madrigal according to the lines, most of which are conveniently end-stopped, and according to the quatrains. In respect of its directness of syntax, and its consequent honest rhythmicality, this is typical of Wilbye's texts.

The setting is for five voices, usually in modern performance SATTB, but originally and more effectively, SSAAB, the middle part being deployed alternatively as top and bottom voice in different trio groupings, where the counter-tenor's penetrating quality is especially effective. The first quatrain is sung by the top four voices only. Wilbye employs a favourite sequential device, echoing phrase after phrase through a texture which is kept very light. The first line of text, consisting of an apostrophe and the opening phrase of a question is broken into those components for the musical phrasing. The second and third lines, containing the substance of the question, are set almost homophonically, each line forming a musical phrase. As the third line is one of the few enjambments in the text, it is overlapped with the fourth, in which counterpoint once more takes over. Up to this point, the whole has the feeling of a canzonet; speech rhythms have been well-simulated, with one note to a syllable except for a brief flourish in the second soprano part on the last part of the third line. The second quatrain very slightly overlaps the first, with soprano and alto opening. But their parts are, in a sense, pre-echoes, because they are followed after two beats with a splendid bass entry on the text "An, make your flight", transforming the canzonet-like texture immediately. The word "flight" is decorated in every part at every utterance with a quaver figure, sometimes rising, sometimes falling. Melisuavia's lips have barely been mentioned when the two inner parts rush headlong to announce "There may you revel", before all the parts take up the phrase. Wilbye completes the first part of the madrigal, which takes up the first two quatrains of text, with more of the changes of texture and grouping that are so much a feature of this piece. The tutti "There may you

revel" is contrasted with a trio completing the text down to the end of the seventh line, with a typical melisma on "smiling roses", reminiscent of the figure in the opening line of Philip Rosseter's lute song, "When Laura smiles". After a repeated tutti "There may you revel", the grouping is changed for another trio. "Keeping their Springtide graces" is introduced by yet another trio grouping, probably a symbolic pun on "graces", before moving into four parts, and then five. The writing has been homophonic for some twenty-six measures since that first "There may you revel" with occasional imitative phrases linking sections. But before bringing the first part to an elegant interrupted cadence, Wilbye repeats the last line in counterpoint, gracefully illustrating the beauty and diversity of Melisuavia's Springtide graces.

The second part of this madrigal, "Yet, sweet, take heed", coping with half as much text as the first, is considerably the longer part. In fact the number of measures devoted to the last two lines is slightly greater than that devoted to the other ten. It opens with another set of contrasts among the vocal groupings. The two phrases of the opening line are each repeated once, and the crucial phrase "Sting not" is then introduced homophonically by the three inner parts. "O beware of that" is a fine polyphonic sequence. The music is brought to a cadence on the tonic before the brilliant setting of the closing couplet. The alto's silence in this cadence makes his entry on "For if one flaming dart" all the more brilliant. (In the edition quoted above, the whole piece has been transposed down a whole tone, and the alto parts are scored for tenor.) In performance this section is often taken at a slightly increased tempo; in any event the music moves with a greater urgency here. The whole couplet is set in a mere thirteen measures. The forty-six remaining measures constitute a brilliant development of these ideas, with imitations, regroupings, tuttis, and characteristic pedal points in the bottom line.

The undulating quaver figure on "flaming" is the first piece
of word-painting Wilbye permits himself in "Yet, sweet, take
heed"; it is also the only departure from something like speech
rhythm. The sharpening on the word "sharp" is a typical madrigalian
joke, and the falling figure on "Ah, then you die" is also typical.
Yet only Wilbye could have made such music of it; his doubling
of the note values on the final phrase of the final tutti is
particularly effective. In this work Wilbye has contrived as
fine a musical development as anything in Weelkes, yet it is
bound into its text; a text no doubt chosen for its adaptability
to his ideas. What of the poetry of the text survives - or matters
- is another issue: very little, I think.

The beauties of Wilbye's madrigals deserve to be explored at
great length, and there are many more, particularly in the 1609
collection, which we could examine with pleasure and profit. "Draw
on sweet night" is perhaps the greatest of all, and has been
extensively analysed, Wilfrid Mellers (1955) paying particular
attention to the setting of the text. I propose to look at a
less well-known madrigal, the four-part "Love me not for comely
grace" (Wilbye, 1966, 12-17), which shows Wilbye in a more sombre

more than "sweet honey-sucking bees". Its text is one of the most interesting of all madrigalian texts: not only does it have a poetic grace of its own, but it represents a reaction to the entire Petrarchan convention, similar to that found in some of Shakespeare's sonnets, like "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (Son 130), and "When my love swears" (Son 138).

> Love me not for comely grace,
> For my pleasing eye or face,
> Nor for any outward part,
> No nor for my constant heart;
> For those may fail or turn to ill,
> So thou and I shall sever.
> Keep therefore a true woman's eye,
> And love me still, but know not why,
> So hast thou the same reason still
> To dote upon me ever.

The lyric's gentle, anti-conventional virtues are immediately apparent. I can offer no explanation for David Brown's serious misreading of it (1974, 41), when he calls it a lyric which views woman's perverseness in love with a cynicism that is far removed from any Petrarchan convention...it conveys an accumulating bitterness. The syntax surely implies a male narrator commenting upon his own perverseness in love, and the comment and the injunction are very far from cynical - further than the two Shakespeare sonnets referred to above. Nor can I see how Brown finds cynicism expressed in the music, which on the contrary very faithfully reproduces the loving gentleness of the text.

The setting is blandly homophonic, following the speech rhythm to the end of the third line. But now the word "no, beginning the fourth line, is repeated discordantly through the texture, though no one voice repeats it. The rhyme at the end of the first quatrain is just heard, though the tenor part anticipates it and overlaps into the next line. Here the blank rhythms of the text are broken up and the voices repeat the warning "those that fail" several times in counterpoint. The second phrase of the line, however, is not repeated, and the voices converge at a cadence on the word "ill". The short three-stress line

of the text is given a homophonic phrase in the music. But from this point onwards the texture breaks into exquisite counterpoint, the lines of the text however determining the musical phrasing. The phrase "Keep therefore a true woman's eye" is the basis of a lovely imitative sequence, with the overlapping entries giving the impression of great density of texture. The note values are subtly varied, so that each voice rings changes of rhythm affecting the semantics of the text. The line itself can be read in several different ways, and Wilbye makes his music do just this, so that at different times every word in the line except the article receives an emphasis.

the heavily syncopated passage is achieved without a sense of awkwardness in any one utterance of the phrase. But the climax of the lyric is still to come, and for the line "And love me still but know not why" Wilbye offers us yet another beautiful sequence, refusing to break the line into two phrases; he writes a long phrase unambiguously emphasising the word "love" with a poignant three-note rising figure. Though the note values couple occasionally, the variety comes in the shifting tonality. The last two lines are approached by a passage in which the outer two voices are singing **alla breve** against the **note nere** singing of the inner voices before the short last line is given a final polyphonic flourish.

What is profoundly impressive about this madrigal is Wilbye's delicate sense of which lines will bear breaking up and repeating, and of the rhetorical force of the lyric's argument. A more rigidly structured lyric could not withstand polyphonic setting, let alone the repetitions; but as it stands, comparatively little poetic structure is totally lost, though it is subordinate to the music. A charming lyric is turned into a very fine piece of song. It is as finely balanced a polyphonic setting of poetry as has ever been written.

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656) was a contemporary of Wilbye and Weelkes; devout and conservative in his musical taste, probably a pupil for a short while of Byrd (Denis Stevens, 1957, 27), he lived to see the Cathedral at Worcester desecrated by Parliamentarian troops, and his organ there dismantled. The major part of his output was church music, yet his 1622 collection, **Songs of 3, 4, 5 and 6 Parts**, is important and repays our attention. The title is significant: though madrigalian style is more than a slight influence, it is tempered by the decorum of Elizabethan church music, and 'too much I once lamented.' (Ledger, 368-369), dedicated

appropriately to his "ancient and much revered master William Byrd" (Fellowes, Issue, 299). It is a sombre setting of an unmistakably sombre quatrain on the sorrow of love, little more than a mood setter:

> Too much I once lamented,
> While love my heart tormented,
> Fa la.
> Alas, and ay me, sat I wringing,
> Now chanting go, and singing,
> Fa la.

That distinguishes the setting is, first, an intense chromaticism capable of wringing the utmost anguish out of a text, and secondly, a surprising pair of fa-la refrains which mollify the anguish without negating it. The verse is not inappropriate to a Walter but a more conventional treatment would have emphasised the excess of the lament, burlesquing the third line, and using the fa-la to dismiss the experience. Tomkins, however, takes the pain seriously, and transcending his text, gives us an affirmation of endurance in the face of suffering.

Something of this affirmation is apparent in a far more serious context in "When David heard that Absalom was slain" (Tomkins, 1960, 112-123). This is one of four sacred songs in the collection; one is a metrical version of a passage from the Song of Songs, the other three, including this, are settings of biblical prose texts. It is possible that this piece commemorates a bereavement, perhaps in the life of Tomkins's dedicatee, Thomas Myriell. The setting is obviously motet-like, and yet the text does not really fit the didactic liturgical function of an anthem, though settings of great laments were becoming increasingly common at the time.

> When David heard that Absalom was slain, he went up
> to his chamber over the gate, and wept; and thus he
> said: O my son Absalom, my son, my son! Would God
> I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!
> (2 Sam 18, 33)

The narrative half of the piece sets the mood, again employing discords and chromatics. This is preparation for the beautiful lament, heralded by an agonising clash on the exclamatory entry. Absalom's name and the phrase "my son" are echoed in grave polyphony,

throughout the parts, though the outburst "Would God I had died
for thee" is articulated clearly through the texture, being
established as the thematic subject for imitation. Here is
no variation on the emphasis in the phrase, however, for "God"
is the focus at every utterance, as if in submission to Divine
Will; and this submission becomes affirmatively major in the
exquisite final cry "O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Lenk, Stevens says of this,

Perhaps the most wonderful touch of all is the way in which Tomkins seems to bring in a note of quiet resignation as the descending, cambiata-like point for 'Absalon, my son,' gives place to an ascending figure, set to the same words, and enclosed as it were in the comforting embrace of a complaint ground and an inverted tonic pedal. (1957, 112-115)

There is no doubting Tomkins's deep concern with text, both its overall mood and its nuances of meaning and emotion, could, as Tomkins demonstrates, express a very profound reaction to text; but it was becoming clear that poetry was described by text; it is significant that this lovely piece is set to a prose text, for his method was inclined to ignore poetic form.

It was perhaps inevitable, the increasing sophistication of the late Elizabethans in musical structure and harmony could as Tomkins demonstrates, express a very profound reaction to text; but it was becoming clear that poetry was described by vocal polyphony. He small close this chapter by looking at the use of the great Elizabethan polyphonist Orlando Gibbons, who, despite his being a mere twenty years old when the queen died, was conservatively Elizabethan in temperament, partly because he was Byrd's pupil. This. Probably the best known and loved of his madrigals, "The silver swan" (Ledger, 310-312) is very much a product of the end of its age, but it must also have pleased Byrd, for its somber beauty is preoccupied with death and change and sorrow, and it is expressed in a musical manner that derives directly from Byrd's motets, using polyphony very discreetly, and indulging in no Italianate madrigalism. Its undistinguished text expresses awkwardly ideas Byrd would have approved, and have taken no count to refer directly to the Reformation.

The silver swan, who living had no note,
When death approached, unlocked her silent throat.
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,
Thus sung her first and last, and sung no more:
Farewell, all joys! O death, come close mine eyes!
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise."

But the piece's logic is musical than its size for viols and voices"
as the cycle says, the six even for viols alone.

Far more interesting for our purposes is Gibbons's extended setting of a Raleigh poem "What is our life?" (Berger, 382-394) whose text commands more than simply a vague general sympathy with its sentiments. Fellowes (1967, 114) prints the poem anonymously, but Raleigh scholars accept the authorship of Sir Walter Raleigh (Raleigh, 1951, 51, 143-145). It is a very simply structured Elizabethan commonplace. Each of the rhyming couplets is enclosed, and corresponds to a movement in the argument, and each line is a grammatical unit. Only the first and last lines contain grammatical cadences between clauses. Not only does the transition correspond directly to the imagery, but the latter is a simple set of variations on a single theme, well-known to Elizabethan readers and middle audiences. Even a modern audience is familiar with Jacques' famous use of the image, "All the world's a stage" (AYL II, vii, 139-166). The iambic metric of the couplets does not, however, impose any rhythmical regularity, though it is strictly syllabic. "Passion" containing three syllables and "division" four, as Gibbons's setting confirms. The text is thus freely imagery but minimally structured and plainly amenable to Gibbons's musical purposes.

What is our life? a play of passion.
Our mirth the music of division.
Our mother's wombs the tiring houses be,
Where we are dressed for this short comedy.
Heaven the judicious sharp spectator is,
That sits and marks still who doth act amiss.
Our graves that hide us from the searching sun
Are like drawn curtains when the play is done.
Thus march we, playing, to our latest rest,
Only we die in earnest, that's no jest.

Even so, the text is destroyed as poetry. Gibbons's structure is certainly determined by its semantics, but the dense five-part polyphony swamps most of the text. Raleigh's ability to turn a melodic phrase simulating the speech rhythm of a text is lacking here, with the result that the initial utterance of each new phrase rarely bleeds out from the texture with as much clarity as this composure. Even the initial question, which is subtle, stands in urgent contrast to the texture which it inhabits

enough as Gibbons's beautiful fugue builds up, is set to a rhythm which counters its speech rhythm. One's interest is held by the exquisite long line which runs question and answer into one, and by the poignant development of the melodic figure. The **alla breve** writing here is contrasted with the treatment of the next line, which has a falling quaver figure on "division", emphasising the elaborate division of the voices. There may be an ironic echo of the standard madrigalian figuring of mirth, laughing or smiling in descending quavers, such as we noted in "Sweet honey-sucking bees".

WHAT IS OUR LIFE?
ORLANDO GIBBONS

The lines are overlapped with one another in sustained polyphony down to the cadence halfway through the piece at the end of the sixth line of text. "The judicious sharp spectator" is characterised wittily in sharpened phrases, and, preceding the cadence,

That bits and marks who still both act amiss is given great diversity of treatment in a **note here** amiss style. Gibbons pivots the piece on the mention of "graves", marked by solemn **alla breve** homophonic writing back in the minor key after the major cadence. The homophony breaks up for a piece of madrigalian word-painting as "searching" is prominently repeated through a polyphonic texture, followed by repetitions of "when the play is done". An ironic, stalking march bears the text

"the march we' playing, to our latest rest after which each part usually has a rest. But this tol-tootlery is terminated piecemeal; voice by voice, by the last line, which is suitably brief, with a **tierce de picardie** which has its musical logic as well as its surprising semantic point.

Gibbons's lovely note-like madrigals are the work of a man in direct line of descent from the pre-Reformation Tudor church musicians through Byrd and Tallis; but a man also who made the early development of a form that, at the end of a turbulent century, Purcell was to use magnificently: the verse anthem. It is a form which occupies a necessary place in any story of relations between text and music, and though it would be possible to treat it at great length, it will satisfy our purpose to look very briefly at Gibbons's handling of its problems. He was one of the agents by whom, for a short period, some inspiration techniques were ploughed back into musical worship against whose cultures they had originally been in revolt. In the verse anthem we found a means of combining the intelligible acclamation of scriptural texts with a musically sophisticated meditation upon the message. In "This is the record of John," (Gibbons, 1958) a setting of the verses interrogation of John the Baptist in John 1, 19-23, the verses carry the text in an immediately intelligible form, a declamatory line that uses speech rhythms and the pauses of speech while the accompanying viols provide discreet imitative polyphony. The intervening choruses are built on the musical and textual material

of the solo passage. Much of the choral writing is homophonic, and the polyphony remains decorously intelligible with imitative sequences based scrupulously on musical figures that correspond to the syntax. In this respect, the contrast with "What is our life?" is strong. It is a conservative work, although in its declamatory lines Gibbons achieved an extraordinary melodic grace and beauty wedded to accuracy of speech rhythms.

This was far superior to the dreary recitatives in the **stile nuovo** that Nicholas Lanier was soon to import from France.

But a far more extensive exploration of the rich resources of the verse anthem is found in "See, see, the Word is incarnate" (Le Huray, **1982**, 198-219). The text, attributed to "Dr Goodman, Dean of Rochester", is not directly biblical, but is a free-ranging meditation on the Incarnation, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, with phrasal echoes from the Gospels, the Epistles and Revelations. The meditation is dramatically presented by the solo voices,

and the chorus comments in periodic exclamations. The anthem is through-composed, so that it depends upon the dialogue between solo and chorus for its structure, though ribbons come, from time to time, the recapitulations, say, of material from the instrumental accompaniment to the solo passages in the subsequent chorus. The first solo does as a herald introducing the chorus "Glory be to God on high", whose text is sufficiently familiar to permit a joyful sequential counterpoint. The following verse is an extended canon for two solo voices and again the exclamation is clear and the overlapping and repetition so conceived that the text is readily intelligible. The chorus comments with three homophonic exclamations, "Let us welcome such a guest", each exclamation being a different combination of voices, followed by polyphonic mosaics. The third verse is for solo trio, again sequential in structure, and is restored by a chorus of attendant angels "are multiplied throughout the texture before the convergence of the four voices on the last word of the phrase "... in the eight of multitudes". A full five-part shout of triumph in the ascension follows. A very brief solo passage then introduces the extended final chorus which begins monumentally on the well-known text, "Glory be to God that sitteth on the throne". But from here on the logic of the musical structure demands a denser five-part polyphony in which the text is subordinated in a triumphant rejoicing. The loose-jointed text has been the foundation for Gibbons's fine exulting, but the architectural details have a musical logic governing them.

The looseness of construction or the narrative line in Gibbons's verse anthems proclaims his relish in the word as too luxuriate. Yet somewhere in the texture of his polyphony, and within the musical architecture there lies a sane that natural language cannot

bear all the meaning, all the significance that he wants it to express; a sense that it needs to be translated into a more sublime language; for natural language is earthbound, limited and limiting, whereas the word referred to by us would is in-measurable. But for an Elizabethan, the word would penetrate the mysteries of the Cosmos and sound in celestial harmony; musica practica was seen as a striving artist, and at best a glance into that celestial harmony that musica speculativa postulated.

This cosmology, however, was dying. The readiness to question, upon which so much of the Renaissance and the Reformation was built, created a doubt which undermined the self-confidence of Elizabethan England. In the late song we can see both the self-confidence and the doubt manifesting themselves; it was a form of artistic expression reflecting a distrust of foreign fashion, and an attempt to restore a balance between music and poetry.

Campion the preference for solo song was undoubtedly determined by his meticulous craftsmanship as a lyric poet, and by his reluctance to subordinate texts to music which he had poured so much. John Dowland and Campion were learned men. Dowland was the author of various works on lute-playing, and proudly proclaimed himself "bachelor of musicke in both the Universities" on the title-page of **A Pilgrim's Solace.** Later on he was consistently referred to by his contemporaries as "Doctor Dowland." Campion was a law student and physician as well as the author of two learned theoretical works, one on music, one on poetry. Both of them were talented men, and between them they comprehend the range of the lute song writer, only loyal and doctor appointed their skill.

Campion's fastidious ear for the rhythms of English poetry, and for the sound and shape of English syllables would permit nothing to obliterate those phonological features. Bruce Pattison makes some very perceptive comments on Campion's settings of his own verse (1970, 135):

If this is an attempt to reproduce the mutual correlation of the evening voices to music, the same relation to the experiments of the Camerata laid as in Peri's writing to his own verse more to drowning a feeling. The emphasis in the two cases is on the one on the expressive qualities of the verse and in the other on the emotional and dramatic possibilities of the words.

Pattison goes on to point out that the **stilo recitativo** which was the outcome in Italy and France of the experiments of the Camerata did not attract Campion precisely because of its melo-dramatic tendencies. It was left to a later generation to introduce the fashion in England. Dowland was the more accomplished musician of the two, and learned a good deal about counterpoint from the madrigalists. His settings, even the best of them, lack the melodious craftsmanship of Campion: but he was a lyricist, counted to the declamation of the verse. Pattison comments elegantly (1970, 142) translates

Not too fast

VOICE

Fine knacks for la - dies, cheap, choice, brave and
Great gifts are guiles and look for gifts a -
With - in this pack pins, points, la - ces and

new, Good pen - ny-worths but mo - ney can - not move,
-gain, My tri - fles come as trea-sures from my mind,
gloves, And di - vers toys fit - ting a coun-try fair,

I keep a fair but for the fair to view,
It is a pre - cious jew - el to be plain,
But in my heart, where du - ty serves and loves,

A beg - gar may be li - ber-al of love.
Sometimes in shell the Or - ient'spearlswe find.
Tur-tles and twins, Court's brood, a heav'n-ly pair.
Though
Of
Hap -

all my wares be trash, the heart is true,
o - thers take a sheaf, of me a grain,
-py the heart that thinks of no re-moves,

the heart is true, the heart is true.
of me a grain, of me a grain.
of no re - moves, of no re - moves.

SAY LOVE IF EVER THOU DIDST FIND

In quick time

VOICE

Say Love if e - ver thou did'st find, A
But could thy fie - ry poi - son'd dart At
To her then yield thy shafts and bow, That

wo - man with a con - stant mind? None but one.
no time touch her spot - less heart, Nor come near?
can com - mand af - fec - tions so. Love is free:

And what should that rare mir - ror be. Some
She is not sub - ject to Love's bow, Her
So are her thoughts that van - quish thee, There

god - dess or some queen is she? She, she,
eye com - mands, her heart saith No, No, no.
is no Queen of love but she, She, she,

she, she, she, she, and on - ly
no, no, no, no, and on - ly
she, she, she, she, and on - ly

she, She on - ly Queen of love and beau - ty.
no, One No an - o - ther still doth fol - low.
she, She on - ly Queen of love and beau - ty.

18. I SAW MY LADY WEEP

progressively more preoccupied with eschatology. The magnificent and not very well known "Me, me and none but me" **(1980, 9)** perfectly reflects the transition from love song to religious song. Its text draws on a convention far older than the Petrarchan, using imagery of love like the fatal dart, the turtle dove, and the silver swan to express a longing for God.

IN DARKNESS LET ME DWELL

Slow

VOICE

I care not for these Ladies That must be wooed and prayde.
Give me kind Amarillis The wanton countrey maide.
Nature art disdaineth, Her beautie is her owne:
Her when we court and kisse, She cries, forsooth, let go:
But when we come where comfort is, she never will say no.

If I love Amarillis,
She gives me fruit and flowers,
But if we love these ladies,
We must give golden showers;
Give them gold that sell love,
Give me the nutbrown lasse,
    Who when we court and kisse,
    She cries, forsooth, let go:
    But when we come where comfort is,
    She never will say no.

These ladies must have pillowes,
And beds by strangers wrought,
Give me a bower of willowes,
Of mosse and leaves unbought,
And fresh Amarillis,
With milk and honie fed,
    Who when we court and kisse,
    She cries, forsooth, let go:
    But when we come where comfort is,
    She never will say no.

