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Thomas Whythorne and Tudor Musicians

by

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Declaration

This thesis is solely the work of Katie Nelson
and has not been submitted for a degree at any other University.

Abstract

The autobiography of Tudor musician Thomas Whythorne (1528-1596) is rich with self-exploration, social commentary and intimate storytelling. His story begins at childhood, then progresses chronologically as he gains an education, becomes a music master, and rubs shoulders with some of the most prominent people in England. This rich historical source has been strangely neglected, particularly by social historians, since its discovery in 1955.

No one in any discipline has so far attempted an overall assessment of Whythorne the man, his work, and his significance. This is my aim. Working outwards from a close examination of his unique manuscript (Bodleian MS. Misc.c.330), this study hopes to shed new light on the music profession in early modern England. Whythorne adds considerable clarity of focus to the professionalization of music in the sixteenth century, as seen through the eyes of one of its advocates. Chapter 1 reviews Whythorne's own life story and compares it with available external evidence. Chapter 2 proceeds to mine the manuscript itself for further evidence of Whythorne's motives and methodology, offering a number of new hypotheses regarding the dating, content, and structure of the manuscript. Chapters 3 and 4 explore the nature of the Tudor musical profession, proposing and exploring a 'spherical' model of the music profession (in place of a hierarchical model). These chapters examine the various 'spheres' or types of musicians in turn, comparing Whythorne's descriptions of them to external evidence. Chapter 5 then examines private music tutors in greater depth, as this group have remained very shadowy figures. Finally, Chapter 6 examines the world of early music printing in England, and Whythorne's pioneering place in it. It also examines the nature and function of his self-fashioning, arguing that Whythorne constructed an identity well outside the realm of the generic.

By viewing early modern society through Whythorne's lens and comparing it to contemporary sources, we can shed new light on early modern musicians in England, and on the society in which they lived.

Abbreviations and Notes

Whythorne	<i>The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne</i> , ed. James Osborn (modern spelling edn, Oxford, 1962).
Whythorne (original orthography)	<i>The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne</i> , ed. James Osborn (Oxford, 1961).
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (online edn, Oxford, 2010).
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (online edn, Oxford, 2010).
REED	<i>Records of Early English Drama</i> (volumes listed in bibliography).
STC / STC2	Short Title Catalogue / Short Title Catalogue 2nd edition.

While I recognize the benefit of preserving Whythorne's original orthography in my quotations, I have chosen to draw generally from the modern spelling edition of Whythorne's manuscript, in the interest of lucidity. Not only does the change in spelling ease comprehension, but the modern spelling edition of the book is also more readily acquired (although both editions are now out of print). I have therefore resisted the admittedly attractive impulse to quote Whythorne in his 'own words' for the reader's ease. Where it has been necessary to cite the orthographic edition, or the manuscript itself, this is duly noted. Original spelling has otherwise generally been preserved, except where it obstructs clarity. The year is taken to begin on 1 January.

Introduction

Roald Dahl wrote that ‘an autobiography is a book a person writes about his own life and it is usually full of all sorts of boring details’.¹ That is certainly a fitting description for many autobiographies, but Thomas Whythorne’s is not one of them. He lived in England through the reigns of four Tudors, from 1528 to 1596, and his book is rich with observations of the religious and political world around him. It has wider appeal, too, focusing on romance and scandal, the rise and fall of the great and powerful, plague, pain, intrigue and despair.²

Whythorne was a musician, tutor, composer, and sometime secretary, in a period when the music profession was dramatically changing. His manuscript is an autobiography from an era when conventional wisdom teaches that such works did not exist—indeed his text has convincingly been called the first autobiography in English.³ Rich in self-exploration and social commentary, Whythorne’s life story is an unparalleled historical source but has been strangely neglected, particularly by social historians, since its discovery in 1955. Wrapped in brown paper, the manuscript lay at the bottom of a wooden crate of old legal papers that H. D. Foley found in his family home in Hereford. He brought the crate to Sotheby’s for auction in 1955, knowing nothing of the book or how it came to be in his home, except that his father had been a collector of letters and manuscripts.⁴ The literary scholar James Osborn purchased it, and published two edited versions before presenting the manuscript to the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

¹ Roald Dahl, *Boy* (London, 1984), p. 1.

² The manuscript is now in the Bodleian Library, MS Eng. misc. c. 330.

³ James Osborn, *The Beginnings of Autobiography in England* (William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, Los Angeles: 1959[?]).

⁴ James Osborn, Introduction to Whythorne (original orthography), pp. lx-lxi.



Figure 0.1: *Thomas Whythorne, from 1590 Duos*

Without his manuscript, we would know little of Whythorne except his name and face. He published collections of his musical compositions in 1571 and 1590, with his own image inside the cover of the music. This was strange indeed; he was the only Elizabethan composer to do so. And before 1955, critics were puzzled by his appearance in print. Who was this man? He was not a famous musician from the Tudor court or the church; he had no reputation in his lifetime, as far as records can show; no one ever mentioned him in any list of prominent musicians during or after the sixteenth century. Morrison Boyd imagined that he was ‘probably a wealthy amateur’, ‘a fortuitous and isolated outcropping of a high level of secular musical intelligence’.⁵ Others made the same assumption; Henry Davey believed Whythorne

⁵ Morrison Boyd, *Elizabethan Music and Musical Criticism* (Philadelphia, 1940), pp. 101-102.

was a wealthy amateur with too much ‘belief in his own powers’.⁶ He did not fit neatly into early music history, and was generally ignored. But when the tattered manuscript surfaced at Sotheby’s, Thomas Whythorne revealed himself in his own words— quite literally, for he wrote in his own orthography, intending to ‘wryte wurdz as they be sownded in speech’.⁷ How wrong we had been to assume he was either wealthy or an amateur. He was instead a struggling professional, a musician who made his own way in the world, working his way from yeoman to ‘gent.’, to Master of Music for Archbishop Parker.

The first published edition of the manuscript is in Whythorne’s own orthography; the second is in modern English. Strong women and perennial misfortunes in both his personal and professional life are the main focus of Whythorne’s story. Life never seemed to measure up to his expectations, and in the end he felt his had been ‘wrapped in calamities’. His tale is both tragic and comical, and also deeply, sometimes shockingly personal. Indeed his stated intention in writing was to ‘lay open unto you the most part of all my private affairs and secrets’.⁸ As the son of an Ilminster yeoman, the fact that of all the players on the Tudor ‘stage’ of history, he left behind an autobiography is fascinating in itself; his unique manuscript takes us to the heart and mind of a seemingly ordinary man. His narrative begins at childhood, and progresses chronologically through his life as he rubs shoulders with some of the most prominent people in England.

Whythorne’s narrative offers a vivid, richly detailed description of life as an English musician. Serving in wealthy Tudor households, he was well-positioned to witness humanity’s dramatic turns on Fortune’s Wheel; it was a wheel he also whirled

⁶ Henry Davey, *History of English Music* (2nd edn, revised, London, 1921), p. 126.

⁷ Whythorne, p. 6.

⁸ Whythorne, p. 1.

around himself. He was neither rich nor powerful, neither famous nor noble, but he associated with some of England's high and mighty. And despite seeming so ordinary, Whythorne did some remarkable things. He was a pioneer in a number of fields: music pedagogy, music printing, literature, even, arguably, 'selfhood' all bear the fingerprint of Thomas Whythorne.

Anthony Fletcher once observed of early modern people that 'we are deaf to what was really going on in their minds', especially those below the highest ranks.⁹ Whythorne provides a striking exception to this rule, telling his readers not only what he was thinking during times of personal crisis, but also what he thought other people thought he was thinking. His practice was not simply to relate the events of his life but to reflect on them in hindsight, to contemplate their causes and outcomes in an attempt to make sense of it all. Meredith Skura has put it well: 'the book is compelling...not only for its record of a particular society but also because it shows what one particular man made of that society'.¹⁰ So while Whythorne never graced the court, nor led a movement, his story is most certainly worth telling. For, as Peter Marshall has put it, 'there are considerable advantages to be gained from ... exploring the mental world of a humble individual', especially in early modern history.¹¹

Working outwards from a careful examination of Whythorne's manuscript, this thesis seeks to extract from it a largely untapped mine of information about the musical profession in early modern England. I call it a 'profession', because it was emerging as such at precisely the time Whythorne was most active. Taking the reader through his life experience as an intimate friend, Whythorne writes of his initial career choice (he liked music best at school), his astute career moves (he learned to

⁹ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven and London, 1995), p. 123.

¹⁰ Meredith Skura, *Tudor Autobiography, Listening for Inwardness* (Chicago and London, 2008), p. 100.

¹¹ Peter Marshall, *Mother Leakey and the Bishop: A Ghost Story* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 269-270.

play the cittern and gittern because they were new and fashionable) and all the ups and downs (mostly downs) of his lifetime scraping a career from music. Along the way, he recalls ill-fated secret love affairs with his mistresses, not leaving out the spying ‘busybodies’. He describes his efforts to present himself as a *bona fide* master of music, and relives his worst romantic failure, whose bitterness still chafes after many years. Remembering the day when he discovered his betrothed had abruptly decided to marry another man, Whythorne makes no attempt to disguise sour grapes: the man was a dung beetle, he said, who ‘having flown all the day about among herbs and flowers, hath now shrouded her under a horseturd. And to say the truth, he is sweet enough for such a sweet piece as she is. And thus I end of this foresaid matter’.¹² Through his writing he binds the wounds of his past and contemplates the present. He discusses other musicians— and the reasons they do or do not deserve scorn— and holds his head high while describing scholars who found him too proud. He remembers brushes with death, too, and moments of despairing fear, pondering the moments that steered his fate. He had, he thought, ‘through experience waxen a little wiser’, and he thought it useful and good to share it with his reader.¹³

No one could write Whythorne’s story in terms of clearly defined historical or cultural categories, because he did not fit them. Instead of being defined by categories, his life spanned many, benefiting from the fluidity of the world in which he lived. His various career paths would not always have designated him as a musician, and his lifetime was one of social and professional movement as he manoeuvred among the middling sorts.

Perhaps it should not be surprising, then, that so little has been written about Whythorne and his text. No one seems to have noted his existence at all until the late

¹² Whythorne, p. 171.

¹³ Whythorne, p. 27.

eighteenth century, when musicologists began occasionally to note their scathing opinions of his music (though it now appears that most of them had not actually heard his music).¹⁴ Their dismissal of Whythorne set a pattern, for historians, musicologists and literary scholars alike have since drawn only very selectively on Whythorne's work, and almost always only to illustrate or confirm whatever general point they wanted to make.¹⁵ A handful of brief analyses of Whythorne the man, his self-scrutiny, and especially the nature of his text, have lately been published,¹⁶ all of which, though useful, necessarily lack the depth that an extended study could bring (see Chapters 2 and 6). A few scholars have also used particular episodes from Whythorne's story to illustrate points about wider Tudor society.¹⁷ None of these—nor any of the many works citing Whythorne even more briefly, too numerous to mention—have been concerned with the significance of exploring Whythorne's core identity as a musician. This is of special interest because, through the virtual absence of sources, historians have overlooked the role and significance of musicians in early modern society. Indeed, as Christopher Marsh asserts, they have tended to 'neglect

¹⁴ See Chapter 6.

¹⁵ Two notable exceptions are one unpublished musicology dissertation which transcribed some of Whythorne's music: Joan Jobling, 'A Critical Study and Partial Transcription of the Two Published Collections of Thomas Whythorne' (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 1978), and Rupert Palmer's linguistic analysis of Whythorne's orthography: Rupert Elmer Palmer, Jr., *Thomas Whythorne's Speech* (Copenhagen, 1969). Still, neither of these focus in Whythorne the man.

¹⁶ David Shore has written two articles on the nature of Whythorne's text: 'The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne: An Early Elizabethan Context for Poetry', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 17 (1981), pp. 72-86; and 'Whythorne's Autobiography and the Genesis of Gascoigne's Master F.J.', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 12 (1982), pp. 159-178; Meredith Skura has a chapter on Whythorne and his 'inwardness' in *Tudor Autobiography, Listening for Inwardness* (Chicago and London, 2008); Andrew Mousley has produced some hypotheses on Whythorne's impetus for writing such a text in 'Renaissance Selves and Life Writing: The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 3, 3 (1990), pp. 222-230; and 'Early modern autobiography, history and human testimony: The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne', *Textual Practice*, 23, 2 (2009), pp. 267-287.

¹⁷ Norman Jones, *Birth of the Elizabethan Age, England in the 1560s* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 96-101, 186-18; Ilona Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 50-63.; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, Death* (Oxford, 1997) pp. 237-239; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven and London, 1995), pp. 103-104.

the place that music, in general, occupied in the lives of the early modern majority'.¹⁸ Musicologists have avoided the social dimension of music, too, focusing instead on the analysis of music itself, and the lives of great composers.¹⁹ This fact came to the attention of some historians as early as the 1960s, one of whom declared that 'of all cultural manifestations none has been so long and so consistently neglected by the historian of Western Civilization as music'.²⁰

Walter Woodfill had pioneered the field in 1953, with his *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles I*.²¹ That meticulously researched book proved seminal, focusing on musicians and their social roles rather than their music, but its focus on the Stuart period limits its usefulness. It has also become outdated with the passing of sixty years.

In those six decades after Woodfill's *tour de force*, not much was added to the field of study.²² In 1961 John Stevens (*Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court*) turned to the early Tudor period, about which hardly anything had been written, but he focused on music and musicians at court, no doubt swayed by the relative wealth of sources there and the dearth of sources for musicians elsewhere. Both Woodfill and Stevens were motivated in part, they explained, by the sweeping and often ridiculous generalizations about music made by previous historians and musicologists.

¹⁸ Christopher Marsh, 'The Sound of Print in Early Modern England: the Broadside Ballad as Song', in Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (eds), *The Uses of Script and Print 1300-1700* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 174.

¹⁹ For further discussion see Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 25-31.

²⁰ Edward E. Lowinsky, 'Music in the Culture of the Renaissance', in Paul Kristeller and Philip Wiener, eds., *Renaissance Essays* (New York, 1968), p. 337.

²¹ Walter Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles I* (Princeton, 1953, reprint, New York, 1969).

²² E.D. Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (London and Toronto, 1964). The book focused on musical discourse and tended toward musicology. Less meticulous than Woodfill's book, it has not stood the test of time as well.

Early modern writers like Michael Drayton may have started the trend for sweeping generalisations. In *Poly-Olbion* (1613) Drayton's England was a musical spectacle.²³ Music was everywhere, even in epic political struggle:

England and Wales strive, in this Song,
To whether Lundy doth belong:
When either's Nymphs, to clear the doubt,
By Music mean to try it out.
Of mighty Neptune leave they ask:
Each one betakes her to the task;
The Britons, with the Harp and Crowd:
The English, both with still and loud,
The Britons chant King Arthur's glory,
The English sing their Saxons' story.
The Hills of Wales their weapons take,
And are an uproar like to make,
To keep the English part in awe.²⁴

Subsequent historians took him at his word. In 1918, Paul Jones waxed nostalgic about the aristocratic Tudor household (*The Household of a Tudor Nobleman*): 'it is delightful to record that most of the entertainment of the day was graced with an accompaniment of that "commendable sweet science", music ... every household had its "musitiansers"'.²⁵ Woodfill and Stevens attempted to make a more realistic assessment of music in the past, but it does appear that Woodfill in particular may have swung the pendulum a bit too far the other way (see Chapter 5). Falling between the two stools of musicology and history, the evolution of the social and professional world of musicians remained 'an unwritten chapter in English musical history'.²⁶ In 1971, the situation had not changed, and Walter Salmen, editor of a volume broadly focused on musicians across Europe and across centuries (*The Social Status of the Professional Musician from the Middle Ages to the 19th Century*), stated that 'the state

²³ Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (London, 1613), STC 1377:14. The book is itself a collection of eighteen songs, each describing individual counties in Britain.

²⁴ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, p. 55. Spelling modernized. In the preface Drayton is careful to include a special note to the Welsh, stating he means no offence (by relating their music to an 'uproar').

²⁵ Paul Jones, *The Household of a Tudor Nobleman* (Urbana, 1918), p. 231. My italics.

²⁶ John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (London, 1961), p. 296.

of research in this field has not yet provided...any sort of exhaustive analysis'.²⁷ Two major studies of patronage followed in 1981. Iain Fenlon's edited volume, *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Patronage, Sources, and Texts*, covered a wide-ranging period and geographical area, while David Price's *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance* was quasi-biographical, looking at certain families' patronage in depth. His approach was further expanded by Lynn Hulse, who researched patronage on a wider scale in a 1997 dissertation.²⁸ But both Price and Hulse focused on the Stuart period because of the dearth of sources for earlier periods. Throughout the twentieth century musicological studies persisted, of course, as well as one study of music printing in England.²⁹ David Wulstan's *Tudor Music* (1985) is representative of the group, and pays surprisingly little attention to the social lives of even the most famous musicians.

In 2001, Fiona Kisby's edited volume *Music and Musicians in Renaissance Cities and Towns* and a special issue of *Urban History* the following year focused on the role of music and musicians in cities, pointing out historians' neglect once again.

²⁷ Walter Salmen, Introduction to *The Social Status of the Professional Musician from the Middle Ages to the 19th Century*, Walter Salmen (ed.), trans. by Herbert Kaufman and Barbara Reisner (New York, 1971), p. 4.

²⁸ Lynn Hulse, 'The musical patronage of the English aristocracy, c.1590-1640' (PhD diss., London, King's College, 1997).

²⁹ Eric Blom, *Music in England* (New York, 1977); Morrison Comegys Boyd, *Elizabethan Music and Musical Criticism* (Philadelphia, 1940); Howard M. Brown, *Music in the Renaissance* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1976); Henry Davey, *History of English Music* (2nd edn, London, 1921); E.H. Fellowes, *The English Madrigal Composers* (2nd edn, Oxford, 2007); E.H. Fellowes, *The English Madrigal School* (Oxford, 1914), VI; Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York, 1973); D.W. Krummel, *English Music Printing 1553-1700* (London, 1975). Peter le Huray, *Music and the Reformation in England* (London, 1967); Norman Lebrecht, *Music in London, A History and Handbook* (London, 1992); Edward E. Lowinsky, 'Music in the Culture of the Renaissance', in Paul Kristeller and Philip Wiener (eds), *Renaissance Essays* (New York, 1968), pp. 337-381; Carol MacClintock, *Readings in the History of Music in Performance* (Bloomington, 1979); E.D. Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (London and Toronto, 1964); Bruce Pattison, *Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance* (2nd edn, London, 1970); Antoni Piza, 'The Tradition of Autobiography in Music' (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1994); Henry Plomer, *A Short History of English Printing* (London, 1900); John Rastall, 'Secular Musicians in Late Medieval England' (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1968); Richard Rastall, *The Notation of Western Music* (London, 1983); Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1979); Ernest Walker, *History of Music in England* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1939); Philip Heseltine (alias Peter Warlock), *Thomas Whythorne, An Unknown Elizabethan Composer* (London, 1925); David Wulstan, *Tudor Music* (London, 1985).

In *Urban History*, Peter Borsay rebuked ‘the almost puritanical mistrust of the arts by the historical profession’, concluding (more calmly) that scholars in his field have ‘not paid as much attention to music as [they] might’.³⁰

All these studies highlighted the fact that music was integral to early modern culture, because musicians simultaneously stimulated and monitored its very pulse. Because music as an art form both reflects and inspires cultural change, Edward Lowinsky has gone so far as to claim that a particular society’s history can be illuminated by observing what texts were set to music.³¹ In his anthropological study of music, Alan Merriam found that ‘villagers are unanimous in stating that musicians are extremely important people; without them, life would be intolerable.’³² This was true in early modern society, where musicians were ubiquitous— present in the lowliest alehouses, in the streets, the churches, great country houses, even in the Privy Chamber of the King. Then, as now, ‘music and society stand in a reciprocal relationship’,³³ and the fate of musicians, so essentially connected to society at all levels, reveals much about English society in the sixteenth century. Whythorne, as a musician, experienced and engaged with his world in a remarkable way.

The pioneering studies cited above have now succeeded in drawing attention to the field, and the study of music, musicians, and their role in society, has recently become an exciting area of growth. A number of micro-studies³⁴ have complemented

³⁰ Peter Borsay, ‘Sounding the Town’, *Urban History*, 29,1 (2002), p. 102.

³¹ Edward Lowinsky, ‘Music in the Renaissance’, p. 350.

³² Alan Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, 1964), p. 136.

³³ Salmen, Introduction to *Social Status*, p. 4.

³⁴ Andrew Ashbee, ‘Groomed for Service: Musicians in the Privy Chamber at the English Court, c.1495-1558’, *Early Music* (May 1997), pp. 185-197; Christopher Marsh, ‘The Sound of Print’, pp. 171-190; Elizabeth Baldwin, with David Miles, *Paying the Piper: Music in Pre-1642 Cheshire* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2002); Emily Cockayne, ‘Cacophony, or vile scrapers on vile instruments: bad music in early modern English towns’, *Urban History*, 29, 1 (2002), pp. 35-47; Fiona Kisby, ‘Music and Musicians of Early Tudor Westminster’, *Early Music* (May 1995), pp. 223-240; Fiona Kisby, ‘Royal Minstrels in the City and Suburbs of Early Tudor London: Professional Activities and Private Interests’, *Early Music* (May 1997), pp. 199-219; Hugh Baillie, ‘Minstrels in Tudor London’, *Early Music* (May 1998), p. 374; Ian Woodfield, *English Musicians in the Age of Exploration* (Stuyvesant,

a few broader studies,³⁵ and the publication of Christopher Marsh's *Music in Society in Early Modern England* (2010) marks the first comprehensive survey of popular music in early modern England. In light of all these developments, it is surprising that Whythorne, a musician with so much to say about his world, has remained thrust firmly into the margins. The reassessment of his manuscript as a key source is overdue.

Outside the musical realm, Whythorne's life story can also help to illuminate existing scholarly discussions, adding another dimension to current debates about social mobility, the development of professions, self-fashioning, print culture, gentry culture, gender and class relations, and more. Here mainstream historians have largely missed their opportunity: Whythorne's autobiography often proves extremely relevant but is habitually overlooked.³⁶

NY, 1995); Linda Phyllis Austern, 'Nature, Culture, Myth and the Musician in Early Modern England', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 51, 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 1-47. Linda Phyllis Austern, 'Sing Againe Syren: The Female Musician and Sexual Enchantment in Elizabethan Life and Literature', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 42, 3 (1989), pp. 420-448; Mark Brayshaw, 'Waits, Musicians, Bearwards, and Players: the inter-urban road travel and performances of itinerant entertainers in sixteenth and seventeenth century England', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 31 (2005), pp. 430-458; Michael G Brennan, 'Sir Charles Somerset's Music Books (1622)', *Music and Letters*, 74 (1993), pp. 501-518; Peter Roberts, 'Elizabethan Players and Minstrels and the Legislation of 1572 Against Retainers and Vagabonds', in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 29-55; Robin Headlam Wells, 'Ars Amatoria: Philip Rosseter and the Tudor Court Lyric', *Music and Letters*, 70, 1 (1989), pp. 58-71.

³⁵ Jonathan Willis, *Church music and Protestantism in post-Reformation England, Discourses, Sites and Identities* (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT, 2010); Thomasin, Lamay, ed., *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women, Many-Headed Melodies* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2005); Emily Cockayne's *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England* (London and New Haven, 2007) focuses to a lesser extent on music.

³⁶ There are a number of studies which might have benefited (sometimes greatly) by the inclusion of Whythorne; in some cases the authors did briefly include him but a more thorough examination of his text would have proved relevant. These include, for example, Mary Abbot, *Life Cycles in England 1560-1720, Cradle to Grave* (London and NY, 1996); Ilona Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge, 1998); Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion, and Education in Early Modern England* (London and New York, 1999); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, Death* (Oxford, 1997); Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven and London, 1995); Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England, Honour, Sex and Marriage* (Harlow, 1999); Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1980); Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1540-1640* (Oxford, 1996); Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1994); Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1480-1800* (Harlow and London, 2000); James Raven, *The Business of Books, Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (London and New Haven, 2007); Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003); Alison Sim,

Literary scholars have shown considerably more interest, but have drawn very selectively on Whythorne's work in discussions about autobiography, self-fashioning, and the (non-)emergence of the individual in early modern England.³⁷ While these are themes I am interested in, they are not my main concern in this thesis. In these studies a number of literary critics have inadvertently highlighted the fact that it is all too easy to take Whythorne's narrative out of context so that his meaning becomes malleable. As such, a number of seemingly reasonable claims about Whythorne and his motives become starkly jarring when placed back into the wider picture of Whythorne's character and life as a whole. These will be addressed throughout the dissertation, but on the whole, criticism of Whythorne has proved the wisdom of Jeff Titon's counsel: 'let us not use a life story too quickly; let us know it first'.³⁸

To extract real insights from his autobiography scholars must first acquaint themselves with Whythorne the man. No one so far, in any discipline, has attempted an overall assessment of Whythorne the man, his work, and his significance. This is my aim. Whythorne's engaging, plain-speaking and thoughtful character offers a

Masters and Servants in Tudor England (Thrupp, Stroud, 2006); Jeremy Smith, *Thomas East and Music Publishing in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 2003).

³⁷ Ronald Bedford and Lloyd Davis and Philippa Kelly, *Early Modern English Lives: Autobiography and Self-Representation, 1500-1600* (Aldershot, 2007); Elizabeth Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship in Renaissance Verse* (Basingstoke and New York, 2003); Alison Harl, 'Passive, Pursued and Powerful: construction of the Male Self in Renaissance Autobiography', *Discoveries*, 22, 2 (2005), no pagination; Katharine Hodgkin, 'Thomas Whythorne and the Problems of Mastery', *History Workshop Journal*, 29, 1 (1990), pp. 20-41; Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Tracing a Heterosexual Erotics of Service in *Twelfth Night* and the Autobiographical Writings of Thomas Whythorne and Anne Clifford', *Criticism*, XL (Winter 1998), pp. 1-21; Andrew Mousley, 'Renaissance Selves and Life Writing: The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 3, 3 (1990), pp. 222-230; Andrew Mousley, 'Early modern autobiography, history and human testimony: The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne', *Textual Practice*, 23, 2 (2009), pp. 267-287; James Osborn, *The Beginnings of Autobiography in England* (William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, Los Angeles: 1959[?]); David Shore, 'The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne: An Early Elizabethan Context for Poetry', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 17 (1981), pp. 72-86; David Shore, 'Whythorne's Autobiography and the Genesis of Gascoigne's Master F.J.', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 12 (1982), pp. 159-178; Meredith Skura, *Tudor Autobiography, Listening for Inwardness* (Chicago and London, 2008); William Spengeman, *The Forms of Autobiography, Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London, 1980).

³⁸ Jeff Todd Titon, 'The Life Story', *Journal of American Folklore*, 93 (1980), p. 291.

unique opportunity to explore the sixteenth century as contemporaries experienced it, shedding considerable new light on musical early modern England.

Chapter 1 therefore begins by reviewing Whythorne's own life story and comparing it with available external evidence. Whythorne's dedication to *discrezione* meant that most of the people he mentioned in his text remained anonymous. In a few cases it has become possible to identify certain characters, but most must remain frustratingly unknown. Chapter 1 will also examine the nature of autobiography, and ask what leads a person to write such a text, and what we can derive from it. If autobiography cannot provide unbiased fact, of what value is it?

Chapter 2 proceeds to mine the manuscript itself for further evidence of Whythorne's motives and methodology, and looks for more satisfying answers to the questions Osborn posed: 'When was it written? To whom was it addressed? Is it a first draft? Did Whythorne put it aside once he had written it, or did he go over it frequently in later years?' These questions and more Osborn came to believe were 'impossible to answer', but Whythorne has left us more clues than we might have thought, in the manuscript itself.³⁹ Indeed, a closer study may also offer some clues about his later life—the part of the story his unfinished manuscript does not tell.

Chapter 3 begins to place Whythorne within the broader context of the musical profession in early modern England. His observations on the structure of the profession have often been quoted by historians, but here Whythorne may prove a less reliable source than we have thought. Music was developing into a profession in this period, and Whythorne strongly approved of this development. The popular model of a vertical hierarchy is one he promoted himself, though I will argue that other primary sources cast doubt on it. Chapter 3 will propose a very different, 'spherical' model of

³⁹ Osborn, Introduction to Whythorne (original orthography), p. lxi.

the music profession, a model which emphasizes fluidity and the overlap of different branches of the profession. Chapter 3 then begins to explore this model by examining the ‘sphere’ of minstrels in early modern England, a group about whom Whythorne had much to say.

Chapter 4 pursues this exploration of the profession’s ‘spheres’ by setting Whythorne’s account alongside other contemporary evidence. It examines the roles and social status of various types of musicians, paying special attention to the ways different categories of musicians overlapped. Musicians generally fell into particular categories, but often moved fluidly between them, or could fit into several categories simultaneously.⁴⁰

Chapter 5 examines in more depth a group of musicians who have remained very shadowy figures: private music tutors. A dearth of any kind of extant sources has left such tutors almost invisible, but turning to the music written by musicians known to have been in household service at the time has proved a fruitful exercise. Placing this music into its original social context can shed new light on the secret meaning of songs that initially seem banal or generic. The tutor’s place in the household and society was liminal and precarious— full of special opportunities social, professional, and romantic, but also rife with danger.

Finally, Chapter 6 examines the world of early music printing in England, and Whythorne’s pioneering place in it. Publishing one’s music might offer social, professional and financial advantages, but, like tutoring, it also involved great risk. Music and language were Whythorne’s own self-fashioning tools that proved useful also in self-promotion, and the ‘self’ Whythorne fashioned was multi-faceted and unique. While his text certainly lends itself to a Greenblatt-style New Historicist

⁴⁰ The categories are: minstrels, waits, household musicians, members of the company of musicians, university-trained musicians, church musicians, and court musicians.

reading wherein the ‘self’ merely mirrors the wider culture, it is only when episodes of Whythorne’s life are removed from their context that such readings can be achieved. Chapter 6 argues that far from being a ‘ventriloquized omnivocal’⁴¹ cultural mime, Whythorne’s self is distinct and individual. Indeed, his pioneering publishing activity itself reveals that Whythorne constructed an identity well outside the realm of the generic.

In early modern England, musicians in the public realm met with both respect and suspicion. They were hard to place within the social hierarchy, mobile and rootless. And was music really a proper calling for an adult male? Many contemporaries felt that, in Woodfill’s words, ‘if musicians hunger, let them work at an honest and useful calling’.⁴² But that did not stop them from becoming essential members of society throughout the land. As such, musicians prove a particularly revealing subject for historical study: ‘the creators and transmitters of music [did] not usually live in isolation, or in discord with the world, but quite the opposite’.⁴³ Connected to society at all levels and in all places, they reflect the changing world around them in an intriguing microcosm. Taking Whythorne’s life and mind as a lens through which to examine his engagement with early modern society, we can shed new light on the experience of early modern musicians in England, and on the society in which they lived.

⁴¹ Bedford et al., *English Lives*, p. 19.

⁴² Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 3.

⁴³ Salmen, *Social Status*, p. 3.

Chapter 1

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND WHYTHORNE'S LIFE STORY

*No matter what sort he is, everyone who has to his credit ...
great achievements, if he cares for truth and goodness,
ought to write the story of his own life in his own hand.*
-Benvenuto Cellini

Thomas Whythorne's book has been called the first autobiography in English. But in order to assess whether this is true, one must first decide what 'autobiography' means. At perhaps the most basic definition, an autobiography is a life story (bio) written (graphy) by the subject himself (auto). But what exactly are the permutations? Must it be literary, or can it take other forms? Who should write one, and who should not?

In the nineteenth century it was expected that only the great figures of society—politicians, military leaders, famous writers—would feel driven to, and justified in, writing their life: Ulysses S. Grant's *Personal Memoirs*, Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, Voltaire's *Mémoires*. But over the past century it has become more acceptable for 'common' people to share their life stories with the world: Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* were the authors' first books. In their cases it was the telling of their stories that made them rich and famous, not vice versa.

All these books are quite universally classified as autobiography. But labelling a work as such is not always easy. Is Richard Wright's *Black Boy* an autobiography, or Hitler's *Mein Kampf*? Does Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel *Maus* fit into the category? Should we also include Whitman's

‘Song of Myself’, or Van Gogh’s self-portraits or Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*?

Drawing borders around the genre is as difficult as it is seemingly arbitrary.

Perhaps autobiography in the strict sense of an accurate and objective life-narrative, does not even exist. Indeed, a person’s inability to be objective and truthful about his own life has led many critics of late to classify autobiography as fiction. And, ‘having dissolved the self into a text and then the text into thin air, several critics...have announced the end of autobiography’ altogether.⁴⁴ Citing a person’s inability to be objective about his own experience, Elizabeth Heale argues that ‘through their possession of the pen, these autobiographical authors literally make themselves’.⁴⁵ Others have claimed that a person’s consciousness not only during an experience but in the years that pass afterwards is too difficult to pin down accurately, so that authors of autobiography inadvertently produce ‘proliferating roles and paradigms, amongst which the possibility of a single true identity becomes, increasingly and self-evidently, an illusion’.⁴⁶ In the very act of writing an autobiography—in selecting which stories to tell (or leave out) and what analysis to give—the author creates a self as he wishes to be remembered. There is also no guarantee that the person can remember accurately what happened: two siblings in a row will report very different versions of the same event to their mother, yet both are convinced they are telling the truth. How then, ‘is it at all possible to comprehend or define the self or to give anyone else a sense of it?’⁴⁷ A person’s memory and

⁴⁴ James Olney, ‘Autobiography and the Cultural Movement: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographical Introduction’, in James Olney (ed.), *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, 1980), p. 22. For more on this argument, see Michael Sprinker, ‘Fictions of the Self: The End of Autobiography’, in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, p. 321-342, and Barrett J. Mandel, ‘Full of Life Now’, in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, p. 54.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship in Renaissance Verse* (Basingstoke and New York, 2003), p. 3.

⁴⁶ Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship*, p. 8.

⁴⁷ James Olney, *Metaphors of Self, the Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton, 1972), p. 29.

subjectivity, some would argue, cannot accurately reveal the truth, therefore autobiography is fiction.

James Olney argues that readers of autobiography actually can get at the truth through figurative language: by using techniques employed in writing fiction (specifically metaphor), authors access the truth of themselves ‘sidewise’, the best way he believes possible.⁴⁸ And Barrett Mandel argues that the important thing is not a guarantee that the text is absolutely factual (who could ever guarantee that?), but that the author’s intention was to be honest. In writing autobiography, the author makes a kind of pact with the reader that he is telling a true story. Since the intention is truth, Mandel says, autobiography cannot be called fiction.⁴⁹ Can it then be classified as non-fiction? Or perhaps, in Louis Renza’s words, the genre lies somewhere in-between, ‘an indeterminate mixture of truth and fiction’.⁵⁰

But we do not turn to autobiography in search of true facts and data. Autobiography offers the special opportunity to step into the mind and world of the author, accessing their experience of the world around them. Jeff Titon put it aptly: ‘the life story tells who one thinks one is and how one thinks one came to be that way’.⁵¹ We turn to Whythorne’s autobiography not to know the facts of his life, but to know him.

Before moving on to explore the value of autobiography as a way to access individual experience, we are presented with the troubling task of defining proper ‘autobiography’. It appears there are almost as many definitions of the genre as there are critics who have studied it. Is autobiography, quite simply, ‘a self-portrait’?⁵² Or

⁴⁸ Olney, *Metaphors of Self*, p. 29.

⁴⁹ Mandel, ‘Full of Life Now’, p. 53.

⁵⁰ Louis A. Renza, ‘The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography’, in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, p. 268.

⁵¹ Jeff Todd Titon, ‘The Life Story’, *Journal of American Folklore* 93 (1980), p. 290.

⁵² William L. Howarth, ‘Some Principles of Autobiography’, in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, p. 85.

perhaps it is, even more vaguely, an attempt to make one's life *matter*.⁵³ In searching for a more specific definition we might turn to a dictionary, but we are then presented with the troubling task of defining the words that define 'autobiography': if it is 'the story of one's life written by himself', who exactly is 'himself', and what exactly is a 'story'?⁵⁴ Can it be the account of a few years of one's life, or must it cover many years? Must it be an artful narrative— must it be a narrative in form? Is it a reflection of a person's psyche rather than the actual world they lived in?⁵⁵ In the end, 'what is autobiography to one observer is history or philosophy, psychology or lyric poetry, sociology or metaphysics to another'.⁵⁶ But setting aside, for our purposes, the more open-ended definitions of autobiography, of the definitions that delve into specifics James Osborn's is the most satisfactory. It is especially important for our purposes because Osborn's claim that Whythorne's is the first autobiography in England hinges upon it. Osborn claims that a genuine autobiography has three minimum characteristics:

- 1) It should be the history of a life, told by the person himself, usually in the first person.
- 2) It should be written in conscious literary form of some kind, an orderly plan of narration, usually with a beginning, a middle, and (God permitting) an end.
- 3) It should be a sustained attempt to delineate a whole life up to the date of termination, albeit with selection of details.⁵⁷

Using these guidelines as a kind of touchstone, Osborn is then able to distinguish between various early modern narratives, labelling some texts as true autobiographies and others as only *autobiographical* (i.e., literature based on a person's experience but failing to meet the above criteria). According to Osborn, diaries are *autobiographical*

⁵³ Mandel, 'Full of Life Now', p. 64.

⁵⁴ Stephen Spender, 'Confessions and Autobiography', in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, p. 115. Hollywood autobiographies are often written by ghost writers, and some argue that these are not true autobiographies. Indeed, film star Neve Campbell admitted never having read her 'autobiography'.

⁵⁵ Olney, 'Autobiography', p. 11.

⁵⁶ Olney, 'Autobiography', p. 5.

⁵⁷ James Osborn, *The Beginnings of Autobiography in England* (Los Angeles, 1959), pp. 3-4.

because, produced as a day-to-day record, they fail to meet criterion number two. Memoirs are likewise autobiographical because they contain accounts of particular instances rather than an entire life, therefore failing to meet criterion number three. Osborn narrows the field logically and usefully, formally distinguishing literary forms we commonly intuit to be different. Osborn's definition is quite strict, excluding not only visual art, but also music, and indeed any written text that was not clearly intended to *be* an autobiography.⁵⁸

But Osborn was certainly not the first to address the subject of autobiography. The field of study bloomed suddenly in the 1960s and 70s, when critics of varied backgrounds took a sudden interest in the genre.⁵⁹ Even before that, Georges Gusdorf had published an essay, 'Conditions et limites de l'autobiographie', in a 1956 German volume that was later translated into English by James Olney in 1980.⁶⁰ But whether they read his article before or after writing their own work, most critics in the field have found that their ideas are 'both anticipated and confirmed in Gusdorf'.⁶¹ In the criticism of autobiography, the first scholarly text is still the most important. The single area where Gusdorf is no help, however, is in defining the genre itself: Gusdorf tends to focus on the culture (and individual) producing autobiographies, not on definition.

Who Was First?

⁵⁸ For a discussion of the definitions of autobiography as well as the individual, and for some alternate views, see Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-identity in England, 1591-1791* (Stanford, 1996), Chapter 1.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the reasons literary critics came to subject so late, and so suddenly, see Olney, 'Autobiography,' pp. 3-27.

⁶⁰ Georges Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography', trans. by James Olney, in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, pp. 28-48. The essay was originally published in French, in *Formen der Selbstdarstellung* (Berlin, 1956), pp. 105-123.

⁶¹ Olney, 'Autobiography', p. 10.

Michael Mascuch has rightly pointed out that, while on the one hand, identifying the first autobiography is pedantic and pointless, on the other hand such designations are useful for understanding autobiography and its cultural origins.⁶² We turn to the issue then only briefly, since other questions arising from Whythorne's text prove more intriguing. The text that critics most commonly cite as the first autobiography is probably St. Augustine's *Confessions*, selected from among its ancient contemporaries for its focus on the internal world of the author—and the author's whole life—rather than selected episodes or philosophies. But most critics agree that it was not until the Renaissance that autobiography as we now know it truly appeared, and it was only in the eighteenth century that the word 'autobiography' was invented.⁶³

Across Europe, autobiographies began to appear in the course of the sixteenth century. 'The soil of Italy was well prepared for this flowering...for the Renaissance had opened the minds of men to human personality and concerns, and to the writings of antiquity'.⁶⁴ The first (extant) autobiography to grow out of the Renaissance was Benvenuto Cellini's *Vita*, called 'the best known autobiography in world literature,' written around 1558-62 but not printed until 1730.⁶⁵ Cellini seemed to realize that he was involved in a new and valuable kind of literature and encouraged others to take up the task: 'No matter what sort he is, everyone who has to his credit...great achievements, if he cares for truth and goodness, ought to write the story of his own life in his own hand.'⁶⁶ (Cellini added that this should not be undertaken by anyone before the age of forty, establishing a pattern that has generally held to the present day.) Girolamo (Jerome) Cardano, ingenious mathematician, gambler and

⁶² Mascuch, *Individualist Self*, p. 19.

