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»Sinner's Sighs« – The Devotional Lute Songs of  
John Dowland and Thomas Campion

The year 1597 saw the publication of John Dowland's *First Booke of Songes or Ayres*. The immediate success of this collection gave rise to one of the most characteristic musical fashions of this age and dozens of lute song collections followed into the 1620s. In this article I investigate a sub-genre of the lute song: the devotional lute song. The devotional lute song is an exceptional phenomenon and during the course of my argument it might become evident, why it did not reach the popularity of its secular counterpart. My approach can be described as both comprehensive and narrow at the same time. Comprehensive, because it is impossible to talk about sacred music without addressing the culture in which it is embedded; narrow, because the repertoire under investigation only comprises approximately one and a half song books.

The general point which I would like to make – and which has been made before by many others –, concerns a notorious topos of historiography. This topos deals with the considerable cultural loss which (supposedly) accompanied the Reformation. The story has been told often and tells of the »disenchantment of the world«, the great sense of loss caused by protestant iconoclasm, the abolishment of firmly established rites and feasts.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, with regards to issues such as the sacraments, the Reformation might reasonably be described in terms of desacralisation, whereas at the same time other discourses, such as science (e.g., the Baconian project) or politics (e.g., the Divine Right of Kings) underwent a clear process of sacralisation. Protestants as well as Catholics could not do without rituals: the sacred does not present itself in the world unmediated, rather it has to be brought to life and made tangible through performance. Therefore, the reformers did not only abolish certain rituals, they also created new ones.<sup>2</sup>

1 The seminal study of the Reformation as a history of loss is Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, 1992). In musicology a related line of argument can be encountered in Joseph Kerman's »The Elizabethan Motet: A Study of Texts for Music«, *Studies in the Renaissance* 9 (1962), pp. 273–308. Here Kerman describes the cessation of Catholic services in 1549 and 1559 as »something like disaster for English music« (p. 274).

2 This has been stressed by Edward Muir in *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997).

The sacred can be performed in a variety of ways and figures in a number of cultural practices. One of those practices is music. In order to distinguish themselves from their predecessors, Protestants attempted to provide new modes of musical expression for their community, which would shape the identity of this community as well as allow it to articulate itself. In this sense music not only reflects and mirrors the culture in which it is embedded, it produces it at the same time. In the following discussion, I investigate the specific contribution of the devotional lute song to the religious culture of early modern English Protestantism. The focus will be on John Dowland's *A Pilgrimes Solace* (1612) and Thomas Campion's *The First Booke of Songs* (c. 1613) and their particular performances of religious culture. It is not only the religious performance which this music serves, but also professional performance: How do Dowland and Campion make use of religious discourse in order to promote their own causes as professional composers?

While investigating the history of the devotional lute song, a second story will unfold to complement the story of a commercial failure – that of the devotional ayre – with the story of a particularly successful enterprise, the psalm book. Both genres attempted to contribute to Protestant devotional culture and both aspired to the status of ritual practice within this cultural framework. The comparison between both genres allows us to understand better the mechanisms of successful rituals and the demands made on them.

### Religious culture and devotional music: Mapping the market

Early modern English religious culture has generally been described as a culture of interiorisation and individualisation with a strong emphasis on spontaneous and individual expression. The literary historian Ramie Targoff, however, has convincingly argued in a recent study that there was a deep interest in formalized prayer in Protestant theology of that period, especially in the works of Richard Hooker.<sup>3</sup> In fact, for many theologians public standardized prayer was of more importance than private prayer.<sup>4</sup> This observation stands in marked contrast to the long cherished notions of interiorisation and individualisation.

3 Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago, 2001).

4 An attitude which had to be harmonized, with considerable theological effort, with the well known passage in Matthew 6,6: »When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.«



Targoff describes this religious culture as the »culture of common prayer«, named after its key text, the formalized prayer book. This *Book of Common Prayer* is – according to Targoff – characterized by two principles: the »inter-twining of the singular *I* and the collective *we*, and the absolute preference for formalized over spontaneous voice«. <sup>5</sup> These principles also made their way into the devotional poetry of the age, such as that of George Herbert, whose poems Targoff describes as »personal and communal, faithful and formal« at the same time. <sup>6</sup>