In a way the whole movement was an attempt to impose
on the poets a system alien to the English tradition
and contrary to the very nature of the language.

Derek Attridge has, however, taken Campion seriously enough,
both as a poet and as a theorist, to ask what he meant by quantity
(see especially 1974, 215-227). Attridge argues that Campion
was well aware of the artificiality of quantity as an organising
principle in English poetry, but, like any poet of his time,
he saw artifice as a basic feature of all poetry. Consequently,
Campion sought quantitative rules that used the native features
of the English language. The detailed rules, which are given
in the last chapter of his **Observations** are sometimes perverse,
but we should be mistaken to imagine that the rules have no
relation to spoken English; as Campion says (1969, 313-314),

> But above all the accent of our words is diligently
> to be observ'd, for chiefly by the accent in any
> language the true value of the sillables is to be
> measured.... We must esteeme our sillables as we speake,
> not as we write.

For Campion, quantity was thus an artificial means of patterning
English poetry, to be used in conjunction with what he called
"accent" and we should call stress. His sense of quantity was
not based solely or even primarily on vowel length, but on the
weight - one of his terms - of the entire syllable. He found
English syllables "so loaded with Consonants, as that they will
hardly keepe company with swift Notes, or give the Vowell convenient
liberty" (ibid, 56). Moreover, quantity is affected by pauses,
and Campion recognised that even in reading verse, pauses need
to be incorporated into the metrical pattern. As Pattison claims,
it is a real contribution to prosody (Pattison, 1970, 130).
Catherine Ing, in a very sympathetic analysis of Campion's metres
(1971, 151-177), frequently exposes oddities in Campion's experiments
with classical metres. In her analysis of "Come let us sound
with melody the praises" (Campion, 40) she demonstrates that
the musical setting compels the observation of Campion's Sapphic
metre, but only by doing violence to the natural rhythms of
English, in which prepositions like "with" and "of" surely cannot

The peace-full wes-terne winde The win-ter stormes hath
And na-ture in each kinde The kinde heat hath in-

tam'd,
flam'd.

The for-ward buds so sweet-ly breathe Out
of their ear-thy bowers, That heav'n, which viewes their
pompe be-neath, Would faine be-deckt with flowers.

See how the morning smiles
On her bright easterne hill,
And with soft steps beguiles
Them that lie slumbring still.
The musicke-loving birds are come
      From cliffes and rockes unknowne,
To see the trees and briers blome
      That late were over-flowne.

What Saturne did destroy,
Loves Queene revives againe;
And now her naked boy
Doth in the fields remaine:
Where he such pleasing change doth view
      In ev'ry living thing,
As if the world were borne anew
      To gratifie the Spring.

since, in the second stanza, it dramatically underlines the
sexual innuendo. The point of the broken refrain is its contrast
with such lyrical ecstasy. The treatment of "sighs" is standard
madrigalism, but most effective here, where it is followed by
the exquisite final point of the falling broken chord on "the
strings do breake", the point at which the two terms of the
comparison converge.

the longer third line stands on it's own, and the final line, a refrain, is expanded and repeated: musically AABCC.

The first couplet of each stanza does not present too much of a problem: the movement up to and down from "willing" in the first stanza, and "Heav'ns" in the second works equally well; while the corresponding second lines are both concerned with mortality, and the contrast is minimal, the negatives of the second stanza being in unstressed positions. It is in the two third lines that the miracle is achieved. The quavers here give a greater sense of movement to the tune in the falling sequence of the first half and in the rising figure of the second half of the line. But the text transforms that falling sequence from a fainting in the first stanza to a paean in the second. This is partly simple semantics, and therefore is left to the singer

to express, but he is governed by the disposition of vowels and consonants. The line in the first stanza begins with a form word not heavily weighted semantically; it is introduced by a fricative consonant moving into a rather lax vowel, "Then". The word "Glory" on the other hand is heralded by plosion and moves via the continuant to a splendid open tense vowel. A similar contrast is achieved in the refrain after the sequence on "O come quickly", between the qualifying adjectives "sweetest" and "glorious" at the climax of the line. The calm of this famous song is built upon a tremendous confidence of faith.

But the world that inspired that confidence was passing, even as Campion wrote. Within a few years of his death in 1620 the school which he and Dowland had created, which included the rich talents of Philip Rosseter, John Danyel, Thomas Ford and Robert Jones had disappeared virtually without trace, together with the madrigals and Elizabethan polyphony. It was not just that poetry like Campion's ceased to be written, that the social conditions that made Elizabethan music ceased to exist; for were these things cause or effect? It was that Campion stood at a watershed of English history and that shattering changes took place in the early Seventeenth Century whose effect was, in the words of Henry Denne "to turn the world upside down" (quoted in Hill, 1975, 13). And the faith which Campion could declare in such confidence was severely shaken, as Donne saw:

> And new philosophy calls all in doubt,
> The element of fire is quite put out;
> The sun is lost, and th' earth, and no man's wit
> Can well direct him where to look for it.
> ("The First Anniversay"; Donne, **1912**, I, 237)

CAVALIER SONG: JUST NOTE AND ACCENT

Thomas Campion and Ben Jonson are probably the greatest masters
of the song lyric in English literature - excepting, of course,
Anon. They were working at that moment of balance at the beginning
of the Seventeenth Century when "the new philosophy" to which
Donne refers was beginning to be reflected in English poetry
and in English music, as well as in the relations between them. But
the special quality of Campion and Jonson is in fact dependent
on the changes taking place in English poetry. Mark W Booth
makes an interesting observation about Campion (1981, 78):

> One way to describe his significance is to say that
> in a history of increasing complexity, immediacy,
> and personalness in the English lyric, Campion's verses
> represent the latest stage before what seems interesting
> in lyric is too complex to set.

The ideas generated by the Renaissance transformed the world
that experienced the Renaissance. In England, the experience
was brief and intense, and the transformation prolonged to the
Civil War and the Puritan Revolution. In 1660 the monarchy was
restored to a land "changed utterly" from that in which Elizabeth
had died in 1603. The physical destruction by fire of large
parts of Elizabethan London in 1666 was perhaps symbolic. But
the process of transformation had begun long before Elizabeth's
death, as the previous two chapters have shown.

Some formal account of the changes in English lyric poetry is
now necessary, and with it, a description of the species, song
lyric, within the genus lyric poetry. It has not been a well-
recognised form, let alone well-analysed or well-appreciated. The
standard text-book definition of lyric poetry as "originally...
a poem which was set to music for performance as a solo song"
(Barber, 1983, 70) merely evades a necessary distinction. Northrop
Frye has been more helpful in suggesting (1957a, 270-281) that
the traditional association of lyric with music is one boundary
of lyric, and that on the other side it is related to the pictorial.

This at least offers us a continuum in which we may attempt to locate song lyric somewhere on the musical side. Frye comments (273-274),

> The history of music shows a recurrent tendency to develop elaborate contrapuntal structures which, in vocal music, almost annihilate the words. There has also been a recurrent tendency to reform and simplify musical structures in order to give the words more prominence. This has sometimes been the result of religious pressure, but literary influences have been at work too. We may take the madrigal, perhaps, as representing something close to a limit of the subservience of poetry to music. In the madrigal the poetic rhythm disappears as the words are tossed from voice to voice, and the imagery in the words is expressed by the devices of what is usually called program music. We may find long passages filled up with nonsense words, or the whole collection may bear the subtitle "apt for voices or viols," indicating that the words can be dispensed with altogether. The dislike of poets for this trituration of their words can be seen in the support they gave to the seventeenth century style of isolating the words on a single melodic line, the style which made opera possible. This certainly brings us closer to poetry, though music still predominates in the rhythm. But the closer the composer moves towards emphasizing the verbal rhythm of the poem, the closer he comes to the chanting which is the real rhythmical basis of lyric. Henry Lawes made some experiments in this direction which won the applause of Milton.

But even if we agree with the general direction of Frye's comment, we must concede that it is based on a conception of poetry which gives precedence to rhythmical organisation; one, indeed, that leans heavily towards the musical rather than the pictorial side of lyric poetry. There is no simple descriptive technique which will set up the distinction we seek. A description of song lyric which would include all Elizabethan and Jacobean lute song texts would fail to distinguish the special features which make some lyrics very much more suitable for song than others. We would also find, in the corpus of Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry, some magnificent song lyrics which were never set to any music that we know of. "Fear no more the heat o' th' sun" is, according to the text of **Cymbeline** (IV, ii, 254),

recited, not sung in the play. The difficulties of description
are enormous, because what works and does not work in text setting
is ultimately a matter of subjective personal preference, and
the best we can do is to establish as clearly as possible the
basis for that preference.

Perhaps because we have no contemporary tune for it, the dirge
in **Cymbeline** (IV,ii,258-281) is a good starting point.

> Fear no more the heat o' th' sun,
>   Nor the furious winter's rages;
> Thou thy worldly task hast done,
>   Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.
> Golden lads and girls all must
> As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.
>
> Fear no more the frown o' th' great,
>   Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
> Care no more to clothe and eat,
>   To thee the reed is as the oak.
> The sceptre, learning, physic, must
> All follow this, and come to dust.
>
> Fear no more the lightning flash,
>   Nor th' all-dreaded thunder-stone;
> Fear not slander, censure rash,
>   Thou hast finished joy and moan.
> All lovers young, all lovers must
> Consign to thee, and come to dust.
>
>   No exorciser harm thee.
>   Nor no witchcraft charm thee.
>   Ghost unlaid forbear thee.
>   Nothing ill come near thee.
>   Quiet consummation have,
>   And renowned be thy grave.

The first three stanzas of the poem have an obvious unity of
pattern, syntactical, phonological and semantic. The fundamental
frame,

> Fear no more [A], [B];
> ([C]), [GENERAL METAPHOR of COMPLETION].
> [EARTHLY CREATURES/ATTRIBUTES] must
> ... come to dust.

is formulaic, and even sequence is not crucial. The first two
stanzas could be interchanged, though the movement from natural
to man-related hazards is deliberate. The third stanza does

not read at all like an opening stanza, presumably because it lacks the all-inclusive generality of "the heat o' th' sun", but it could be interchanged with the second stanza. Also, there is no semantic constraint on the interchangeability of the refrain lines (5 & 6) of the first stanza and those (17 & 18) of the third stanza. The development from stanza to stanza is thus minimal, and the climax falls in the same place in all three stanzas: at the beginning of the fifth line. The slight changes in the disposition of unstressed syllables do not affect this climax pattern; musically the refrain begins on the beat in the first stanza, and on the up-beat in the second and third. In fact the feminine endings of the first stanza, and the extended first syllable of its fifth line are the only variants whatever in the metrical scheme, which is a regular ballad form with refrain. Moreover, the refrain contains the only enjambment of the poem; otherwise each line is a clear syntactical unit. The fourth stanza is strictly end-stopped and preserves the regularity of rhythm. However, it comprises four three-stress lines in a different rhyme scheme, all feminine rhymes, followed by a rhymed couplet of four-stress lines. Where the first three stanzas use imperative constructions, they are barely distinguishable in semantic intent from the generalisations framed in indicative constructions with which they alternate. In the fourth stanza, however, the imperatives are semantically justified as petitionary incantation. The stanza is thus set aside from the others by both mood and metre.

We can only speculate on what exigencies of the theatre prevented this song from being sung in the play. In his edition of **Cymbeline**, J M Nosworthy (1969, 212-216) points out that the play's other song, "Hark, hark the lark", was beautifully set, probably by Robert Johnson, although two of the lines printed in the 1623 Folio are omitted in the setting. Nosworthy suspects (213),

> ... that they were deleted by the composer in order that the singer should not have to cope with awkward sibilants.

If such mundane considerations governed the music for "Hark, hark the lark", it is possible that "Fear no more the heat o' th' sun" was not set because Shakespeare did not care for the composer's setting, or because the composer had not the time to do justice to the duality of stanzaic form, or because the actors playing Guiderius and Arviragus were not up to the standard set by the professional musicians who performed "Hark, hark the lark". I believe on the evidence of the song lyric, that Shakespeare intended it to be sung.

The features that can be abstracted from this poem are those that distinguish the typical song lyric. The final stanza is an unusual variation clearly demanding fresh melodic material of its musical setting. The features are, first, a simple strophic form in which the stanzas include recurrent rhetorical figures, and similar emotional movement and colouring at fixed points. A fairly strict and simple metre is required, and a high incidence of end-stopping. It is unusual for an effective song lyric to have more than four stresses per line. It requires the rhythmical ingenuity of a Dowland to cope with, say, the hexameters of "Me, me, and none but me" (143 **supra**). Pentameters rarely accommodate themselves to song, but fourteeners, like those in "Never weather-beaten sail" (160 **supra**), are often ballad-metre in disguise. In fact, ballad-metre with its many variants is an admirable vehicle for song.

The second feature distinguishing song lyric from other lyric poetry is syntactical simplicity. The severe limitation on the number and complexity of grammatical structures in "Fear no more the heat o' th' sun" is typical. An obvious complexity avoided by song lyric is irregularity of syntax. A glance at Campion's lyrics reveals very little inversion of word order, for example; and where it does occur, it is usually according to accepted conventions of poetry, inversion of verb and object, for example, as in the third line of the **Cymbeline** dirge.

Another major cause of syntactical complexity is phrasal subord-
ination, and the more complex structures of subordination are
therefore shunned by song lyric. Simple narrative, of course,
can subsist on the simpler patterns of conjunction: those employing
"and", "but", "then", "when" and "or". But an argumentative
syntax, employing more complex patterns of conjunction and subord-
ination strains the listener's attention in song. The famous
syllogism on which Marvell's "To his coy mistress" is organised
(**vide supra** 27) is unsuitable for song, not least because of
the length and complexity of each premise. Where a song lyric
does present an argument, it is usually done implicitly in the
juxtaposition of repeated images, with minimal syntactical subord-
ination: Campion's "I care not for these ladies" (151 **supra**)
and "The peaceful western wind" (154 **supra**) are good examples. In
performance, an exquisite attention to diction, sometimes at
the cost of vocal quality, is required to communicate even something
as simple as the arch conclusion to Campion's "It fell on a
summer's day" (Campion, **1969**, 31), in which, after Jamie had
once penetrated Bessie's bower and wooed her while she, in her
terror, feigned sleep, the conclusion follows,

> And, since this traunce begoon
> She sleepes ev'rie afternoone.

Centuries later, W S Gilbert, in directing the Savoy Operas,
made similar sacrifices of vocal quality to his own texts.

Concomitant with syntactical simplicity is semantic simplicity. But
this is more problematic, because, while syntactical simplicity
implies a semantic simplicity on the surface, the implications
of context, contrast, and symbolic association can create rich
and complex tapestries of meaning beneath the surface. Booth
argues (1981, 80) that a lyric's multiple meanings may be borne
in a song

> ... to the extent that the various layers of meaning
> tend in the same direction, reinforcing and validating
> each other. To the extent that its complexity makes

kinks in our reading, making us look back and revise
what we thought we had caught, it is not good for
song.

The refrain, which is so common a feature of the song lyric,
carries this reinforcing and validating function. It is also
a clearly demarcated point in the poetic structure at which
the composer is at liberty to expand and repeat without doing
violence to the poetic structure. The short lines found within
a song lyric stanza are often slightly disguised refrains.

On the surface the most obvious determinants of semantic simplicity
are, first, simple sequential narrative such as is characteristic
of so many ballads; secondly, very simple argument based upon
juxtaposition of image types such as we saw in, say, "I care
not for these ladies" (151, **supra**); and thirdly a tendency towards
generality of statement, imagery and implied situation. Symbolic
meaning tends also towards generalisation, and the subtleties
of symbolic association, context and contrast may enrich and
complicate a song lyric's meanings as long as they work within
the surface conventions of the genre. The Petrarchan conventions
were particularly appropriate to song simply because they provided
the typical and generalised imagery and situations required. The
erosion of the conventions at the end of the Sixteenth Century
was a movement into greater particularity of utterance, towards
more intimately confessional poetry set in less tightly organised
metrical and stanzaic forms. It was thus a movement away from
song lyric.

But if the lyrics suitable for song lack an intimacy, song in
performance most certainly does not, for performance contextualises
a song's emotion. This can happen in a number of different ways. In
the middle class drawing rooms of Victorian England lovers were
able to convey around a piano messages that social decorum did
not permit in other forms. Similarly song is contextualised
in the theatre; in a play by Shakespeare or Jonson, the generalities
of a song lyric take very specific meanings in relation to the
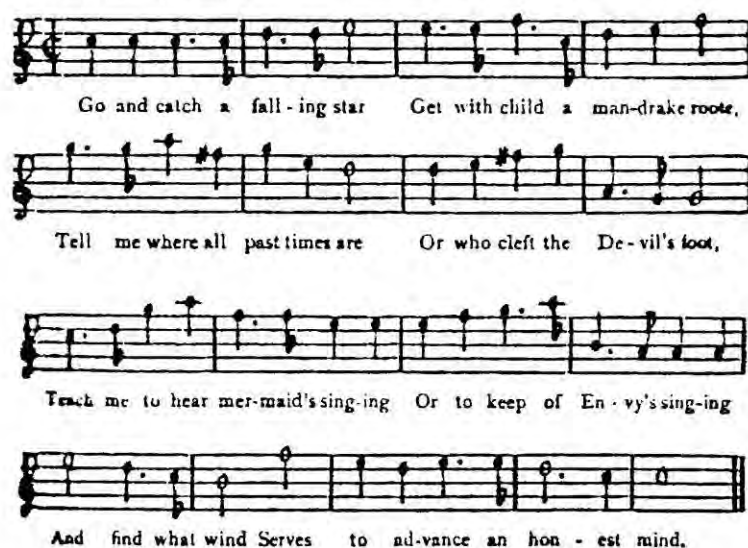
manifold contrasts of their contexts; the song, in fact, means different things to different characters, and perhaps different things again to the audience. One of the oddest examples can be found in **The Merchant of Venice**, where the song that is sung while Bassanio is choosing the casket he hopes contains Portia's portrait (III, ii, 63-66), directs his choice by the insistence of the rhymes towards the casket made of lead.

> Tell me where is fancy bred,
> Or in the heart or in the head?
> How begot, how nourished?
> Reply, reply...

Even in the concert hall, the individual singer particularizes the general message; a careful singer pays every bit as much attention to characterisation as does an actor, and creates the illusion that he or she is singing to each member of the audience individually. Where the text of a poem implies realisation in performance, the text of a song demands it. Here again we see a reason why the changes in poetic fashion involve a movement away from song lyric: a more intimate, confessional text tends to pre-empt the characterisation of a song in performance.

The great Elizabethan sonneteers anticipated many of the changes in poetic fashion, and the typical Elizabethan sonnet stands disqualified as a song lyric on several of the grounds given above; not least the logical sophistication of its argument, and the intimacy of its approach. But Shakespeare's sonnets still preserve the careful artifice of syntactical parallelism which ensures a fairly high rate of coincidence between syntactical units and lineation; Donne's poetry contains far more enjambment. It is, as Stanley Hussey points out (1982, 83), more intemperate and more colloquial than the language of Shakespeare's sonnets. Donne's love poetry, his so-called "Songs and Sonets", continues a debate with Petrarchan convention where Shakespeare's sonnets leave off. It is typical of a Donne lyric that its ambivalence makes us "look back and revise what we thought we had caught". In this respect, "Goe, and catche a falling starre" (**1912**, 8) is

atypical; its images accumulate line by line with a high incidence
of end-stopping, comprising a fairly straight line of argument.
Indeed, its reaction against Petrarchan convention is direct
enough to have become a new stereotype in Cavalier poetry: Suckling's
"Out upon it" (1971, 55-56) follows a very similar argument. "Goe,
and catche a falling starre" is one of the few Donne poems for
which we have a contemporary musical setting, though the Egerton
manuscript which is our source gives the air without accompaniment
(1912, vol 2, 54):

Go and catch a fall-ing star Get with child a man-drake roote,
Tell me where all past times are Or who cleft the De-vil's foot,
Teach me to hear mer-maid's sing-ing Or to keep of En-vy's sing-ing
And find what wind Serves to ad-vance an hon-est mind.

But the tune hardly does justice to the vigour of Donne's verse. His
characteristically dramatic opening is not accommodated by the
music, while the dramatic downward leap of a seventh at the
word "Devil's", becomes in the subsequent stanzas merely awkward. Nor
is the crucial dramatic **volte face** at the third line of the
final stanza assisted by the music.

> If thou findst one, let me know,
> Such a pilgrimage were sweet;
> Yet doe not, I would not goe,
> Though at next doore wee might meet,
> Though shee were true when you met her,
> And last, till you write your letter,
> Yet shee
> Will bee
> False, ere I come, to two or three.

Even in this simple poem Donne is not writing, and perhaps not
trying to write, good song lyric. A more typically complex poem

like "The Exstasie" (1912, 46), despite its ballad metre, disqualifies itself entirely as song lyric by making us "look back and revise what we thought we had caught". Donne's dramatic diction, its imperatives, its colloquialisms, its passionately involved syntax, marks a dramatic change in the language of poetry, and the change, as a whole, is less amenable to musical setting than was the standard Elizabethan lyric.

Donne's rejection of the Petrarchan style may have owed something to earlier English poetry - Wyatt at his more colloquial, and perhaps Skelton - but a more obvious influence is Elizabethan dramatic verse. And it is interesting that we should see and hear so clearly in Elizabethan drama such a distinction between a powerful dramatic verse diction, dense, syntactically complex, and colloquially rhythmed, and the studied elegance of some of the finest Elizabethan song lyrics; for the two sorts of poetry occur side by side in the plays. A great deal has been written about the extensive use of music, both vocal and instrumental, in Elizabethan drama in order to heighten dramatic effect and to provide generalised comment on the action. But the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists had no need of music to enhance the line-to-line effects of their dramatic texts. In the less public, more stylised theatre of the masque music had a greater role, but it was not permitted to swamp the text; writers of the stature of Daniel, Campion, Jonson and Milton would not otherwise have used the form. The contemporary debate in the Florentine Camerata about the proper declamation of Classical poetry, a debate which led to the creation of a new art form grandiosely named "opera", arose out of totally different cultural conditions from those in England. When opera arrived in England over half a century later, it had severed itself from the native dramatic tradition, and was characterised by lavish spectacle - and sometimes fine music - that mercifully drew away the auditor's attention from its absurd libretti.

At the end of the Sixteenth Century, however, English theatre was too literary to tolerate elaborate music. Shakespeare and Jonson used music in accordance with their notions of **musica mundana**, cosmic harmony, and their companies employed some fine musicians, including the younger Ferrabosco and Robert Johnson; but the immediate demand was for simple melodies and accompaniments, even for purely instrumental interludes, for language in Elizabethan theatre was paramount; later in the Seventeenth Century, when more elaborate music was provided for some of the Elizabethan plays, most notably for **The Tempest** and for **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, it completely transformed the text, effectively rewriting the play (see Covell, 1968). Song settings had their own practical problems: an actor competent enough to play Feste or Ariel, for example, would need a good singing voice, but would be unlikely to cope with an elaborate lute part as well. There are relatively few songs in the plays that are performed, as is "Hark, hark the lark" in **Cymbeline** (II, iii, 20-26), by musicians who have no acting role. The point is further illustrated by imagining an attempt to use in dramatic performance really sophisticated settings like Gerald Finzi's lovely **Let us Garlands Bring: Five Shakespeare Songs** (Finzi **1942**), which includes a setting of the Dirge from **Cymbeline** which pays scrupulous attention to the structure and meaning of the verse; yet it would be inappropriate in the theatre, because of its elaborate piano part and also because it is too poised for its immediate dramatic context.