⁶³ Olney, 'Autobiography', p. 6, and Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship*, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Osborn, *Beginnings of Autobiography*, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Osborn, *Beginnings of Autobiography*, p. 10.

⁶⁶ Benvenuto Cellini, *Autobiography*, ed. George Bull (revised edn, London, 1998), p. 1.

notoriously bad father, followed with his *Vita* around 1575. Cardano outlined his motives clearly: ‘know thyself’ combined with a desire for eternal fame drove him to create such a work.⁶⁷ These two eminent Italians are often hailed as the creators of autobiography, but it is difficult to tell what influence, if any, they had on contemporary literature and on Whythorne specifically, as neither was published until much later.

The French had their pioneers of the genre as well. The war memorialist Blaise de Monluc’s *Commentaries* (1577), though self-serving, ‘set a standard of subjective reporting that influenced military and political memoir writers far beyond the borders of France,’ while eminent statesman Michel Montaigne’s *Essais* (1580) is one of the renowned classics of subjective, autobiographical writing.⁶⁸ In both Italy and France, the pioneers of autobiographical writing were great public figures, but in England the situation was quite different. Thomas Whythorne, our struggling professional musician, and the late medieval Margery Kempe, ‘one of the most exasperating neurotics in the annals of psychiatry’, are England’s unlikely pioneers of autobiography.⁶⁹

The Book of Margery Kempe, written about 1436, recounts the religious experiences of Margery Kempe, born in 1373. Since Kempe herself was illiterate, her story was purportedly dictated to a priest. Thomas Whythorne’s story, *A Book of Songs and Sonnets, with long discourses set with them of the child’s life, together with the young man’s life, and entering into the old man’s life*, was written much later (1576-1590s), and by his own hand.⁷⁰ Which text deserves the title ‘first autobiography in England’? Osborn argues that Kempe’s book is not ‘autobiography’

⁶⁷ Jerome Cardano, *The Book of My Life: De Vita Propia Liber*, trans. by Jean Stoner (New York, 1930), pp. xvii-xviii.

⁶⁸ Osborn, *Beginnings of Autobiography*, p. 11.

⁶⁹ Osborn, *Beginnings of Autobiography*, p. 7.

⁷⁰ For more on the dating of the manuscript, see Chapter 2.

because it was not written by herself, but ‘by two priests, and in their words’.

Actually it seems that one scribe was her son, and the second a priest, but Osborn’s point is valid.⁷¹ For both Kemp and the priest, the motivation was not to tell the story of her life but rather to recount her dealings with God (or rather, God’s dealings with her). Originally written in the third person, her story begins as one might expect of any hagiography, or indeed any religious diary: ‘Here begins a short study which offers sinful wretches great reassurance, consolation and comfort, and an understanding of the sublime and inexpressible mercy of our sovereign saviour Christ Jesus. May his name be worshipped and praised for ever...’⁷² While accepting with Osborn that it is certainly ‘the most autobiographical of biographies’, it seems more appropriate to classify Kemp’s *Book* as religious biography.⁷³

Though autobiography as a genre did not exist in early modern England, Whythorne’s book qualifies by most modern criteria. His narrative chronologically follows the events of his life, in an apparent effort to create a literary record of his life ‘from beginning until the very end’.⁷⁴ Osborn was right in labelling Whythorne’s autobiography as ‘the first’ in England. But does the book’s value hinge upon this claim—must Whythorne’s text be ‘the first’ in order to make it important? The personal insight Whythorne offers into the early modern world is invaluable not simply because he was first to fit inside our modern definition of a genre, but because his level of self-awareness is rare. He offers us an unusual chance to view the world of sixteenth-century England through his personal experience.

⁷¹ *The Book of Margery Kemp*, ed. Tony D. Triggs (Tunbridge Wells, 1995), pp. 11, 19.

⁷² *Book*, p. 17.

⁷³ Osborn, *Beginnings of Autobiography*, p. 7. The first editor of Margery Kemp’s *Book*, Donald Stauffer was also inclined to call it biography, but later editors such as Tony Triggs called it ‘the first autobiography to be written in English’ (*Book*, p. 7).

⁷⁴ Whythorne, p. xvi.

The Value of Autobiography

The question of what drove Thomas Whythorne to produce his autobiography will be discussed in Chapter 2. But the very fact that he produced such a text —whatever his motivations— tells us something significant about his world, because ‘autobiography is not possible in a cultural landscape where consciousness of self does not, properly speaking, exist’.⁷⁵ The emergence of the early modern ‘self’ is not a new subject of study, especially in literary criticism, but its relevance here is significant: Whythorne saw himself as an individual ‘worthy of a special interest’.⁷⁶ But Whythorne was not, as Cellini was, a great artist, nor was he, like Montaigne, a great philosopher, and he did not depict himself as such. Whythorne was a mediocre musician who spent most of his life in the service of members of the nobility. He was not famous, or even influential in his day. Unless he was completely oblivious to this fact, he must have found some other justification for telling his story. The practical justification came with the opportunity to publish all his songs together in one text (see Chapter 2), but the content of the text is deeply personal— more so than one would have expected in a simple collection of verses. His book could have been merely a collection of songs, anecdotes, and witticisms, without any autobiographical element. But Whythorne chose instead to explain, sometimes in great detail, the unhappy events of his life that had inspired his songs. What led him (consciously or not) to share such intimate stories of his failed romances, his bad decisions, and his bad luck?

Gusdorf’s seminal essay on autobiography delves into the subject deeply. If Whythorne is indeed the first autobiographer in England, his text marks the advent of

⁷⁵ Gusdorf, ‘Conditions and Limits’, p. 30.

⁷⁶ Gusdorf, ‘Conditions and Limits’, p. 29.

a 'spiritual revolution' inspired by the Renaissance and Reformation, wherein 'the artist and model coincide, the historian tackles himself as an object'. Gusdorf suggests that during this era 'humanity ... finds itself engaged in an autonomous adventure', and 'man knows himself a responsible agent'.⁷⁷ In this environment it became possible for a person to see himself as a unique and important part of humanity, 'worthy of men's remembrance even though in fact he is only a more or less obscure intellectual'.⁷⁸ That Cellini, Montaigne, Cardano, and Whythorne all produced autobiographies around the same time is therefore no surprise; the intellectual climate of the age stimulated such literary pursuits.

Whythorne's ability to see his life as a kind of artefact, and his desire to record his story as a piece of history, indicates that he participated in a culture that has 'emerged from the mythic framework of traditional teachings and must have entered into the perilous domain of history'. In other words, as an autobiographer, Whythorne 'knows that the present differs from the past [and] has become more aware of differences than of similarities; given the constant change, given the uncertainty of the events of men, he believes it a useful and valuable thing to fix his own image'.⁷⁹

Gusdorf again anticipated many later critics in his belief that a person writes an autobiography out of an acute consciousness of his own transient existence. Aware of his own insignificance, perhaps he writes so that he can be certain at least some evidence of his existence 'will not disappear like all things in this world'.⁸⁰ Or, perhaps the very act of writing one's life helps one to understand just what it was, and just what it meant. Osborn ties the individual's interest in his own life story (which

⁷⁷ Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits', pp. 31, 34.

⁷⁸ Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits', p. 31.

⁷⁹ Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits', p. 30.

⁸⁰ Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits', p. 30.

had become common by the eighteenth century) to the growing popularity of humanism, expressed in popular credos like Alexander Pope's 'the proper study of mankind is man'.⁸¹

Coming near the end of his life, perhaps the writer of autobiography seeks to satisfy his need for some kind of order in it all.⁸² In a sense, the author takes the reader through a narrative exploration of his or her life, at the end of which, if executed well, both the reader and the author emerge illuminated. Autobiography therefore provides, on one level, the facts (tied of course to the author's subjectivity) of a person's experience, but on another level, a window into the emotional or spiritual side of a person's existence. We are taken along on a journey in search of meaning, and by paying attention to what the author dwelled upon, and what the author left out, we achieve a kind of 'privileged access to [his] experience...that no other variety of writing can offer'. Autobiography renders a person's experience, even centuries ago, 'in a peculiarly direct and faithful way',⁸³ enabling the text to 'suddenly reveal a meaning so deep as to seem to be lodged in metaphysical...ground'.⁸⁴ The text serves almost as a 'magnifying glass, focusing and intensifying' a person's deeper experience of life, revealing 'the key to...all that he was'.⁸⁵ When carefully explored on all its levels, autobiography provides a window to the soul.

Is autobiography an assertion of uniqueness and individuality, or is it an assertion that the author's experience is universal— that others will relate to and learn from one person's experience? In other words, does an autobiography declare 'I am

⁸¹ Osborn, *Beginnings of Autobiography*, p. 10.

⁸² Olney, *Metaphors of Self*, pp. 5-8.

⁸³ Olney, 'Autobiography', p. 13.

⁸⁴ Mandel, 'Full of Life Now', p. 68.

⁸⁵ Olney, *Metaphors of Self*, p. 4. A very different interpretation of Renaissance texts is the New Historicist approach to literary self-fashioning and cultural mimetics. See Chapter 6.

alone in the universe’ or rather, ‘I am universal’? While some critics assert that a person’s awareness of individuality is the key to autobiography, others argue that it is a person’s perception that their experience is common to humanity that leads him to write his story.⁸⁶ I would suggest that it is not one or the other, but both. Indeed, it may be one that leads to the other. Perhaps autobiographers write, among many other motivations, to share the universal feeling of being alone.⁸⁷ To put it another way, C.S. Lewis famously said that ‘we read to know we’re not alone’; writers, perhaps, feel compelled to send that message rather than simply receive it.

Was Thomas Whythorne alone in the universe? His autobiography is scattered with expressions of isolation, loneliness, pride, confusion and pain. An intensely self-aware individual, Whythorne clearly believed he was unique. In writing his story (as well as commissioning portraits of himself), he showed his anxious belief that he was a special individual worth ‘recording’. Writing his autobiography also became an opportunity to soul-search, to assign meaning to his own experiences. Whythorne was thus rooted in a keen focus on his own individuality. But he also found great personal fulfilment in the belief that his troubling experiences were actually universal, and he appreciated his chance to share his experiences with others. Whythorne’s preface to his manuscript makes clear his expectation that his stories would prove illuminating for all readers:

Ye youthful imps, that like on shows to look,
As by strange sights, reports, or else in book,
What changes chance within the world so wide,
On which to whet your wits yourselves provide

⁸⁶ Examples include Georges Gusdorf, ‘Conditions and Limits’ (for the former argument), Elizabeth Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship* (for the latter).

⁸⁷ If I may take an example from modern musical theatre to elucidate, Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty’s song ‘Alone in the Universe’, features a character expressing his feeling of isolation and ‘uniqueness’. Meanwhile, another character in a seemingly different world begins to sing of his own loneliness. Their songs become a duet, and the two characters, worlds apart, can suddenly hear each other. It is by expressing feeling ‘alone in the universe’ that the characters realize their feelings are, in fact, universal.

For to behold how many play their parts,
 And guerdon give, as ye deem of deserts:
 Mark now, and I to you report will make
 Of that which I of late did undertake
 To endite and write in prose and eke in verse
Which followingly I will to you rehearse;
Wherein young youths are learned lessons large
By which they may, if like chance do them charge
That happed to me, the better know to deal
Therein, and so it may for their weal.
 All which to write I took not long ago,
 With long discourse of matters to and fro,
 What hap'ned to me, between those matters said,
 Which be not ill if they be wisely weighed.
 My words therewith, that I to light do send
 From beginning unto the very end,
 Together with the premises foretouched,
 Shall follow now as I the same have couched.⁸⁸

So what insights about authors of autobiography can we bring to our reading of Whythorne's life story? First, autobiographies are generally of two types: factual and personal. Factual autobiographies, popular among military heroes and other public figures, attempt to control the public perception of a life— they tend to be full of accounts of brave or important actions, lacking any introspective 'soul-searching'. These types of autobiographies read not as deep self-explorations but rather as the author's 'revenge on history',⁸⁹ 'in which the author tells the events of his career as objectively as if he were writing the life of some other person'.⁹⁰ It was this form of autobiography that prevailed until the nineteenth century. A second type of autobiography, wherein the author seems to be 'searching for his self through history',⁹¹ made intermittent appearances, however, and Whythorne's is among them. His text is truly remarkable in its self-analysis and introspective focus. Among the flurry of contemporary miscellany writers, who published collections of songs and sonnets similar to his, Whythorne alone turned so honestly inward, taking his own life

⁸⁸ Whythorne, p. xvi. My italics.

⁸⁹ Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits', p. 35.

⁹⁰ Osborn, *Beginnings of Autobiography*, p. 24.

⁹¹ Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits', p. 39.

as a subject ‘that I to light do send/ from beginning unto the very end’.⁹² Even though ‘personal revelation came late in English literature’ and ‘in Tudor writings one rarely finds such incidents,’⁹³ Whythorne shows not only that early modern man could so consciously seek out the meaning of his own existence, but also (perhaps more significantly) that he thought other people would care to read about it.

Another point we might remember in reading Whythorne’s text is that ‘one would hardly have sufficient motive to write an autobiography had not some radical change occurred in his life— conversion, entry into a new life, the operation of Grace’.⁹⁴ Though Whythorne’s text carefully skirts the edge of politics, he lived in a century of great upheaval, and his lifetime (1528-1596) spanned the reigns of nearly all the Tudor monarchs. Whythorne’s career in the service of the nobility placed him very close to some monumental turns on the political wheel of fortune, as we shall see. Perhaps it was his dealings with radical change, ‘fickle fortune’, and ‘flickering fame’ that drove him to write his story— to better digest the changes going on around him, to construct an order in it all. He also seems to have possessed a great desire to make his mark on the world and to advance socially, and he had witnessed first-hand that fortune was just as fickle for those at the top.

In addition to being deeply personal at times, Whythorne’s text also reveals a commitment to *discrezione*, which proves frustrating for the historian. Whythorne carefully avoids naming any of his employers, nor does he offer specific information about locations or even dates. While some key individuals can be identified, and dating events is relatively straightforward, much must remain hidden behind the veil of time. Without further ado, we turn to Whythorne’s story itself, which he addressed

⁹² Whythorne, p. xvi.

⁹³ Osborn, Introduction to Whythorne, p. xiii.

⁹⁴ Jean Starobinski, ‘The Style of Autobiography’, in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, p. 78.

to a mysterious ‘good friend’, leading the reader to expect a narrative that is both affable and intimate. He does not disappoint.

The Story of Thomas Whythorne

A.L. Rowse has offered a model study of autobiography, and, like him, I should make it clear that my purpose here is not to simply repeat Whythorne’s story but to place it in context, check it against other sources, and ‘make the picture as complete as possible’.⁹⁵

In the decades surrounding Thomas Whythorne’s birth in 1528 at Ilminster, in Somerset, Martin Luther was excommunicated, Magellan’s ships successfully circumnavigated the globe, and Adrian Willaert circumnavigated the circle of fifths.⁹⁶ Rome was sacked and Pope Clement VII was imprisoned; Castiglione wrote *The Courtier*; the once unassailable Medici family was expelled from Florence. The Incan civilization was discovered and destroyed, Machiavelli’s *The Prince* was published, and Jacques Cartier claimed Canada for France. Henry VIII declared himself head of the church in England, and Thomas More was executed. His was a time of great upheaval, and though young Whythorne may not have had any personal connection to these events as a child, the echo of events surrounding his birth shaped his private world for a lifetime.

⁹⁵ A. L. Rowse, *Simon Forman, Sex and Society in Shakespeare’s Age* (London, 1974), p. 26.

⁹⁶ In the same spirit of adventure and exploration as overseas adventurers, Willaert composed the first song exploring the entire tonal space of the circle of fifths. See Edward E. Lowinsky, ‘Adrian Willaert’s Chromatic “Duo” Re-examined’, *Tijdschrift der Vereeniging voor Noord-Nederlands Muziekgeschiedenis*, D. 18de, 1ste Stuk (1956), p. 22.



Figure 1.1: *St. Mary, Ilminster, Whythorne's childhood church*

Thomas' father John Whythorne came from a 'well-established' Ilminster family and Joane, his mother, was the daughter and heir of William Cabbot (also of Ilminster).⁹⁷ John Whythorne seems to have been a relatively prominent landholder in the county, and was active in local business transactions, especially buying land.⁹⁸ So far as records can show, neither John nor his wife ever moved away from Ilminster, nor had any member of the Whythorne family for at least three generations. In a brief survey of his childhood, Whythorne describes his infancy as one given to 'the wanton and idle life', and though one might think this natural of small children, Whythorne believed otherwise.⁹⁹ Eventually he was sent to school 'every day for the most part' where he was kept from idleness, thus developing no 'incurable vices'.

⁹⁷ British Library, MS Harley 1096, f.13, printed in Robert Cooke, *Visitation of London, 1568, with additional pedigrees 1569-90*, ed. H. Stanford London and Sophia Rawlins (London, 1963), p. 88. Osborn calls the family 'well-established', however Thomas Whythorne may have had more of a hand in creating the appearance of a long-established family than at first seems, as we will see. His mother's name, Cabot, was unusual, but there was presumably no connection to the early American explorers, John and Sebastian Cabot.

⁹⁸ Whythorne (original orthography), p. 12, n.1. Osborn here summarizes the instances John Whythorne appears in the records.

⁹⁹ Whythorne, p. 2. Whythorne discussed his own theories on 'the general bringing-up of children': first, a child's complexion should be considered (for this will reveal which humours are dominant in the child), along with the child's 'manners and dispositions' to better predict likely problems. Above all, parents should avoid 'overmuch cherishing, cockering and suffering' because this leads 'many and most times to great and incurable vices', and instead 'keep them always well occupied'.

There he learned ‘to read, to write, and also to sing music’.¹⁰⁰ Much of sixteenth-century Ilminster remains, including the town’s grammar school and the church where Whythorne was baptized. But around 1538, the young Thomas was sent away to Oxford, and he never returned to Ilminster. The chantry priests at St. Mary were removed about the same time Whythorne left Ilminster, so it is possible that one or more of the priests had administered the school Whythorne attended, necessitating his being sent elsewhere for an education.¹⁰¹

Whythorne was sent to live with his uncle, a priest living near Oxford,¹⁰² by whom his subsequent education at Magdalen School, Oxford, was partly funded. He seems to have benefited very little from his father’s holdings, and in fact offers little indication that he had any contact at all with his family after he left home.¹⁰³ It must have been clear from the start that he would not inherit much from his parents, for his uncle encouraged him to ‘ply your learning so as you may live thereby hereafter,’ reminding Thomas that his father was ‘not able to keep you and the rest of his children in such a sort as they may live idly and at ease’.¹⁰⁴ Whythorne was to work for a living, and if he did eventually inherit something from his parents later in life, it

¹⁰⁰ Whythorne, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰¹ The grammar school now standing was founded in 1549, and was thus too late for Whythorne, who would have left home for Oxford c. 1538. It was the house of one of the priests that became the town’s designated grammar school.

¹⁰² No Whythornes or Cabbots (mother’s maiden name) have been found in any visitation database which match the death date of Whythorne’s uncle.

¹⁰³ Whythorne seems to have been a younger son, but by 1569 he was listed as the only son of John and Joane in the London Visitation (Cooke, *Visitation*, p. 88.) Whythorne mentioned his family only three other times in the manuscript: twice in reference in regards to his brother-in-law bringing news of his projected wedding to his sisters (pp. 152,156), and once in reference to an inheritance he expected from his mother (p. 151). She was presumably a widow at the time. There is no indication that he received the inheritance.

¹⁰⁴ Whythorne, p. 5. The visitation of London (see above) shows that at this date John Whythorne had only three children living (Thomas and two daughters); there may have been others who died in childhood. One might speculate that there had once been another ‘John’ (brother to Thomas), following the family name tradition, who would have been the fourth-generation ‘John’.

was not much; near the end of his life, Thomas Whythorne was assessed for the subsidy on just three pounds.¹⁰⁵

Whythorne lived with his uncle for seven years— years that must have awakened him to the religious changes in the country, particularly as he was living with a priest. In these years (c.1538-1545), England saw the dissolution of the monasteries, including the violent end of Glastonbury Abbey, not far from Whythorne's hometown. His uncle's experiences and opinions must have influenced Whythorne's own religious beliefs: whether eagerly Protestant, steadfastly Catholic, or somewhere in-between, his uncle must have been deeply affected by the changes happening around them. The uncle's identity, however, remains frustratingly unknown.

At Magdalen School, Whythorne found that he was 'most given to the love of music before any other science'.¹⁰⁶ And for a student of music, no other school could offer so much: Magdalen School was one of the best music schools of the day.¹⁰⁷ Whythorne was listed among the Demies of the college in 1544, but any other record of his schooling comes from his own words. He spent six years at the music school, then one at the grammar school where he focused on 'the knowledge in the Latin tongue'.¹⁰⁸ But when his uncle died in c.1545, Whythorne chose to 'leave and forsake Oxford' claiming that he was 'desirous to see the world abroad'.¹⁰⁹ While admittedly his motivation may truly have been that simple, it is certainly possible that, at age sixteen, Whythorne's voice was dropping and his singing scholarship was no

¹⁰⁵ '1582 London Subsidy Roll: Candlewick Ward', *Two Tudor subsidy rolls for the city of London: 1541 and 1582* (London, 1993), pp. 176-180. It is not clear whether Whythorne inherited anything from his parents (refer to footnotes above).

¹⁰⁶ Whythorne, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ See Nicholas Orme, *Education in Early Tudor England: Magdalen College Oxford and Its School* (Oxford, 1998). For more on music in schools and colleges, see Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁸ Whythorne, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ Whythorne, p. 5. Presumably he could have stayed at the college as a Demy; he also mentions that he had inherited money and household goods (though not much) from his uncle.

longer an option. That year he was placed ‘by the mean of a friend...with Mr. John Heywood to be both his servant and scholar: for he [Heywood] was not only very well skilled in music and playing the virginals, but also such an English poet as the like...was not as then seen in England...since Chaucer’s time’.¹¹⁰ Whythorne lived with Heywood for over three years, which proved to have a profound effect on the rest of Whythorne’s life.

Entering John Heywood’s world exposed Whythorne to new kinds of music, theatre, literature, and perhaps even the court, but did not isolate Whythorne from the persistent religious conflict around him. Heywood, a musician in Henry VIII’s court, was a devout Catholic.¹¹¹ He strongly opposed Protestantism to the end of his life—and his religious convictions were surely reinforced by his mentor, Sir Thomas More. More and Heywood apparently had an established relationship even before More became a privy councillor, and it may have been that Heywood’s connection to the court was More’s doing.¹¹² The relationship grew even stronger when Heywood married More’s niece, Joan Rastell, c.1523, and the family was prosperous. But when Henry severed ties with Rome, the family’s prosperity was deeply shaken. In 1535, More was executed, and the next year, Heywood’s father-in-law (More’s brother-in-law) was imprisoned as a Protestant heretic. Heywood’s Catholic brother-in-law, William Rastell (who had printed two of Heywood’s plays) found it expedient to stop printing. It must have been a time of great anxiety for Heywood, who also saw the birth of his second son, Jasper, amid the unrest.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Whythorne, p. 6.

¹¹¹ Peter Happé has suggested that Heywood’s social and economic prosperity ‘could hardly have resulted solely from his musical duties, whatever they may have comprised’, but a clear indication of where his wealth came from has not yet been found. See Peter Happé, ‘Heywood, John’, ODNB.

¹¹² Happé, ‘Heywood, John’, ODNB.

¹¹³ *The Plays of John Heywood*, ed. Richard Axton and Peter Happé (Cambridge, 1991), p. 6.

But Heywood weathered the storm very well indeed. He acquired more land and property, higher status, and became a member of the Mercers' Company.¹¹⁴ His success has been attributed to his remarkably inventive wit and gift of humour. He humorously addressed serious issues in his plays at court (e.g., Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn), and dared joke about dangerous subjects, revealing great skill in playing the fool. He did not remain silent about the religious changes that troubled him (as his plays reveal) but his jollity and ability to seem harmless allowed him to succeed at court, remaining close to the royal family. Princess Mary was especially fond of him.¹¹⁵

But all this may well have made him an easy target when scapegoats were needed for the Prebendaries' Plot in 1543, when conservative elements within Thomas Cranmer's cathedral establishment conspired with allies at court to provide evidence of the archbishop's encouragement of heresy in Kent.¹¹⁶ After Henry VIII 'saved' Archbishop Cranmer from the fall out, it was understood that servants and go-betweens would suffer for the plot, not the plotters themselves.¹¹⁷ Heywood was one of these unfortunates. He was found guilty on 15 February 1544 at Westminster, and led to the scaffold on 7 March. In the event, he was not executed. Did he escape hanging 'with his mirth', or had Princess Mary intervened? The records are inconclusive, but by 26 June Heywood was pardoned, and on 6 July he recanted at Paul's Cross.¹¹⁸ The next year, after Heywood had escaped the fate of his mentor and was beginning to live quietly, Thomas Whythorne came to work for him. Thanks

¹¹⁴ Happé, 'Heywood, John', ODNB.

¹¹⁵ *The Proverbs of John Heywood*, ed. Julian Sharman (London, 1874), p. xlv; Happé, 'Heywood, John', ODNB. Sharman suggests that Heywood may have been among the King's jesters, judging by the amount of gifts and pensions awarded him.

¹¹⁶ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer, A Life* (New Haven, 1996), pp. 320-322; Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), Chapter 6. See also Peter Marshall, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 163, 188.

¹¹⁷ MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, p. 321.

¹¹⁸ *Plays of John Heywood*, p. 7; *Proverbs*, p. xlii.

to Whythorne's account, we know that Heywood made amends by writing a play for Cranmer called *The Parts of Man* (which has not survived except for the few lines Whythorne transcribed in his manuscript), in 'the end whereof he likeneneth...the circumstance thereof to the universal estate of Christ's Church'.¹¹⁹ But under the surface all was not well: William Rastell, Heywood's brother-in-law and printer of his plays, went into exile. Whatever the religious opinions Whythorne had learned from his uncle, knowledge of Heywood's experiences and attitudes could have affected him deeply. Then again, perhaps Heywood, an excellent jester, kept the darker parts of his life from his pupils, projecting only mirth and joy. Whythorne's account of his time with Heywood is pleasant and almost nostalgic— and even in mentioning *The Parts of Man*, Whythorne never hinted at conflict or strife, themes that recurred often as his story moved on.

Heywood taught Whythorne to play the virginals and the lute, and instilled in him a love of music, poetry, and literature that shaped his future profoundly. Part of Whythorne's duty as 'servant and scholar' to Heywood was to 'write out for him' all his works before they were published.¹²⁰ Not only did Whythorne gain knowledge of the printing world as well as the world of courtiers and musicians, but the texts that he spent a great deal of time copying clearly affected his own taste in literature as well as his world-view. He copied *The Parts of Man* as well as Heywood's seminal *Dialogue Containing the Number in Effect of All the Proverbs in the English Tongue*, and he was also instructed to copy the poems of Wyatt and Surrey several years before they were published.

The parts of man and proverbs both play a prominent role in Whythorne's text. His narrative, as the title suggests, is framed around the 'parts' of his own life: *A*

¹¹⁹ Whythorne, p. 6. An alternative interpretation is that it was a gesture of magnanimity on Cranmer's part to commission a play from Heywood (MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, p. 321).

¹²⁰ Whythorne, p. 6.

Book of Songs and Sonnets, with long discourses set with them of the child's life, together with the young man's life, and entering into the old man's life. The idea seems to have been popular: Jacques' speech in *As You Like It* is probably the most familiar example of the concept.¹²¹ But proverbs, too, clearly interested Whythorne throughout his life. Not only was he 'equipped with a mind that collected proverbs like lint',¹²² something he must have learned from Heywood, but he also showed a keen interest in applying proverbs to his own life. This was precisely Heywood's practice in his *Dialogue Containing....All the Proverbs in the English Tongue*, wherein characters carry on a lengthy and disjointed conversation, spouting every English proverb in existence along the way.¹²³ The collection became 'the most popular of all popular books'.¹²⁴ Years later, Whythorne clearly still enjoyed spouting proverbs profusely, as his manuscript contains countless proverbs and pithy phrases, many of which are the first recorded usage.¹²⁵ Similarities between Heywood's and Whythorne's texts, and their practice of stringing proverbs together in discussion of a single event, is clear.

Heywood's household was not a bad place for an aspiring musician/versifier to get his start. In fact, it may well have been ideal. Whythorne's master was

¹²¹ The number of 'ages of man' varied with authors, the most common number being seven. Whythorne's model had just three ages, and it is likely that his model was indeed Heywood's *Parts of Man*. No copy of the play exists except for the few lines Whythorne quotes. On the parts or ages of man, see Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1540-1640* (Oxford, 1996), Chapter 1.

¹²² Norman Jones, *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age, England in the 1560s* (Oxford, 1993), p. 186.

¹²³ The most recent printed version of this text is in *The Proverbs of John Heywood*, ed. Julian Sharman (London, 1874). Heywood recorded hundreds of proverbs, many still popular today, including look before you leap, strike while the iron is hot, haste makes waste, better late than never, not all that glitters is gold, cannot see the wood for the trees, blind leading the blind, and the more the merrier.

¹²⁴ *Proverbs*, p. xv. 'Skelton had set the fashion for coarse rhymes; Heywood made coarse rhymes fashionable' (p. xiv).

¹²⁵ For example, 'goodnight John Lyne', 'keep your breath to cool your pottage', and 'Joan is as good as my lady'. Mark Eccles performed the useful task of noting all words, phrases, and proverbs in Whythorne that antedate OED, as well as those which are not in OED at all. See Mark Eccles, 'Words and Proverbs from Thomas Whythorne', *Notes and Queries*, 21, 11 (November, 1974), pp. 405-407. Of course, Eccles based his analysis on Osborn's dating the manuscript to 1576, which is questionable (see Chapter 2).

remarkably influential in the world of early modern playwrights and poets; he has been called ‘the originator, nay, the inventor of our native drama’.¹²⁶ His effect on Whythorne’s future was profound. His influence on Whythorne’s religious beliefs is however unclear, and Whythorne was to encounter many other religious views over the course of his career.

Upon leaving the service of John Heywood, Whythorne was determined to ‘be mine own man’ as a master of music. He took a chamber in London, but soon found that life on his own was harder than he had anticipated. Not only did he struggle to ‘have a care of mine own credit and estimation’, he also worried that he might not be able to ‘keep myself without penury and need’. The reality of being without the guidance and protection of his master was so worrisome that Whythorne was ‘almost at my wits’ end’.¹²⁷ To boost his confidence, he behaved as any proper young gentleman should: he sent himself to dancing and fencing school, and learned to play the most fashionable new instrument, the gittern. He also commissioned a painting. It depicted Terpsichore, goddess of music, and the result was so pleasing that he soon commissioned another painting— of himself. The element of public display must have played into his actions: such paintings declared him a music master as well as his own master. But Whythorne would continue to have his portrait painted at regular intervals for the rest of his life, and they were inspired, he said, by more than vanity. They enabled him to *see* time, to reflect on his life, and to leave something behind:

But now, peradventure, you would say that they may see themselves when they will in a looking-glass. To the which I do say that the glass showeth but the disposition of the face for the time present, and not as it was in time past... And also the perfection of the face that is seen in a glass doth remain in the memory of the beholder little longer than he is beholding of the same. For soon as he looketh off from the glass he forgetteth the disposition and grace of his face. Wherefore, as is said before, that divers do cause their counterfeits to

¹²⁶ *Proverbs*, p. xxxii.

¹²⁷ Whythorne, p. 10.

be made, to see how time doth alter them from time to time; so thereby they may consider with themselves how they ought to alter their conditions, and to pray to God that, as they do draw towards their long home and end in this world, so they may be the more ready to die in such sort as becometh true Christians.¹²⁸

These motivations are intriguing. They would at first seem to be highly unusual, since in most cases, Tudor portraits were made of the rich, or powerful, or perhaps, in the case of portrait miniatures, of lovers. Whythorne's portrait was, he says, for no one but himself, and for no other reason than to aid his own meditation. Some have rejected these declarations, contending that the portraits were only 'in the interest of gentrification'. And indeed the use of portraiture to announce 'social arrival' was common in his time.¹²⁹ Elizabeth Heale explored a different possibility: Whythorne was interested not in seeing himself age but in seeing how he appeared to others—to see how he *seemed*.¹³⁰ If we believe his own words, it is clear his portraits were prompted by all these motivations—self-analysis, gentrification, and appearances. His penchant for self-analysis is overtly expressed in his text and his interest in gentrification is clear enough (see Chapter 6). And, though Heale does not note it, there is considerable evidence that Whythorne was in fact very curious about *seeming*—regarding himself and others. Whythorne disdains those who practise 'dissimulation...who will rather seem to be, than to be indeed'.¹³¹ At one point he focuses on the word specifically, discussing how contemporary poets use it ('for seeming to do a thing is rather not to do the thing than to do it'),¹³² and even in discussing his portraits he touches in the subject: 'Also [a mirror] showeth the face in the contrary way, that is to say, that which seemeth to be the right side of the face is

¹²⁸ Whythorne, p. 116.

¹²⁹ Ronald Bedford, et al., *Early Modern English Lives: Autobiography and Self-Representation 1500-1660* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 168; Robert Tittler, 'Portraiture, Politics, and Society', in Robert Tittler and Norman Jones (eds), *A Companion to Tudor Britain* (Oxford, 2004), p. 458.

¹³⁰ Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship*, p. 51.

¹³¹ Whythorne, p. 52.

¹³² Whythorne, p. 35.

the left side indeed; and so likewise that which seemeth to be the left side is the right'.¹³³ Mirrors distort true appearances, but portraits show how one truly seems.

Whythorne's portraits announced his social status, froze him in time, revealed him through others' eyes, captured his own aging, and inspired him to move closer to God. Marguerite Tassi posited that Whythorne's portraits served as 'personal badges, the one fashioning him as an accomplished musical and literary artist, the other reflecting his inward self'.¹³⁴ These 'badges' continued to appear throughout his life. Only one is known to survive, now at Yale University. John Bennel claims to have identified another portrait, a miniature, but the claim is highly speculative.¹³⁵

Whythorne never mentioned having a miniature made— but it is just possible that one was made for a woman, since in the year the miniature was painted (1569) Whythorne was entangled in the problematic suit of a woman who eventually rejected him. But upon closer inspection this seems unlikely to be a portrait of Whythorne. As it happens, 1569 was also the year that the only extant portrait of Whythorne was painted, and a comparison of the two reveals notable differences. Either Whythorne's appearance was much altered for the miniature (perhaps to make him look years younger), or these portraits are not of the same man.

¹³³ Whythorne, p. 116.

¹³⁴ Marguerite Tassi, *The Scandal of Images* (Cranbury, NJ, 2005), pp. 103-104. Tassi argues that this attitude was characteristic of an 'Elizabethan mindset' that was reflected in the theatre.

¹³⁵ John Bennel, 'Whithorne, Thomas (c.1528-1596)', ODNB. Bennel's evidence is a phrase from Whythorne's text: 'the spheres be the walls of music'. Whythorne is paraphrasing Chaucer (Whythorne, p. 169). Bennel has taken the spherical shapes on the miniature to be the 'walls of music'. Additionally 'SO. CHE. IO. SONO. INTESO' ('I know that I am in harmony') relates to music.



Figure 1.2: *Portrait of Thomas Whythorne and portrait of an unknown man*, both 1569. Note especially the eyebrows, hairline, and jaw line.¹³⁶

Whether by connection to Heywood, his own gentrification, or other means, it was not long before Whythorne found a position as a tutor in a great household. This was the first of over ten such posts held in his life. Whythorne's manuscript takes the reader through various household posts as tutor and sometimes serving-man, and most narratives dwell at length on his failed romances. His affections seemed unfortunately always to fall upon a woman who could not reciprocate, while he often had to dodge the affections of women he believed to be unsuitable. Whythorne tended to pursue his mistresses, while he found himself pursued by serving women. He lived in a socially grey area, between the two worlds of master and servant, which created a tension he could never quite resolve.¹³⁷

Whythorne was first employed by a couple who lived in the country, and during his stay seems to have become keenly aware of the social world of the gentry, where 'dissemblers and flatterers' were skilled enough to 'deceive even those that be

¹³⁶ The portrait is currently at Yale University, reproduced in Whythorne, p. ii; miniature reproduced in Roy Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature* (London, 1984), p. 59.

¹³⁷ See Chapter 5.

accounted wise and of great estates'.¹³⁸ He also experienced his first brush with romance. He found a love-note tucked into the strings of his gittern ('the which instrument ... I then used to play on very often, yea, and almost every hour of the day'), which led him to wonder 'whether it were done of a woman of a purpose for love, or in mockage by some man'.¹³⁹ So he wrote a reply on the back of the note, essentially demanding that the anonymous writer reveal him or herself. Much to his distress, he found that the author of the love-note was neither man nor woman but a young girl who worked in the household. The master and mistress of the house learned of the matter, 'and finding that she was so loving without provoking or enticing thereunto, she was discharged out of that house and service'. Whythorne believed that, had he 'then any mind of marriage, it was like that then I might have been sped of a wife'. Perhaps he looked back on the possibility with a sense of irony, for he did not marry until quite late in life, and only after many vexing encounters with women.¹⁴⁰

It was during this time that Whythorne realized to what extent his natural 'bashfulness towards women, and chiefly in the affairs of wooing of them', affected him. He found that 'if it came to making of love by word, sign or deed, especially in deed ... I had no more face to do that than had a sheep'.¹⁴¹ Then, to add to feelings of helplessness, he was visited by 'a worshipful knight, and well (yea too well) known to many, who is called Sir John Ague'. He was so sick that he believed he 'could never recover the same again'.¹⁴² Perhaps it was during this period that Whythorne grew

¹³⁸ Whythorne, p. 20.

¹³⁹ Whythorne, p. 22.

¹⁴⁰ Whythorne, p. 23.

¹⁴¹ Whythorne, p. 24.

¹⁴² Whythorne, p. 26.

more dedicated to writing. It became an outlet for his suffering, and he ‘would wreak mine anger altogether with pen and ink upon paper’.¹⁴³

After suffering for over a year, Whythorne had declined both in health and in wealth (both were consumed by ‘Sir John’). He was then offered a position by ‘a gentlewoman (who was a widow) that was desirous to have me to be both her servant and also her schoolmaster ... to whom I said that to be a schoolmaster I did not mislike; but to be a serving-creature or servingman, it was so like the life of a water-spaniel, that must be at commandment to fetch or bring here, or carry there, with all kind of drudgery that I could not like of that life’. But considering his financial situation, Whythorne forced his ‘will to yield to reason’ and took the post.¹⁴⁴ Thus he embarked on a paradoxical career whereby, as a music-teacher-cum-servingman, he was often both servant and master to his betters. As for the widow, Whythorne was proud to serve such as her:

To show you what manner a mistress and scholar I had, I assure you she was such a one as no young man could serve a better, to break and train him up to the fashions of the world. Although I could better skill than she in music and teaching to play on musical instruments, yet could she better skill than I to judge of the natural disposition and inclination of scholars... Also, her joy was to have men to be in love with her...and how she could fetch them in, and then how she could with a frown make them look pale, and how with a merry look she could make them to joy again.¹⁴⁵

Early on, Whythorne understood what she was: a mistress who desired all her serving men to love her. Still, it seems that he could not escape believing that he was different from the rest—that she flirted with the rest, but did, in fact, love him. Of all the events in Whythorne’s life, his rocky romance with the ‘Suds-of Soap Widow’ (as Osborn calls her) must have been one of the most affecting. Perhaps because it was his first experience of being in love, and perhaps also because it was such a

¹⁴³ Whythorne, p. 27.

¹⁴⁴ Whythorne, p. 28.

¹⁴⁵ Whythorne, p. 29.

perplexing experience, Whythorne dwelled on the subject at length, and with great detail. He expressed frustration and utter bafflement at the ways of women, but he also conveys a sense of mirth, as if, looking back, he was able to laugh at the situation. Whythorne's writing is personal and revealing—he did not seek to show himself as the victimized hero, nor did he moralistically paint himself as the foolish youth. He merely told what happened to him, honestly and amusedly.

Their long drawn-out affair, further explored in Chapter 4, was eventually ended by the tumultuous political world around them: 'fortune changed my mistress' estate from high to low'.¹⁴⁶ Mary's accession to the throne in 1553 had seemingly ruined the anonymous widow. Whythorne's fate was affected, too, for he was now out of a job. This might have 'the more have grieved me', he says, having just turned down a position in the household of Lady Dudley, Duchess of Northumberland, 'yet inasmuch as the said noblewoman and her lord and husband had worse fall' his luck had run out either way.¹⁴⁷ Her fall was 'worse' indeed: John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, having failed to place Jane Grey on the throne, was executed. This near-employment marks the beginning of Whythorne's seeming lifetime connection with the Dudley family.

It is interesting to speculate about Whythorne's religious leanings at this point. For with Mary on the throne, his old master John Heywood was at the height of his success at court. He gave an oration at her coronation and wrote a laudatory ballad upon her marriage to Philip of Spain, and was granted increased pensions as well as property.¹⁴⁸ But Whythorne's most recent mistress had been ruined by Mary's accession. He had spent years in service to both Catholic and Protestant without

¹⁴⁶ Whythorne, pp. 44, 47-48.

