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Donne's Lost Songs

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Neuer may thy name be in our songs forgot
Till we shall sing thy ditty, and thy note.
John Donne, *An Anatomy of the World* (1611)[1]

Unmusicality

The poems of John Donne (1572–1631) have been widely regarded as unmusical because of the way they were written: irregular line lengths, enjambments, inscrutable accents, metaphysical subjects, complexity of structure and of meaning. These things have been observed by a host of eminent writers over the last several decades, and even during the poet's lifetime. In the early twentieth century, Donne editor Herbert Grierson refers to his poetry as "rugged of line and careless in rhyme."[2] In 1970, Edward Doughtie offers that "most of Donne's poems are not suitable for singing because they are too complex," and that they "are a delight to read, but with the added interest or distraction of music, their progress would be impossible to follow."[3] John Hollander, in 1972, notes the "unmusicality" of Donne's verse and believes that its "contrastive stress" can only be handled by modern composers, being beyond the

[1] This couplet concludes the elegy, *The first Anniversary* (1611), sig. A4r, which was printed without author but included in all editions of *Poems, by J. D.* from 1633 to 1669.
[2] Herbert J. C. Grierson, *The Poems of John Donne, edited from the old editions* (London: Clarendon Press, 1912), vol. 2, p. lv.
[3] Edward Doughtie, *Lyrics from English Airs, 1596–1622* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 29, 38.

capabilities of Donne's contemporaries.[4] A similar view is expressed, also in 1972, by Brian Morris, asserting that Donne's irregular "stanzaic construction" bewildered composers of Donne's time who unanimously made a mess of attempts to set his verse.[5] Winifrid Maynard, in 1986, concludes that Donne's poems, problematically for strophic verse, are "astir with turbulence, and their shifts of stance or emotion or thought throw up complex and non-recurring rhythms."[6] In this century, Roz Kaveney observes that "Some of the extra syllables in [Donne's] lines can be elided, as you read, with no loss of sense; others deliberately throw off any reading for music rather than powerful rhetoric."[7]

This irregularity did not go unnoticed by Donne's contemporaries: Ben Jonson famously commented to William Drummond ca.1619 "that Done for not keeping of accent deserved hanging."[8] Indeed, Diane McColley acknowledges Donne's "complex syntax, angular prosody, and abstruse allusions" and, furthermore, not only his "metaphysical conceits but his delicacy and complexity of tone."[9] Song historian Ian Spink notes that, in general, "metaphysical verse tends to be unmusical," and much of Donne's poetry falls into that category.[10] Peter Walls, pushing back against that view, disagrees with what he perceives as a "widespread agreement that metaphysical poetry is unsuitable for music."[11] That unsuitability complaint chimes with John Stevens's view of poetry like that of Sidney and Donne as a "self-sufficient art,"

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[4] John Hollander, "John Donne and the limits of lyric," in *John Donne, Essays in Celebration*, A. J. Smith, ed. (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 259–272, at 268.

[5] Brian Morris, "Not Siren-like to Tempt: Donne and the Composers," in Smith, *John Donne, Essays*, pp. 219–58.

[6] Winifrid Maynard, *Elizabethan Lyric Poetry and its Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 149.

[7] Roz Kaveney, "John Donne, priest and poet, part 2: theologian who played with poetic form," *The Guardian* (May 2012): 28.

[8] "Certain Informations and maners of Ben Johnsons to W. Drumond," (dated 1619) National Library of Scotland Advocates MS 33.3.19, fol. 26r.

[9] Denise Kelsey McColley, *Poetry and Music in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 94, 108.

[10] Ian Spink, *English Song, Dowland to Purcell* (London: Batsford, 1974), p. 79. On Donne as a metaphysical poet, see Colin Burrow, *Metaphysical Poetry* (London: Penguin, 2013).

[11] Peter Walls, "'Music and Sweet Poetry'? Verse for English Lute Song and Continuo Song'," *Music & Letters* 65 (1984): 237–54, at 237.

distinct from "actual music."[12] This is the "pure poetry" argument, where the poetry has "a deep melody of its own" (to use Grierson's phrase about Donne),[13] not needing the adulteration of actual music, and I think it is fair to say that Donne's poems have been generally regarded as epitomizing that description.

The Musical Record

That view is still widely held, but some writers have argued against it. Peter Walls points out parallels between Donne's metaphysical poetic imagery and that found in lutesong lyrics set by John Dowland and others.[14] Anne Lake Prescott explores Donne's affinity with the psalms and the godly harmony they embody.[15] Jonathan Holmes traces Donne's relationship to music, both in philosophical terms and in possible connections to period composers.[16] Scott Trudell argues that, in spite of Donne's "deliberative, exacting, elaborately metaphorical" language, he is more musical than often portrayed, noting the multifaceted aspects of his lyrics, existing simultaneously "as notated music, as speech, as vocal song, and as manuscript and printed writing."[17] Most recently, Anna Lewton-Brain notes that, in spite of their reputed unmusicality, metrical irregularity and metaphysical wit, several of Donne's lyrics were set to music by early modern composers.[18]

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[12] John Stevens, "Sir Philip Sidney and 'Versified Music': Melodies for Courtly Songs," in John Caldwell et al. (eds.), *The Well Enchanting Skill* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 153–70, at 155–56.

[13] Grierson, *Poems*, vol. 2, p. lv.

[14] Walls, "'Music and Sweet Poetry'."

[15] Anne Lake Prescott, "'Forms of Joy and Art': Donne, David, and the Power of Music," *John Donne Journal* 25 (2006): 3–36.

[16] Jonathan Holmes, "'There must be something heard': John Donne's Aural Universe," in *Refiguring Mimesis*, Jonathan Holmes and Adrian Streete, eds. (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005), pp. 183–207.

[17] Scott Trudell, *Unwritten Poetry: Song, Performance, and Media in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 1–25.

[18] Anna Lewton-Brain, *Metaphysical Music: A Study of the Musical Qualities & Contexts of the Poetry of John Donne, George Herbert, & Richard Crashaw* (PhD diss, McGill University, 2021), pp. 34–38.

Indeed, in an oft-cited 1959 study, Vincent Duckles lists twenty-nine musical settings of Donne's poetry from the seventeenth century.[19] Two of those settings, surprisingly and ironically, are the earliest of Donne's lyric poems to be printed: Alfonso Ferrabosco's *So, so, leave off this last lamenting kiss*, in his *Ayres* of 1609,[20] and William Corkine's *'Tis true, 'tis day, what though it be?* in his *Second Booke of Ayres* of 1612.[21] In addition, a number of musical settings of Donne's poetry survive in manuscript, many of a much later date, but some probably copied before the printed poetry editions. Several of these settings are discussed by Helen Gardner in Appendix B of her book, *John Donne: The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets*,[22] by Brian Morris in his 1972 essay, as well as by Bryan Gooch in his article, "Music for Donne."[23] Gardner and Gooch each analyze several settings, while Morris's essay might better be described as a scathing critique of surviving settings, from which he concluded that "Donne never conceived his poems in musical terms, and never delivered them as material for a marriage of the arts."[24] Morris seems determined to show Donne's indifference to music, as when he describes Donne frequenting musicales at the Killigrew home, only to complain that he apparently "never sang, or played an instrument, or had any particular disposition towards music." Whatever the merits or shortcomings of the extant settings of Donne's poetry, this seems a

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[19] Vincent Duckles, "The Lyrics of John Donne as set by his Contemporaries," in *Bericht über den siebenten Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Köln 1958* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959), pp. 91–3. Six of the settings were collected in *Poèmes de Donne, Herbert, et Crashaw*, ed. André Souris (Paris: CNRS, 1961), pp. 1–19.

[20] No. 7, sig. C2v. The printed title for the poem is *The Expiration*. Ferrabosco changed Donne's "breake" to "leave." For a discussion of the poetic and musical qualities of this poem and setting, see Trudell, *Unwritten Poetry*, pp. 1–4.

[21] No. 4, sig. B1v. The title given the poem is *Breake of day*. Donne's extended elegy for Elizabeth Drury, *An Anatomy of the World* (1611), predates Corkine in its earliest edition, but these three are the only Donne poems printed before the posthumous *Poems, by J. D.* (1633).

[22] (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 238–47.

[23] Bryan N. S. Gooch, "Music for Donne," *John Donne Journal* 15 (1996): 171–83, at 176–78.

[24] Morris, "Not Siren-like," p. 224.

rather extreme view of Donne's relationship to music, and one that is not supported by the evidence.

For one thing, Donne was certainly aware that his poems could be, and in fact, were being set to music. The publication of the Ferrabosco and Corkine songs could not have escaped his notice, for example, but beyond that, Donne wrote about musical setting in his poem *The Triple Fool*.[25] After describing the experience of writing a poem to assuage his grief at unrequited love, his pain is renewed when:

> Some man, his art and voice to show,
> Doth Set and sing my paine,
> And, by delighting many, frees againe
> Griefe, which verse did restraine.

This could be construed as Donne disliking the effect of having his poetry set to music: Morris perceives its "underlying attitude [as] scarcely complimentary to the composers, whose art is condemned as parasitic by origin and exhibitionist by intent."[26] In fact, besides demonstrating Donne's expectation that musical setting of his poetry was likely to happen,[27] it is actually a testament to his understanding of the power of music. That sentiment is most forcefully presented in Izaac Walton's early biography, where he describes Donne commissioning and listening to a musical setting of his *A Hymne to God the Father*:

> I have the rather mentioned this *Hymne*, for that he caus'd it to be set to a most grave and solemn tune, and to be often sung to the *Organ* by the *Choristers* of that *Church*, in his own hearing, especially at the Evening Service; and at his return from his Customary Devotions in that place, did occasionally say to a friend, *The words of this* Hymne *have restored to me the same thoughts of joy that possest my soul in my sicknesse when I composed it. And, Oh the power of Church-musick! that Harmony*

[25] For an analysis of this poem from a musical point of view, see Andrew Mattison, "Donne, Britten, and the Honesty of Song," *John Donne Journal* 31 (2012): 283–300, at 283–85.

[26] Morris, "Not Siren-like," p. 224.

[27] Walls characterizes it as "an assumption that lyric poetry will be set to music." See "'Music and Sweet Poetry'," p. 237.

> *added to it has raised the affections of my heart, and quickned my graces of zeal and gratitude;* and I observe, *that I alwaies return from paying this publick duty of* Prayer *and* Praise to *God with an unexpressible tranquillity of mind*, and a willingnesse to *leave the world.*[28]

Donne here refers to the "power" of the music, and how its "Harmony" so heightened his joy that he was ready to "meet his maker," so to speak. Such bliss in hearing his poetry set to music can only indicate a profound appreciation of music and its potentially positive effect on the words it sets.

This is not the only indication we have that Donne thought of his poetry in musical terms. Helen Gardner perceptively notes that "Words and music in a song may be related in two opposed ways. A poem may be written to music or music may be written to a poem."[29] Like all of the surviving musical settings of Donne's poetry, the Ferrabosco and Corkine settings (and apparently the commissioned setting of Donne's *Hymne*) are of the second type, where the poems existed and a composer set them to music. What I want to focus on here is the first type, where "a poem may be written to music," because there is good evidence that several of Donne's poems were conceived by him in that way. That aspect of Donne's poetry has not received the attention it deserves.[30]

Print & Manuscript

Donne's collected poems were not published until 1633, two years after his death, so it is difficult to date individual poems precisely.[31] In fact, this lack of publication seems to have been by design. As Peter Walls says:

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[28] Izaac Walton, *The Life of John Donne, Dr. in Divinity and Late Dean of Saint Pauls Church London* (1658), pp. 77–78.

[29] Gardner, *John Donne*, p. 238.

[30] Bryan Gooch sees the fact of Donne basing poems on existing songs as intriguing: "(about which speculation will prove diverting and possibly even fruitful)," though he does not pursue such speculation. See Gooch, "Music for Donne," p. 175.

[31] The first collected edition was *Poems, by J. D.*, printed for John Marriot in 1633.

> John Donne is a particularly interesting figure when it comes to the question of the reluctance amongst gentlemen poets to see their work in print. He clearly felt that a reputation for writing poetry, particularly lyric poetry, was not compatible with recognition as a serious-minded person fit for public responsibilities. So far from actually encouraging the publication of his work, Donne sought increasingly to restrict its circulation in manuscript form, even before he embarked on a career in the Church.[32]

Because of this, the circulation of Donne's poetry during his lifetime was almost exclusively through manuscript transmission, and besides the occasional poem copied into a poetical commonplace book (something that happened often), Donne's friends with access to his unpublished oeuvre seem to have made their own collected manuscript versions. These are useful in dating to a certain extent, though we are still at a loss for much of the chronology. As Arthur Marotti has noted, "solid evidence for dating is difficult or impossible to find,"[33] though there is consensus that his lyric poems were earlier, probably before his ordination to the Anglican priesthood in January 1615.[34]

A group of these early manuscript collections, however, provides evidence that some of Donne's poems were written as parodies or "contrafacta" of existing songs.[35] With remarkable unanimity, six Donne manuscripts from a decade or so before the first printing label a group of poems with this phrase: "Songes which were made to certain Aires that were made before," revealing that Donne wrote the identified poems based on aires (or ayres)—songs—that he knew and admired. Five of those manuscripts include three poems that Donne wrote in

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[32] Walls, "Music and Sweet Poetry," p. 241.

[33] Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. xiv.

[34] This is supported by the Ferrabosco and Corkine printed song settings of 1609 and 1612. Izaak Walton says that Donne's "facetiously Composed and carelesly scattered" poems were mostly "written before the twentieth year of his age," i.e., 1592. It is not clear to which poems Walton refers. See Walton, *The Life of John Donne*, p. 75.

[35] "Parody" is used here in the sense of a tribute or imitation based on an existing original, and "contrafacta" refer to works that were "made against" an existing work, specifically setting new words to a pre-existent song.

that way: *The Message* ("Send home my long straid eyes to mee); "Sweetest Love, I do not goe"; and *The Bait* ("Come live with mee, and bee my love").[36] A sixth manuscript, National Library of Wales, Dolaucothi MS 6748 (ca.1622–33),[37] identifies a further three poems as among those "made to certain Aires," concluding the series of six poems with the confirming note, "The eande of the Songes." The three poems added to the contrafacta by this latter manuscript are: *Communitie* ("Good we must love, and must hate ill"), *Confined Love* ("Some man unworthy to be possessor"), and *The Mandrake* ("Goe, and catch a falling starre"). Neither *The Expiration* ("So, so, breake off this last lamenting kisse"), set by Ferrabosco in 1609, nor *Breake of day* ("'Tis true, 'tis day; what though it be?"), set by Corkine in 1612, is included in this number, though their musical potential was clearly recognized by the composers.