Song settings like Ferrabosco's "Come my Celia", from **Volpone** (Auden **et al, 1968**, 134) and Morley's "It was a lover and his lass" (**ibid**, 204) might thus have been beyond the companies' actors, and some scholars have doubted their being composed for theatrical use (see, e g Fuller, 1977). More obviously, Henry Youll's three-part setting of Jonson's "Slow, slow, fresh fount" is unlikely to have been used in the theatre. It certainly is strange that so few of the song lyrics from the plays found their way into the various lute song collections, for there

must have been attractive contemporary settings; perhaps theatre music lacked professional prestige, as it has done sometimes since. Richard Johnson's settings of "Where the bee sucks" and "Full fathom five" for **The Tempest** are perfectly suited to the dramatic needs of the play. "Full fathom five", in particular, is a very fine song setting, sensitively responding to the rhythms of the text, and neatly characterising Ariel's whimsical serious- ness. The subtle variations of musical rhythm after the first quatrain contribute notably to this effect. Significantly, the first published version of the song, in John Wilson's **Cheerfull Ayres or Ballads** of 1659, prints a simple bass accompaniment that can be elaborated according to the accompanist's talents (Kermode, 1962, 157)

Johnson worked continuously for the King's Men from 1607 to 1617 and composed songs for all the famous playwrights of the day. One of the loveliest of all lyrics to have emerged from the theatre is a Johnson setting of Ben Jonson's lines "Have you seen but a bright lily grow". The lyric deserves examination on its own (Jonson, **1925**, vol VIII, 134-135).

> Have you seene but a bright lillie grow,
>> Before rude hands have touch'd it?
> Have you mark'd but the fall o' the snow
>> Before the soyle hath smutch'd it?
> Have you felt the wool o' the bever?
>>> Or swans downe ever?
> Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier?
>>> Or the nard i' the fire?
> Or have tasted the bag o' the bee?
> O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!

It was famous enough in the Seventeenth Century to have provoked among other corrupt texts (see, e g, Jonson, **1925**, vol VIII, 135), an imitation by James Shirley, incorrectly ascribed to Thomas Carew (Carew, **1957**, 197 & 286), and a savage parody by Sir John Suckling (**1971**, 29); an emphatic rejection of Petrarchan love poetry.

> Hast thou seen the doun i' th' air
>> when wanton blasts have tost it;
> Or the ship on the sea,
>> when ruder waves have crost it?
> Hast thou markt the crocodiles weeping,
>> or the foxes sleeping?
> Or hast viewed the peacock in his pride,
>> or the dove by his bride,
>> when he courts for his leachery?
> Oh so fickle, Oh so vain, Oh so false, so false is she!

But Jonson himself must have liked the poem, for he added an extra stanza to the two originally written for his play **The Devil is an Ass**, and the three stanzas were published in his posthumous volume of poetry, **Underwoods**, in 1640, as one of ten lyric pieces, "A Celebration of Charis". In the stanza that is set to music, the rich sensuality of the conventional images is expressed in a tightly controlled rhythmical and metrical pattern, with the first two lines being echoed rhythmically by the following two. The two short lines in the second half arrest the movement, and prepare for the climax. The final line stands apart from the others not only in its climactic parallelisms but also in its four stresses. The composer tactfully emphasises the point, extending the line by repetition, very much as the "Ding dong bell" line is extended in "Full fathom five". Indeed, the setting, which survives in an anonymous British Library

manuscript, is attributed by John P Cutts (1955) and others to Robert Johnson. To some extent the bar-lines obscure the tune's great sensitivity to the rhythms of the poetry.

The uncertainty about the composer's identity and the absence of Jonson's first stanza are not, in themselves, evidence that

this song was not intended for theatrical use. Still less is
the contrast between the exquisite tenderness of the song and
its dramatic context of cynical rapacity in **The Devil is an
Ass** (II, vi, 94-113). Mary Chan has made the illuminating observation
that, in placing such exquisite song lyrics in such ironical
contexts, Jonson is in fact upholding the power of song, music,
poetry and drama as constituents of an ideal unifying world
of artifice, cosmic harmony, against the "mad, mad world" of
contemporary London (1980, 111).

> As anthology pieces both Volpone's and Wittipol's
> songs illustrate some of the important values which
> lie behind their plays; values of an aristocratic
> society, values which see in man's ability to communicate
> effectively by poetry and music those qualities which
> place him in harmony with the divine cosmic plan. But
> in both plays this point is enacted in the pattern
> of the whole play rather than stated; in the particular
> contexts the wisdom of the songs' composers and performers
> is shown to be flawed and we thus have mimicry rather
> than eloquence.

It should be observed, however, that in Volpone's song the harmonious
values are reflected in the careful balance of the verse and
in Ferrabosco's elegant setting, rather than in the text, which
concludes cynically (**Volpone**, III, vii, 180-183),

> 'Tis no sinne, loves fruit to steale,
> But the sweet theft to reveale:
> To be taken, to be seene,
> These have crimes accounted beene.

Wittipol's song from **The Devil is an Ass**, on the other hand,
contrasts both text and setting with their cynical context. In
Jonson's work the tension between a calm, harmonious, Apollonian
art and a tempestuous, intractible reality is always apparent. In
their commentary on his poems, C H Herford and Percy Simpson
point out that most of them

> ... arose directly out of particular events in Jonson's
> experience or out of actual relations with friends
> or foes. (Jonson, **1925**, vol II, 338)

Jonson comprehended the difference between song lyric and the
sort of intimate, particular, autobiographical lyric poetry
that stands opposed to it. The contrast with song lyric is apparent

from such poems as "My Picture Left in Scotland" (1925, vol
VIII, 149):

> I now thinke, love is rather deafe then blind,
>   For else it could no be,
>   That she,
> Whom I adore so much, should so slight me,
>   And cast my love behind:
> I'm sure my language to her, was as sweet,
>   And every close did meet
>   In sentence of as subtile feet,
>   As hath the youngest hee,
> That sits in shadow of Apollo's tree.
>
> Oh, but my conscious feares,
>   That flie my thoughts betweene,
>   Tell me that she hath seene
>   My hundred of gray haires,
>   Told seven and fortie years,
> Read so much wast, as she cannot imbrace
>   My mountaine belly, and my rockie face,
> And all these through her eyes, have stopt her eares.

This anti-Petrarchan lyric, like the "heterogeneous ideas... yoked
by violence together" of metaphysical poetry, is part of the
shift in poetic fashion "from anonymity to self-consciousness",
as Jerome Mazzaro puts it (1970, vii). English poets no longer
"... considered the vernacular inadequate as a literary medium"
(Peterson, 1967, 4), as they had through the greater part of
the Sixteenth Century. Their preoccupation with Petrarch had
enriched the language as it was intended to, but now they could
come into their fortune, and the sort of music they were prepared
to admit as they enjoyed that legacy was required to be modest,
unassuming and unobtrusive. Edmund Waller was here speaking
for his age: ("To Mr Henry Lawes" Parfitt, 1974, 14)

> For as a window, thick with paint,
> Lets in a light but dim and faint,
> So others with division hide
> The light of sense, the poet's pride.
> But you alone may truly boast
> That not a syllable is lost:
> The writer's and the setter's skill
> At once the ravished ears do fill.
> Let those who only warble long
> And gargle in their throats a song,
> Content themselves with ut, re, mi:
> Let words and sense be set by thee.

Waller, we notice, commits the error of characterising the literary side of song as "words". And certainly the new generation of song composers paid close attention to words; an attention that was to culminate in Purcell's elaborate word-painting techniques at the end of the Century. Campion's strictures on polyphony, and Dowland's experiments in declamatory song were carried a stage further by the cultivation of the **stilo recitativo.** The use of an Italian term is extremely ironic to describe a technique by which English poetry was supposed to be more faithfully rendered into music than it had been in the ayres of the late Elizabethan age. Dowland must have made some acquaintance with the new music of the Italians during his Italian visit of 1595, and it probably influenced his experiments in declamatory writing. Ian Spink is, however, sceptical whether Nicholas Lanier and the younger Ferrabosco were intimately acquainted with the new music of the Italians (1974, 43). Lanier apparently made no extensive visit abroad until 1625, just before he was appointed Master of the King's Music, and long after he had developed the declamatory air. No doubt Lanier's experiments were influenced by what he could glean of the theories of the Italian Camerata, but his music is part of a general movement away from polyphony and towards a more stable tonal system in which the accompaniment serves merely to harmonise the melody. His works range from fairly dry recitative-like incantation to sweetly melodic airs, yet his declamatory style sounded strange enough to English ears in the second decade of the Seventeenth Century to warrant the adoption of a new term to describe it. Jonson described the music for his masque **Lovers Made Men** in 1617 as follows **(1925, Vol VII, 454):**

> And the whole maske was sung (after the Italian manner)
> **stylo recitativo** by Master Nicholas Lanier, who ordered
> and made both the scene and the music.

This famous reference has been taken by most of the standard reference works (Grout, 1965, for example, 135-136) to mark the introduction to England of the new style, described by Macdonald

Emslie (Emslie, 1960, 20).

> The declamatory air's voice-line, like that of recitative,
> but to a less degree, models itself on the time-movement,
> and to a certain extent the pitch movement, that the
> words would have if given spoken declamation. The
> result is a song-form more tuneful than early recitative
> proper - that is, its music makes a greater contribution
> in its own medium to the total song - but none the
> less the effect it frequently produces is, like recitative,
> that of musically heightened speech.

The term **stilo recitativo** was probably current a few years before
Jonson used it, for Lanier had used the declamatory style in
a song he wrote for Campion's masque on the occasion of the
marriage of the Earl of Somerset and Lady Frances Howard in
December 1613 (Campion, **1969**, 278-279).

It is apparent that this song lacks the melodic pliancy of the
airs of Campion, Dowland and Johnson, and that it is not actual
recitative either. Certainly there is some simulation of the

timing of speech rhythm, but the melody can hardly be said to follow, even roughly, the intonations of speech. Expressive devices like the C sharp on the word "suppliant", and the rising passage for the line "And let that hand advance it now", and the sustained D on "charme" giving the singer the opportunity to illustrate the text by fading out the note, belong to the language of musical expression, not linguistic. Lanier is here using quite common song devices, and the frequent rests separating syntactical units we might find in an individual voice part by Wilbye. One might, in fact, argue that Lanier's treatment of the English language owes as much to the madrigalists' treatment of individual lines as to any other influence; the foreign influence lies in the newly emerging harmonic language.

But the use of madrigalian techniques in monophonic song is startling in its destruction of verse structure; for if Lanier simulates speech rhythms, he does so to the neglect of poetic metre. Campion's lyric is as elegantly made. as ever; its two sections are neatly contrasted metrically, the first being a ballad quatrain with an extra line, the second a quatrain in which two five-stress lines enclose two four-stress lines.

> Bring away this sacred tree,
>   The tree of grace and bountie,
> Set it in Bel-Anna's eye,
>   For she, she, only, she,
> Can all knotted spels unty.
> Pull'd from the stocke, let her blest hands convay
>   To any suppliant hand a bough,
>   And let that hand advance it now
> Against a charme, that charme shall fade away.

Lanier's pauses and repetitions of phrase destroy the form of Campion's ballad stanza completely; this is surely what struck Jonson and his contemporaries so strangely in monophonic song.

Recitative is in fact a technique for setting prose intelligibly. The essential compromise of song in its use of lyric poetry is, as we have seen from folk song, an accommodation of musical form to poetic form. What we can see in Lanier's song is the

beginnings of a dissociation between music and poetry in which
both musicians and poets tend to go their own ways without any
accommodation of one another. The relationship, never very stable
outside folk song, is beginning to break up, and good poets
and musicians now contemplate one another's arts either as totally
independent of one another or as subordinate graces. Poets are
drawn to inferior music, and musicians to inferior poetry. At
his very best, Henry Lawes rises above these strictures, as
we shall see, but the rot had set in, and a tradition initiated
in English song for texts of great dulness or great absurdity;
a tradition which was not seriously challenged until the work
of Gilbert and Sullivan and Parry and Vaughan Williams.

Even the best of Lanier's songs show the dissociation. "Mark
how the blushful morn" (Spink, **1976**, 4) is a setting of a Thomas
Carew lyric from his **Poems** of 1640 (Carew, **1957**, 42).

> Marke how the bashfull morne, in vaine
> Courts the amorous Marigold,
> With sighing blasts, and weeping raine;
> Yet she refuses to unfold.
> But when the planet of the day,
> Approacheth with his powerful ray,
> Then she spreads, then she receives
> His warmer beames into her virgin leaves.
> So shalt thou thrive in love, fond boy;
> If thy teares, and sighes discover
> Thy griefe, thou never shalt enjoy
> The just reward of a bold lover:
> But when with moving accents, thou
> Shalt constant faith, and service vow,
> Thy Celia shall receive those charmes
> With open eares, and with unfolded armes.

The logical structure of Carew's poem is simple enough, depending
upon the simpler patterns of conjunction: "yet", "but", "so",
"then", "but when". Moreover, the stages of Carew's argument
fall easily enough into four quatrains. Nevertheless, it is
grammatically a single unit, and although its imagery is simple
and conventional enough, we do not find the close parallelism
of either syntax or imagery that is typical of Elizabethan song
lyric. The argument is not easy to follow listening to the song.

182

Lanier's decision to set the song in two eight-line stanzas is logical enough, since the overall semantic pattern is parallelled in the two halves, the first eight lines dealing with the vehicle of the image, the second eight with the tenor. The amendment of the text is not defensible, however, for it vitiates the force both of Carew's imagery and of his argument. "Blushful" is a particularly poor substitute for Carew's "bashfull", since it obscures the lyric's fundamental argument, since it introduces an unpleasant archness, and since it apparently dictates the further amendment of Carew's "sighing blasts" to the ridiculous "sighing blush" in the third line. A madrigalist would no doubt have destroyed much of the poem's form, but one cannot imagine him failing to respond to Carew's own third line. The change of Carew's "shalt" to "mayst" in the ninth line weakens the argument to no purpose. In the following line of Lanier's version, "silent" serves no clear purpose, and even destroys the rhythmical parallelism between lines two and ten. In the thirteenth line, Carew's direct syntax is amended to the awkward "But when the moving accent, (thou) / Shalt..." It might be argued that the original text could be restored and the song consequently improved, but the point is that the amendments indicate an insensitivity to the quality of the text. It seems as if Lanier seized on his own image of blushing, and built his song around it regardless of the context. Apart from these amendments to the text, Lanier chose a poem employing far more enjambments than an Elizabethan lyric would have done. Run-on lines tend to contradict the logic of musical phrasing, and since these are not parallelled in the two halves, they work against the strophic setting. In Lanier's first stanza, his treatment of "Then she spreads, then she receives" is particularly felicitous, but it makes nonsense of the corresponding line in the second stanza. Lanier's pretty air is hung very loosely upon a text which, even in its authentic form, offers little help to the song writer. Its charm does not depend upon the intelligibility of its text; not even to the performer,

as a good madrigal is intelligible to the performers, even when
the polyphony obscures much of the message from the listener.

It is apparent that in Lanier's declamatory writing we have
the beginnings of an English style that was to flower in the
magnificent declamation of Henry Purcell's vocal line. But we
cannot agree with the judgement of Vincent Duckles (Duckles
and Zimmerman, 1967, 5):

> Obscure as they are, the English composers of the
> mid-seventeenth century were among the most literate
> musicians who ever lived. They had the highest respect
> for poetry, and in their close reading and careful
> setting of the works of their literary colleagues,
> they created a school of song composition that is
> unique and deserving of more attention than it had
> received.

As the styles for poetry had changed, so the production of good
poetic texts suitable for setting diminished, and the Cavalier
song writers tended to exploit the dramatic potential of inferior
texts – as Purcell was later to do. But the case of Henry Lawes
(1596-1662) must be considered, for he certainly did write some
fine songs to fine texts, and he drew from Milton and other
poets some extravagant compliments. Milton's famous sonnet (**1966,
174**) deserves to be quoted in full for its specific judgements.

> Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song
> First taught our English music how to span
> Words with just note and accent, not to scan
> With Midas' ears, committing short and long,
> Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng,
> With praise enough for Envy to look wan;
> To after age thou shall be writ the man
> That with smooth air couldst humour best our tongue.
> Thou honour'st verse, and verse must lend her wing
> To honour thee, the priest of Phoebus' quire,
> That tun'st their happiest lines in hymn or story.
> Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
> Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,
> Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.

Mortimer H Frank (1979) has shown that Milton not only received
a thorough musical training from his father, but also knew and
understood both the practical and theoretical implications of
the changing musical styles both in Italy and in England.

Milton shrewdly recognised in Lawes the one composer of his time whose talents could comprehend the changing fashions in both music and poetry. It is no coincidence that Milton commends Lawes across a line boundary for his ability "...to span/ Words with just note and accent", for Lawes was able to find a musical rhythm which could cope with the increasingly frequent enjambments of Seventeenth Century poetry without reducing the verse to prose. As R J McGrady points out (1969, 92)

> His particular achievement was to break through the lyrical framework of the lutenist ayre - a framework which depends ultimately upon a number of balanced sections, each of which usually corresponds to a complete line of verse - to create a continuous flow of melody which owes its shape and structure, not to the metrical organisation of the verse but to its sense and rhythm.

But McGrady, like so many of Lawes's recent admirers, seems to underestimate the difficulty of the problem by ignoring the extent to which, despite enjambments, or even because of them, line periods retain an enormous importance in Seventeenth Century poetry. If the line became a more variable and flexible unit, serving a greater variety of phonological and semantic purposes, it remained a fundamental unit of verse nevertheless. The careful foregrounding of the word "span" in Milton's sonnet is an excellent example of the functioning of the line period. To the extent that Lawes did refashion English song by breaking the relationship so evident in Campion's songs between balanced musical phrases and balanced lines of verse, the result is a less satisfying tribute to English poetry than McGrady and Ian Spink (1974) suggest. But Lawes certainly did not consistently ignore line periods. Even in an early song in which he is very patently working under the influence of song-writers like Robert Johnson, his awareness of the problem is apparent. "O that joy so soon should waste" is a setting of one of the songs from **Cynthia's Revels** (IV, iii, 242-253). The musical setting (given by McGrady, 1969, 91) is quite obviously influenced by "Have you seene but a bright lillie grow" (cf. 175 **supra**).

O yᵉ joye soe soone should wasse,   or soe sweet A bliss as a kiss

as a kiss might not   for Ev - er Last;   soe sug - red,

soe mel - tinge,   soe soft   soe de - lic - ious   yᵗ dew yᵉ

Lyes   on Ros - es when yᵉ_____ Morne   her selfe dis - clo - ses was

Not soe pre - cious; O ra-ther then I would it smo-ther, were I to taste such an

[sic]

oth - er, it would__ be my wishinge,   yᵗ I might dye kiss - inge.

Lawes here repeats the phrase "As a kiss", which occurs in Jonson's
text as a separate line. Its effect is to change Jonson's pattern
slightly by creating three four-stress lines which correspond
to three musical phrases. The following line, however, is another
of Jonson's catalogues of epithets, and Lawes treats it to delicate
declamation very similar to that for the last line of "Have
you seene but a bright lillie grow". This declamatory writing
is continued through a long phrase embracing three lines of
verse with its climax a rapid scale passage rising to the word
"morn" - again reminiscent of the other song. Certainly this
is freer rhythmically than any Campion song, but the phrasing
is such that the rhyme words still mark out the linear structure
of the verse, as they might in a sensitive reading of the poem
aloud. All Lawes's cadences fall in the right places.

In the course of a detailed and sensitive analysis of the song
"When thou poor excommunicate", Ian Spink (1974, 79-83) demonstrates
how Lawes coped with the difficulties presented by Thomas Carew's
poem, entitled "To my inconstant mistris" (Carew, **1949**, 15).

> When thou, poore excommunicate
>   From all the joys of love, shalt see
> The full reward, and glorious fate,
>   Which my strong faith shall purchase me,
>   Then curse thine owne inconstancie.
>
> A fayrer hand then thine, shall cure
>   That heart, which thy false oathes did wound;
> And to my soule, a soule more pure
>   Than thine, shall by Loves hand be bound,
>   And both with equall glory crown'd.
>
> Then shalt thou weepe, entreat, complaine
>   To Love, as I did once to thee;
> When all thy teares shall be as vaine
>   As mine were then, for thou shalt bee
>   Damn'd for thy false apostasie.

Eric Ford Hart says (1951, 223) of the work of the Cavalier
poets whom Lawes so favoured in his settings,

> It had lost the passionate simplicity of Elizabethan
> lyric verse; instead there was a new note of courtly
> sophistication, which intellectualized its underlying
> emotion into compliment, cynicism or moralizing, or
> exaggerated it into hyperbole.

Spink makes a related observation about the central metaphor
of Carew's poem (80):

> It is a conceit to the taste of a court that found
> religious controversy an intriguing diversion, but
> it is one to which music can add little or nothing
> since it is purely intellectual. It is through 'wit'
> that the point is made; there is little or no 'feeling'
> to communicate.

How little there remains to communicate is illustrated by the
fact that Lawes could dispense with Carew's second stanza without
undue loss. I am indebted to Spink's analysis, particularly
of the way Lawes uses the new harmonic language of the Seventeenth
Century to organise the cadences to correspond with the syntax
of the poem. The cadence Lawes employs at the end of the first

stanza is in B flat, the relative major key to the tonic G minor;
his half-closes at phrase endings are in the tonic, except for
that on the word "damned", which is on the dominant, before
the final phrase resolves into G minor. It is significant that
Carew's rhymes are not strong enough to assert the line periods
against the syntactical logic of the musical cadences.

Spink observes that "Structure like this is clearly dependent
on the words" (81), but he seems to underestimate the violence
done to the verse structure. Spink's argument is that Lawes
is offering us a reading of a poem whose wit is not intimately
bound in with passion, the way wit appears in Donne; the question
needs to be asked how suitable a vehicle is song for such a

poem? Lawes showed a marked preference for the Cavalier poets, Herrick, Carew, Waller, Lovelace, Suckling and Cartwright, for example, avoiding the complexities of metaphysical verse. But sometimes the consequence was a loss of passion, without which there seems little point in musical setting for a text. A comparison of Carew's use of religious metaphor in love poetry with Donne's shows a difference of seriousness as well as of passion: "The Relique" (1912, 62), or "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" (49), or this, from "Twicknam Garden" (28), makes the point:

> But O, selfe traytor, I do bring
> The spider love, which transubstantiates all,
> And can convert manna to gall,
> And that this place may thoroughly be thought
> True Paradise, I have the serpent brought.

