

Peter Tranchell on Edward Johnson

from the Notes (Part 1) for the LP 'Music from Caius' issued in 1985

Edward Johnson is a shadowy figure even for musicologists. Towards the end of the sixteenth century he was considered one of the foremost English composers. Both Byrd and Morley admired him. Yet, little is known of his life, and almost all his music has been lost. His surviving madrigal poses a mystery, and his connection with Caius needs explanation for he was never an undergraduate at the College.

There appears to be no evidence as to where or when he was born or died. He is first on record as retained or perhaps fully employed as a professional musician by the Kitson family at Hengrave Hall near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. This connection seems to be documentarily supported from 1572 until 1577. Assuming that when he entered the Kitsons' service he had reached manhood, and was a fully-fledged executant musician, his birth-date could scarcely be later than 1552.

Apart from his Cambridge Mus.Bac. in 1594, we next hear of Johnson in 1600 through his collaboration with John Wilbye in arranging for the publication of John Dowland's Second Book of Ayres, a collection of lute-songs. One wonders about the connection of Dowland with these two men.

Dowland was abroad at the time as a professional lutenist to the court of Denmark, combining musical duties with the gathering of intelligence for Sir Robert Cecil, Secretary of State; or, to put it crudely, engaged in espionage.

The impression which Dowland gave of privately favouring Roman Catholicism was inconvenient as regards his advancement as a professional musician at home: he failed in 1594 to be made lutenist to Queen Elizabeth when the post fell vacant, a point he complained of in an extant letter to Sir Robert; but it was politically useful in gaining entry to Roman Catholic enclaves about which he was able to report back.

At that time, the British Government was anxious to be fully briefed about all dissident Britons and potential plotters abroad, and perhaps also about the political background of the woman who might well be the next Queen of England, Anne of Denmark, consort of James VI of Scotland.

It is nowadays difficult for Englishmen (though less difficult for Ulstermen) to imagine the acuteness of the tensions between Protestants and Roman Catholics during the sixteenth century not only in England but in many places on the continent. We tend to regard a dominant faction's outbursts of savagery as isolated incidents. In fact they were tips of an iceberg of continuous mutual suspicion and resentment.

Whatever men said in 1588 they commonly suspected what we now know for certain: the Armada was an instrument of religious coercion; and had it succeeded in ferrying the invasion army from the Low Countries to England, there were plenty of British Roman Catholics who might have broken cover and joined the Spanish cause as a local fifth-column.

In Denmark, the official Church adopted Lutheranism in 1536; and the king had by law to be Lutheran. But everyone else was free to please himself: there was an unusual climate of religious tolerance.

Anne of Denmark, elder sister of King Christian IV, was of Roman Catholic persuasion. She was aged fifteen when she married James VI of Scotland, and twenty when in 1594 she gave birth to Henry, their eldest son. Almost immediately the child was taken from her and given into the care of the Earl and Countess of Mar at Stirling Castle. In 1595 James gave order that the boy was not to be in the queen's entourage till he reached the age of eighteen. Ironically enough, Henry died (some say by poison) in his eighteenth year. Clearly James perceived that his successor to a throne could not be brought up with any taint of actual or suspected Roman Catholicism. Still, it was effectively a black mark against Anne. At the coronation in England in July 1603, Anne caused a minor scandal by declining to take the sacrament according to the Anglican rite.

Dowland must have had to tread a very delicate path to seem a reliable agent to Sir Robert Cecil whilst seeming to Johnson and Wilbye of the opposing camp a suitable recipient of their good offices.

Curiously enough, Dowland continued for some years to spend time at the Danish court where he was greatly welcome, until at some point after 1603 he began to accumulate debts. Had some unstated source of income dried up? Had his 'intelligence' ceased to be of vital interest to the British authorities, with the

result that they no longer funded him? In 1605 King Christian tried to help him by steering pupils in his direction, but by March 1606 Dowland was in dire straits, and he was dismissed from the Danish court.

How did Dowland send his 'intelligence' back to Sir Robert Cecil? How did he avoid the risk of detection?

It should be remembered that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries witnessed the publication of a number of treatises on musical cryptography; Philip II of Spain was using a musical cipher c.1560; the papal cipher-office used a musical cipher c.1596; and the notion of musical ciphers has continued as a way of concealing the transit of 'sensitive' messages up to and including the Second World War.