The question is this: Is it possible to identify extant songs to which those six poems might have been written, and to which Donne's lyrics might therefore be set in return? Successfully doing so could, ideally, be an enhancement. As Jonathan Holmes says, "poetry that is, in particular, semantically and syntactically complex, such as that of Donne, can be enriched, rather than obfuscated further, by virtue of musical setting."[38] That would, indeed, be a desirable outcome. The six poems in question are all part of the group of Donne's poems known as *Songs and Sonets*, a designation that was not used in the 1633 edition, though it appeared in Marriot's reorganized 1635 edition, and thereafter.[39] Interestingly, the O'Flahertie Manuscript at Harvard (ca.1623–25), was the earliest to use the label, with the section heading "Songs and Sonnets" given in the table of contents (fol. 3r), and "Sonnets and Songs" where the section begins in the manuscript (p.

[36] The five manuscripts are: British Library, MS Add. 18647 (ca.1620s–30s), fols. 56v–57v; Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.12 (ca.1623–25), pp. 122–24; Dublin, Trinity College MS 877 (ca.1623–25), pp. 160–62; Harvard, MS Eng 966.5 (the O'Flahertie MS) (ca.1623–25), pp. 145–46; British Library, MS Egerton 3884 (the Melford Hall MS) (ca.1625–35), fols. 101v–104r.

[37] Pp. 100–05

[38] Holmes, "'There must be something heard'," p. 192.

[39] Because of this, the lyrics to all of the examples here are based on those in the 1635 edition of *Poems, by J. D.*

245).[40] In addition to the six identified contrafacta, there are further poems within that section that are sometimes specifically labeled "Song" in manuscript or printed sources, and those will also be analyzed for possible musical origins. This represents a direction unexplored in previous studies, even those sympathetic to Donne's musicality. I emphasize that I am not looking for settings that show evidence of a composer "painting" Donne's specific words, more or less successfully, but for songs that may have inspired Donne's poems, as reportedly did happen. John Hollander observes that composers setting ayres "would always work out a setting for the initial stanza and cheerfully ignore the lack of fit in subsequent ones."[41] And Jerome Mazzaro remarks that "if Donne's poems were ever intended to be songs, they were never intended as strophic songs."[42] Edward Doughtie elaborates: "one finds strophic poems with varying line lengths that look like song texts, but which contain so much enjambment and metrical variation that strophic setting would be all but impossible.[43] Indeed, some extant musical settings simply mangle subsequent stanzas,[44] although those deficiencies are not Donne's fault, as has been inferred.[45] In theory, if an extant ayre was the basis for Donne's poem, infelicitous text setting from one stanza to another should not be egregious, and the fit should be generally good.

"Made to Certain Aires"

The easiest of the six models to identify would seem to be that for *The Baite*, as the title is given in the 1635 edition. "Come live with me,

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[40] On this manuscript, see Erin A. McCarthy, *Doubtful Readers: Print, Poetry, and the Reading Public in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), chapter 4, "*Poems, by J. D.* (1633 and 1635), the O'Flahertie Manuscript, and the Many Careers of John Donne," pp. 147–81.

[41] Hollander, "Donne and the limits of lyric," p. 261.

[42] Jerome Mazzaro, *Transformations in the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 155.

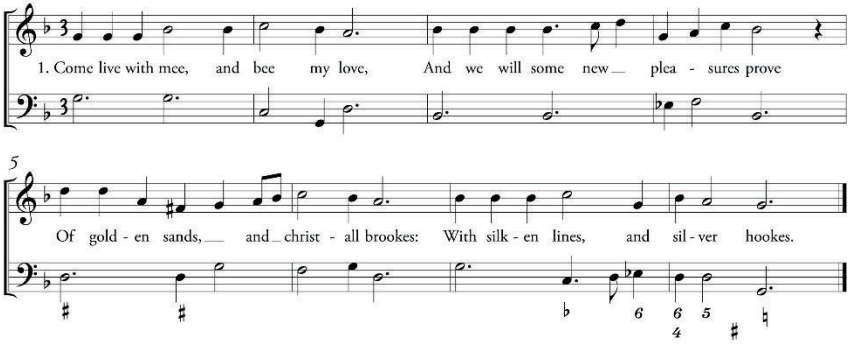
[43] Edward Doughtie, *English Renaissance Song* (Boston: Twayne, 1986), p. 159.

[44] See Examples 15, 17, and 20, below.

[45] "The evidence of these lyrics suggests an absence of aptitude in Donne for writing words to or for music." See Winifrid Maynard, *Elizabethan Lyric Poetry and its Music*, p. 148.

and be my love" is recognizable, not just as a contrafactum, but as a parody of Christopher Marlowe's poem, *The passionate Sheepheard to his loue*, beginning "Come liue with mee, and be my loue," printed in *Englands Helicon* of 1600.[46] The earliest source for the tune of that name is a set of variations for solo lyra viol in William Corkine's *Second Booke of Ayres*,[47] the same 1612 publication that includes the setting of Donne's *Breake of day*, although by 1600 the tune was already being referred to as *Shore's Wife* (which continued as an alternative title for some decades).[48] *The Baite* set to Corkine's tune is given as Example 1.

Example 1. *The Baite*, by John Donne, set to the music of *Come liue with me and be my Loue*, from Corkine's *Second Booke of Ayres* (1612).



1. Come live with mee, and bee my love,
And we will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands, and christall brookes:
With silken lines, and silver hookes.

2. There will the river whispering runne
Warm'd by thy eyes, more then the Sunne.
And there the'inamor'd fish will stay,
Begging themselves they may betray.

[46] Sig. Aa1v–Aa2r. A shorter version with a variant first line had appeared in *The Passionate Pilgrime* (1599), sig. D5r.
[47] Sig. G2v–H1r.
[48] See, for example, "With hart opprest with grief and care," dated 1600, from the Shirburn Ballad Manuscript, British Library, MS Add. 82932, fol. 194v–95v.

3. When thou wilt swimme in that live bath,
Each fish, which every channell hath,
Will amorously to thee swimme,
Gladder to catch thee, then thou him.

4. If thou, to be so seene, beest loath,
By Sunne, or Moone, thou darknest both,
And if my selfe have leave to see,
I need not their light, having thee.

5. Let others freez with angling reeds,
And cut their legs, which shells and weeds,
Or treacherlously poore fish beset,
With strangling snare, or windowie net:

6. Let coarse bold hands, from slimy nest
The bedded fish in banks out-wrest,
Or curious traitors, sleavesicke flies
Bewitch poore fishes wandring eyes.

7. For thee, thou needst no such deceit,
For thou thy selfe art thine own baite,
That fish, that is not catch'd thereby,
Alas, is wiser farre then I.

With a quatrain versification of tetrameter rhyming couplets, this lyric fits a popular tune from the broadside ballad repertoire though, of course, we have its intended harmony from Corkine's variations.[49] The situation may be more complicated, however. The earliest reference to *Come live with me* as a tune is found in Thomas Deloney's posthumous *Strange Histories* (1602), where it is called for as an alternative to a newly

[49] I am giving a figured bass accompaniment for all of the song settings here. Lutenist and scholar Elizabeth Kenny has pointed out that the transition from tablature accompaniment to continuo song was well underway in the first decade of the seventeenth century, and while surviving bass accompaniments in the English song repertoire rarely use figures, they are useful for indicating harmonic accidentals, suspensions, and triadic inversions. See Elizabeth Kenny, "The Uses of Lute Song: Texts, Contexts and Pretexts for 'Historically Informed' Performance," *Early Music* 36 (2008), pp. 285–99.

composed melody that is printed there in music notation.[50] We surmise that the tune mentioned was the same one later printed by Corkine,[51] although *Lavgh and lie downe: or The worldes Folly* (1605), by C.T. (Cyril Tourneur?), includes the passage: "there sat he, hanging the head, lifting vp the Eyes, and with a deepe sigh, singing the Ballad of, *Come liue with me, and be my loue: To the tune of adew my Deere.*"[52] No tune by that title is known; it may or may not be the one that survives as *Come live with me*. Of course, we do not know for sure if Marlowe intended his poem to be sung, or sung to *Shore's Wife*, or to another popular tune used for quatrains of tetrameter couplets, like *Bonny Robin*, or *Callino Casturame*, for example—or to *adew my Deere*, whatever that is.[53] It could be that Donne simply wrote a parody of Marlowe's lyric as a poem, rather than a song, although its inclusion in the "made to certain Aires" group suggests it was definitely based on the song, and intended to be sung itself. Indeed, in four early literary manuscripts, the poem bears the heading, "Songe" or "Song,"[54] supporting its origin as a parody of an existing ayre. In order to show that it could work to another tune that sets tetrameter quatrains, Example 2 gives a setting of *The Baite* to the tune, *Callino Casturame*,[55] preferred here as an alternative setting simply because it is livelier than the melancholy *Bonny Robin*, which would nonetheless fit the versification of the lyric equally well.

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[50] Sig. C2v. The poem, "Thrice woe is me vnhappy Queene," uses cross-rhymed tetrameter quatrains.

[51] This is supported by the 1607, 1608, and 1612 editions of *Strange Histories*, which continue to call for the tune.

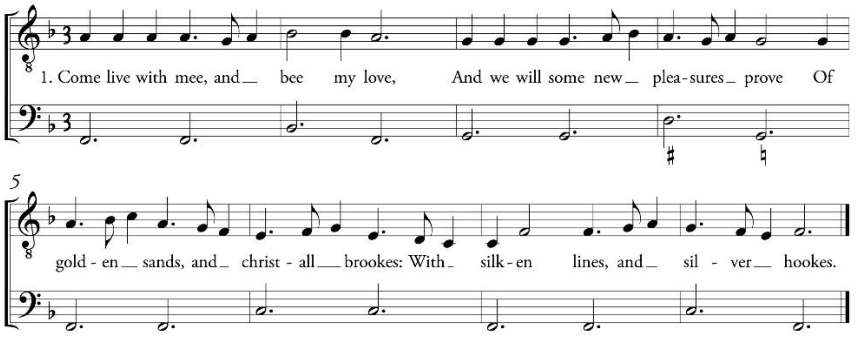
[52] Sig. C4v.

[53] On the songs *Bonny Robin* and *Callino Casturame*, see Ross W. Duffin, *Shakespeare's Songbook* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), pp. 72, 86.

[54] The four manuscripts are Harvard, MS Eng 966.5 (the O'Flahertie MS), p. 301; Harvard, fMS Eng 966.1, pp. 63–64; British Library, MS Stowe 961, fol. 73r; Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 8468, fol. 122r.

[55] *Callino Casturame* survives in a keyboard variation set by William Byrd in British Library, MS Add. 30485 (late 16th century), fols. 96v–97r, and the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS Mu. MS 168 (ca.1617), p. 277. Anonymous settings for solo lute survive in Dublin, Trinity College MS 410/1 (the Dallis Lute Book) (1583–85), fol. 79r, and Dublin, Trinity College MS 408/2 (ca.1605), fol. 85r.

Example 2. *The Baite*, by John Donne, set to the tune *Callino Casturame*.



Donne's other poems in this group are too complex from a versification standpoint to have had their origins in the ballad repertoire. Thus, the search for musical models must extend to the repertoire of composed ayres, although both *The Message* and "Sweetest Love" themselves survive in composed settings, made afterwards to Donne's poems.[56]

In the case of *The Message*, Coprario's extant setting is described by Gardner as "certainly, an art song, written with the text before the composer," which both she and Vincent Duckles find "over-rhetorical."[57] Morris likes its urgency but finds it "more intelligent than sensitive."[58] The music and the lyrics fit, but it is inconceivable that the music is the ayre on which Donne based his poem. Each stanza has eight lines in a versification of 44422224 and a rhyme scheme of aabccddb.[59] Aside from Coprario's setting of the lyric, no extant song has a versification like that, so finding a possible model is a challenge. One

[56] *The Message* survives in a setting attributed to John Coprario in Bodleian Library, MS Tenbury 1019 (ca.1615–25), fol. 1v, and "Sweetest Love," with a variant opening, "Dearest Love," in an anonymous setting in MS Tenbury 1018 (ca.1615–25), fol. 44v.

[57] See Gardner, *John Donne*, p. 240.

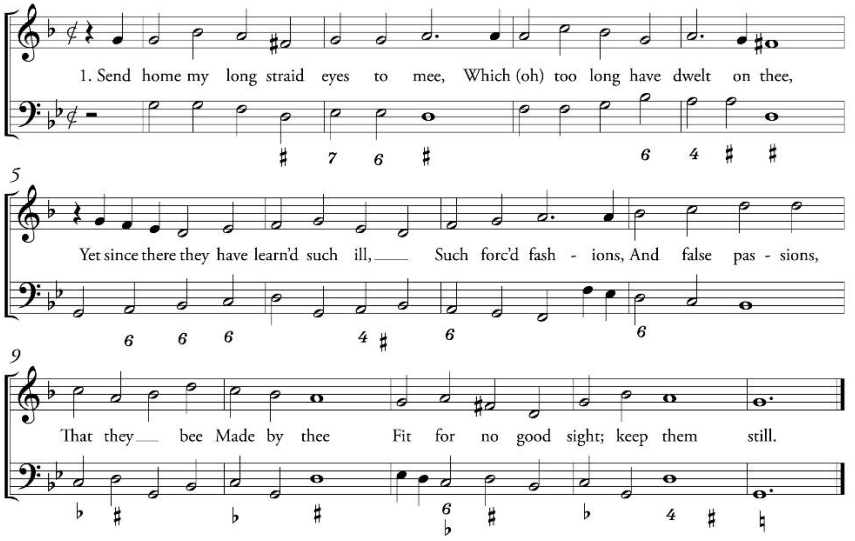
[58] Morris, "Not Siren-like," p. 230.

[59] A further complication is that lines 4–5 have four syllables while lines 6–7 have three syllables, though they are both essentially dimeter lines. In addition, the final lines in all three stanzas seem to have different accentuation in spite of each having eight syllables. This may be the kind of feature of which Ben Jonson complained to William Drummond.

characteristic that seems important, however, is the rhyme between the third line and the last (eighth) line. Combining the four dimeter lines into two tetrameter lines would create a stanza of two tetrameter tercets with a rhyme at the end of each; in this, they would resemble three ayres from the lutesong repertoire: John Dowland's *Woefull hart with griefe opprest* from his *Second Booke of Songs or Ayres* (1600),[60] Robert Jones's *O my poor eies the sun whose shine* from his *First Booke of Songes and Ayres* (1600),[61] and an anonymous setting of Philip Sidney's poem *O deere life when shall it be*, printed in Robert Dowland's *A Musicall Banquet* (1610),[62] but composed earlier since it survives as a lute solo in the Marsh Lute Book of ca.1595.[63] All three of these were extant by 1600, and available as possible models for Donne by that time. These three ayres, in fact, have the same versification as Shakespeare's song, *O Mistress mine* from *Twelfth Night* (2.3), and I have written elsewhere about how one of them may have been intended as a tune for that play song, since the traditional tune by Thomas Morley is only tenuously connected to the lyric and is a terrible fit.[64] In this case, a successful setting of Donne's *Message* can be made to *O deere life* (Example 3).