The declamatory style, for all its devotion to the sense of the text, reflects a decline in intimacy between poetry and music. Yet Lawes was capable of writing very fine songs, given the right sort of text for his style and purpose. His collaboration with Milton in the masque, **Comus**, presented at Ludlow Castle on Michaelmas night 1634 produced perhaps his finest song, "Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph". Milton's text (**Comus**, 230-243) offers Lawes an abundance of concrete, stylised imagery, and drama rather than argument. Though the verse form is irregular, the lines are units of sense, rhymed firmly, especially where the syntax runs on to the next line. Lawes brings the music to four cadences, all in the dominant, before the last line returns to the tonic: the first at the end of the third line of text, midway through the first sentence; the second at the end of the sixth line, concluding the first sentence; the third concluding the dramatic question; and the fourth at the end of the twelfth line of text, preceding the musical imagery of the final result-clause. But the cadences are not really resting places, for Lawes drives his declamatory melody through the text with tremendous rhythmical vitality. The melody and accompaniment are always moving forward to the final resolution.

Sweet Ech - o, sweet - est nymph, that liv'st un-seen __ With-in thy air - y shell, By slow __ Me-an-der's mar - gent green, And in the vi - o - let - em - broi-dered vale Where the love-lorn Night-in-gale night-ly to thee her sad __ Song mourn - eth well. Canst thou not tell me of a gen - tle pair That lik - est thy Nar - cis - sus are?

O if thou have hid them in some flow - 'ry cave. Tell me but where sweet __ Queen of Par - ly, Daugh - ter of the Sphere, So may'st thou be trans - lat - ed to the skies, And give re-sound-ing grace to all heav'ns har - mo - nies.

Sweet Echo, sweetest Nymph that liv'st unseen
Within thy airy shell
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-imbroider'd vale
Where the love-lorn Nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad Song mourneth well.
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle Pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O if thou have
Hid them in som flowry Cave,
Tell me but where
Sweet Queen of Parly, Daughter of the Sphear,
So maist thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heav'ns Harmonies.

The part played by the accompaniment in moving the melody forward is vital. The musical rhetoric of the question in the middle of the song is impressive with its near sequences imitating interrogatory speech patterns, but serving at the same time an essentially musical function in providing the basis of the melodic material for the concluding couplet. Yet it is the bass part, played in Lawes's time by the bass instrument of a concert of viols with other parts filled in by formula, that drives the melody on from the question into the second half of the song with an octave leap tied through the rest in the vocal part. There are thus rests in the vocal part and cadences, both dictated by the syntax of the text, but the sound is continuous. In its melodic and rhythmical vitality, therefore, the bass line is both essential to the song's effect, and more independent than Lanier's mere harmonic underpinning of the melody. This song is an exquisite miniature, but Lawes's talent, as Spink points out, was overtaken a few years after the presentation of **Comus** by the turmoil of Civil War and Revolution. Although he lived to see the Restoration, Lawes had found his natural creative environment in the unique court of Charles I.

The song writers contemporary with Henry Lawes were all concerned with the problems of developing a new harmonic language and, with it, a monodic vocal line. Lanier, John Jenkins (see Duckles, 1962), John Wilson (see Duckles, 1954), John Hilton, Simon Ives and the younger Lawes, William, were all born within eight years of Henry, and all but William Lawes and Hilton saw the Restoration. It is strange to think of a masterly polyphonist like Thomas Tomkins living through the reign of Charles I with them, although, in retrospect, perhaps we can see their influence in his treatment of the narrative line in, say, "When David heard that Absalom was slain". But the Civil War is a very clear cultural watershed in English history, and despite the presence of survivors from the first Caroline age into the second, musical life in England had to be rebuilt.

HENRY PURCELL: ESTRANGEMENT

The effect of the Puritan revolution on musical life in England was to suppress the Dionysian tendencies in music and to encourage only the Apollonian. The attitudes of the Puritans towards music have been thoroughly explored by scholars following the great work of Sir Percy Scholes (1934), which corrected the fundamentally mistaken notion that the Puritans objected to all music. The effect of this work has been to specify the sort of music to which the Puritans took exception. Though church choirs were disbanded, and some of the organs vandalised, small-scale instrumental music flourished under Puritan rule. The Word of God was paramount, and anything that was seen to distract the faithful from that Word, the sensual appeal of sculpture, or vestment, or ritual, or elaborate music, was removed. Sober home music was not seen as such a distraction, and encouraged. But another substantial part of public music was banned with the closing of the theatres, though private masques continued to be written. However, four years before the Restoration we have a significant instance of that alleviation through music of the perceived threat of the Dionysian that we discussed in the opening chapter (**supra**, 5): the theatres were permitted to reopen for musical drama, in effect, the first English opera, Davenant's **The Siege of Rhodes**. Nevertheless, little vocal music was written during the interregnum, and that of little interest. Effectively, therefore, the period saw very little public music, which, in turn, made music a very precarious profession. Thus, at the Restoration the musicians who were re-employed in church, court and theatre were faced with the task of rebuilding a national tradition. The discontinuity of the English tradition was emphasised by the French tastes which Charles II brought back with him; Nicholas Lanier, whom he re-appointed Master of the King's Music, had also spent the Commonwealth period in exile. This, in turn, made clearer the break between the harmonic language of the

Renaissance and the new tonalities which were firmly established
in Europe by 1660.

In its effects, the most remarkable musical achievement of the
early years of the Restoration was that of Captain Henry Cooke,
appointed master of the children at the Chapel Royal, who scoured
England for suitable boy choristers, and then trained them. Among
the first boys he chose were Pelham Humfrey, John Blow, Michael
Wise, and William Turner. A couple of years before Cooke's death
in 1672, the young Henry Purcell joined the Choir. Cooke was
succeeded by Humfrey and Blow in turn, and both of these taught
Purcell. The King encouraged Humfrey's precocity, sending him
abroad for study at the age of seventeen. Among his surviving
works is a remarkably austere setting of Donne's "Hymn to God
the Father". This song (Humfrey, 1947) provides a significant
link between composers such as Lanier and Henry Lawes on the
one hand, and Henry Purcell on the other. The choice of text
is itself remarkable, not only for its sombre quality, but for
its being the work of a poet from an earlier age whose work
is notoriously difficult to set. Yet, as the word "hymn" implies,
the poem is far better suited to musical setting than most of
Donne's work. It varies images within a repetitive framework,
and its language is not opaque or startling except for its pun
on the poet's name. Humfrey probably knew the setting of the
same poem by John Hilton (Spink, 1976, 25) which is far more
lyrical in character, presenting a far blander interpretation
of the text. Moreover, Hilton's setting is strophic, so that
the hope held out in the final stanza of text is not differentiated
from the fearful contrition of the first two stanzas by anything
other than the performers' expression. Humfrey's setting is
through-composed, offering a much finer and more specific inter-
pretation.

(Not too slow)
(p)

PELHAM HUMFREY
(1847-1674)

VOICE

KEYBOARD

(pp)

Wilt thou for-give .that_ sin where I be-gun, which

is my sin though it were done be-fore? Wilt thou for-give those

(p)   (pp)

sins, through which I run, and do run_ still, though still_ I_ do de-

(mf)

plore? When thou hast done, thou hast not done, for_____ I have more.

(p col canto)

(p)

Wilt thou for-give that sin by which I've won o-thers to sin? And made my sin their

(pp)

door? Wilt thou for-give that sin which I did shun a year or two:

(mf)

_ but wal-low'd in, a score? When thou hast done, thou hast not_done, for_

(p col canto)

I have more. I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun my last

(mf)

(p)

thread, I shall per-ish on the shore, but swear_ by thy self, that at my

(pp)

death thy Sun shall shine as he shines now, and_ here-to

fore; and. hav-ing done that, thou hast done, I fear no more.

(p)

The effectiveness of this setting by Humfrey depends to a large extent upon his close simulation of speech rhythms, upon the close correlation between musical phrasing and syntax, and upon the very narrow tessitura of each phrase and the corresponding lack of large intervals before the climactic stanza. Donne uses only two rhymes in the text, including his pun. These are insistently established in the first stanza, so that the run-on lines in the following stanzas, ending on the words "won", "shun", "spun" and "Sun", can be run-on in the musical phrasing without any danger that the rhyme-scheme will be lost to the listener. Humfrey is sparing in his decoration, so that the text is declaimed very clearly. The figure on the word "for" in the final line of the first two stanzas is psychologically apt, simply suspending the emphasis on the final phrase of each stanza. The setting of the last stanza is splendid, with its movement from the tonic F minor into the relative major, A flat, at the phrase "Thy Sun/ Shall shine as he shines now". This is heralded by the dramatic octave drop to the phrase "... but swear by thy self...", all the more startling for the narrowness of the tessitura up to that point. The return to F minor for the final cadence is a lovely homecoming, preserving the penitential character of the whole. The emphases marked in the score for the penultimate line of the text are unnecessary since the drama of the line is written into the music with its leap up of a sixth to "done", and then down a seventh to "that". In sensitive performance the line will emphasise itself without melodrama.

Humfrey's poise in this use of **stilo recitativo** is particularly significant, for he is faithful to the character of the verse, yet interprets it with a fine sense of dramatic intensity. It is this dramatic intensity, buttressed by a clear sense of natural speech rhythm that looks forward to the achievement of Henry Purcell. Purcell, as we shall see, never used a verse text half as fine, however.

The need to cultivate a strong declamatory line was important to a composer of church music in an England that remained staunchly Protestant despite the court, and that maintained a Protestant concern for the Word. This need was reinforced by a purely practical consideration: the desperate lack of choristers. It was necessary to have the major burden of the singing borne by the handful of competent singers. The verse anthem was a resource extensively used by the composers associated with the Chapel Royal, and it links back to the great Sixteenth Century tradition through Orlando Gibbons's son, Christopher, one of the Chapel Royal organists and a teacher of Blow who, in turn, taught Purcell. But this concern with language was not shared by the court, nor by the theatre which was re-established under court patronage. Charles II brought back from France a taste for spectacle accompanied by musical grandiloquence. Occasional music was demanded by the court to celebrate weddings, birthdays, journeys, homecomings and campaigns; and the texts to which this music was set were invariably wretched sycophantic doggerel. Purcell began writing such odes in his very early twenties and continued for the rest of his life. It cannot have cultivated a marked sensitivity to poetry to have welcomed the King after a strenuous journey down river from Windsor to Westminster with a setting of

> Your influous approach our pensive hope recalls,
> While joyful sounds redouble from the walls,
> As when Apollo with his sacred lyre
> Did in the Theban stones a harmony inspire...
> (Quoted by Westrup, 1980, 37)

Rosamund McGuinness (1971) has traced the story of these occasional odes from 1660 to 1820 when Robert Southey finally had the Poet Laureate relieved of the obligation to provide the texts. The attitudes they helped to engender towards song texts is made very clear by a 1731 Grub Street attack on Colley Cibber:

> ... when a song is good sense, it must be made nonsense before it is made musick; so when a song is nonsense, there's no other way but by singing it to make it seem tolerable sense (McGuinness, 1971, 64).

Jonathan Swift's savage "Directions for a Birth-day Song" dating
from 1729 makes a similar point at greater length (Swift, **1958**,
459-69) Purcell's occasional music, it must be said, includes
some of his very finest, like "Come ye sons of art", a 1694
birthday ode for Queen Mary, and some of the St Cecilia Day
Odes. What concerns us here is the indifference to poetic quality
they must have bred.

The theatre created by this court was characterised by spectacle
and cynicism. Plays and operas were staged with lavish mechanical
ingenuity before an aristocratic audience many of whose members
conducted their brawling or bawling or bawding while the play
was in progress. The attitude of such an audience to language
is well illustrated, as Allardyce Nicoll has argued (1961, 171ff),
in the many adaptations of Shakespeare that were staged for
its entertainment. Nahum Tate, who provided Purcell with the
libretto for **Dido and Aeneas** and the texts for many of his songs
saw fit to amend **King Lear** by pairing off Cordelia and Edgar
at the end under the beaming patronage of Lear himself. **The
Tempest** and **A Midsummernight's Dream** were turned into Purcellian
operas with grotesque distortions of both plot and text. **Macbeth**
was adapted into an opera by Sir William Davenant with some
amazing rewriting of the text; Nicoll quotes (1961, 176),

> She shou'd have di'd hereafter,
> I brought her here, to see my victims, not to die.
> To morrow, to morrow and to morrow,
> Creeps in a stealing pace from day to day,
> To the last minute of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> To their eternal homes...

At least as significant was the neglect of the romantic comedies;
for Restoration comedy was salacious and cynical, its taste
was for what Shakespeare had deplored sixty years earlier:

> ... folly, doctor-like controlling skill,
> And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
> And captive good attending captain ill.
> (Son 66, 10-12)

It was an age Nicoll evaluates perhaps overgenerously (177):

> ... able dimly to appreciate the great work of the
> past, but filled with an overweening sense of its
> own importance and offended at any attempt to inculcate
> in a reasonable way honour or virtue: an age that
> has inherited great and noble things, yet debilitate
> and weak, nursing the degenerate descendants of a
> powerful race, glorious sometimes in its decay, but
> graceless, if debonair, corrupt if airy and splendid.

The follies of the age determined, to a large extent, the attitudes taken to language by one of its greatest geniuses, Henry Purcell. A great deal has been written about Purcell's handling of the English language, almost all of it fulsome; and it is certainly not my intention to deny that Purcell was sensitive to the rhythms of English, that he was fascinated by language, and that he had an extraordinary talent for finding a musical imagery apt to the text he was setting. Nevertheless, we need to look carefully at the details of his handling of text, at what sort of texts he chose or accepted, and more particularly at the attitudes to poetry that are implied by his settings.

The range and variety of his vocal music is phenomenal: the bawdy catches; the grand comedy of the frozen awakening "What power art thou who from below" in **King Arthur**; the roistering sailor's song in **Dido and Aeneas**; the classical pathos of Dido's lament; the dramatic recitative, "The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation"; the panache of the great brass-accompanied choruses like "Hail, bright Cecilia"; the solemnity of the Queen Mary funeral music; the rapture of the **Te Deum and Jubilate in D**; the quietness of the penitential anthems like "Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts". Of all of these moods and all of these resources Purcell was absolute master with a ravishing gift for melody. His word-painting techniques are dazzling in their ingenuity as well as in their aptness: in the verse anthem "My Beloved spake", for example, or in that wonderful frozen awakening from centuries of sleep in **King Arthur.** But these techniques, which have received so much attention from critics, need to be evaluated by the

textual environments in which they appear. In the last hundred years much fine and passionate scholarship has been devoted to establishing Purcell's pre-eminence in English music. Dennis Arundell, Sir Jack Westrup, F B Zimmerman and Ian Spink are among the scholars who have given us some splendid analysis of Purcell's style in vocal music. Our concern here is simply to re-examine Purcell's response to the English language. Arundell provides an excellent starting point; he locates Purcell's unique achievement as a composer for voice in his ability

> ... to bridge the gap between a lilting tune for rhymed lines and a more down-to-earth progression of notes for dialogue... The melodic shape conforms closely to a natural way of speaking the words... The breaks of emotion and the dramatic pauses are as theatrically realistic as they would be when performed by a fine actor or actress. (1959, 323)

I propose to ignore chronology and to begin rather at the lighter end of the spectrum by referring to Purcell's treatment of text in two of his catches before carrying the analysis through solo secular song to that pivotal piece of dramatic recitative "The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation", on to a consideration of two of the better known verse anthems, and finally to **Dido and Aeneas:** opera, where, in a sense, all his talents logically lead.

Such a progression is compatible with the sort of chronological analysis undertaken by Ian Spink (1974), who believes that Purcell's maturity as a song writer was achieved in the theatre. In the course of our examination it is important to bear in mind two technical points made by Spink. In the first place, he demonstrates that the process of developing the air into a larger and more powerfully expressive medium than it had previously been was initiated in the purely musical development of more expressive and more varied ground basses; Spink cites (pp219-220) the beautiful setting of Katherine Philips's poem "O Solitude, my sweetest choice" which Purcell composed about 1687, when he was twenty-eight. Secondly, Spink maintains that the influence of verse and dance forms diminished as Purcell sought the means "to break through

the formal and emotional restrictiveness of [their] small-scale symmetries" (221). This is a very important theoretical point in the history of song-writing, for "small-scale symmetries" are, in fact, the basis of the relationship between music and lyric poetry. In practice, where large-scale verse forms have been set to music, they have been totally subordinated to the demands of musical architecture, as in Handel's setting of Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso".

In the Restoration, the catch was a well-developed musical genre (see Hart, 1953), and much in demand in the taverns where the gentry amused themselves in singing. The term "catch", it is conjectured, is derived from the way in which different voices in the canon catch up on each other, juxtaposing words and phrases that the linear text separates, thus creating additional meanings. A sample of Seventeenth Century catches including eight by Purcell can be heard on a recording called "Cakes and Ale" made by the Pro Cantione Antiqua, directed by Mark Brown (BASF BAC 3081, 1975). In "Tom the taylor" the text is hardly subtle, but the three voices catch one another to juxtapose "pull'd out", "nine inches" and "too short" in direct sequence.

> Tom making a Mantua for a lass of pleasure,
> pull'd out, pull'd out his long and lawful measure.
> But quickly found tho' woundly streight lac'd Sir
> nine inches would not surround her waist Sir.
> Three inches more at length brisk Tom advances,
> yet all too short to reach her swinging hanches.

Somewhat wittier is Purcell's treatment of an anecdote about Sir Walter Ralegh that was commonplace enough for that Seventeenth Century gossip columnist, John Aubrey, to tell in his **Brief Lives** (Aubrey, 1972, 418). Purcell's text is again in three couplets which he sets with great care for the speech rhythms, phrasing the text line by line. The musical rhythm of the second line is particularly apt to the text. And the final couplet, when it is reached by the first voice, becomes a sort of ground against which the rest of the text is sung. Slight as it is,

this catch demonstrates very clearly Purcell's concern with the meaning of his text and with its rhythms. A skilful performance will use a gentle **accelerando** to arrive at the climax.

Sir Wal-ter en-joy-ing his dam-sel one night, he tick-l'd and pleas'd her to so great a de-light, that she could not con-tain t'wards the end of the mat-ter but in rap-ture cried out 'O sweet Sir Wal-ter, O Sweet Sir Wal-ter, O sweet Sir Wal-ter, O sweet Sir, sweet Sir Wal-ter, O swit-ter swat-ter swit-ter swat-ter swit-ter swat-ter swit-ter swat-ter swit-ter swat-ter

While these catches provide ample illustrations of Purcell's concern for the semantics of his text, they suggest also an indifference to poetic quality. Some of the commentators gloss over this point and a few concede it, but the implications for the nature and history of the relationship between music and poetry are very rarely pursued. Michael Tippett, as we have seen (**supra**, 15), assumes both as critic and as composer the primacy of music over text as a matter of course.

When we hear a good song we are rarely if ever disturbed

by the quite possible fact that the poetry is poor. (1970, 462)

Against this confident statement I would argue that we should not be so indifferent to the text, but I am forced to accept it as a statement about musical and aesthetic fashion; and the rot set in about Purcell's time. Writing specifically about Purcell, Tippett praises his care for the shape and meaning only of individual words and phrases. Peter Pears, whose sensitivity and intelligence as a performer are backed by considerable learning, has said of one of Purcell's most prominent collaborators,

> Nahum Tate knew what he was about, and he gave Purcell verses of a neutral, passive quality which were fair game for a real composer. (1959, 3)

Pears bases his comment on similar premises to those of Tippett. Dennis Arundell (**supra** 199) refers to Purcell's ability to simulate the interpretation of a fine actor, which glosses over the distinction between lyric poetry and dramatic. Franklin B Zimmerman has claimed that Purcell's amendments of song texts often "mended unskillful poetry" (1967, 59); if that were so, he left a great deal unmended. But Zimmerman goes on to agree with Tippett, Pears, Arundell and Spink that the musical design in Purcell is paramount; at the same time Zimmerman adds an extraordinary analytical comment which articulates a widespread attitude about the roots of musical expression (1967, 70).

> Synthesizing the poetic notion with integrated illustrative themes, [Purcell] fashioned musical figures too deep for words, even when the musical motives involved were logogenic.

Once more it is apparent that music is seen to occupy the Dionysian end of the spectrum, literature the Apollonian. The age that saw the founding of the Royal Society, whose early members included John Locke, John Aubrey, John Dryden and Sir Christopher Wren (see Ashby, 1954, 154), would have concurred. The deeper significance of Pears's remark about Nahum Tate is that his texts, like others used by Purcell, support the view expressed by Zimmerman in that they delineate very roughly the area of emotion and leave its exploration entirely to the composer.

Typical in this respect is a text of which Purcell made three different settings in the last three years of his life, Colonel Hevenigham's "If music be the food of love".

> If music be the food of love,
> Sing on till I am fill'd with joy;
> For then my list'ning soul you move
> To pleasures that can never cloy.
> Your eyes, your mien, your tongue declare
> That you are music ev'rywhere.
>
> Pleasures invade both eye and ear,
> So fierce the transports are, they wound,
> And all my senses feasted are,
> Tho' yet the treat is only sound,
> Sure I must perish by your charms,
> Unless you save me in your arms.

It is pointless objecting to the Colonel's taking his inspiration from a famous line of Shakespeare, though it is unfortunate that the rich associations of Orsino's speech should receive such leaden echoes as they are given here. Though the lyric is different from the fragment of **Twelfth Night**, it is difficult to judge it independently, for there is a difference of seriousness between them; the lyric takes at face value the attitudes that **Twelfth Night** submits to critical examination. Even in the field of conventional loving importunity the superiority of, say, Ben Jonson's lyrics intrudes on one's consciousness. But the lyric suits Purcell's purposes. Dating from 1692, 1693 and 1695, the three versions are all mature works, so that it is particularly illuminating to see the differences between the first version (Purcell, **1949**) and the third (Purcell, **1947b**). In the first version Purcell takes a lyrical approach, though one in which he repeats words and phrases as they take his fancy. Effectively the song is strophic, although Purcell scores it right through so as to accommodate small differences in the rhythm of the two stanzas as well as particular points of musical emphasis or illustration of a word or phrase. Thus the insistent repetition of "sing on" is paralleled by "so fierce", although the opening phrases of the stanzas differ slightly in order to allow for

the upbeat on the unaccented first syllable of the first stanza, in contrast to the accented first syllable of the second stanza. The melisma on the word "transports" seems a typical piece of Purcellian decoration, yet its melody is identical to that for "I am fill'd" in the first stanza. The treatment of the fifth and sixth lines of the first stanza is paralleled for the corresponding lines of the second; but the rising two-note sequence for the line

<div align="center">Your eyes, your mien, your tongue declare</div>

followed by the inevitable melisma on "music" does not have the same rightness applied to the lines of the second stanza. On the other hand, Purcell's sense of the force of an image is surely right, for the fifth and sixth lines of the first stanza have a liveliness that the rest of the poem lacks - or is this a **post facto** reaction to Purcell's lovely writing?

The song is charming, and its quality depends, in a curious way, upon the neutrality, the inoffensiveness of the verse.