It is intriguing that Sir Robert Cecil in 1598 engaged Antony Holborne (?1555-1602), a composer, to carry letters to the states of the United Provinces.

Presumably it would be no great problem to include pages of musical cryptography among the leaves of a collection of genuine music. Perhaps even genuine music might be made to incorporate a cryptogram itself. Nobody I think has had the idea of scrutinising the surviving music of Dowland, Holborne, or Bull to see if it contains cryptograms. It is likely that the enciphered pages would be detached once they reached their destination, and afterwards destroyed. Thus only non-cryptographic music would survive. But who knows? It is possible to write genuinely good music which contains a cryptogram.

Johnson was not the only musician patronised by the Kitsons. John Wilbye, already mentioned, was another, taken into service c. 1598 when he was about twenty-four.

There is no indication of these men's duties either at the Kitsons' London house or at Hengrave Hall. But it may be supposed that they had a hand in building up and directing the sizeable musical establishment which the Kitsons evidently had by the end of the century, to judge from an inventory of the household's instruments, which suggests the existence of a large mixed consort or chamber orchestra, and a musical retinue of performers to play in it.

It is likely that Johnson and Wilbye also provided music, whether composing, playing, singing or directing, for the regular private family celebrations of Roman Catholic mass.

Hengrave Hall was built in 1534 by a Sir Thomas Kitson, whose son, also Sir Thomas, was probably Johnson's patron. This junior Sir Thomas, on his second marriage (to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Cornwallis of Brome Hall, about three miles east of Diss in Suffolk), allied himself by this union to a substantial mercantile clan whose branches held property not only in Suffolk but in Norfolk and elsewhere. Both Norfolk Suffolk branches of the family were known 'recusants'.

Wilbye was born at Diss; and it must have been through the Brome Hall Cornwallises that he came to the notice of the Kitsons.

No fewer than seven members of the Cornwallis family went to Caius College between 1544 and 1609. Lady Elizabeth's father had entered the college in 1546. Richard Cornwallis, probably her first cousin once removed and thus a sort of nephew, entered in 1585. Her real nephew John entered in 1589.

Richard became a Fellow in 1592 and Dean in 1595. Subsequently he showed his true religious proclivity, for he defected to Italy where he became a Roman Catholic priest.

Though Caius College had obstructed Thomas Mudd(e) in his path to a degree in 1580, and doubtless others from time to time, Lady Elizabeth Kitson may have considered in 1594 that her Cornwallis kinsmen had enough influence in the college for it to be an opportune moment for her protégé, Johnson, to put himself forward. Indeed two of the Fellows were her neighbours, having homes in Bury St Edmunds, as well.

This may well explain the choice of Caius College by the servant of a family of recusants. But it is not obvious why Johnson should wish for a Mus.Bac. in the first place.

He was now about forty, and was already well-known as a composer. What could the holding of a degree, or a tenuous connection with a University, or the impression of having reached a University standard do for Johnson in England? But perhaps it might impress people abroad, if he were going abroad. Why should he go abroad in any case? What if he were being prepared for some eventual commission abroad, and were instructed that a University degree might be useful, especially if the commission involved visits to foreign Universities?

In those days, the Mus.Bac. at Cambridge cannot have been much of a hurdle. It entailed no residence in the University. Candidates were required only to be of accredited musical standing and to submit for scrutiny a work not necessarily written for the occasion.

Johnson submitted his 'Medley', which had received mention in 1588, some six years previously, and which must have been widely popular. Of course, a secular piece might serve to disarm religious prevaricators for whom at the time church-music savoured of popery.

One of the examiners, at Johnson's own request, was Dr John Bull. This in itself might have been seen to substantiate Johnson's claim to musical standing, had Bull himself been in the musical fore-front. But in 1594 Bull was only thirty two (some eight years junior to Johnson), and though he was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, he had not yet gained the wider eminence that was to be his in due course. Possibly it may also have been a manoeuvre to ensure a sympathetic examination.

What may be pertinent is that Bull himself had met with difficulties at Oxford some five years earlier. For though he had acquired B.Mus. at Oxford in 1586 without trouble, his subsequent application for D.Mus. Oxon. was blocked by a Puritan faction amongst the Oxford dons.