[60] No. 16, sig. I2v–K1r.
[61] No. 13, sig. E1v–E2r.
[62] No. 5, sig. D1v–D2r.
[63] Dublin, Marsh Library MS Z3.2.13, 383/3.
[64] Ross W. Duffin, "Thomas Morley, Robert Johnson, and Songs for the Shakespearean Stage," in Mervyn Cooke and Christopher R. Wilson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Music*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 356–86, at 362–68, and 382–4.

Example 3. *The Message*, by John Donne, set to the anonymous *O deere life when shall it be*, from the Marsh Lute Book (ca.1595) and Robert Dowland's *A Musicall Banquet* (1610).



1. Send home my long straid eyes to mee,
Which (oh) too long have dwelt on thee,
Yet since there they have learn'd such ill,
Such forc'd fashions,
And false passions,
That they bee
Made by thee
Fit for no good sight; keep them still.

2. Send home my harmelesse heart againe,
Which no unworthy thought could staine,
But if it be taught by thine
To make jestings
Of protestings,
And breake both
Word and oath
Keep it, for then 'tis none of mine.

3. Yet send me back my heart and eyes,
That I may know, and see thy lies,

And may laugh and joy, when thou
Art in anguish,
And doth languish
For some one
That will none,
Or prove as false as thou art now.

This is conjectural, of course, but a successful setting to an existing tune could indicate that the ayre was in Donne's mind as he wrote the poem. The music here is a natural fit to the poem in spite of the challenges. Jerome Mazzaro points out that fitting the final lines of each stanza to identical music is "difficult, if not impossible,"[65] Indeed, the Coprario setting struggles with this, but even those ambiguous final lines are well-served by the equal-note declamation here, adjustable by the singer to match the accentual requirements of each stanza.[66] Besides the inclusion of *The Message* in the "made to certain Aires" group, it bears the additional designation "Songe" in fourteen different literary manuscripts from the period.

The third poem among those set to existing ayres is "Sweetest Love, I do not goe," invariably given without a title, but often headed "Song" in both manuscript sources and the earliest prints. The music of the extant setting is not a good fit for the poem, changing and chopping around the words of the lyric and still not fitting well, as may be seen in an excerpt showing its conclusion from both manuscript sources (Example 4). It seems, in fact, like an attempt to fit Donne's words to an existing tune that originally belonged to a different lyric.[67]

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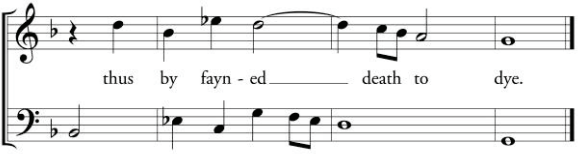
[65] Mazzaro, *Transformations*, p. 156.

[66] As Diane McColley observed, "Much of the alleged roughness of Donne's prosody unfrets itself—without betraying his refusal of mellifluous regularity—if readers fit word lengths and rests into lines as singers do." See McColley, *Poetry and Music*, p. 99.

[67] The unanimity of awkwardness is remarkable. Singers today might be inclined to contract "fayned" to "fayn'd," putting "death" on the long note and "to" on the short notes following, as Paul Hillier does in his recording on the album, *The Rags of Time*, Harmonia Mundi USA 907257 (2002), track 1.

Example 4. Excerpt from "Deerest love I doe not goe," by John Donne, from a setting in Oxford, MS Tenbury 1018 (ca.1615–25), fol. 44v, and British Library MS Add. 10337 (1656), fol. 55v.



The setting in the Tenbury manuscript contains the insertion, "my lady killegrewe," emphasized by a manicule—presumably either an attribution or dedication—while the British Library version is anonymous but has elaborate ornamentation. Four poetry manuscripts have headings that suggest the poem was written before a voyage, with captions like "To his loving Mistres When hee travailed,"[68] and "Dr Dunne on his Departure from his Loue."[69] Donne editor John Shawcross, among others, speculates that the poem was written on the occasion of Donne's trip to the continent with Sir Robert Drury in 1611,[70] in which case a model available by that date would be preferable. As it happens, two such ayres work well for this poem.

The stanza of "Sweetest Love" consists of eight lines, beginning with a ballad meter quatrain (4343), followed by an irregular quatrain of 2443, with the rhyme scheme of ababcddc. The closest match to this unusual versification is Thomas Campion's *Your faire lookes enflame my desire*, from *A Booke of Ayres* (1601),[71] a publication shared with Thomas Rosseter. Campion was somewhat lax about publishing his own songs, but he must have thought highly of this one since he reprinted it (with a variant lyric) in his *Fourth Booke of Ayres* (1617).[72] The versification of this Campion song is cross-rhymed 43433443, so only the fifth line

[68] Folger Library, MS V.a.103, fol. 32v; University of Nottingham, Pw V 37, p. 66. This is echoed by "To his Mrs when he went to Travayle" in Bodleian, MS Eng. poet.e.14, fols.42v–43r.

[69] Folger Library, MS V.a.345, p.131.

[70] John T. Shawcross, ed., *The Complete Poetry of John Donne* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 415. The first to propose this dating seems to be T. E. Tomlins, in *Walton's Lives* (London: Henry Kent Causton, 1852), p. 50.

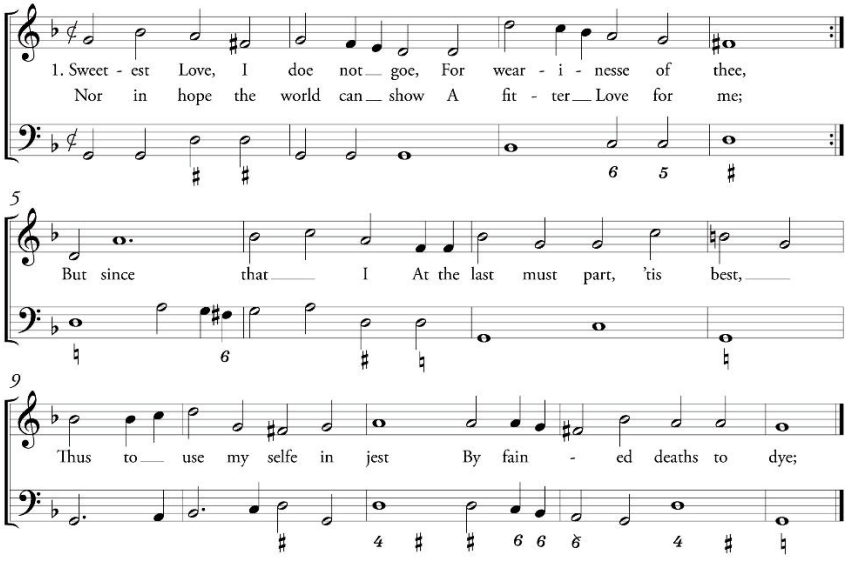
[71] No. 17, sig. F1v.

[72] No. 23, sig. L2r.

deviates from Donne's poem, with a trimeter rather than a dimeter line—five syllables instead of four—still a close correspondence (Example 5).[73] Beyond that mechanical match, there are elements in the 1601 poem that anticipate Donne's lyric, such as the line "Then come, sweetest come," and this quatrain from Campion's third stanza:

> Will you now so timely depart
> And not returne againe,
> Your sight lends such life to my hart,
> That to depart is paine.

Example 5. "Sweetest Love I doe not goe," by John Donne, set to Campion's *Your faire lookes enflame my desire* (1601, 1617).



> 1. Sweetest Love, I doe not goe,
> For wearinesse of thee,
> Nor in hope the world can show

[73] Winifrid Maynard's complaint that the sixth and seventh lines in later stanzas are not congruent with the first seems not to be true. See *Elizabethan Lyric Poetry and its Music*, 147–48. The only outlier is "Speedier" in the second stanza, which can easily be sung as two syllables, though even that is unnecessary in Example 5.

A fitter Love for mee,
But since that I
At the last must part, 'tis best,
Thus to use my selfe in jest
By fained deaths to dye.

2. Yesternight the Sunne went hence,
And yet is here to day,
He hath no desire nor sense,
Nor halfe so short a way:
Then feare not mee,
But beleeve that I shall make
Speedier journeyes, since I take
More wings and spurres then hee.

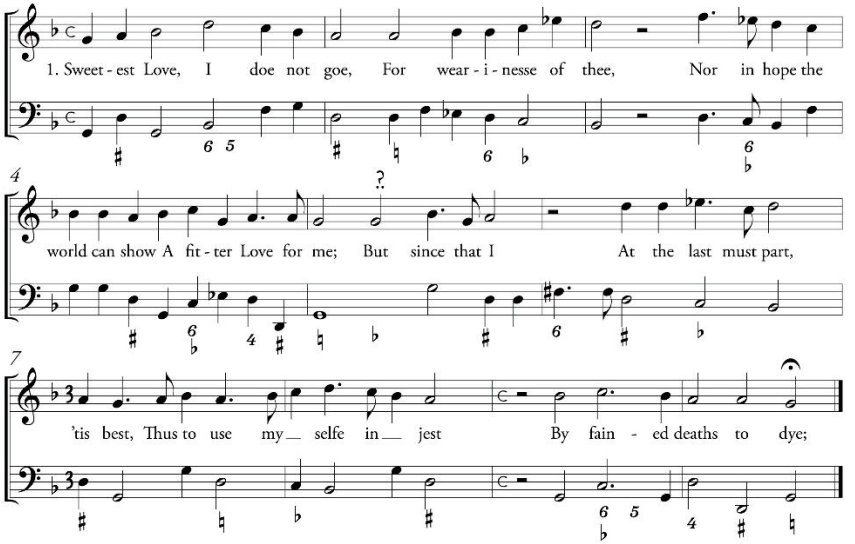
3. O how feeble is mans power,
That if good fortune fall,
Cannot adde another houre,
Nor a lost houre recall?
But come bad chance,
And wee joyne to it our strength,
And wee teach it art and length,
It selfe o'r us to'advance.

4. When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not winde,
But sigh'st my soule away,
When thou weep'st, unkindly kinde,
My lifes blood doth decay.
It cannot bee
That thou lov'st mee, as thou sayst,
If in thine my life thou waste,
Thou art the best of mee.

5. Let not thy divining hear
Forethinke me any ill,
Destiny may take thy part,
And may thy feares fulfill,
But thinke that wee
Are but turn'd aside to sleepe;
They who one another keepe
Alive, ne'r parted bee.

The other possible model for "Sweetest Love" is *Rest sweet Nimphs let goulden sleepe*, from Francis Pilkington's *First Booke of Songs or Ayres* (1605).[74] In this case, the versification is 434333223, so it is ostensibly a lesser match mechanically than Campion's song, although the rhyme scheme is closer, at ababccddc. Moreover, it accommodates the short line well, and its triple-meter section gives a playful rendering of "'tis best, Thus to use myself in jest." These things, plus the overall match, make it worth offering as an alternative setting (Example 6), and potentially, the model that inspired Donne's poem. Following Pilkington's original, the final section may be reprised from the sign of congruence in bar 5.

Example 6. "Sweetest Love I doe not goe," by John Donne, set to Pilkington's *Rest sweet Nimphs let goulden sleepe* (1605).

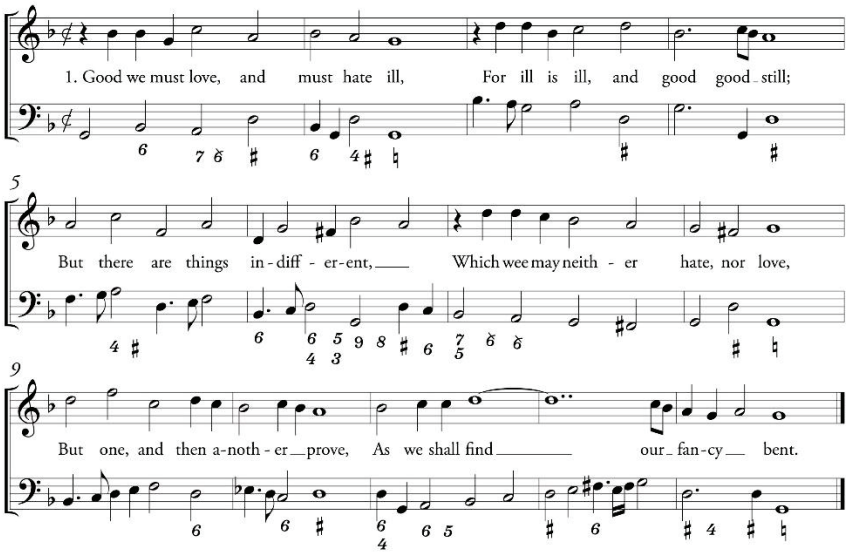


The three poems added to the "made to certain Aires" group in the Dolaucothi Manuscript are *Communitie* ("Good we must love, and must hate ill"), *Confined Love* ("Some man unworthy to be possessor"), and *The Mandrake* ("Goe and catch a falling starre"). No musical setting survives for *Communitie*, but its aabccb tetrameter versification means

[74] No. 6, sigs. D2v–E1r.

that it may have been inspired by the same group of three lutesongs that use that versification, discussed above for *The Message*. In this case, the match is more straightforward and alternative settings are given here for Dowland's *Woefull hart* (Example 7) and Jones's *O my poor eies* (Example 8).

Example 7. *Communitie* by John Donne, set to Dowland's *Woefull hart with griefe opprest* (1600).



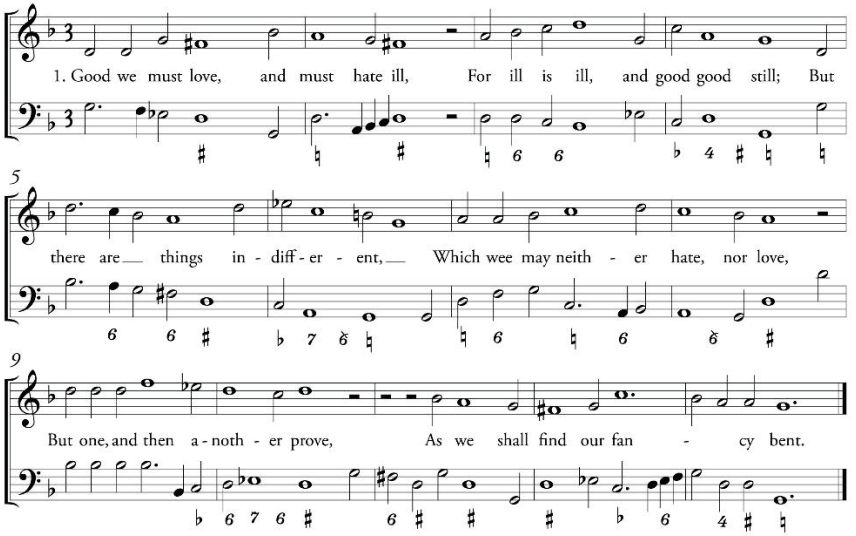
1. Good we must love, and must hate ill,
For ill is ill, and good good still,
    But there are things indifferent,
Which we may neither hate, nor love,
But one, and then another prove,
    As we shall finde our fancy bent.