The considerable demand for formalized devotional aids did not only affect the literary, but also the musical, side of devotion and the producers of sacred and devotional music provided a variety of genres for the musical needs of the Protestant community. <sup>7</sup> The musical market for sacred music in the late 16th and early 17th century can roughly be divided according to public and private performances of the sacred. The central focus of public performance was the service and its liturgy. Composers provided liturgical and sacred music for these occasions, which was bound to a specific script and fulfilled defineable ecclesiastical functions. The necessity for this kind of music was constantly being debated and produced heated and extensive polemics. These debates, however, did not affect performance of private devotional music – the usefulness of this kind of music was widely accepted. Even though the age saw a decrease in music patronized by the Church there was a growing market for devotional music, which provided believers with means for private performances of the sacred. <sup>8</sup>

It is important to bear in mind, however, that, outside the exclusively ecclesiastical realm, the border between congregational and strictly private devotional music cannot easily be drawn. There was a particularly lively interchange between private and congregational music in the Elizabethan age. Peter le Huray observes that »a number of consort songs and religious madrigals may have been performed in church services [...], just as some church anthems were taken over for use in the home«. <sup>9</sup> Sacred madrigals and anthems could be sung in

5 Targoff, *Common Prayer* (cf. fn. 3), p. 87.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 88. This tendency also characterises the Sidney-Pembroke Psalter with its »interest in creating a series of texts that seems open to reiteration at both a personal and congregational level« (*ibid.*, p. 80).

7 Peter Le Huray gives a list of printed books containing devotional music (*Music and the Reformation in England, 1549–1660*, London, 1967, pp. 403–5).

8 David C. Price, *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 153–4.

9 Le Huray, *Music and the Reformation* (cf. fn. 7), pp. 58–80.

church as well as privately at home<sup>10</sup> and even most Latin church music would have been performed in private houses.<sup>11</sup>

### Psalter

The psalm books can be regarded as the most distinctive genre and achievement of Protestant devotional music. They had a firm place in Protestant practices of piety: Those practices comprised *secret exercises* such as reading and study, meditation, prayer and personal writing.<sup>12</sup> One of the ordinances of *public worship* which would also be practised as part of family devotion was psalm singing.<sup>13</sup> Psalm books – most of them containing metrical psalms set to vocal music in four parts – can be described as the most characteristic product of Protestant devotional musical culture.<sup>14</sup> The most influential psalm book in England was the metrical Sternhold-Hopkins Psalter which was printed with music in Geneva 1556.<sup>15</sup> After the accession of Elizabeth I, psalms were sung in the church and psalm printing developed into one of the most successful business ventures of the printing industry: Between 1561 and 1600 approximately 70 editions each of 1000 copies per edition were produced and the monopoly on psalm book printing proved financially far more rewarding than that on music printing.<sup>16</sup> The success of the psalm books can be attributed to two factors: Firstly,

10 Price, *Patrons and Musicians* (cf. fn. 8), p. 59.

11 John Milsom, »Sacred Songs in the Chamber«, *English Choral Practice, 1400–1650*, ed. John Morehen (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 161–79.

12 Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, 1982), pp. 156ss.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 111ss., p. 146.

14 Already by the 1540s metrical psalms and devotional songs were popular at court, cf. Le Huray, *Music and the Reformation* (cf. fn. 7), p. 217. The private translation of psalms was considered a penitential exercise. On the history of psalm books in general see Le Huray (*ibid.*, p. 370ss.).

15 The historiographer Anthony à Wood writes of Sternhold in his *Athenae Oxoniensis* (1691): »Being a most zealous reformer, and a very strict liver he became scandaliz'd at the amorous and obscene songs used in the court, that he forsooth turn'd into English metre 51 of David's Psalms, and caused musical notes to be set to them, thinking thereby that the courtiers would sing them instead of their sonnets, but did not, only some excepted«, quoted in Diana Poulton, *John Dowland* (London, 1972), p. 320. Poulton points out that Sternhold actually paraphrased 137 psalmes.