To circumvent this opposition, Bull applied for and (in 1589) received D.Mus. Cantab, on the books of King's College. After a decent pause, he was able in 1592 to apply successfully for D.Mus. Oxon. by 'incorporation' in virtue of his Cambridge doctorate.

The Oxford opposition had clearly been prompted by the suspicion that Bull was a crypto-Roman-Catholic, and this may well have been a sign of grace in the eyes of East Anglian recusants. Such is a likely explanation of his selection by Johnson to act as an examiner.

Bull, like Dowland, was to spend much of his later life abroad, allegedly in exile, as a refugee from British law (ostensibly to escape what seems a very slenderly trumped-up charge of immorality), but in reality, according to the late Professor Thurston Dart, as a British Spy, using his musical profession as a cover.

It is interesting to note that the British Universities in the sixteenth century were as much the recruiting-ground of future intelligence-agents as they have been in our own time.

The last we hear of Johnson is his contribution, 'Come, blessed Bird', to the madrigal collection 'The Triumphes of Oriana' published in the late autumn of 1601. This collection was so popular that a second edition was published early the following year.

Thomas Morley was the editor, and his dedication of the publication to Lord Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham, Baron of Effingham, K.G., Lord High Admiral seems to suggest that Lord Howard had something to do with the initiation of the collection amid well-known circumstances too painful to mention.

The circumstances may have been the rebellion, arrest and trial of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. Lord Howard was one of the judges. Essex was executed on the 25th of February 1601. Queen Elizabeth went into a deep melancholy. To help her regain her spirits, a monster entertainment was organised for May-day (of the sort called a 'Maying') to be given at the Highgate House of Mr William Cornwallis. This Cornwallis (knighted in 1602) was a nephew of Lady Elizabeth Kitson, being son of her brother Sir Charles Cornwallis.

Sir Charles, incidentally, was to be treasurer to the household of the future Prince of Wales, Prince Henry, and to be in very close attendance upon the prince during his final illness. Moreover he afterwards was to feel obliged to write a treatise about the prince, almost as if it were in defence of himself.

Sir William was to outlive his father by only a couple of years, after a life spent as a courtier and an essayist. He was a friend of Ben Johnson and persuaded the playwright to write a masque for private performance at the Highgate house before the new King and Queen in 1604. This too was a spectacular occasion.

It seems that 'The Triumphes of Oriana' was originally intended as incidental music for the 1601 Maying, the madrigals to be sung, as appropriate, while a procession of wheeled 'pageants' (floats bearing symbolic *tableaux vivants*) was trundled past the Queen. From a scrutiny of the texts, it is possible to group them and to envisage the mobile scenes which they accompanied. Each madrigal concludes with a

couplet averring that shepherds and the nymphs of Diana (or the latter alone) uttered the refrain 'Long live fair Oriana'. Johnson's madrigal alone differs, ascribing the refrain to 'the wood-born minstrel of Diana'.

Presumably, as soon as the depth of Queen Elizabeth's feeling at the loss of Essex was realised, a fortnight or so later, Lord Howard consulted his colleagues at court, including both George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, the current Queen's Champion, and the former holder of the title, Sir Henry Lee. Lee was a highly cultivated and outstanding man-at-arms, who had devised and organised the splendid, colourful, allegorical and fantastic Accession Day Tilts throughout Elizabeth's reign until his retirement aged forty-seven after the 1590 Tilt, and who was still at court. Howard doubtless also consulted Mr William Cornwallis and perhaps Ben Johnson, aged twenty-nine at the time, who had produced the comedy 'Everyman out of his Humour' the previous year.

For those who had a hand in steering Elizabeth's ship of state, her good humour may have been important, but more important must have been her continued playing of the role built up for her by the extremely active British propaganda-machine. It is not always observed how influential this machine was in poetry, drama, pictures, the life-style of the court and spectacular public occasions. The whole panoply of classical mythology and romance chivalry was brought to bear in portraying Elizabeth as the living embodiment of the wise and chaste Imperial Virgin attended by fame, justice, peace and plenty. She was hymned as Diana, Cynthia, Selene, Astraea, Flora, Gloriana, Belpheobe and Vesta. She was even reckoned as a re-embodiment of the Virgin Mary. She was portrayed with a sieve and with an ermine (symbols of chastity), with cornucopia, ears of corn, and the rainbow.