2. If then at first wise Nature had
Made women either good or bad,
    Then some wee might hate, and some chuse,
But since she did them so create,
That we may neither love, nor hate,
    Only this rests, All all may use.

3. If they were good, it would be seene,
Good is as visible as greene,
And to all eyes it selfe betraies.
If they were bad, they could not last,
Bad doth itself, and others waste,
So they deserve nor blame, nor praise.

4. But they are ours as fruits are ours,
He that but tastes, he that devours,
And he that leaves all, doth as well,
Chang'd loves are but chang'd sorts of meat;
And when he hath the kernell eate,
Who doth not fling away the shell?

Example 8. *Communitie* by John Donne, set to Jones's *O my poor eies the sun whose shine* (1600).



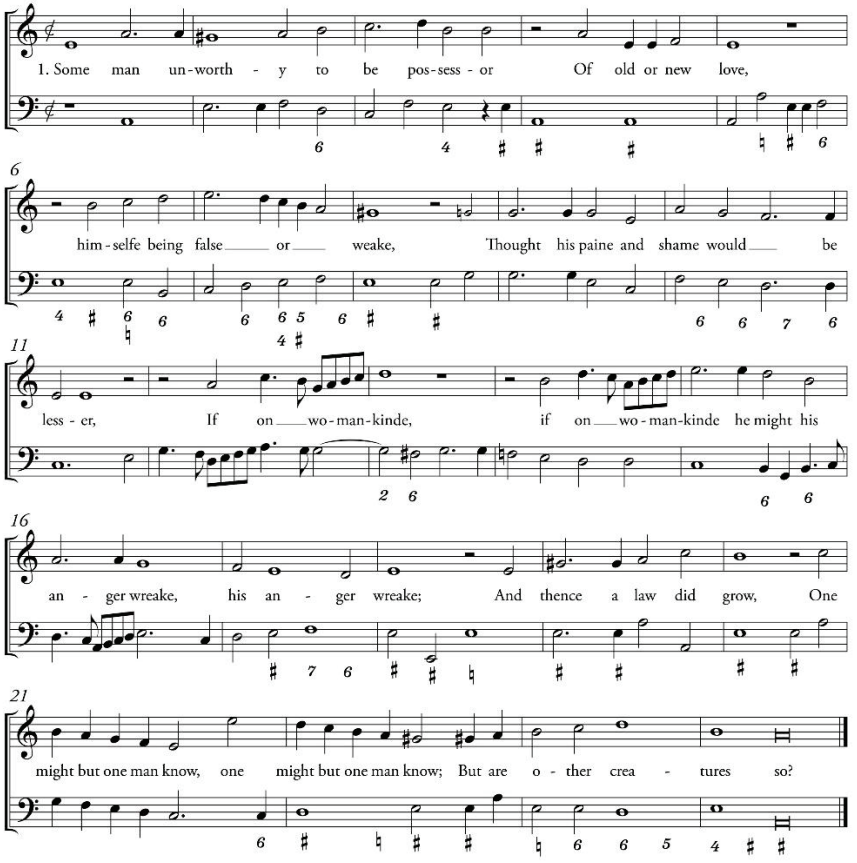
Donne's poem, *Confined Love*, is much more complicated from a versification standpoint, and its variable accents make it a special challenge to identify a possible musical model. Its survival in one literary manuscript, headed "A songe. Confined Love," supports its inclusion in the "made to certain Aires" group.[75] The opening quatrain

[75] Harvard, fMS Eng 966.4 (ca.1623–30s), p. 412

of its seven-line stanza might be described as cross-rhymed pentameters, but the syllable counts vary in each line (mostly 10.11.9.11), and from stanza to stanza as well.[76] Furthermore, the final tercet in each stanza is roughly in trimeter with the same rhyme (a triplet), but the final line has seven syllables to the others' six, again with variable accent, so the versification is unsettled, to say the least. As it happens, only one lutesong in the repertoire has a versification close to this: *That hart wherein all sorrowes doth abound*, from *The First Booke of Songs & Ayres* by Robert Jones (1600),[77] the same musical source that provided the model *O my poor eies* in Example 8 above. Its cross-rhymed pentameter quatrain to begin the stanza, and trimeter triplet to conclude, are as good a match as could be hoped, though text repetitions within the stanza make for a more complicated musical setting (Example 9). The first line of each stanza also seems to require separate treatment by the singer. Still, nothing else in the repertoire comes close as a musical model, and the return to the same Jones collection may indicate a special appreciation on Donne's part.

[76] The extra note provided in bar 8 of Example 9 is actually in Jones's original song but is not needed in the first stanza. It is, however needed for a counter accent in stanza 2, and an extra syllable in stanza 3.
[77] No. 17, sigs. F1v–F2r.

Example 9. *Confined Love* by John Donne, set to Jones's *That hart wherein all sorrowes doth abound* (1600).



1. Some man unworthy to be possessor
Of old or new love, himselfe being false or weake,
Thought his paine and shame would be lesser,
If on womankinde hee might his anger wreake,
And thence a law did grow,
One might but one man know;
But are other creatures so?

2. Are Sunne, Moone, or Starres by law forbidden,
To smile where they list, or lend away their light?
Are birds divorc'd, or are they chidden

If they leave their mate, or lie abroad a night?
Beasts doe no joyntures lose
Though they new lovers choose,
But we are made worse then those.

3. Who e'r rigg'd faire ship to lie in harbours,
And not to seeke new lands, or not to deale with all?
Or built faire houses, set trees, and arbors,
Onely to lock up, or else to let them fall?
Good is not good, unlesse
A thousand it possesse,
But doth waste with greedinesse.

That brings us to the sixth and final poem in the "made to certain Aires" group: *The Mandrake* ("Goe and catch a falling starre"). Beyond its inclusion in the song group in the Dolaucothi manuscript, it additionally bears the title "Song" in the earliest Donne prints and in four literary manuscripts,[78] reinforcing the idea that it was conceived as something to be sung. The lyric survives in an anonymous musical setting which is difficult to date, but which is certainly not the model that inspired the poem.[79] The nine-line stanza consists of six lines of trochaic tetrameter, rhyming ababcc, followed by a pair of two-syllable lines in a couplet, and a concluding tetrameter. The only extant song whose form might have inspired such a lyric is *Mistris since you so much desire* from Campion's *Booke of Ayres* (1601).[80] This song, in fact, is overleaf from *Your faire lookes enflame my desire*, used for setting "Sweetest Love I doe not goe," in Example 5 above, so Donne may be showing appreciation of Campion here as well. The first six lines of the musical setting fit without difficulty, while the pair of very short lines is well served by the short repeated figure in the music, concluding with the declamatory final tetrameter line (Example 10).

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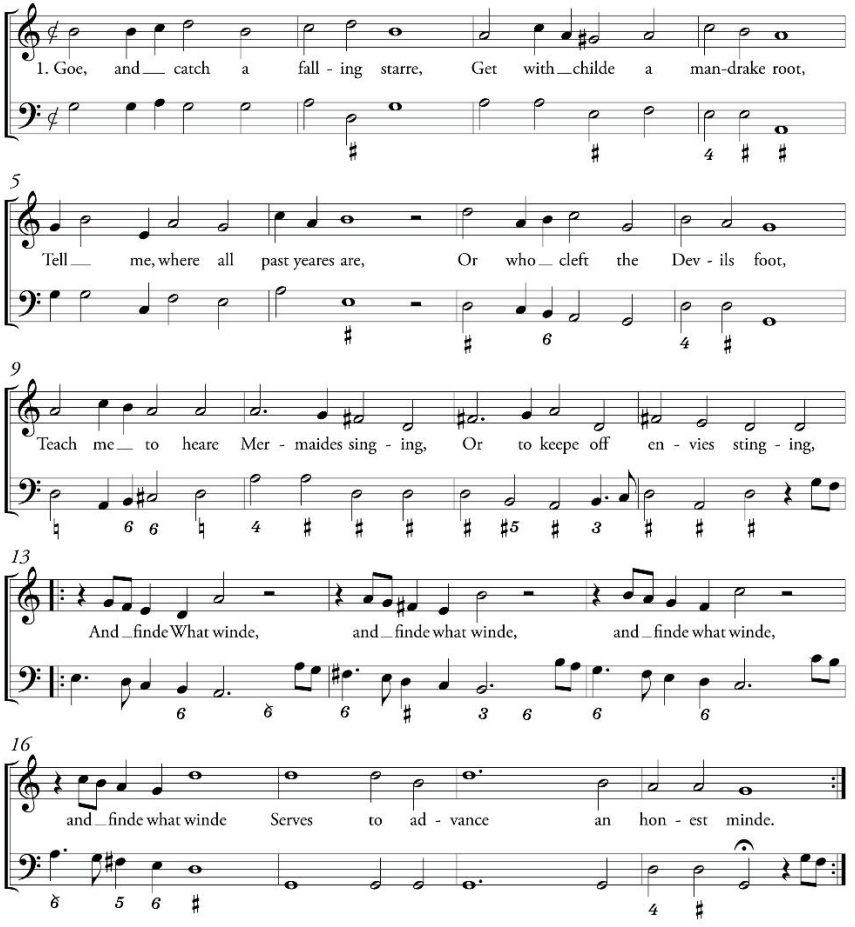
[78] British Library, MS Stowe 962 (ca.1637), fols. 65r–65v; Meisei University, MR 0799, p. 52; London, Metropolitan Archives, ACC/1360/528, fols. 34v–35r; British Library, MS Egerton 3884 (Melford Hall Manuscript), fols. 46v–47r.
[79] British Library, MS Egerton 2013, fol. 58v. Only the first stanza is given.
[80] No. 16, sig. F1r. Campion published a new version of it as *Beauty since you so much desire*, in his *Fourth Booke of Ayres* (1617), No. 22, sig. L1v. Ironically, Hollander discusses the 1601 song in "Donne and the Limits of Lyric," pp. 271–72.

Example 10. *The Mandrake* by John Donne, set to Campion's *Mistris since you so much desire* (1601).



1. Goe, and catch a falling starre,
Get with childe a mandrake root,
Tell me, where all past yeares are,
Or who cleft the Devils foot,
Teach me to heare Mermaides singing,
Or to keepe off envies stinging,
And finde
What winde
Serves to advance an honest minde.

2. If thou beest borne to strange sights,
Things invisible to see,
Ride ten thousand dayes and nights,
Till age snow white haires on thee,
Thou, when thou retorn'st, wilt tell mee
All strange wonders that befell thee,
And sweare
No where
Lives a woman true, and faire.

3. If thou findst one, let mee know,
Such a Pilgrimage were sweet,
Yet doe not, I would not goe,
Though at next doore we might meet,
Though she were true, when you met her,
And last, till you write your letter,
Yet shee
Will be
False, ere I come, to two, or three.

Other "Songs"

We have manuscript testimony that the foregoing six poems were all based on songs. Two of them, *The Mandrake* and "Sweetest Love," were additionally labeled "Song" in the first Donne print of 1633. For the reorganized 1635 collection, now with a *Songs and Sonets* section, those labels appear again, but this time, an additional three poems bear the "Song" label: "Deare Love continue nice and chaste," "Stand still, and I will read to thee," and "Soules joy, now I am gone." Those labels persist in the later editions to 1669, except for "Stand still," which is given the replacement title, *A Lecture upon the shadow*, starting in 1649. There are issues of attribution in two of those three poems, as will be discussed below, but the use of the "Song" label, in parallel with lyrics that manuscript testimony says were based on songs, makes them also worth exploring as singable lyrics.

The use of the word "song" applied to a poem in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, as Katherine Larson has pointed out, is not necessarily an indication for singing, although she makes clear that the line between poetry and song was not as distinct then as it is

now.[81] Today, the term is sometimes traced to the biblical book, the "Song of Songs," or "Song of Solomon," but until the Authorized King James Bible (1611), the so-called Bishops Bible (1568) was the authorized version in the Church of England, and like the Great Bible (1539), it calls that book "The Ballet of Ballettes."[82] Another precedent is the title of Tottel's Miscellany, *Songes and Sonettes* (1557), where some of the poems are labeled "song," although frequently, its references to the word also refer to singing. As Philip Sidney says, "hee [the *Poet*] commeth to you with words set in delightfull proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for the well enchanting skill of *Musicke*.[83] George Puttenham defines "*Lyrique* Poets" as those who "write songs or ballads of pleasure, to be song with the voice, and to the harpe, lute, or citheron & such other musical instruments."[84] Donne's contemporary William Scott says, "Lyrick [Poesyes] are soe called bycause properlye they be applyable to Musicke and songe."[85] And composer, poet, and theorist, Thomas Campion, speaks of "such verses . . . which we may call *Lyricall,* because they are apt to be soong to an instrument, if they were adorn'd with conuenient notes."[86] As Scott Trudell argues, "longstanding assumptions of a categorical difference between written and musical systems of communication have obscured the vital role that song played in the crafting of English Renaissance poetry."[87] Whatever the later history of "song as poem," when it comes to lyric poetry during Donne's time, the evidence suggests that "song" generally referred to

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[81] Katherine Larson, *The Matter of Song in Early Modern England: Texts in and of the Air* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 37–38.

[82] In the Catholic Douay-Rheims Old Testament (1609–10), the book is entitled "The Canticle of Canticles."

[83] Sidney's *The Defence of Poesie*, written ca.1580, was printed twice in 1595. Ponsonby's was the authorized issue and is now preferred, although it is less well laid out than Olney's earlier unregistered volume. Olney (STC 22534.5), sig. E4v; Ponsonby (STC 22535) sig. E2r.

[84] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), p. 20.

[85] William Scott, *The Modell of Poesye*, British Library, Add. MS 81083 (ca.1599), fol. 14r.

[86] Thomas Campion, *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602), p. 29.

[87] Trudell, *Unwritten Poetry*, p. 10.

singing, or the perceived potential for singing, and that is how I interpret it for these lyric poems.[88]

The first of the three labeled "songs" beyond the "made to certain Aires" group, "Deare Love continue," has been attributed to Ben Jonson's friend, Sir John Roe. This is on the strength of four manuscript copies of the poem with the marginal annotation "J. R.", and Herbert Grierson's sense that the poem is not in Donne's style, regardless of its inclusion in every printed collection of Donne poems from 1633 to 1669.[89] The broad consensus around Roe's authorship is slightly surprising, given his stated "purpose to followe the warrs"[90] (fighting in Ireland and the Low Countries), his travel to Russia, as well as his reported intent to spend money till "when he had no more to spend he could die,"[91] and the fact that he died in January 1606 at the age of 24.[92] The poem may belong to Roe in spite of all that—or to some other "J. R."—but its designation as a "Song" in the 1633–69 Donne prints makes it worth investigating as having been inspired by the tune of a previously existing song. It consists of eight quatrain stanzas of tetrameters, though the last stanza has a couplet reprise at the end. The quatrain rhyme scheme alternates abab and abba, which suggests the

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[88] Winifrid Maynard sees Donne's conception of lyric poetry as song as "notional rather than practical," although that would seem to be contradicted by the expectation Donne expressed in *The Triple Fool*. See Maynard, *Elizabethan Lyric Poetry and its Music*, p. 143.