16 It was also one of the most contested monopolies. William Seres held the psalter patent, while John Day owned the psalm book patent, which was eventually taken over by the Company of Stationers. The vague specification of the patents gave rise to legal quarrells, such as Seres' suit against Day for issuing »a quatron of psalms with notes ... without lycense and contrary to or-



they could claim to be part of an ancient tradition, built on firm biblical foundations, a quality very agreeable to Protestant tastes. Secondly, psalm singing was considered to function in a similar way to praying – with which it was sometimes compared.<sup>17</sup> As well as praying, the singing of psalms aims at internalizing specific gestures, practising a certain language, acquiring an appropriate attitude, meanwhile intensifying faith. What was being practised with the body – i.e. externally – was meant to become part of the inner religious life. In a sense, the practice of singing heightened this enactment and embodiment of religious sentiments, since it was considered a type of intensified speech, closely related to the body as well as to the soul.<sup>18</sup> Above all, the actual communal singing of psalms was a performance and embodiment of its textual content: The shift from the personal to the congregational, which Ramie Targoff describes as forming the core of these texts, is being brought to life and made accessible to all participants. Psalm books could well be described as the vocal versions of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

### Devotional lute songs

As noted at the beginning, the devotional lute song is a rare thing indeed.<sup>19</sup> The lute song's original domain is the courtly realm and amongst the gentry emulating the courtly way of life. The songs are embedded in the rituals of court, such as the game of love, often disguising the struggle for political advancement.<sup>20</sup> They contribute to the performance and self-presentation of court and to aristo-

ders«. Day was fined 12 shillings, quoted in Donald W. Krummel, *English Music Printing 1553–1700* (London, 1975), p. 11.

17 For example by William Byrd in »The Epistle to the Reader« of his *Psalmes, Sonets, & songs of sadnes and pietie* (London, 1588).

18 In fact this was a contested point in the debate of the use of formalized prayer, since the performance of prayer did not guarantee a concomitant working in the soul. Critics claimed that formalized prayer lend itself to feigning religious sentiments better than individual prayer, and it was often being compared to a theatrical performance.

19 Le Huray, *Music and the Reformation* (cf. fn. 7), p. 394, gives the following list: »Sacred songs are also to be found in one or two of the thirty or so lutenist song-books, all of which were published between 1597 and 1622, notably John Bartlet's *A Booke of Ayres* (1606), Thomas Campion's *Two Bookes of Ayres. The First contayning Divine and Morall Songs* (1610), John Dowland's *A Pilgrimes Solace* (1612) and John Attey's *The Firts Booke of Ayres* (1622).« Le Huray's dating of Campion's collection has been revised recently. It is considered most likely that the collection was published some time after Prince Henry's death in 1612.

20 On the courtly convention of the game of love see John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (London, 1961), pp. 154ss.

cratic self-fashioning.<sup>21</sup> Considering the secular roots of the lute song it is not surprising to find only few songs with sacred texts. Although there are, in fact, a number of related song types which explore similar subjects or employ similar terminology. A brief survey will provide a typology of these songs as well as distinguish them from devotional lute songs in its stricter sense.

In a number of song books, one finds the occasional sacred song bearing strong resemblances to psalms. Often they are put in exposed positions of the book, as for example in John Bartlet's *A Booke of Ayres* (1606). A psalm opens the book, its subject – as so often with psalms – is the praise of God. The rest of the book contains light ayres. Here, the only difference between a psalm and a devotional lute song lies in the fact that the latter demands a lute as accompaniment.<sup>22</sup> Psalm and lute song differ more in terms of presentation and musical realization than on a structural level.

Lute song collections more frequently contain moral songs, which tend to be placed at the end of collections. In general, moral songs deal with subject matters such as the vanity of the world (e.g. in Robert Jones, *The Second Booke of Songs and Ayres*, 1601), carrying religious undertones but not spelling them out. Since they are generally located between courtly love songs, they tend to express discontent with the situation at court (or in love), rather than articulate theological insights.

A third group of songs closely related to the sacred are love songs, whose discourse is often borrowed from the discourse of the sacred. Here the vocabulary of religion is applied to affairs of the heart, lovers are depicted as »sighing sinners«, longing for grace and infinite love. These songs create ambiguity and it is up to the interpreter to decide whether he or she is dealing with the sacralisation of love or the secularisation of religion.

Devotional lute songs in the strictest sense can be found in two collections: John Dowland's *A Pilgrimes Solace* (1612) and Thomas Campion's *The First Book of Ayres* (c. 1613). The secular lute song was already an established and economically successful genre when Dowland and Campion decided to enter the market with their sacred songs. Like their secular counterparts, the devotional collections were intended for the private market (i.e., not for the church), to be performed by amateurs, perhaps together with the professional musicians in their employ. The texts were generally chosen from devotional poetry (in

21 On the role of songs in the performance of court see Jeanice Brooks, *Courtly Song in Late Sixteenth-Century France* (Chicago, 2000).