When she visited Cambridge upon a royal Progress, her presents from town and university included pairs of white gloves, reminiscent of the 'favours' worn by the ladies of chivalrous Arthurian Knights. She also received gifts of marzipan or 'marchpane'.

Her apotheosis outdid that of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at whose accession all Europe had earlier hoped for a new era of peace, concord and good government. Indeed devices from his armorial bearings were borrowed and adapted for Elizabeth.

She also outdid Catherine de' Medici, Queen and Queen Mother of France during much of the sixteenth century, whose moderate and conciliatory image became more like that of a Messalina or Agrippina, when Admiral Gaspard de Coligny was assassinated (probably by Spanish agency) as a prelude to the massacre of Huguenots in 1572.

As Elizabeth's reign proceeded, it became progressively more unthinkable that she should ever get married. It was important that she should not step out of the picture built up around her.

1592 had seen the publication in Venice of a collection of twenty nine Italian madrigals each by a different composer and each concluding with the refrain *Viva la bella Dori*.

Dori or Doris was in classical mythology the wife of Nereus, a Sea-god. For Venetians, whose city was married to the sea-god in an annual ceremony, Doris would have represented Venice itself. For Admiral Lord Howard it was more likely to have signified sea-girt Britain and Britannic sea-power. Doubtless Shakespeare in his 'Merchant of Venice' was aware of the overtones when he christened a Venetian maiden 'Nerissa'.

The Italian collection was entitled *Il Trionfo di Dori*. Giovanni Croce's contribution, *Ove tra l'herbe e i fiori*, was reprinted with English words as 'Hard by a crystal fountain' in Nicholas Yonge's second collection of anglicised Italian madrigals, *Musica Transalpina*, in 1597. Here the refrain became 'Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana: Long live fair Oriana!'

The same refrain was used by Michael Cavendish in his madrigal 'Come gentle swains' (1598). Cavendish was a member of the notable Suffolk family, a courtier, and an amateur musician. In due course he became an officer in the retinue of Prince Charles (the second son of James I and his successor to the throne as Charles I).

Hitherto the name of Oriana had not been applied to Queen Elizabeth, but in the spring of 1601 it might have seemed felicitous. Not only did it recall the familiar Gloriana, and its use as a refrain (in the intended set of twenty-nine madrigals by different English musicians which were to form 'The Triumphes of

Oriana') could not help reflecting the refrain and similar arrangements of *Il Trionfo di Dori*; but also the word Oriana itself could be taken as the female form of Orion.

Orion was a hero of classical mythology, who, having been struck blind for an injudicious love-affair by Dionysus the God of irrational rapture, and having regained his sight through the good offices of Hephaestus the God of divine technology, became a consort of the virgin Goddess Diana or Artemis, and was celebrated as a constellation.

No parable could have been more apt or more gently put for a Queen who had apparently been blinded by (or into) a misplaced amour, and who, it was hoped, would recover her sight, and return to her place in the Olympian family circle as, or with, the Goddess of Chastity. Doubtless the point was not lost on Elizabeth: Essex must be forgotten.

We can now see the relevance of 'Bonny-boots', whether celebrated as living or mourned as dead, for clearly Elizabeth had harboured a strong affection for this young person and treasured his memory. But it had been a harmless attachment, and not out of keeping with the Queen's 'Astraeon' role. She had evidently surmounted the bereavement of 'Bonny-boots' without going into a melancholic decline. It would be politic to perform the same recovery after the death of Essex.

Now also we can see the point of Thomas Weelkes's Oriana-contribution: 'As Vesta was from Latmos hill descending, she spied a maiden Queen the same ascending'. What was so important about Latmos hill that it should occasion such coming and going?

It was on Latmos hill in Caria that Endymion, renowned for his beauty, slept his eternal sleep. This had been put into his enchanted slumber by the maiden moon-goddess Selene (or Phoebe or Diana) out of love for him, so that she could regularly come and kiss him, – a chaste relationship. Vesta, the maiden goddess of the hearth had presumably been about the same business, doubtless as a surrogate of Selene, for the night-light of the fire on the sacred hearth might be seen as a counterpart of the night-light of the moon. The ascending 'maiden Queen' was bent upon the same errand.