¹⁴⁷ Whythorne, pp. 47-48.

¹⁴⁸ Hap  , 'Heywood, John', ODNB.

indicating any mental or spiritual discomfort— nor truly, indicating his own beliefs. This was a pattern he would maintain.

When Mary came to power Whythorne left the country. But again we are offered no real clues as to his true motives or beliefs. He said he decided ‘to spend a time in foreign and strange countries, the better to digest all the changes that hitherto I had felt and tasted’, as well as learn languages and investigate the state of music abroad. His destination may have offered us clues of his personal religious conviction, since living in Protestant Frankfurt or Geneva would mean something quite different from living in Catholic-friendly Venice.¹⁴⁹ But Whythorne never stayed in any one place very long; his was a true grand tour. He visited nearly forty cities and towns in the Low Countries, Germany, Italy, and France, narrowly escaping dangers of all sorts. He visited Frankfurt as well as Venice and never remarked upon religion in any case; at least not in this manuscript. Since an account of his travels ‘were too long to show and set down in this place’, Whythorne wrote an entirely separate account of his nearly two years abroad, which sadly has not survived.¹⁵⁰ In the present narrative, then, Whythorne focused not on his travel experiences but on the sonnets he wrote abroad. They were generally inspired by his encounters with vice, which seemed to afflict most travellers: ‘because I would not drink and carouse and all out, when they would have had me as they did, I was in some danger therefore’.¹⁵¹ It is important to note that Whythorne depicted himself not as a picture of perfect virtue (‘I must confess that I am not made of stocks or stones, but even of

¹⁴⁹ Anne Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations, c. 1535-1585* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 125-144; Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1979), p. 27. There were of course Protestant exiles in Italy, too, with significant political power. See Kenneth Bartlett, ‘The English Exile Community in Italy and the Political Opposition to Queen Mary I’, *Albion*, 13, 3 (Autumn 1981), pp. 223-241.

¹⁵⁰ Whythorne, p. 49. See Appendix 2 for a full list of Whythorne’s destinations.

¹⁵¹ Whythorne, p. 50.

the self-same metal that other men be made of”), but as a man striving to be so.¹⁵² In essence, throughout the text Whythorne tried hard to show that he was trying hard.

Upon returning to England, his love of country was reborn:

My course I took by surging seas into Britain again,
Whose temperate air, and fertile soil, with all things else there bred,
The like in no one country is, where I have travelled.¹⁵³

He soon found employment as tutor to the daughter of a lawyer, and it was not long before he decided the young gentlewoman was ‘worthy to be looked on and sued to for marriage’. Reminding himself that ‘faint heart never got fair lady’, Whythorne prepared to give ‘the assault’ all of his effort. Whenever he found himself feeling ‘marvellously daunted and abated in this enterprise, because that my ability and wealth was so small in comparison of hers’, he simply reminded himself of ‘a great many that I did know had achieved as great enterprises’, and carried on.¹⁵⁴

He was careful to dress appropriately: ‘I ... furnished myself with convenient apparel and jewels so well as I could (with the glorious show of the which, among other things, a young maiden must be wooed)’. In lieu of expensive gifts, Whythorne offered his lady music, virtue, honesty, and ‘all other kinds of favours, ceremonies, and dutifulness, appertaining to a lover’s services’. Whythorne found it easy to ignore his lady’s multiple rejections after reminding himself that it was ‘the property of some women to refuse that which is offered them’. Eventually he played hard-to-get himself, since he had once been told that women tend to ‘take hold of that which is going from them’,¹⁵⁵ and the tactic worked. ‘But woe was me!’ Whythorne continues, ‘this love of ours was detected and known to divers in the house’, including the father. And as the father was a lawyer, ‘I had the less hope to have

¹⁵² Whythorne, p. 25. For more on this, see Chapter 6.

¹⁵³ Whythorne, p. 57.

¹⁵⁴ Whythorne, p. 63.

¹⁵⁵ Whythorne, pp. 63, 64, 65.

gotten his good will in this enterprise, if I had sued unto him for it. And how should I have brought his good will on my side? For as the livings of those of my profession be gotten of them that do delight in concord, so do the lawyers live chiefly by they who do delight in discord'. To further put Whythorne's 'nose out of joint', the father brought in a suitor 'of great living' to marry his daughter instead.¹⁵⁶ Thus were his chances of marriage foiled again, but, reminding himself of misogynistic proverbs as well as the story of a man who 'in his days had been a suitor to above twenty women, and the forgoing of them all did not so much grieve and vex him as did the present possessing of her, whom he then had', Whythorne soothed his wounds and went his way.¹⁵⁷

He had no sooner left the service of the lawyer than he found a place in another household, this time 'for profit and not for love'.¹⁵⁸ Though he does not name his new master, it was almost certainly Ambrose Dudley, brother to Robert Dudley, and son of the Duke of Northumberland who had recently met a violent end. Ambrose, the last of the brothers to be released from prison after the Jane Grey plot, had been released in late 1554, pardoned in 1555, and was living mostly on his wife's inheritance.¹⁵⁹ Whythorne was employed as tutor and 'chief waiting man' to the mistress Elizabeth Dudley, a position he seemed to enjoy very much. He jested often with Elizabeth's attendant gentlewomen, even giving them all nicknames. He was in Elizabeth's service when she suffered her hysterical pregnancy in the spring of 1555 (Whythorne mentions the pregnancy, but not its outcome), and passed another two years in service to the Dudleys before Ambrose was called away to serve in the

¹⁵⁶ Whythorne, p. 68.

¹⁵⁷ Whythorne, p. 69.

¹⁵⁸ Whythorne, p. 70.

¹⁵⁹ Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Ambrose, Earl of Warwick (c.1530-1590), ODNB.

expedition to St Quentin in 1557.¹⁶⁰ Though Ambrose successfully recovered his honour through the expedition, the expense nearly broke him. We learn from Whythorne that he was forced to ‘break up his housekeeping, and thereupon divers of my fellows had leave to depart’.¹⁶¹ Whythorne however was encouraged to stay, though Dudley informed him that he was, at present, unable to pay him the promised twenty pound annuity. ‘Thus was my cake dough, and mine annuity laid awater’, Whythorne lamented; he was not paid and yet Dudley ‘was offended with me in that I sought to be gone from his service’.¹⁶² After more earnest entreaties, Dudley finally did grant Whythorne permission to leave. Whether they parted amicably is unclear, though Whythorne’s later connections to the Dudleys would seem to indicate that they did. Whythorne could not then have known Ambrose Dudley’s future: soon the accession of Elizabeth I would restore his fortune, and more. He was made Master of the Ordnance, and Earl of Warwick.¹⁶³ One cannot help but wonder whether Whythorne regretted his decision to leave the Dudley household. If the decision haunted him ever after, he does not mention it directly. His manuscript, however, betrays an obsession with fortune’s wheel, and with his own seemingly constant string of bad luck.

Whythorne left Ambrose Dudley’s service to work for a master who, at the time, must have seemed a much safer bet: ‘a man of great worship, and one that was at that time of the Privy Council unto the Prince [Mary]’.¹⁶⁴ Here again Whythorne moved between very different religious circles: from the son of the Protestant who

¹⁶⁰ Adams, ‘Dudley, Ambrose’, ODNB. One wonders whether her pregnancy was actually false, or whether she miscarried. Whythorne had added the key detail, ‘St. Quentin’ in the margin of his manuscript but then crossed it out. This may confirm the idea that he was working from this draft to make one ready for publication— and he felt the detail would too easily reveal the identity of his master (see Chapter 2). He replaced ‘St. Quentin’ with ‘beyond the seas’.

¹⁶¹ Whythorne, p. 72.

¹⁶² Whythorne, p. 72.

¹⁶³ Adams, ‘Dudley, Ambrose’, ODNB.

¹⁶⁴ Whythorne, p. 73.

had tried to overthrow Mary, to a Catholic gentleman in her Privy Council. But if he experienced any discomfort, he gives no indication. Instead Whythorne focused once more on his troubled romances during his service, when Elisabeth, the ‘ancient’ housekeeper of a neighbour, mistook his friendly jests and fell in love with him. Believing her to be quite below him—as well as much too old—Whythorne hid from her, and though he suffered the occasional pang of guilt, the trouble eventually blew over. In a discussion on early modern masculinity in life writing, Alison Harl argues that in writing about this episode Whythorne’s goal was to show ‘cool disinterest in a woman’, while he ‘covertly tries to convince the reader [she] is pursuing him’.¹⁶⁵ Harl attempts to fit Whythorne into her model of male autobiographers of the age: they wanted to appear to be pursued by women rather than vice-versa. Harl argues that in reality Whythorne must therefore have pursued Elisabeth. But, being in the end rejected, she argues, ‘Whythorne constructs a scenario where rejection is no longer rejection, but a conscious choice, a chosen state of chaste-like virtue’.¹⁶⁶ In reality Whythorne does not seem fit this model in general nor in this particular instance. Harl’s argument overlooks the fact that Whythorne described Elisabeth was ‘ancient’, and that others inquired whether he really intended to wed an ‘old, crooked crone’ and a ‘scroil’. Whythorne’s response was to tell them to ‘keep your breaths to cool your pottage withal. Ye are all in a wrong box.’ It was all ‘pastime and mirth’, and Whythorne’s consistent candour (even when it made him look bad) should not be disregarded.¹⁶⁷ Elisabeth was a merry old woman with who fell in love with the

¹⁶⁵ Alison Harl, ‘Passive, Pursued and Powerful: Construction of the Male Self in Renaissance Autobiography’, *Discoveries*, 22, 2 (2005). Online journal available from <<http://www.scrc.us.com/discoveries/archives/222/harl222pf.html>> (15 October 2007), no pagination.

¹⁶⁶ Harl, ‘Passive’, no pagination.

¹⁶⁷ Whythorne, p. 76.

flirtatious Whythorne.¹⁶⁸ He took the jest bit too far, perhaps, but to argue that he falsified an episode in his life in order to conceal romantic failure misjudges and misrepresents his character.

Elsabeth and Whythorne came to an understanding, and immediately thereafter Whythorne's master 'had certain troubles happened unto him, at the which I had leave to depart from his service'.¹⁶⁹ These were troubles indeed— Queen Mary died, a most unfortunate 'trouble' for members of her council. Given this information, it is interesting to speculate on the identity of Whythorne's employer. Mary's council was so numerous that no particular individual can be singled out based on the scant information Whythorne recorded; a great many of her councillors found their careers at an end when Mary died.¹⁷⁰ Still, by connecting some rather tenuous dots, one can at least speculate that Whythorne's employer was Edward Hastings, a man 'of great worship' indeed.¹⁷¹ Hastings was one of Mary's intimate advisors and Master of the Horse. A man of 'irreproachable religious conservatism', his career was ruined by Mary's death, as Whythorne indicates of his employer.¹⁷² There are of course a number of councillors who would fit Whythorne's description, but Hastings is also linked to Whythorne in two other ways. Whythorne came into the service of the Councillor after leaving Ambrose Dudley, whose finances were ruined by the St. Quentin expedition. Edward Hastings was also at St. Quentin— indeed it was the only military service he did for Mary. Perhaps Dudley was the 'agent' between Whythorne and Hastings, reluctantly sending Whythorne on to an employer who could afford him. Later in life, Whythorne dedicated his 1590 *Duos* to

¹⁶⁸ Whythorne also writes of Elsabeth's declining health: 'she was somewhat a-crazed, and grown to be so shortwinded or breathed that she wheezed' (p. 77). She was frail and even possibly near death.

¹⁶⁹ Whythorne, p. 80.

¹⁷⁰ *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, ed. John Roche Dasent (46 vols., London, 1893), VI, pp. 499-504.

¹⁷¹ Whythorne, p. 73.

¹⁷² David Loades, 'Hastings, Edward, Baron Hastings of Loughborough (1512x15?-1572)', ODNB.

Francis Hastings, brother to Edward. As Whythorne appears to have had a habit of circulating among family groups (see Chapter 4), Edward Hastings seems a likely candidate.¹⁷³ Of course, nothing can be proven in the face of the Whythorne's inexorable *discrezione*.

Mary's death did not only affect Whythorne's present master. It meant real danger for John Heywood, whose career was at its peak under her rule; after her death his life was troubled. Both his sons became Jesuit priests in exile, and Heywood himself followed to exile in 1564.¹⁷⁴ However for Ambrose Dudley, life was transformed from near desperation to triumph. These were certainly dramatic turns of fortune's wheel for everyone Whythorne had associated with, while Whythorne himself quietly retreated to his chambers in London, 'which city is always my chief worldly refuge at such times of need'.¹⁷⁵ In the context of his religiously chaotic world, his calling London a 'worldly refuge' becomes more meaningful. In London, disconnected from masters on either side of the religious conflict, Whythorne could keep his head low and was out of harm's way.

It is now clear that Whythorne had not felt compelled to take any committed religious stand. Like the remarkably successful first Marquis of Winchester (who managed to remain in favour at court throughout the religious upheavals), he was a conformist, '*ortus ex falice, non ex quercu*', that is, 'sprung from the willow, not from

¹⁷³ Whythorne was employed to teach the 'children' of the house, and also mentions that his employer had a wife. Hastings was married, but virtually nothing else is known about his family life. His will mentions only an illegitimate son; whether he had other children who died young, or whether he kept children in his household which were not his own (as was not unusual) remains unknowable. David Loades also speculates that Hastings and his wife and/or children 'may have been estranged'; Whythorne seems to have had dealings primarily with the wife, with whom he 'fell at a jar'. Loades, 'Hastings, Edward', ODNB; Whythorne, p. 80.

¹⁷⁴ Happé, 'Heywood, John', ODNB.

¹⁷⁵ Whythorne, p. 80.

the oak'.¹⁷⁶ A song Whythorne composed later in life almost perfectly encapsulates his experience with (and attitude toward) religion and religious change:

Nothing is certain in these days
But subject still to changes all
Therefore tis best we change our ways
That no mishap to us do fall.¹⁷⁷

After a short rest in London, Whythorne was appointed as music tutor in a household within five miles of the city. The lady of the household, once again his pupil and his mistress, had been 'sometime a courtier'.¹⁷⁸ Whythorne remained in her service for about two years, entangled with her in a long, painful *near* love affair. Though Whythorne insisted that the two never acted upon their love, the episode clearly remained a powerful and perplexing memory much later in his life. Perhaps this is not surprising, since it seems the Court Lady (as Osborn names her) was the only woman he ever truly loved.

Whythorne's description of the Court Lady is certainly intriguing. He dwelled at length on her personality and wit before giving a long description of their almost-affair. The Court Lady, whose oft-absent husband 'loved change of pasture',¹⁷⁹ was knowledgeable, experienced, and opinionated, and Whythorne, despite his best efforts to the contrary, loved her for it:

Here I must show you, by the way, how that the said gentlewoman having been sometime a courtier, and well experienced also in the affairs of the world, and also she had a great wit and jolly, ready tongue to utter her fantasy and mind, that I took pleasure many times to talk and discourse of such things as she by experience had had some knowledge of. And sometimes of religions, she would argue in matters of controversy in religion; sometimes of profane matters; ... sometimes she would touch the city, with the trades of citizens, and not leave untouched the fineness of the delicate dames and the nice wives of the city. Sometimes she would talk of the court, with the bravery and vanities thereof, and the crouching and dissimulation...And

¹⁷⁶ L.L. Ford, 'Paulet, William, first marquess of Winchester (1474/5?-1572)', ODNB.

¹⁷⁷ Whythorne, pp. 218-219.

¹⁷⁸ Whythorne, p. 80.

¹⁷⁹ Whythorne, p. 81.

sometimes she would minister talk of the courting of ladies and gentlewomen by the gallants and cavaliers.¹⁸⁰

Contemporary conduct manual writers like Juan Luis Vives might have used this same excerpt to describe precisely what a woman should *not* be: ‘Full of talk I would not have her...for as for among men to be full of babble, I marvel that some regard shame so little that they do not dispraise it’.¹⁸¹ But Whythorne would seem to believe the opposite.

The Court Lady also developed an affection for Whythorne, and the two were locked in a tortuous battle between ‘my ghostly enemy [who] would provoke my flesh to rebel against the spirit; and another while God’s grace working in me (His name be praised for it) would put into my mind and remembrance those of the Ten Commandments which do say, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife.’ Intense ‘imaginings and debatings’ with himself led Whythorne to pledge to himself that ‘whatsoever came of it, I would by God’s grace never defile her wedlock bed’.¹⁸² The Court Lady did not make it easy, though. After one of his short trips away from the house, he returned to find that she had ‘caused a chest of mine in her house to be removed out the chamber where before that time I was accustomed to lie ... and to be brought into a chamber so nigh her own chamber, as she might have come from the one to the other when she list, without any suspicion’.¹⁸³ Whythorne was immediately nervous, and indeed the moment came when the Court Lady came into his bedchamber. He never touched her, and afterwards both were riddled with guilt (she for her boldness, he for giving offence).

¹⁸⁰ Whythorne, pp. 80-81.

¹⁸¹ Juan Luis Vives, ‘The Instruction of a Christian Woman’, in Kate Aughterson (ed.), *Renaissance Woman* (London, 1995), p. 73.

¹⁸² Whythorne, p. 87.

¹⁸³ Whythorne, p. 87.

Whythorne's experiences offer a fascinating look at domestic life behind the scenes, and at the way moral codes affected personal choices.

In the end, their 'sparks' were espied by others in the house and the two were forced to part on friendly terms. Whythorne ended his recollection of the event with another tribute to the Court Lady's personality ('I must confess that I loved her as much as I might do with a safe conscience, because that she well deserved it'), also reminding himself that 'it is good to cast the worst of every enterprise before ye do begin it, and so work therein accordingly'.¹⁸⁴ Whythorne had learned, to use another proverb, to hope for the best but expect the worst.

In the meantime Whythorne had also secured a part-time post teaching another gentlewoman's children and found himself inconvenienced by her advances toward him as well. A friend was also trying to arrange a marriage for him to his landlady in London, and from the whole group of incidents Whythorne learned the truth of another 'proverb [which] saith, between two stools the tail go'th to the ground;/ But I may say, between three stools, like state in me is found'.¹⁸⁵ None of the romances panned out, surely due to Whythorne himself, who ran from the landlady (she had children, which made her the undesirable kind of widow), and there was never any hope for him concerning the other two, who were married. He had had his share of romance, with no success, and his seemingly chronic bad luck in the past was becoming ever more clear to him as he wrote his autobiography. His tone becomes increasingly puzzled as he ponders his failed affairs, but he also achieves a resigned acceptance that romances, like human lives, rise and fall on fortune's wheel.

After living 'between three stools' Whythorne found a completely different lifestyle in a new post: tutoring a gentleman's son at Cambridge. He went to

¹⁸⁴ Whythorne, pp. 99-100.

¹⁸⁵ Whythorne, p. 91.

Cambridge with great anticipation, where his pupil was already under the charge of another tutor, for it was not unusual for university students to employ music tutors to teach them the desirable, gentle skills of music-making alongside their academic studies.¹⁸⁶ But Whythorne soon found himself in a predicament regarding the other tutor. While Whythorne saw himself as an equal, the tutor expected deference ('as that is a thing much used and looked for, with giving of the wall when they meet in the street').¹⁸⁷ Whythorne would not give it, and so a long conflict ensued during which Whythorne was 'turmoiled in this labyrinth of his unkindness'.¹⁸⁸ When his pupil finally noticed the problem, he wrote to his father, who sorted it all out in one letter: though lacking a degree, Whythorne was an equal, and should be treated as such.

Despite his proud colleague, Whythorne's time at Cambridge was a happy one. He socialized with the educated elite, and was blissfully immersed in reading and discussion. He was also present at the 'resurrection of Dr. Bucer', which occurred in July 1560 when new Protestant authorities gave Martin Bucer and others a second Christian burial (after they had been exhumed and burned as heretics in Mary's reign). Whythorne wrote a song lampooning those who had written in dispraise of Bucer years before. This is the first indication that Whythorne was by now, in fact, Protestant in outlook: he used the common derogatory term 'Papists' and writes of the 'Romish religious'.¹⁸⁹ At Cambridge, Whythorne participated actively in discussions of 'controversies in religion', which all centered on the Protestant-

¹⁸⁶ On music in the universities, see Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁷ Whythorne, p. 101.

¹⁸⁸ Whythorne, p. 103.

¹⁸⁹ He wrote the song in the persona of 'Pasquil', which is an antiquated form of Pasquin, according to OED: 'The person popularly supposed to be represented by a statue in Rome on which satirical Latin verses were annually posted in the 16th cent.; the statue itself. Hence: an imaginary person to whom anonymous lampoons were ascribed; a composer of lampoons'. Whythorne considered his song an addition to the body of Pasquillesque, 'taunting verses that do reprehend the vices of all estates, even as well of the Pope himself' (Whythorne, pp. 106-109).

Catholic conflict.¹⁹⁰ Perhaps this was where Whythorne finally felt confident—or safe—enough to define his own religion.

Two years later, when his pupil successfully graduated, Whythorne remained in the service of the father, whom Osborn identified as London merchant William Bromfield. Bromfield grew to like Whythorne so well that when he was called to serve as Master of the Ordinance to ‘her Queen’s Majesty in her wars beyond the seas’, he left the management of his affairs to Whythorne. Bromfield served in the expedition to Le Havre commanded by none other than Ambrose Dudley, Master of the Ordnance General. But in his master’s absence, Whythorne discovered that ‘all was not gold that glistered in his [Bromfield’s] sight’, and that Bromfield had made many enemies who now secretly sought to undo him.¹⁹¹ The defence of Bromfield’s estate was in Whythorne’s hands, and he suffered for it. He wrote a characteristically self-searching passage regarding his decision to remain in Bromfield’s service:

Then, quoth I to myself, what hap have I? I am not newly entered into credit with this gentleman, who, for the good opinion that he hath in me, hath me in great trust. If I therefore continue in his doings and affairs still and that his enemies may bring their fetches and practices to full effect, peradventure, though I do know nothing of his doings that way, I may be made to smell of the smoke of that fire wherewith my friend is like to be singed and tried. On the other side, if I leave him now (when he is in case not to put another in my room conveniently), I shall not only lose forty marks a year during his life, beside a constant friend, but also to play the part of an ingrate and an inconstant caitiff. Wherefore, even in this perplexity, I determined with myself not to leave him so, but to take all chances as they came, having a sure hope in God that, whatsoever became of him, mine innocency in his doings before this time should be my defence.¹⁹²

Remaining in Bromfield’s service, Whythorne found that his social world was expanding dramatically. He associated regularly with ‘divers of the worshipful merchants of London’ who seemed to talk of ‘no other ... but of gain and riches’.

¹⁹⁰ Whythorne, p. 109. See H.C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1958), esp. pp. 50-57.

¹⁹¹ Whythorne, p. 118.

¹⁹² Whythorne, pp. 118-119.

They often discussed the man of new riches, ‘who had been in his office but a small time; and when he came to it, he was little or nothing worth and every man paid, and yet now he was known to be both a purchaser, a builder and also a great moneyed man’.¹⁹³ Indeed it was an age of huge opportunity for the ambitious, and social ladders were being climbed all around him. It is probably not coincidence that Whythorne then felt compelled to recite a series of saws on covetousness.¹⁹⁴

Whythorne felt he had become quite successful. Not only did he have the promise of a significant salary, he also did daily business with worshipful folk, and felt both valued and important. But in writing the autobiography, from his vantage of hindsight, he understood that the times had placed him ‘now on the top of fortune’s wheel’.¹⁹⁵ And if there is anything to be learned from Whythorne’s previous experience, it is that those at the top do not stay there very long.

News came that plague had struck the expedition at Le Havre, and though there was no news of Bromfield, Whythorne despaired at the prospect of his master’s death. It would mean not only the loss of a friend, but also the loss of an annuity and the terrible prospect of facing Bromfield’s enemies alone. But guided by the writings of Marcus Aurelius ‘the wise emperor’, and the Bible, Whythorne adopted a positive outlook: ‘now I plucked up my spirits unto me again and did set the better foot before; determining with myself to take all chances that might happen unto me in good part, and to take nothing at the worst till I did find certain cause thereto’.¹⁹⁶ He made every effort to ensure that Bromfield’s accounts were in order, while he waited for news.

On 18 July 1563, Maurys Denys reported that ‘the Master of the Ordnance is hurt, and gone to England [and] since his departure Cook, his clerk, has died’.

¹⁹³ Whythorne, p. 120.

¹⁹⁴ The saws on covetousness are excluded from the modern-spelling edition. For more on social climbing and Whythorne’s ambitions, see Chapter 6.

¹⁹⁵ Whythorne, p. 121.

¹⁹⁶ Whythorne, p. 122.

Bromfield had escaped from the plague, but alas ‘had such a sore hurt...that...he finished his living days’.¹⁹⁷ Though despairing about his own prospects, Whythorne spared a thought for late master, and told himself that, for Bromfield at least, it was perhaps for the best. His employer had escaped the clutches of his false friends: ‘in the end, to be called out of this vale of misery unto the joys celestial, I did account his calling to be better for himself than for those of his friends who hoped to have been benefited by his life’.¹⁹⁸

While Bromfield was bound for joys celestial, Whythorne was left in the vale of misery. News spread of Bromfield’s death, ‘immediately whereupon I might perceive the old proverb to be true which saith that a dead body biteth not. For they who, before his death did whisper and groin [sic] against him, now they spake and barked aloud at him’. Whythorne faced ‘many perils and hindrances’ in maintaining and protecting of his master’s goods as well as protecting himself—surviving even a ‘dangerous hurt’.¹⁹⁹ All this he did out of duty, waiting for Bromfield’s son (the student he had tutored at Cambridge) to return from overseas. His promised annuity of twenty pounds was reduced to a single payment of five pounds, left to him in Bromfield’s will.²⁰⁰

But his troubles were not over. While he waited for Bromfield the younger to return, the plague had come from Le Havre to London. The city was ‘so sore visited with the plague of pestilence, as I doubted to tarry there any longer for being swallowed up among those who were devoured with the same’, but in honour he had

¹⁹⁷ He died 3 August, three miles from Portsmouth. *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, 1563*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (London, 1896, reprint 1966), VI, p. 459; Whythorne, p. 123. On the New Haven expedition see Wallace T. MacCaffrey, ‘The Newhaven Expedition, 1562-1563’, *The Historical Journal*, 40, 1 (March 1997), pp. 1-21.

¹⁹⁸ Whythorne, p. 123.

¹⁹⁹ Whythorne, p. 123. Whythorne offers no further details!

²⁰⁰ The relevant section reads, ‘I give and bequeath to Thomas Whitehorne gent five pounds’, with no further note on Whythorne. National Archives, Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills, PROB 11/47, 3 June 1564.

to stay and wait.²⁰¹ Immersing himself in Biblical passages, very many of which he included in his manuscript in commonplace fashion, he tried to comfort himself. But when the plague became ‘so great, and in so many places, and also so nigh unto me as it was not only come round about me but also into the house where I did then lie’, Whythorne was stricken with terror. According to Whythorne’s contemporary John Stow, the 1563 outbreak was particularly terrifying, claiming the lives of 17,400 Londoners.²⁰² ‘I looked’, he wrote, ‘every minute of an hour when I should be visited as the rest were’. He spent more than six months enduring the ‘troublesome and pestiferous time’, until Bromfield the younger finally arrived.²⁰³

Whythorne was then discharged and left London immediately, to live with a gentleman friend in the country.²⁰⁴ He surely took the post in the interest of health more than wealth, for he received no salary but only ‘good and friendly entertainment, diet and lodging’. His intention was to ‘recover if I could some part of my health, the which was so much impaired by the means of the doings that I had for [Bromfield], as I doubt yet I shall never recover the same again’.²⁰⁵ His time spent in the country was merry, and during it he wrote a great many versified prayers as well as some playful songs about members of the household. But eventually the question must have arisen as to what to do next. Surely he could not stay with his friend forever. Whythorne determined to return to music, an occupation which had provided more ‘security and stability’ than any other.

What better way to make himself known to the musical community than to publish some of his compositions? He began to prepare a printed collection of the

²⁰¹ Whythorne, p. 124.

²⁰² Barrett Beer, *Tudor England Observed: The World of John Stowe* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 51-52.

²⁰³ Whythorne, pp. 127-128, 130.

²⁰⁴ Osborn’s best guess is that this employer was Winstan Browne (d. 1580) of Weald Hall near Childerditch, but there are other possible locations matching Whythorne’s description. See Osborn’s note in Whythorne (original orthography), pp. 208-209.

²⁰⁵ Whythorne, p. 130.

songs he had written to date. It was to become *Songs for Three, Four, and Five Voices*, published by John Day in 1571. But the process was not easy. Whythorne spent two years preparing his manuscripts for print, and spent many hours asking himself whether it was a wise move:

One while would I think to myself, what do I mean now thus to travail and beat my brains about this matter? Do I not daily see how they who do set out books be by their works made a common gaze unto all the world, and hang upon the blasts of all folks' mouths and upon the middle-finger pointings of the unskilful and also upon the severe judgements of the grave and deep wits?²⁰⁶

Sometimes he would tell himself, 'I will not put my finger in the fire willingly', but then he assured himself that 'we should not hide our talents under the ground', and ultimately that 'he that soweth virtue, reapeth fame, and true fame overcometh death'.²⁰⁷

During the two years he was working on the preparation of his music manuscripts, Whythorne found himself involved in yet another romantic tangle. A gentleman friend introduced him to a widow worth twenty pounds a year (Osborn calls her the 'Twenty Pound Widow'). At around forty-two years old, Whythorne was probably feeling increasing pressure to find a wife. So after visiting the widow just once, Whythorne determined that 'as yet I misliked her not, and if it should please God that we should join in marriage, I may not, nor I hope I should not, refuse that which He hath appointed'.²⁰⁸ And so he began his suit, the account of which has attracted the attention of many scholars of early modern courtship. The widow soon

²⁰⁶ Whythorne, p. 140.

²⁰⁷ Whythorne, p. 141. For more on his view of fame and search for recognition, see Chapter 6. At the end of the preface Whythorne wrote for his music, he included a poem by Walter Haddon (Whythorne, pp. 146-147). The connection is interesting, since Haddon was an old friend of both Matthew Parker (who would later employ Whythorne), and Martin Bucer, whose burial(s) so incited Whythorne's religious fervour at Cambridge. Haddon would later become president of Whythorne's alma mater, Magdalen College, Oxford, and though his position there was brief, he seems to have had a strong influence on the religious leanings of the college. It became 'the most protestant college in the University'. Gerald Bray, 'Haddon, Walter (1514/15–1571)', ODNB.

²⁰⁸ Whythorne, p. 150.

agreed to marry Whythorne; they exchanged tokens and set a date three weeks away. But it was not long before the widow suddenly began to behave ‘so strange as though she had never made me any such faithful promise’, which effectively made Whythorne feel ‘cast into a dump’.²⁰⁹ They fought over money, and over how often Whythorne was obligated to visit her, and the widow tried to return Whythorne’s token. He refused to take it, and called again on the gentleman who had introduced the pair, to ask him to intervene. With the help of his friend he visited the widow again, who announced that she had determined never to marry. Whythorne left in confusion, giving up the suit.

Two weeks later he met the friend again and discovered that his suit was not over yet, and that word came from the widow that she was willing to accept him. He returned to her, and she gave him some gold with the request that he have it made ‘after the manner of a wedding ring’.²¹⁰ But with the aid of hindsight, Whythorne wrote that he now realized that she never actually said *to whom* she would be getting married. Nevertheless he performed the task with eagerness, also making sure to visit the widow every day in the mean time. When the ring was finished and returned to the widow, ‘she grew therewithal into a great melancholy and said that it was not of the newest and best fashion’. Whythorne tried to appease her but ‘all my words prevailed nothing ... which brought her quickly into glumming, pouting and sighing’.²¹¹ The confusion continued, resulting in many visits that ended in anger, until Whythorne’s suit was finally rejected. After writing of the end of the matter, Whythorne included (again in commonplace fashion) all the proverbs, stories, and philosophies he had at the time been inspired to record. They concerned women, wooing and marriage (e.g., ‘he that will marry must wink and drink, and take the good

²⁰⁹ Whythorne, p. 152.

²¹⁰ Whythorne, p. 158.

²¹¹ Whythorne, p. 160.

or ill fortune that God shall send him’).²¹² But despite all the proverbs and stories designed to soothe his ruffled feathers, perhaps the greatest redemption he found was in the act of writing about the event. His final paragraph on the incident reads like an emotionally venting journal entry, reminding us that Whythorne had made it a practice in earlier years to ‘wreak mine anger altogether with pen and ink upon paper’.²¹³ In this passage we see Whythorne at an emotionally deeper, brutally honest (and also quite humorous) level:

Not long after my widow and I parted as is aforesaid, she being hot in the sear, and of the spur could tarry no longer without a mate, and therefore in haste she stumbled under an ostler, who now doth lubber leap her. For he, with rubbing horseheels and greasing them in the roofs of their mouths, gat so much money as therewith he so bleared the widow’s eyes that she, thinking all had been gold than shined, took him to be her wedded spouse. So that the dor [dung beetle], having flown all the day about among herbs and flowers, hath now shrouded her under a horseturd. And to say the truth, he is sweet enough for such a sweet piece as she is. And thus I end of this foresaid matter.²¹⁴

Surely his sour grapes are just what we might expect of a spurned suitor.

Returning briefly to work for with the country couple (with whom he had lived after escaping the plague), Whythorne found their attitude toward him now less congenial. They would not pay him the salary they had promised, and mocked him when he requested it. He was no longer willing to put up with such treatment: ‘And then, lo, I would sometimes bestow a little choler on them ... [and] I would shoot their bolts back unto them again. And in the end I went from them’, though not before writing a song about it:²¹⁵

Now that the truth is tried
Of things that be late passed
I see, when all is spied,
That words are but a blast;
And promise great

²¹² Whythorne, p. 167.

²¹³ Whythorne, p. 27.

²¹⁴ Whythorne, p. 171. *Lubber*: a big, clumsy, stupid fellow; esp. one who lives in idleness; *dor*: a dung beetle (OED).

²¹⁵ Whythorne, p. 172. The poem continues for two more stanzas.

Is but a heat,
If not performed at last.

I can bear it no more.
It is too great a pain.
I have no strength in store
To toil for so small gain.
I will forbear
My wits to wear,
And waste no more in vain.

Fortune's wheel was ever turning, repeatedly dashing his high hopes. He turned to his publication activities with more zeal, and in 1571 his *Songes for Three, Fower, and Five Voyces* was finally published. In an attempt to promote the sale of his music, Whythorne inserted, facing the title-page, a woodcut of himself with his coat of arms, as well as verses by friends in praise of his music.

We know little of Whythorne's 'divers' friends, besides a few names. Particular friends, 'who were learned', wrote sonnets in commemoration of Whythorne's music, which he printed with his 1571 *Songes*: Thomas Covert, Thomas Barnum, Adrian Schaell, and Henry Thorne. The latter three (of the first we know virtually nothing) seem to have been active in their own literary pursuits. Schaell, a German, came to England as a schoolmaster after studying at University in Leipzig, but soon found a career in the church. At age 68, after nearly thirty years (1570-1599) as rector of a parish in Somerset, he decided to write a memoir of Higham Church. Though his wit was 'now waxing dull and decayed with drowsiness', he was equal to the task, and one cannot help but wonder if Whythorne had any influence on Schaell's activities.²¹⁶ Whythorne, also in his sixties, had been working

²¹⁶ 'Adrian Schaell's memoir of High Ham Church and Rectory, AD 1598', ed. C. D. Crossman, *Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 20 (1894), pp. 113-122; quotation from p. 118, where Schaell gives a brief account of his own life story.

on his autobiography in the years before.²¹⁷

Henry Thorne was also active in literary pursuits, and published a few books, including a translation of a Latin text, *Phisicke for the Soule* in c.1568.²¹⁸ It is likely that the Latin version was originally a gift from Whythorne, linking the two friends through the exchange of books as well as the pursuit of publication (more on Thorne in Chapter 2). Of Thomas Barnum, we know even less. He was a fellow tutor with Whythorne in ‘a gentleman’s house’, hired to teach Latin. Whythorne describes Barnum as ‘a very proper scholar, and therewithal can make verses both in Latin and in English very well’. The two seem to have enjoyed a regular exchange of verses, some of which were devices playing upon each other’s names.²¹⁹

Short of an appeal to a great patron, Whythorne did everything he could to promote his music.²²⁰ When the books were printed, Whythorne took a copy first to the country to show Henry Thorne, and returned again to London with his hopes high. He went ‘to my printer to know of him how my music went away out of [his] hands. And he told me that it was not bought of him so fast as he looked for’.²²¹ Disappointment again, a feeling that was all too familiar.

Whythorne was, however, a persistent man. Refusing to give up, he devised another method of advertising his music: the publication of a kind of libretto book, ‘so that when it is commonly known abroad (and the rather by the means of these said books) that there is such a music to be bought, they who do desire to have variety of

²¹⁷ Schaell wrote his memoir in the spare pages of a parish register from 1569— it is curious that he should choose that date, since it is also the year that Whythorne first conceived of his own writing/publishing pursuits.

²¹⁸ Henry Thorne, *Phisicke for the soule verye necessarie to be vsed in the agonie of death, and in those extreme and moste perillous seasons, aswell for those, which are in good health, as those, which are endowed with bodily sicknesse. Translated out of Latine into Englishe, by H. Thorne* (London, 1568), STC2 19894 and 19893a.7. The book was reprinted in 1570 and 1578.

²¹⁹ Whythorne, pp. 177-178. Osborn notes that he was probably the Thomas Barnum who matriculated at Clare College, Cambridge in 1564.

²²⁰ The woodcut is clearly based on the 1569 portrait. Whythorne had actually registered his arms in London shortly before the publication of his music. See Chapter 6.

²²¹ Whythorne, pp. 179-180.

music will the sooner procure to have it'.²²² His publisher John Day, 'one of the titans of the Elizabethan book world',²²³ approved of the marketing scheme and arranged for another printer to take it on, but there is no evidence that the libretto-type book was ever printed.²²⁴

At this point in his narrative, there is a major shift in tone. Whythorne undertook a lengthy academic defence of music, thickly scattered with quotations and references. It reads as a kind of plea for credibility and validation, as if Whythorne wanted to show that he was more than people thought he was— more than he *seemed*, perhaps. He had written in the preface of his 1571 *Songs* that he would 'stay at that time what I could write in the praise of music', but in this text Whythorne was out to prove something: 'it should not be thought that I stayed to write it then for that I could not do it'.²²⁵ Whether he had suffered criticism of his music we cannot know (though we know that many later music critics condemned his work), but Whythorne felt challenged to prove how much he could say. Pages and pages were dedicated to discussions of music in the Bible, the classics, and modern English and continental writing. He discussed the ranks and categories of musicians and quoted writers from all places and centuries. He touched on the church, the court, the university, and, in the end, summarized 'the general estimation of music'. He leads the reader to one concluding question: 'if music were not a virtue to be esteemed of, would so many saints and holy men and women and also wise and learned men, have learned, used,

²²² Whythorne, p. 180.

²²³ Andrew Pettegree, 'Day [Daye], John (1521/2-1584)', ODNB. John Day was closely associated with the Protestant movement and had been deeply involved in the production of clandestine protestant literature during Mary's reign. When Elizabeth came to power, Day became a rich man, printing some of the most popular books of the period under the monopoly granted him. To defend his monopoly, he had the protection of Robert Dudley (thus linking Whythorne again, if loosely, to the Dudley family). As Whythorne was preparing his music for print, Day was feverishly working on the second edition of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, published in 1570. See Elizabeth Evenden, *Patents, Pictures and Patronage, John Day and the Tudor Book Trade* (Aldershot, 2008).

²²⁴ I believe that Whythorne's manuscript probably is this book. See Chapter 2.

²²⁵ Whythorne, p. 182.

and esteemed of it, as is before spoken? Now judge you what frenzy and madness remaineth in those blockheads and dolts, who will so utterly condemn it'.²²⁶

At the end of the treatise we are then briefly informed that Whythorne had 'a motion made unto me to serve Doctor Parker, of late Archbishop of Canterbury; and that I should be the master of the music of his chapel. The which service I refused not, because I did know that by his place he was the most honourable man in this realm next unto the Queen'.²²⁷ But our manuscript is nearing its end, and we know little of Whythorne's work for Parker. He arranged some psalms at the Archbishop's request, but this section of the manuscript lacks Whythorne's usual intimate narrative. Soon, the manuscript becomes something else entirely: a list of seventy-one songs without annotation or explanation.

The end of the incomplete manuscript leaves the reader wishing for many things, not least for the rest of the manuscript. The presence of a catch-word on the final page indicates that more existed and was lost, and so his story ends there. We do not follow Whythorne to the end of his days, nor are we able to follow Whythorne's work for Parker, which must have been a satisfying advance in his career. How did he feel about fortune's wheel now? What happened after he found this position? Did he ever find a suitable wife? Was he ever happy? Chapter 2 will extract what additional information can be found in the manuscript itself, but for now we turn to external sources in search of the end of Whythorne's story.