22 Psalms with other kinds of instrumental accompaniment are rare. An exception is Richard Allison's *The Psalmes of David in Metre* (1599) which contains optional parts for lute and cittern.



Campion's case: from his own poetry) and from the psalms. In the following discussion of these collections I focus on two issues: firstly, on how those song-books participate in Protestant culture and what Protestant values they propound, and secondly, I argue that Dowland's and Campion's »spiritual turn« was not motivated by some kind of religious programme, but rather by pragmatic economic considerations.

Since I am primarily interested in the collections' specific religious stance, the focus will more on the textual than the musical element of the ayres. In musical terms, the devotional lute songs of Campion are as different to those of Dowland as their respective aesthetic outlook. While in Dowland's case, the ayres reveal considerable musical labour and a striving for seriousness, Campion's ayres do not seem to differ significantly from their secular counterparts. However, it has been argued by Walter R. Davis that »... by setting most of the sacred songs of *The First Booke* to four parts, Campion assimilated his religious ayres to »the grave and well invented Motet« which he had compared earlier to the epic poem in verse». <sup>23</sup> In fact, Campion himself clearly states in the preface to his collection, that he added the middle voices not because he was emulating the motet, but because he was profoundly dissatisfied with contemporary performance practice:

Yet we do daily observe, that when any shall sing a treble to an instrument, the standers by will be offering at an inward part out of their own nature; and true or false, out it must, though to the perverting of the whole harmony.

Bearing Campion's statement in mind, the setting of his devotional lute songs can hardly be described as aspiring to the condition of the motet. The point of the devotional ayre is that its musical physiognomy remains recognizable as belonging to the genre of the lute song. Devotional lute songs were meant to profit from the tremendous success of their secular predecessors rather than to imitate the motet or other long established genres of sacred and devotional music.

#### John Dowland, *A Pilgrimes Solace*, 1612

John Dowland had already contributed to the market for sacred music when he published *A Pilgrimes Solace* in 1612. He had published harmonized psalms, canticles and prayers, most of them based on the Sternhold-Hopkins Psalter. <sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Walter R. Davis, *Thomas Campion* (Boston, 1987), p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> Poulton, John Dowland (cf. fn. 15), pp. 320ss.

He contributed to Thomas Est's *The Whole Booke of Psalmes* (1592) and in 1596 his *Lamentatio Henrici Noel* was performed in Westminster Abbey – sophisticated mourning music based on psalms and canticles.<sup>25</sup> Since then, however, Dowland had not produced any sacred music. *A Pilgrimes Solace* appeared 1612 – 16 years after his last sacred work and nine years after the publication of *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires* (1603).<sup>26</sup>

*A Pilgrimes Solace* contains 21 songs of which six can be described as devotional songs.<sup>27</sup> Most songs are set for either solo voice and accompaniment, or for four voices. Three songs require a chorus at the end, one song features tenor, bass and chorus. Unusual – in a collection of ayres – are songs numbers 9, 10 and 11: which are set for solo voice, lute, treble and bass viol, and are reminiscent of consort songs.

The collection not only provides a wide range of vocal and instrumental settings, but also a considerable range of song genres. The first songs are love songs in the light, popular manner. They are followed by the »consort songs« in a profoundly different mood. In songs such as »Go nightly cares« (no. 9) or »From silent night« (no. 10), sadness, tears and sighs dominate. In a sense, these songs can be regarded as preparing the ground for the following six devotional songs. A sailor song and wedding songs conclude the worldly end of the collection.

The sacred section opens with a poetological song »In this trembling shadow cast« (no. 12), describing the singer's (respectively the poet's) situation:

In this trembling shadow cast  
 From those boughs which thy wings shake,  
 Far from human troubles plac'd:  
 Songs to the Lord would I make,  
 Darkness from my mind then take,  
 For thy rites none may begin,  
 Till they feel thy light within.

25 Dowland set six psalms to music: Ps. 38 »Put me not to rebuke, o Lord«, Ps. 100 »All people that on earth do dwell«, Ps. 104 »My soul praise the Lord«, Ps. 130 »Lord to thee I make my moan« and Ps. 134 »Behold and have regard.« (Ps. 100 was set twice to music by Dowland.)