Endymion's sleep was tantamount to death. The madrigal's message was therefore that Elizabeth should remember Essex as the recipient of kisses chaste and divine, not as an engrossing carnal lover. Elizabeth must follow the path of Diana and Vesta.

We can also guess that, in circumstances where political life was significantly intertwined with allegorical charade, Essex's conduct in endangering the Queen's image so carefully built up over decades put his own life at risk. It may well have coloured the deliberations which led to his death-sentence.

Assuming that Lord Howard had arrived at a crystallised scheme for the 'Maying' by the third week of March, he would have then sent for a musical director and given him instructions. He must also have ensured that the others were briefed who had charge of horses, carpentry, scene-painting, costumes, decor, lighting, and of the rehearsal and stage-management of the crowd of performers and stage-mechanics.

Whoever was musical director would have had a rush job on his hands: Twenty nine composers had to be found and provided with requisite verse. The dead-line for entries would have had to allow time for the singers to learn the music by heart and to rehearse it in walk-through and dress-rehearsals. If, as was likely, different choirs attended different *tableaux*, then these had to be recruited, and enough copies of the music made ready. Possibly the treble lines were provided by the boys of St Paul's and other city churches, of St George's Windsor and Eton (with the due consent of the various clergy in authority). Probably the boys would from the start have been taught their music and texts by heart, a time-consuming process.

That the composition of the music was done in haste there is internal evidence. And several composers failed to meet the dead-line. Also there were some whom the shortage of time prevented from being asked or from undertaking the assignment. Michael Cavendish's already published 'Come gentle swains' was used: It already had the correct refrain. Amateur musicians were pressed into service: John Lyly the poet was probably the I.L. of two of the lyrics and also the composer named as John Lisley. John Milton (father of the poet) also contributed a setting. John Holmes must have written his madrigal before 1597 since it refers to 'Bonny-boots' as alive, whose death was mourned in two later madrigals published in 1597. Presumably he tacked the Oriana refrain onto the end for this occasion.

Composers not represented include John Bull, William Byrd, John Dowland and Giles Farnaby.

Michael East's madrigal arrived so late it was only just in time to be included as an appendix in the printing. It was probably not performed at the 'Maying'.

Thomas Bateson's was only published in 1604 as 'Orianaes farewell' with the refrain changed to 'In heaven lives Oriana'. The same change was made in Francis Pilkington's madrigal not published till 1613. Thomas Vautor changed the refrain in his madrigal to 'Farewell fair Oriana', and did not publish the piece till 1619.

These last three, added to the twenty-five madrigals printed in the collection, only bring the total to twenty-eight.

One composer, or more, must have been invited to contribute, but for some reason could not. Twenty nine madrigals were required to make the collection a numerical counterpart of its Italian model.

Returning to Johnson's contribution, the capital B for 'Come blessed Bird' is thought by some to indicate an apology for Byrd's not being represented, while the references to people by their courtly nicknames has kept musicologists guessing.

The text of Johnson's madrigal is as follows:

Come, blessed Bird, and with thy sugared relish
Help our declining choir now to embellish,
For Bonny-boots, that so aloft would fetch it,
O he is dead, and none of us can reach it,
Then tune to us, sweet Bird, thy shrill recorder,
Begin, and we will follow thee in order.
Elpin and I and Dorus
Will serve, for fault of better, in the chorus.
Then sang the wood-born minstrel of Diana:
Long live fair Oriana.

Nobody has identified the young court dancer, singer and wind-player who was a favourite of Queen Elizabeth's and called Bonny-boots. He evidently had a high voice, perhaps an unbroken treble, sang eloquent solos, and over-indulged with cream at the celebration of one of the Queen's birthdays and was probably violently sick. Perhaps an effigy or representation of this boy was included in one of the *tableaux vivants*.

Two other names occur: Elpin and Dorus. Elpin could scarcely be Elpenor, a comrade of Odysseus and one of those transformed by Circe on her magic island, for he met his death by falling off a roof while drunk.

The Greek Elpo (infinitive Elpein) might have been used punningly (it means 'give hope'). A possible candidate then could be Edmund Hooper, organist, composer and singer. He appears to have been a Gentleman Extraordinary at the time, becoming a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal two years later. He was already Master of the Choristers of Westminster Abbey. But the Greek Elpo, Elpein, Elpis might conceal near-equivalent Latin counterparts: Spero, Sperare, Spes.