The second version is very similar in manner to the first, but Purcell was apparently not satisfied, for in the last year of his life he made a third setting, totally different in character. he abandoned all pretence that the text offers enough parallels

for a strophic setting, and lavished all his dramatic flair
on the imagery, ignoring the poetic form entirely, and turning
the song into a grand aria. The very insipidity of the text
defeated him however. The song makes some splendid gestures,
but it fails to work as a whole, largely because the text, whose
lyric qualities Purcell had found wanting, lacks also the dramatic
potential of, say, Tate's "The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation"
or Dryden's "I attempt from love's sickness to fly", both of
which imply a richer context of situation. Perhaps the most
obvious indication of Purcell's loss of respect for the power
of his text occurs in the tenth line,

> Tho' yet the treat is only sound.

In the first version it is set without repetition of any sort,
and the contrast between the beloved's voice and her arms is
left largely to language. In the third version, Purcell repeats
the line and then echoes the final word a further six times.

Though the song is a **tour de force** for the singer, its effect
upon a listener attentive to the text is pure bathos.

Clearly Purcell's response to language is founded on a nice
sense of the rhythmical shape of a phrase, and clearly he enjoyed
simple concrete imagery, and hints of powerful emotion, but
one gains no sense from his work that he valued poetry for itself.

His sense of the dramatic was informed by a psychological under-
standing that could be very subtle at times, but that did not
generate itself from subtle linguistic expression; consequently
it expressed itself largely in musical terms. He would have
been incapable of as self-effacing a song setting as Humfrey's
"Hymn to God the Father". Like Schubert he could make a fine
song out of trivial poetry. But he would use poetic form very
precisely when it suited his musical purposes.

Another song dating from 1695 is the boisterous "Man is for
the woman made" (Purcell, **1961**), written for Thomas Scott's
play **The Mock Marriage,** but using a lyric by Peter Motteux. The
lyric is a little roundelay with a trite refrain enclosing four
terse similes in each of the first two stanzas and four terse
contrasts in the third. It is chauvinistic and lacks both grace
and wit in itself.

> Man is for the woman made,
> And the woman made for man.
>   As the spur is to the jade,
>   As the scabbard to the blade,
>   As for digging is the spade,
>   As for liquor is the can,
> So man is for the woman made,
> And the woman made for man.
>   As the sceptre to be swayed,
>   As for night's the serenade,
>   As for pudding is the pan,
>   And to cool us is the fan,
> So man is for the woman made,
> And the woman made for man.
>   Be she widow wife or maid,
>   Be she wanton, be she staid,
>   Be she well or ill arrayed,
>   Whore bawd or harridan,
> So man is for the woman made
> And the woman made for man.

Purcell dramatises the cockiness of the song; male self-assertion
demands that the opening word be uttered three times on emphatic
minims before the melody runs into the opening phrase, perfectly
complemented by the second line of the refrain resolving down
from the dominant to the tonic. The four lines of the verse

are then given a repeating, drone-like phrase which cries out for resolution by the refrain, and so on through the three stanzas.

Purcell preserves the form of the roundelay perfectly; his repetition, which would be absurd in a spoken text, is a splendid dramatisation. Provided the singer's diction is clear, the song virtually sings itself, but Purcell has left the nuances to the performers; the absurd contrasts, for example.

> As for night's the serenade,
> As for pudding is the pan,
> And to cool us is the fan...

In a totally different mood, "Fairest Isle" (Harewood & Duncan, **1973**, 44) affords another example of a strophic song that takes its form from its text and yet that transforms pedestrian poetry. It is not that Purcell's exquisite melody evokes a love of place "too deep for words" (**supra**, 202), but that the song's emotion derives from beyond Dryden's undistinguished lines (**1958**, 577).

> Fairest Isle, all isles excelling,
>   Seat of pleasures, and of loves:
> Venus here, will chuse her dwelling,
>   And forsake her Cyprian groves.
>
> Cupid, from his fav'rite nation,
>   Care and Envy will remove;
> Jealousie, that poysons Passion,
>   And Despair that dies for Love.
>
> Gentle murmurs, sweet complaining,
>   Sighs that blow the Fire of Love;
> Soft repulses, kind disdaining,
>   Shall be all the pains you prove.
>
> Every swain shall pay his duty,
>   Grateful every nymph shall prove;
> And as these excel in beauty,
>   Those shall be renown'd for Love.

In its operatic context in **King Arthur** the very simplicity of the song is functional. Spink points out (1974, 225-226) how Purcell's dramatic instincts can transform even stage directions into thrilling music, so that the blustering, buffeting four winds are subdued at Aeolus' command, "Ye blust'ring Brethren", after which, in calm "An Island arises" from the sea, and after some joyful peasant dances, Venus sings the song in perfect serenity. That serenity is contrived in a gentle 3/4, matching Dryden's regular trochaic rhythm, with variety maintained by the timing within the bars. But Purcell's care for speech rhythms should not be exaggerated: here his musical purpose over-rules the speech rhythms of his opening bar, where we should expect minim to precede crotchet. The eight-line strophe with the melodic structure, AAB, so much used by Campion, confers an expansiveness on the text's ballad structure. In this context Purcell creates an ambience rather than a detailed emphasis upon text.

A totally different sort of song is "The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation", dating from 1693 (Purcell, **1947a**). Generically it is related to the extended arias from the theatre, like "Let the dreadful engines" and "From rosy bowers". Here we have a dramatisation of the anguish of Mary when the twelve-year-old Jesus was lost by his parents in Jerusalem (Luke, 2, 42-52). The text is a loosely-structured, clichéd piece in irregular couplets by Nahum Tate.

> Tell me, some pitying angel, quickly say,
> Where does my soul's sweet Darling stray?
> In tiger's or more cruel Herod's way?
> Ah, rather let his little footsteps press
> Unregarded through the wilderness.   5
> Where milder savages resort.
> The desert's safer than a tyrant's court.
> Why, fairest object of my love,
> Why dost thou from my longing eyes remove?
> Was it a waking dream that did foretell   10
> Thy wondrous birth? No vision from above?
> Where's Gabriel now that visited my cell?
> I call, Gabriel! Gabriel!
> He comes not; flatt'ring hopes farewell.
> Me Judah's daughters once caress'd,   15
> Called me of mothers the most blest.
> Now, fatal change, of mothers most distress'd.
> How shall my soul its motions guide
> How shall I stem the various tide,
> Whilst faith and doubt my lab'ring soul divide? 20
> For whilst of thy dear sight beguil'd
> I trust the God, but O! I fear the child.

Purcell preserves the sequence of lines but repeats freely as his dramatic declamation demands, for the looseness of the structure clearly leaves him free to create his own structure. Tate's final line, which certainly deserves a better context, offers Purcell a thematic focus for a psychological drama of faith.

The song falls into six distinct sections. The first, in C minor, runs down to the end of the seventh line of text in twenty-six bars, establishing the dramatic situation. The intensity of the declamation is apparent from the beginning, with the repetition of the opening phrase and the distraught isolated "some" as

if Mary were casting about desperately for help. The key word
in the opening phrase, "pitying", takes an anguished leap downward
of a minor sixth, a device that is used throughout the song
at moments of intense anguish. Thus the characterisation depends
from the beginning on the agitated rhythms and uncomfortable
intervals.

Only on the second utterance of the word "cruel" does Purcell
use melisma for the first time. The fourth line of text, however,
is treated to some characteristic Purcellian word-painting,
with its dotted quaver sighs and its sequential rhythmical figures
on "little, little footsteps"

The section is brought to a full cadence with a protracted angry
melisma on the word "tyrant" - Purcell's contribution to alleviating
the effects of Tate's sententious banality.

The next section is heralded by a major chord in the dominant of the original C minor, as the reaction of Mary to her situation is explored more specifically. Dramatising the conflict between faith and doubt, Purcell presents Mary's first anguished questions against an affirmatively major chord before shifting back to the minor for the terrible doubt of the truth of her original vision. For the repeated calls on Gabriel the voice takes a high G while the accompaniment explores the tonal relationships of that note in a distracted sequence of chords. This is followed by the anguished chromatics of the following line, ending the section in virtual despair, reminiscent of Dido's lament, with its drooping sequences.

Yet the strength of the annunciation promise is magnificently affirmed in the next section, "Ye Judah's daughters", a lovely arioso in C major, further differentiated from the rest of the song by its triple time. The song returns to its anguish with a sudden startling movement into the distant key of F minor, heralding the line

Now, fatal change, of mothers most distress'd.

This line comprises the shortest section of all, virtually a

bridge passage, a passionate outburst, lacking the questioning introspection of the sections that enclose it. Yet it closes, at the word "distress'd", on another of those mysterious major cadences, this time in G major; another point at which the music as a whole makes an affirmation despite its vocal line.

The section that follows is the longest: a brisk lyrical **allegro** which expands three lines of text into forty-four bars of music, including the repeats. In keeping with the promise of the previous cadence, its somewhat calmer self-questioning is conducted partly in a major key, returning at the end of the line

> Whilst faith and doubt my lab'ring soul divide

to C minor. This is followed immediately by a C major chord introducing the final **adagio** with its declaration of trust in God, and its subsidence, through a long drawn-out sigh, to the tonic C minor on the phrase "O! I fear the child".

It is a work of extraordinary intensity, almost unique in Christian art for its refusal to conform to hagiographic convention at the cost of psychological truth. And at the service of that psychological truth it places uncompromisingly all its musical resources, rhythmic, melodic and harmonic.

It is clear that Purcell's particular concern for language, for dramatic utterance as an index of individual psychological truth, required not verse, but impassioned prose. This he found in the Bible, and the unique quality of his church music is rounded on a powerful response to Biblical text. "My Beloved spake" (Purcell, 1952) is a very early work, written some fifteen years before "The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation". It takes its text from **The Song of Solomon** (2, 10-13 and 16).

> My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flow'rs appear upon the earth; and the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land...
> My beloved is mine, and I am his.

For this magnificent text Purcell found dramatic expression, using the form of the verse anthem with a vitality and an inventiveness in his musical imagery that some persons found shocking. A slightly older contemporary, Thomas Tudway, writing in 1716, recalled that Charles II,

> ... who was a brisk and airy prince, comeing to the crown in the flow'r and vigour of his age, was soon, if I may so say, tyr'd with the grave and solemn way, and order'd the composers of his Chappell to add symphonys etc. with instruments to their anthems; and therupon establis'd a select number of his private music to play the symphonys and retornellos which he had appointed.
> (Quoted by Westrup, 1980, 199.)

Tudway does not disguise his own disapproval, and later refers to "this secular way" of writing church music. Even eighteen years after the Restoration Purcell's anthem must have been startling, but it was, in a way, self-justifying, because the text must have had very powerful symbolic associations with

the Restoration, not only of the monarchy, but also of the Church
of England. Its imagery of natural regeneration, then, is a
sort of declaration of new faith, and it is this imagery that
shapes a work that is musically somewhat diffuse. Comparatively
little melodic material is recapitulated; the work alternates
between 3/4 and 4/4 tempi rarely moving very far away from its
home key of F major. Its effects depend upon broad contrasts
of texture among the strings, the solo voices, the solo ensemble
(ATBB), and the full chorus.

The opening section is a pastoral overture, setting the scene. A
change of tempo accompanies the first verse of the text. The
first phrase is given to three of the voices in turn, followed
by the successive rising invitation, "Rise!"

The apostrophes, "my love, my fair one", are moved from voice to voice in easy polyphony, dovetailing the invitations "...rise ... and come away". This celebration of love is the outer frame of the work. It ends here with a short comment from the strings before a shift into F minor at the phrase "For, lo, the winter is past". A hundred and seventy-three bars later the music returns to the sentence, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away", before the concluding verse, "My beloved is mine and I am his."

The interior section is a set of images of natural generation. It begins, as we have observed, in the minor at "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone." The two phrases of this sentence occupy nineteen bars of singing before the strings take over the same material. The appearance of the flowers upon the earth is set in successive imitative phrases converging into homophony where Purcell uses simple word-painting for the singing of birds, bringing in the chorus for the first time. The hallelujahs that follow this are a means of using voices to develop a musical idea with strong emotional, and weak semantic content, very much as Tudor composers used the Amen. The voice of the turtle makes a rather cursory appearance in which Purcell's invention does seem, for a moment, to be flagging, for he does not develop his little chromatic figure very far, but repeats, instead, the overture. This is followed by a twenty-bar tenor solo to the sentence "The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell." Purcell's ability to find music appropriate for this image of young growth is uncanny; its effect lies partly in the chromatics, partly in the sensual relish of the phrase "... give a good smell".

This very sensuality is the motivation for the return to the
section "Rise, my love, my fair one", and its resolution in
the final section, a lovely, skipping theme which, with hallelujahs,
Purcell expands to a hundred bars.

It is an uneven work characterised, appropriately enough, by
a tremendous vitality and charm. Its significance for our purposes
is its demonstration of how Purcell could respond as a very
young man to a beautiful text in strong rhythmical prose that
permits considerable repetition and expansion. We can see the
same vitality in a more disciplined context in an anthem from
Purcell's mid-twenties, the popular "Rejoice in the Lord alway"
(Purcell, **n.d.**). We referred in an earlier chapter (**supra** 87-89)
to the anonymous Sixteenth Century setting of the verses from
Philippians (4, 4-7),

> Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let
> your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is
> at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing
> by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your
> requests be made known unto God. And the peace of
> God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your
> hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A comparison of the two settings reveals, rather surprisingly,
how simple are Purcell's effects in this anthem; these effects
are largely dependent upon the three-way contrast among strings,

vocal trio and full chorus. His opening string section is built
on the simplest ground bass, a double descending C major scale
repeated five times on the cellos. It is, of course, this ground
from which the piece takes its popular nickname, "The Bell Anthem",
although a residual sense of decorum restricted the use of grounds
in church music. By the seventh bar, this scale is being used,
rising or falling, in all the instrumental parts. The whole
passage of sixteen bars is then repeated before the first vocal
section, so that the command to rejoice is heralded by peal
upon peal before the text is announced by the three solo voices,
ATB. At their entry, new melodic material is introduced in 3/4
time. From here Purcell builds a rondo around the two phrases
of the first line of the text, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and
again I say, rejoice".

The rhythmical and syntactical integrity of the text is scrupulously preserved for these phrases, which constitute the core of the whole work. The underlay of the text is subtle; Watkins Shaw (1959) has made the point that the note values should not be followed too literally within the phrases, but that the singers should permit the phrases to shape themselves according to speech rhythms. The core phrases are repeated, with slight variations, by the strings, who then introduce new material of their own before the trio returns to repeat the core phrases. The vocal cadence is then repeated in the strings before the solo tenor entry, "Let your moderation", a new phrase again, which is picked up in close imitation by the other two voices, returning quickly to homophonic scoring for the rest of the sentence. The full chorus then enters with its own variation of the "Rejoice in the Lord alway" theme. Here, not only the choral weight, but the added harmonic weight of the treble part creates a splendid contrast with the preceding material. The point is neatly clinched where the single word "again" is echoed by the solo voices as the coda repeats the last part of the sentence.

The second part of the work begins with the lovely bass solo, "Be careful for nothing". He is joined in sequence by the other two voices in this more meditative section. It contrasts with the ebullient C major sections by passing through several modulations into E minor, and thence into a cadence in the major on the words "...made known unto God." A further modulation into A major takes us with a change of tempo into the gentle section beginning, "And the peace of God". Here again the singers must be careful to allow the natural rhythms to assert themselves, for the chant-like setting is intended by Purcell to emphasise the petitionary nature of the text. Perhaps even here we can detect the influence of Merbecke, though the discretion with which Purcell turns a chant into an exquisite melody is the work of a great musician.

The whole sentence is repeated very quietly, moving gently into
C major, where the strings pick it up for a short variation. The
work ends with a return from this tranquillity to the 3/4 "Rejoice
in the Lord alway" section, first in the solo trio and then
in full chorus, completing the rondo, and bringing the music
back to the joyous mood in which it began. In this respect,
it differs from the anonymous Sixteenth Century setting, which
ended with those polyphonic variations on a rising five-note
figure to the text "And the peace of God..." (supra 89). This
difference is not only a matter of where the focus falls on
the text, though it certainly is that. It is also attributable
to a shift, even in church music, from text-determined form

to musically-determined form. Purcell's approach in this anthem is not dramatic, for the text does not invite it. Rather he interprets the text under an over-ruling mood, the constant return to which provides the thematic centre for his rondo. The expressiveness of the music is not determined by melisma or word-painting or chromatics, but by the creation of broadly contrasting moods, enlivened by well-judged modulations with occasional graces and syncopations in the vocal lines and one or two poignant false relations. Although it is on the conservative side of Purcell's output, it could not be mistaken for anyone else's work, and it is to this and to its marvellous assurance that its great popularity is attributable.

Most of Purcell's anthems belong to the earlier years of his career. The later religious songs like, "The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation", which were published in Purcell's lifetime in two volumes entitled **Harmonia Sacra** in 1688 and 1693, are not church music in the sense that they were not written for performance in church. Most of the later church music was composed for specific occasions, and belongs stylistically with the odes and welcome songs; this includes such masterpieces as the **Te Deum and Jubilate in D**, composed for St Cecilia's Day 1694, and the 1695 setting of "Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts", written for Queen Mary's funeral. All of Purcell's vocal music, as we have seen, became steadily more and more dramatic during the 1680s. Whether it is cause or effect, it is clear that his dramatic flair is associated with an interest in individual human reactions in specific situations. Even when his imagination was seized by a great text to give it inspired utterance in the verse anthem "They that go down to the sea in ships" (Ps 107, 23-32), the occasion was the deliverance of King James II from a fearsome storm at sea and the account given to Purcell by the great bass virtuoso, the Rev John Gostling, for whom Purcell wrote the tremendous solos of that anthem. Anthony Lewis sees this interest in the individual as one of the fundamental characteristics

of Purcell's work, and accounts for Purcell as a product of the age that saw the founding of the Royal Society as well as the building of St Paul's (1968, 4).

> A heightened interest in the individual, his emotions and his place in the scheme of life, and a growing belief in the independence of his intellectual powers found an appropriate parallel in music where the solo human voice became the chief focus of attention over a subordinate accompaniment.

By this interest in the individual, this passionate search for psychological truth, Purcell is associated with some of the deeper currents in European culture. A similar search, for example, is apparent in the work of a great near-contemporary, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), who could also take overwhelming inspiration from a snippet, say, of biblical text. And in Rembrandt we can see also, despite the differences in medium, a drive towards the dramatic.

Purcell's involvement with the theatre began as early as 1680 when he provided music for Nathaniel Lee's tragedy **Theodosius.** But it was with **Dido and Aeneas** in 1689 that he was able to bring the concentrated force of a mature talent into the theatre. From then until his death in November 1695 he was continually involved in the theatre, providing music both substantial and incidental for tragedies, romances and farces, and saving many a theatrical hack from total oblivion. We have seen examples of the technique he brought to the theatre, and have discussed his sensitivity to dramatic context. Ian Spink, in particular, feels that a great deal of the impact of the music is lost out of its dramatic context. He discusses (1974, 230-231) one of the most famous of the songs, "Music for a while", which is now part of the repertory of art song, but which was originally written for a version of **Oedipus** by Dryden and Lee (1692). In context, the comfort offered by the beguiling powers of music to Oedipus before he learns the truth about the curse upon Thebes is cold comfort indeed, and a far deeper significance is assumed by the strangeness of the famous passage to the text,

> musick for a while
> Shall all your cares beguile:
> Wondring how your pains were eas'd.
> And disdaining to be pleas'd;
> Till Alecto free the dead
> From their eternal bands;
> Till the snakes drop from her head,
> And the whip from out her hands.
>   (Dryden, 1958, 171)

The trouble is, however, that the play as a whole is not worth the revival, even to provide a context for such a fine song.

Westrup asserts confidently, "There is no doubt that Purcell was fortunate in his librettists" (1980, 155). This is quite wrong: there is a good deal of doubt on the point, and it needs to be examined, for a just estimate of the relationship between music and text in Purcell cannot stop simply at the lyrics of individual songs or at the biblical texts of individual anthems. Purcell was the first English operatic composer of real stature, and still perhaps the greatest; and opera takes the question of text and music into a new dimension.

When a character in a play announces that he is angry, the audience is left unmoved until it can see some demonstration of the anger and, more important, some consequence of the anger. If the character spends five minutes telling us how angry he is we are left irritated or bored or unbelieving. In opera however, we expect some time to be devoted to the statement. This is partly because a well-executed musical statement of anger, like Polyphemus' "I rage, I burn" in Handel's **Acis and Galatea,** is itself a demonstration of anger which the conventions persuade us to accept. In such a case the libretto for the statement serves simply as a pointer to what the music expresses and explores. If it is absurd, it may distract the attentive listener; if it is great poetry it may frustrate, especially if the dramatic impulses of the music tend to dismember the poetry. In so far as opera tends to concentrate its dramatic interest in the music, there is some aesthetic sense in the well-known gibe that audiences prefer opera to

be sung in a language unfamiliar to them. In a great deal of
opera therefore, dramatic action is limited and crude; the most
important music arrests the course of dramatic action; how often
is action announced in recitative and reacted to in aria!

But in opera's greatest moments, music succeeds in being dramatic
action. The opening of **Le Nozze di Figaro** is a case in point: the
curtain rises on a cocky, self-confident Figaro pacing out the
bridal chamber to determine the position of the bed. Susanna
is trying on a bonnet: preening her mating plumage, as it were. Each
is pre-occupied, and for a while neither secures the other's
attention. Their separate, yet related pre-occupations are dramatised
in their singing lines; first in sequence, and then simultaneously,
before they recognise each other's concerns and their singing
lines converge into comfortable homophony. As the opening to
a drama concerned with the search for, and struggle for, and
discovery and loss and rediscovery of human sexual identity
it is superb. A little later, when Figaro's naivety is challenged
by Susanna, and she reveals the threats and limitations imposed
upon his attainment of selfhood by an acquisitive, class-conscious
society, he responds with a most seditious statement of his
determined claim on selfhood, "Se vuol ballare, Signor Contino". More
than the literal stage is set for a truly dramatic conflict.

Lorenzo da Ponte displayed very great skill in providing Mozart
with a libretto out of which he could create such drama. It
is such a librettist that Purcell lacked. Westrup asserted of
Purcell's librettists (1980, 155),

> Several of them were poets of distinction, who did
> not regard theatrical composition as an excuse for
> lowering their standards.

This statement is hardly justified by the appalling verse that
was given to Purcell by the likes of Tate, D'Urfey, Shadwell
and even Dryden. But worse still, none of these men showed a
genuine sense of drama by giving Purcell a libretto in which
characters could develop and expand even in the course of an

aria, and in which the singing could therefore constitute dramatic action itself rather than a reaction to a stated action. That he sometimes succeeded in making dramatic action of the music is a measure of his genius alone.