Perhaps it will come as no surprise that Whythorne's service to the Archbishop was not as long as he might have hoped for. Parker died in 1576, and 'Mr. Whithorne' was listed among the pallbearers at the funeral.²²⁸ He did not retain

²²⁶ Whythorne, pp. 206-207.

²²⁷ Whythorne, p. 208. It may have been John Day who introduced Whythorne to the Archbishop, as Day published Parker's *Whole Psalter* in 1567.

²²⁸ John Strype, *The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker* (London, 1711), p. 497.

his post under Parker's successor. After that we know little of his career, except that wealth never came: by 1582 he was living in the parish of St. Mary Abchurch in London, and was assessed for the subsidy at just three pounds.²²⁹ Though Whythorne wrote at one point that he expected ten pounds a year after the death of his mother, it appears that he had not received the inheritance, or had lost it.²³⁰

But Whythorne at last succeeded in finding a wife. The 'spinster' Elizabeth Stoughton was a fellow Londoner, and the couple were married at St. Martin in the Fields in 1577. However (again, perhaps not surprisingly), his was not a fairytale romance that proved to be worth the wait. The marriage was childless and possibly quite unhappy (see Chapter 2).²³¹

Whythorne managed to publish one more collection of music. His *Duos, or Songes for Two Voyces* was published in 1590 by Thomas East. Like the 1571 *Songes*, this second collection was pioneering: while *Songes* has been called arguably the first set of madrigals in England, the *Duos* was the first of its kind in the country.²³² The *Duos* are dedicated to Francis Hastings, which may suggest some relationship between the two. Whether Whythorne worked in his household, or merely used Hastings' name to help sell his music remains unknown. In either case David Price believes that Whythorne's dedication does not reveal any kind of special relationship between Whythorne and his patron as some other dedications do.²³³ At the time Whythorne's dedication was printed, Hastings was living in Whythorne's native Somerset, active in local government. He sat in every Parliament from 1571

²²⁹ '1582 London Subsidy Roll: Candlewick Ward', p. 176-180.

²³⁰ Whythorne, p. 151.

²³¹ *London Marriage Licences*, ed. Joseph Foster (London, 1887), XXV, p. 75. Whythorne is listed as living in St. Alfège (St. Alphage), Cripplegate at the time; the records of St. Alfège do not survive. The couple later lived in the parish of St. Mary Abchurch.

²³² His 1571 *Songs* are hybrids of part-songs and madrigals, published long before madrigals would truly appear in England with Yonge's *Musica Transalpina* in 1588. Whythorne should be considered pioneering at least.

²³³ David Price, *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 213-215. See Chapter 6.

until his death in 1610 (except 1572), and spent his energies ‘attempting in season and out of season to promote the further reformation of the church’.²³⁴ This led to his eventual disgrace under James, but in 1590, when Whythorne dedicated his music, Hastings was both wealthy and influential, soon to be knighted in Somerset. Hastings’ long residence in Somerset might suggest that Whythorne retained more links with his place of birth than he let on.

Whythorne’s connection to Francis Hastings returns us again to the great variety of his religious associations: having started his career with the devoutly Catholic John Heywood, forty-five years later he dedicated his music to the Puritan Hastings, whose actions were ‘impelled by his detestation of popery’.²³⁵ Francis Hastings, whose upbringing had been largely under the charge of his brother Henry (known as the ‘Puritan Earl’), was also connected to the Dudley family: Henry was Ambrose Dudley’s brother-in-law. But it remains an open question as to what Whythorne’s association with Hastings indicates about his own religious beliefs.

The *Duos* were published in the winter of Whythorne’s life, and six years later he died. The cause of death is unknown, but the fact that his will was nuncupative indicates that it was somewhat unexpected. He did not actually die, however, until a month later, suggesting that he suffered something debilitating but not immediately fatal, such as a stroke. The memorandum states that on 5 July 1596,

Thomas Whythorne of the parish of St. Mary Abchurch London, gentleman—made his last will and testament nuncupative by word of mouth as followith, being demanded by one Mr. Thomas Hussey of London, clothworker, how he intended to bestow his goods. The testator answered being then of perfect mind and memory in this manner: ‘All that I have I give unto my wife for I have none other to give it unto.’ Being then and there present: the said Mr.

²³⁴ Claire Cross, ‘Hastings, Francis (c.1546-1610)’, ODNB.

²³⁵ Cross, ‘Hastings, Francis’, ODNB.

Hussey, Mistress Margery Baker, widow, and Thomasine French, the wife of Richard French with others.²³⁶

Less than a month later, the parish register of St. Mary Abchurch recorded the burial of ‘Thomas Whythorne, gentleman’ on ‘ye second of August’, 1596.²³⁷

Assessment

Whythorne was not the only aspiring gentleman writing in his day. He was part of a ‘flurry’ of writers in the 1560s and 70s who ‘were almost exclusively gentlemen, or men who aspired to gentry status, for whom writing and printing verse should be understood, at least partly, in terms of social definition and career advancement’.²³⁸

There were many commonplace books, and there were many printed miscellanies—in short, there were many people doing something similar to what Whythorne was doing. Whythorne’s text clearly echoes Tottel’s *Songs and Sonnets* of 1557 and is not very different in form from many other collections. But in adding an autobiographical frame, Whythorne was casting his text into a completely different genre (though centuries would pass before this genre would fully develop). He was not as self-conscious as Cellini or Cardano in creating a new literary genre—he was simply telling his audience what ‘happened to me, the better know to deal therein’.²³⁹ However, on a deeper level his motives seem to mirror Cardano’s precisely: ‘know thyself’, together with a desire for eternal fame.²⁴⁰ His motives were the same as his continental counterparts, his writing was begun in the same period, and his text in form was certainly autobiography. Nevertheless, with nothing to measure his text

²³⁶ Guildhall Library, Records of the Archdeacon’s Court, MS 9051/5, 1596, f.50. Spelling and punctuation modernized. As Osborn points out, this is the only Whythorne (‘Whitehorne’) listed between 1577 and 1647. Will is also transcribed in Whythorne, p. 231.

²³⁷ Whythorne’s widow married Robert Sowche on 18 October of the same year. Guildhall Library, MS 7666, St. Mary Abchurch parish register, 1596.

²³⁸ Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship*, p. 11.

²³⁹ Whythorne, p. xi.

²⁴⁰ Osborn, *Beginnings of Autobiography*, p. 9. For Whythorne’s motives, see Chapter 2.

against (the continental autobiographies not being printed until much later), Whythorne was unaware of the significance of his work. It seems autobiography was independently invented several times in several countries, within the same period.

Whythorne had the autobiographical ‘germ’ early on. He wrote his first autobiography, a poem recounting ‘my whole life to this day in effect’ (the first song in the book), at nineteen.²⁴¹ Even before he had read much, he seems to have had an innate inclination to think of his life in the big picture. It was only natural, then, for him to look back on his life in his old age, seeing it as a cohesive whole. He could then reflect more consciously on the turns of fortune’s wheel. This reflection produced what I believe to be the most deeply personal and searching passage in Whythorne’s text, wherein, after acknowledging that his publishing efforts have failed, he confronts the perplexing nature of life and its meaning:

So many ways man is wrapped in calamities as one who, through the weakness of his mould, is ready and prone to be overthrown with the blast of every temptation: as one, though his abiding on the earth be never so long, yet he is the prey of time and by him swallowed up and devoured; as one who is subject to every chance of fortune, on whom they do triumph daily, making him to play continually their divers comical and tragical parts; as one who is the very image of inconstancy, ever doing and undoing and never satisfied nor quiet; and lastly, as one who is the very receptacle of all worldly troubles and perturbations...²⁴²

Here we find the five major themes of Whythorne’s life:

- 1) weakness and temptation
- 2) being the prey of time
- 3) chance and fortune
- 4) constancy and satisfaction
- 5) being the victim of worldly troubles

And because his text is constructed around his life, these are also the themes of his autobiography as well. Whythorne was a keenly self-aware and contemplative person

²⁴¹ Whythorne, p. 7.

²⁴² Whythorne, p. 174.

who looked back upon his life and tried to achieve understanding. He was searching for the meaning and order of his life, hoping also to find that he had ‘through experience waxen a little wiser’.²⁴³

Ronald Bedford argues that Whythorne’s text shows us a man who only knows himself through generalities, without a unique sense of identity— that he is ‘depicting himself in a ventriloquized omnivocal vulgate in which the individual voice struggles for breath’. He adds that that Whythorne’s ‘self-depiction seems to suggest that [he] “knows” himself *only* through ... social movements’. Whythorne does not project a true individual, he argues, but instead represents ‘a period when ... most people did not have to find a place in the world but inherited it and knew what it was’.²⁴⁴ But here again we have literary analysis which skilfully explicates extracts of Whythorne’s text while missing his character entirely. His story reveals a lifelong, troubled pursuit of ‘a place in the world’. And the very existence of his autobiography tells us that he saw his experiences as something more than the ‘inevitable’: his experiences were universal, but he was also alone in the universe. In his old age he returned to pen and paper to try to make sense of his life— to find closure, understanding and, most of all, meaning. He did not find his life’s meaning in a generality, or in a proverb. Quite to the contrary, generalities and proverbs found meaning in his unique experience.

In a recent study of the individual in early modern England, Michael Mascuch found that ‘it is certainly appropriate to locate the origins of the individualist self in early modern Britain’.²⁴⁵ Though his study pays very little attention to Whythorne, it is clear that Whythorne serves as an excellent early example of individualism.

Strikingly similar in many respects to contemporary miscellanies, Whythorne’s text is

²⁴³ Whythorne, p. 27.

²⁴⁴ Bedford et al., *English Lives*, p. 19.

²⁴⁵ Mascuch, *Individualist Self*, p. 24.

yet extraordinarily individual— and the same is true for his personal identity. One would hope that his inclination toward big-picture self-assessment helped him find solace and meaning at the end of his life, but no matter the personal result, his pen-and-ink search made him the first autobiographer in England. He would have been pleased to know it.

Chapter 2

THE MANUSCRIPT

*[I] now lay open unto you the most part
of all my private affairs and secrets...
-Whythorne*

Much about Thomas Whythorne remains a mystery. Before his manuscript was known, he was a shadowy Elizabethan composer about whom almost nothing was known. Now that we have his manuscript, Whythorne has answered some questions, but raised many more. And those who have undertaken the troubling task of defining, explaining, and understanding Whythorne's manuscript (puzzling in its very existence) have revealed that there is no clear way forward. Operating under various assumptions, the three scholars who have addressed the actual form of Whythorne's manuscript, James Osborn, David Shore, and Andrew Mousley, have all produced different theories.²⁴⁶ The little evidence we have about Whythorne and his manuscript was outlined in Chapter 1, so any further assessment of Whythorne's manuscript remains speculative. But a careful reading of the text may lead us to reconsider its dating, form, and meaning. An exegesis of Whythorne's own words can produce, if not solid proof, at least a stronger hypothesis about his methods and motivations for creating such a book.

²⁴⁶James Osborn, Introduction to Whythorne (original orthography); David Shore, 'The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne: An Early Elizabethan Context for Poetry', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 17 (1981), pp. 72-86; Andrew Mousley, 'Renaissance Selves and Life Writing: The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 3, 3 (1990), pp. 222-230. Though considerably more than three scholars have explored Whythorne's manuscript, nearly all of these have taken Osborn's assumptions as fact and have not questioned the purpose, methodology, or form of the manuscript.

The first person to confront the puzzling form—and indeed puzzling existence—of Whythorne’s manuscript was its owner and editor James Osborn. In 1961 and 1962, his editions of the text established a number of assumptions about the manuscript, especially that it was the first autobiography in English. It was not until 1981 that any of these underlying assumptions were re-examined, when literary critic David Shore argued that the manuscript was not quite an autobiography but rather a collection of annotated poems.²⁴⁷ Later, in 1990 literary critic Andrew Mousley re-examined Whythorne’s text in an attempt to explain its existence.²⁴⁸ The three men disagree with each other on many (if not most) points. Turning now to the most significant and puzzling aspects of the manuscript, I will briefly summarize their theories before offering my own.

Why was it written?

The unique manuscript has elicited varied explanations for its existence, including some provided by Whythorne himself. James Osborn believed Whythorne’s text to be the first autobiography in English, but David Shore argued that this is not exactly the case—that the book is not *simply* an autobiography. Beginning by pointing to Whythorne’s original title, *A Book of Songs and Sonnets...*, Shore constructed a strong argument that Whythorne’s motivation was not to tell his life story, but to create a positive public reception of his poems by explaining their meaning. Shore argued that Whythorne’s poems could not quite stand alone; the poems need explanation in order to be truly understood. An examination of the manuscript does suggest that Whythorne thought the verses to be more important than the narrative;

²⁴⁷ Shore, ‘Elizabethan Context’, pp. 72-86.

²⁴⁸ Mousley, ‘Renaissance Selves’, pp. 222-230. Mousley was apparently unaware of Shore’s earlier study and addresses some questions that Shore previously answered.

the verses are usually written with a larger, clearer script with wider spacing.²⁴⁹ It is also clear in Whythorne's text that each verse was written for a very specific event in his life, which, Shore argued, was significant: 'it is verse written very much and deliberately not for all time but for an age'. Since each poem was written about one incident alone, Whythorne perhaps wanted to create 'the context and commentary that the *Autobiography* provides' in order for his poems to be better appreciated.²⁵⁰ Whythorne's creation of such an unusual manuscript, then, was not motivated by a desire 'to create a new English literary genre but simply to provide an adequately annotated collection of his very conventional poetry'.²⁵¹ As supporting evidence, Shore drew on Whythorne's text, taking a key excerpt from the section on travel. Whythorne listed the places he had visited, and said that he experienced much. But he did not write of his experiences, in the interest of his real goal: 'I will pass unto my purpose, which is to let you understand that two sonnets I made when I was in that country...' (his sonnets follow).²⁵² Clearly, in this instance at least, Whythorne's goal was not to write his life but to explain his verses.

The literary critic Ilona Bell took her lead from Shore, but placed the manuscript in a gendered context. Whythorne's book, she theorized, was built around poems he wrote for women, and so 'the prose sets out to explain the original lyric situation and the private female lyric audience to male readers who might otherwise fail to grasp the poems' "secret meaning".²⁵³ This is an intriguing idea, but a fully-encompassing explanation of Whythorne's manuscript, it seems, cannot be quite so neat. For his book contains a great many verses he wrote addressed to other men, or

²⁴⁹ Bodleian Library, MS Engl. Misc. c. 330.

²⁵⁰ Shore, 'Elizabethan Context', p. 77.

²⁵¹ Shore, 'Elizabethan Context', p. 81. Shore's analysis is convincing, however, as we have seen in Chapter 1, Whythorne's ignorance of his creation of a new literary genre does not necessarily mean that his book is not 'autobiography'.

²⁵² Whythorne, p. 49.

²⁵³ Ilona Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 62-63.

more commonly, to himself. Indeed the first verse in the manuscript, *My Faithful Friend*, was according to Whythorne written for a male friend, the next was his uncle's advice made into verse, and the next was a verse he wrote 'to ease my mind in [some] perplexity'.²⁵⁴ The manuscript features verses he wrote on his virginals, rhymed reminders to himself to beware certain dangers, versified prayers, and a great many songs written to assuage his own 'agony', and 'ease my mind'.²⁵⁵ Bell's observation that gender should be factored into an interpretation of the manuscript is quite right, but it was not the only element that made up Whythorne's world, and his work. Still, Shore's argument (and to some extent Bell's addition to the theory) that Whythorne's real motivation for creating the manuscript was to provide an explanation of his poems is convincing in part. The only problem is that Whythorne did not consider himself a poet. Indeed, the crucial fact that Whythorne was a musician has been underplayed or, more commonly, ignored by virtually all scholars working with his autobiography.

Whythorne believed himself primarily a musician and composer. To make this point we may begin by pointing, as Shore did, to Whythorne's own title for his manuscript: *A Book of Songs and Sonnets*. These were songs and ditties—verses set to music. Whythorne never called himself a 'poet,' nor his verses 'poems', referring to them instead as songs, sonnets, or ditties. To introduce each song, Whythorne used such phrases as 'I wrote on a piece of paper as thus following', and 'in the which agony I wrote thus', or 'and therefore I wrote thus', always rather carefully avoiding the word 'poem'. Indeed, in some cases, the ditty is introduced by phrases clearly implying music: 'I made and sung unto her this,' or 'I made this song somewhat dark and doubtful'; one verse is followed by 'to this foresaid sonnet I made a song of five

²⁵⁴ Whythorne, pp. 7-10.

²⁵⁵ For respective examples, see Whythorne, pp. 12, 18, 25, 27, 30.

parts'.²⁵⁶ In fact the only word Whythorne used which might seem to imply poetry rather than music is 'sonnet,' a word that today implies a certain form of poem. But in its sixteenth century context, the word often implied music. Sonnets, having many forms, were in many cases metered rhymes meant to be sung.²⁵⁷

Whythorne was a musician above all else. Throughout his text, Whythorne made clear that, though he sometimes found it necessary to 'demean' himself by working as a servant to nobility, he was first, foremost, and always, a musician. Indeed at a particularly low point in his life (experiencing what we might call an identity crisis), Whythorne determined to return to music, his true calling in life: '[Since I had proved] no such security and stability in any way that I had proved as I did in the profession of the teaching of music, I intended...to give myself wholly to the profession thereof and to none other'.²⁵⁸ So what would motivate Whythorne to advertise (or publish, for that matter) a collection of poems, when he clearly did not consider himself a poet? Still, Shore's argument that Whythorne's motivation was to promote public appreciation is convincing. Perhaps his theory need not be discarded, but modified: Whythorne's manuscript was intended to promote his *music elsewhere*, not his 'poems' *therein* contained, as I will further explain later.

While Shore was reluctant to see Whythorne's manuscript as something radically new, Andrew Mousley accepted Osborn's identification of it as the first autobiography in English. Mousley, though, attempted to place it neatly into the tradition of Renaissance self-fashioning, where, indeed the manuscript might seem less radically new. The book, he argued, was Whythorne's attempt to create a stable, exemplary self in a changing world. It was, therefore, not 'a new concern with the

²⁵⁶ Whythorne, pp. 34, 27, 20, 40, 31, 179 respectively.

²⁵⁷ Bruce Pattison, *Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance* (2nd edn, London, 1970), p. 90.

Pattison shows that the line between music and poetry in the sixteenth century was very fine indeed.

²⁵⁸ Whythorne, p. 140.

self, so much as an illustration of an intensified preoccupation with status and role' that inspired the book.²⁵⁹ Whythorne's seeming obsession with his own status led him, Mousley argued, to create a book containing 'a picture of consistency of virtue and action'. The problem was that Whythorne rarely succeeds in depicting himself as ideal. Indeed, his story is full of personal failure, embarrassment, rejection, and even his own deceit. In Mousley's mind, this was because Whythorne's idealization of himself was 'undermined by his continuing adaptability'.²⁶⁰ Mousley attempted to show that by quoting conflicting proverbs, Whythorne himself was conflicted: he did not know which 'ideal' to model.²⁶¹ But this takes Whythorne's proverbs out of their context, where the fact that they conflict with each other has no relevance. Indeed as Adam Fox has said, 'proverbs can seem inconsistent and contradictory unless seen in context. Only from the specific circumstances in which they are used do they derive their meaning'.²⁶² That Whythorne's text is a piece of idealized self-fashioning is a common assumption made by more than one analyst, but a look at his manuscript as a whole undermines this theory.²⁶³

The Beginning

In his opening line, we have Whythorne's own explanation for the existence of the manuscript. He made it for a friend, whom he addressed directly:

²⁵⁹ Mousley, 'Renaissance Selves', p. 228.

²⁶⁰ Mousley, 'Renaissance Selves', p. 229.

²⁶¹ Elizabeth Heale makes a similar argument in *Autobiography and Authorship in Renaissance Verse* (Basingstoke and New York, 2003), pp. 43-51. Heale argues that Whythorne did not differentiate between conflicting ideals and as a result embodied paradox. As her argument is so similar to Mousley's and as she does not directly address the questions of the form, intention, methodology of Whythorne's manuscript in her book, I have not engaged her work directly in this chapter for the sake of clarity.

²⁶² Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2002), p. 411.

²⁶³ In addition to Mousley and Heale, see Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Tracing a Heterosexual Erotics of Service in *Twelfth Night* and the Autobiographical Writings of Thomas Whythorne and Anne Clifford', *Criticism*, XL (Winter 1998), pp. 1-21. For more on self-fashioning, see Chapter 6.

My good friend, recalling to mind my promise made unto you, I have here sent you the copies of such songs and sonnets as I have made from time to time...[and], to gratify your good opinion had of me, [I] now lay open unto you the most part of all my private affairs and secrets, accomplished from my childhood until the day of the date hereof.²⁶⁴

But in the next sentence, Whythorne offers a second explanation: 'I do think it needful not only to show you the cause why I wrote them, but also to open my secret meaning in divers of them...lest you should think them to be made to a smaller purpose than I did mean'.²⁶⁵ Whythorne himself has outlined the two reasons (now theories) for the manuscript's existence. Osborn simply assumed that the literary conceit was true (Whythorne wrote it for a friend), while Shore was convinced that the second explanation was real (Whythorne wanted to promote his poetry). Mousley embraced Osborn's assumption but took it further, and tried to identify the 'good friend'. Admitting that there was no clear proof, he suggested that the 'good friend' was Elizabeth, Whythorne's future wife. The manuscript, he posited, was a gift given in exchange for Elizabeth's life story, and 'the exchange of life accounts may have been a way of "committing" themselves to each other'.²⁶⁶ Some notable evidence suggests otherwise.

Mousley's theory was based on Osborn's belief that the manuscript was written in 1576, a year before we know Whythorne married. While the dating itself is questionable (see next section), this is the only fact that would support Mousley's theory. But in operating, for the sake of argument, under the assumption that the manuscript was indeed written for his future wife, a reading of the text becomes alarmingly offensive. Near the beginning of the manuscript Whythorne dedicated pages and pages to a collection of misogynistic jokes and proverbs, including the following:

²⁶⁴ Whythorne, p. 1.

²⁶⁵ Whythorne, p. 1.

²⁶⁶ Mousley, 'Renaissance Selves', p. 225.

Like all women, but love them not: for they be like unto pitch and tar, the which one cannot handle very much, but his hands shall be defiled therewith. They be as slippery as ice, and will turn as the wind and weathercock. In craftiness, flattering, dissembling, and lying, they do excel men. High women be lazy, and low be proud. Fair be sluttish, and foul be proud.²⁶⁷

Whythorne closed the lengthy collection by admitting he found the proverbs amusing ('I could have laughed very well at them but yet I durst not for the tearing of my lips'), and he generally believed that men's honour was put far too often at risk by women ('so you may see what a goodly thing it is, when a man's honesty and credit doth depend and lie in his wife's tail').²⁶⁸ Returning to the subject regularly throughout the manuscript ('Yet to return again to the feminine sex...to the allurements, enticements and snares of women...'²⁶⁹), one can hardly believe that this text was written for any woman, let alone a woman he hoped to marry. Whythorne's characteristic concern with propriety and behaviour certainly would, it seems, prohibit him from giving her such a text, as it was virtually guaranteed to offend on a personal level. Add to this Whythorne's addressing the reader as 'sir,' and Mousley's theory seems highly unlikely.²⁷⁰ Shore's argument is strong that the conceit was literary, but on the possibility that it was not—that Whythorne was writing to a particular friend—it is difficult to believe that the friend was female.

How Was it Written?

Osborn's title, *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne* would seem to imply that, at some point later in life, Whythorne sat down and wrote his story. This is, essentially, Osborn's claim. Based on the events recounted in Whythorne's manuscript, Osborn dated the manuscript c.1576, when he believed it was most likely Whythorne wrote

²⁶⁷ Whythorne, p. 15. It seems the final line is merely dittography, and that the first 'proud' should have been 'loud'.

²⁶⁸ Whythorne, p. 17.

²⁶⁹ Whythorne, p. 21.

²⁷⁰ 'Now, sir, to come to the end of my purpose in these actions...' (p. 211).

the final draft of his manuscript. Osborn (and Mousley too) further surmised that, when Whythorne wrote his autobiography, he drew from a commonplace book, wherein he had written all his verses in chronological order. The poems, he said, were then used as ‘peg[s] on which to hang his narrative’.²⁷¹

Osborn showed that the manuscript was not a first draft, based mostly on the fact that it exhibited dittography (i.e., words and even large sections appear twice, revealing that the writer was copying a previous text without great concentration).²⁷² Another strong clue to Whythorne’s methodology is the paper fragment Osborn calls the ‘Bucer scrap’. Tucked into the extant manuscript, it shows on one side, a part of Whythorne’s song about Martin Bucer, written at Cambridge, and on the other, narrative text similar to that on the opposite side of the Bucer song in the actual manuscript. The verses on the scrap are in a very neat hand, while the margin is crowded with brackets, notes, and bits of additional information. It appears that the scrap is a piece of an earlier, ordinary spelling draft of the manuscript, and (which will be important later) that Whythorne made notes in the margins of the verses to help him fill in his narrative about the song for the next draft.²⁷³ The reasonable conclusion is that Whythorne was copying from some earlier text, and that the manuscript was certainly not a first draft.

Considering that no autobiography was published in England until the seventeenth century, Whythorne’s 1576 (?) book would have been pioneering indeed,

²⁷¹ Osborn, Introduction to Whythorne (original orthography), p. lv. I have used the term ‘poems’ as Osborn did, but I would distinguish them rather as songs.

²⁷² Osborn, Introduction to Whythorne (original orthography), p. lxiv. A note on the script: Whythorne’s signature on the front page of the manuscript is in quite different from the neat secretarial hand of the rest of the text. There are two possible explanations for this variance, the first being that the manuscript was indeed copied by a secretary, and not Whythorne himself. While there is nothing to show that this was not the case, it is equally likely that Whythorne himself was the scribe, and that his signature was distinct from his secretarial hand. Jonathan Goldberg has shown that this was not uncommon: *Writing Matter from the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford, 1990), pp. 234, 241.

²⁷³ Bodleian Library, Eng. MS misc. c. 330, f. 96 (back cover). See also Osborn, Introduction to Whythorne (original orthography), pp. lxiii-lxiv.

involving the creation of a new literary form: autobiography via poetry/song. One imagines that the author of such a text must have possessed an intensely creative, perhaps even ingenious mind, while also exhibiting a desire to break established rules and pave new ground. Does Whythorne exhibit any of these characteristics?

Whythorne was a great upholder of rules and propriety— in life as well as in music, for musicological analysis of Whythorne's compositions reveal that he was well versed in the rules of composition and stringently obeyed them.²⁷⁴ Indeed, the correct understanding and application of the rules of composition was the foundation of Whythorne's own definition of 'musician'. So one image of Whythorne as an ingenious trailblazer opposes the careful rule-following Whythorne at the other end of the spectrum. For David Shore, who felt Whythorne was no trailblazer, this led to a reconsideration of the form of the manuscript: was it really radically new, or was it merely a quirky form of annotation that had already been exhibited in books like Gascoigne's *Hundred Sundrie Flowers*?²⁷⁵ Shore argued that it was the latter, and emphasized that the author's intention was to create a book of annotated poetry, not to write a life story.²⁷⁶

But Shore did not go so far as to say Osborn's classification of the manuscript as 'autobiography' was wrong—he merely held that Whythorne's intentions were different. And in most other ways, Shore actually relied on and confirms Osborn's dating and analysis of the manuscript. In fact, every subsequent scholar working with

²⁷⁴ I discussed this in greater depth in my MA thesis but lack the space to reproduce it here ('Becoming a Gentleman: Thomas Whythorne and the Pursuit of Honour in Early Modern England', MA diss., Utah State University, 2006, pp. 50-54.) For more on Whythorne's definition of music, see Chapter 3.

²⁷⁵ 'The Adventures Passed by Master F.J.' is similar to Whythorne's text, in that a man's experience is recorded as well as the text of notes passed back and forth between characters. See David Shore, 'Whythorne's Autobiography and the Genesis of Gascoigne's Master F.J.', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 12 (1982), pp. 159- 178; and George Gascoigne, *A Hundred Sundry Flowers*, (London, 1573, reprint, Menston, 1970).

²⁷⁶ The pioneering nature of Whythorne's music is undeniable: both collections were the first of their kind in England, coming years before anything of the like would be printed again. So in contrast to Shore's opinion, this chapter may, by the end, support the image of Whythorne as a creative, perhaps even visionary thinker. See also Chapter 6.

Whythorne has assumed Osborn's analyses to be correct, including the beliefs that the manuscript was an autobiography, and that it was written about 1576 by a forty-eight-year-old Whythorne.

In 1990 Andrew Mousley produced a more elaborate theory of Whythorne's methodology. There were, he said, three drafts of the manuscript: the first was a commonplace book, in which Whythorne wrote all his poems, favourite quotes, proverbs, and thoughts. Then (drawing on Osborn's dating) Mousley theorized that in 1576, Whythorne wrote the second draft, an autobiography based on the commonplace book, for his 'good friend', Elizabeth Stoughton. Then, according to Mousley, sometime later, Whythorne decided to publish it, and produced the third draft, adding the preface at the beginning and filling out the text. Mousley can offer very little evidence to support this theory, but it is an interesting idea.

Did Whythorne intend to publish the manuscript? Osborn left the question unanswered, reminding readers only that it was a mystery. Another literary critic, Elizabeth Heale, mentioned the possibility only in passing, noting that 'the intimate and personal nature of much of the narrative makes publication unlikely'.²⁷⁷ But both Shore and Mousley believed that publication must have been Whythorne's goal. Adding to his argument that the 'good friend' was merely a conceit, Shore argued that 'whatever revelations his friend may have made, they are unlikely to have been of the magnitude of a manuscript several hundred pages long. The event seems inadequate to explain so elaborate a response'.²⁷⁸ Mousley would agree that a gift of such magnitude was unlikely, but argued that the manuscript was rather an expanded version of the original gift to Elizabeth. But of Mousley's theory the central question is, why? If the gift had already been given (and fair lady won), what would motivate

²⁷⁷ Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship*, p. 41.

²⁷⁸ Shore, 'Elizabethan Context', p. 80. It should be noted that Whythorne's *manuscript* is not 'several hundred pages long' but only about fifty. However, in print, his narrative does reach that length.

Whythorne to edit, add to, and print such a text? His motivations remain as mysterious as his methods.²⁷⁹

The Ending

As we have seen in Chapter I, the end of the extant manuscript leaves the reader puzzled: after pages and pages of ordered, chronological narrative, the manuscript suddenly becomes an academic treatise, then a list of seventy-one unannotated songs, preceded only by the statement, ‘And now I began anew to read and rhyme, and to consider again of worldly affairs, and to make ever as my leisure served me. And the ditties have I written here followingly as I made them...’²⁸⁰ The shift is certainly jarring, especially since Whythorne’s narrative does not end in a sensible place, or offer any kind of closure to his story. But the presence of a catch-word, ‘lyk,’ on the last page of the manuscript indicates that it did not end there. Perhaps, in what was lost, Whythorne took up his narrative again, and followed it to the end of his life. However even if this were the case, the strange tone shifts and plot jumps are still quite odd. Osborn dealt with the oddity by believing that it was a collection of poems ‘for which the music was still to be composed’.²⁸¹ He further surmised that the skipping and unexpected halt in narrative indicated the time the manuscript was written: since nothing beyond 1576 was mentioned, it must have been written then.²⁸² Osborn did not further explore the lack of closure; Mousley ignored the idiosyncrasy as well. Only David Shore directly addressed the problem, suggesting that ‘obviously a degree of selection was involved in compiling the manuscript. It seems to me

²⁷⁹ See Chapter 6.

²⁸⁰ Whythorne, p. 212.

²⁸¹ Whythorne, p. xlix.

²⁸² Osborn’s choice of date is odd, for Whythorne never actually mentioned anything that is datable later than 1571. I can only assume that when Whythorne wrote, ‘And now I began anew to read and rhyme, and to consider again of worldly affairs, and to make ever as my leisure served me’ (p. 212), Osborn believed he was referring to the death of his patron the Archbishop, which occurred in 1576.

probable that the final group of poems comprises items that did not find a natural place in any of Whythorne's chosen narrative units, and that he decided to include them using a rather vague and catch-all statement of occasion'.²⁸³ But this does not seem characteristic of the fastidious and careful Whythorne revealed in the manuscript. And most notably, if Whythorne's intention was to promote his songs by explaining the story behind them (as Shore argued), listing over seventy under a 'catch-all' statement at the end would hardly seem to suit his purposes. If his songs needed annotation to be appreciated, he would not leave so many unexplained. And if the manuscript were intended for publication, as seems most likely, it is difficult to believe that Whythorne's ordered narrative would intentionally come to a halt so strangely, offering no closure to his life story. There is something missing in our analysis of Whythorne's manuscript, and a careful reading of this puzzling ending reveals many clues—to the manuscript, and indeed to Whythorne's own life.

A Likely Story

In what follows I will argue that a number of more likely answers can be found in Whythorne's manuscript, including the date of the manuscript, the question of whether it was intended for print, and the identification of the 'good friend'. I also believe that the missing parts of Whythorne's life story—i.e., the end—can be reconstructed from the manuscript's strange ending.

I suggest that the manuscript was begun in 1571 but still under revision in the 1590s, late in Whythorne's life. In 1571, when his newly published music was not selling as fast as he would have liked, the ever-persistent Whythorne devised a plan: he would create a book that explained the stories behind his songs:

²⁸³ Shore, 'Elizabethan Context', p. 86.

And therefore I had devised a mean to make it known and to further the knowledge thereof as thus. I told [John Day] that I had written into a book all the songs and sonnets which I had made to be sung with my music... And if he thought it good, as I did, to put this book in print, I thought that it would be an occasion to manifest and make known the same the more and farther off. For although that the book hath in it no great excellency of matter and manner, yet heads that do delight to know every man's device in writing will for novelty's sake have one of the books when they be printed. So that, when it is commonly known abroad (and the rather by the means of these said books) that there is such a music to be bought, they who do desire to have variety of music will the sooner procure to have it. The which device of mine the printer liked well.²⁸⁴

Surely if people knew the history behind his music, they would be more interested in learning to perform it. Of this advertising collection, Osborn says 'nothing further is known,' but perhaps the answer was right under his nose.²⁸⁵ If we agree with Shore that the motivation of Whythorne's manuscript was to promote his verses, it seems quite possible that Whythorne's manuscript is this very project. For if we read carefully, we note that Whythorne had a six-book plan underway after the publication of his 1571 *Songs*. Whythorne mentioned it almost in passing, while discussing a conversation with Henry Thorne, when he told his friend, 'I would print in a book by themselves all the sonnets that I have set to my foresaid music, so that book will make six books that I do set forth in this whole work'.²⁸⁶ Notably, Whythorne calls it '*this* whole work,' a phrase which seems to include the project he must then have been working on: *this* manuscript, his *Book of Songs and Sonnets*. With the projected six books in mind, we can then turn to the close of the manuscript's narrative, where Whythorne enthusiastically listed his goals in music publishing:

Now, being entered again into the conceit and vein of making of music, I entered into a determination (if it should please God to further mine intent) not to leave off the same till I had made forty duos or songs of two parts. And also... forty songs of three parts, to answer to the duos aforesaid. Also I determined to increase the number of the printed songs of four parts, being nigh about forty, unto a twenty-six more.... Then whereas I made and printed but

²⁸⁴ Whythorne, p. 180.

²⁸⁵ See Osborn's note in Whythorne, p. 181, n.1.

²⁸⁶ Whythorne, p. 180.

twenty songs of five parts, I now intended to make twenty more unto them. Beside all the which I intended to make some songs of six and seven parts, whatsoever I did else. Now sir, to come to the end of my purpose in these actions, the ditties that shall be set unto those foresaid songs shall be all of mine own device and making (except those that shall be of Latin).²⁸⁷

To assign each projected music book a number, we are left with:

1. Forty duos
2. Forty songs of three parts
3. Twenty-six more songs of four parts
4. Twenty more songs of five parts
5. Songs of six and seven parts²⁸⁸

Five would be of music, but what of the sixth in this ‘whole work’? It must have been his planned book of verses—his autobiography—created to explain the songs and advertise the music books. This manuscript, then, was created not to popularize the ‘poems’ included in the text as Shore suggests, but as a ‘making-of’ feature whose purpose was to popularize his music to be printed. Whythorne began to show his friends his work in progress:

At this time I did show the songs and sonnets joined with my music unto divers of my friends, and also did let them hear much of mine sung. Whereupon certain of them, who were learned, did write verses in Latin in the commendation of the whole work, the which verses they did send to me. And then I did go to London, where I plied my time all that I could to set forth my music in print.²⁸⁹

It is clear that Whythorne played an active role in setting his music to print, and this will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 6.

Whythorne’s note that all ditties were his own ‘except those that shall be of Latin’ was probably more significant than it first seems. Whythorne’s books were created with the encouragement of his friend, Henry Thorne, who himself published

²⁸⁷ Whythorne, p. 211.

²⁸⁸ I have taken Whythorne’s language ‘six and seven parts’ to imply that he meant them to be in one book (as, according to Whythorne consorts of this number were fairly unusual, four parts being most in demand); all the other books are separated by full stops.

²⁸⁹ Whythorne, p. 179.

two books, including a translation of a Latin text, *Phisicke for the Soule* in c.1568.²⁹⁰

It is in fact quite possible that Whythorne introduced the book to Thorne in the first place, for he mentioned giving the book to a friend around 1562: ‘I had a book the which I used to read...(it being a very comfortable book for a distressed and an afflicted mind), the which is named *A Medicine or Physic for the Soul*. This book a friend of mine desired to have of me; and I...gave it unto him’.²⁹¹ It is notable that 1568, the year Thorne’s translation was published, was also the year Whythorne first decided to try to publish his music. Perhaps in witnessing quite closely his friend’s progression from initial idea to success in print, Whythorne decided to try it himself.

It is not surprising then that Whythorne included a Latin verse written by Thorne in his first publishing effort, the 1571 *Songes*. After the *Songes* were published (as we have seen in Chapter I), Whythorne immediately went into the country to show his new book to one of his friends; again it seems likely that this was Henry Thorne, who had introduced him to the idea in the first place. So in his short comment, ‘except those that shall be of Latin’, Whythorne was acknowledging his close friend’s expertise. Thorne was, according to Whythorne, aware of his six projected works (and in a laudatory poem Thorne said of Whythorne’s work, ‘*ter binisque dedit mundo*’),²⁹² and Whythorne included even more of Thorne’s dedicatory verses in the manuscript. Perhaps, then, Whythorne’s ‘good friend’ was actually Henry Thorne.

²⁹⁰ Henry Thorne, *Phisicke for the soule verye necessarie to be vsed in the agonie of death, and in those extreme and moste perillous seasons, aswell for those, which are in good health, as those, which are endowed with bodily sicknesse. Translated out of Latine into Englishe, by H. Thorne*. (London, 1568) STC2 19894 and 19893a.7. The book was reprinted in 1570 and 1578. The other book, *The Confutation of Folly* (London, 1584), STC2: 24040.5, was another religious dialogue. Nothing else is known of Henry Thorne.

²⁹¹ Whythorne, p. 105.

²⁹² Whythorne (original orthography), p. 219.

This is not to discount Shore's point that the 'good friend' was a conceit—clearly Whythorne intended to publish the book, not simply present it as a gift. But I would suggest that the conceit is not *merely* a conceit; it might have also been a nod to Henry Thorne. Such a dedication also provided a good 'excuse' for Whythorne, faced with the stigma of print.²⁹³ In the end, the identity of the 'good friend' can never be proven, but it is interesting to speculate.

The puzzling end of the manuscript becomes especially useful in dating the manuscript, as well as finding clues for the missing part of Whythorne's story. Careful analysis reveals that Whythorne was working on the project late in his life—into the 1590 as he revised the text and revisited the events of his life to produce a newer draft of the manuscript. But despite Whythorne's ambitious six-book plan, in the end, only one more music book was printed (1590 *Duos*), and the advertising manuscript remained unfinished. But this is not to say that the work was abandoned. This was probably a project Whythorne pursued to a very old age, and it is quite possible he died before he could complete his projected six-book *magnum opus*. While much remains shadowy, it is clear that Osborn's dating of the manuscript to 1576 has been accepted too hastily as fact.

There are several clues from the manuscript itself that support this claim. The cover page of the manuscript shows on one side the title of the book, while on the other a woodcut of the author was sewn onto the page.²⁹⁴ This woodcut was printed in both Whythorne's 1571 *Songs* and his 1590 *Duos*, which would leave the manuscript datable to a wide range of dates, but for one remarkable detail. The

²⁹³ Composers could maintain *discrezione* by pretending that their patrons requested the printing. For more the stigma of print and music, see Chapter 6.

²⁹⁴ Bodleian Library, MS Eng. misc. c. 330. Sometime since, the thread was removed; the image is now glued to the page but sew holes clearly indicates that it was not always so.

woodcut was altered very slightly for the 1590 printing, darkening the area behind the scallop shell, and the image on the extant manuscript is from the 1590 *Duos*.