Thomas Tallis who composed the forty-part motet 'Spem in alium nunquam habui' had died over a decade earlier.

There may have been a composer noted at the time for a popular anthem or song in which the word 'hope' was prominent. Thomas Morley's First Book of Ayres (1600) contains a song 'Love winged my hopes'.

A more remote solution depends on accepting that the mispronunciation of a man's name might give rise to his nickname. Of course any nickname indicates that its bearer is pretty regularly at court.

In the first part of the nineteenth century, it was fashionable to pronounce various vowel sounds in a manner no longer fashionable today. James was Jeames, Charles, was Chorles, and so on. Thackeray's 'Yellowplush Papers' amusingly pillories the fashion.

Can the cockney accent of the late sixteenth century, perhaps given a dainty would-be-upper-class diction after the style of a Malvolio, have distorted the name Holborne into 'Olben or 'Elben'?

Or if Holborne were pronounced Hope-orn or Hope-borne, with the suppression of the l-sound as in modern Holborn uttered as Ho'born, then a solution along these lines may be more plausible.

If so, Elpin may just possibly have been either Antony Holborne mentioned above as message-carrier for Sir Robert Cecil, or his brother William. Apart from his musical reputation, Antony was apparently a Gentleman Usher to the Queen. Nothing is known of William except for some three-part songs. One of these mentions Bonny-boots, which suggests that William was at court during the ascendancy of this short-lived child-star.

The name Dorus is equally puzzling. If its origin is Greek, it could connect with the root *dōru-* indicating spear, lance, pike. There are no musicians of the period with such names. The next word in the text is Will. At a very long shot, '-spear Will' might suggest Shakespeare. This could only be countenanced if Johnson's madrigal was to have been associated with a float on which perhaps Shakespeare's troupe provided the actors.

If Dorus were connected with the Greek root *dōro-*, it could signify gift, given, present. Again, no musicians of the period would fit, and even if '*gi(o)van(ni)*', the Italian name, were pressed into service for 'given', no Italian musicians were resident at the time with that name. The Ferraboscos and Lupos all had other names. John Cowper or Cooper was known as John Coprario, not Giovanni.

Alternatively from *dōro-*, Dorus could signify the ancestor of the Dorian race of Greeks, or perhaps a composer or theorist who had used or written about the Dorian Mode in music. Nobody springs to mind on this tack.

Harking back to Latin origins, Dorus was a character in Terence's play 'The Eunuch'. By transference, Dorus might then apply to any falsetto singer whose voice was as good as to suggest that he had been castrated. We have no evidence about the individual alto lay-clerks in the various English choirs of the time, or about individual court lutenists in this respect. Dorus was also a philosopher mentioned in Seneca's *De beneficiis*, where he is described as '*librarius*', a book-seller.

Of all the musicians at court in 1601, Thomas Morley best fits these descriptions. He had published '*A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practical Musicke*' in 1597, a work of considerable erudition and knowledge of theory. Moreover, in 1598 he had been awarded an almost total monopoly over the printing of music throughout England, which he held till his death. He was much involved in publishing and printing. He *par excellence* could be called '*librarius*' and hence 'Dorus'.

Dorus on the other hand might have been applied to someone responsible for the introduction of at least some of *Il Trionfo di Dori* to England. Nicholas Yonge had done this in his '*Musica Transalpina*' of 1597. Among other things, Yonge was a lay-clerk at St Paul's.

But as far as Johnson was concerned in 1601, Morley also might qualify under this head, since Morley, if not the actual music director for the 'Maying', was certainly the central editor of this collection of music which imitated *Il Trionfo*.

So perhaps the lines 'Elpin and I and Dorus Will serve, for fault of better, in the chorus' indicate that the performance of Johnson's madrigal involved Edmund Hooper or Antony Holborne, Thomas Morley and possibly Johnson himself.

We next encounter the line 'Then sang the wood-born minstrel of Diana...'.

Who was 'wood-born'? Could it be 'blessed Bird' (Byrd) from the opening line? Byrd did not contribute to the collection. It would be nonsense to say that he sang.

Now Morley was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal till his death, thought to be in October 1602, whereupon the vacancy was filled by one George Woodson, of whom nothing else is known. But this man must have been in the offing for some time. He could scarcely be appointed out of the blue.