[89] The manuscripts with "J. R." attributions include British Library, Lansdowne MS 740, fol. 99v; British Library, MS Egerton 3884, fols. 67v–68r; Dublin, Trinity College, MS 877, p. 257. Grierson's discussion is in *The Poems of John Donne*, vol. 1, cxxx–cxxxv. The "J. R." attribution had previously been noted in E. K. Chambers, *The Poems of John Donne* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1896), vol. 2, 303. In fact, it appears that poems attributed to Roe almost never give anything beyond the initials. Huntington MS EL 6893, fol. 31r, has "By S^{r} John Roe" written above "To Ben Johnson 6 Jan: 1603," but clearly as an afterthought (over the previous poem's ending decoration), and perhaps in a different hand. "Deare Love, contynue" in that manuscript (fol. 95r) is unattributed.

[90] The Earl of Devonshire to Ralph Winwood, 13 May 1605, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Buccleuch* (Montagu House), i. 56.

[91] "Certain Informations," fol. 27r.

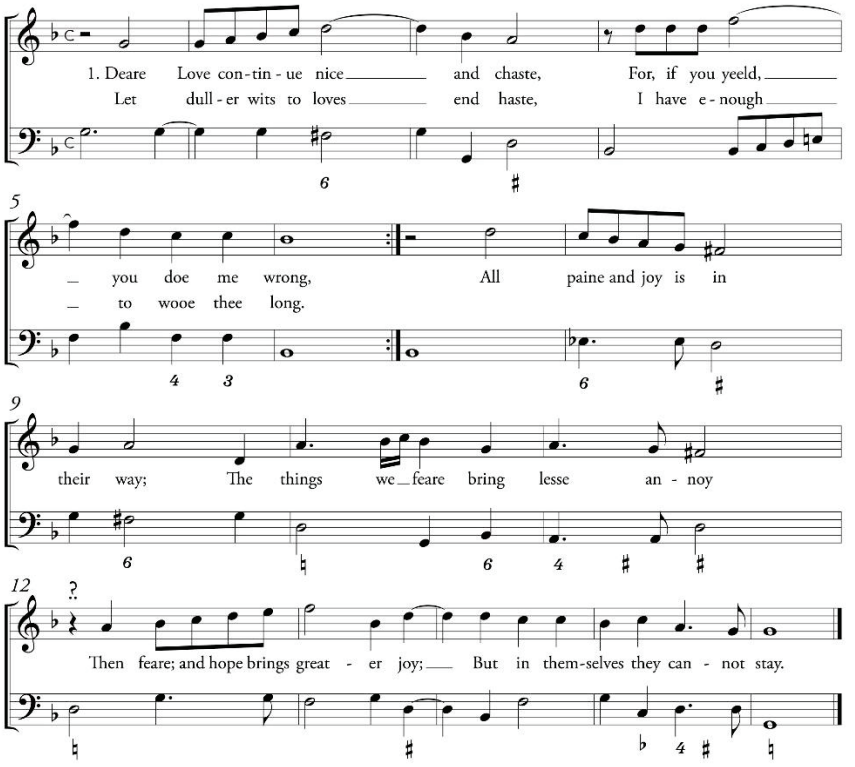
[92] On Roe's life, see Alvaro Ribeiro, "Sir John Roe: Ben Jonson's Friend," *Review of English Studies* 24 (1973): 153–64.

poem could have been based on an eight-line tetrameter stanza with ababcddc rhyme scheme. No extant song has that versification, although four lutesongs survive with eight cross-rhymed tetrameters. The best match and, in fact, the only one from the first decade of the seventeenth century is *Vnto the temple of thy beauty*, from Thomas Ford's *Musicke of Sundrie Kindes* (1607).[93] Ford was a court musician and, at some later point, he set Donne's "The Lamentations of *Jeremy*, for the most part according to *Tremelius*,"[94] so he seems to have been a composer interested in Donne. Whether Donne returned the favor is unknown, but Ford's work makes an attractive setting of "Deare Love continue" (Example 11). The final couplet may be reprised from the sign of congruence in bar 12.

[93] No. 3, sig. B2v–C1r.

[94] Oxford, Christ Church, MSS 736–38 (mid-1630s), fol. 21r (736 and 737) and fol. 22r (738). The setting is transcribed in Morris, "Not Siren-like," pp. 252–58.

Example 11. "Deare Love continue nice and chaste," by John Donne, set to Ford's *Vnto the temple of thy beauty* (1607).



1. Deare Love continue nice and chaste,
For, if you yeeld, you doe me wrong,
Let duller wits to loves end haste,
I have enough to wooe thee long.

All paine and joy is in their way;
The things we feare bring lesse annoy
Then feare; and hope brings greater joy;
But in themselves they cannot stay.

2. Small favours will my prayers increase;
Granting my suit you give me all,
And then my prayers must needs surcease,
For, I have made your Godhead fall.

Beasts cannot will, nor beauty see,
They, mans affections onely move;
Beats other sports of love doe prove,
With better feeling farre then wee.

3. Then Love prolong my suite, for thus
By losing sport, I sports doe win:
And that doth vertue prove in us,
Which ever yet hath been a sinne.

My comming neare may spie some ill,
And now the world is given to scoffe:
To keep my Love, (then) keep me off,
And so I shall admire thee still.

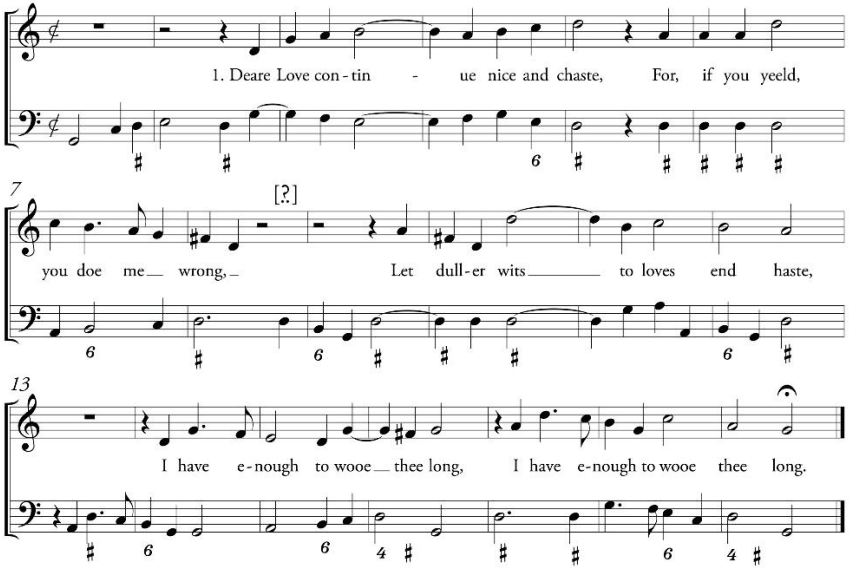
4. Say I have made a perfect choice,
Saciety our selves may kill;
Then give me but thy face and voyce,
My eye and eare thou canst not fill.

To make me rich (oh) be not poore,
Give me not all, yet something lend,
So I shall still my suite commend,
And you at will doe lesse or more.
But, if to all you condescend,
My love, our sport, your Godhead end.

In spite of the eight-line rhyme scheme, "Deare Love continue" seems always to have been presented in quatrains, so the ayre that inspired it may have had a quatrain stanza. In that case, one possible model is *Once did I loue and yet I liue*, from Robert Jones's *First Booke of Songes & Ayres* (1600),[95] already seen as a source for settings here. The music is simple and fits the lyric well, with a reprise of the last line of each quatrain. The extra couplet at the end could then be set using a reprise from the editorial sign of congruence in bar 8 (Example 12).

[95] No. 4, sig. B2v–C1r.

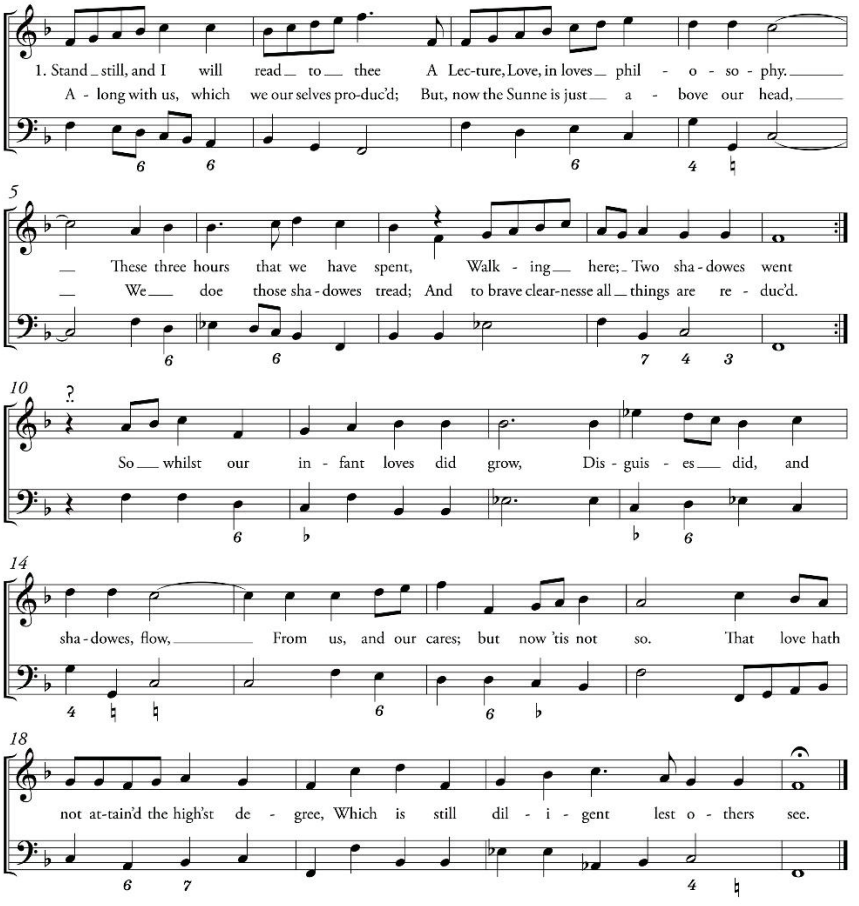
Example 12. "Deare Love continue nice and chaste," by John Donne, set to Jones's *Once did I loue and yet I liue* (1600).



Another poem labeled "Song" in the early Donne prints is "Stand still, and I will read to thee." As noted above, for the 1649 edition of Donne's poems, it bore a new title: *A Lecture upon the shadow*—a reference to "A Lecture in loves philosophy" mentioned in the second line, and the shadows made by two lovers, both literally and metaphorically. The poem has two long stanzas of thirteen lines each, certainly an irregular number. But beyond that, the line lengths are irregular, varying from six to ten syllables until the final couplets, which are pentameters. It would not seem to be a lyric based on an existing song, or indeed, that could be set to an existing song. But among the handful of extant thirteen-line songs, one does fit this lyric: Thomas Campion's *Come ashore, come merry mates*, from *The Description of a Maske* (The Somerset Maske) (1614).[96] The running scalar notes, indeed, make it possible to set flexible numbers of syllables in those passages where discrepancies exist, and the light-hearted character of the music suits the lyric well (Example 13).

[96] Sig. C4v–D1r.

Example 13. "Stand still and I will read to thee" by John Donne, set to Campion's *Come ashore, come merry mates* (1614).



1. Stand still, and I will read to thee
A Lecture, Love, in loves philosophy.
These three hours that we have spent,
Walking here; Two shadowes went
Along with us, which we our selves produc'd;
But, now the Sunne is just above our head,
We doe those shadowes tread;
And to brave clearnesse all things are reduc'd.
So whilst our infant loves did grow,

Disguises did, and shadowes, flow,
From us, and our cares; but now 'tis not so.

That love hath not attain'd the high'st degree,
Which is still diligent lest others see.

2. Except our loves at this noone stay,
We shall new shadowes make the other way.
As the first ere made to blinde
Others; these which come behinde
Will worke upon our selves, and blind our eyes.
If our loves faint, and westwardly decline;
To me thou, falsly, thine,
And I to thee mine actions shall disguise.
The morning shadowes weare away,
But these grow longer all the day,
But oh, loves day is short, if love decay.

Love is a growing, or full constant light;
And his short minute, after noone, is night.

"Stand still," at least, is not disputed as a poem by Donne. The next lyric, "Soules joy, now I am gone," however, has long disappeared from the Donne canon, and like "Deare love continue," has been omitted from recent standard editions.[97] "Soules joy" has been attributed to William Herbert, the 3rd Earl of Pembroke, based mostly on *Poems, written by the Right Honorable William Earl of Pembroke* (1660), a collection edited, ironically, by Donne's son, John.[98] The version of the poem there

[97] See, for example: Gardner, *John Donne*; Theodore Redpath, *The Songs and Sonets of John Donne*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983); Shawcross, *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*; Robin Robbins, *The Complete Poems of John Donne* (Harlow: Longman, 2008). The two poems do appear in an Appendix to *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 4.3, Jeffrey Johnson, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022).

[98] It is also attributed to Pembroke in British Library, Lansdowne MS 777, fols. 73r–73v. The Pembroke attribution is accepted in *The Poems of William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke*, Mary Ellen Lamb, Garth Bond, and Steven W. May, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023). There exists also a "Parodie" of this poem by George Herbert, Pembroke's kinsman. The two "Soules joy" poems are given in parallel and discussed in Simon Jackson, *George Herbert and*

is corrupt, however, missing large chunks of verse and moving sections around; but even in that edition, it bears the title "Song."

The most striking feature of "Soules joy" in the Donne prints, at least, is the use of an italicized refrain, something that does not appear anywhere else in the volume. There is even a short-form indication for a return to the refrain at the end of the second stanza: "*O give no way to griefe, &c.*"—a common space-saver in printed ayres with a refrain—which makes the poem look even more like a song lyric. The versification is complicated, however, with three five-line sections to each stanza, each rhyming ababb, with a versification of 32243, making it difficult to identify a song that might fit. A single extant ayre has a versification that resembles this, however: *Absence heere thou my protestation*, from Thomas Morley's *First Booke of Ayres* (1600).[99] Its versification begins 42243, quite close to "Soules joy," and the reprise of the second half of the song, called for in Morley's print, is ideal for the refrain.[100] One intriguing thing about this match of lyrics is that "Absence heere thou my protestation" is attributed to Donne in several literary manuscripts, and the two poems actually appear consecutively in the O'Flahertie Manuscript.[101] Its frequent attribution to Donne's friend, John Hoskyns, in other manuscripts, however, is supported by its early printing as an anonymous poem in Francis Davison's *A Poetical Rhapsodie* (1602), at a time when Donne was actively avoiding publication. Regardless, there is an affinity between the two lyrics, even to the extent that the word "Absence" in the midst of the first stanza occurs at an identical point in the songs (Example 14).