Figure 2.1: *Thomas Whythorne's coat of arms, from 1590 Duos*

The title of the manuscript, written on the opposite side of the page, fits inside the sew holes from the image on the reverse. This would seem to indicate that Whythorne compiled the book after his music went to print in 1590. Still, there is a possibility that the image was sewn on in the 1590s fourteen years after the manuscript was ‘written’, and this is the assumption one must make in order to support Osborn’s dating. But consider a few more details.

The ‘musical scrap’, a fragment tucked into the extant manuscript, lists in Whythorne’s hand the great musicians of the time, noting names, university degrees, as well as positions. Thomas Morley, John Dowland, and ‘Mr. Farnabye’. Both Thomas Morley and Giles Farnabye were listed among ‘Bachelors of music’ awarded bachelor’s degrees in late 1592. This would date the musical scrap to late that year at

the very earliest.²⁹⁵ This, Osborn surmised, merely shows that Whythorne maintained an interest in the musical profession later in life. But why would we find it tucked into a manuscript he had begun but abandoned, unfinished, seventeen years before? It may have been more than happenstance that placed the scrap in the manuscript—perhaps Whythorne was in fact actually working on the manuscript in 1592. The musical scrap was found tucked among the pages of the manuscript that contain Whythorne’s discussion of the musical profession in England.²⁹⁶ Is it merely coincidental that inside a draft of Whythorne’s discussion of the musical profession, we find a scrap of paper dealing with professional musicians? This seems to be a small, but not insignificant, indication that Whythorne was working from his old manuscript to create a new, updated, draft of his treatise on music in England, and he would have been writing it in 1592 or later.

Whythorne’s narrative ended shortly after he was appointed Music Master to Archbishop Parker. For such a seemingly momentous event in the musician’s life, a reader might wonder that he devoted so little of his narrative to it.²⁹⁷ This is where the story ends, though there is no closure, no concluding thoughts or any indication that indeed, it is the end. It is certainly not in keeping with the rest of manuscript, where Whythorne offered closing reflections on most events, clearly marking the beginning and end of stories, and forming a neat chronological narrative. This oddity is perhaps explained by presuming that Whythorne simply had not lived the ending yet. But as evidence shows that he at least picked up the manuscript late in life, we must search for more explanation. Whythorne’s story was unfinished in this draft of

²⁹⁵ Engl. Ms. Misc. c.330, f. 67. Also reproduced in Whythorne (original orthography), p. 300.

²⁹⁶ Engl. Ms. Misc. c.330, f. 64-82; pp. 193-202 in modern spelling edition.

²⁹⁷ Neither Mousley nor Shore has attempted to explain this oddity; Osborn also ignored it, merely assuming that sometime around this event Whythorne stopped writing—thus dating the manuscript to 1576.

the manuscript, but a newer draft perhaps was in progress, where the stories about the songs at the end of the manuscript may well have been filled in.

We know something about Whythorne's methodology from another fragment, the 'Bucer scrap', an earlier draft of part of Whythorne's narrative about the song he wrote about the exhumation and subsequent rehabilitation of Martin Bucer's remains during the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth.²⁹⁸ The fragment shows that Whythorne drew from previous, unannotated lists of his songs, filling the margins with notes to help himself produce a narrative. Therefore it is reasonable to believe that the seventy one songs at the end of the manuscript were simply awaiting annotation, similar to the earlier Bucer draft. Whythorne himself explained this very process, noting that his narration was partly done first when he wrote the songs down, but that much was added to later as he produced the manuscript: 'part of the...discourses I made and wrote when I did make these songs and sonnets; and now, as more matter hath come unto my remembrance, so have I augmented the same'.²⁹⁹

There are signs of this 'augmenting' process in the seventy songs. Next to each one, Whythorne drew a small box containing the words, 'this hath a note of [blank] parts.' It is clear that Whythorne intended to fill in the blanks at a later time, indicating how many parts the composed music had. Five of the songs' blanks have actually been filled in, indicating that the sonnet 'hath a note of 5 parts', or three parts, or whichever. It seems Whythorne was in the process of coordinating his manuscript with his music: as he finished compositions, or readied them for print, he recorded the music's existence in the manuscript of all his verses. Knowing that he was planning five new music publications, this is not surprising. As he readied his 'advertising' manuscript, perhaps he was making sure that each verse was indeed in

²⁹⁸ Whythorne was present at the ceremony to rehabilitate Bucer's honour at Cambridge in 1560. See N. Scott Amos, 'Bucer, Martin (1491–1551)', ODNB.

²⁹⁹ Whythorne, p. 1.

one of his projected music books, and vice versa. After ensuring that each ‘poem’ was also printed in musical form, he could then continue to ‘augment’ the verses with the stories of the circumstances of their composition to produce a complete advertisement for all his compositions.

All the songs annotated in the manuscript are arranged chronologically, and we may safely assume the case was the same for the seventy at the end. So if the manuscript’s end was not simply a catch-all collection of poems as Shore suggests, and if we recognize the possibility that the manuscript was a draft in progress, and also that he was working on it very late in life, then the logical conclusion is that the songs, chronologically arranged, *are* the rest of the story, awaiting ‘augmentation’. If this is the case, and the songs were indeed written after 1572, we may be able to read between the lines of the songs to reconstruct the rest of his life story.

Perhaps the best way to summarize the content and themes of the remaining songs is to do so graphically. Below is a list of the song titles in the order they appear, grouped where possible according to subject/theme:

Title	Subject/Theme
Of time	Time attaining and revealing all things; wisdom
Otherwise of time	
Time tries the truth	
Of needful things oft harmful	Virtue
Of counsel giving	
Of things of most men desired and to many most dangerous	Love, passion
Of things that do sometimes make the wise to seem fools	
Of things that we do carry about with us, and yet most times they do carry us	
Of things that we do most set by, and are least sure of	
Such experience is gotten in time as maketh wise	Wisdom and youth
A man’s mind is wavering and full of passions	Wavering emotions
Of the proud man and of such as do fear God	Righteous behaviour rewarded by God
Of riches well or ill gotten	
The Lord made us that we should serve Him and that we should do good unto others	
How we should win us honour	

The labour of the good and fruits of the wicked	
Salvator mundi domine	
Of things that do abate pride	
Of humility	
Of patience	
The reward of those who do fear, or not fear God	
Of knowledge and ignorance	Knowledge separating man from beast
Of those that do take many things in hand at once	Taking on too much
Of trusting	Betrayal and jealousy
Of those that can keep no counsel	
Of three things which be seldom or never cured	
Of being overlight	Puzzling behaviour of a woman
Nothing is certain	Changing behaviour to avoid 'mishap'
Of troubles well sent, by the attempt of the S.	Troubles sent by God to teach a lesson
His heart revived when the S. fled ³⁰⁰	
Of fame	Haughty pride (of a woman?), fame
Of pride and humanity	
Of the swiftest thing in the world	Value of secrecy, forgiveness and controlling oneself
Of virtue	
Of clemency	
Of overcoming appetites, with other lusts hurtful	
Of overmuch offensive speech	Betrayal, hope, lies, and untamed will
How to use a dissembling friend	
Hope the most comfortablest thing in the world	
Of diligence	
Of maintaining the truth	
Of untamed will	
Otherwise of will	
Of winning	
A good motion of fancy	
Of 'Had I wist'	
Of the mean estate	Regret, repentance, wisdom and acceptance
Try ere thou trust	
Of a contented mind	
The tongue of a wise man is in his heart, but the heart of a fool is in his tongue	
Of the covetous man	
Of things that do good and harm	Pain and sorrow
The beginning of the 71 st Psalm	Appealing for help from confusion
Of beauty	Beauty fades to reveal vice
The good estate of a happy life	Virtue makes happiness
Of fruitless friends or foes	Bad friends, secrets betrayed
Of unfeigned faith	
The thought is free	
Of secret things	

³⁰⁰ 'The S.' is puzzling; no satisfying hypothesis has yet been found. Perhaps he refers to a 'Seducer'?

Of vows making	
A persuasion to patience	Appealing to God for patience
Otherwise of the same	
Of hope	
Of felicity	
How to assuage anger	
Psalm 96	Praising God, who will judge all people
Audi vide tace	'Hear and see and hold thy peace'
The guiltless thought sets fame at naught	Flickering fame
It is more miserable to be born into the world than to die and be buried	Death, release, and happiness
No man is happy until that he happily dieth	

Table 2.1: *Thomas Whythorne's seventy-one unannotated song titles and thematic elements*

Though certainly no specific events can be surmised, the themes of the songs are at least suggestive. Dwelling at length on betrayal, untrue friends, and lies, Whythorne's life appeared to continue to be full of troubles—this time perhaps not with prospective mates but with his own wife. We know nothing of Whythorne's marriage outside of these songs and some fragments of evidence; still it is surprising how highly suggestive these fragments are. In 1577 (a few years after the narrative ended), Whythorne married Elizabeth Stoughton in her parish of St. Martin in the Fields. Elizabeth was a 'spinster': both Whythorne and she were marrying for the first time. Perhaps his wooing of Elizabeth is reflected in the group of songs about love and passion that begin the set of un-'augmented' songs. But Whythorne's songs soon turn to darker subjects: betrayal, jealousy, secrecy, lies, and revisiting the wisdom of one's vows resurface again and again. Perhaps Whythorne's marriage, so long awaited, turned out to be an unhappy one. Of hard evidence we have little, but we can add to the songs' themes a few more bits of telling information.

Whythorne's nuncupative will (see Chapter I for full text) contains one especially revealing detail. Upon being asked to whom he would leave his belongings, Whythorne said, 'all I have I leave unto my wife, *for I have none other to*

give it unto'.³⁰¹ Osborn appreciated this line because it indicated Whythorne had no children, but it also suggests a tension in his relationship.³⁰² Certainly a doting husband would not leave his possessions to his wife so reluctantly. Add to this the fact that Elizabeth remarried about ten weeks later at St. Mary Abchurch,³⁰³ and a story begins to suggest itself. Elizabeth married Robert Sowche, leading Osborn to conclude that she proved yet again that women 'are as slippery as ice and will turn like the wind and weathercock'.³⁰⁴ Osborn would seem to believe that Whythorne, given his fate, was at least justified in quoting all the misogynistic proverbs he did. But perhaps the relationship is more causal than coincidental: if Whythorne was still drafting and editing his manuscript late in life, his experience with a troublesome (perhaps wayward) wife might have actually inspired the inclusion of so many misogynistic proverbs and stories of bad women. Looking back on his life, perhaps Whythorne was processing and puzzling over all his relationships with women: they had always brought trouble. If this was the case, one particular passage becomes even more meaningful. After a Heywood-like collection of misogynistic proverbs crudely linked with narrative, Whythorne turned thoughtful:

For he that is known to be a notorious cuckold cannot be taken upon quests, and is barred of divers functions and callings of estimation in the commonwealth and a man defamed: so that you may see what a goodly thing it is, when a man's honesty and credit doth depend and lie in his wife's tail. Therefore, in mine opinion, it is not good for a man to be too curious, and to search too narrowly, to know the truth of his wife's folly that way, if by chance she hath borne a man more than she ought to do. For if he be known to know that his wife is a strumpet, and yet doth keep her still, he shall be reputed not only to be a cuckold, but also a witwold. And beside, that giveth cause to his wife (except the grace of God doth turn her heart) to continue in her lewdness still. If he do put her from him, yet thereby he denounceth himself to be a cuckold for ever after. Wherefore it is best that, whatsoever he doth think of his ill wife, except it be too apparent to all the world or to his

³⁰¹ Guildhall Library, MS 9051/5, Records of the Archdeacon's Court, 1596, f. 50.

³⁰² Osborn, Epilogue to Whythorne, p. 231.

³⁰³ Guildhall Library, MS 7666, St. Mary Abchurch Births, Marriages, and Deaths, 1596.

³⁰⁴ Osborn, Epilogue to Whythorne, p. 232.

danger or undoing, never to be known thereof, but to tell her what is said of her, and thereupon to persuade her and to counsel her to a better life.³⁰⁵

A few lines later, Whythorne insisted that a strumpet wife should first be reminded that she is breaking ‘the Commandment of God, which saith, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*”’ This is one of the very rare times in the narrative text when Whythorne emphasized text (his italics).³⁰⁶ Perhaps the words hit closer to home than may at first be assumed; perhaps he had even more experience with problem women than we have read; perhaps it was in fact his immediate experience with a misbehaving woman that led him to focus so much on the troublesome women in his life.³⁰⁷

A printed fragment at the British Library adds another intriguing piece to the puzzle of Whythorne’s manuscript. It is a single piece of paper on which is printed Adrian Schaell’s Latin poem, ‘*In libros Thomae Whithorni Octostichon*’, in praise of Whythorne’s music. The fragment has been identified as John Day’s work and dated to 1571.³⁰⁸ It appears to be a page from the front of the bassus part book of Whythorne’s 1571 *Songes*. Strangely, though, the document does not match the one extant copy of the *Songes*. The decorative marks at top and bottom are not the same, and in one version Adrian Schaell’s initials are printed below his name while in the other they are not. This is curious indeed, a tantalizing hint that there remains a great deal we may never know about Whythorne and his publishing activities.

For an incomplete manuscript, the ending is surprisingly appropriate. Both of Whythorne’s final two songs reveal an author contemplating death and assessing the meaning of his life:

It is more miserable to be born into the world than to die and be buried

³⁰⁵ Whythorne, p. 17.

³⁰⁶ MS Eng. misc. c. 330, f. 8.

³⁰⁷ For more on women see Chapter 5.

³⁰⁸ British Library, Harleian Manuscripts 5936 [325], *In libros Thomae Whithorni Octostichon*, 1571; the fragment is also listed in the Short Title Catalogue as STC2 25584.

For to be born as infants be,
The st< > so to set by,
As in their state whose end we see,
Because they're rid of misery.
Lament we should at children's birth,
And at their death to show some mirth.

No man is happy until that he happily dieth

The worldlings judge that man happy
That worldly wealth hath at his will;
And that honour doth set on high,
Whereby he may his will fulfill.
But Solon said, none was happy
Till happily that he did die.³⁰⁹

That the manuscript is unfinished may be explained a number of ways: it was merely a precursor to the final draft, which does not survive; or, Whythorne lost interest in the project; or, Whythorne died while the project was still underway. But with a number of clues nudging the date of the manuscript much later, Osborn's 1576 dating is at least worth a second look. The analyses of Osborn, Shore and Mousley can likewise be revisited and re-evaluated. Though it must remain only a hypothesis, I suggest that what we have in this manuscript are the memories and reflections of an older man, reworking a manuscript he began much earlier. If we take Whythorne's prologue for truth, his story would go 'from beginning unto the very end', and perhaps it does.

In his first edition of the manuscript Osborn raised a number of questions: 'When was it written? To whom was it addressed? Is it a first draft? Did Whythorne put it aside once he had written it, or did he go over it frequently in later years?' These questions and more Osborn is resigned to regard as 'impossible to answer', but Whythorne left us more clues than we might have thought.³¹⁰ We can come closer to

³⁰⁹ MS Eng. misc. c. 330, f. 91v. < > indicates manuscript damage.

³¹⁰ Osborn, Introduction to Whythorne (original orthography), p. lxi.

the answers to all of these questions and more through a careful analysis of the text itself. The new dating of the manuscript is important not just for the sake of historical accuracy, or even for the dating of his proverbs, words, and phrases Whythorne used, some of which may be the first recorded use.³¹¹ But understanding that Whythorne was writing later in life, as an old man, provides answers to other aspects of the manuscript. Why does it end so abruptly? Why the remarkable level of self-scrutiny? In short, why did he create an autobiography? These questions are all closer to being answered. And by reading between the lines of the end of the manuscript, we can also come closer to understanding why Whythorne seemed obsessed with the roles of women in his life, and his turns on fortune's wheel.

Whythorne's manuscript displays the ingredients that produced England's first autobiography: a writer's natural inclination to think in terms of the big picture, a collection of songs inspired by life events recorded as they were written in chronological order, a desire to elucidate those songs' meanings for readers, chronic bad luck, a wayward wife, and a desire to work out the value and meaning of existence. These factors came together in one rather unremarkable man to create something remarkable indeed.

³¹¹ Mark Eccles has done the useful task of noting all Whythorne's uses of words and proverbs that antedate OED, or whose senses are not listed in OED at all. 'Words and Proverbs from Thomas Whythorne', *Notes and Queries*, 21, 11 (November 1974), pp. 405-407.

Chapter 3

THE MUSIC PROFESSION AND MINSTRELS

Now judge you what frenzy and madness remaineth in those blockheads and dolts, who will so utterly condemn [music]. There is none that do despise it but such as be either delighted to drudge and toil for their livings in servile and filthy trades, or else be ignorant in all sorts of learnings.

-Whythorne

Whythorne began the last major section of his manuscript with a self-confident assertion: ‘Because it should not be thought that I stayed to write [a treatise on music] for that I could not do it, I do now mean to make you a witness what I can say for music’.³¹² What follows is a ‘praise of music’, listing great historical figures who loved music and recounting stories of musical miracles: a man delivered from ravaging wolves by a bagpipe tune, horses readied for war by the sound of drums, babies soothed by instruments, fish lured into nets by song, and even a drowning man saved by a dolphin who had earlier heard him singing.³¹³ These types of meditations on the virtues of music are not at all unusual for the period;³¹⁴ indeed Whythorne’s text mimics Castiglione’s praise of music in his highly influential *Book of the Courtier*.³¹⁵ What makes Whythorne’s text unique, however, is the fact that he moved on from praise to a discussion of the state of the music profession itself. In

³¹² Whythorne, p. 182.

³¹³ Whythorne, pp. 200-202.

³¹⁴ For the most recent collection and discussions of these ideas and beliefs in early modern England, see Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 32-70; and Jonathan Willis, *Church music and Protestantism in post-Reformation England: Discourses, Sites and Identities* (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT, 2010), pp. 11-38.

³¹⁵ First published in 1528, *The Courtier* was not translated into English until 1561, but Englishmen (including Whythorne himself) were already reading and modeling on the Italian version. The format of the Count’s speech, ‘For I shall enter into a large sea of the praise of music’ is strikingly similar to Whythorne’s as well as many other published venerations of music. Beginning by hearkening back to the classical world and then citing great men and ‘wise philosophers’ who loved music, Castiglione proceeds to recount examples of music’s miracles and extols its ability to soothe ‘all worldly pains and griefs’. This is precisely the pattern Whythorne adopted. Baldasare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby (with Introduction by W.H.D. Rouse, London, 1959), pp. 75-76.

this he was entering new territory, and his assertions have since made him one of historians' few authorities on the social structure of the music world in early modern England. He discussed the rules and ranks of the profession in England, as well as its changes over time. As he has often been cited as an authority, and his text will be so essential to this chapter, it is worth quoting at length:

Now I will touch on the general estimation of music... Ye shall understand that in this our realm it was one of the trades ... allowed for such gentlemen to live by as were younger brothers [with] neither lands nor fees ... to maintain them... In time past music was chiefly maintained by cathedral churches, abbeys, colleges, parish churches, chauntries, guilds, fraternities, etc. But when the abbeys ... were suppressed, then went music into decay. To speak of music in houses, ye shall understand that diverse noblemen and women in time past, imitating the Prince, would have organists and singingmen... But that imitation is also left. Then for such as serve for private recreation in houses, which were for the nobility and worshipful, these were no less esteemed than the others; till time that the rascal and off-scum of that profession who be, or ought to be, called minstrels (although nowadays many do name them musicians); these, I say, did and do make it common, by offering it to every Jack, going about every place and country for the same purpose...

Now ... for the Church, you do and shall see it so slenderly maintained ... [that] ye shall have few or none remaining, except it be a few singingmen and players on musical instruments. Of the which ye shall find a very few or none that can make a good lesson of descant; and yet these would be named and accounted musicians, although there be none worthy of that name, except they can make songs of two, three, four parts and so upward, according to the true rules thereof, as is before said... I cannot here leave out or let pass to speak of another sort that do live by music and yet are no musicians at all. And those be they who, after they have learned a little to sing pricksong ... by and by they will usurp on music, and account and call themselves musicians. Of the which pettifoggers of music there be both schoolmasters, singingmen, and minstrels.

Here, peradventure, you would say that I have given occasion...to draw away the good wills of some who do favour music, because I do make such distinctions of the degrees and sorts of the lovers and professors of music, and of those who be no musicians indeed; and will not allow the meanest sort of them the name of musicians as well as the best sort. But they that love the furtherance of the estimation of music ... will not mislike that which I have now written therein, but rather allow mine opinion; because that it is a chaos or a confused lump of degrees and sorts heaped up in a bundle ... whereby the science hath of late been the less esteemed of many...

And if music were not a virtue to be esteemed of, would so many saints and holy men and women and also wise and learned men, have learned, used and esteemed of it...? Now judge you what frenzy and madness remaineth in those blockheads and dolts, who will so utterly condemn it.

There is none that do despise it but such as be either delighted to drudge and toil for their livings in servile and filthy trades, or else be ignorant in all sorts of learnings.³¹⁶

Whythorne goes on to lay out a hierarchy of music professionals, which will be quoted later. Naturally his detailed description has made him an authoritative source for early modern historians.³¹⁷ In his characteristic conversational style, he covered all major aspects of music that contemporary writers and modern historians alike have found intriguing: the supposed virtue of music, the hierarchy of the profession, and the changes in the profession over the century. But is the picture Whythorne painted for his readers an accurate reflection of reality? He certainly did not shy away from bold declarations that would potentially ‘draw away the good wills of some’, carrying on in the interest of combating the ‘blockheads and dolts’ of the world. Diana Poulton’s statement, then, that Whythorne’s treatise contains ‘calm statements of fact, containing none of the proselytizing zeal of [others]’, seems to miss the mark considerably.³¹⁸ In fact as we compare Whythorne’s treatise to external evidence of the music profession at the time, it seems that proselytizing may have been precisely his intention.

While Whythorne is certainly hailed as an authority, there is a strange tension in the works that ‘use’ him. Heavily quoted on the musical hierarchy, on minstrels, and on the state of the profession, he is given scant consideration otherwise. He is

³¹⁶ Whythorne, pp. 203-206.

³¹⁷ Elizabeth Baldwin built her discussion of musicians around Whythorne’s own hierarchy in *Paying the Piper, Music in Pre-1642 Cheshire* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2002). David Price quoted Whythorne as the authority on musical careers and the declining patronage of the church throughout the century: *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1981). In her biography of John Dowland, Diana Poulton likewise cited Whythorne’s opinions of the hierarchy of the musical profession, and Peter Roberts relied solely on Whythorne in his discussion of professional musicians in Elizabethan England. Diana Poulton, *The Life of John Dowland* (2nd edn, London, 1982), Peter Roberts, ‘Elizabethan Players and Minstrels and the Legislation of 1572 Against Retainers and Vagabonds’, in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 26-55.

³¹⁸ Poulton, *John Dowland*, pp. 204-205.

called upon only to support an argument here and there; rarely does his true voice find a place, even in studies that profess to examine his precise area of expertise. He has, in fact, told us much that makes our picture of Tudor musicians clearer, and his remains the most remarkable record of any early modern musician's life. And though we may not always take Whythorne at his word, there is certainly no need to discard his text altogether. Indeed this very tension adds a new layer to our understanding of the musical world. Holding Whythorne's text up to other kinds of evidence, this chapter will explore the state of the musical profession in early modern England, as well as Whythorne's motives for depicting it as he did.³¹⁹

The music profession in Tudor England had two major characteristics. First, it was particularly fluid as musicians crossed boundaries between countries, counties, classes and professions with relative ease. Second, it underwent a concerted effort on the part of literate, formally educated musicians to organize, control, and stratify it. Whythorne was part of this movement. He therefore wrote about the musical profession in a way that appears authoritative and factual, but looking closer we find that Whythorne was proselytizing indeed, attempting to shape his readers' opinions and perceptions of the musical profession. In essence, his text was persuasive rhetoric masquerading as statements of fact. He was part of a larger movement in the musical world, as well as a movement in the early modern world more generally, that stratified professions and widened the divide between elite and popular cultures— and between elite and popular musicians.³²⁰

³¹⁹ In this chapter we will focus on the early and mid Tudor period where we can, but due to lack of sources it may simply remain a shadowy time. John Stevens, the only historian to have focused a major study on the early period, suspects this must remain the case. John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (London, 1961), p. 296.

³²⁰ See Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (3rd edn, Farnham and Burlington, 2009); Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 2003), pp. 148-150.

Definitions

It is a particularly academic habit to painstakingly define terms that are easily defined by common sense—the term ‘musician’, for example. However a number of terms have proven deceptively simple, and the historiography of musicians reveals the dangers of operating with only a set of assumed or implied definitions. It is therefore necessary to take a moment at the outset to carefully define particular terms carefully, beginning with the most nebulous term of all, music.

Today we might call music an ‘art’ above all. But in the extract of Whythorne’s treatise above, music has been dubbed a ‘trade’, ‘recreation’, ‘profession’, ‘science’ and even a ‘virtue’. Each label comes with its own implications. For if music was a ‘trade’, we can understand it as a skilled job that required some kind of training in a manual procedure. As such it might also be organized by a guild or company, recognized by the city, that regulated the trade and its membership. Evidence suggests that this was indeed the case for music, as we shall see.

However if music was a ‘science’, it must then have been a kind of systematic body of knowledge achieved through observation and reason. It would also likely be an academic subject taught at university, with musicians being highly trained scholars.³²¹ Evidence shows that this was indeed the case, especially at universities in the early Tudor period when music was considered to be a branch of mathematics. It was something that could be studied purely in theory, by academics who may have had no practical skill at all. On the other hand, if music was simply ‘recreation’, it was something one did for enjoyment; it was decidedly *not* work or study. Music could then be considered a distraction, frivolity, or entertainment, nothing more. And there

³²¹ Whythorne at certain points also groups music with mathematics and astronomy (Whythorne, pp. 160, 168, 169).

is much evidence that this was true, too, for people from all walks of life in early modern England.

Lastly, if music was a ‘virtue’ then it was something quite different indeed. It would have been associated with belief, transcendence and religion, something that was approved and rewarded by God. Again, evidence shows that this, also, was the case. Music was endorsed, maintained, and patronized by the church to the extent that music was a major part of worship; prayers were carried to Heaven on the wings of melody. This was true for Catholics and Protestants alike; indeed in his introduction to the Geneva Psalter, Jean Calvin affirmed that music was God’s gift for the pleasure of man.³²² The Reformed, however, were much more alert to the dangers of music in worship; its power over emotions could be treacherous in the wrong hands.³²³ Nevertheless it was a commonly professed belief in sixteenth-century that music wielded all kinds of mystical, perhaps divine powers, England. Music was ‘known’ to cure plague, drunkenness, insanity, delirium, sciatica, and snake and tarantula bites. It could prolong life, exorcise evil spirits, cure melancholy and the ‘dejection of the mind’, mend bad pronunciation, and cure stammering. It was also reported that ‘those who are stung with the tarantula are cured only by music’.³²⁴

By association, musicians might be considered closer to the divine. According to the enthusiastic poet Pierre de Ronsard: ‘music has always been the sign and the mark of those who have shown themselves virtuous, magnanimous, and truly born to

³²² But, he said, music’s divine power over emotions could also prove dangerous: ‘every evil word corrupts good manners, but when it has the melody with it, it pierces the heart much more strongly and enters within; as wine is poured into the cask with a funnel, so venom and corruption are distilled to the very depths of the heart by melody’. Calvin’s solution to the potential evil influence of music was to advise the world to sing psalms only, giving up all previous music ‘in part vain and frivolous, in part stupid and dull, in part foul and vile and consequently evil and harmful’. Jean Calvin, *Geneva Psalter* (2nd edn, 1545), in Oliver Strunk (ed.), *Source Readings in Music History* (London, 1981), II, p. 157. The discourse on music was added for the second edition.

³²³ See Willis, *Church Music*, esp. Part 1; Marsh, *Music and Society*, esp. pp. 59-64.

³²⁴ Giovanni de Bardi, ‘Discourse on Ancient Music and Good Singing’, (c. 1580) in Strunk (ed.), *Source Readings*, p. 103.

feel nothing vulgar'.³²⁵ He who hears music, said Ronsard, and feels no elation reveals 'the sign of one whose soul is tortuous, vicious, and depraved, and of whom one should beware';³²⁶ Castiglione also insisted that music 'doth not only make sweet the minds of men, but also many times wild beasts tame; and whoso savoreth it not, a man may assuredly think him not to be well in his wits'.³²⁷ While the mystical and emotional power of music did cause some to fear it (e.g., Calvin, and Zwingli more so), what seems to have been a far more popular belief was that any person who did *not* love music should be mistrusted. The sentiment was perhaps most poetically expressed by Shakespeare:

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections are dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted.³²⁸

The idea went beyond the erudite circle of writers and courtiers, too: a popular proverb stated that 'whom God loves not, that man loves not music'.³²⁹ In all these cases, God, goodness, virtue, and music were intimately intertwined.

Are we then any closer to a definition of 'music' proper? In the early modern world the term certainly fitted but did not exclusively conform to the objective definitions of any of its descriptors. And if Whythorne is our key representative, it would seem early modern musicians themselves did not have a strict idea of what music actually was. Indeed the York Minstrels' Ordinance of 1578 haphazardly identified their company as 'the arte or sciens of musicions comonlie called the

³²⁵ Pierre de Ronsard, 'Livre des Melanges', (1560) in Strunk (ed.), *Sources Readings*, p. 97. Though Ronsard was French, this text from the dedication to his collection of poetry is considered to be an important manifesto for European music in general.

³²⁶ Ronsard, 'Livre', p. 97.

³²⁷ Castiglione, *The Courtier*, p. 76.

³²⁸ *Merchant of Venice* Act V, Scene I, lines 82-87. *Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (2nd edn, Boston, 1997), pp. 314-315.

³²⁹ This (originally Italian) proverb was quoted by Whythorne and Peacham among others. Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman* (London, 1622, reprint Oxford, 1906), p. 96.

minstrells'.³³⁰ Art or science? Recreation or virtue? If we concede that the most likely answer is 'all of the above', then perhaps we might also allow that Whythorne's inclusion of so many disparate labels was intentional. Perhaps the defining characteristic of music was that it was not one thing but a composite.

It is also worth noting the differences in opinion regarding what qualified as music proper. Individuals in the early modern period had, like today, individual ideas of what constituted music and what did not. If the singing of a milkmaid qualifies, what about the street cry of a chimneysweep? If the piping of a city wait was most assuredly music, what about the improvised honking of an unskilled minstrel? Was an itinerant crank-organ player creating 'music', just as the organist in the cathedral? Whythorne certainly had his 'authoritative' opinion, but it was by no means universal. Indeed it seems likely that opinion varied as much then as it might today.

While Whythorne was content to leave 'music' vaguely defined, on the subject of exactly *who* is a 'musician', he offered a strict definition. Unless a person understands theory, can 'make a good lesson of descant' as well as compose songs 'according to the true rules thereof', he is no musician.³³¹ Since a person would have no way to gain knowledge of descant and the 'true rules' of music theory without formal education, his definition therefore requires that a true musician be trained either at university or, crucially for Whythorne, by a skilled tutor. While there is no requirement that a musician have a university degree (for that would exclude Whythorne himself), his definition certainly excludes the majority of contemporary practitioners. It is compositional skill, according to Whythorne, that is necessary to distinguish a proper musician from

³³⁰ REED, York, p. 385. They here also lay the vague terms 'musician' and 'minstrel' side by side; discussed later.

³³¹ Whythorne, p. 205.

another sort that do live by music and yet are no musicians at all. And those be they who, after they have learned a little to sing pricksong...by and by they will usurp on music, and account and call themselves musicians. Of the which pettifoggers of music there be both schoolmasters, singingmen, and minstrels.³³²

But in the context of a vertical social hierarchy this definition is troublesome indeed.

Pettifoggers, according to Whythorne, can achieve even the respected rank of schoolmaster. Whythorne's frustration at this fact is clear; he saw the musical profession as being usurped by impostors who were degrading 'the science' as a whole.

Whythorne's strict definition of 'musician' seems much closer to our modern 'composer', a term which was not used in the early modern period.³³³ Himself a composer of songs 'according to the true rules thereof', Whythorne believed that anyone who could only *perform* music someone else had written was merely capitalizing on someone else's real skill. But contemporary evidence shows that most people did not follow Whythorne's way of thinking. In fact, the term 'musician' itself only became popular in the 1560s, with musicians up to that point being commonly called 'minstrels' no matter their social rank or level of skill.³³⁴ Whythorne's definition is therefore neither helpful for our purposes, nor is it a reliable

³³² Whythorne, pp. 205-206. Whythorne's use of the term pettifogger is interesting as it is usually applied to disreputable lawyers. The legal profession had the appearance of being strictly hierarchical but it was also highly fluid, making it difficult for historians to place lawyers within their hierarchy over time. Rosemary O'Day has argued that the legal profession proved far more complex than a simple vertical ladder, and that the rapidity of its changes during the sixteenth century constitute a revolution in legal life. In this way the profession was, as she shall see, striking similar to music. Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1480-1800* (Harlow and London, 2000), pp. 113-180.

³³³ Roger Bowers has shown that composers in early modern England (though they would not have been called that) were not employed to compose music; rather it seemed a sideline of singers and tutors: 'no one offered a "composer" work'. 'Obligation, Agency, and Laissez-Faire: the Promotion of Polyphonic Composition for the Church in Fifteenth-Century England', in Iain Fenlon (ed.), *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Patronage, Sources, and Texts* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 10-11, 13.

³³⁴ More on this later. Surviving archival records show that guilds, cities, abbeys, and households paid 'minstrels' throughout the sixteenth century, but in the late 1560s records began to show payments to 'musicians' instead. Due to the patchiness of the records, I agree with David Price that 'no attempt at quantitative analysis of numbers involved would be worth making' (*Patrons and Musicians*, p. xvi), but the pattern is worth noting.

representation of reality. It does however strongly indicate his own personal preference, just as his presentation of his opinion as fact reveals that he hoped the profession would come to be that way (more on this later).

We will take a very much wider definition of ‘musician’. While we may concede that musical skill and practice may take many different forms, it does not necessarily follow that *any* kind of musical activity makes a musician. A musician, then, is perhaps better defined as a musician as a person who practises music. This would require that the person has or is consciously acquiring musical skill and/or understanding, whether through formal study or not. The level of skill then of course comes into consideration: while singing is something quite intuitive that a milkmaid could do without any practise, training, or formal study, a piper necessarily would have had to undertake significant training to make sense of his instrument. And so it is where that conscious acquisition of skill or understanding is present, that we have a musician.

Such painstaking definitions have proven necessary since it has become clear that historians have operated using a number of problematic definitions which have led them down disparate paths. Take for example Elizabeth Baldwin, who here sets out to define ‘musician’ but in the process takes a number of other terms for granted:

The focus of this study is not only on the musician in the sense of the musically literate, trained professional, but also the music-maker, the performer, trained or untrained, depending on music as a means of livelihood or not, who provided entertainment at guild feasts, in alehouses, and in gentry households. The true amateur, the lady or gentleman who performed music for pleasure rather than necessity, must also be considered.³³⁵

For Baldwin, divisions between musicians hinge upon performance. Professionals and amateurs alike all ‘performed music’, whether out of necessity or for enjoyment. This inevitably leads to a philosophical conundrum: if a musician

³³⁵ Baldwin, *Piper*, pp. 1-2.

sings in the woods and no one hears him, is he still a musician? By this definition the answer is no, but I would argue that a musician can be so whether others hear him or not. Baldwin also separates amateurs from musically literate, formally trained musicians, but what if a person who sang or played for their own pleasure were highly skilled and literate? ‘Professional’ and ‘amateur’ are very perplexing terms, and Baldwin seems to take their definitions for granted, generating in the process the additional problem of a ‘true’ amateur. Does this mean that there also existed a group of ‘false’ amateurs (as Whythorne might believe)? And how indeed should we define ‘trained’?

There seems to have been no standard vocabulary of music in the sixteenth century, which may be part of the reason historians wrestle with these terms today. Whythorne offers no advice in this case; he seems to use the terms ‘profession’ and ‘professors’ without much care. For him a ‘professor of music’ is anyone who *professes* to be a musician, whether he believes the person to be legitimate or not. Historians have taken various views of ‘professionals’, some believing that it was musical literacy (i.e., the ability to read and write music as well as understand music theory) that was the determining factor, but others have shown that in the early modern period literacy varied greatly among supposed professionals just as it did among the poor.³³⁶ Others choose to label musicians who travelled from city to city or household to household as professionals, while those who remained at home (and may yet have been paid to perform in their own cities) were mere amateurs.³³⁷ Evidence seems not to support this or any of the common definitions of ‘professional’.

³³⁶ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. 40; Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 46, 409. David Price argued that it was knowledge of music theory that distinguished a true musician from a ‘mere cantor’, but he did not attach the term ‘professional’ to these ‘true’ musicians.

³³⁷ REED, Kent, p. lvi.

Attempts to define ‘amateur’ have been equally varied and vague. The term is especially tricky, since it was not used in the sixteenth century but is used widely by modern historians to describe certain musicians. Historians seem compelled to place a neat dividing line between professional and amateur, but it appears such distinctions were never very tidy. While Baldwin assumed that ‘true amateurs’ were only gentlemen and ladies (thus excluding anyone of a lower social rank who studies music for pleasure), Peter Burke made the opposite assumption, defining amateurs as those whose careers were not in music but who ‘might derive a supplementary income from their singing [or] playing’ (thus excluding gentlemen, who never played for money).³³⁸ Still others have used the terms but left the murky details to the reader’s imagination.³³⁹ Whythorne tells us that we should value amateurs above speculators (self-taught musicians who probably perform for money), but that we should do so ‘according to their estates’. This seems to imply that Whythorne, like Baldwin, believes that only gentlemen were ‘true’ amateurs, but he also believed that such amateurs were to be respected.³⁴⁰

In his pioneering study Woodfill also operated under problematic definitions of professional and amateur. He divided the subjects of his book into two major groups: professionals (parts one to four) and amateurs (part five). The world of ‘professional’ musicians was according to Woodfill was made up of city musicians

³³⁸ Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 146.

³³⁹ David Wulstan for example describes household music this way: ‘the number of amateur musicians in a household capable of playing upon [viols] would have been small; most of this music at least until the closing years of the century would have been played by professionals’. David Wulstan, *Tudor Music* (London, 1985), p. 84. Walter Salmen does not actually define terms, only claiming that the growth of music theory scholarship demoted ‘executant musicians’ in Europe. Walter Salmen, Introduction to *The Social Status of the Professional Musician from the Middle Ages to the 19th Century*, in Walter Salmen (ed.), trans. Herbert Kaufman and Barbara Reisner (New York, 1971), p. 18.

³⁴⁰ Whythorne, p. 205.

(waits and members of the company),³⁴¹ private household musicians, minstrels, and musicians employed by the church and court. For Woodfill, amateurs were those for whom music was only recreation, not a source of income.³⁴² This definition helps to avoid the confusing notion of ‘true amateur’, but ignores those who were paid for their musical services but for whom music was not a primary source of income. Such musicians turn up often in the REED volumes: examples include one man who was identified as a mariner and musician; another a trumpeter and surgeon; another piped for a lady and then sold her pins and ribbons.³⁴³

Sixteenth-century scribes were not always bothered by terminology. A complete survey of the *Records of Early English Drama* for the sixteenth century reveals that record-keepers did not use ‘musician’, ‘minstrel’, ‘wait’, or any other musical term consistently. Peter Burke has gone so far as to suggest that some terms were used interchangeably, particularly that a ‘player’ might mean anything, but this claim is not supported by evidence in REED. An excerpt from the Coventry Chamberlains’ and Wardens’ Account Book (1575) is a good representative of the typical ways musicians appear in all the records.³⁴⁴

Item paid to the Earle of Darbyes Bearward	xs
Item paid to the lord of hunsdonns Musissions	iijs iiijd
Item paid to the Earle of Essex gesters	ijs
...	
Item paid to two of the queens Gard yat Came to survey for her Graces progresse	vjs vijd
...	
Item paid to the queens Trumpeters	xls
...	

³⁴¹ The company of musicians operated as a musicians’ guild in most major cities. See later section on the group.

³⁴² Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, pp. 201-239.

³⁴³ REED, Bristol, pp. 258, 260; REED, Sussex, p. 207. In the first case, ‘mariner’ was deleted and ‘musician’ overwritten; while it is possible that it was merely a spelling error, another explanation seems more plausible: if the man was primarily a mariner, the scribe might have identified him as such without much thought, but since in this case he was being paid for his music, the man was, almost as an afterthought, labeled ‘musician’.

³⁴⁴ REED, Coventry, pp. 269-270.