When Tate revamped one of his early plays as the libretto for **Dido and Aeneas**, both he and Purcell assumed in their audience a familiarity with the plot of Vergil's epic. This is evident because the sequence of action is taken for granted and very few textual pointers to that sequence are given. The point is material, because a libretto whose plot can be taken for granted need not rely on more than cue references being made intelligible by the singers; it is a principle which has determined the character of most of the great liturgical settings and oratorios. We need not concern ourselves too far with the conditions of the opera's composition and first performance at Josiah Priest's dancing academy in 1689. It is clear that Purcell's imagination was seized and that the absence of elaborate stage machinery was a challenge he joyfully accepted; it left him free to create something between a chamber opera and a secular cantata.

For an indication of how little Purcell relied on his libretto we have only to look at the two "ho ho ho" choruses (Purcell, **1887**, nos 16 and 18). Both Westrup (1980) and Spink (1974) complain about Purcell's treatment of the witches, and his failure to "... suggest the horror of the supernatural" (Westrup, 1980, 118). But in fact the demonic energy of the first "ho ho ho" chorus follows a particularly sinister piece of recitative, with powerful dramatic effect; and the second such chorus is followed by the storm-conjuring duet "But ere we this perform", in which Purcell's meteorological effects are wonderfully executed to a particularly limp quatrain:

> But ere we this perform,
> We'll conjure up a storm
> To mar their hunting sport,
> And drive 'em back to court.

Westrup presumably has in mind the witches in **Macbeth,** but Purcell's witches are more Classical, and in a grim way, more humanist. It is not supernatural horror that Purcell is exploring, but a demonic energy personified in the Furies and driving the characters headlong to their fatal destruction. The treatment of that word "drive" is powerfully significant.

This passage recalls the urgency of the pursuing phrases in Belinda's solo air "Pursue thy conquest, Love" (no 10), which is a sort of frenetic benediction on the fated pair.

One can continue to quote example after example of the strength each particular piece takes from its context and juxtapositions. It will, of course, be pointed out that the sequence is Tate's,

but it is clearly Purcell who breathes life into the sequence, deciding what shall and what shall not be emphasised. There is, for example, no correlation whatever between length of textual passages and length of musical items. The famous sailor's song "Come away, fellow sailors" (no 28) at the opening of Act Three is one of Tate's better lyrics, and Purcell sets it as a jaunty sea song without decoration or repeats before the last line.

> Come away, fellow sailors, come away,
> > Your anchors be weighing,
> > Time and tide will admit no delaying;
> Take a boozy short leave of your nymphs on the shore,
> > And silence their mourning
> > With vows of returning,
> But never intending to visit them more,
> No, never intending to visit them more.

It is precisely this jaunty male cynicism from which Dido takes the cue for her inconsolable grief when Belinda joins Aeneas in an attempt to persuade her that Aeneas is compelled to leave Carthage by divine command: see "Your counsel all is urg'd in vain" (no 33). The cynicism of the sailors shades easily into the witches' demonic delight in the song "Our next motion must be to storm", and the chorus "Destruction's our delight" (nos 30 and 31). If this sort of subtlety was Tate's, he disguised his talents very well at other times.

Purcell's use of the chorus is also very effective in its musical ingenuity; see, for example, the echo chorus "In our deep vaulted cell" (no 21). But the dramatic effect of the choruses is vitiated by their texts where polyphony does not discreetly obscure them. Purcell's skill at the court odes had long accustomed him to setting lines like,

> When monarchs unite, how happy their state;
> They triumph at once o'er their foes and their fate.
> > > (No 5)

or,

> Great minds against themselves conspire,
> And shun the cure they most desire. (No 35)

We can be thankful, therefore, that, for Dido's dying lament

(no 37), Tate attempted no more than the following prosaic utterance:

> When I am laid in earth,
> May my wrongs create no trouble in thy breast;
> Remember me! but ah! forget my fate.

The inspiration Purcell took from this is clearly dramatic and situational, and the wonderful **passacaglia** he created is shaped and controlled not by its text, but by its magnificent chromatic ground bass.

If it is idle to speculate how Purcell would have reacted to a librettist of genius, a Da Ponte or a Boito or a Hofmannsthal, it is also absurd to pretend that those he had were even competent; his dramatic talents were not assisted by his librettists. His vocal music shows us a man whose imagination could be fired to powerful dramatic expression by the merest suggestions of a text, regardless of quality or length. "When I am laid in earth" expands a mere three lines into a major aria. In this respect we have a notable contrast with some of the great arias from the last years of Purcell's life, like "From rosy bowers" and "Let the dreadful engines", which are set to lengthy texts. But "When I am laid in earth" anticipates the solutions of Bach and Handel to the problems of text and music in building an extensive meditation around a short text whose phrases are constantly repeated, and provide the inspirational basis for an essentially musical development.

HANDEL: DIVORCE

In 1885 W S Gilbert poured some of his considerable scorn upon

> The idiot who praises with enthusiastic tone
> All centuries but this and every country but his own.
> (**The Mikado**, I; Gilbert, n. d., 353)

He would have found many targets in Eighteenth Century England, in another age of middle and upper class prosperity and complacence. We have referred to the French tastes brought into England by Charles II. A further Continental influence is apparent in the praise which Dryden bestows on the Italian language for the "perfect harmony" of its sounds (Preface to **Albion and Albanius**, 1685; see Dryden, **1912**, 175ff). And even Purcell, under Dryden's influence, could say of English music,

> 'Tis now learning Italian, which is its best master, and studying a little of the French air, to give it somewhat more of gayety and fashion.
> (Preface to the published score of **Dioclesian**, 1691, quoted by Westrup, 1980, 69)

After he died a few years later, English music was to labour under a still greater sense of inferiority to Italian, French and German.

The gap left in London's musical life by his death was filled almost fortuitously by a young man from Halle in Saxony who was seeking fame and fortune, and perhaps escape from the tradition of Lutheran Church music in which he had been so thoroughly grounded. However the immediate appeal to the London public of George Frideric Handel was not his Lutheran training, but his familiarity with Italian opera. He arrived, aged twenty-five, in 1710, fresh from Italy, where he had met and learned from both Scarlattis, Alessandro and Domenico, and Corelli (see Colles, 1928 and 1978). In 1711 his opera **Rinaldo** was performed to enthusiastic audiences in London. It began a London fashion for Handel operas with Italian libretti. In 1712 he settled in England, and his former employer, George, the Elector of Hanover, acceded

to the British throne in 1714. Handel's vocal music with English texts began about 1717 when, under the patronage of the Duke of Chandos, he wrote a set of anthems, and, in 1718, the secular cantata, **Acis and Galatea**, to a libretto by John Gay and others. Given the force of his musical personality and the absence of a native successor to Purcell, English opera, indeed English music, fell into a remarkable decline for nearly two hundred years between Purcell and the quarrelsome partnership of W S Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan.

But despite the success of **Rinaldo**, and the persistence for thirty years after of the series of Italian operas by Handel, the London public was never wholly predictable in its attitude towards Italian opera. And its fickleness may be partly attributable to the alien idiom. The greatest operatic success of Handel's time was a brilliant counterblast from the native tradition of English culture, John Gay's **The Beggar's Opera**, which had an unprecedented run of over a hundred performances in 1728, and remained popular throughout the Century (see Lewis, 1973). It is a significant work in our narrative for its attempt to assert both the native tradition of English vocal music, and a relationship between English poetry and music that preserves the integrity of both. But it was the last such attempt before the genius of Handel established unambiguously the priority of music in song and the relegation to a very junior partnership of the text. In any event, after Handel's death there is a decline in the stature of English music, and the manifold problems of the relationship that is song are not seriously faced in English culture again until the late Nineteenth Century. This chapter will consider **The Beggar's Opera** (Gay, 1973, and 1982), and then look briefly at Handel's setting of English texts.

If the target for Gay's satirical comment had been only contemporary musical fashion, it would have perished the way all "in" jokes do. But Gay devised a piece of drama that offered incisive comment

on the social and political **mores** of his day. In a letter to
Pope dated August 30th 1716, Swift observes that "the pastoral
ridicule is not exhausted" and suggests that Gay might write
"a Newgate pastoral among the whores and thieves there" (R Brimley
Johnson, **1897**, 53). Gay took up the suggestion at a time when
one of the more obvious targets for pastoral ridicule was Italian
opera. **Rinaldo** was far from being the first Italian opera to
be staged in London, and it prompted Joseph Addison to a series
of attacks in **The Spectator** (Addison et al, 1907, vol 1, nos
5, 18 & 29). But between **Rinaldo** and **The Beggar's Opera** at least
fifteen Handel operas were performed in London (Dean & Hicks,
1980, 114), many on heroic classical subjects. While there is
no evidence that Gay objected to Handel's music, he certainly
did see the fashion for Italian opera as a threat to literary
values. A passage in a letter from Gay to Swift in February
1728 is as revealing of Gay's aspirations as of contemporary
fashion (R Brimley Johnson, **1897**, 110):

> As for the reigning amusement of the town, 'tis entirely
> musick; real fiddles, bass viols and hautboys not
> poetical harps, lyres and reeds. There's nobody allow'd
> to say I sing but an eunuch or an Italian woman. Every
> body is grown now as great a judge of musick as they
> were in your time of poetry. And folks that could
> not distinguish one tune from another now daily dispute
> about the different styles of Handel, Bononcini, and
> Attilio. People have now forgot Homer, and Vergil
> and Caesar, or at least they have lost their ranks,
> for in London and Westminster in all polite conversations
> Senesino is daily voted to be the greatest man that
> ever liv'd.

Senesino was one of the most famous castrati of his day.

Gay was able, therefore, to construct a comedy of manners that
both parodied and contrasted with the prevailing fashions in
opera and in spoken drama, and that also presented these fashions
as symptoms of the acquisitive and exploitative cynicism pervading
the political and social life of London. Gay's point that the
whores and thieves of his Newgate pastoral were no worse than
their jailers, who were, in any case, often their pimps and

receivers, was not an idly chosen metaphor, but a passionate conviction, well recognised by his audience. Contemporary gossip gave him ample opportunity for some scathing and very direct attacks upon the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. His satire appealed to Hogarth, who makes several references to it in his paintings and graphics, most notably in a painting, now in the Tate Gallery, of Macheath in the condemned cell.

The libretto is incisively witty. Its one-liners are as pungent in their way as those of Oscar Wilde. When Polly confesses to her parents that she is married, they berate her, though her father concedes,

> I am not against your toying and trifling with a customer
> in the way of business. (I, vi, 17)

When Polly protests she loves her husband, her mother exclaims in exasperation,

> Love him! Worse and worse! I thought the girl had
> been better bred. (I, viii, 61)

Yet Gay was served by no native composer. It is a droll sign of the times that the man who composed the overture and arranged the songs Gay chose was the German musical director of the Theatre Royal, Dr Pepusch. But Gay made of necessity a virtue, and embellished his pastoral with a rich variety of popular airs culled from a variety of sources, mainly from Tom D'Urfey's famous anthology, **Wit and Mirth: or Pills to Purge Melancholy**, published in six volumes between 1719 and 1720. The tunes were well chosen and the lyrics finely matched. **The Beggar's Opera** is a far cry from the work of the composers we have discussed so far, Dowland, Campion, Lawes and Purcell, for example, but it is rooted nevertheless in a great English tradition by its use of folk song and urban balladry. One consequence is that the relationship between text and music is here simplified almost to the matching of melody and such clear, simple lyrics as we discussed at the opening of chapter seven. Harmony is unimportant, since neither accompaniment nor added vocal parts have much significance. The third stanza of the famous "Were I laid on Greenland's coast"

(Act I, air xvi), to the tune "Over the hills and far away" is about the most dense harmonic texture we are offered: the first stanza is given to Macheath and the second to Polly, and only in the third do they actually sing together. But the tune is beguiling, and Gay's simplicity of means achieves a fine dramatic effect. With a bit more musical sophistication Mozart was to use the same structural device in the duet "La ci darem la mano" in **Don Giovanni.**

The relationship is simplified **almost** to the mere matching of lyric and air, I said. As in the **Don Giovanni** duet, the other factor of vital importance to the impact of the songs in **The Beggar's Opera** is dramatic context. The very tenderness of the duet between Polly and Macheath has a host of ironic contrasts with the sense of vulturine appetite that has been established as one of the work's themes before Macheath and Polly are brought together on stage. With the single exception of Polly - and she is ambivalent - the characters see themselves and one another as consumable commodities, and their loyalties are simply arrangements of convenience, truces during which they combine to consume a hapless third party. Peachum's opening song makes the point in very general terms (I, air i):

> Through all the employments of life
>   Each neighbour abuses his brother;
> Whore and rogue they call husband and wife:
>   All professions be-rogue one another.
> The priest calls the lawyer a cheat,
>   The lawyer be-knaves the divine;
> And the statesman, because he's so great,
>   Thinks his trade as honest as mine.

A more subtle song, in both music and text, is Mrs Peachum's "A maid is like the golden ore" (I, air v). Here the real bite to the setting of the pastoral "among the whores and thieves" in Newgate begins to show. The point is not unlike that made by Blake seventy years later in his "London" (**1977**, 128), where "the chartered streets" and "the chartered Thames" are symptomatic of the usage of a society in which procreation, marriage and

love itself are given out to charter - and in every social class.

The charm of the tune half-covers the deadly morality of the
sentiments, very much as the polite institutions of society
disguise its avarice; but the tune has a drive that is appropriate
to the ruthlessness of the lyric, and the climax falls rightly
enough on the word "gold", which rhymes so ominously with "sold",
undercutting the appearance of a conventional tribute to wifely
worth. The point is made over and over, right through to Macheath's
song "The modes of the court" (III, air xliv) in which Gay so
carefully matches a sententious ballad to the famous tune "Lilli-
bullero". Gay's fine craftsmanship is shown in the easy accommod-
ation of the ballad into the tune's triple time, and the internal
rhymes of the second ballad stanza, which so perfectly match
the phrasing of the music.

Polly's attempt to assert other values against these, attributed
by Mrs Peachum to "those cursed play-books she reads" (I, x,
63), is not without a knowing wit, as is apparent in "Can love
be controlled by advice" (I, air viii).

Another instance is "Cease your funning" (II, air xxxvii), in which Gay's skill at telling internal rhymes is once more apparent.

But the whole setting and mood of the work implies that such attempts to break out of the social value-system are doomed. Gay's contrived happy ending is perhaps part of this implication; it is inserted, as the Player says, "To comply with the taste of the town" (III, xvi, 15), a splendid irony. In one respect, the value-system of society did assert itself over Gay's biting commentary. Sir Robert Walpole, who was seen to laugh and applaud loudly on the opening night, never returned to the play, and, though he found it expedient to tolerate **The Beggar's Opera**, suppressed its proposed successor, **Polly** (see Lewis, 1973, 20-21), which was published in 1729, but not staged until 1777. The popularity of a ballad opera in the age of the baroque is easy to understand, but it must also be apparent why **The Beggar's Opera** is unique: even without political suppression, the formula was not infinitely repeatable, for it moved against the tide of European music; and had Gay found a native composer of genius, it is unlikely that the partnership would have flourished. In the event, the native composer of genius was not there. Gay's single collaboration with Handel was **Acis and Galatea**, dating from 1718 when Handel was still struggling with English. In any case, as we shall see, Handel's treatment of text involved the imposition of a musically-determined form upon any text, poetry or prose. The dramatic treatment of "I rage, I burn" and the melismata and tedious repetitions of textual phrase in "O ruddier than the cherry", show clearly that even with Gay's libretto for **Acis and Galatea**, Handel's habits had been formed before 1718.

Handel's treatment of English text naturally shows a development as his mastery of the language of his adopted country grows. The characteristics of his treatment of text are well-known because so much of his vocal music is well-known. The heavy false emphasis at the opening of "For unto us" in **The Messiah** is a well-known flaw handsomely compensated by the splendid choral declamations of the titles promised by Isaiah to the Christ-child, "Wonderful!

Counsellor! The mighty God! The Prince of Peace!" The melismata of the great choruses like "And he shall purify" or of arias like "Rejoice greatly" and "The trumpet shall sound" contrast, as is well-known, with the intrisically melodic yet carefully declaimed recitative and arioso sections. Compare "Comfort ye my people" with "Ev'ry valley". But if the outlines are clear, the details are sometimes obscured. **The Messiah** is one of those works we think we know very much better than we do, but it rewards fresh examination. As John Tobin (1969) has shown, it has been very badly butchered by editors, and he has shown that Handel's treatment of English, though flawed, is more subtle than editors sometimes realise. We shall examine the relationship between text and music in his mature work first by looking at something fairly familiar: the duet "O lovely peace" from **Judas Maccabeus** (Handel, **1966**), which was first performed in 1747. We shall then look at his use of a famous verse text in **L'Allegro Il Pensieroso ed Il Moderato (1965b)**, described as an oratorio, and dating from 1740. And finally we shall look at his setting of those fine texts from the Authorised Version that were selected for him by his friend Charles Jennens, the librettist for **The Messiah (n.d.)**.

The Libretto of **Judas Maccabeus** was the work of the Rev Thomas Morrell. The duet "O lovely peace" (Handel, **1966**, 216-221) comes at the end of the work, following the dramatic martial music that bears the narrative of the struggle of the Jews against the oppression of the Seleucid kings. For the restoration of peace, Morrell provided Handel with a simple quatrain which may owe its imagery to the closing verses of Psalm 65.

> O lovely peace with plenty crowned,
> Come spread thy blessings all around;
> Let fleecy flocks the hills adorn,
> And valleys smile with wavy corn.

Handel sets this quatrain in an easy, flowing 6/8 in G major. The opening vocal phrase is given once, clearly, with proper accentuation, before Handel expands it with repetitions and sequences.

When the expansion comes, the accentuation is changed, and in the second line of text, it is left to the singer to avoid too gross a misaccentuation on "thy". The first voice concludes on F sharp, from which the lower voice picks up in the key of D major. The voices continue in imitative counterpoint repeating "O lovely, lovely peace". The effect of the whole, with flute and string parts above the voices, is an exquisite hymn to peace achieved, as always in Handel, by a deceptive simplicity of means. The second couplet is given initially by both voices homophonically without repetitions. But as he develops the imagery of pastoral plenty, it is the final line that attracts Handel's attention. He decorates the word "smile" with one of his characteristic dotted quaver melismata, as if it were a gentle laugh - again perhaps thinking of the wording of Psalm 65:

> The valleys also shall stand so thick with corn that
> they shall laugh and sing.

The gently windswept corn is depicted in the famous quaver figure, folded in, voice after voice. It is interesting that the German translation completely misses the specificity of the musical imagery by rendering "wavy corn" as "die goldne Saat". Throughout the piece it is clear that an understanding of the text is necessary for an understanding of the music. However, Handel has made prose of it in order to submit it to his musical purpose. The adagio in the last phrase of the vocal part is followed characteristically by an instrumental conclusion recalling the material of the introduction.

Morrell's verse is not distinguished enough for us to complain that Handel dismembers it; but this can hardly be said of his treatment of Milton's "L'Allegro and Il Penseroso" (Milton, **1966**, 88-96). The libretto for Handel's setting (Handel, **1965b**) was compiled from Milton by Charles Jennens, who had the temerity to add a section of his own, "Il Moderato". Though Handel later suppressed this section, Wilfrid Mellers has claimed that it contains some of his finest music (1965, 262-265); Mellers attributes

its continued suppression to British outrage at the insult to
Milton. Jennens's text begins,

> Hence, boast not, ye profane,
> Of vainly-fancied, little-tasted pleasure,
> Pursued beyond all measure,
> And by its own excess transform'd to pain.
>
> Come, with native lustre shine,
> Moderation, grace divine,
> Whom the wise God of nature gave,
> Mad mortals from themselves to save.
> Keep, as of old, the middle way,
> Nor deeply sad, nor idly gay
> But still the same in look and gait,
> Easy, cheerful and sedate.

If this reminds us more readily of Isaac Watts than of Milton,
it is because Jennens offers us an Eighteenth Century reaction
to a Seventeenth Century poem. His entire libretto, and Handel's
treatment of it, make an extraordinary commentary from the Eighteenth
Century upon Milton's youthful virtuosity. Mellers argues persua-
sively that this is one of Handel's finest and most profound
works (Mellers, 1965, 257):

> ... the pantheism of **L'Allegro** is the closest Handel
> ever came to religious experience - even closer than
> **Messiah**. So the first two parts of the work are an
> exploration of man's essential nature, and l'Allegro
> (the sanguine man) and il Pensieroso (the melancholy
> man) are the two poles of the human spirit... Although
> they are opposing forces, they are complementary,
> both being within the mind: thus the work is dramatic,
> though the drama is not projected into social ritual.

Of the resolution of this conflict in **Il Moderato**, he says,

> In **Il Moderato** there is only one 'character'; the
> mind is no longer a dualism, though it assumes multiple
> forms.
> **(Ibid, 262)**

My main quarrel with Mellers's judgement is that I dispute the
even-handedness of Handel's exploration of these poles of the
human spirit. Mellers attributes the ebullience of Handel's
"L'Allegro" sections to a conscious thematic dramatisation of
the sanguine humour, distinguishing it from the distracted character
of the melancholic. Certainly Handel consistently finds powerfully
attractive musical imagery for mirth, joy, holidays, and a whole

range of pastoral pleasures, but contemplation, on the other
hand, is not always as attractive. Handel fails to exploit even
such lines as these ("Il Penseroso", ll 161-166):

There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heav'n before mine eyes.

He gives this passage a rather desultory treatment (1965b, 132-133).

If there is a prejudice in Handel towards the sanguine temperament, then it contradicts the grand design as Mellers describes it. But in any case, there is a discrepancy between Milton's design and Handel's, as the dismemberment of Milton's poem shows. That Jennens and Handel added a section devoted to "Il Moderato" is a denial of Milton's design, which rejects the negative aspects of the two humours, and offers hymns to the positive aspects, joy and contemplation respectively, like a two-movement symphony. Milton's contrast is translated in the music into an argument between "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso", with passages of one juxtaposed against passages of the other. Mellers makes the very important point that the lack of specific vocal characterisation for either humour is part of the assertion that these humours are present in all of us. Even without "Il Moderato", the work is planned on a grand scale as a two-part oratorio with numerous movements contrasted in tempo and texture, and a performing time of about two hours.

The tendency we noted in Purcell to expand less and less text into more and more music is, of course, continued in Handel. Thus, a number in this oratorio, whether solo or chorus, rarely uses more than ten lines of text, and usually rather less. The work begins, logically enough, with the opening lines of each poem placed in sequence, although Jennens cuts three lines of "Il Penseroso" in a clear declaration that the symmetry of Milton's design, each poem opening with ten lines, short and long lines alternating, is to be replaced with a different structure. These two introductions, rejecting the negative aspects of Melancholy and of Mirth, are set as dramatic arioso for solo tenor and soprano respectively. They are followed by the two invocations to the positive features of Mirth and Melancholy. Here Handel's prejudice is apparent, and Jennens's too, for he makes substantial cuts from the text of the "Il Penseroso" invocation. Handel sets the "L'Allegro" section with energetic lyricism, but the

section from "Il Penseroso" lacks the sense of calm that Milton evokes. It is as if Handel were bothered by the term "Melancholy" and failed, surprisingly, to realise the significance of Milton's Italian title; for it is calm contemplation that Milton is invoking.