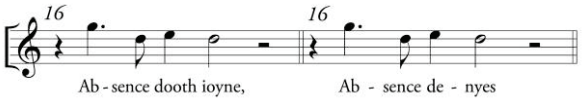
Early Modern Musical Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 59–64, with Jackson ultimately lamenting, "unfortunately, in the case of 'Soules joy', we no longer have access to the musical notes." It is, in fact, labeled "Songe" in Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 8468 (ca.1632), fols. 124v–125r.

[99] No. 14, sig. D4v.

[100] This is complicated because the rest of Morley's unique print is missing, but the lute accompaniment for the second section begins again at the end of the page, along with a *custos* for the first note of the vocal part of that section. "Soules joy" has more text in its stanza than *Absence heere*, but Morley's ayre uses text repetition; not repeating text for "Soules joy" allows it to be set comfortably to the music.

[101] Harvard, MS Eng 966.5, pp. 308–09.

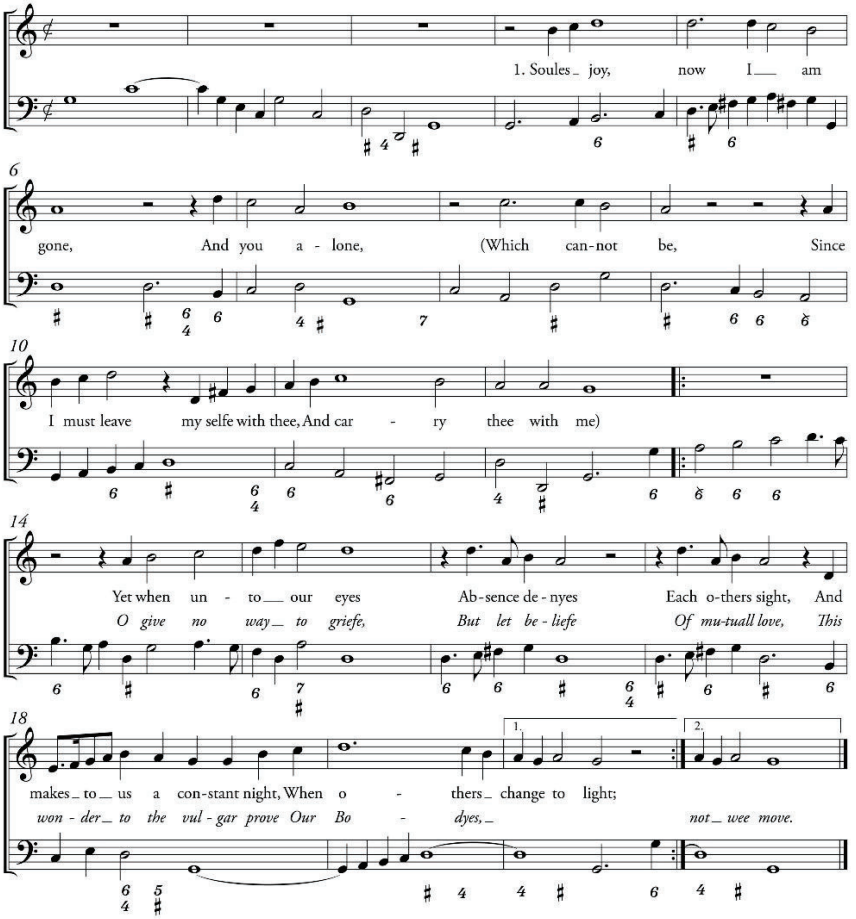
Example 14. Excerpt from *Absence heere thou my protestation*, by Thomas Morley (1600), at left, with a parallel passage from "Soules joy" set to the same music, at right.



This detail may be serendipitous, but along with the compatibility of the complicated versification, it is enough to suggest that "Soules joy, now I am gone" may have been written with "Absence here thou my protestation" in mind, making the use of Morley's music for it all the more justified (Example 15).[102]

[102] Instrumental openings for some ayres are omitted in manuscript versions, so the second stanza may alternatively begin at bar 4.

Example 15. "Soules joy, I am gone" by John Donne, set to Morley's *Absence heere thou my protestation* (1600).



1. Soules joy, now I am gone,
And you alone,
(Which cannot be,
Since I must leave my selfe with thee,
And carry thee with me)
Yet when unto our eyes
Absence denyes
Each others sight,
And makes to us a constant night,

When others change to light;
O give no way to griefe,
But let beliefe
Of mutuall love,
This wonder to the vulgar prove
Our Bodyes, not wee move.

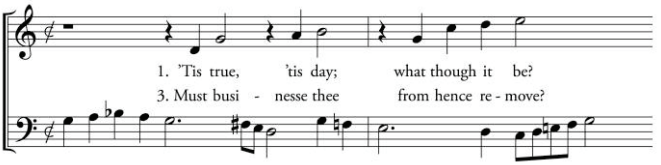
2. Let not thy wit beweepe
Words but sense deepe,
For when we misse
By distance our hopes joyning blisse,
Even then our soules shall kisse,
Fooles have no meanes to meet,
But by their feet,
Why should our clay,
Over our spirits so much sway,
To tie us to that way?
O give no way to griefe,
But let beliefe
Of mutuall love,
This wonder to the vulgar prove
Our Bodyes, not wee move.

Those are the lyrics in the Donne *Poems* editions, 1633–69, that are labeled "Song," but there are other poems from the *Songs and Sonets* section that bear that heading in manuscript. One of these is *Breake of day*, beginning "'Tis true, 'tis day; what though it be?" which is labeled "A Songe" in Cambridge University Library MS Add. 29 (ca.1620–33),[103] and "A songe" in the Skipwith Manuscript (begun ca.1620).[104] It is unusual as a poem written in the woman's voice and, as noted, it survives in a musical setting by William Corkine from his *Second Booke of Ayres* (1612).[105] Brian Morris complains that Corkine's setting is "routine" and "predictable," with "temptations to word-painting" that work only in the first stanza, concluding that "Donne's words are

[103] Fol. 6v.
[104] British Library, MS Add. 25707, fol. 18v. The poem also bears this label in the mid-seventeenth-century manuscript, Bradford Archives, 32D86/34, p. 26.
[105] No. 4, sig. B1v.

nowhere near so well served."[106] Besides incongruous word-painting, in fact, the music is not a good fit for the third stanza, for example, where the second word is broken by a rest and, because of the harmony, its first syllable cannot technically be extended, as might sometimes serve to correct such faults (Example 16).[107]

Example 16. Opening of *Breake of day*, by John Donne, from a setting by William Corkine (1612).



It seems possible, in fact, that this poem was a "A songe," not because it was set by Corkine, but because, like the others, it was based on a pre-existent song. Indeed, aside from Corkine's 1612 setting of this poem, the versification of six lines of 444455 in rhyming couplets is found in only one early-seventeenth century song: *I dye when as I doe not see*, from John Danyel's *Songs for the Lvte Viol and Voice* (1606).[108] There is brief repetition in Danyel's song at the beginning of the last line, but it works for Donne's poem as well, and the fit is perfect (Example 17).[109]

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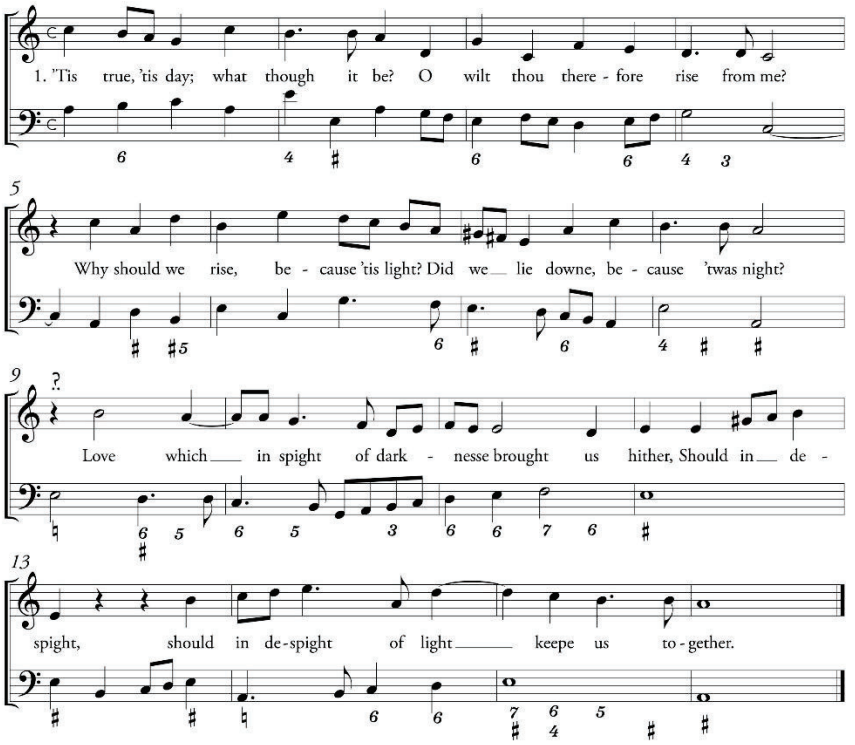
[106] Morris, "Not Siren-like," pp. 230–31.

[107] One possible fix in this case would be to extend the third note backward over the rest.

[108] No. 18, sig. I2r.

[109] The final couplet may be reprised from the sign of congruence in bar 9. In the final line of the first stanza, "despight" from the 1633 edition (and others) is preferred over "spight" from the 1635 edition because it matches the number of syllables in the penultimate line. In an odd twist, the rapid transition between lines 3–4 at the end of bar 6—a feature of Danyel's original song—works better for the second and third stanzas of Donne's poem than for the first.

Example 17. *Breake of day*, by John Donne, set to Danyel's *I dye when as I doe not see* (1606).



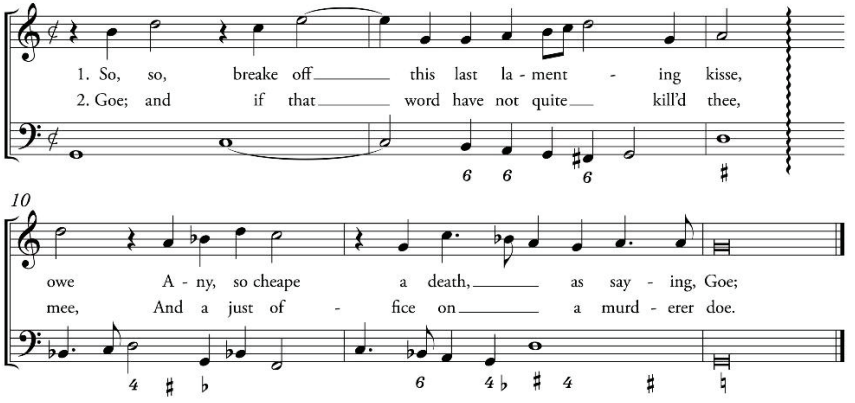
1. 'Tis true, 'tis day; what though it bee?
O wilt thou therefore rise from me?
Why should we rise, because 'tis light?
Did we lie downe, because 'twas night?
Love which in spight of darknesse brought us hither,
Should in despight of light keepe us together.

2. Light hath no tongue, but is all eye;
If it could speake as well as spie,
This were the worst, that it could say,
That being well, I faine would stay,
And that I lov'd my heart and honour so,
That I would not from him, that had them, goe.

3. Must businesse thee from hence remove?
Oh, that's the worst disease of love,
The poore, the soule, the false love can
Admit, but not the busied man.
He which hath businesse, and makes love, doth doe
Such wrong, as when a maryed man should wooe.

Besides *Breake of day*, the other Donne lyric with a printed musical setting from the early seventeenth century is *The Expiration* ("So, so, breake off this last lamenting kisse"), or "So, so leaue off," as Ferrabosco sets it (and ten literary manuscripts have it). Ferrabosco's setting, in fact, is one of the most egregious examples of text underlay working well for Donne's first stanza, but not for his second. As John Hollander said of it, "the second verse cannot under any circumstances be sung to the setting that should, ideally, do for both of them."[110] Of course, singers sometimes add or remove syllables to make the lyric fit the music, but presumably, that is not what Donne was imagining when he wrote the poem. Example 18 gives the first and last musical phrases of Ferrabosco's song with both stanzas underlaid to Donne's words.

Example 18. Opening and ending of *The Expiration*, by John Donne, from a setting by Alfonso Ferrabosco (1609).



[110] John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), p. 188.

In fact, Ferrabosco anticipated that his opening was not going to work for Donne's second stanza, so he changed its opening words to: "Goe, goe, and if that word . . . ." That fixes the problem at the opening; for the ending, it would be possible for the singer to extend the note on the first syllable of "office" to avoid the awkwardness of a word divided by a rest.[111] So there are ways around infelicitous text setting, whether anticipated by the composer or effected by the singer in performance. Those "repairs" were not enough to avert John Hollander's scorn for Ferrabosco's setting, however.