Also they do ask further allowaunce of money by them payde to the Earle of Leicester Musissions Bearwarde	iijs iiijd
Item paid to the Earle of worcettters Musissions	vs
...	
Item paid to the lord of hunsdons Musissions	xijd
Item paid to the Earle of leicesters players	xxvjs viijd
...	
Item paid to the Earle of leicesters drumplayers & ij of hys fluet players	vs
Item paid to the lord Chamberlaynes players	xs
Item to the Earle of Warwickes players	vjs viijd
Item paid to the Earle of Essex players	vjs viijd
...	
Item paid to the queens Bearward	xs
Item paid for a base pyppe for the Waytes	vijs

It remains a possibility that each time players are mentioned above they might, as Burke suggests, ‘play instruments, play a part, play the fool, or all of these’,³⁴⁵ but there seems to have been enough of an attempt to distinguish between musicians, bearwards, jesters and waits to indicate that they were not so interchangeable. ‘Players’, it would seem, indeed most commonly referred to groups of travelling actors in this period. Such an inference would also explain why the sums paid to the players listed above are comparatively large. The deletion of ‘Musissions’ and insertion of ‘Bearwarde’ also exhibits conscious distinction. Similarly, James Gibson points out that Kent records show scribes correcting errors by deleting ‘minstrel’ and writing in ‘player’ or vice versa, indicating that the terms were in fact seen as distinct.³⁴⁶ Nevertheless these corrections, or rather the errors that required correction, do themselves indicate that entertainers of all types must have been associated closely enough with each other that a scribe could absentmindedly write one instead of the other. Whythorne also tells us that musicians were known (shamefully in his opinion) to hire their services to companies of players, which must

³⁴⁵ Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 136.

³⁴⁶ REED, Kent, p. lii.

have added to the confusion of terminology, as companies of players might also have some minstrels in their midst.³⁴⁷

While there is certainly enough evidence to show that terms like musician, player, wait, and jester, and minstrel were not as interchangeable as some may have thought, they were also not applied with extreme care. Even the King's company of musicians were called minstrels, as were the poorest sorts of vagrant musicians. It is a rare case indeed to find any scribe who monitored his musical terminology as rigidly as Whythorne would have wanted (discussed in detail later). Perhaps he hoped his book would help remedy that.

John Stevens may well have been correct in asserting that it may in the end be impossible to neatly pin down exactly who was—or should have been—identified as professional or amateur musician in the early modern period. A status is, after all, 'not a way of life but what others think of that way of life',³⁴⁸ and professionalism has many grey areas. In all his protestations Whythorne does confirm this point. His assertions and their relation to reality gets to the root of the problem of music, both from the Tudor perspective and a modern historiographical one: not only is it difficult to identify or categorize 'professors' of music, but music itself—science, art, trade—crosses lines of taxonomy. Perhaps, as was the case with 'gentleman', the real requirement to be a professional musician 'was the ability to call oneself [one] without anyone laughing'.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Whythorne, p. 194.

³⁴⁸ Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, p. 296. Or, as Baldwin puts it, 'a musician is a musician when he is seen as such by his neighbours'. Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 24. In his anthropological study of music, Alan Merriam has shown that this sort of distinction is common across different human societies and across time. Musicians' roles and status 'are determined by the consensus of society'. Alan Merriam, *Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, 1964), p. 123.

³⁴⁹ Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England 1485-1714, A Narrative History* (Oxford, 2004), p. 30. Defining a professional musician has proven so problematic because number of historians have chosen different gauges by which to measure professionalism. Many are inclined to require a professional musician to be musically literate. This, however, might exclude those who were

Since we must make some kind of distinction in writing about musicians of the period, we may, like some historians, resort to using contrived terms like ‘music-maker’, ‘executant musician’, ‘musical performer’, or the Medieval ‘cantores’ and ‘joculator’. But Christopher Marsh’s terminology seems most intuitive and useful. By his system, those who relied on music for their livelihood are deemed occupational musicians, while others can be called recreational musicians.³⁵⁰ But even then, we are faced with defining ‘livelihood’: the very nature of the musical profession meant that musicians were known to take on trade work to supplement their income (addressed in detail later), and the source of their living was not always music.³⁵¹ In some world cultures, musicians receive no payment whatsoever, but are still considered professionals.³⁵² In the end there must, according to anthropologist of music Alan Merriam, ‘be a number of degrees of professionalism; in fact, professionalism seems to run along a continuum from payment in occasional gifts at one end to complete economic support through music at the other.’³⁵³ It is therefore as difficult as it is seemingly arbitrary to mark the point where professionalism begins.

The vagaries of the musical profession that puzzle historians today were equally puzzling to Whythorne’s contemporaries. And Whythorne’s text was designed to help his readers make sense of it all: how do we know who is legitimate

known for and made a good living by music— especially in the early Tudor period, when musical literacy was highly unusual.

³⁵⁰ Marsh, *Music and Society*.

³⁵¹ See James Saunders, ‘Music and Moonlighting: The Cathedral Choirmen of Early Modern England, 1558-1649’, in Fiona Kisby (ed.), *Music and Musicians in Renaissance Cities and Towns* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 157. But whether such men were *primarily* musicians remains unknown. Roger Bowers has suggested that tradesmen who sang in Cathedrals were actually amateurs who sang as a hobby, not a profession. (‘Lay participation in the liturgy of the pre-Reformation parish church in England, and its Reformation extinction’, Sites of Change in Reformation England Conference, University of Warwick, 23 February 2008). Saunders’ evidence does show that singingmen complained about having to take on trade work, implying that at least some considered themselves professional musicians who had fallen on hard times. It remains unclear whether individual singingmen were professional musicians first and foremost.

³⁵² Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, p. 128.

³⁵³ Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, p. 125.

and who is not? Which musicians deserve fame and fortune? Whythorne gives us a clear answer. Around Europe, other poets, musicians, and philosophers did much the same, publishing tracts designed to help readers better understand music and its professors.

In Florence, Vincenzo Galilei, avid musician and father of astronomer Galileo Galilei, discussed such problems in his *Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna* (1581).³⁵⁴ Like Whythorne, Galilei thought that music and musicians were ‘little understood by any who have discussed them’, and examined the issues carefully. He asks the questions that Whythorne, in his pursuit of fame and recognition, must have asked himself many times:

How does it happen that ...[some] musicians are very learned and erudite, and for all that, on the practical side, their compositions have not been at all satisfactory when performed? And that others will hardly know how to read, and will have very little knowledge of practical matters, especially in music, and for all that they will succeed marvellously...?³⁵⁵

To answer, Galilei’s narrator (Giovanni Bardi) first insists that ‘to clear up your doubts, I should need your permission to speak freely...in order not to be considered slanderous (even with complete injustice) by the envious and malicious’; clearly the issue is a delicate one.³⁵⁶ He follows with advice on how best to distinguish musicians of real worth: ‘those who are more learned’ deserve to be the most admired, even if their practical skill is lacking. For a musician can still achieve great esteem if his learning ‘not only makes up for [his] deficiency but exceeds that of the first sort’. This is because learning is ‘rarer and more excellent’ than mere

³⁵⁴ Galilei and his son nicely exemplify the link between music, mathematics, and astronomy. Vincenzo’s knowledge of music was not purely theoretical, though— he played the lute and viol and was a member of Bardi’s celebrated *Camerata*.

³⁵⁵ Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna* (1581), trans. Oliver Strunk, in Strunk (ed.), *Source Readings*, pp. 114, 129-130. As a great lover and scholar of Greek music, it is perhaps not surprising that Galilei chose the dialogue format, echoing Plato.

³⁵⁶ Galilei, *Dialogo*, p. 130.

‘buffooneries’ which may yet delight. Combine learning with ‘the highest character’, and you have the ‘perfect musician’, who will improve the character and learning of others simply by playing. And as for the musicians who cannot achieve this ‘perfection’, ‘they should and can content themselves with being somewhat esteemed by persons who are inferior to them in knowledge’.³⁵⁷

But here the dialogue comes to an end. The text perhaps puts ‘imperfect’ musicians in their place, encouraging them to be content with the admiration of their inferiors. But for the public, and for modern historians, questions remain unanswered: just who is whose ‘inferior in knowledge’? And should musicians then only be ranked by education, ignoring public esteem or practical skill? It is here that Whythorne takes up the issue. He endeavours not just to explain differences between musicians but to offer his readers— a rather general group, not musical specialists— a hierarchy in which to place any musician they chance to meet.³⁵⁸

The Musical Hierarchy

‘Ever since that music came to any perfection and was accounted as one of the seven liberal sciences,’ Whythorne instructs his readers, ‘there have been degrees thereof, as there be of divines, lawyers, and physicians’. After outlining the hierarchies of the church and law (which are by no coincidence strict vertical ladders), Whythorne then claims that ‘of musicians there be [a hierarchy] also’.³⁵⁹ First there are doctors and bachelors of music,

and some musicians uncommenced also; of the which sort there have been
and be some that have set forth as great masteries in music as ever did any

³⁵⁷ Galilei, *Dialogo*, pp. 131-132.

³⁵⁸ This is of course dependent on my argument that Whythorne did in fact intend to publish his manuscript. See Chapters 2, 5.

³⁵⁹ Whythorne, p. 193. Whythorne’s comparison of the musical profession to the church, medicine, and law is certainly intriguing as each of these professions was associated with strict social hierarchies that were perhaps much better known to his readers. See note on p. 108.

doctor and bachelor of music. Then is there organists in churches; then there be teachers of music...which be named schoolmasters; then there be singers in churches, of the which there be...children or boys, as well as of men; then out of the Church there be those that do teach and serve privately, as some in noblemen's houses and men of worship's houses, and some in their own houses. Lastly there be those do use to go with their instruments about the countries to cities, towns, and villages...and there...they will sell the sounds of their voices and instruments.³⁶⁰

Some have by this passage imagined a fairly simple vertical professional hierarchy that looks something like this:³⁶¹

Doctors
Bachelors
Uncommenced
Organists
Schoolmasters
Singingmen
Private Musicians
Minstrels

But Whythorne would be doing himself no favours by depicting such a hierarchy, since as a private musician, he is but one step above the 'off-scum' of the vagabond minstrels he so despises. At the same time, though, he is careful to remind readers that some uncommenced musicians 'have set forth as great masteries in music as ever did any doctor and bachelor of music'—whereby he places himself, having attended Magdalen College but not graduated, potentially near the top of the list.

Turing again to the passage, with careful awareness of Whythorne's writing style and a close reading of the text (e.g., '*then out of the Church* there be'), perhaps the hierarchy he actually depicts is rather more complex, with not a single vertical ladder but two descending branches. This would help incorporate the notion Whythorne expresses that attending university can create the option of a career in or outside the church:

³⁶⁰ Whythorne, pp. 193-194.

³⁶¹ Elizabeth Baldwin uses this simple hierarchy, but also acknowledges that it was in reality probably more complex. *Piper*, pp. 2-29.

	Doctors	
	Bachelors	
	Uncommenced	
<i>Inside Church:</i>		<i>Outside Church:</i>
Organists		Private Musicians
Schoolmasters		Minstrels
Singingmen		

This model improves our understanding to some degree; here Whythorne occupies spaces on two separate ladders. He places himself safely among the most educated musicians, those with career options in or out of the church. His contemporary reader would also know that ‘nowadays’ the church is so ‘slenderly maintained ...[that] ye shall have few or none remaining’, so it seems sensible that Whythorne chose employment outside the church. And in that category, Whythorne sits atop the ladder (even if it only has two rungs). This sort of hierarchy seems to fit the Whythorne we know a little better— he was an ambitious, proud and self-aware man who felt confident enough to demand respect. But in reality, were university degrees really so important that *they* were the defining keys to success, the top of the ladder?

Whythorne however places those with degrees at the top of his hierarchy; and yet, he quickly follows with a caveat that degrees are not really necessary. Galilei admitted that unlearned players could gain a great deal of fame. Schoolmasters also are troubling, since their place in both Cathedral schools and urban grammar schools (as well as households) was both in and outside the church. There is certainly a tension here that Whythorne’s hierarchy does not resolve. And in addition, there is a glaring omission: Whythorne says nothing about court musicians, a group whose work and reputation dominated the musical world in early modern England.

Before Whythorne’s manuscript was known, Walter Woodfill imagined a kind of vertical hierarchy among musicians that was based on their place of employment, and he placed the court at the very top. In simple terms, according to Woodfill the

king employed the best musicians; the church, the next best; private patrons, the third best; cities, the fourth. The unfortunate remaining musicians wandered the streets as minstrels and vagrants.³⁶² Employment by the court was, David Price agrees, ‘the final ambition of all literate musicians’, which should therefore place the court at the top of our hierarchy.³⁶³ Perhaps we might then create a more meticulous hierarchy that attempts to incorporate all these. Indeed it seems that to a certain extent historians have done so, if not expressly, picturing it something like this:³⁶⁴

Court Appointment Chapel Royal	
<i>Inside Church:</i>	<i>Outside Church:</i>
Organist	-----
Choirmaster	-----
-----	City Waits
Singingmen	Private Musicians (tutors)
Bell ringers	Household players
	Minstrels

But in the end all of these models are problematic. Nearly every rank on the above hierarchy is shifted up or down by different historians. For example John Stevens, who wrote about music at court, suggests instead that the highest rank a professional musician could achieve was Choirmaster, which is placed much lower on the chart above.³⁶⁵ Bell ringers are added or removed from the list according to various assumptions about whether they are, in fact, musicians. Continued disparity among modern historians reveals the extraordinary difficulty in placing musicians on any

³⁶² Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 241. There are some notable flaws in Woodfill’s hierarchy, given that musicians like Whythorne moved in and out of places of employment, and that musicians outside the court or church might also gain reputations as some of the best in England (Wilbye, for example).

³⁶³ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. xv.

³⁶⁴ It might also be possible to place the two top ranks under the subheadings instead (i.e., ‘Chapel Royal’ would fit under *Inside Church* with ‘Court Appointment’ under *Outside Church*).

³⁶⁵ Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, p. 305. I suspect the problem stems from perceiving a dichotomy between church and court musicians, as the Chapel Royal Choirmaster was simultaneously both.

hierarchy. But perhaps this difficulty stems from the fact that our sources, the musicians themselves, refuse to stay in one place. Indeed Whythorne moved from singingman as a youth, to (possibly) the court as Heywood's apprentice. He then became a private musician, then Choirmaster, then private musician again. He therefore made some leaps up, down and across the dividing lines, skipping steps in between.

In the end, a hierarchy like this does little to aid our understanding of the musicians in the time period. Perhaps we are too attached to imagining the social system as something vertical which musicians ascend or descend. There seems to be a combination of factors encouraging us to imagine it as a ladder: first, people like Whythorne painted it that way (and he had his motives); second, contemporary professions actually did function on a kind of vertical hierarchy, leading us to imagine that music functioned much the same way.

And so at the very outset, the tendency— both now and in the past— to first organise, categorize and rank leads us into murky waters. Early modern musicians 'refuse to be strictly categorized', and even Whythorne's model has many flaws.³⁶⁶ We must acknowledge that the social world in which musicians operated allowed them an unusual amount of movement from the start. Elizabeth Baldwin has shown that early modern musicians were believed to be 'below or outside the social scale by both tradition and law', but they were also 'sought out and encouraged'.³⁶⁷ Musicians had achieved an exceptional degree of social mobility in the early modern period, but throughout the sixteenth century this special status would be treated with increasing suspicion. They were exempted from Acts of Apparel but also subject to the Statute of Vagabonds; they were arrested in alehouses but brought into the Privy Chamber. I

³⁶⁶ Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 2.

³⁶⁷ Baldwin, *Piper*, pp. 185-186.

would argue that in a world that presented itself as static, hierarchical, and carefully demarcated—to the extent that clothing was regulated by law—musicians lived in a state of liminality. Crossing borders between social classes, professional and educational fields, and even nations, musicians’ lives were dominated by fluidity, movement and change.

In order to explore these claims we must examine musicians’ careers and practices more closely. Like Woodfill, we will examine musicians in groups based on type of employment, but resist forcing the musicians to fit neatly into a category, a hierarchy, a tidy model. This chapter will feature (rather than tuck away in footnotes) the wealth of evidence signifying that musicians defied hierarchical models, and that the dividing lines around categories were moveable. Indeed I will suggest that a useful map of Tudor musicians’ world might not resemble a vertical scale at all, but instead would look something rather like this:

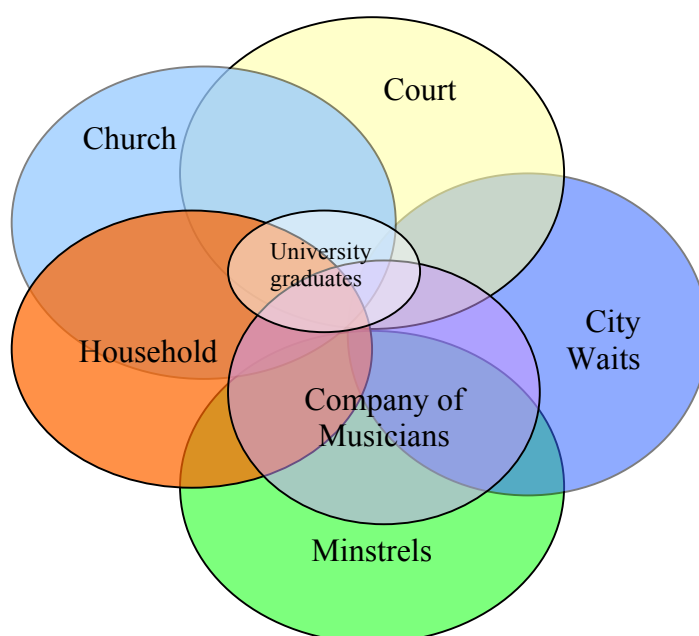


Figure 3.1: *Model of the structure of the music profession in early modern England*³⁶⁸

³⁶⁸ Companies of musicians, present in most cities and towns by the late Tudor period, played a key role in the professionalization of music. See Chapter 4, p. 158

Whythorne, himself a great advocate of a vertical hierarchy, offers a very telling hint that a model rather like this was indeed closer to the reality. Explaining why he was so carefully laying out his hierarchy even at the risk of offending some, he says essentially that *someone* has to create order because as the profession stands, ‘it is a chaos or a confused lump of degrees and sorts heaped up in a bundle’.³⁶⁹

Revealingly, he also suggests that the tidy hierarchy he offered was probably new to his readers: ‘[this] has as yet peradventure been unknown to you’.³⁷⁰ But despite his insistence on hierarchy, evidence confirms that the musical profession was a ‘bundle’ indeed, though perhaps not as ‘confused’ as Whythorne would have us believe.

In the above diagram each sphere represents a group of professional musicians in Tudor England. The model is I think particularly useful in showing where each ‘profession’ overlapped, and that in some cases a number of spheres might overlap the same area. Musicians who began their careers in one particular sphere could where possible move from one circle to another, without making any radical moves up or down a social ladder. Indeed, it was possible to occupy a space where two or more ‘spheres’ overlapped, building a career in more than one branch of the musical profession. But as the model shows, each sphere was not accessible to every musician. The court and itinerant minstrel spheres for example do not overlap, showing that a move directly to the court was unrealistic for a minstrel, and by the same token a move from the court to minstrelsy would involve a very dramatic fall from grace of which no example has yet been found. For a minstrel, joining a company of musicians, or becoming a household musician was more achievable. Likewise a household musician might become a minstrel, or find employment in the

³⁶⁹ Whythorne, p. 206.

³⁷⁰ Whythorne, p. 192.

church, the court, or as a wait. For musicians with university degrees, career patterns involved movement between households, the court, and the church (with the possibility of membership or even leadership in the company of musicians).

While the model stresses movement, it does allow for and express the sense of rank and prestige for each group, particularly the certain disparity between musicians at court and those on the streets. The Court and Church spheres are therefore near the top while minstrels sit at the bottom. Particularly excellent minstrels might eventually join the city waits, while particularly excellent city waits might eventually join the musicians appointed at court, thus creating a social boost for ambitious individuals. In addition, there certainly would have been varying levels of prestige within each sphere (e.g., household tutors were considered to be superior to household performers). But while prestige played its role in the profession, the social world of musicians was certainly also a ‘bundle’, not a ladder; careers, as well as degrees of perceived respectability, were not static or vertical but fluid and relative. Indeed we might imagine all of the spheres as figurative cogs inside a machine, turning, and being turned by, each other to generate a successful whole. To borrow a favourite analogy of Whythorne’s, each sphere became a Wheel of Fortune, revolving slowly and unpredictably, interlocking with other wheels to create the world in which musicians rose, fell, or just turned round and round. In order to best explore these claims we must examine each sphere in turn.

Minstrels

Whythorne had much to say about minstrels, as have a number of modern historians. As a careful examination of Whythorne’s comments can significantly add to the current discussion of minstrels and their ‘fall’, the remainder of this chapter will focus

on the minstrel sphere. (The remaining spheres will be examined in Chapters 4 and

5.) Of minstrels Whythorne tells us:

There be those do use to go with their instruments about the countries to cities, towns, and villages, where also they do go to private houses, to such as will hear them, either publicly or privately; or else to markets, fairs, marriages, assemblies, taverns, alehouses, and suchlike places and there, to those that will hear them, they will sell the sounds of their voices and instruments. Also to banqueters, revellers, mummers, maskers, dancers, tumblers, players and suchlike, they sell also the sounds of the their voices and instruments. These in ancient time were named minstrels; and as the foresaid Marcus Aurelius did banish this sort of people for their misused life, so have they been of late in this our realm restrained somewhat from their vagabond life, which some of them used.³⁷¹

He claims minstrels have ‘usurp[ed] on music’ and made it ‘misused and discredited’ by offering it ‘to every Jack, going about every place’; minstrels were the ‘off-scum of that profession’. This passage, however, contains a contradiction that represents well the uncertainty surrounding minstrels during his lifetime.³⁷² He began by generalizing about all minstrels but then acknowledged that only ‘some of them’ followed the way of life he described. Still, generalizing was easier, and in 1598 musician Thomas Weelkes depicted a similar minstrel stereotype. Real musicians, he said, were undertaking a noble effort ‘to call home againe the banished Philomele, whose purest blood the impure Minstralsie hath stained’.³⁷³

Who were these unfortunate minstrels that came to bear the brunt of other musicians’ malice? Though Whythorne painted them all as rascals and rogues, in reality the Tudor minstrels’ sphere might be thought of as the melting pot of the musical profession: all walks of life made up the population of minstrels. Minstrels in the records were, from 1500 onwards, almost always providing some kind of musical

³⁷¹ Whythorne, pp. 193-194. Whythorne refers to the 1572 Statute of Vagabonds.

³⁷² Whythorne, pp. 203, 204.

³⁷³ Thomas Weelkes, *Balletts and Madrigals to Fiue Voyces, with one to Six Voyces* (London, 1598), STC 25203, f.1. Weelkes is essentially accusing minstrels of the rape of pure music: in Greek mythology, Philomela was raped and her tongue was cut out so she could not reveal her attacker. Many different versions of the story exist; in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* she was later turned into a nightingale (despite, or perhaps to recompense, her having no tongue) and given the sweetest song.

performance.³⁷⁴ They were identified by every imaginable variant spelling of ‘minstrel’, as well as by specific instrument (e.g., ‘John Smith, piper’). A powerful stereotype has led historians to assume minstrels were only, as Whythorne would have described them, masterless wanderers—essentially vagrants.³⁷⁵ The stereotype is so deep-rooted that it has become ‘axiomatic to the point of cliché that minstrels wandered’.³⁷⁶ In actuality, the range of practices and sorts of people practising minstrelsy was huge, particularly in the early and mid Tudor periods. And while it is certainly true that minstrels were often itinerant, it would be wrong to assign wandering strictly to minstrels. Household musicians, waits, court musicians, even church musicians earned a part of their income through travel. In addition there is evidence of minstrels remaining solely in their own cities, as members of the city company of musicians, some even keeping their own servants and apprentices.³⁷⁷ So while travelling may certainly be associated with minstrels more than any other musician, it certainly was not exclusive to them.

A clearer definition is therefore necessary; and, as with our other terms, we must choose a definition that works for our purposes now, accepting that the term had many different meanings over time. Based on all available evidence, the most useful definition of a ‘minstrel’ is as an independent or freelance musician. This helps distinguish court, church, household, or other variously patronized musicians from minstrels, who made their way in the musical world independently, and with hugely varying degrees of success. Due to the huge variations within in the scribes’

³⁷⁴ In other cases, they are either involved in a legal dispute, or are employed for some other purpose, such as carrying messages.

³⁷⁵ Baldwin operates under the assumption that ‘minstrel’ equals ‘vagrant’, while a ‘musician’ is one who is ‘clearly literate and professional’ (*Piper*, pp. 15-16). But in addition to relying on the problematic terms ‘literate and professional’, this still leaves a great number of musicians unaccounted for (e.g., those who made a living through music and were not vagrants, but could not read music).

³⁷⁶ Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 79.

³⁷⁷ For examples of minstrels who were sedentary guild members who were freemen and/or maintained their own servants and apprentices, see REED, York, pp. 352, 377, 447, 494; REED, Cambridge, p. 746.

terminology, I have classified musicians as ‘minstrel’ only when they fit my own criteria, assigning other so-named minstrels to other categories when fitting.

Musicians identified as ‘Iustyce Trogmerton his mynstrelles’, for example, or the ‘Queen’s minstrels’ are for our purposes privately patronized household and court musicians despite the scribe’s labels.³⁷⁸ Even though they travel from place to place, they enjoy private patronage and so are not independent minstrels, who by definition have no patron.

In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham identified minstrels as ‘blind harpers or suchlike tavern minstrels that give a fit of mirth for a groat’. And the minstrel’s audience, he continued, was made up of the lowly inhabitants of taverns and alehouses, as well as country boys who passed by on the street.³⁷⁹ Whythorne claimed that ‘beggars and rogues do account them [minstrels] to be their companions and fellows’.³⁸⁰ This kind of depiction of minstrels focused squarely on the minstrel’s lack of skill as well as the common man’s supposed lack of taste, and is typical of the sentiments expressed in print.³⁸¹ However historians must resist taking the printed word for truth: elitist complaints about minstrels’ lack of talent should not be taken to imply that most minstrels had none.³⁸² Through printed tracts we see minstrels only through the eyes of the middling and upper sorts, who reveal, in the face of other evidence, a tendency to generalize and exaggerate. Historians reading these kinds of sources can also be guilty of generalization and exaggeration: Walter Salmen (albeit sympathetically) depicted minstrels as an unfortunate race who ‘were often more

³⁷⁸ REED, Gloucestershire, p. 298.

³⁷⁹ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie, a critical edition*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca and London, 2007), p. 173.

³⁸⁰ Whythorne, p. 204.

³⁸¹ For a collection of sentiments against minstrels, see Emily Cockayne, ‘Cacophony, or Vile Scrapers on Vile Instruments: Bad Music in Early Modern English Towns’, *Urban History*, 29, 1 (2002), pp. 35-47.

³⁸² Cockayne, ‘Cacophony’, is a fascinating discussion of ‘bad’ music in early modern England but relies on the words of the educated elite.

mistreated by the aristocracy than the domestic animals’, a claim that paints a dramatic picture but lacks evidence.³⁸³ The less biased, but scant, legal and economic records of minstrels in cities, abbeys, taverns, and households adds some breadth to the narrow views of disdainful early modern authors.

Whythorne tells us that minstrels ‘go with their instruments about the countries to cities, towns, and villages, [and] to private houses’, and there is certainly a host of evidence of this, so much so that it has led to the stereotype of the minstrel as a wanderer. But household and court musicians wandered, too; and I would disagree with Whythorne (and other historians) in the assumption that minstrels were *de facto* wanderers. While the records are full of itinerant minstrels, tucked among them all is evidence that some minstrels’ careers were made and maintained in their own town.

Guilds commonly maintained their own minstrels, especially in the first half of the sixteenth century. Coventry’s guilds’ account books survive in greatest number and date range, leaving the city to serve well as a model of practices in other cities (where less plentiful records hint that the case was the same). A number of Coventry’s guilds maintained, or sponsored in part, a minstrel from at least 1540 when the records begin. The Carpenters and Weavers Guilds made especially regular annual payments to ‘the mynstrell for the yere’, ‘to ye mynstrell for hys wages’, and such like payments, sometimes offering a name: ‘John Covper owr menstrell’.³⁸⁴ The Cappers, who often recorded payments to more than one minstrel, also recorded the annual collection of that money from guild members: in 1545 for example, iiij*s* ijd

³⁸³ Salmen, *Social Status*, p. 12. Evidence to support this may exist in some sense for the Medieval period, but in the early modern period evidence points to the contrary— indeed, this was the source of Whythorne’s angst.

³⁸⁴ REED, Coventry, pp. 126, 159, 165.

was ‘received of the crafte for mynstrelles money’.³⁸⁵ Payments continue with great regularity among the guilds until at least 1585, when they become less regular. While these kinds of regular payments could indicate some kind of patronage, the records also hint that exclusive ‘ownership’ of a minstrel was not the practice. Since individual minstrels’ names are rarely given, it is difficult to prove that the guilds were all paying the same minstrel, but there is one telling detail that indicates this might have been the case. In 1538, the Carpenters recorded a payment to the minstrel for ‘beryng’, leading the reader to assume that the Carpenters were paying for the burial of their own minstrel. But in the same year, the Weavers recorded a payment for ‘bereyng of owr minstrelles wyfe’.³⁸⁶ This would seem to indicate not only that minstrels enjoyed some form of employment ‘insurance’ whereby burial costs were paid for (and in other cases, maintenance after retirement), but also that the Carpenters and Weavers were both maintaining the same musician.³⁸⁷ The musician himself, then, would have remained a kind of independent contractor, who was employed simultaneously by two or more guilds, and potentially any number of other employers.

However these cases may have been the exception rather than the rule. A greater number of guilds never made annual payments to minstrels; payments were made instead for specific services on special occasions. Clearly some guilds had a greater interest in music than others. Since a great number of weavers’ songs survive which were designed to keep with the rhythm of the loom³⁸⁸ (or vice versa), their regular maintenance of a minstrel seems sensible. Other guilds, the Bakers or

³⁸⁵ REED, Coventry, p. 170.

³⁸⁶ REED, Coventry, pp. 147-148.

³⁸⁷ Perhaps this kind of ‘sponsored’ minstrelsy was the predecessor to the city wait. Waits became more and more popular in the mid and late sixteenth century, while simultaneously annual payments to minstrels by guilds seems to have declined but not halted altogether.

³⁸⁸ Peter Burke has shown that Weavers across Europe were known to use this method and that their practices therefore had an ‘international stamp’ (*Popular Culture*, p. 67).

Coopers for example, made payments only on special occasions such as ‘myssomer nyght’, ‘at the gowse etinge’, ‘on the dynner day’. By far most common before the Reformation were payments to minstrels for Coventry’s Corpus Christi festival, to which the guilds were required to contribute.³⁸⁹ In Shropshire practices were similar. The Sharmen’s Company paid ‘our mynstrell at our feaste’ every year while also allocating money ‘to the prentices to pay ther mynstrell’.³⁹⁰ Hiring musicians for celebratory occasions seems to have been quite common for guilds, and in some cases the propensity to celebrate a little too much caused financial strain. In 1601/2, the Mercers, Ironmongers and Goldsmiths of Shrewsbury all felt it necessary to set a cap on the amount of money that could be spent on wine and music on these special occasions. The limit was twenty shillings: presumably beneficial for the guilds, but disappointing for the musicians they hired.³⁹¹

Guilds were not the only potential employers, and Whythorne tells us that minstrels themselves were not particularly picky. They would perform ‘either publicly or privately; or else to markets, fairs, marriages, assemblies, taverns, alehouses, and suchlike places’.³⁹² The town of Rye hired minstrels to play at a great number of feasts and celebrations such as ‘the fetyng in of the maye’, and in 1555 even hired minstrels to play for ‘laborers comeng from the mending of the highe waies’.³⁹³ Parish churches also regularly employed minstrels to play at ales (albeit

³⁸⁹ REED, Coventry, pp. 127, 294. The Weavers also joined other guilds on special occasions and made additional payments to their minstrel. Coventry’s guild and civic account books are packed with expense lists and descriptions of each annual (pre-Reformation) Corpus Christi festival and play.

³⁹⁰ REED, Shropshire, pp. 284-285. Perhaps the Sharmen and their apprentices did not feast together, or perhaps the hiring of separate musicians speaks more to a kind of generation gap— indeed Peter Burke has suggested that apprentices maintained a consciously separate, more youthful culture than their masters (*Popular Culture*, p. 68). In addition, Alan Merriam has shown that anthropologically, the ‘identification of a sub-culture partially through music seems to be fairly widespread both in nonliterate and Western societies’ (Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, p. 143). Perhaps the apprentices required different music for their own generation.

³⁹¹ REED, Shropshire, p. 287.

³⁹² Whythorne, p. 193.

³⁹³ REED, Sussex, p. 115.

with increasing anxiety and controversy throughout the century). In Devon, Morebath church paid both a harper and a minstrel ‘for playing at the ale’ in successive years as late as the 1580s, and St. Thomas a Becket’s church in Shobrooke was still paying ‘minstrils and pleayers’ as late as 1595.³⁹⁴

Minstrels might also sub-contract with other entertainers, Whythorne tells us, including ‘banqueters, revellers, mummers, maskers, dancers, tumblers, players and suchlike’.³⁹⁵ And indeed city waits seem to have hired local minstrels when they needed extra musicians. In 1615 the Coventry waits needed five extra men to perform with them ‘about the cytie according to the ancient custom’. Since the employment was temporary, the men were not offered liveries but were required to ‘furnish themselves with comely and sufficient Cloakes’. It was also deemed necessary to note the requirement that the musicians ‘play as orderly as thei should’; perhaps there was some anxiety among the waits about hiring independent musicians.³⁹⁶ Other towns all over England seem to have used a similar system, hiring additional pipers, minstrels, drummers, or trumpeters when the situation demanded.³⁹⁷

While the case in Coventry is quite clear, other instances must remain speculative. Whythorne tells us that minstrels hired themselves to all types: players, tumblers, and even dancers. Itinerant players may have hired local minstrels at each town rather than hire musicians to travel with them. This certainly seems likely, as this is the kind of work that local (stationary) minstrels would need to survive. But evidence of such informal arrangements is rare indeed. Presumably detailed records were not kept by players or dancers, or the records do not survive. Civic records,

³⁹⁴ REED, Devon, pp. 212, 278.

³⁹⁵ Whythorne, p. 194.

³⁹⁶ REED, Coventry, p. 393.

³⁹⁷ See for example, REED, Cumberland, p. 22; REED, Devon, p. 169. Of course, due to the varied use of musical terminology, references to pipers, minstrels, drummers, etc. may in actuality refer to the city waits themselves. But since waits are also listed among those receiving payments it seems more likely that, in certain cases at least, pipers or minstrels and waits were separate people.

which record a great number of payments to players, do not note whether the players hired minstrels or not. The extreme variety of terminology in early modern England further complicates the situation. When the records read, ‘players’, what should be inferred? Would scribes have been bothered to note that the players had also subcontracted with minstrels? Carlisle paid ‘a tumbler & his musicions’ in 1616, but such details are scarce.³⁹⁸ Admittedly, it could be that Whythorne exaggerated, but as he would seem to gain nothing from fabricating such a detail, I am inclined to believe that minstrels indeed subcontracted with other performers and that these arrangements are largely lost in the records. Instead Whythorne has inadvertently offered us an explanation to the sometimes arbitrary use of the term ‘players’: it might sometimes seem to refer to minstrels because the players had hired minstrels to join them.

Stereotypical minstrels are plentiful in the records across England. Minstrels journeyed across the county, across the country, or indeed across the sea in search of employment.³⁹⁹ Some were indeed penniless vagrants, and the recipients of charity. Gloucester Cathedral recorded a number of charitable payments to ‘poore musician[s]’ in the early 1600s, and from 1533 to 1610 musicians were among the ‘pore pepull’ receiving charity at Coventry’s Holy Trinity.⁴⁰⁰ In 1601 in Cornwall, Richard Clere bequeathed his two harps to two blind boys and his trumpet to a ‘meheamed man yat canne use ye same’. According to the inventory of his property, two harps and a trumpet were all his instruments, and he seems to have chosen to give them to those who would otherwise be beggars.⁴⁰¹ This would seem to imply that unfortunate beggars who had instruments could somehow improve their lot by

³⁹⁸ REED, Cumberland, p. 83.

³⁹⁹ Barnstaple, for example, hired ‘mynstrylles that came oute of Ireland’ in 1543 (REED, Devon, p. 40).

⁴⁰⁰ REED, Gloucestershire, p. 321; REED, Coventry, pp. 138, 158, 225, 380.

⁴⁰¹ REED, Dorset and Cornwall, pp. 475-476.

begging with music. Did a blind harper play simply because he could do no other work, or could he become a truly skilled musician? And even if that were the case, was he primarily a musician or a beggar?

The stereotype of a blind harper certainly had its roots in reality. Seeing them as the deserving poor, towns licensed local blind men as minstrels, who earned their livelihoods by busking round town. Music, it seems, was one way to make begging more ‘respectable’. In at least one instance music was reserved as the occupation of the disabled: in 1589 Christ’s Hospital ordered that none of their charges should be apprenticed to musicians ‘other than such as be blinde, lame and not able to be put to other services’.⁴⁰² Blind harpers turn up regularly in payment accounts across England. And while the stereotype is a distinctively negative one, the records seem to indicate that at the local level blind harpers were treated with a certain degree of affection. In Shrewsbury three men were imprisoned for ‘abusinge a pore harper in taking his harpe from him’ and playing it in the streets,⁴⁰³ showing that the town saw the ‘abusinge’ of the harper as a serious crime. And the very fact that such figures could earn a living busking tells us that, whatever their motivation, there was a willing and supportive audience for such musicians. Intriguingly, it seems the blind musician may be a common social role across many cultures, past and present, but more studies are needed to confirm such commonalities.⁴⁰⁴

Busking minstrels were not free from persecution, though. The Shrewsbury case is one example; Whythorne also delighted in one encounter with an itinerant minstrel who visited his master’s house. The minstrel was, in his opinion, far too

⁴⁰² Morrison Boyd, *Elizabethan Music and Musical Criticism* (Philadelphia, 1940), p. 15; Cockayne, ‘Cacophony’, p. 40.

⁴⁰³ REED, Shropshire, p. 291.

⁴⁰⁴ The ascription of music to the blind has been noted by anthropologists in Africa, Japan, and the Marquesas. While this is ‘extremely interesting and suggestive ... too little is known to allow us to postulate any kind of correlation between the blind and the ascription of the musician’s role’ (Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, p. 132).

proud, and Whythorne was pleased to see him humbled and reminded that he was no more than a beggar.⁴⁰⁵

It is, however, impossible to calculate how ‘beggar-like’ each minstrel was, able-bodied or not. While Whythorne (and the minstrel stereotype) would lead us to believe minstrels were very lowly indeed, evidence in the records is far less convincing. Since the records usually only show payments to ‘minstrels from Shrewsbury’ for example, we cannot know whether the minstrels were penniless and half-starved, or if they had been comfortably receiving regular payments across the country for the past year. In addition, money was not the only form of payment minstrels received. They might play for material goods, or for shelter for the night, or for food. In Lancashire, 1612, Sir Richard Shuttleworth gave a piper 18d ‘in steede of oates’, suggesting that the usual method of payment here was food.⁴⁰⁶ Evidence of this kind of ‘income’ for minstrels was rarely recorded. What we do have are tantalizing hints. The same Sir Richard Shuttleworth paid a great number of minstrels each year, and while ‘a piper’ typically received 4d, a ‘poore piper’ was paid just 3d.⁴⁰⁷ It is difficult to decipher whether his payment is a reflection of the piper’s social rank, the quality of his playing, or some combination.

While we cannot know the annual income of minstrels, such a career seems to have been rewarding enough to attract people in other trades in times of need. In 1594 two Shrewsbury men and a woman were apprehended as vagabond minstrels after they were found to be wearing false liveries. It was revealed that they were not minstrels by trade, but a tailor, a pavier, and his wife. The three had spent the past two weeks travelling from village to village as minstrels, singing in taverns,

⁴⁰⁵ Whythorne, p. 204.

⁴⁰⁶ REED, Lancashire, p. 175.

⁴⁰⁷ REED, Lancashire, p. 174.

alehouses, and streets.⁴⁰⁸ In an economy of makeshifts, music was presumably more rewarding for them at this point than their previous work. The false liveries probably served to increase their takings, and perhaps gave them some measure of protection. In another case, a bricklayer's wife complained that she would have had more money if she had married a fiddler.⁴⁰⁹ But while we might infer from her statement that fiddlers could make more money than bricklayers, there is an irony in her comparison. She seems to be sardonically comparing her husband to a *mere* fiddler, claiming that *even* with a stereotypically poor *fiddler*, she would have been better off. A great many minstrels supplemented their income with extra-musical activities. One sold pins and ribbons to the ladies whose households he visited in 1572, and others fashioned careers combining music with another trade: Reynold Prickett, the minstrel-tailor; William Pickering, fiddler-miner; John Webbe, minstrel-carpenter; and John Temple, minstrel-joiner are just a few examples.⁴¹⁰ This was not just a habit only of minstrels or the poorer sorts of musicians. Cathedral choirmen were known to complain about the necessity of finding supplementary work in other trades, and of course Whythorne himself was often a musician-tutor-servant.⁴¹¹ Another example is Robert Perrot (*c.* 1478–1550), ‘church musician and land speculator’ and onetime choirmaster at Magdalen College (Whythorne may well have known him). He gave up his post as choirmaster to grow rich as a land speculator in the wake of the Reformation, but retained his post as organist until death.⁴¹² While this kind of makeshift employment was common in the period, one wonders whether it was

⁴⁰⁸ REED, Shropshire, pp. 279–280.