The famous lines beginning "Haste thee nymph" are set to a fine tenor aria and chorus that employ some very graphic word-painting. Again, it is apparent from the beginning that Handel derives his inspiration from the text and is dependent on it, for it is clearly articulated, properly accented and profusely and lovingly illustrated; but the frequent repetitions of word and phrase make it clear that Handel is treating the text as inspired prose, and the work has become a meditation on a theme by Milton. The word "laughter" provokes an orgy of mirth from Handel, with a pun on the first syllable of "holding" (1965b, 12-14).

In the choral section, this mirth become gales of infectious laughter pealing through four-part polyphony.

The next two lines of text ("L'Allegro" ll 33-34),

> Come, and trip it as ye go
> On the light fantastic toe

are similarly expanded with ingenious word-painting into aria and chorus, this time in a tripping 6/8. This tripping chorus in C minor is juxtaposed with an exquisite aria and chorus in F minor to the lines beginning "Come, pensive nun, devout and pure" ("Il Penseroso", ll 31-44). Handel runs through this a particularly lovely ground bass, an image of her "even step and musing gait". It begins like this (Handel **1965b**, 25-26):

A little later Handel commits one of his unfortunate errors of accentuation (1965b, 27).

His intention is clearly to illustrate the word "leaden", but the disposition of the syllables and the top G cause an awkward emphasis on the indefinite article.

So the work proceeds: Handel builds his oratorio on powerful contrasts, taking Milton's poems as his point of inspirational departure. But the work is no more a setting of "L'Allegro and Il Penseroso" than the Verdi-Boito **Otello** is a setting of Shake-speare's **Othello**. In some respects we might see Handel's oratorio as a precursor of those Nineteenth Century overtures and tone-poems which expressed the composer's response to, say, a Shakespeare play, through purely instrumental music; if we concede that the use of the human singing voice makes an important difference, we should nevertheless not overlook the similarities. As a last illustration of the process of translation, let us consider the **da capo** chorus "Populous cities please us then", with its introductory bass solo (1965b, 90-99). Milton wrote

> Towered cities please us then,
> And the busy hum of men,
> Where throngs of knights and barons bold
> In weeds of peace high triumph hold,
> With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
> Rain influence, and judge the prize
> Of wit or arms, while both contend
> To win her grace whom all commend.
> ("L'Allegro", ll 117-124)

Handel's imagination seems to have been seized by the phrase, "the busy hum of men", which he could hear as the basis of a dense sound built up in multiple entries. The three content words of that phrase gave him the means of simulating the buzz and hum of a hive, and he repeats the words at length. This is also the phrase of text which he repeats in the **da capo** section.

Mellers commends Jennens for changing "... the romantic 'towered' to the realistic 'populous'" (1965, 261). Certainly it justifies the musical foregrounding of "the busy hum of men", but again Milton's intention is defeated. Handel might have seen the pleasures of "populous cities" as some of the "vain deluding joys" of the opening line of "Il Penseroso", and so have expressed the comlementarity that Mellers discusses; but Milton clearly meant to take a positive pleasure in the very "romantic" notion that Mellers censures by implication. Why else would Milton have continued by referring to the traditions of chivalric behaviour and courtship? The idealistic mythology in which it is set by Milton conjures a very different sort of "busy hum of men" from that of Handel. The music thus forcibly foregrounds a part of the text that the poetic structure does not. The second part of Handel's chorus, beginning at the line

> Where throngs of knights and barons bold

makes no semantic sense, though its homophonic dignity neatly complements the polyphony that precedes it, and contrasts well with the less pompous following section in a minor key with a contrasting tempo, "With store of ladies".

The functions of "translation" in George Steiner's special sense (**supra**, 18) are so complex and so varied that it is pointless to insist in every case on close correspondence; but Handel's **L'Allegro ed Il Pensieroso** illustrates how far apart English music and English poetry had drifted by the mid-Eighteenth Century, a distance exaggerated by the century that separates the original text from Handel's magnificent oratorio. To see how Handel used a prose text in English in his maturity, we shall turn to more familiar material.

The story is told of a cleric offering to find suitable texts for Handel to set for the coronation of George II. Handel replied that, as a good Christian, he knew his Bible, and would find his own texts, thank you. The consequences included "Zadok the

priest" and "My heart is inditing" (see Dean & Hicks, 1980, 103). In addition to showing something of the man, the story is a commentary on the times and on Handel's expectations of his audience. For, in setting liturgical or biblical prose, the post-Reformation composer could take for granted the familiarity of his listeners with the passage set. This alone would justify a look at how Handel set biblical text, for the problems of making the text intelligible to the listener are significantly different for a biblical text from those relating to, say, a poem by Milton. After two centuries of religious strife and controversy the demands of ecclesiastical decorum in church music, at least in the Church of England, the Lutheran Church and the Catholic Church, were less stringent than they had been, and baroque ebullience found splendid musical expression in the dense polyphony evolved in the new harmonic idiom. Audible intelligibility of every part of the text was not demanded, so that the brilliant fugal choruses of, say, Vivaldi's **Gloria** or Bach's **Mass in B minor** were accepted as devout meditations upon a theme with which the congregation was assumed to be familiar.

Handel had at his disposal not only the resources of tonal harmony, no longer by his time so tentative, but also denser instrumental textures than Purcell had commanded. In **The Messiah** the role of instrumental accompaniment in evoking appropriate moods is vital. Examples spring readily to mind. The recitative "There were shepherds" is accompanied by simple continuo, but the appearance of the angel is heralded by a dramatic change of key and the ecstatic intrusion of the strings with their repeated rising arpeggios. The bare continuo resumes at "And the angel said unto them", which is virtually **recitativo secco**, but this is followed by the strings, in rapturous ostinato, offering a commentary on the angel's announcement. The vocal passage, "And suddenly there was with the angel" is virtually a solo prelude to the great chorus that follows, "Glory to God" (Handel, **n.d.**, 90-93). The bass aria "Why do the nations?" (**n.d.**, 232-242) is prepared

by fourteen bars of furious buzzing on the strings. Similarly, the vocal part in the aria "The trumpet shall sound" (**n.d.**, 301-312) is prepared carefully by the atmospheric recitative using the text,

> Behold, I tell you a mystery! We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

This establishes the theme of the aria, which is then introduced by twenty-nine bars of brilliant trumpet fanfare; and the trumpet continues as a vital part of the entire **da capo** section.

With so much, and such familiar material to choose from, we shall examine in detail simply an example each of Handel's treatment of recitative, aria and chorus in **The Messiah**: the consecutive items, "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth", "The people that walked in darkness" and "For unto us" (**n.d.**, 65-87). The texts are taken from Isaiah (60, 2-3; 9, 2; 9, 6).

> For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.
> The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. And they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.
> For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

The darkness is represented initially by a brooding string ostinato in which the tonic B minor chord oscillates tensely with the chord of the dominant seventh. With the voice's descent through the notes of the B minor chord on the phrase "darkness shall cover the earth" it seems to evoke the darkness of the void before Creation. But the subsequent phrase, "and gross darkness the people", evokes a man-made, post-lapsarian darkness. It is characterised by the downward leap of a diminished fifth, that discordant interval that seems to violate all the laws of concord, and has been characterised as **diabolus in musica**. As

Deryck Cooke points out (1959, 64-69) it is an expression in the language of music which has long been associated with Satan and his influences. When Handel repeats the phrase or text, the interval on "gross darkness" widens to another discord, the minor seventh, which Cooke says is usually expressive of deep melancholy (1959, 74). At the promise of redemption, the crucial word "arise" is treated to a rising melisma in the relative major key of D. The phrase builds itself impressively to its apparent climax on the second syllable of "upon", but it is in fact driving onwards to the real climax on the word "glory", where a solemn descending scale in the voice part takes the music into A major. When the phrase is repeated, the descending passage repeats a note higher. In the final sentence of the text for the arioso the word "light" occurs for the first time, upon which the rhetorical contrast both in the arioso and in the ensuing aria is based. From this point the music moves to a cadence in F sharp major, from whence it returns for the aria to B minor. Handel accommodates the speech rhythms for this dramatic arioso to a slow four in a bar. The declamation is thus deliberate, and the only oddity comes in the final cadence where the word "of" is sung on the first beat of the final bar.

The aria that follows is characterised by the jagged awkwardness of its intervals, images of walking in darkness. The disyllabic pronunciation of "walk-ed" matches this awkwardness. Again the music begins in tension between the tonic chord and that of the dominant seventh. The opening phrase is a long one, working its way down to an F sharp major cadence. From here the second phrase climbs up into a triumphant D major, with the climax on the word "light". As the sentence is repeated in a single musical phrase the music retains its major tonality, but in C. Then, as if its confidence in Isaiah's promise falters, the music slips back into jagged discord, basically in E minor, as Handel simply repeats elements of the phrase "the people that walked in darkness". But the wandering in darkness is resolved

at the next utterance of "light" into G major and thence to
A major as Handel recalls the descending major scale passages
of the arioso, but this time on the word "light" and at a faster
tempo. Again, by the fundamental opposition between darkness
and light, Isaiah's promise is presented as a means of redemption
from the Fall into the original light of Creation. The second
half of the aria, moving on to the second sentence of its text,
emphasises this point. But the sentence is not completed until
the fourth musical phrase, and from here the music gradually
abandons its discordant character, resolving finally onto the
original B minor in a penitential acceptance of the promise
of redemption from "the shadow of death".

The text of "For unto us" contains the justification of Isaiah's promise. From the B minor cadence of the preceding aria, the chorus begins in a joyful G major, with the orchestra announcing the theme before the sopranos, contrasting with the solo bass, enter with the first phrase of the text. Reference has already been made (supra, 238) to the heavy false emphasis on the opening word.

For un-to us a child is born, un-to us a son is givn un - to us a son is givn.

Even the falling figure for the repeated "unto us" seems badly accented, especially when a choir sings it as three evenly accented syllables. A word of caution is necessary, however, about editors, editions and performances. Although false emphases can be found sporadically throughout Handel's work, and although many can be attributed as plausibly to the speed with which he wrote as to the fact that he was not working in his native language, some at least of the oddities of accentuation can be attributed to Handel's editors rather than to the composer. John Tobin's important work on the manuscript sources and the printed editions (1969) has demonstrated that Handel was far more careful in his maturity at setting English text than has been supposed. Tobin shows (1969, 135-136) that Handel was conscious of the sorts of elision that the rhythms of English require, which is why I have scored "given" above as a monosyllable, and set it to a crotchet rather than to two quavers. As to the phrase "unto us", it is given a rising figure in the tenor part much later in the chorus (bars 75-78) where the leap onto the word "us" makes it somehow easier to accent properly; which is perhaps an indication that, with care, it can be made to sound more natural than it usually does in the original soprano entry. One could also argue that the heavily accented "For", if unusual

and somewhat idiosyncratic, is a perfectly legitimate stress laid upon the conjunction to underline the logical structure of the argument proceeding from the previous aria. Certainly Handel is insistent about the emphasis, for the phrase is frequently repeated, and takes no other accentuation. When he wishes to emphasise a different portion of the sentence, the conjunction is conspicuously dropped, as the voices explore various meanings and components of the text "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." The instrumental scoring is spare, and the variations are often uttered against a background of vocal melismata by sopranos or basses. At the phrase "And the government shall be upon his shoulder" new melodic material is used and the voices pick up the phrase in fugal entries which become homophonic at "... and his name shall be called...", to make clear the significance of the titles which are proclaimed in joyful homophony. Here again, the accentuation is scrupulously accurate. Out of the proclamation "The Prince of Peace" the individual parts pick up again the phrase "unto us a child is born", as if Handel is reminding us of the promise given in a later chapter of Isaiah:

<p style="text-align:center">And a little child shall lead them. (11, 6)</p>

The rest of the chorus is an extended development of the ideas, both musical and semantic, that have been announced already. It includes one of Tobin's most telling instances of Handel's care with text and of his editors' carelessness. Successive tenor and soprano entries are made to the text "And the government shall be upon his shoulder" (bars 61-65). Editions and performances frequently render the phrase as
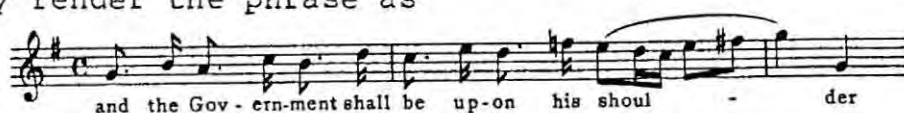
But Tobin points out that Handel's autograph gives the much more logical
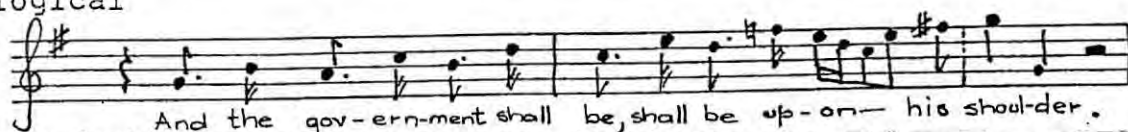
which is better accented because it places the climactic octave

leap in the most logical position on the most logical word. Handel skilfully juxtaposes polyphonic sections with homophonic, being careful always to preserve the homophonic proclamation of the titles, and the chorus ends with their triumphant repetition.

The movement from this chorus to the Pastoral Symphony is masterful. Handel makes one of his characteristic shifts into the subdominant, from G major to C major, and offers us a moving contrast in rhythm, tempo, dynamic and texture with an entirely instrumental **da capo** piece, which bridges the gap between Isaiah's prophecy and its fulfilment. Out of the quiet of the Pastoral Symphony comes the wonderful soprano recitative "There were shepherds".

The compelling power of Handel's design is, as we can see, based upon a profound reaction to his textual material. His use of the resources of the musical language of his time forms a most impressive and moving commentary on the meanings of his text. The aria grows out of the arioso and prepares the way for the chorus that follows. Multiple repetition of elements of the text is an essential feature of his vocal writing. In other words, brief passages of inspired rhetorical prose were precisely what his method demanded. In this characteristic he is part of the mainstream of baroque music. Johann Sebastian Bach was an exact contemporary, born also in 1685. In Bach's work again, text is the essential starting point for profound musical exploration. Whether text is devotional verse, as in **Wachet Auf!** and **Ein Feste Burg,** or liturgical, as in the **Magnificat** and the **Mass in B minor,** or directly biblical, as in the **St Matthew Passion** and the **St John Passion,** Bach uses it for the development of high drama. This is perhaps nowhere more movingly evident than in the **St John Passion,** where St John's own sense for dramatic detail provides Bach with the perfect vehicle for his talents.

If J S Bach's place in the mainstream was sometimes overlooked, British patrons and audiences were able to absorb his influence

through the work of his son, Johann Christian Bach, who spent the last years of his life in Britain. A little later Haydn was very popular with London audiences, which had become cosmopolitan in their musical tastes. Meanwhile, the native British musical tradition was muted; Thomas Arne and William Boyce are minor figures in the history of European music, and their contemporary audiences knew it. English song in the later Eighteenth Century was distinguished neither in its music nor in its texts.

NECESSARY CONJUNCTION: THE HOLY LIFE OF MUSIC AND OF VERSE

This study has not set out to give a history of song, not even
of English song; it has, rather, used an historical framework
to study a problem in aesthetic relationship. In concentrating
on song using English text, and in ending its survey with the
death of Handel, however, it has largely neglected a great period
of song. In the early Nineteenth Century Franz Schubert developed
song anew using piano accompaniment, and helped found virtually
a new genre. He was followed by a group of **Lieder** composers
of enormous talent, all born within the first sixty-five years
of the century: Berlioz, Schumann, Brahms, Dvorak, Fauré, Duparc,
Wolf, Mahler, Debussy and Richard Strauss. By the end of the
century there had been a revival in British music, and song
in English was beginning to find again a native idiom through
Sullivan, Parry, Stanford, Elgar and Vaughan Williams. In this
concluding chapter, as we draw together the threads of the argument,
the historical framework will concern us still because it is
necessary to recognise how developments in music and in poetry
since the Eighteenth Century have altered the relationship and
have revealed new features and new solutions to an old problem.

We may see the Age of Reason personified by Don Alfonso in **Cosi
fan Tutte.** The opera takes a retrospective glance at the Eighteenth
Century, and finds it wanting. As in **Le Nozze di Figaro** and
Don Giovanni, which preceded it, the threat of alienation that
lurks beneath the surface of human experience is very apparent;
there is a sense that the order that had governed European society
is disintegrating. And indeed it was; the opera was first performed
in January 1790 in Vienna. But wherein lies the threat of alienation
in this comedy which marries exquisite music to a text of cynical
farce? Da Ponte's plot revolves around a wager between an ageing
cynic, Don Alfonso, and two young men, Ferrando and Guglielmo,
concerning the fidelity of the ladies betrothed to the young

men, Dorabella and Fiordiligi, respectively. As part of the
wager, Ferrando and Guglielmo claim they are called away suddenly
on military duty, and they take their lugubrious farewells of
Dorabella and Fiordiligi. Shortly after, they return disguised
rather improbably as Albanians and each begins to woo the other's
lady. Dorabella's resistance is mild, Fiordiligi's strenuous,
but of course each is overcome by the charms of the wooers. Nuptial
contracts are then drawn by a fake notary, the ladies' maid,
Despina, who has her own brand of pragmatic cynicism. Then the
disguises are removed, and the indignant young men and their
mortified ladies apparently mollified by Don Alfonso's advice
to take life as one finds it and to let reason only be one's
guide (John, 1983a, 122).

> Fortunato l'uom che prende
> Ogni cosa pel buon verso,
> E tra i casa e le vicende
> Da ragion guidar si fa.

But what are we to assume Don Alfonso's experiment has proved: that
women are all the same, "Così fan tutte"? Da Ponte may have
intended this, but Mozart's music probes deeper. The exploration
of sexual identity in **Le Nozze di Figaro** and **Don Giovanni**, and
the consciousness in those operas of the hypocrisy of proprietorial
male attitudes cannot simply have reverted in this work to mindless
cynicism. In **Così fan Tutte**, as in the earlier operas, a great
deal both of the plot, and of the thematic significance is dependent
upon disguises assumed and then discarded or discovered. What
disguises are removed here? Don Alfonso is clearly right in
his belief that the lovers are merely role-playing when we originally
meet them; but they take more seriously than he does the new
roles which he thrusts upon them. The Ferrando and Guglielmo
who return "as themselves" at the end are no more the young
men who took the wager than Dorabella and Fiordiligi are the
women they were betrothed to. All four have made painful discoveries
of self, most notably, the music tells us, Fiordiligi: the passion
which she discovers in the second act is an entirely new level

of self-awareness, and is deeply disturbing to her. Moreover, neither score nor libretto gives us any clear idea of who in the end pairs off with whom. There are hints about who should be paired: Fiordiligi's depth of feeling is nearly matched by Ferrando's, as Dorabella's superficiality is matched by that of Guglielmo - although the women are given the more individual characterisation by Mozart, as if the men were condemned by society never to drop their disguises entirely. Also, when Fiordiligi attempts to fly in disguise from her dilemma, it is Ferrando's uniform she chooses for herself and Guglielmo's for Dorabella. At all events, the only character for whom nothing seems to have changed by the end is the representative Eighteenth Century "philosopher", Don Alfonso. The philosophy he offers is inadequate to the situation as the others have perceived it, however.

The performing history of this work, and the amendments it suffered (see John, 1983a) suggest it was received with incomprehension. The sort of introspection that is apparent in Mozart's later work violated Eighteenth Century norms, because the music of the Eighteenth Century, both baroque and classical, could be said to have lacked intimacy on the whole. Passion it had in abundance, and grandeur, but its feeling tended towards extroversion. And the vocal music of the Eighteenth Century tended to be public and occasional. When it used poetic text the poetry tended to be subordinated in ways that we have seen; but it was often poetry of such triviality that the subordination could be welcomed. While Mozart's later work maintains the exquisite formal poise and grace of the classical period, it looks forward in its psychological intensity to the romantic age. The change it heralds is made manifest in Beethoven's work. One of his last, most extravagant gestures in vocal music, was to incorporate into the last movement of his last symphony a setting of Schiller's poem, "An die Freude". Never has a lyric poem had so grandiose a setting. Not the finest of German romantic lyrics, it owes its immortality to being swamped as a poem by sheer weight of

musical sound and texture. The central focus of Beethoven's setting suggests that he derived much of his inspiration from the single line,

Alle Menschen werden Brüder.

This is, by its doctrine, public, extroverted music. It contrasts significantly with the **Missa Solemnis**, written about the same time, whose profound personal declaration of faith looks inward at the composer's soul. The **Missa Solemnis** is public music in its use of the liturgy of public worship and in its scale, but it contains moments of great intimacy, and even its public declarations of creed come with the force of personal confession.

There is a passage in the **Credo** which declares the Romantic Revolution as clearly as does Figaro's aria "Se vuol ballare, Signor Contino" (**vide supra,** 224), though it is concerned with the relationship of man to God, not of man to man. Traditionally, a setting of the **Credo** marks the "Et incarnatus est" as a distinct section, as we saw in Byrd's **Mass for Five Voices** (**supra,** 92). It is liturgically a moment of great ritual drama at which, for centuries the celebrant and congregation genuflected or prostrated themselves at the mystery of the Incarnation. Beethoven begins the section (**1971,** 65-69) with a shift from B flat major to D minor, and the music moves in the traditional reverential quiet down to the phrase "...ex Maria Virgine"; but out of a choral cadence then arises the solo tenor in a powerfully affirmative D major proclaiming "Et homo factus est." As the soloist turns over the phrase in wonder, the chorus softly echoes him. In a major break with the traditions of liturgical music, Beethoven here celebrates the grace and dignity of man in the spirit of the psalmist quoted by Jesus in John 10, 34:

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High.   (Ps 82, 6)

The music then moves discordantly back to the minor key on "Crucifixus etiam pro nobis". It has given us a glimpse of man as he might be, in contrast with man as he is, and in this contrast

the blandness of Eighteenth Century reason dissolves. After the **Missa Solemnis** and the **Choral Symphony** Beethoven set aside the resources both of the orchestra and of the human voice to work out his musical last will and testament through the intimate medium of the string quartet.

The Romantic Movement was a revolution against the Age of Reason, and the revival of art song - in the restricted sense of solo song using poetic text - can be attributed to causes similar to those which drove Beethoven back to the string quartet. In the first chapter I insisted on the continuity of song from charm to opera, quoting Edward T Cone (1974, 21):

> If every song is to certain extent a little opera,
> every opera is no less an expanded song.