The "So, so, breake off" poem is written in what has come to be known as the *Venus and Adonis* stanza after Shakespeare's poem of that name—six pentameter lines in an ababcc rhyme scheme—one of the most popular versifications for lutesongs, with almost a hundred of them surviving up to 1622. *The Expiration* title appears in the printed Donne editions starting in 1633 and in five poetry manuscripts, but not in Ferrabosco's *Ayres*. Besides having drawn Ferrabosco's attention, it finds a place here because the poem is called "A Songe" in Bodleian MS Eng. poet. c. 50 (ca.1630s–40s),[112] a fairly late source. More intriguing is that it bears the title *Valedictio* (*Valedico*, *Valediction*) in about a dozen literary manuscripts, raising the possibility that Donne might have had in mind one of the earliest and most famous of the ababcc pentameter ayres, *His golden locks time hath to siluer turnde*, from John Dowland's *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1597).[113] Reportedly sung at the Accession Day tilt on 17 November 1590, it served as the "Farewell to the Court"—the valediction—of Sir Henry Lee as Queen Elizabeth's champion. It was described as "a musicke so sweet and secret" with "excellent melodie," and was "pronounced and sung" by Robert Hales, the queen's

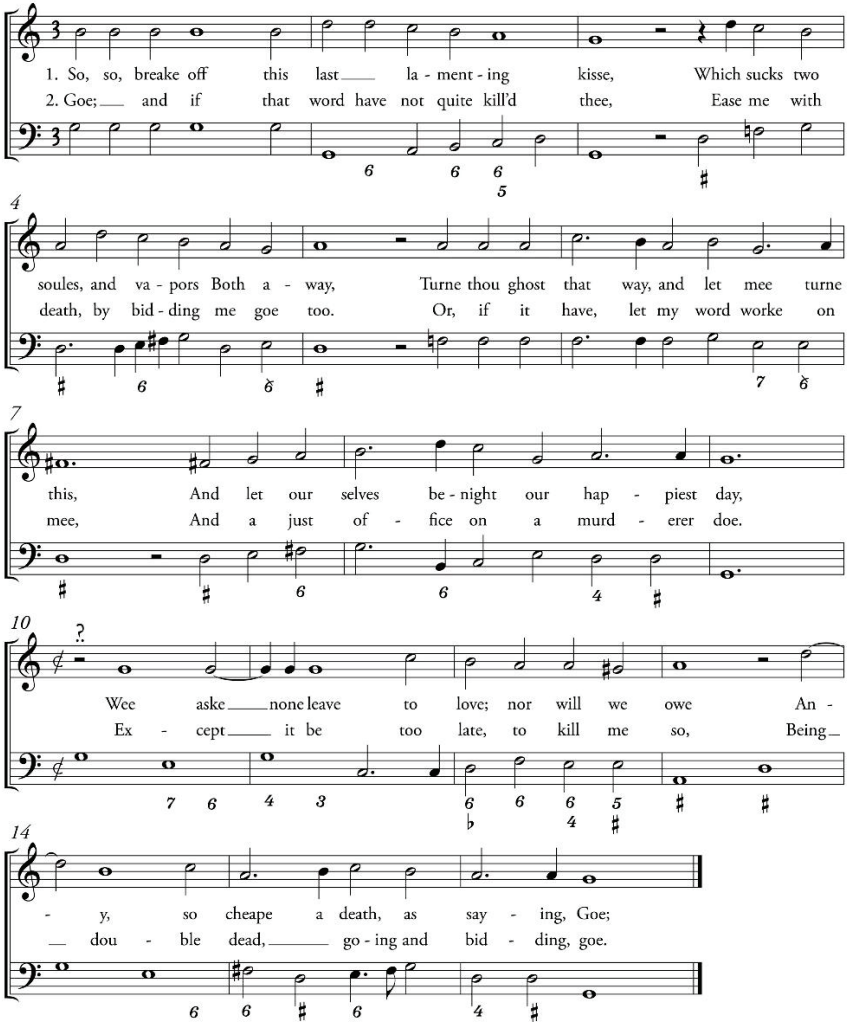
[111] Winifrid Maynard gives yet another instance of this, in the third phrase of *The Expiration*. See Maynard, *Elizabethan Lyric Poetry and its Music*, 128. This same phrase is given by John Duffy in his analysis of the song, concluding that the second strophe "does not have the same rhetorical construction nor the same internal organization of lines" as the first, and further, that "the entire second strophe is off-balance." See John Duffy, *The Songs and Motets of Alfonso Ferrabosco, the Younger (1575–1628)* (Ann Arbor, 1979), 65. Like the final phrase, however, this one could be mitigated by the singer extending a note over a rest.
[112] Fols. 65r–65v.
[113] No. 18, sig. I2v–K1r.

favorite singer.[114] Published in Dowland's landmark 1597 collection and undoubtedly known to Donne, its music makes a simple but effective setting (Example 19), such as Donne might have hummed to himself as he penned his own *Valedictio*. Both stanzas are given to show that, with small underlay variants at the beginning and near the end—such as a singer might make to accommodate varying accentuations—they work equally well with the music.[115]

[114] William Segar, *Honor Military, and Ciuill* (1602), pp. 197–98. The lyrics have been attributed to Sir Henry Lee, not least because the version in Segar (and some manuscript sources) is in the first person: "My golden locks," etc. Sometimes also attributed to George Peele, the authorship is discussed in Thomas Clayton, "'Sir Henry Lee's Farewell to the Court': The Texts and Authorship of 'His Golden Locks Time Hath to Silver Turned'," *English Literary Renaissance* 4 (1974): 268–75. See also David H. Horne, *The Life and Minor Works of George Peele* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 169–73.

[115] Setting the second stanza like the first would emphasize the word "that": possible, but perhaps not intended.

Example 19. *The Expiration*, or *Valedictio*, by John Donne, set to Dowland's *His golden locks time hath to siluer turnde* (1597).



1. So, so, breake off this last lamenting kisse,
Which sucks two soules, and vapors Both away,
Turne thou ghost that way, and let mee turne this,
And let our selves benight our happiest day,
Wee aske none leave to love; nor will we owe

Any, so cheape a death, as saying, Goe;

2. Goe; and if that word have not quite kil'd thee,
Ease mee with death, by bidding mee goe too.
Oh, if it have, let my word worke on mee,
And a just office on a murderer doe.
Except it be too late, to kill me so,
Being double dead, going, and bidding, goe.

The last of the *Songs and Sonets* poems identified in manuscript as having a musical origin is, without question, the most surprising: *The Triple Fool*, where Donne speaks of the effect of having his poetry set to music. Despite that irony—despite being a complex meta-poem about lyrics becoming songs—it nevertheless appears with the label "Songe" or "A song" in no less than eleven manuscripts, including the O'Flahertie Manuscript at Harvard (ca.1623–25) and Stowe MS 962 (ca.1637).[116] This is a remarkable testament to a widespread view of this poem as sung, or at least, as having a musical background. Donne's eleven-line stanza, with an aabbbcdcdee rhyme scheme, and a highly irregular versification of 34353554555 finds no exact match in the lutesong repertoire, but one extant song with eleven lines, in odd combinations of long and short, is able to set Donne's poem: *Fortune and glory may be lost and woone*, a lyric by Thomas Campion set by John Coprario in *Songs of Mourning* (1613).[117] Donne's first line, notably, has fewer syllables than Campion's, but the setting still works in patterning longer syllables with more notes in that first line, and elsewhere in the song. Also, the different syllables and accents in the final two couplets require a slight difference in underlay when set to the same music, but that resolves the discrepancy and the music otherwise fits Donne's poem well (Example 20).

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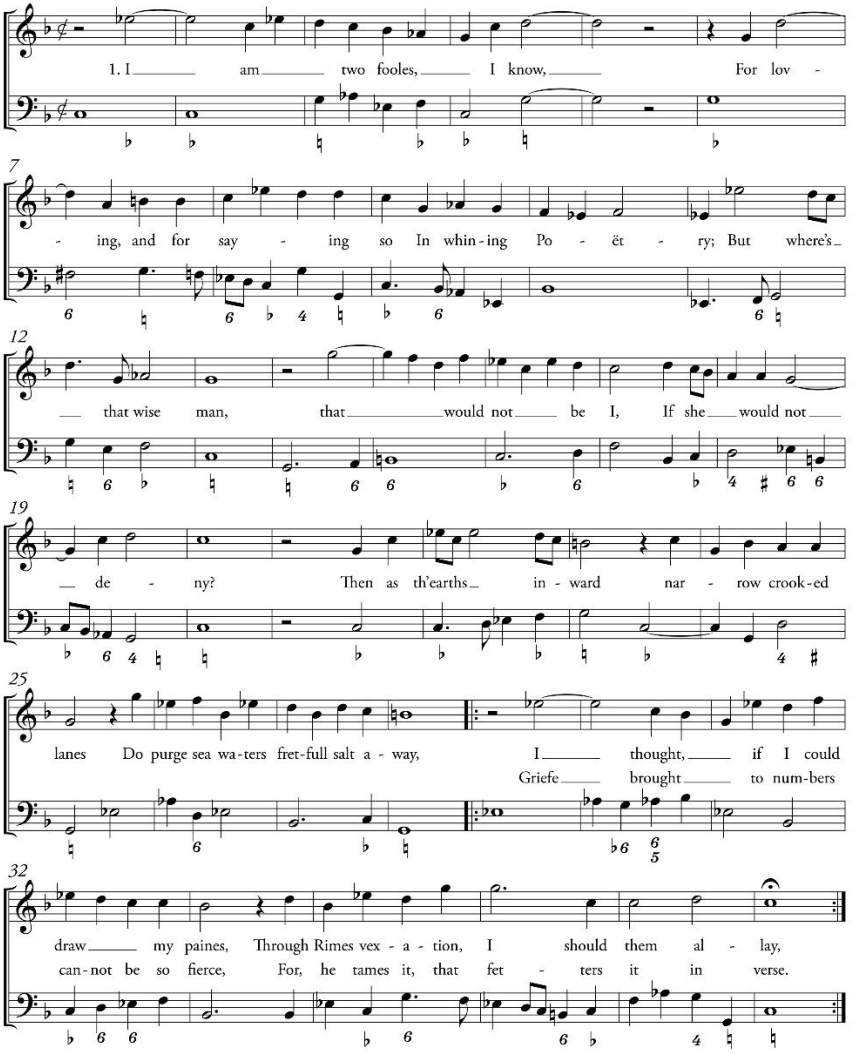
[116] Harvard, MS Eng 966.5, p. 255, and British Library, Stowe MS 962, fols. 124r–124v. I mention the latter because "Stowe MS 962 displays an unusually high level of attention and accuracy." See Lara M. Crowley, "Attribution and Anonymity: Donne, Raleigh, and Fletcher in British Library, Stowe MS 962," in *Manuscript Miscellanies in Early Modern England*, Joshua Eckhardt and Daniel Starza Smith, eds. (Farham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 134–49, at 135.

[117] No. 3, sigs. C1v–C2r. Campion's lyric has eleven lines with a versification of 55335425566 and an aabbcddcee rhyme scheme.

Example 20. *The Triple Fool*, by John Donne, set to Coprario's *Fortune and glory may be lost and woone* (1613).



1. I am two fooles, I know,
For loving, and for saying so
In whining Poëtry;
But where's that wise man, that would not be I,
If she would not deny?

Then as th'earths inward narrow crooked lanes
Do purge sea waters fretfull salt away,
    I thought, if I could draw my paines,
Through Rimes vexation, I should them allay,
Griefe brought to numbers cannot be so fierce,
For, he tames it, that fetters it in verse.

2. But when I have done so,
Some man, his art and voice to show,
    Doth Set and sing my paine,
And, by delighting many, frees againe
    Griefe, which verse did restraine.
To Love, and Griefe tribute of Verse belongs,
But not of such as pleases when 'tis read,
    Both are increased by such songs:
For both their triumphs so are published,
And I, which was two fooles, do so grow three;
Who are a little wise, the best fooles bee.

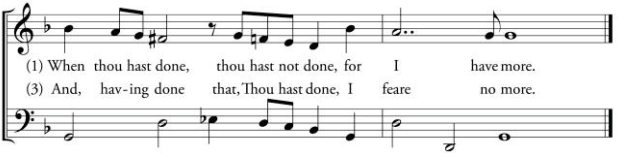
"A Hymne to God the Father"

Now we come to the final lyric—unique in having three numbered stanzas with, not only the same ababab rhyme scheme, but the same two rhymes (one of which rhymes with "Donne") in all three stanzas. It holds a special place here because Donne requested that it be set to music so he could hear it sung. John Shawcross identifies the surviving setting by John Hilton as the one Donne commissioned: "According to Walton, this poem was written during Donne's illness in winter 1623. It was set to music, by Donne's suggestion says Walton, by John Hilton, organist to St. Margaret's Church, Westminster."[118] While it would be convenient to think that the surviving setting is the one Donne commissioned (assuming it is by Hilton),[119] that statement has some misleading aspects which, unfortunately, have become well accepted because of Shawcross's authority. The poem may, indeed, have been written around December 1623 when Donne suffered a serious

[118] Shawcross, *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, 392.
[119] The attribution in British Library, MS Egerton 2013, fol. 13v, is in a different—probably later—hand.

illness,[120] though Walton says merely that "Yea even on his former sick-bed he wrote this heavenly *Hymne*."[121] The expression "former sick-bed" does imply some illness prior to the final one, so the dating seems logical from that standpoint.[122] Walton makes no mention of John Hilton, however. Hilton was born in Cambridge ca.1599, took his MusB there in 1626 after ten years' study (as he says), and was appointed organist at St. Margaret's, Westminster in 1628.[123] Thus, it is unlikely that Hilton is the composer that Donne turned to at St. Paul's in late 1623 or early 1624 to set his *Hymne*.[124] Moreover, the setting also suffers from incongruous underlay, in this case in the last phrase of the third (and final) stanza, either leaving the words poorly served by the music, or requiring a re-write. The endings of Donne's stanzas 1 and 3 are given in Example 21 by way of illustration.

Example 21. Ending of *A Hymne to God the Father*, by John Donne, from a setting by John Hilton in British Library, MS Egerton 2013, fol. 13v.



In fact, Egerton 2013 omits the word "that," so that the prosody works better, if not the sense. It is difficult to imagine, however, that Donne would have found the crucial (and modified) closing line of that setting of his *Hymne* to be bliss-inducing, which I think makes this piece even

[120] Donne discusses this illness in major portions of his *Devotions vpon Emergent Occasions, and seuerall steps in my Sicknes* (1624), sections 13–18.
[121] Walton, *The Life of John Donne*, p. 76.
[122] This seems likely because Donne also wrote a separate *Hymne to God my God in my sicknesse*, dated 23 March 1630/1 and described by Walton (p. 85) but not printed by him. It appears in the 1635 *Poems* just before the *Hymne to God the Father*, pp. 387–88.
[123] Ian Spink, "Hilton, John" in ODNB, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13326 (2004).
[124] On the circle of musicians at St. Paul's during Donne's tenure, see Clayton D. Lein, "Donne, Thomas Myriell, and the Musicians of St. Paul's," *John Donne Journal* 23 (2004), pp. 215–47.

less likely as Donne's commission. What Walton actually says in his description of the *Hymne*, is that Donne "caus'd it to be set to a most grave and solemn tune, and to be often sung to the *Organ* by the *Choristers* of that *Church*, in his own hearing, especially at the Evening Service."[125]

Donne is known to have revered the psalms and their "formes of joy and art."[126] As he said in Sermon LXVI, preached at St. Paul's on 29 January 1625: "The Psalmes are the Manna of the Church. As Manna tasted to every man like that that he liked best, so doe the Psalmes minister Instruction, and satisfaction, to every man, in every emergency and occasion."[127] There is a suspicion, however, that Donne was not enamored of the metrical versions in the *Whole Booke of Psalmes*: In *Vpon the translations of the Psalmes by Sir Philip Sydney, and the Countesse of Pembroke his Sister* (first printed in the 1635 *Poems*), Donne seems to lament the quality of English metrical psalms:

> When I behold that these Psalmes are become
> So well attyr'd abroad, so ill at home,
> So well in Chambers, in thy Church so ill,
> As I can scarce call that reform'd, untill
> This be reform'd; Would a whole State present
> A lesser gift that some one man hath sent?
> And shall our Church, unto our Spouse and King
> More hoarse, more harsh than any other, sing?[128]

Though not mentioned by name, this seems to disparage the reformed-church psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins in comparison with those of continental traditions, like Clément Marot and Théodore de Bèze in France and Switzerland, with their musical settings by Louis Bourgeois.[129] As Diane McColley says, "It is not the prose psalms sung

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[125] Walton, *The Life of John Donne*, pp. 77–78.
[126] From Donne's poem on the Sidney psalms, *Poems* (1635), 367.
[127] *LXXX Sermons Preached by that Learned and Reverend Divine, Iohn Donne* (1640), p. 663.
[128] Donne, *Poems* (1635), 367.
[129] On this issue, see Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 21. The superiority of the continental psalm translations, specifically, is raised in a letter from Donne's friend, Sir Robert Kerr, to his son William on 24 April 1624. Speaking

'in thy Church' by chapel and cathedral choirs that Donne finds unsatisfactory, but the Sternhold and Hopkins texts most people sang both in church and at home."[130] A close reading of the passage, in fact, reveals a complaint about "hoarse" and "harsh" singing of the psalms in English churches (as opposed to chambers), rather than the metrical psalms themselves. Indeed, many musical settings of English metrical psalms are derived from the French tradition, so musically there would seem to be little difference.