26 After 1612 Dowland contributed to Sir William Leighton's *Tearcs or Lamentations of a Sorrowfull Soule* (1614). He wrote the dedicatory poem and a consort song for 4 voices »An heart thats broken and contrite« as well as a five part setting of »I shame at my unworthiness.«

27 On the religious songs in *A Pilgrimes Solace*, Poulton, John Dowland (cf. fn. 15), pp. 305, writes: »Filled with a deeply religious spirit they are still secular compositions in the sense that the texts are not taken from recognized scriptural sources.« If Poulton's categories are accepted, then a great deal of devotional music would have to be described as secular.



As I sing, sweet flowers I'll strew,  
 From the fruitful valleys brought:  
 Praising Him by whom they grow,  
 Him that heav'n and earth hath wrought,  
 Him that all things fram'd of nought,  
 Him that all for man did make,  
 But made man for his own sake.

Music all thy sweetness lend,  
 While of His high power I speak,  
 On whom all powers else depend,  
 But my breast is now too weak,  
 Trumpets shrill the air would break,  
 All in vain my sounds I raise,  
 Boundless power asks boundless praise.

This song figures as a plea for inspiration («Darknesse from my minde then take») and can be described on a functional level as invocation. The persona of the poem has withdrawn from the world – here we have the topos of withdrawal from court turned religious – seeking to make »Songs to the Lord«. Whilst the first stanza is dedicated to the question of divine inspiration, the second stanza shows the persona while it sings those songs, which are ultimately about the power of God. In the third and final stanza, music is invoked to support the praise of the Lord («Music all thy sweetness lend»). But what so far had been progressing well (withdrawal from the world, purification, receiving the »light within«, singing the Lord's praises most eloquently) suddenly comes to a stop. Boundaries emerge and what had so far been the cause for optimism now gives rise to a more pessimistic note: »But my breast is now too weak / ... / All in vaine my sounds I raise / Boundless power asks for boundless praise.« The »boundless power« of God remains ultimately ineffable and therefore also un-singable. As the first religious song in the book, this ayre is a very cautious beginning indeed. The song reflects its own limitations, as well as critically evaluates the expressive power of music in relation to the power of God. But in a sense it is a truly classical beginning, since most devotional writing commences with the topos of the unnameable.

The following songs fulfill various functions. Songs 14–16 which form a unit, present biblical figures as emblems of Christian virtues. In Song 16, a first person is being introduced and related to the virtues already mentioned. These songs can be read as a kind of exercise in a particular technique of exegesis which applies biblical stories to contemporary, individual lives. Another song (no. 17 »Where sin sore wounding«) delivers crucial Protestant doctrines, features sin's »sore wounding«, which can only be overcome by God's mercy and his love which is »free without merit«. »Grace abounding« only saves the sinner,

works are worth nothing. This is the last religious song in the collection and it has a strong sense of closure. Whilst the first song dealt with (amongst other subjects) religious calling (in theological terminology: *vocatio*) and the necessity of the rejection of the world (*mortificatio*), the following songs are mainly concerned with the godly life (*sanctificatio*). Song no. 17 not only affirms the theology of grace, but also carries an eschatological message: »Sinnes stripe is healed, and his sting abated, / Deaths mouth is sealed, and the Grave amated.« Without overstating the case, we can say that Dowland's choice of texts aims at covering the main stages of the Protestant *ordo salutis* (*vocatio*, *justificatio*, *sanctificatio*, *glorificatio*).

One song not mentioned so far – which also fits into this scheme – is song no. 13 »If that a sinner's sighs be Angels food«. <sup>28</sup>

If that a sinner's sighs be Angels' food,  
Or that repentant tears be Angels' wine,  
Accept O Lord in this most pensive mood,  
These hearty sighs and doleful plaints of mine,  
That went with Peter forth most sinfully:  
But not as Peter did, weep bitterly.