⁴⁰⁹ Salgado, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (London, 1977), p. 142.

⁴¹⁰ REED, Sussex, p. 207; REED, Somerset, pp. 501, 40. Christopher Marsh has pointed out further examples including a minstrel-tailor, and basketmaker-musician, and a weaver who bequeathed a tabor and pipe to his son (*Music and Society*, pp. 71–72).

⁴¹¹ James Saunders, ‘Moonlighting’, p. 157

⁴¹² In addition, the annual ‘May morning’ music rituals that continue to this day were probably derived from his widow’s bequest in his honour. Roger Bowers, ‘Perrot, Robert (*c.* 1478–1550)’, ODNB.

always done in economic desperation (like the choirmen), and whether they considered themselves musicians above all. As with most things, the situation must have varied greatly from person to person.

Many minstrels fit Whythorne's stereotype quite nicely, but this was not always exclusively so. The 1557-1565 songbook of Richard Sheale, minstrel, illustrates the potential range and variety of a minstrel's interests, abilities, and repertoire.⁴¹³ The book contains songs by various composers (including five by Sheale himself) written in varied scripts. While it has been assumed that the notebook belonged to Sheale himself, Christopher Marsh has pointed out that the scribe remains anonymous, and that we cannot be sure whether Sheale himself was even literate.⁴¹⁴ If the notebook is indeed Sheale's, he collected songs in French, Latin, and English, which ranged from the most pensive meditations on Christ's suffering to epic ballads, elegies for the noble dead, satires and even lewd drinking tunes. Based on the songbook, where should we place Sheale in his social world? Did he circulate among the nobility singing the latest French ballads for fashionable ladies, or offer psalms to the devout? To whom was he singing lewd drinking tunes? And if he was a musician of the upper sorts, as he presented himself, why did he deem it acceptable to sing a ballad about his misfortune, begging passers-by for spare change? Sheale's songs shed light on the varied role of the mid-Tudor minstrel.

There are a number of early modern songbooks equally eclectic. The Shirburn Ballads (1585-1616)⁴¹⁵ and British Museum MS Cotton Vesp. A XXV contain a range of pious, vulgar, pensive and playful songs. Whythorne was not a minstrel, but his repertoire is equally varied. Some songs are pensive and prayerful, others dwell on love and deceit, and he also happily devoted a number of pages to his lewd ballad

⁴¹³ Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 48.

⁴¹⁴ Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 140.

⁴¹⁵ *The Shirburn ballads, 1585-1616*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford, 1907).

about a ‘frisking friar’.⁴¹⁶ While most authors remain anonymous, manuscript compilations reveal the range and span of the minstrel sphere in Tudor England, as well as, according to Christopher Marsh, ‘the role of music in connecting the high with the low in English society’.⁴¹⁷

A great number of minstrels were far from beggars. Indeed their economic success as independent musicians was remarkable. In York, for example, minstrels were regularly noted as ‘freemen of this Cittie’, and in Bristol a number of minstrels were city burgesses, whose apprentices were also made burgesses upon completion of their apprenticeship.⁴¹⁸ These musicians, neither itinerant buskers nor city waits, have managed quite successfully to escape the notice of historians. Because of the nature of the records, there is very little hard evidence of what appears to have been a rather substantial group of minstrels, and their lives remain shadowy. But thanks to Bristol’s habit of noting independent apprenticeship indentures, minstrels in Bristol—and quite successful ones at that—briefly make an appearance on paper. From 1543 to 1634 (dates from which records survive), the sons of labourers, shoemakers, husbandmen, yeomen, and orphans, too, were apprenticed to local minstrels. The minstrels were usually designated as ‘citizen of the city’ and took on apprentices for a term of seven to ten years.⁴¹⁹ At the end of the designated term, apprentices received money and clothing, and often one or more instruments. The minstrels appear to have been musicians first and foremost, but like so many other musicians, made it a habit to keep more than one basket for their proverbial eggs. Nicholas Holden was a trumpeter and surgeon, and took an apprentice who would receive at the end of the

⁴¹⁶ Whythorne, pp. 109-112.

⁴¹⁷ Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 140.

⁴¹⁸ REED, York, p. 385; REED, Bristol, pp. 116, 118, 132, 146, 158, 201, 225.

⁴¹⁹ REED, Bristol, p. 256.

contract ‘an instrument called in English one trumpet’.⁴²⁰ Patrick Wise took music apprentices but was presumably also a mariner as the scribe recorded him as such and then crossed it out. And Geoffrey Hellier contracted his apprentice to serve him both in music ‘and in other crafts of which this trade makes use’, offering him a violin at the completion of the contract.⁴²¹ Francis Highwood’s apprentice was contracted in 1601 to receive at the end of his contract ‘one instrument that he can play best’, perhaps indicating that the boy was to receive a wide and varied musical education, learning to play a number of instruments and thus a number of musical styles.⁴²² So while one apprentice may be learning surgical skills as well as trumpeting skills, another could be combining music with ‘other crafts’, and yet another could be focusing on music only, learning a variety of instruments and styles.

One of those ‘other crafts’ or trades was apparently inkeeping. Peter Burke has shown that innkeepers were ‘leading figures from the entertainment world’,⁴²³ and Bristol’s records add another layer to this. Thomas Rancock, identified only as innkeeper, and his wife Dorothy took on four apprentices between 1548 and 1551. The apprentices served between seven and ten years, and were paid ‘at the end...a viol, a loud shawm, a still shawm, and a recorder, with double clothing that fits him’.⁴²⁴ These apprentices were being trained and set up as minstrels, making the innkeeper himself a minstrel. His arrangement would have made good business sense: he could cater for functions and provide the entertainment too. It is this kind of habitual boundary-crossing by musicians that so problematises the neat categorisation of the profession, but this very fact enhances our understanding of the Tudor musical world (see Chapter 4). Independent musicians could be as prominent as the ‘leading

⁴²⁰ REED, Bristol, p. 260.

⁴²¹ REED, Bristol, pp. 258-259.

⁴²² REED, Bristol, p. 262.

⁴²³ Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 155.

⁴²⁴ REED, Bristol, p. 58, translated from Latin. The apprentices received various instruments.

figures from the entertainment world', and they could also be beggars in the streets. They might sell pins and ribbons, take on any number of odd household jobs, or take apprentices to serve them in their own households. They could in fact be prosperous burgesses of the city. One more (frustratingly uninformative) reference to a 'gentlewomanminstrell' points us in the direction of acknowledging the wide range of minstrels' roles and practices in Tudor England.⁴²⁵

As if to further complicate minstrels' identity, in 1572 certain kinds of minstrels were formally criminalized. The Statue Against Vagabonds listed minstrels with jugglers, players, bearwards and fencers as vagabonds, or those without land, master, or craft who wander the countryside to sustain their livelihood without a warrant.⁴²⁶ While certainly not every minstrel (by our definition) in early modern England fit this description, it did apply to a great number of the poorer sorts, and it has been argued that criminalisation came about because of the danger minstrels 'posed in the spreading of seditious rumours'.⁴²⁷ The 'deserving' poor, such as blind harpers, and other musicians who had obtained a license from their city or a great household were safe.

This legislation, and the grouping of minstrels with vagrants has led to much discussion and speculation as to the status of Tudor minstrels. But it must be noted that these discussions rarely look at *all* minstrels; only independent itinerant musicians (the stereotypical minstrels) have drawn historians' attention, as they seem to have experienced a dramatic 'fall' over the course of the sixteenth century. Every

⁴²⁵ REED, Cumberland, p. 66. Carlisle paid ijs 'vnto j scotes gentlewomanminstrell'. It is worth noting that women are distinctly absent from records of musicians. Apart from this reference and the pavier's wife, women below the gentry level are almost completely absent from the record. While recently a laudable effort has been made to resurrect female musicians from history, it is only female musicians of the highest social ranks—women who were not professionals—that appear in records. See Thomasin LeMay, ed., *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women, Many-Headed Melodies* (Aldershot and Burlington, 2005).

⁴²⁶ Roberts, 'Legislation of 1572', p. 33.

⁴²⁷ Fox, *Oral Culture*, p. 345.

historian dealing with Tudor musicians has acknowledged this decline, for it is certainly curious that in the early Tudor period, even the most famous court musicians were called minstrels,⁴²⁸ and as late as 1544, the newly formed company of musicians in Canterbury called itself the ‘followship of the Craft and mystery of Mynstrelles’.⁴²⁹ By the close of the century things were very different: ‘minstrel’ became closely associated with vagrant, criminal, and defiler of music itself. Some studies of vagrancy during the period have, like the 1572 statute, lumped minstrels in with beggars and masterless men from the start, but it was a slow cultural transition⁴³⁰ and minstrels only ‘became’ vagrants by statute in 1572, and the impulse to treat minstrels as if they were vagrants all along is misguided.

Nevertheless the Tudor period marked the rise of the new ‘musician’, and the fall of the old ‘minstrel’, two groups which had in the beginning been called the same. Why did this happen? It was not simply down to their potential ability to spread rumours through ballads. In fact a number of factors came together in the sixteenth century to bring about what Patrick Collinson calls ‘the war against the minstrels’.⁴³¹

By our definition, minstrels are most certainly musicians. But Whythorne insisted that a person ‘be no musician at all’ unless he understands music theory and can compose songs according to its rules. Minstrels themselves had a different perspective. They called themselves musicians, which was offensive enough, but what really frustrated Whythorne was that other people *believed* them. Those who

⁴²⁸ Examples of elite musicians being labeled with the term in the early Tudor period are common in REED; a representative example is that of Barnstaple, which paid the King’s ‘Mynstrelles’ as well as those attached to the Earl of Devonshire, Lord Daubeney, and Lord Denny in 1533 (REED, Devon, p. 38). Another particular example is Cardinal Wolsey’s ‘minstrels’, who traveled with him to France to perform for the King, and later at Hampton Court in the late 1520s. George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. Richard Sylvester (Oxford, 1959), pp. 20, 50, 70.

⁴²⁹ REED, Kent, p. lxiii.

⁴³⁰ The anxiety over vagrancy— and what vagrancy meant— was sustained over the Tudor period as royal proclamations revisited the issue again and again. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. P.E. Hughes and J.F. Larkin (London and New Haven, 1964).

⁴³¹ Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. x.

should have known better— nobles, gentlemen, the middling sort— were not only still hiring these types, but also ignorantly calling them musicians. Whythorne reminds his readers that Marcus Aurelius ‘did banish this sort of people for their misused life’, and reports with some relief that ‘they have been of late in this our realm restrained somewhat from their vagabond life’. He must be referring to the 1572 statute, which clearly gave him some pleasure though it did not provide a complete solution. The problem was one of terminology, and it went all the way up to the top:

Those magistrates and justices be not well advised (with reverence I do speak it) who do give licences unto minstrels, under the name of musicians, to go about the country with their music in such sort as it is before rehearsed; and if they do remember themselves, the statute nameth them minstrels, and so ought they to do in their licences given unto them.⁴³²

Even justices of the peace had not learned the crucial differences between minstrel and musician, and it was a distinction that meant a great deal to those who stood to benefit by it.

The imposition of new terminology by elite musicians slowly took effect. In the REED volumes ‘musician’ begins to appear in the 1560s to 70s in almost every county. But it was applied haphazardly, depending upon the scribe’s inclination. There were those who persisted in using the term ‘minstrel’ in any circumstance, and there were those who adopted the new ‘musician’ but applied it to any ‘rascal and off-scum’ that played an instrument. A comparison of the account books of the Coventry guilds reveal, for example, that the Weavers and Carpenters recorded payments to ‘mynstrells’, even though they were actually paying the city waits.⁴³³ In 1575,

⁴³² Whythorne, p. 194. Elizabeth Baldwin interpreted Whythorne’s complaint to mean that ‘musician’ was being used to relate to musicians further down the social scale than it had been used before. In reality, use of the term was new, as was the use of terminology to distinguish between musicians at all social levels. Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 15.

⁴³³ REED, Coventry, pp. 284, 297. Among the Weavers’ regular payments to vague ‘minstrels’, a name was included once (‘to hewit & the minstrilles’), and other Coventry account books reveal that the

Coventry's Chamberlain may have got it right when he called one group of visitors 'Lord of Hunsdonns Musissions', because presumably the musicians were licensed, educated and elite.⁴³⁴ By our definition these were not independent, and therefore not minstrels (by Whythorne's criteria, we could only know if we could test their knowledge of descant and the rules of composition). Carlisle's Chamberlain was sensitive to the importance of using the new terms, but got it wrong in application: the scribe recorded a payment to 'three mussishiners' noting only that 'one of them said he was borne in Carelell'.⁴³⁵ In other entries, patrons (whether cities or noblemen) were habitually noted, and so we can infer that these three were indeed minstrels. For Whythorne to be satisfied, the Chamberlain would need to have been certain of the 'mussishiners' level of understanding of music theory before applying the label.

Others scribes were equally careless with the new term: Coventry's Wardens' account book records alms given 'to pore Soldiers and musicions' in 1610, which was precisely what disturbed Whythorne, for in his eyes no proper 'musician' would ever need to beg. In Gloucester alms were likewise given to 'Trowte a poore Musican', and in Hutton a 'poore man' accused of vagrancy was identified as 'musitian'.⁴³⁶ These were minstrel 'off-scum' according to Whythorne, on whom the scribes had bestowed the title of musician even decades after the shift in terminology. In other instances it appears that scribes could not be bothered with terminology and simply recorded payments 'ffor musicke'.⁴³⁷ And in Plymouth one wordy description hints (if only just) that the scribe chose to avoid the minstrel/musician problem entirely by

Hewit named was actually the head of the city waits. The Chamberlain for example paid James Hewit 'for his part of the weites Lyvereyes', p. 218.

⁴³⁴ REED, Coventry, p. 269

⁴³⁵ REED, Cumberland, p. 76.

⁴³⁶ REED, Coventry, p. 380; REED Gloucestershire, p. 321; REED, Somerset, p. 143.

⁴³⁷ REED, Coventry, p. 306.

circling round the term: ‘pd to men appertaigninge to some nobleman which playede [with] the waites’.⁴³⁸ Wait, minstrel, musician or otherwise, it seems that in the case of many scribes it was simply a matter of what came to mind first. This kind of indifference was Whythorne’s nightmare.

In addition to campaigning for the proper use of terminology, literate musicians and their sympathisers spent a great deal of energy simply complaining about minstrels and their offensive music. Minstrels’ scraping and twanging hurt the ears and offended the spirit, and they played even when they were drunk, creating nauseous discord and dishonouring God. Minstrels were also, as a group, ignorant people with loose morals.⁴³⁹ The attack was not lost on minstrels themselves. Stephen Gosson’s ‘An Apologie of the School of Abuse’, which condemns minstrels as Whythorne does, notes that ‘Pipers are very sore displeased’ at his attacks. Like Whythorne, he hearkens back to the classical world and argues that, back then, pipes were ‘not worth a straw’. The pipers’ retort, according to Gosson, is that ‘they say, their music is perfecter now than it was before’, to which Gosson scoffs, ‘who shall be judge?’, mocking the pipers’ musical ignorance.⁴⁴⁰ In response to attacks like this, minstrels did not turn away. Indeed they did not call themselves ‘musicians’ absentmindedly; in fact some seem to have actively insisted upon their musician status.

One example of this comes from Cheshire’s Quarter Sessions Examinations in 1594, wherein Richard Preston is described as a ‘~~pip~~ musicianer’. As the document was a statement taken from Preston himself, it seems likely that the scribe began to write ‘piper’ but was corrected. ‘Musicioner’ was probably Preston’s description of

⁴³⁸ REED, Devon, pp. 250-251.

⁴³⁹ See Cockayne, ‘Cacophony’ for a collection of complains about ‘bad’ music.

⁴⁴⁰ Stephen Gosson, ‘A Short Apologie of the Schoole of Abuse’ in *The Ephemerides of Phialo* (London, 1579), STC 12093, p. 85.

himself.⁴⁴¹ Similarly, in Cheshire's official records, one John Tompson is described on separate occasions as a piper and a minstrel; in the parish records, which more likely reflected what he called himself, he was identified as a musician.⁴⁴² John Grylynge of King's Lynn was arrested in Norwich for 'exercising the idle trade of minstrelsy' while 'calling himself a musician'. This was 1580, after the vagabond statute, and Grylynge was punished for 'roagyng' under the name of musician.⁴⁴³

However not all minstrels seemed eager to take on the 'musician' label. Even some relatively wealthy minstrels, who might have been expected to seek the prestige of a more desirable professional description, seemed contented as 'minstrels' even at the turn of the century. The 1598 will of Robert Banwell of Newcastle reveals that he maintained a number of apprentices (his 'boys'), and was certainly wealthy enough not to be the busking, poorer sort of minstrel. However Banwell still chose to call himself 'minstrel'.⁴⁴⁴ And the York Minstrels Ordinance of 1578 (which we have seen before) lays the controversial terms side by side: 'the arte or sciens of musiciens comonlie called the minstrells'.⁴⁴⁵ Did Banwell cling to his 'minstrel' title out of ignorance, or tradition, or defiance? And was it necessary to insist that musicians were only 'comonlie called' minstrels, or was the phrase included without much controversy? The spirit in which such terms were used in wills, ordinances, and account books may not be ascertainable, but throughout the records it is clear that from the 1560s there was an awareness of the growing use of 'musician' and the declining connotation of 'minstrel'.

Walter Salmen suggested that minstrels brought their 'decline' upon themselves. As independent musicians, minstrels freed themselves from the authority

⁴⁴¹ Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 19.

⁴⁴² Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 15.

⁴⁴³ REED, Norwich, p. 188.

⁴⁴⁴ REED, Newcastle, p. 39.

⁴⁴⁵ REED, York, p. 385.

of church, court, and to some degree the town, and were effectively masterless men. By excluding themselves from the power structure, Salmen argued, minstrels seemed dangerous, and created a feedback cycle that eventually spun them right out of society's favour.⁴⁴⁶

But the large number of payments to minstrels might show the opposite. Minstrels were favoured well enough for a great number to make a living as such, and even tailors and paviors turned to minstrelsy for money. In 1579, Stephen Gosson complained that 'London is so full of unprofitable Pipers and Fiddlers, that a man can no soner enter a taverne, but two or three caste of them hang at his heeles'. By complaining about the number of 'idle beggars' in London, Gosson has perhaps also revealed that minstrels were in fact was not so disdained.⁴⁴⁷ The city would not have been so crowded with minstrels if there were no money in it. London contained a sufficiently large paying audience to keep the minstrels coming.

So if the resentment of society as a whole cannot be blamed for minstrels' inclusion in the legislation against vagabonds, what was the cause? One extremely significant bit of evidence relating to the minstrels' 'fall' is often overlooked. Found not in the 1572 legislation that made them vagrants, but in the parliamentary diaries, it shows that the inclusion of the word 'minstrel' in the statute was very controversial indeed. Committee members were given an audience with Elizabeth regarding 'the great cause' before the bill was presented to Parliament, but exactly what was discussed is unclear. The bill was read and rejected twice before an amended third draft was debated, and Thomas Cromwell noted that much of the debate was regarding the inclusion of minstrels: 'much argument pro and contra was made aboute minstrels'. Fulk Onslow, clerk of the Commons, also noted in his diary that 'of these

⁴⁴⁶ Salmen, *Social Status*, p. 26.

⁴⁴⁷ Gosson, 'Apologie', p. 87.

wordes “minstrelles”, whether they should be contained within the said bill or not, great argument arose’.⁴⁴⁸ Minstrels were not, therefore, declared vagabonds because society as a whole regarded them as dangerous criminal types. The opposite was not true either: there was enough anxiety about minstrels’ behaviour that, in the end, they *were* included in the bill. 1572 marks, then, a watershed for English minstrels, when ‘great debate’ arose over their role in society. The situation was created by a number of important social changes in the mid-sixteenth century.

In addition to vagrancy paranoia, another factor in the minstrels’ ‘fall’, and one to which Patrick Collinson ascribed much significance, was the Protestant Reformation and its resulting culture wars. Music was traditionally and inextricably associated with dancing, drinking, festival, and other activities that came to be labelled as lewd by eager Protestants. Their reformation came to target ‘not so much Catholics as...a way of life that had lived happily alongside the old religion but...could not put up with the new. It was the minstrels more than mass-priests who proved to be the enemy’.⁴⁴⁹ Collinson believed that this kind of ‘Reformation’ began in the 1570s, which, as we have seen, was the time of the Statute as well as the appearance of ‘musician’ in account books. It was also the same time that Whythorne began writing his manuscript. At this crucial time, Whythorne and his sympathisers who were attempting to break with the old traditions of music found like minds in the larger movement of English Protestantism, which ‘made an iconoclastic holocaust of the culture which already existed’.⁴⁵⁰ In essence, elite musicians and Protestantism found a common enemy.

Protestantism’s particular conflict with traditional music played out again and again in conflicts between preachers and minstrels. In Mobberly in 1595, for

⁴⁴⁸ Roberts, ‘Legislation of 1572’, pp. 37-38.

⁴⁴⁹ Collinson, *Birthpangs*, p. x.

⁴⁵⁰ Collinson, *Birthpangs*, p. 94.

example, the vicar Mr. Eaton, preached against pipers and music-making in general, while the town piper, John Baxter, responded by playing his pipes louder, nearer to the church— even at the vicar’s gate, and immediately after evening prayer.⁴⁵¹ As in similar cases involving Puritans and pipers, Baxter had popular support and the incident suggests that it was a coordinated effort by the townspeople ‘for the specific purpose of testing the parson’s authority and tolerance’, with a musician as their flag-bearer.⁴⁵² Sunday was the only regular day of leisure and was popular for dancing and merrymaking, but growing Sabbatarianism worked against minstrels as well. It was not unusual for musicians to be fined or arrested for playing on Sunday, often as part of an ale or as accompaniment to dancing. Elizabeth Baldwin shows that musicians convicted in Cheshire were usually accused of breaking the Sabbath.⁴⁵³ Eager Protestants might then be more willing to condemn minstrels alongside musicians like Whythorne.

In another case, minstrelsy was presented as the ally of a disreputable clergyman, serving to confirm the growing Puritan belief that minstrelsy harmed one’s spiritual health. In 1600 Philip Wyot of Barnstaple noted in his diary that the local vicar was found in the alehouse ‘as usuall’, by the mayor and aldermen. The vicar and his cohorts had ‘amongst them a pip with a Taber a little after nine’. The vicar was arrested and committed by the mayor. Despite appeals to his bishop, the vicar was ordered to stand trial, and was released on bail. It was perhaps in retribution that he then preached for a full two hours the next Sunday, and ‘weryed all

⁴⁵¹ Baldwin, *Piper*, pp. 35-39.

⁴⁵² Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 37.

⁴⁵³ Patrick Collinson and Elizabeth Baldwin have cited extensive evidence of such cases. While minstrels’ actions (i.e., their insistence on playing on Sunday) might have been motivated by an ideological opposition to Puritanism, it seems equally likely that they were simply doing it for money. Otherwise, musicians were arrested for committing similarly benign crimes such as playing in an illegal alehouse, playing at night or at some other forbidden time/place. See Baldwin *Piper*, Chapter 1, and Collinson, *Birthpangs*, p. 156.

his audience'.⁴⁵⁴ There also exists some evidence that minstrelsy was associated with recusancy. Fiddlers were known to utilise their music and mobility to proselytize as well as act as recusant messengers.⁴⁵⁵

Despite coming under fire after the English Reformation, minstrels maintained an important place in society. For, as Collinson notes, there remained 'plenty of young people with money in their pockets who preferred dances to sermons on Sundays'.⁴⁵⁶ Like all the other factors contributing to the decline of the minstrel, this one cannot be given sole responsibility.

Rapid increases in education and therefore literacy in the mid-sixteenth century also brought great changes for the music profession. The printed ballad, and the fact that those who purchased a ballad could then perform the song for themselves at any time, meant that people lost 'incentive to stand in the square for an hour at a time, listening' to a singer of tales.⁴⁵⁷ Epic storytellers and minstrels in the square lost out to the individual's new opportunity to sing songs to himself and his friends with the aid of the printing press.⁴⁵⁸ But, as others have shown, print was not a solvent of oral culture and existed alongside it, each reinforcing the other.⁴⁵⁹ Indeed many who purchased ballads could not read, and learned the song by rote from the ballad seller. So while literacy certainly affected the musicians' craft and audience, the degree to which it did so is contested.

More important than the growing literacy of the audience was the growing literacy of the musician, as the sixteenth century also saw great changes in musical

⁴⁵⁴ REED, Devon, p. 47.

⁴⁵⁵ Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 33.

⁴⁵⁶ Collinson, *Birthpangs*, p. 153.

⁴⁵⁷ Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 348.

⁴⁵⁸ Adam Fox has shown that ballads were purchased and learned even by illiterate townspeople who could take the ballad to someone in the town to read it for them (*Oral Culture*, esp. Chapter 2). See also Keith Wrightson, *English Society*, p. 204.

⁴⁵⁹ See Fox, *Oral Culture* and Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1996).

literacy. In the fifteenth century, musical notation was a rhythmically complex ‘language’, and learning to write and to read it was a laborious process. Further complications arose in reading music once one had learned to, because individual scribes’ quirks could vary so greatly that it was hardly translatable. Music notation was not yet a standardized language. Three developments in the sixteenth century brought about what Richard Rastall has called an ‘age of transition’ for music notation, indeed even a ‘revolution’.⁴⁶⁰ The simplification of rhythm, and with it the simplification of rhythmic notation, encouraged the use of notation, while the printing press assisted in the creation of a standardized ‘language’.⁴⁶¹ Educated men across Europe and England began to embrace music and its new system, and the radical changes in notation developed in concert with radical social changes for the profession. Music could now be recorded and transmitted without someone actually having to perform it, and a great deal of prestige was bestowed upon those who had the skills to read and write music. These skills could only be acquired from a learned teacher or by studying music at university, which meant that the poorer sorts were excluded. Now the tangible and measurable difference between those who understood music notation and those who did not created an immense generation gap between the old-style musicians and the new.

The rise of musical literacy also had an unexpected effect on music and song itself. Previously, music was learned by rote and stored only in the memory, and a great deal of musical performance involved improvisation. Each musician thus placed his individual ‘stamp’ on the basic elements of a particular song, so one performance differed slightly from another. There was therefore ‘no “correct” version [of a song], for the idea of a correct version [was] meaningless’ before music

⁴⁶⁰ Richard Rastall, *The Notation of Western Music* (London, 1983), pp. 97, 105.

⁴⁶¹ Rastall, *Notation*, pp. 97-117.

was transcribed, recorded, and made permanent.⁴⁶² The poorer sorts of minstrels, having no access to university education nor money to hire tutors, continued to perform in the traditional way, learning by rote and performing by improvisation, while the more literate musicians increasingly labelled their practises as ‘wrong’. Whythorne was certainly one of the latter. And for musicians like him, the insistence that minstrels were *not* musicians at all was beneficial in career terms. Disliking the fact that he might be associated with buskers on the street, Whythorne berated minstrels for their lack of taste, skill, and education; others went so far as to accuse them of defiling music, and called for a return to an older, purer music.⁴⁶³ This accusation was of course ironic, since it was minstrels who were in fact practicing the more traditional musical ways. But critics, in the spirit of the Renaissance, harkened back to ‘old’ days before the minstrel, before the Middle Ages, to Classical Greece and Rome, where they imagined music was ‘pure’. They tied up their new music with the ancients in an attempt to elevate it far above the musical tradition England had inherited.

The new ‘science’ of musical literacy was respectable and fashionable; it was now desirable for the gentry to learn music. In such a cultural climate, educated professionals like Whythorne felt the need to teach people to distinguish ‘proper’ musicians from the less desirable ‘people who crowded the urban streets’. As such, they attempted to ‘control the sound environment and to bring music indoors’.⁴⁶⁴ Indoors, the gentry could enjoy music without risking association with the poorer sorts who used it as a livelihood. For the gentry, music was purely entertainment, and

⁴⁶² Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 173.

⁴⁶³ For a collection of complaints by elite members of society, see Cockayne, ‘Cacophony’.

⁴⁶⁴ Cockayne, ‘Cacophony’, p. 47.

as authors like Castiglione confirm, to use it for any other purpose (such as income), or to become *too* interested in it, was not at all fitting a gentleman.⁴⁶⁵

New musical instruments, and new musical genres suited to the indoors emerged in the 1560s and 70s and became highly fashionable. Part-songs, madrigals, and other chamber music required the ability to read one's part, and were very difficult to learn by rote. Highly fashionable lutes, gitterns, and virginals⁴⁶⁶ were quiet, mellow instruments well suited for the parlour while pipes, tabors and rebecs were less 'elite' and far too loud to play in such close proximity. 'Superior' musicians and gentlemen could therefore safely keep their music inside, and out of the hands and ears of the more vulgar sorts. Castiglione's Sir Frederick acclaimed the virtues of the lute, viols, and all 'instruments with frets', which 'fill the mind with the sweetness of music'. 'Noisome' instruments, he thought, were better left alone.⁴⁶⁷ It was during this watershed of the 1570s that table books began to be printed⁴⁶⁸ (whereby a consort of players could encircle a table and read from the same music book), signifying a new movement in the world of music: the proper musician performed indoors and only for his own enjoyment. Simultaneously, songs associated with raucous groups (ballads, dance tunes, epics, and carols) became much less fashionable, so that types of music, which earlier in the century had been popular across all social spheres, were by the 1580s becoming fixed into a pecking order. Minstrels were fixed as well, so that the upper sorts (and ambitious middling sorts,

⁴⁶⁵ According to Castiglione's Sir Fredrick and Lord Julian, all practice and performance of music 'must be [by] discretion'. As *sprezzatura* dictates, one should be reasonably good without revealing one had tried too hard. Playing in the presence of women was desirable, while playing after one had passed the appropriate age was disparaged: 'it were no meet matter, but an ill sight to see a man of any estimation being old, hoarheaded and toothless, full of wrinkles with a lute in his arms playing upon it and singing in the midst of a company of women'. Castiglione, *The Courtier*, pp. 101-102.

⁴⁶⁶ Whythorne tells us he learned to play these instruments precisely because they were 'then strange in England, and therefore the more desired and esteemed' (p. 11).

⁴⁶⁷ Castiglione, *The Courtier*, p. 101.

⁴⁶⁸ Rastall, *Notation*, p. 117.

too) could follow Castiglione's advice to 'flee the multitude, and especially of the unnoble'.⁴⁶⁹

The profession persisted in its fluidity nevertheless, eternally frustrating people like Whythorne, who stood to benefit from its stratification. This is perhaps precisely why he presented the musical hierarchy the way he did. His model did not allow for movement and it did not allow the poorer sorts even to be called musicians. Whythorne and his sympathisers wanted to be seen as something quite separate from the common musician. It was to his great disgust that he might be perceived as a lowly singer of tales. Or indeed perhaps the real issue was his disgust that a singer of tales could be mistaken for his equal. His book was intended to remedy this problem, as he explained to his readers (the 'better sorts', whose opinion 'mattered') that a minstrel was *not* a musician and that a man's ability to play pretty tunes on a harp did not automatically qualify him as such. The hierarchy Whythorne presents us with, then, was meant to be instructional. He wanted his readers to believe him, and it certainly worked, though his readers have been modern historians rather than his own contemporaries. But when we 'know' rather than just 'use' Whythorne, we can come to his text with an understanding of his motives, and recognize the dangers of believing him too literally. Indeed, like so many of his contemporaries who set out social hierarchies in various forms, Whythorne was depicting the music world as it *ought* to be, not the way it was.⁴⁷⁰

Whythorne's and other literate musicians' efforts to widen the gap between minstrels and themselves was in fact part of the larger movement in Elizabethan England towards stratification, the ordering of professions, and the widening gap

⁴⁶⁹ Castiglione, *The Courtier*, p. 102.

⁴⁷⁰ On contemporary social hierarchies and their relation to reality, see Wrightson, *English Society*, pp. 26-46.

between polite and low society.⁴⁷¹ Patrick Collinson warns us, though, against automatically tagging every change in early modern England as a growing gap between the elite and popular, pointing out the fact that many wealthy people were known to defend traditional community festivities.⁴⁷² And the continual hiring of lowly minstrels by the upper sorts would support this argument; clearly the elite had not retreated from popular culture so far as to cease hiring poorer sorts of musicians altogether. English carols and ballads certainly also prove that in music the ‘great’ and ‘little’ traditions continually overlapped.⁴⁷³ Additionally after the Reformation some elite individuals would have cheered on the piper at the gates rather than the preacher in the church. But in looking at the musical profession itself—the makers of music and not their audiences—there was most certainly a growing gap between elite and popular. In the Tudor musical profession the phenomenon is quite clear. The question then becomes one of the chicken-and-egg kind: did musicians divide and stratify because of the pattern in wider society, or did the wider society divide and stratify because of the patterns established in subcultures like musicians?

Besides accusing minstrels of ignorance and lack of talent, elite musicians widened the gap between minstrels and themselves by highlighting minstrels’ supposed criminal natures. Minstrels wielded the power to draw a crowd, which made them perfectly suited for carrying and delivering messages. But this power was

⁴⁷¹ Burke, *Popular Culture*. See also Wrightson, *English Society*, pp. 148-150. Music was especially similar to the legal profession in early modern England in striking ways, most notably that within the profession a polarization was being imposed from above: ‘barristers insisted that attorneys belonged to an inferior social class and were fitted for entirely different functions than were they themselves’. The profession was hierarchical but fluid as well, so that ‘who precisely belonged to this profession ... is far from clear’. (O’Day, *The Professions*, p. 116.) O’Day claims that the change was so marked that there was actually a revolution in the legal profession (p. 120). For the implications for the music profession, see Chapter 4.

⁴⁷² Collinson, *Birthpangs*, p. 124.

⁴⁷³ Tessa Watt has gone so far as to say that minstrels, who sang ballads that might also be purchased in print form, ‘occupied a position as mediators between older musical traditions and the London printing press’ (Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 14). It has been claimed that minstrels served as link between court and popular culture in Tudor England (Fox, *Oral Culture*, p. 9), but upon further investigation this does not seem plausible. See Chapter 4 section on court musicians.

also dangerous because it could not be controlled by the authorities. A minstrel could sing a tune as he pleased, and if he drew a crowd, the authorities might have cause for concern. Not only could the wandering minstrel bring to town the physical threat of plague, but he could also infect the crowd with idleness and immorality. The crowd could also become disorderly, with or without the minstrel's encouragement.⁴⁷⁴

Crowds were the haunt of cutpurses and pickpockets, and the minstrel's ability to create such situations was dangerous in itself. In Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, the ballad monger/cutpurse Nightingale uses this power to his advantage, and it appears that in this case art reflected life. Gamini Salgado has shown that some criminally-inclined minstrels achieved success by working as a team: one distracted the crowd with his music while the other circulated among the people and cut purses.⁴⁷⁵

Minstrels' association with crime, especially their common depiction as petty criminals, also presents a chicken-and-egg problem. Were they condemned by writers like Whythorne because of their criminality, or were they depicted as criminals because the authors were looking for reasons to condemn?

Minstrels could certainly be the victims as well as the perpetrators of crime. Richard Sheale, minstrel, tells us he lost all his money in a robbery, though he had expected that his minstrel's appearance would have protected him:

I thought by Reason off my harpe
no man wold me suspect
For minstrels offt with money
the be not moche Infecte.⁴⁷⁶

Sheale, a prosperous minstrel himself, had relied on the stereotype of the penniless minstrel to protect him. Apparently thieves knew as well as patrons that not all minstrels were beggars. In another case, two young minstrels at an inn were

⁴⁷⁴ Cockayne, 'Cacophony', p. 44; Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 42.

⁴⁷⁵ Salgado, *Elizabethan Underworld*, p. 142.

⁴⁷⁶ Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 48, Songbook of Richard Sheale, f. 96.

approached by a well-dressed gallant who implied that he might be able to help them find permanent positions in a great house. (It is interesting to note here that while they were certainly minstrels, they played the ‘gentrified’ lute and virginals, thus blurring the lines between elite and popular, as music and musicians tend to.) Enthusiastic at this prospect, the minstrels met him over drinks, which were served in silver goblets. Complaining that the claret needed more sugar, the gallant tossed his cloak on his chair and carried his goblet to the back of the tavern, never to be seen again. The minstrels were left to pay for the wine and the goblet, with the added disappointment that the cloak he left behind was ‘tawdry stuff, not worth two shillings’.⁴⁷⁷

The most significant result of minstrels’ association with crime was that in 1572, the vagabond statute officially made wandering minstrels criminals simply for doing what they had always done. They had carried on in England’s ancient musical tradition, wandering the country playing for those who would pay. But by 1572, the culture around them had changed; their services were no longer favoured enough to be defended or preserved. Minstrels were now required to carry licences or face punishment. The statute was enabling legislation; it was intended to create a more ordered, measurable, and controllable musical profession. And again, while Whythorne and the upper sorts of musicians must have approved of such changes, the itinerant minstrel suffered. The inclusion of minstrels in the vagabond statute was very controversial, however, and 1572 was perhaps a watershed point, when music in England moved in a new direction. It was an official declaration of change in the profession. Music, like other contemporary professions, underwent a ‘long and partially successful series of attempts on the part of some members of the educated

⁴⁷⁷ Salgado, *Elizabethan Underworld*, p. 33.

minority to reform the culture of craftsmen and peasants'.⁴⁷⁸ As Christopher Marsh aptly put it, 'there were those at work in this period who wished the world to change'.⁴⁷⁹ Minstrels survived, though, long into the seventeenth century, and Whythorne's very frustration that perceptions of minstrels were not altering fast enough confirms Burke's assertion that 'changes do not always take place because someone wants them'.⁴⁸⁰

Religious reform, growing literacy, culture wars, too many beggars in the streets, even a vague 'change of musical taste' have all been suggested as the primary reasons for the decline of the minstrel in Tudor England. Certainly, for certain types of minstrels, life in Elizabethan England was 'more precarious than ever'⁴⁸¹ as they lost the respect of their fellow musicians, and sometimes their audience, without ever changing their behaviour. The growing chasm between literate and illiterate, elite and popular musicians was the result of the intersection of not one but many social changes—changes that erupted in part from within the profession itself. It was a movement that was also part of a wider social pattern: Wrightson's description of English life in the 1580s, where 'the poor had become not simply poor, but to a significant degree culturally different', certainly applies to the social world of musicians by 1580 as well.

It should be emphasized, however, that not all minstrels were affected by the growing prejudice against itinerant musicians. Not all minstrels were itinerant. They were rather a composite group, made up of musicians ranging from dubious wanderers to resident citizens, some even prominent and well-off. Many were also part-time minstrels who used music to supplement their incomes in any number of

⁴⁷⁸ Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 335.

⁴⁷⁹ Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 75.

⁴⁸⁰ Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 335.

⁴⁸¹ Salgado, *Elizabethan Underworld*, p. 138.

trades. And indeed, many minstrels moved in and out of the minstrel sphere as their career paths led them to household service, to employment by the city, or to membership in the company of musicians of their town. In the next chapter we will explore the various spheres musicians might move between over the course of their career.

Chapter 4

THE MUSICAL PROFESSION AND OTHER SPHERES

Roare deep in the Quire ... deeper in the Taverne.
-John Earle

In examining the music profession in sixteenth century England, we will go from the minstrel sphere to the spheres that overlap it, and so on ‘up’ the model. It is hoped that the usefulness of the spheres model (fig. 3.1, p. 122) will become clearer along the way.

Companies of Musicians

An Ordinance drawn up by the minstrels of York in 1561 set rules and regulations for performers of music in the city.⁴⁸² First and foremost, ‘noo maner fforeyner of what condicion he by [could] occupie any mynstrelsyng syngyng or playing upon any instrument within any parochie within this Citie’. This monopoly was limited to feasts and holy days, and required that any offending ‘forayne Mynstrell...paye for every tyme that he shalbe fonde doing the contrary’.⁴⁸³ Such monopolies were not unknown in other cities—Bristol and Newcastle, for example, seemed to have used the same kind of system—but there were plenty of cities that did not, and travelling minstrels would have quickly learned when to avoid which cities. York’s minstrels’ ordinance went far beyond the establishment of a monopoly, though. The ‘ffelawship of the Mynstrelles ffreemen of this Citie’ had the authority to annually ‘assemble theym selves...within the Cities [sic] at a day certayne of theym

⁴⁸² REED, York, pp. 334-338.