This is an issue here because one of the best musical matches for Donne's *Hymne to God the Father* is the tune for Sternhold's "Now Israell may say and that truely," Psalm 124 from the *Whole Booke of Psalmes* (1562–),[131] based on the tune from the pioneering French edition, *Pseaumes Octantetrois de Dauid* (1551). Certainly, "grave and solemn" is a good description of that metrical psalm tune, with its stately pentameters (so unusual in the metrical psalm repertoire); moreover, the phrase "caus'd it to be set to" could imply the use of a pre-existing melody. Often, metrical psalms would be sung monophonically—printed as they usually were with melodies alone—but four-voice settings were composed starting in the 1560s, culminating in the popular collections by Thomas East (1592) and Thomas Ravenscroft (1621).[132] Those included settings for Psalm 124, of course, but the model that emerges as best for Donne's *Hymne* is the version by lutenist Richard Allison, who in 1599 published his psalm settings for four voices, with the tune in the soprano range, accompanied by lute.[133] Besides the accompaniment, this stands out because, in other four-

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of The Dutch and French, he says, "the Psalmes are better done in their translationes than in ours." See *Correspondence of Sir Robert Kerr*, David Laing, ed. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1875) vol. 2, 488. See also Prescott, "'Forms of Joy and Art'," pp. 5–7.

[130] McColley, *Poetry and Music*, p. 127.

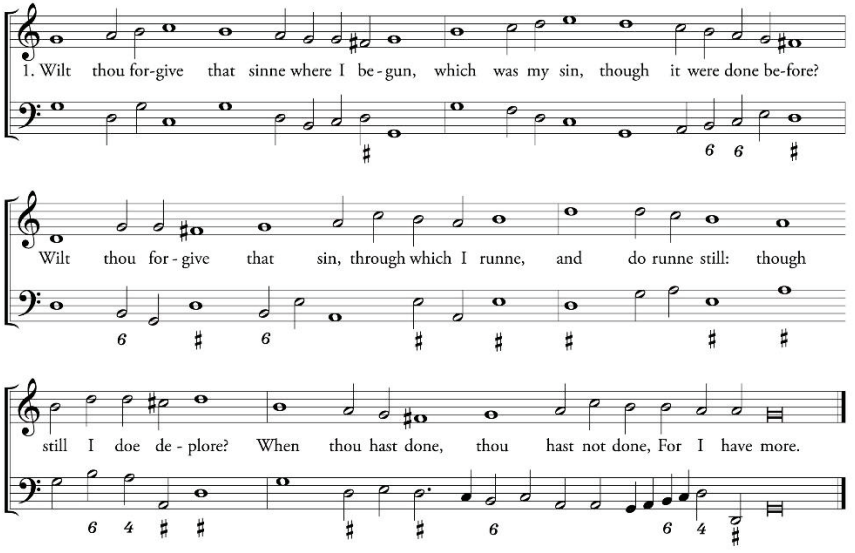
[131] The English-language setting first appeared in *The Forme of Prayers*, printed in Geneva in 1558.

[132] Thomas East, *The Whole Booke of Psalmes with their Wonted Tunes, as they are song in Churches, composed into foure parts* (1592); Thomas Ravenscroft, *The Whole Booke of Psalmes . . . Composed into 4. parts* (1621).

[133] Richard Allison, *The Psalmes of Dauid in Meter* (1599), Psalm 124, sig. N2v–N3r. The format thus resembles Dowland's *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1597), which first presented accompanied songs with three *ad libitum* voices.

voice psalm collections, the tune was, almost without exception, placed in the tenor range.[134] Allison's soprano-tune version, therefore, seems an excellent choice for choirboys to sing with organ accompaniment (Example 22). By convention, singers would add a breath after each phrase.

Example 22. *A Hymne to God the Father*, by John Donne, set to Allison's version of Psalm 124 (1599).



1. Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begun,
which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I runne,
And do run still: though still I doe deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For, I have more.

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[134] An exception is William Daman's *Second Booke . . . of Dauids Psalmes . . . in which Sett the highest part singeth the Church tune*(1591); that same year, he published a "Sett" with the tune in the tenor. One other isolated exception is David Peebles' Psalm 129 in the Wode Psalter (1560s), though the tune is still given in the tenor partbook, Edinburgh University MS La III. 483, 94–95. That tune was comparatively short-lived in the psalter, however, lasting only up to 1635, mainly in Scottish editions.

2. Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I have wonne
Others to sinne? and, made my sinne their doore?
Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shunne
A yeare, or two, but wallowed in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For, I have more.

3. I have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne
My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;
But sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done,
I feare no more.

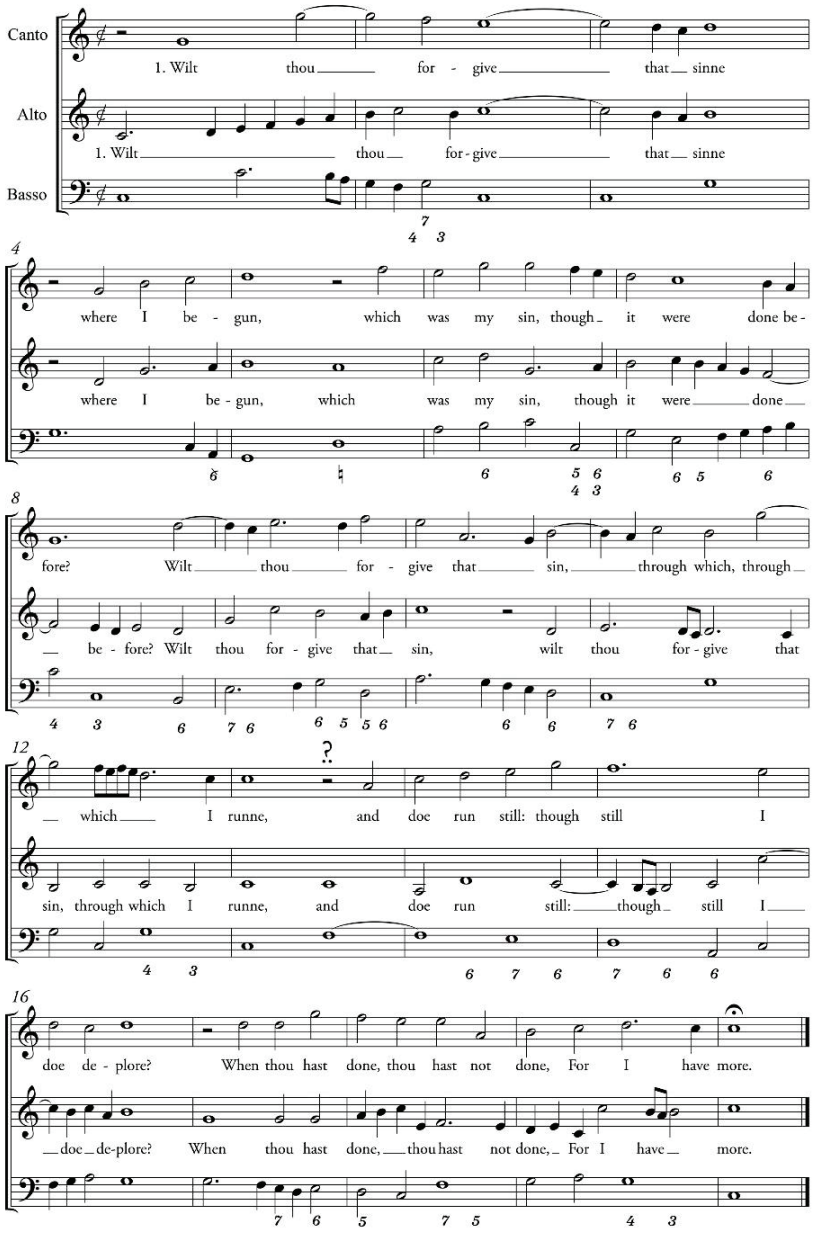
Again interpreting Walton's "caus'd it to be set to" phrase as an indication for contrafaction rather than composition, a more elaborate setting for Donne's *Hymne* can be made using the music of *O th'unsure hopes of men the brittle state*, from John Coprario's *Fvneral Teares* (1606).[135] That collection features songs with a "Canto" and an "Alto" voice with accompaniment, the "Alto" being set in the mezzo-soprano clef.[136] Performance by two (or more) high- and low-voice choirboys would, thus, seem to be entirely possible, fitting Walton's description of "*Choristers*" with organ accompaniment, not in unison in this case, but singing two independent parts. It makes an exquisite setting of the *Hymne* (Example 23), and easily conjures an image of Donne listening to it blissfully at Evensong in Old St. Paul's.[137]

[135] No. 3, sigs. C1v–C2r. Two other lutesongs could theoretically fit the lyric but would have difficulty setting the *Hymne* comfortably: John Dowland's *Bvrst forth my teares, assist my forward griefe*, from his *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1597), No. 8, sig. D2v–E1r, has a rhetorical opening with a rest that seems incompatible with Donne's lyric, though it could otherwise work; Thomas Morley's *Thirsis and Milla, arme in arme together*, from *The First Booke of Ayres* (1600), No. 2, sigs. A4v–B1r, has too much text repetition and is too lively.

[136] This suggests a higher tessitura than alto-clef parts, where the singers would more likely be adult male falsettists or high tenors.

[137] The final section may be reprised from the sign of congruence in bar 13.

Example 23. *A Hymne to God the Father*, by John Donne, set to Coprario's *O th'unsure hopes of men the brittle state* (1606).



"Heaven hath a song but no man heares"

> *in all these, though there be no sound, no voice, yet we may even see that it is an excellent song, an admirable piece of musick and harmony.*
>
> John Donne, *A Sermon preached at White-hall, April 19, 1618*[138]

Are Donne's songs lost? Donne is a master poet whose association with music has been denigrated, and whose poems have long been described, in myriad ways, as unmusical. And yet, beyond the extant seventeenth-century musical settings of Donne's poems, there is evidence that some of his lyrics may have had their genesis in songs that he knew. As Jonathan Holmes wrote in 2005:

> Although, as with almost every aspect of this writer's life, any final conclusion about his practice must contain speculation, it seems clear that by far the most likely theory as to the design of many of the poems we know as *Songs and Sonets* must include music. The next step in the development of this theory would of course be to locate a method that would identify with some certainty which of the collection fall into this category.[139]

By focusing on the poems specifically identified as "Songs" in print and manuscript sources, that is what I have attempted here, along with a further step, which is to identify ayres that might have inspired them. Whether Donne's particular song models survive is an unanswerable question, but these settings demonstrate, at least, that being "rugged of line and careless in rhyme" does not disqualify his poems as being based on existing songs, or as being apt for conjectural musical setting. Certainly, many of his versifications are unusual, but that makes it possible to narrow the search for models to a very small number of extant songs that match those characteristics and, ultimately, to hear the lyrics sung.

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[138] *XXVI Sermons (Never before Publish'd) Preached by that Learned and Reverend Divine, John Donne* (1661), Sermon XIII, p. 181.
[139] Holmes, "'There must be something heard'," p. 203.

Elizabeth Helsinger perceptively notes that for lyric poems that are also songs, "it can be difficult to read them as poems without the memory of their musical settings affecting our senses of sound, rhythm, and even sense."[140] That could be seen as a danger, imparting different powers and meanings from those of the poems alone; except that in this case, the poems seem to have been crafted with melodies in mind, leaving us to wonder if Donne always "heard" the music as they were read. That would seem likely. It also makes the point that, in spite of the long-standing view of Donne's lyrics as "pure poetry," hearing them now as songs cannot be regarded as wrong, or against the wishes of the poet. Are these, then, the settings Donne had in mind? It is not possible to say. But I hope to have shown that it is nevertheless possible to realize the musical potential of Donne's lyrics in a way that is faithful to the poetry, and that honors, at long last, the poet's evident but unsung fondness for music.[141]

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[140] Elizabeth Helsinger, "Poem into Song," *New Literary History* 46 (2015): 669–90, at 673. As examples, Helsinger cites William Blake's *Jerusalem* ("And did those feet in ancient times"), widely known from its musical setting by Sir Hubert Parry, and Christina Rossetti's "In the bleak midwinter," known from its setting by Gustav Holst (and, I might add, another by Harold Darke). See also Mattison, "Donne, Britten, and the Honesty of Song," p. 298.

[141] When this article was about to go to press, a new dissertation came to my attention that argues that "Donne was more musical than has previously been thought." See Mary Elaine Sigmon Nelson, "John Donne and Music" (PhD diss. University of Birmingham, 2024) https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/15086/. Though she focuses on extant settings rather than potential models, readers are referred to her work for a new consideration of Donne's musicality and many of the lyrics discussed here.

Appendix
First-line Index to Musical Example Settings

First line	Ex.	Model	Composer (Date)
Come liue with me and be my loue	1	*Come liue with me and be my loue*	William Corkine (1612)
	2	*Callino Casturame*	Anon./Byrd (ca.1583–1600)
Deare Love continue nice and chaste	11	*Vnto the temple of thy beauty*	Thomas Ford (1607)
	12	*Once did I loue and yet I liue*	Robert Jones (1600)
Goe and catch a falling starre	10	*Mistris since you so much desire*	Thomas Campion (1601, 1617)
Good we must love, and must hate ill	7	*Woefull hart with griefe opprest*	John Dowland (1600)
	8	*O my poor eies the sun whose shine*	Robert Jones (1600)
I am two fooles, I know	20	*Fortune and glory may be lost and woone*	John Coprario (1613)
Send home my long straid eyes to me	3	*O deere life when shall it be*	Anonymous (ca.1595, 1610)
So, so breake off this last lamenting kiss	19	*His golden locks time hath to siluer turnde*	John Dowland (1590, 1597)
Some man unworthy to be possessor	9	*That hart wherein all sorrowes doth abound*	Robert Jones (1600)
Soules joy, I am gone	15	*Absence heere thou my protestation*	Thomas Morley (1600)
Stand still and I will read to thee	13	*Come ashore, come merry mates*	Thomas Campion (1614)
Sweetest Love I doe not goe	5	*Your faire lookes enflame my desire*	Thomas Campion (1601, 1617)
	6	*Rest sweet Nimphes let goulden sleepe*	Francis Pilkington (1605)
'Tis true, 'tis day; what though it be?	17	*I dye when as I doe not see*	John Danyel (1606)
Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begun	22	*Now Israell may say and that truely* (Ps. 124)	Richard Allison (1599)
	23	*O th'unsure hopes of men the brittle state*	John Coprario (1606)