Here, Dowland, who held a kind of monopoly on the *Lachrimae*-topos, allows the tearful melancholy mood to turn religious. The *Lachrimae*-theme is presented in the text (not in the music, however) and with this song Dowland adds »repentant teares« to his encyclopedia of tears. <sup>29</sup>

*A Pilgrimes Solace* appeared during the years of the »pleasure-loving court of James I and Queen Anne« (a court, whose main musical indulgence was the masque). <sup>30</sup> Why during these years, did Dowland – who was still looking for an appointment as lutenist in the royal household – chose to write religious songs? Was his sole purpose to cater for devotional demands inspired by the »culture of common prayer?« I suggest that he had intentions going well beyond a desire to provide for the religiously-minded. The key to these intentions can be found in his famous preface which precedes the collection. In this preface Dowland laments his personal situation:

I have lien long obscured from your sight, because I received a Kingly entertainment in a forraine climate, which could not attaine to any (though never so meane) place at home ... yet I must tell you, that as I have beene a stranger; so

28 This text was also set to music by William Byrd, cf. Edward Doughtie, *Lyrics from English Airs, 1596–1622* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), pp. 615–6.

29 Religious melancholy was actually a subject of great concern to Dowland's contemporaries. Robert Burton dedicated many learned pages to the topic in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621).

30 Poulton, John Dowland (cf. fn. 15), pp. 69–70.



have I againe found strange entertainment since my returne, especially by the opposition of two sorts of people that shroud themselves under the title of Musicians...

Here he describes his frustrating return to England after the years spent as lutenist at the court of Christian IV in Denmark. He presents himself as having been received with hostility on all sides. The pilgrim in the title of his collection refers to himself: John Dowland has been, and still is, on pilgrimage, the music is primarily his own solace. However, the pilgrim imagery not only suggests that our hero is a stranger to worldliness, it also implies spiritual progress. Even though his state in the world might be humble, he is progressing continually – and it is this that he is hoping to show the world with his collection of songs. There is a distinctive eschatological flavour to the whole undertaking. The book was, in fact, his last published song collection, and he describes himself as an old man in his preface («being now entered into the fiftieth yeare of my age».<sup>31</sup> Bearing all this in mind, it is interesting to consider the content of the song book once more. It is a mixed collection, in which sacred and profane rub shoulders. Dowland was trying to present his musical legacy, the *summa* of his art. By publishing such a wide-ranging collection he confronted the public with the whole variety and depth of his art as well as the lamentable fact that he had not been appreciated as he should have been.

It is, perhaps, ironic that *A Pilgrimes Solace* was to be the last collection to be published, because Dowland was finally rewarded the success he had so eagerly sought. In a sense, the collection marks the end of his own long and wearisome worldly pilgrimage. On 28 October 1612 Dowland was appointed one of the King's lutenists –, a position he held until his death in 1626.

### Thomas Campion, *First Book of Ayres*, c. 1613

The poet and composer Thomas Campion published 119 songs, of which approximately 20 can be classified as devotional songs. In contrast to Dowland's mixed collection, Campion's devotional songs are kept separately from the secular songs: he draws a clear line between the two repertoires. The title of his *First Book of Ayres* actually reads: *Two Bookes of Ayers. The First Contayning Divine and Morall Songs: The Second. Light Conceits of Lovers* ... Whereas the first book is dedicated to Francis, Earl of Cumberland, the second book is dedicated to Francis' son, Henry Lord Clifford. In the dedicatory sonnet, age and wisdom are linked to »grave words«, and the songs are recommended as being suitable for

31 In the following year, however, his *First Booke* would be reprinted.

devotion »to any virtuous, and not curious ear«. Walter R. Davis writes about this book:

*The First Booke* was central for [Campion's] career: the first English collection of sacred ayres to proceed from the new lutenist song school, it let a whole new dimension into Campion's world view. Gone is the Greco-Roman classicism of *A Booke of Ayres* that threatened to supply a new myth for life at the accession of James I; instead we have reflections of the life of Campion's day.<sup>32</sup>

Speaking of these songs, Davis distinguishes the following genres: »general moral verse in the Horatian manner« (nos. 2, 20), »political hymns« (nos. 6, 21), songs in the »tradition of Latin hymnody« (nos. 5, 8) and finally paraphrases of psalms (nos. 4, 14, 15). It is not difficult to agree with Davis in this respect, but I would like to suggest a further typology which pays more attention to functional aspects. If the songs are read as means of participation in and support of a certain practice of piety, what kind of approaches do they offer?