A Leonard Woodson appears to have been a lay-clerk at Windsor. He gets mention as Deputy Master of the Choristers in 1605. A Thomas Woodson was a lay-clerk at St Paul's, who joined the Chapel Royal in

1581 and retained this post till 1605. If 'wood-born' means Woodson, we have a choice three persons, of whom Leonard is the least probable.

Now perhaps we can stand back from the canvas, as it were, and guess at what Johnson's madrigal was accompanying.

The carriage bearing the *tableau vivant* has stopped. Prominently placed on the carriage is a man or boy dressed up as one of the allegorical birds associated with Elizabeth (Phoenix, Pelican or Eagle). The Pelican is most probable. He either descends with a retinue, or sends it to salute the Queen with a gift of marzipan or marchpane. This takes us from the first line 'Come, blessed Bird, and with thy sugared relish...' to the end of the fourth line.

The Pelican hen was thought to peck its own bosom and to feed its chicks with the flesh thus pecked. Elizabeth was being asked to remain the Goddess of nourishing Peace and Plenty, and like the pelican to put the wound in her bosom to the service of her British brood.

At this point the actor or musician disguised as the bird produces a recorder (the Madrigal continuing with 'Then tune to us, sweet Bird, thy shrill recorder'), and retires with retinue to the carriage, which is set in motion.

The Madrigal proceeds with 'Begin, and we will follow thee in order, Elpin and I and Dorus...' indicating that the carriage is followed by three choirs, some of the boys perhaps playing recorders.

Elpin (Hooper or Holborne) has (if Hooper) the Westminster Abbey Choir with him, Johnson has perhaps the smaller choir from Hengrave Hall, and Dorus (Morley) has the choir of, say, St Paul's, where he had been organist. These serve in the 'chorus', that is they are silent to begin with, but probably join in at 'Then tune to us...'

The final refrain indicates that 'the wood-born minstrel' (one of the Woodsons) has with him the Choir of the Chapel Royal, probably all on the carriage itself, perhaps even dolled-up as birds. Possibly they flap their wings in loyal salute as the carriage is drawn away, followed by the other choirs on foot; and the piping sound of voices and recorders in harmony dies away as they pass into the distance.

One cannot help thinking that once round the corner the choirs will run to the tiring-room for a change of costume. Thus a sizeable procession of carriages could need only some six or seven choirs to accompany them.

But these musings must be abandoned if we are to believe opposing theorists.

Early in the course of researches on Tudor music it was noted by John A. Fuller Maitland that though the title-page of 'The Triumphes of Oriana' gave its date as 1601, and though there was a second edition in 1602, the Register of the Company of Stationers did not give it as issued till 1603. Instead of this anomaly being looked into, a new theory was evolved, based on the apparent suppression of the publication till after Queen Elizabeth's death.

But the urgency of getting the collection together may have had some bearing on the matter. Morley had been in variable ill health from 1597 onwards, which may have led to his accidentally overlooking due processes in this instance. He had also been in dispute with the Stationers' Company, for the Company possessed an official Patent for the printing of the psalter and its musical settings which Morley considered infringed his Monopoly. He particularly wanted control over the psalter-music since this was the one most lucrative branch of printing at the time. The Bishop of London tried but failed to arbitrate in the dispute, and the issue was brought in 1600 to Parliament, where, instead of settling the case, it was ruled that on the expiry of Morley's Monopoly no further printing Monopolies were to be allowed.

In 1606 the music-printer William Barley, a business colleague of Morley's, who had been printing music under licence from Morley, renewed the tussle with the Stationers' Company, asserting that though Morley was dead, the Monopoly (and thus his, Barley's licence) had another thirteen years to run.

It is quite possible that in the confusion between the 'Maying' of 1601 and Morley's death in 1602 the publication could not reach the Stationers' Register until 1603.

But some are convinced that 'The Triumphes of Oriana' was not associated with the 1601 'Maying', for there is no solid external evidence.

Their theory goes something like this: It was thought that Queen Elizabeth was at death's door, or perhaps some of the Roman Catholics got wind of a plot to assassinate her. There were many such plots in the latter part of her reign.

It was therefore a matter of urgency to get ready an offering to the expected future Queen, Anne of Denmark, as a loyal gift from the musical community.