That continuity is a necessary premise to an understanding of the relationship between text and music. But it is, I think, significant that the finest examples in our evidence of a matching of good poetry and good music use the intimacy of a single voice and a single instrument or a small consort. In other words, for poetic text, the intimacy of what is usually called art song has been throughout several centuries the most effective vehicle. It is difficult to see how as intimate a medium could have flourished in an "Age of Reason". **Così fan Tutte** helps to show why: the "charms" to which the ladies succumb are in fact songs, and their consequent dilemmas are expressed in song. Perhaps the least charming of the lovers, Guglielmo, finds it impossible to join in the nuptial canon because he is in a state of uncharmed anger. Charm is, in fact, antithetical to reason. Dictionary characterisations of the Romantic Movement (the **OED** is no exception) stress its preference for feeling over form, imagination over reason, anarchy over order, and so on. Despite the crudity of such characterisations, we can discern in the literature and music and painting of the time a less mechanistic psychology giving more importance to imagination and intuition than had the Eighteenth Century. Blake valued reason for its

power to organise the mass of data received from the senses:

> Energy is the only life and is from the body and reason
> is the bound or outward circumference of energy.
> **(The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 1977, 181)**

Similarly, the German Romantics found an underpinning to their ideas in the work of Immanuel Kant, whose **Critique of Pure Reason** of 1781 and **Critique of Practical Reason** of 1788 are key documents in the Romantic Movement.

We have traced the tendency of music to use smaller and smaller snatches of text within larger and larger musical designs, and have seen how, following this tendency, composers have found prose as effective as poetry, and have frequently dismantled poetry into prose. The practice is still prevalent, as an examination of Britten's **War Requiem** would show (**vide supra,** 30). We have also glanced at the problems involved in subsuming stage drama into music. But opera falls mainly outside the scope of this study, for the reason that so little good opera uses English text. The further development in the Nineteenth Century of opera as dramatic art, at a time when stage drama was foundering, is a major study in itself, revolving about the massive talents of Richard Wagner and Guiseppe Verdi. At the end of the Nineteenth Century, when Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chehov led a revival of stage drama, it produced works that, by their standards of realism and their overt philosophising, stood diametrically opposed to opera. Indeed, Chehov's stories offer far better libretto material than his plays. In terms of text-setting, one magnificent experiment, alas unique, deserves mention: it is Debussy's only opera, **Pelléas et Melisande,** in which Debussy created an extra-ordinary drama of brooding passion, keeping an impressive fidelity to the speech rhythms of the text as he received it from Maurice Maeterlink, and repeating practically nothing; in effect, an opera consisting almost entirely of recitative. It is as if Debussy had decided to create a "music drama" as unlike Wagner's as he could make it.

The large-scale works of vocal music, opera and oratorio, clearly offer a different set of problems to the composer from those posed by art song, where the musical form is miniature and the sound less dense. Art song is, in a sense, a very specialised form of chamber music, and thrives on the same sort of concentration of material. I wish to conclude this study by summarising what it has to say about the combination in song of poetry and music, and by taking note of the differences between song since Schubert's time and song in the period covered in detail by this study.

At the beginning of chapter seven we summarised the qualities required of lyric poetry if it is to be used in song. In essence, what is required is simplicity of form, of syntax and of semantics. But the sort of simplicity demanded under these headings needs specifying. Of the three categories, semantic simplicity, as we saw, is the most problematic. The sort of layering of meanings that can be achieved by symbolism and by parallel imagery can involve a very high degree of semantic complexity; and accompanying music can add its own layers even of directly linguistic meaning by, say, quotation from a well-known folk song or hymn tune. We saw how Campion achieved this, both in the context of a masque, and, with a different text, in a separate song, "The peacefull westerne winde" (**supra,** 154-155). We accepted Wayne Booth's observation that semantic complexity which "makes kinks in our reading making us look back and revise" (1981, 80) works badly in song.

The requirement for formal simplicity is determined from our evidence that complexity of poetic form sets considerable problems for composers. Even an English sonnet seems too complex a form to survive as recognisable poetic form after being set. When John Danyel set sonnets written by his brother, Samuel, he broke the form and wrenched it, repeating whole sections to suit his convenience. And it was notable that few of the more successful songs in our evidence used that most popular of Elizabethan

line-units, the iambic pentameter. British composers of the
last hundred years have tended to avoid sonnets. And the attempts
that have been made to set them have not been notably successful.
Britten's settings of Donne's **Holy Sonnets** dismember the form
of the verse. The most nearly successful sonnet setting in the
English repertoire is probably Vaughan Williams's setting of
D G Rossetti's "Silent Noon". I wonder how many listeners to
that song have ever been aware that it is a sonnet. On the other
hand, it is obvious that ballad form accommodates itself very
naturally to song, and it is extraordinary how many apparently
more complex song lyrics are in fact disguised ballads. Campion's
"Never weather-beaten sail" (**supra,** 159-160), for example, is
set in what hymn-books describe as common metre. Part of the
explanation is that most musical phrases simply last longer
than syntactical phrases, and a stanza of a song occupies more
time than the stanza would if read aloud. It follows that simplicity
of syntax is an absolutely essential feature of a good song
lyric. The demands made on the listener's attention by the music
simply do not permit puzzling over problematic syntax. Moreover,
the coherence among the elements of what we might call musical
syntax is dependent on balance, euphony and contrast, impinging
on the listener's consciousness through sound; the coherence
of linguistic syntax, on the other hand, is abstract and cerebral.

I believe these requirements of simplicity have not changed
since Elizabethan times. One could argue that the translation
into song of more complex poetry such as Donne's **Holy Sonnets**
or Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" (which has been set by Gerald
Finzi, among others) produces a different sort of vocal music,
and that the condition of the listener's assumed familiarity
with the text might apply to these works as much as to settings
of liturgy. The work then becomes a meditation on a theme. But
the sort of prior familiarity possessed by a hypothetical listener
to such works differs considerably from familiarity with a liturgy
which has been internalised by incantation in the first place.

Furthermore, the poem has a structure, I have argued, which is part of its meaning; dismantle the structure and you dismantle the poem. What is it, then, that has been set for the vocal instrument? It is not Donne's or Wordsworth's poem.

And so we come to the qualities demanded by poetry of the music to which it is set. In the first place, a composer needs to be conscious of the mood of the poem and to find for it an appropriate musical mood. This requirement is, of course, not specific to poetic text, but the mood or moods of a poem are often more elusive than those of a prose text. Martin Cooper (1974) has pointed out how often German composers setting Heine overlooked or failed to find musical expression for his characteristic irony. In the song of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, however, mismatches of mood are very rare; a measure, perhaps, of that "intense concern with words" we have noted (**supra**, 11). Oddly enough, such mismatches were more common in church music than anywhere else: new texts were frequently given to existing music, either because the original texts were doctrinally objectionable or because the new texts were deemed liturgically necessary and music had to be found for them in a hurry. We noted some examples in the fourth chapter. And in the following two chapters we noted how changes of mood from stanza to stanza of the lyric created problems for the performers when the song was strophic.

More specific than mood is the matter of the formal patterns within the poetry. The degree of respect for these formal patterns varies enormously, as we have seen, from composer to composer, and some compromise is invariably necessary between the musical demands and the poetic form. Perhaps no composer has ever shown greater awareness of poetic form than Thomas Campion, and for obvious reasons. Some such awareness, however, is vital in good song-writing, and its absence can mar a setting however fine the music in itself. Among the most important of all these formal patterns are rhythm and metre. No great writer of art song has

ever ignored these totally, but again the degree to which the rhythms of the text are simulated by the more insistent musical rhythms varies considerably. The most common problem in this respect is perhaps the discrepancy in some poetry between rhythm and metre. Musical rhythms, particularly after the Renaissance, tend to be far more regular than poetic rhythms.

Without an accurate sense both of overall mood and of the formal features of a poem the composer will be at a serious disadvantage in his treatment of imagery. If the composer is inventive musically, he will face all sorts of temptations to over-decorate the text. Indeed, many a composer has had his musical imagination provoked in the first place by a specific image in the text. Good judgement is desperately important here, for an ill-chosen piece of word-painting can seriously impair the sense of the poem and therefore the coherence of the song. Even where the word illustrated is part of a central image as is the trumpet figure in Purcell's "Hark the echoing air", the balance of the lyric can be distorted. Such figures are much better used to illustrate a prose text like "The trumpet shall sound" in **The Messiah**. The effects of distortion were apparent when we considered Handel's illustration of Milton's phrase "and the busy hum of men" (**supra**, 248-249). In English lute song, word-painting is relatively rare, but even Campion uses the device occasionally to foreground an important word or idea. In "When to her lute Corrina sings" (**supra**, 157-158) the key words "leaden", "echo", sighs" and "spring" all receive musical illustration, as does the image that unites the two stanzas in the refrain,

> Even with her sighs]
> Even from my heart]　　the strings do break.

In "I care not for these ladies" (**supra**, 150-151) the poet's preference for pastoral love-making over courtly dalliance is figured musically in the country dance idiom of the tune. This sort of musical illustration of a pervasive image is, in fact, far more common, and far more important than mere word-painting. One

of the most remarkable of all such musical images is Schubert's famous spinning-wheel figure in "Gretchen am Spinnrade" (n.d., 10-15). Here is an image that Schubert derived, not from the text of the lyric itself, but from the dramatic context of Goethe's poem: Gretchen is alone in her room at her spinning wheel. The wheel thus becomes a symbol of the relentlessness of time and fortune, literally and figuratively the background against which Gretchen sings her song. Enormous dimensions of Goethe's original meaning are thus effectively realised, even on the concert platform. The example throws up an historical point as well: such an accompaniment would not have been possible on as unobtrusive an instrument as the lute or the harpsichord. We see here how, in Schubert's hands, the accompaniment to art song becomes an equal partner with the voice.

Having looked a great deal at some very lovely vocal polyphony in Renaissance and Baroque music, we must come to the conclusion, however, that in order to honour its responsibilities to the formal patterns of poetry music needs to offer a homophonic vocal line. Polyphony can provide some very rich examples of word-painting and some very subtle treatment of imagery. It can even, by offering alternative stress patterns, bring out subtleties of the rhythm that a homophonic vocal line cannot express, as we saw in Wilbye's "Love me not for comely grace" (supra, 118-119), for example. And polyphony can play with rhymes in a way that homophonic writing can not. But all of these effects it achieves at the cost of destroying essential poetic form. If the poetry is to retain intelligibility as poetry, it must be left to a single vocal line. Having said this, I must concede that the English Madrigal School made remarkable use of a sort of modest poetry which suited its purposes. "Love me not for comely grace" is a fine example, as is Morley's "April is in my mistress' face" (supra, 106-107). But when we get to Gibbons's setting of "What is our life?" (supra, 124-126), we find that the music consumes Ralegh's poem.

It remains for us to note very briefly how our argument is affected by developments since Handel's day in the language of music, and in the means of expressing that language. Some of these developments we have discussed already. In chapters seven and eight we saw the changes in English song marked very strongly in the development of a system of tonal harmony. By the Eighteenth Century that system had stabilised, and it went on to become, in the work of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, a means of very subtle shading of musical meaning. Because of the stability of the tonal system modulations became a much more powerful means of foregrounding than they had been in late Renaissance music. A grammar of modulation developed by which changes from major to minor, or from tonic to dominant, could be differentiated from the more dramatic changes to remote keys. Moreover, the sequence of chords by which an important modulation is effected is also a source of great subtlety of expression. We have seen Purcell experimenting with these resources, particularly in "The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation" (**supra**, 210-214), and Handel using them with greater confidence in **The Messiah**. Adequate analysis of such devices is a very technical matter, but the grammar of expression is now so internalised by performer and listener alike that comprehension is readily achieved. In the Twentieth Century Berg and Schönberg and Bartok extended the language with their experiments in different harmonic systems, or, to use the metaphor we used previously, different grammars, which still strike many listeners as foreign beyond comprehension.

Right outside the period covered by this study is the development of the pianoforte. There was already an established repertoire for the piano as well as a number of songs written with piano accompaniment before Schubert began to realise the potential of the instrument as a full partner in the art of song. It was a remarkable development whose implications are still lost on too many **Lieder** singers who treat their accompanist as a provider

of background music. Almost for the first time in the history of solo song a single instrument was admitted to equal partnership with the voice. J S Bach sometimes used special characteristics of a particular instrument to evoke an appropriate mood in his arias and duets. A horn partners the solo bass voice in "Quoniam tu solus sanctus" in the **Mass in B minor.** In the **St John Passion** there is a magnificent aria for alto, viola da gamba and continuo, "Es ist vollbracht!" And the Cantata no 140, **Wachet Auf!,** contains two vocal duets that are effectively trios: the first, "Wann kommst du?" for soprano, bass and violino piccolo, and the second, "Mein Freund ist mein" for soprano, bass and oboe, an instrument whose qualities of poignant intimacy Bach specially valued. But a significant feature of these examples, and the many others one could cite from Bach's work, is that it was specific qualities of emotive sound for which Bach brought them into partnership with the voices. As Schubert, and later Robert Schumann developed the role of the piano in **Lieder,** it was the versatility of the instrument which was so impressive. For one famous song Schubert used the quality of a particular instrument in addition to the piano for particular effect: the clarinet in "Der Hirt auf dem Felsen", which makes of the song a duet with piano accompaniment.

Later composers of **Lieder** continued to use the piano as their fundamental instrument of accompaniment, although there have been many experiments with other groups of instruments, often taking **Lieder** out of the realm of chamber music. Among others, Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss have used full orchestra for such song cycles as Mahler's **Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, Des Knaben Wunderhorn** and **Kindertötenlieder** and Strauss's **Vier letzte Lieder.** Mahler, in fact, blurred the distinction between **Lieder** and symphony by including arrangements of songs he had already set in **Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen** and **Des Knaben Wunderhorn** in his Second, Third and Fourth Symphonies. Then in 1908 he produced a symphony for tenor and alto solos and orchestra, **Das Lied von der Erde,** which is a major part of the

orchestral repertoire and of the repertoire of ambitious tenors and contraltos. British composers have also experimented with accompaniment. Vaughan Williams's First Symphony, the **Sea Symphony**, includes settings of passages from Walt Whitman's **Leaves of Grass** scored for soprano, baritone and orchestra. Gerald Finzi, whose piano accompaniments are perhaps the finest and most interesting by any British composer, scored a set of poems and passages of rich rhetorical prose by Thomas Traherne as a cantata for tenor and chamber orchestra, **Dies Natalis**. And perhaps the most interesting of all is Peter Warlock's song cycle, **The Curlew**, consisting of poems by Yeats; it is scored for tenor, flute, cor anglais and string quartet.

Reference to various song cycles raises the matter of the major formal innovation of the period since the Eighteenth Century. It is natural enough for a composer of songs to write several songs at once on related themes, perhaps with texts by the same poet, and for these to be performed and published together. Students of the song cycle (see Peake, 1968) trace the idea back to the Seventeenth Century, but it is significant that the music we have discussed in previous chapters does not include any sequences of linked songs. Art song remained essentially an art of the miniaturist until the Nineteenth Century expanded its scope. In 1816 Beethoven set six songs in carefully considered sequence and in carefully related keys, and recalling thematic material from the first in the last; **An die ferne Geliebte** was written as a coherent sequence, not as a loose grouping of songs, and this coherence makes it a song cycle. The song cycle gives the composer the opportunity to break out of the miniature mould that a single lyric poem imposes. The contrasts of mood and emphasis in the exploration of a unified theme are a major challange to any composer, and, we might add, to the performers and the audience. But the result can be a profoundly satisfying aesthetic experience, for it permits features of meaning in both text and music to accumulate, and to reinforce one another through

parallels and contrasts. But Beethoven left this genre to others
to develop. It is to Schubert's devotion to the poetry of Friedrich
Müller that we owe his great song cycles, **Die Schöne Müllerin**
and **Winterreise.** Berlioz followed him with **Nuits d'Été,** set
to poems by Théophile Gautier, and Schumann with **Dichterliebe,**
to poems by Heinrich Heine, and **Frauenliebe und Leben,** to poems
by Adalbert von Chamisso. These early song cycles are among
the finest ever written.

Something of the independence of English poetry from all the
ferment in early Romantic music is apparent in Keats's observation
("Ode on a Grecian urn", **1977,** 344) that

> Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter...

Even without its context, the point is fairly clear: for Keats,
as for his English contemporaries, music was mainly metaphor. The
song with which Keats's dread muse, "La Belle Dame sans Merci",
enchants him is "A faery's song" (**1977,** 334-335). Wordsworth,
who was born in the same year as Beethoven, heard a "still sad
music of humanity" ("Tintern Abbey", Bloom & Trilling, **1973,**
146-150) in rural solitude. In the earliest manifesto of the
aims of the English Romantic Movement Wordsworth focussed on
the issue of poetic diction as the basis of his break with Eighteenth
Century poetry, and the **Lyrical Ballads** he introduced on that
occasion claimed derivation not from the expressive power of
song, but from "the real language of men" (**Ibid.,** 609). There
were no British musicians to set such ballads, or the **Songs
of Innocence and of Experience,** and lyric poetry in English
pursued a course independent of music until the end of the century.

Such independence is not overcome simply by a musical revival
in which composers arrive who are willing to set poems to music;
the poems must also be there to set. The proviso seems absurd
at first sight, for what F T Palgrave called the "Golden Treasury"
of English lyric poetry was surely waiting to be ransacked. But

it is a significant fact that great song writers rarely make successful song settings of poems other than those by their contemporaries or near-contemporaries. It seems to be something in the **Zeitgeist** that inspires composers to make song out of the poetry of their own time. The neglect by madrigalists and lute song writers of Skelton and Wyatt is quite remarkable, as is the failure of Purcell to use the lyrics of the previous century in preference to those of his own time. When British music began to revive from its long sleep after Purcell's death, it took time for British composers to find good poems and then to devise good settings for them. Sullivan's collaboration in the theatre with a brilliant librettist did not prevent his using appalling texts for the songs he considered a more serious use of his talents. Parry set Blake's great poem "And did those feet in ancient time" (Blake, **1977**, 514) to a tune that caught something of Blake's moral fervour, and yet that parallels "dark satanic mills" with "green and pleasant land" without even a harmonic distinction between the strophes. Stanford ransacked the golden treasury for lyrics, and did write a fine setting for "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (Stanford, **n.d.**), but he was capable of choosing some really bad poetry by Sir Henry Newbolt for two ambitious song cycles.

Vaughan Williams showed more discrimination. It is no coincidence that one of the major figures of the British musical revival was also involved with Cecil Sharp as a collector of folk song - a valuable apprenticeship, surely. He used poetry from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries with great skill throughout his long career, but he also made extensive use of the work of his contemporaries. One of his earliest songs was "Linden Lea", a charming setting of a lyric by the Dorset poet William Barnes. With more ambition, in 1903 he set six sonnets of Dante Gabriel Rossetti in a cycle entitled **The House of Life.** There followed the cycles **Songs of Travel** and **On Wenlock Edge,** with lyrics by R L Stevenson and A E Housman respectively, and the

First Symphony in 1910 with settings of Walt Whitman poems for soprano and baritone. Though all of these poets were older than Vaughan Williams, all died during his lifetime. **Songs of Travel (1960)**, which dates originally from 1905, though it has a fine epilogue written years later and not published until 1960, is perhaps the first English song cycle of real distinction. The poetry is undistinguished on the page, but the setting finds in it a resonance reaching back through European Romanticism to explore an old pastoral tradition. Though the music affirms this tradition, it treats it with nostalgia, as something passing, a point made more explicit by the epilogue "I have trod the upward and the downward slope", which begins by recalling the vagabond motif of the first song, though in a much more sombre context, and ends by quoting a snatch of the penultimate song, "Bright is the ring of words".

The renewal of interest in folk song was a direct consequence of the Romantic Revolution, for with the passing of the Age of Reason and increasing consciousness again of the power of Dionysus, the snobbery that rejected the "primitive" was reviewed. In the course of time more poets began to take an interest in folk literature. Thomas Hardy was steeped from childhood in folk song and folklore; W B Yeats came to folk literature as an adult, seeking in it the roots of his cultural identity. Not surprisingly they both produced lyrics that have inspired fine songs, though Yeats, as we have observed **(supra,** 16), was extremely touchy about having his poems set. He was also notoriously unmusical, as Hardy most certainly was not. It was from Yeats's work, however, that the text for perhaps the finest of all song cycles in English was chosen: Peter Warlock's **The Curlew** (Warlock, **1922)**. Warlock was a musicologist of some distinction who worked on Elizabethan song, and who found lyrics for his own songs in the Elizabethan song books. An interest in folk song led him to make some fine arrangements. Most of his songs are light and well-crafted: some boisterous, like "Captain Stratton's Fancy", to a poem

by John Masefield, some whimsical or tender, like "As ever I
saw", to an anonymous Fifteenth Century lyric. But **The Curlew**
is profoundly serious, using four early Yeats poems on that
central Yeatsian theme, the sorrow of love. One of Yeats's most
telling images of this sorrow is the curlew's mournful cry,
which Warlock represents on the cor anglais, using the figure
throughout the work as a **Leitmotiv**. The songs are alternated
with quite long movements for the instrumental ensemble, while
the accompaniment to the voice part is very sparing in contrast;
the tenor is frequently accompanied by one instrument only,
sometimes none at all, leaving the carefully declaimed vocal
line uncluttered and completely intelligible. This is very necessary
in the last song, "He hears the cry of the sedge", for Yeats
here employs some extraordinary symbols which the clarity of
declamation leaves to puzzle and fascinate the listener on their
own terms (Yeats, **1983**, 67):

> I wander by the edge
> Of this desolate lake
> Where wind cries in the sedge:
> Until the axle break
> That keeps the stars in their round,
> And hands hurl in the deep
> The banners of East and West,
> And the girdle of light is unbound,
> Your breast will not lie by the breast
> Of your beloved in sleep.

Impressive as is **The Curlew**, I believe the finest British song
writer since Purcell is Gerald Finzi. By far the greater part
of his total output of music is vocal, most of that for solo
voice. He was a man who read widely in English poetry all his
life, and his settings include poems by Shakespeare, Crashaw,
Traherne, the Eighteenth Century American, Edward Taylor, Wordsworth
and Robert Bridges; but he returned over and over again to the
work of his older contemporary, Thomas Hardy. His use of text
in general, and of Hardy in particular, demands a full-length
study in itself. Stephen Banfield (1979 and 1984) discusses
his work extensively and well, though Banfield's focus is not

primarily the relationship of text to music. There is also a major study of Finzi's work promised by Diana McVeagh. For our purposes, it is sufficient to acknowledge that the Twentieth Century has produced at least one British song writer whose musical skill and whose sensitivity to fine poetry enable us to compare him to Dowland and Campion without embarrassment.

The changes of form and of texture and of harmonic structure between Byrd and Handel, between Handel and Elgar, and between Elgar and Matyas Seiber have changed the context in which the problems of relationship between text and music require to be worked out. And the language of English literature has changed in those times too. As a result, poetry and music have lost one another from time to time, and have had to find one another again, like any lovers. The dynamic growth of a tradition depends not only upon composers such as Vaughan Williams, Warlock, Finzi and Benjamin Britten, but also upon poets capable of producing the sort of verse which will both inspire and accommodate musical setting. The relationship between music and poetry in song is quite plainly natural, but in a complex and imperfect world it is far from simple. If it were simpler, the effort of rediscovery would be smaller, and the joy of rediscovery less intense. That periodic rediscovery is a "necessary conjunction" (**vide supra,** 75); necessary for the health of music and of literature and of society, and for the preservation and the re-creation of what Wordsworth in **The Prelude** (original version, I, 45; **1972,** 36) called

The holy life of music and of verse.

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