Moral or didactic songs elaborating the exemplary Christian life style in third person narratives are fairly common in this collection (nos. 2, 3, 10, 20). Psalms are, as we have seen, an integral part of the culture of common prayer and they are well represented (nos. 4, Psalm 130; 14, Psalm 137; 15, Psalm 104). Further, there are songs referring directly to certain religious rites or practices of piety. Mourning is practised in an elegy (no. 21) and meditation is presented in no. 17. As in Dowland's Protestant values loom large in Campion's collection, highlighting grace (nos. 5, 13); the importance of the word (no. 5); and political topics such as the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot (no. 6). There are also songs enacting emotions, for example, in a song urging the faithful to cheer up (no. 19), or in a calm song celebrating the qualities of a »quiet pilgrimage,« music's power to evoke emotional effects is fully explored. And finally, a number of songs explore in depth the relations between the group, the individual and God (nos. 1, 4, 18). In these latter songs, changes of perspective are frequently employed. Generally we find shifts from the first person singular to the third person singular (and vice versa), bringing the perspective from the individual to the community and thereby practising and performing what Ramie Targoff has described as the »intertwining of the singular *I* and the collective

32 Davis, Thomas Campion (cf. fn. 23), p. 51. Note also *The Works of Thomas Campion. Complete Songs, Masques, and Treatises with a Selection of Latin Verse*, ed. Walter R. Davis (New York, 1967), p. 52: »*The First Booke*, which was, incidentally, the first English collection of sacred ayres (though, unfortunately, not a very successful one), has considerable variety, including as it does paraphrases of psalms, moral verse in the Horatian manner, a thanksgiving ode, elegy, allegorical vision, and several pieces in the »witty« tradition of Latin hymnody.«



we«. <sup>33</sup> The songs also present various techniques of addressing and describing God, thereby exploring proximity in the sense of »I-Thou«-relationships, or maintaining distance by rendering God in the third person singular.

Both Campion's and Dowland's songs contribute in various ways to contemporary religious culture. But still there seems to be a particular difference between the two composers: their respective approaches to and uses of the genre differ considerably from one another. Campion knew there was a market for devotional music and naturally he was very interested in extending the reach of his production. It was probably not by chance that he published his collection shortly after Dowland's and it is very likely that he knew *A Pilgrimes Solace* and considered Dowland a trend-setter (after all this man had popularised the lute-song). He decided not only to take up Dowland's idea, but to take it even further. Campion's approach to the project of devotional lute songs is rather pragmatic and we do not encounter any of Dowland's self-fashioning as man of sorrows in his statements. Rather, he writes – in thoroughly pragmatic vein – in his address to the reader: »For he that in publishing any work, hath a desire to content all palates, must cater for them accordingly.« But his collection not only appeared after Dowland's book, but also some time after the death of Prince Henry on 6 November 1612, which shocked the nation. Maybe Campion considered this an appropriate time for a religious turn and reacted quickly to the opportunity. <sup>34</sup>

Campion's pragmatic approach to the marketing of his product is very different from Dowland's strategy. Where Campion regarded himself as the mere provider of devotional material and refrained from creating a public persona, Dowland himself attempted to remain visible in his collection. Dowland used devotional songs in order to promote himself, to foreground his personal situation and there is a distinctive confessional flavour to *A Pilgrimes Solace* (especially song no. 14). This collection is part of his project to create a public persona by employing print media as his public stage. <sup>35</sup>

33 Targoff, *Common Prayer* (cf. fn. 3), p. 87.

34 In 1613 John Coprario published the *Songs of Mourning* after poems by Thomas Campion. Davis, *Thomas Campion* (cf. fn. 23), p. 57, characterizes the collection as follows: »*Songs of Mourning* intensifies the religious strains Campion developed in *The First Booke of Ayres* by making religious verse into meditative exercises for the listener, so that the listener responds instead of simply taking in an address«.

35 On the subject of John Dowland's self-fashioning see Susanne Rupp, »John Dowland's Strategic Melancholy and the Rise of the Composer in Early Modern England«, *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 139 (2003), forthcoming.

When it comes to religion, however, Dowland, the playful actor turns out to be the more serious of the two. His approach to religion is characterized by distance, his God is overpowering and ineffable and in the end silence remains the only adequate response. In contrast, Campion's God is a God of familiarity, and Campion's whole approach to devotion is well summed up in a line of song no. 8: »devotion needs no art«.