This would explain the haste evident in the collection's composition and assemblage.

However, when Elizabeth failed to die one way or another, the publication had to be put under wraps until she eventually did. This would explain the later date of registration.

Moreover Anne was known to be a convivial and cultivated woman, especially given to music, dancing and dressing up as a shepherdess or nymph. Indeed, under her influence, the English court was to experience no dearth of masquerades and entertainments. It would be reasonable for any composer to seek her patronage, and in view of her religious even more so for a composer of the same sympathies. Perhaps the Roman Catholic composers were the nucleus master-minding the enterprise.

The refrain's insistence on Oriana refers to Golden Anna, or Anna from the East, or Anna of the Dawn, or (even more amusingly) Anna from elsinORE, the seat of Danish government, then commonly written 'Helsingnoor'. Johnson's line 'Elpin and I and Dorus' then becomes 'ELPIN and i and dORus,' almost Elsinor!

But this theory, however attractive, does not explain a number of things.

Firstly, with twenty-nine composers engaged in a disloyal conspiracy, it is almost certain that there would have been a leakage. This they would have known themselves, and might have approached such a project charily. In any case, only four or five of the composers are known to have been definite Catholic sympathisers.

Morley, the Editor, had been in government service as a spy. [He appears to have gone as such to the Low Countries in 1591, for a letter from another agent there to Sir Francis Walsingham's secretary describes the interception of Morley's mail and the discovery that Morley had been in touch with Roman Catholics. The secretary's draft-reply confirmed Morley's business of luring Roman Catholics into indiscretion and then reporting on them. The agent's letter seems to indicate, however, that Morley himself had Roman leanings, and was not to be trusted. Morley's appointment to the Chapel Royal in 1592 can be seen as a reward for his political services and an assurance of government trust. Different from Dowland's case!]

As Editor, therefore, Morley is unlikely to have been party to a conspiracy, and perhaps woe would have betided any composer foolish enough to seek to broach such a sensitive matter with him.

Secondly, why, with two years delay, were the late entries not included in the collection? Why did those left out before not now contribute?

Thirdly, there seems to be no evidence of a performance of the collection before the King and Queen in 1603 or afterwards. Surely, Sir William Cornwallis's entertainment of 1604 would have been an appropriate moment to introduce them, even if a little late.

Fourthly, it would seem slightly odd to have a reprint early in 1602 if the collection (printed only a few months earlier in 1601) were still being withheld from the public.

Lastly, the texts of the madrigals very firmly pay tribute to the maidenhood of the sovereign Queen. But Anne of Denmark could by no stretch of imagination be called a virgin. In any allegory, she would have had to play the role of Juno, wife and mother. But there is no sign of a peacock anywhere. The single mention of Juno has her bringing a garland for Oriana, along with other goddesses and their gifts. It is all too clear that the madrigals had Queen Elizabeth in mind as Diana or Oriana.

The call of the peacock is one of the least agreeable in the feathered chorus, and would scarcely earn it an address as 'sweet Bird'!

Moreover, as has been pointed out, the later Oriana madrigals indicate that Oriana is in heaven. Anne of Denmark died in March 1619. Admittedly, Vautor's Oriana madrigal published in this year has the altered

refrain 'Farewell fair Oriana', and so, perhaps by a stroke of opportunism, may be attached to Anne. But it would seem to be the only one. The other 'late entries' had appeared much earlier.

Johnson disappears after 1601. His patron, Sir Thomas Kitson, died in 1602, but Lady Elizabeth continued her musical household till her death in 1628, whereupon the musical life of Hengrave Hall came to an end.

Wilbye moved to Colchester to live under the patronage of Lady Rivers, youngest daughter of Lady Elizabeth, till his death in 1638.

The absence of any evidence about Johnson's death is curious. He was a notable musician who in our own time would have received a sizeable obituary notice in the major national newspapers. It must be surmised that he did go abroad on some secret mission and died in the course of it in circumstances which made it inconvenient for the British Government to acknowledge him or even to have his disappearance mentioned in England.

Johnson's 'Medley' consists of six short dance-tunes, each followed by a variation, and a coda introducing a seventh tune. The first three tunes are pavanes. The rest are galliards. It is intriguing to think that this work is a reminder of the carefully orchestrated manoeuvre whereby Johnson and Caius College became linked.

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