### Summary

The devotional lute songs by John Dowland and Thomas Campion were meant to participate in contemporary Protestant practices of piety, characterized by the culture of common prayer. But even though Dowland and Campion made considerable efforts to provide what a Protestant minded music lover could possibly wish for, the songs did not become an integral part of this Protestant tradition. The devotional lute songs failed – as a genre, not as individual collections. Dowland's and Campion's attempts did not give rise to a »school« and the genre did not make its way into the mainstream of music history: it remained an exception. Yet, as interesting as it is to speculate about the success of a genre, it might be just as interesting to investigate a failure. What were the reasons for the humble economic and cultural performance of the devotional lute songs? Four points might account for this phenomenon:

1) The 1620s saw the decline of the ayre in general. There was a turn in private music to more representational forms of music (e.g., masque) as well as to music of different structural features. Following this line of argument, one could claim that the devotional lute song was introduced too late in order to develop its full potential.

2) The performance context should be borne in mind when considering the usefulness of a particular genre. Lute songs were either performed in private (by an individual or a small number of performers) or in public, at social gatherings. It is very likely that participants at a social gathering were not particularly interested in solemn songs, contemplating sin in four parts or listening to someone being penitential.

3) The failure of devotional lute songs might be attributed to the fact that the musical market was already saturated. There were probably already enough motets, anthems and sacred madrigals around to cater for devotees of vocal polyphony. In comparison to the motet, the ayre was an inferior genre and lacked prestige. As Campion writes in his address »To the Reader« in *A Book of Ayres* (1601): »... as in Poesie we give the preheminance to the Heroicall Poeme, so in Musicke we yeeld the chiefe place to the grave and well invented



Motet«. It would have been impossible for the lute song to compete with the status of the motet.<sup>36</sup> In the realm of private and congregational music, psalm books were already doing a good job and could hardly be bettered. Many households possessed psalm books and they would serve as entertainment as well as part of private or family devotion.<sup>37</sup> Their functional scale was broader and more versatile than that of the devotional lute song.

4) The highest obstacle, which devotional ayres failed to overcome, was the fact that lute songs belonged to a ritual realm different to that of Protestant devotion. Lute songs were part of courtly culture and it was difficult to loosen this connection. Courtly culture was considered insincere and artificial.<sup>38</sup> Like their place of origin, ayres drew too much attention to themselves and to their own artificiality. Above all, their composers chose modes of self-presentation which were alien to church musicians and other composers of sacred music. While the conventional church musician would present himself in humble terms and tended to withdraw from his work, composers such as John Dowland or Thomas Campion would have their names printed in fairly large letters on the title pages of their collections and would enter the public stage in a self-conscious manner in which God, as the source of all inspiration, was attributed only a minor role.

While I have tried to mark a strong divide between sacred and secular musical realms, it is true that in contemporary manuscripts secular and sacred music are often to be found next to each other. Nevertheless, one can observe a gradual separation of the spheres of the sacred and the secular during this period (even though it had, as yet, produced no discourse).<sup>39</sup> Whereas Thomas Campion's collection might be a good example for this shift in sensibilities, Dowland's *Pilgrimes Solace* can be considered as representing the old tradition.

These points may help to explain why it would take many more decades for the devotional art song to establish itself in the musical world. The realms of

36 On the hierarchy of musical genres in early modern England see Thomas Morley, *A Plain & Easy Introduction to Practical Music* [1597], ed. R. Alec Harman (London, 1952), pp. 292ss.

37 See Krummel, *English Music Printing* (cf. fn. 16), pp. 35ss.

38 On courtly modes of deception and the cult of dissimulation see Daniel Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England* (Princeton, 1978).

39 Le Huray, *Music and the Reformation* (cf. fn. 7), pp. 321–2, observes a growing tendency in the 1620s and 30s to distinguish between sacred and secular music and to keep them separately (probably influenced by the Laudian movement). Thomas Campion's poem »To the Reader« in the *Second Book of Songs* seems to be arguing against this discourse of distinction: »That holy hymns with lovers' cares are knit / Both in one quire here, thou may'st think't unfit; / Why dost not blame the stationer as well, / Who in the same shop sets all sorts to sell? / Divine with styles profane, grave shelv'd with vaine; / And some match'd worse, yet none of him complain«.

religious and aesthetic rituals had to be negotiated and settled. In England this process took place under aggravating circumstances: in the 1640s, the Civil War put an end to the culture of private music as Elizabethan and early Stuart society had known it. Only after the Puritan Interregnum, and the Restoration in 1660, could a cultural climate re-emerge which could take up the achievements of the »Golden Age of English music«.