⁴⁸³ REED, York, p. 335.

to be lymyed' where they would select 'three hable persones' as Master and Searchers of the 'said sciens or craft'.⁴⁸⁴ The minstrels were operating as a guild 'or craft', and maintained a common box, into which payments had to be made by every 'brother of the said science'; members also made annual payments towards the 'supportacion and bryngyng forth of their pageant'. Apprentices were required to be presented before the Master minstrel within a month of being bonded, and fines were imposed for all kinds of misdemeanors including failing to attend meetings, failure to pay fees on time, and 'presum[ing] to rebuke revile or gyve any slanderouse or vilaynouse woordes to the said Maister or Serchars'.⁴⁸⁵ Brothers of the 'craft' were forbidden to perform with 'any stranger' without permission of the Master, and were also forbidden to teach anyone but their own apprentices. A very notable exception was made, however: 'this acte doo not extende to any brother for teaching any gentleman or free man of this Citie and their children disposed to learne any thing for his pleasure'. Similarly, the rule against performing with strangers did not 'extende to the waytes of the Citie of york for the tyme being to hyre any man to helpe theym in their watche'.⁴⁸⁶

The ordinances of the company of musicians in London also survive from throughout the sixteenth century. The first ordinance was drafted in 1500, after London minstrels claimed that court retainers crowded the market and drove them to poverty, to which the court responded by granting their group authority over professional musicians. Further ordinances came in 1553, 1574, and 1604, granting further concessions. The 1553 ordinance gave a kind of monopoly to London musicians, as in York, forbidding foreign musicians to play in common halls, inns, or alehouses, no matter their rank. And to further protect the profession from London

⁴⁸⁴ REED, York, p. 335.

⁴⁸⁵ REED, York, p. 336.

⁴⁸⁶ REED, York, p. 337.

tradesmen who tried to supplement their income through music (like the tailor and pavier, and many other examples in Chapter 3), it forbade the singing of ‘three men’s songs’ in taverns and alehouses. These could, after all, be performed by any group of three men without instruments or musical training. The 1574 ordinance, as if to support the recent watershed classification of minstrels as vagrants and their exclusion from the category of recognised ‘musicians’, declared any minstrels who did not belong to the company ‘unchaste, wasteful, lewd and dangerous’.⁴⁸⁷

Though records for the period are scarce, evidence survives confirming the existence of a company or guild of musicians in at least nine cities.⁴⁸⁸ These records reveal a number of things about the music profession at the time. First, that the household musicians, waits, and minstrels might all belong to the ‘Fellowship of the Minstrels’; and second, that these spheres of the profession were also seen as distinct and separate, with different rules applied to each. Indeed, companies of musicians involved musicians of all ‘spheres’, and the ordinances of the company helped to protect the poorer members of the organization, who played in inns and alehouses. Promising musicians from these ranks might be recruited to the waits and even the court.⁴⁸⁹ Each company kept financial records, but unfortunately none survive so any detailed information is scarce. Nevertheless Walter Woodfill argued that the company of musicians in London could ‘never become strong’, even in the midst of a thriving musical culture at court and a prosperous economy. He claimed that ‘most of its freemen would be poor’, based on the fact that company members performed for

⁴⁸⁷ Walter Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles I* (Princeton, 1953, reprint, New York, 1969), pp. 11, 14.

⁴⁸⁸ Sources in the REED volumes show that companies existed in Bristol, Canterbury, Newcastle, Shrewsbury, York, London, Oxford, and Cambridge, and Norwich. Notably, a number of these were towns that Robert Tittler has identified as having formalized in the sixteenth century with ‘the greatest expedition’. Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and Towns*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 18.

⁴⁸⁹ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 32.

the 'lower classes'.⁴⁹⁰ There is, however, certainly evidence that a good number of musicians in each city were freemen and even burgesses, and Woodfill's assumption that they were generally poor seems a little pre-emptive. We simply cannot know just how successful all company members were, because they are so elusive in the paper record.

Historians have tended to conflate terms relating to musicians in cities. 'Town musicians' is often taken to mean the Waits, and in other cases even 'company of musicians' is presumed to refer to Waits only. Perhaps this stems from the powerful minstrel stereotype that prevents us from imagining that there were noted musicians in towns who were independent from civic employment. But even in the face of evidence that would point us in the direction of acknowledging the variety of musical roles in cities, some historians have persisted in neatly categorizing musicians outside the court as either vagrant minstrel, or city wait. One instance where all these problems collide is in the interpretation of the records of Shrewsbury's minstrels' guild. By tradition, the guild was founded in Norman times, but the first actual evidence is a 1444 copy (confirmed by the Earl of Shrewsbury) of the original ordinance. The document records the testimony of Robert Bedeleme, Earl of Shrewsbury⁴⁹¹ who, soon after the Norman conquest, was afflicted with leprosy. He was instructed to go to Araske, where a candle that had burned at Christ's birth still 'bernyth and never wastyth'. If God would heal the Earl, the candle was expected to move from its place and drop a bit of wax upon him, but after thirteen days with no result, his minstrel took the matter upon himself. He brought wax from the candle to his master, saying that he had prayed under 'the sayd Candyll' which had 'descended

⁴⁹⁰ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 32.

⁴⁹¹ Robert de Belleme was earl for just four years (1098-1102). After he was deprived in 1102, the earldom was suppressed for 350 years. He died in or after 1113. F.M. Powicke and E. Fryde, eds., *Handbook of British Chronology* (London, 1961), p. 449.

noo ferr from him...[and] a droppe of the waxe fell on his right hond'.⁴⁹² The earl was miraculously healed, and in honour of his minstrel, he ordained 'that every mynstrell within the county of Shropshire dwelling yerely should come to Shroesbury vppon seynt Peterys day...and there to Chuse theim a master'.⁴⁹³

Whether this is a story of a holy miracle or a clever minstrel is a moot point, but the question of whether the Earl actually ordained a kind of guild is quite relevant. Alan Somerset, editor of the Shropshire REED volume, found it difficult to believe for a number of reasons. If it actually occurred in Norman times, this is some of the earliest evidence we have that minstrels' guilds were indeed 'ancient' as their early modern ordinances often claim. The rights and privileges that the Earl granted to Shropshire minstrels were strikingly similar to those granted to York's and London's minstrels five hundred years later: any foreign minstrel was charged a fee or had his instrument confiscated. The minstrels' annual meeting was also sanctioned, with the added element of a candle-lit procession in remembrance of the 'Myracle'.⁴⁹⁴ Such a meeting of minstrels was not unusual in early modern England, and minstrels did organize across England. Did these guilds really exist even as far back as William the Conqueror?

Alan Somerset is inclined to think not and calls the document a 'fabrication'. The 1444 copy of the original (if it existed) was signed by John Talbot, then Earl of Shrewsbury, and it seems that at least he believed it was true. There are some minor problems in the precise dating of the copy, which are curious but not damning; what primarily lead Somerset to think the source was a fabrication was the idea that 'it seems unlikely that an annual "minstrels' court" could go unremarked upon'.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹² REED, Shropshire, p. 511.

⁴⁹³ REED, Shropshire, p. 512.

⁴⁹⁴ REED, Shropshire, p. 512.

⁴⁹⁵ REED, Shropshire, p. 509.

Indeed it led him to conclude that no company of musicians existed at all in Shrewsbury, either in the eleventh century or the sixteenth. But one bit of evidence cannot be discounted, though it is small. A 1638 Shropshire churchwardens' account shows a payment to a joiner for 'a little Chest belonging to the company of musitians'.⁴⁹⁶ Somerset assumes that the 'company' mentioned was simply the city waits, but the answer is not nearly so clear. There were a great many 'town' musicians who were not waits, but musicians who lived in the town. Musicians of all types operated in self-conscious groups, and the existence of official companies across England make Shrewsbury's guild seem more and more plausible.

Whether the guild was 'ancient', and actually founded in Norman times is a separate question. The language of most of the minstrel ordinances implies that they had already organized themselves in the fifteenth century, or earlier.⁴⁹⁷ The scarcity of Medieval records makes this nearly impossible to prove, and most other signs point to a widespread creation of guilds in the 'polarized, hierarchical, and oligarchic' towns of sixteenth-century England.⁴⁹⁸ After the Reformation 'watershed' of the 1540s, a boom in formal organization of fraternities and guilds facilitated towns' newly redefined political role.⁴⁹⁹ Companies of musicians, it would seem, fit this model perfectly. At the same time, there was great interest in a town's ability to claim 'auncienty', and trace its roots to a distant, hopefully glorious past. In many towns, particular myths lay dormant throughout the Middle Ages, never being mentioned (so far as records can show), but after the Reformation, 'out popped the story', and it was linked firmly with the town's constructed past and ambitious

⁴⁹⁶ REED, *Shropshire*, p. 319.

⁴⁹⁷ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁸ Tittler, *Reformation and Towns*, p. 18.

⁴⁹⁹ Tittler strongly argues that the 1540s were indeed a watershed for the political and cultural transformation of towns in England. See *Reformation and Towns*, esp. pp. 21, 50, 335-337.

present.⁵⁰⁰ In light of this, the inclusion of the word ‘ancient’ in the ordinances of so many companies of musicians places them squarely in this tradition. Medieval fabrication or early modern embroidery of stories to advance the honour of the company was probably the case in Shrewsbury as well as other towns.

Besides controlling the music performance market, another primary function of minstrel companies was to help regulate apprenticeship indentures. This could, in theory at least, control the influx of individuals into the profession as well as more easily resolve disputes between musicians. Often trouble arose because in music there was certainly a notion of ‘talent’, and a belief that one who might have been appointed to learn the trade simply was not cut out to be a musician. Thomas Wyncott, organist in Exeter, was involved in a legal dispute with one of his apprentices, who complained that Wyncott suddenly quit teaching him after only a quarter of the contracted six years. Wyncott’s defence was straightforward: he had done the best he could, but the pupil was ‘vnapt’.⁵⁰¹ Other apprentices might have possessed the necessary talent but lacked enthusiasm. One young apprentice abandoned his musical training to work for a con-artist. The boy’s job was to make a display of madness and possession in order to be ‘cured’ by his master in front of a crowd. Apprehended, the boy confessed that he had meant no harm; he only wanted to escape his apprenticeship as a musician.⁵⁰² Of the recorded apprentices in Bristol, a remarkably high number are either orphans or the children of parents in a distant county. And recalling that Christ’s Hospital allowed only their blind and lame charges to be apprenticed to musicians,⁵⁰³ it might appear that the musical profession

⁵⁰⁰ Tittler, *Reformation and Towns*, pp. 270-304, quotation at p. 278.

⁵⁰¹ REED, *Exeter*, pp. 140-141.

⁵⁰² Gamini Salgado, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (London, 1977), p. 94.

⁵⁰³ Morrison Boyd, *Elizabethan Music and Musical Criticism* (Philadelphia 1940), p. 15; Emily Cockayne, ‘Cacophony, or Vile Scrapers on Vile Instruments: Bad Music in Early Modern English Towns’, *Urban History* 29, 1 (2002), p. 40.

was pressed upon youths with no other good options. At the same time, we know that Whythorne proudly served John Heywood for three years, for he was ‘very well skilled in music’ whose ‘like...was not as then in England, nor before his time since Chaucer’s time’.⁵⁰⁴ A great many musical apprenticeships, and music masters, were highly regarded indeed. In Bristol, some apprentices were made burgesses before they had even completed their apprenticeship.⁵⁰⁵ The company of musicians, and indeed the profession itself, again refuses to fit nicely into one category or another, but spans a spectrum that includes both orphans and burgesses— and everything in between. All the ‘spheres’ of musicians convened in companies organized in cities and towns across England. This was a space where musicians from all walks of life met, coordinated, and compromised.

Waits

Waits⁵⁰⁶ seem to have originated as night watchmen. Armed with loud instruments that could easily wake the town, they patrolled the city streets at night, raising the hue and cry when necessary.⁵⁰⁷ In most cities their job also came to include announcing the hours at night, and playing at bedtime and rising time. Like the rest of the branches of the musical profession, the waits’ job continually evolved throughout the sixteenth century. As emphasis on night patrolling decreased, focus on musical expertise increased, and by Elizabethan times the watch became secondary or was eliminated altogether. The role of waits became primarily musical.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁴ Whythorne, p. 6.

⁵⁰⁵ REED, Bristol, pp. 146, 158.

⁵⁰⁶ It is possible that the term ‘wait’ stems from the Anglo-Saxon *wacian*, meaning to guard. David Wulstan, *Tudor Music* (London, 1985), p. 42.

⁵⁰⁷ For an in-depth discussion of waits and their roles into the seventeenth century, see Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 115-130. As this dissertation was written at the same time as Marsh’s book, there is inevitably some overlap here.

⁵⁰⁸ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 79.

In 1590, John Hooker, Chamberlain of Exeter, recorded in his commonplace book a description of the current duties of Exeter's waits:

The Waytes are as servantes of attendance and not officers of any service. for they ar apoynted chefflye to be attendant about the mayor for the worship of the Citie and for the solacynge of hym and others with theire noyses and melodies with theire instruments at tymes apoynted and convenient: nevertheless they ar bounde vnto certeyn particuller & speciall poyntes...

The 'speciall poyntes' were to 'go before' the mayor on Sundays and feast days, to attend him at the guildhall on Mondays, and to attend him at table. On election day they were to play throughout the town, calling 'Citisons to come to the election'.

Only on St. John's Eve and St. Peter's Eve were they expected to 'attende yn the watche', but they were also required to play their instruments at rising time from 'all Sayntes vntyll the feast of the purification of our layde'— thus serving as a kind of alarm clock when the sun did not. Fridays and holy days were their days off, with the exception of Easter and Christmas. The waits were required to make gestures of loyalty to newly elected mayors, and to be prepared to return any city-owned instruments whenever required.⁵⁰⁹ While other cities were less inclined to make the waits primarily servants of the mayor himself, this description of waits' duties in the late sixteenth century seems to have been generally fitting across England.⁵¹⁰ Nearly every town and city in England maintained at least one wait, but each varied in its precise contractual duties and method of payment. Perhaps the best and shortest description of the basic duties of city waits is Wulstan's: to be 'the musical equivalent of a coat of arms' for the town.⁵¹¹

The presence of waits at special events was certainly necessary, not only to play loud enough to draw the people of the town together, but also to musically signal

⁵⁰⁹ REED, Exeter, pp. 166-167.

⁵¹⁰ According to Cameron Louis, waits in Sussex however seemed to still be primarily watchmen into the 1570s and beyond. This kind of variety across England is not surprising, although it is certainly also possible that the waits' other roles went unrecorded. REED, Sussex, p. 1.

⁵¹¹ Wulstan, *Tudor Music*, p. 43.

a special occasion. Sir Richard Hawkins' description of his dramatic departure from Plymouth helps to illustrate how the presence of waits could greatly enhance an event:

I set sayle the 12. of Iune 1593. About three of the Clocke in the afternoone... I loost neare the shore, to giue my farewell to all the Inhabitants of the Towne, whereof the most part were gathered together vpon the Howe, to shew their gratefull correspondency, to the loue and seale which I, my Father, and Predecessors, haue ever borne to that place, as to our naturall and mother Towne. And first with my noyse of Trumpets, after with my waytes, and then with my other Musicke, and lastly, with the Artillery of my Shippes, I made the best signification I could of a kinde farewell. This they answered with the Waytes of the Towne, and the Ordinance on the shore, and with shouting of voices; which with the fayre evening and silence of the night, were heard a great distance off...⁵¹²

Hawkins captures for us the dramatic ways waits could express the sentiment, and also the power, of a city. But Hawkins also reminds us again of the problem of terminology. He calls his own musicians 'waits' as well as those of Plymouth, which is troubling since 'wait' is almost always defined as a musician employed by a city or town. This is not the only instance when a nobleman or gentleman's musicians are labelled as waits; in Cumberland it seems that 'musician' and 'wait' were used almost as synonyms even into the 1620s, with some payments recorded 'to the musicions or wates'. In the same region waits were also on occasion called 'pipers', a decidedly minstrel-esque term in other parts of England.⁵¹³ In 1533 and 1541 Holy Trinity in Coventry dispensed charity 'to the Waits and poore pepull', which is probably but not certainly a misnomer for minstrel, given waits' secure income; and in 1541 the city paid 'The City Minstrells' on St. John Baptist's Day, a feast day that would have most assuredly involved the waits.⁵¹⁴ Likewise in 1590 Plymouth provided liveries for the 'Waytes & Mynstrells of the Citie of Exeter', a phrase which, unless the city had a

⁵¹² REED, Devon, pp. 254-255.

⁵¹³ REED, Cumberland, pp. 20, 22.

⁵¹⁴ REED, Coventry, pp. 138, 158.

habit of providing liveries for all its musicians, actually refers only to the waits.⁵¹⁵ Musicians retained by noblemen and gentlemen, such as Richard Hawkins above, were also regularly called waits by scribes across England, as Hawkins did himself. Some of the variance of terminology may stem from the association of waits with loud instruments such as pipes. Shawms, wooden reed instruments similar to modern oboes or bassoons, seem to have been the most common instrument played by waits, so much so that ‘wait’ may have come to refer to a shawm, or shawm player in some places.⁵¹⁶ So again, it has been necessary to categorise musicians in the records by my own criteria, setting aside labels when they may mislead, such as payments to ‘Sir Henry Curwens iij waites’. These musicians were household retainers rather than waits by our definitions, although their identification as waits may hint that they were playing pipes or shawms.⁵¹⁷

Waits’ rewards varied from city to city. It seems to have been quite common for waits to be paid by annual salary, although in some cities they were paid by occasion.⁵¹⁸ They were occasionally granted raises, such as in York when payments went up because, the scribe noted, their service was better than in the past, and they had an extra man and boy.⁵¹⁹ As Christopher Marsh has thoroughly explored waits’ varied incomes it would be redundant to do so here; we need only to note that, though their salaries were unimpressive, the ‘various fringe benefits that attended employment as a wait’ made the position much more attractive.⁵²⁰ Waits’ liveries were also generally provided by the cities, although in a few cases the men were

⁵¹⁵ REED, Devon, p. 170.

⁵¹⁶ An inventory of the Cambridge waits’ instruments shows that shawm was by far the principal instrument. REED, Cambridge, p. 744. See also Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 84.

⁵¹⁷ REED, Cumberland, p. 135.

⁵¹⁸ See for example REED Coventry and Cumberland.

⁵¹⁹ REED, York, 453.

⁵²⁰ Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 115-130; quotation at p. 123. Woodfill summarized waits’ economic situation as ‘neither riches nor in rags’.

expected to purchase their own escutcheons. The same was true for instruments: in most cases they were purchased and maintained by the city, but Cambridge required waits to use their own.⁵²¹ In a practice that seems to have been quite unusual, Bristol actually paid the annual rent on a house for the waits from 1535 (when the records begin) to 1574 and then again from 1580 onward.⁵²²

The process of becoming a wait also varied from city to city. In some cases, the waits themselves elected members as openings became available. In Exeter, for example, the waits ‘by common consent elected and chosen that nycholus lysowell shalbe one of the waytes of this citie’ in 1567.⁵²³ But the mayor also had some power over the group, and in some cases selected new waits based on recommendations from prominent locals. In Lancashire one man achieved a post as a wait by way of a letter from the Earl of Derby, and in Exeter the musician William Moore, ‘lute Servante of Sire Ames Bampfild’, and a fellow servant became waits at their master’s request.⁵²⁴ Likewise in 1599 ‘at the request of Sir Robert Bassett one Sharland a Musician was retained by Mr. Major and his Brethren to go about the Town ... with his Waits’.⁵²⁵ But in cities where the mayor’s approval was the key to gaining secure lifetime employment as a musician, powerful patrons were not the only way to ingratiate oneself with the mayor. It was not uncommon to simply promote oneself. Upon the death of one of Hereford’s waits in 1587 Roger Squyre wrote to the Mayor and his ‘brethren’, reminding them that he ‘from his youthe hathe byn broughte vp in musycke and dothe presently keepe and meyntheyne seruantes in the arte of musycke...is Desyrous yf hit may stand with your worshippes pleasures that you would admyt him to be the wayte of the said Cytie’. The fact that Squyre could not

⁵²¹ REED, Cambridge, p. 744.

⁵²² REED, Bristol, p. 45.

⁵²³ REED, Devon, p. 170.

⁵²⁴ REED, Lancashire, p. 301; REED, Exeter, p. 181

⁵²⁵ REED, Devon, p. 46.

yet play the instruments waits used was no deterrent; he promised that he would soon learn to play the shawms and other ‘loud noyce’ instruments if he was granted the post.⁵²⁶

In Squire’s case the tactic of self-promotion failed. The Inquest declared that ‘Roger squire shall not by no means gather of any person any benevolence as one of the cities waites’. He appealed ‘every yeere sithence my defeature’, and in 1600 wrote his final letter, the tone of which is much angrier than the first. He reminded the Mayor and Justices of the Peace that he was ‘ode in the loue and favour of you all’, insisting that he was ‘wrongfully defeated vppon no occasion (which is parte of my vtter vndoing)’.⁵²⁷ The records do not survive to tell us whether his angry perseverance paid off, but I am inclined to think not— it appears that the mayor and his ‘brethren’ were either firm in their prejudice or knew something we do not. But Squyre’s failure does not mean that such tactics of acquiring a waitship were always ill-conceived. Indeed in the same city just fifteen years later, Roger Smith attempted the same. His letter was much more confident and concise: ‘May it please your good worship to bee advertized That Roger Smith is thought a good and suffitient man for the supplyance of the place of one of the waytes of the Citty Yf therefore your worship with the Three in quest shall give him admittance into the said place hee shall bee bound to rest’. His request was approved.⁵²⁸ Character, skill, and reputation must have necessarily factored into the equation when powerful patrons did not.

Being a wait also seems to have been something of a family affair; in many cities two and even three generations of men were city waits, trained by their fathers in the ‘art or science’. Often times the fathers and sons were employed at the same time, as in Coventry, 1583, when two of the four waits were ‘Old Styffe & anthonye

⁵²⁶ REED, Herefordshire, p. 123.

⁵²⁷ REED, Herefordshire, p. 124.

⁵²⁸ REED, Herefordshire, p. 138.

Styff'.⁵²⁹ In Newcastle, the city's first wait was appointed in 1509, one 'William Carr mynstrall'. Decades later one of the city's two waits was one Edward Car, and in 1561 payments were being made to 'Henry Carr the waytt'.⁵³⁰ Since evidence of the general musical profession shows that musical skill was quite often— if not most often— passed down from father to son, this only confirms that waits were no different.

On occasion it was necessary for cities to hire additional musicians to help the waits at major performances. Exeter hired a pipe and tabor to help the waits at their Lammas fair; Coventry once hired five extra men to 'play with the Waytes about the cytie', and York paid 'the Wayttes & oyer Mynstrels' for their Corpus Christi festival.⁵³¹ But it was not just minstrels who travelled the country seeking employment at these major events. Waits travelled a great deal, too, usually relatively close to home but also from one end of the country to another. In Cumberland for example, most visits were from the waits of Kendal, Carlisle, and other northern cities, but the Canterbury waits visited as well.⁵³² The head of the Hereford waits declared in 1587 that the greater part of his living came from travelling outside the city.⁵³³ Travel in fact seems to have been an essential part of waits' income.⁵³⁴

One way of attempting to boost waits' income at home was for the city to grant them a monopoly. This practice was extremely rare in the sixteenth century but became more and more popular in the seventeenth century, as travel became less and less popular and the 'control' of music (and exclusion of vagrants) more and more desirable. Monopolies granted to cities' musicians' companies were not so rare in the

⁵²⁹ REED, Coventry, p. 299.

⁵³⁰ REED, Newcastle, pp. 13, 28, 30.

⁵³¹ REED, Devon, p. 169; REED, Coventry, p. 393; REED, York, p. 302.

⁵³² REED, Cumberland, p. 28.

⁵³³ REED, Herefordshire, pp. 122-3.

⁵³⁴ For more examples from the seventeenth century, see Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 126-129.

sixteenth century, as we have seen; in some cases historians have assumed that these monopolies belonged to the waits. This likely stems from the confusion of ‘town musicians’ with ‘waits’ and the persistent idea that musicians in cities were either waits or itinerant minstrels, nothing in between.⁵³⁵ Woodfill had such an assumption when he stated that any qualified musician in a town was a *de facto* wait: ‘the town’s qualified musicians were its musicians-freemen and at the same time its waits’.⁵³⁶ But appeals like that of Roger Squyre, who was certainly ‘qualified’ enough to maintain his own musical apprentices, reveal that there could be a considerable number of good musicians competing for waitships.⁵³⁷ Woodfill dealt with this disparity in a footnote, acknowledging that his statement did not apply in towns where there were more musicians-freemen than waits. Given that even the largest cities only maintained a handful of waits, and that smaller towns maintained approximately one, it appears that Woodfill’s footnoted ‘exception’ towns were, in fact, virtually all of them. In the sixteenth century, then, companies of musicians (not waits) could hold monopolies in towns, thus preventing any itinerant minstrels from performing within the town boundaries. It was not until the seventeenth century that some towns shifted this monopoly into the hands of the much more exclusive waits.

With or without the benefit of a monopoly, the security of a post as a wait was certainly sought after. It was almost always a lifetime post, which could be lost only through grievous misbehaviour or by willingly giving it up, both of which were known to happen. Three York waits made a complaint against an incompetent colleague in 1561, but by 1566 all four of them were discharged ‘for their mysdemeanour’, as were two Oxford waits in 1577, but the details of such cases

⁵³⁵ See REED, Bristol, p. xlii, for example. For a list of cities with waits’ monopolies in the seventeenth century, see Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, pp. 100-103.

⁵³⁶ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 99.

⁵³⁷ There were in addition a great number of excellent musicians like Whythorne, whose careers never moved in the direction of civic employment.

remain frustratingly unknown.⁵³⁸ In Lancashire, however, such ‘mysdemeanours’ were rife—and better yet, they were described. Waits were dismissed for Sabbath breaking, lewdness, failing to play at every official’s door, and failing to play at designated times.⁵³⁹ It appears then that habitual breaches of contract were grounds for dismissal, while in York, the wait Georg Cowper was a bit more creative in his ‘misbehaviour’. He collected ‘woll & money’ intended for the waits’ liveries and with the help of his tailor, ‘wrongfully converted [it] to their own vses’.⁵⁴⁰ He was quickly dismissed. But not all waits left because they were forced out. Some actually willingly gave up the desirable security of a waitship in favour of the itinerant life of an independent musician. In Exeter, 1622, one of the waits ‘willingly yelded vp his place And Iohn Byckely is elected into the same place’, and in 1584 in York, where the waits were especially prestigious, two waits abandoned their posts after displaying ‘evill and disorderlie behaviour, to the discredit of this cittie’. The men became instead itinerant minstrels, ‘for that they haue gone abroad, in the contry in very evill apparel, with their hose forth at their heeles’. The scribe writes them off as good riddance, calling them ‘commoon drunkerds’ who ‘cannot so cunnynglie play on their instruments as they ought to do’.⁵⁴¹ In this case the two seem to have abandoned their waitship in the expectation that they would inevitably be discharged anyway. But in 1602 another York wait, Cuthbert Thompson, likewise abandoned his post but was written of with rather an air of respect. He willingly abdicated his position to go ‘abrode into the contry from his place without licenc of My Lord maiour having alredy befor his departure given vp his cheyne’.⁵⁴² Such a move from honoured wait to illegal vagrant was dramatic indeed, though his reasons must remain a mystery. His

⁵³⁸ REED, York, pp. 348-349; REED Oxford, p. 167.

⁵³⁹ REED, Lancashire, pp. xlvi-xlvii.

⁵⁴⁰ REED, York, p. 408.

⁵⁴¹ REED, York, pp. 408-409.

⁵⁴² REED, Devon, p. 191; REED York, p. 499.

case shows that waits, like all Tudor musicians, moved around the spheres of the profession with a fluidity that could sometimes be surprising.

Just as waits might leave the profession to become minstrels, so minstrels could become waits. In 1584, a minstrel who had travelled all the way from Ipswich was made a York wait contingent ‘vpon his good behaviour’. But this was Georg Cowper, who just five months later, took the wool for the waits liveries for his own use, and he was discharged.⁵⁴³ Cowper comes across as the stereotypical dubious minstrel who was also opportunistic— but he must have been quite a good musician to be hired by the prestigious York waits. Likewise in Newcastle, ‘William Carr mynstrall’ became the city’s first wait at Christmas 1509.⁵⁴⁴ A person raised and trained as a wait could also choose a career in other spheres of the profession.

William Gibbons, a lifetime wait in Cambridge and Oxford, trained his sons as waits from a very young age. While the oldest son joined the Navy (and was apparently disowned), another son used his prominence among the waits to launch himself into a thriving musical career in the church. The youngest son, Orlando, successfully made the transition from wait to court with the help of a university education (and its social connections), where he was successful indeed.⁵⁴⁵ The Gibbons family thus occupied a number of musical spheres at once.

The household ‘sphere’ also overlapped with the waits. Just as waits came from out of household service, sometimes at their master’s request, so could waits straddle the line between household and civic service— or rather, occupy the space where the spheres overlapped.⁵⁴⁶ In 1634 one Lieutenant Hammond described his visit to Lichfield, taking special notice of the city waits: ‘The musicians (for fiddlers I

⁵⁴³ REED, York, pp. 405, 408.

⁵⁴⁴ REED, Newcastle, p. 13.

⁵⁴⁵ John Harper, ‘Gibbons, Orlando (*bap.* 1583, *d.* 1625)’, ODNB; REED, Cambridge, p. 740.

⁵⁴⁶ REED, Lancashire, p. 301; REED, Exeter, p. 181

must not call them) were the gentlemen waits of the town, that wore the badge of a noble brave lord and they were of that garb, and skill, as they were fitting to play to the nicest ears'.⁵⁴⁷ (Decades after Whythorne attempted to elucidate the importance of correct terminology, Hammond showed that such nuances were still very present. 'For fiddlers I must not call them', he noted, playfully commenting on the degrees of respectability one must acknowledge among musicians.) The waits he referred to wore the livery of the Earl of Essex, not of the town, making them a walking 'coat of arms' for the man, not the location. But Hammond calls them 'waits of the town' as well; these kinds of musicians may help to explain why terminology was still so muddled. So 'Sir Henry Curwen's iij waites' may have borne the duties of both household and town.⁵⁴⁸ A 1585 reference in Barnstaple to 'the earl of Worcester's seven musicians of Bristol' is similarly intriguing; the earl would not have been living in the city, but apparently maintained a company of musicians who were also associated with the town.⁵⁴⁹

The professional boundaries of waits did not just extend into other spheres of music. Like so many minstrels, waits might take a variety of non-musical occupations to supplement their income. There were fairly simple tasks, such as 'makinge white Crosses over the doores where the plague was' or 'ffechyng of the wyne', but there were long-term activities, too.⁵⁵⁰ John Gerrard, Oxford University Wait, was a licensed alehouse keeper, and he also operated a music bookshop.⁵⁵¹ Oxford and Cambridge were also convenient locations for waits to make additional income by offering private lessons to students, whose expense books reveal that a

⁵⁴⁷ Derby Mss. of the Duke of Devonshire, Bolton Ms. 94, f. 96b, quoted in Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 73.

⁵⁴⁸ REED, Cumberland, p. 135.

⁵⁴⁹ *The Barnstaple Records*, ed. J. R. Chanter and T. Wainwright (Barnstaple, 1900), II, p. 156. Perhaps it is also possible that entry meant 'coming from' rather than 'living in' Bristol.

⁵⁵⁰ REED, Exeter, p. 172; REED, Bristol, p. 51.

⁵⁵¹ REED, Oxford, p. 622.

great number of them took advantage of these opportunities.⁵⁵² But waits certainly did not have a monopoly of the private teaching market. Indeed Whythorne himself spent a few years at Cambridge as a private tutor to William Bromfield the younger. Whythorne in fact followed his student there, as a great number must have, but with musical skill becoming increasingly fashionable, there must have been enough business to go around. Another Oxford wait, John Bosseley, set up a dancing school to supplement his income, and it became one of the city's most famous.⁵⁵³ William Gibbons likewise operated a dancing school as well as an inn in Oxford, and his wife operated an inn.⁵⁵⁴ Dancing, private teaching, and even inn-keeping (as it often involved music as well as drinking) were all in the realm of the arts, but other waits stepped out of the artistic realm completely. One of the Plymouth waits was also a parish clerk, and was paid separately by the city for each role.⁵⁵⁵ In Carlisle, a drummer was also a shoemaker, and George Hele of Plymouth, joiner, was also hired by the city to drum for the waits.⁵⁵⁶

Though a post as a wait did not in itself guarantee wealth, it did establish a person as a prominent musician in a town. The stability and prestige of such a post was much sought after, though not by every kind of musician. Whythorne, for example, would never have pursued such a post, for he prided himself on the gentlemanly pursuit of quieter music— music that was safely indoors and away from ‘every Jack’. But even the most prominent musicians in the country, those with appointments at court, may have had their roots in waitships, as did Orlando Gibbons. Thomas Morley's origins are unknown, but he certainly held at least some waits in

⁵⁵² See REED, Oxford and Cambridge for collections of student accounts.

⁵⁵³ REED, Oxford, p. 622.

⁵⁵⁴ REED, Oxford, p. 740; Harper, ‘Gibbons, Orlando’, ODNB.

⁵⁵⁵ REED, Devon, p. 249. In 1590, for example, he is paid his salary as a clerk, then a second entry records ‘more to hym for palenge [sic] uppon the waytes this yere’.

⁵⁵⁶ REED, Devon, p. 303; REED, Cumberland, pp. 22-23. Joiners were skilled in making and repairing drums, so it must have been a rather small step for joiners to actually play the drums themselves.

very high regard. Gathering works by the most prominent composers of the day, he dedicated his *First Book of Consort Lessons* to the Mayor and suggested it be placed in the ‘careful and skilful handling’ of ‘those excellent and expert musicians’, the London waits.⁵⁵⁷ A waitship meant at least great opportunity; at most it could be a stepping stone to fame, fortune, or even national eminence.

Regardless of whether they went on to more illustrious careers, Woodfill has rightly observed that waits’ lives must have been ‘more interesting than most’.⁵⁵⁸ Not only were they valued, protected and sustained by their communities, but they also participated directly in every aspect, large and small, of their community. They were the one essential ingredient of every festivity, and as such they were harbingers of pleasure and gladness. In Tudor England, ‘ritual was crucial to...social life’,⁵⁵⁹ and waits were at the centre of a great many rituals, from nightly watches to weddings, feast days to royal visits. As prominent citizens of their town they could own schools or inns, shops or alehouses, while some might have worked in another trade completely, exhibiting just how versatile they were. They could also seek out the adventure of the road if they pleased. Though their job was not sought after eagerly by every musician, waits were well positioned at the intersection of all the ‘spheres’ of the professional musical world.

⁵⁵⁷ Morley adds that, in addition to the book, he means ‘hereafter to give them more testimony of my love towards them’. While it is difficult to tell what composers’ actual motivations were since all dedications are rife with flattery, it does seem possible that the book was meant to be a gesture to the waits. Thomas Morley, *The First Book of Consort Lessons* (London, 1599), STC 18131-480, sig. A2.

⁵⁵⁸ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 108.

⁵⁵⁹ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, Death* (Oxford, 1997), p. 475.

Church Musicians

Church as well as court musicians have a much more extensive historiography, probably due to the relative wealth of extant resources.⁵⁶⁰ It is therefore only necessary here to explore what Whythorne had to say about church musicians as well as ways the church sphere overlapped with other parts of the profession, and indeed other professions outside the music world. For the majority of church musicians at least, the slow stratification of the musical profession over the course of the sixteenth century along with the changes that came in the wake of the Reformation meant instability.

Whythorne himself spent years as Music Master to Archbishop Parker, giving him one of the most prominent musical positions in England outside the court. But Whythorne tells us little of music in the church, if for no other reason than that part of his manuscript had not yet been finished. He does offer us a very amusing anecdote, however: the story of a drunken Dutchman, Helmich van Shelb, who ‘pressed to come in and to stand in the midst among’ the members of a church choir. Having settled into his place, he began to sing with them.

He began with somewhat a temperate voice at first yet, notwithstanding, with rural and unskilful sounds. Then presently after the which, he brayed out louder. And then followingly he roared and yelled out so loud as no beast living...could have made greater and louder a noise than he. And with that sort of sound he continued so long, and he being so placed in the midst among the singers as they on the one side of him could not hear how to agree with those on the other side, and being half amazed with his noise, that in short time they were all out of tune, and could not recover themselves... And when this said Helmich had thus with his discordant noise so separated their concordant harmony, he, after a solemn, long curtsey or low reverence done

⁵⁶⁰ In addition to a wealth of journal articles, a major study from Jonathan Willis has just been published: *Church music and Protestantism in post-Reformation England, Discourses, Sites and Identities* (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT, 2010). Christopher Marsh has also explored the shift in employment opportunities in the church in the period (*Music and Society*, pp. 112-115). Older studies include Peter le Huray *Music and the Reformation in England* (London, 1967); and Nicholas Temperley *The Music of the English Parish Church* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1979). For an excellent distillation of a many recent studies, see Beat Kümin ‘Masses, morris and metrical psalms: music in the English parish, c.1400-1600’, in Fiona Kisby (ed.), *Music and Musicians in Renaissance Cities and Towns* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 70-81.

toward the high altar with...sober and demure countenance...not once changing thereof to any sort of laughter, smiling or frowning, went his way in such a manner and fashion as one would have deemed by his demeanour that he thought he had done as well as any singer there at that time... Yet, in the end he did so, for then he was in as right a tune as they, and they as far out of tune as he.⁵⁶¹

Whythorne's anecdote leads the reader to wonder whether Helmich van Shelb is the brunt of the joke, or the choir. That is, does Whythorne expect his readers to delight in the humbling of a church choir by an oblivious Dutchman, or is he a villain we should condemn? I suspect that from Whythorne's point of view, the Helmich van Shelbs of the world were disruptive, disrespectful scoundrels to be detected and removed by the harmonious choirs of society before worse damage was inflicted. But his story of warning, which may be far more humorous than he intended, draws our attention to the role of singingmen in church music. While there did exist prominent and prestigious music positions in the church (organist, music master), the great majority of musicians employed by the church were men who sang in the choirs. In the early Tudor period, careers for singingmen had been relatively stable,⁵⁶² for not only did churches maintain large musical groups but prominent men established choral groups in their households as well.⁵⁶³ But the Reformation shook the foundations singers relied upon. Exactly how much music was now required in church, what kind, and who should perform it was now unclear, creating conflicts that

⁵⁶¹ Whythorne, pp. 92-93. One wonders whether any church choirs really so informal that anyone who came along, including Helmich van Shelb, could simply join the ranks and sing along.

⁵⁶² On the pre-Reformation period see Fiona Kisby, 'Music and Musicians of Early Tudor Westminster', *Early Music* (May 1995), pp. 223-240; for the coming of the Reformation see Willis *Church Music*; and Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 112-115; Nicholas Temperley, *Music of the Parish*, I, pp. 7-37.

⁵⁶³ Cardinal Wolsey's household was probably exemplary: he maintained twelve singing priests, twelve singing children and sixteen singingmen. He also kept four 'minstrels', who entertained prestigious guests and traveled with him to Europe (George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* (Boston and New York, 1905), pp. 19-20.) For the nobility's modeling on church patronage of music, see Roger Bowers, 'Obligation, Agency, and Laissez-Faire: the Promotion of Polyphonic Composition for the Church in Fifteenth-Century England', in Iain Fenlon (ed.), *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Patronage, Sources, and Texts* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 1-20.

were resolved in different ways.⁵⁶⁴ The result for singingmen was insecurity, and many were forced to take on additional trades in the city ‘or else himself, his wife and children must starve’. Singingmen took work ‘in the barbers trade, the shoemakers trade, the tailors trade, the smiths trade, and divers other...inferior trades which kept them from starving’.⁵⁶⁵ While this suggests that singingmen were forced to take on work in other trades in order to survive, Roger Bowers has posited that many singingmen joined the choir as a hobby, not as a career.⁵⁶⁶ This was certainly the case on the continent, where bankers, merchants, and wealthy tradesmen of all types enjoyed singing in choirs in their spare time. Whether in desperation or by choice, church musicians, like musicians in every sphere, combined music with other trades and odd-jobs.⁵⁶⁷ Church musicians were also happy to occupy the space where musical spheres overlapped, such as the singingmen of Norwich who were also the city waits.⁵⁶⁸ We have seen many of these examples already; still more will come in later sections.

In the description of desperate, starving singingmen above, the inclusion of the word ‘inferior’ is notable, as it implies that music was considered superior to other trades. There is evidence, however, that particular singingmen gained a level of

⁵⁶⁴ For an in-depth study of the sources and evolution of church music, see Marsh, *Music and Society*, chapters 8 and 9. As Peter le Huray notes, the Book of Common prayer gave no instruction for music, leaving musicians ‘little guidance as to what was expected of them’. Music was certainly permitted if not encouraged at Matins and Evensong, ‘but there was nothing to suggest what forms this music should take’ (le Huray, *Music and the Reformation*, p. 19).

⁵⁶⁵ British Library, MS Royal 18B XIX, fol. 6v, an anonymous sixteenth century author, quoted in James Saunders, ‘Music and Moonlighting: The Cathedral Choirmen of Early Modern England, 1558-1649’, in Fiona Kisby (ed.), *Music and Musicians in Renaissance Cities and Towns* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 157.

⁵⁶⁶ Roger Bowers, ‘Lay participation in the liturgy of the pre-Reformation parish church in England, and its Reformation extinction’, Sites of Change in Reformation England Conference, University of Warwick, 23 February 2008; on the continent see Edward Lowinsky, ‘Music in the Culture of the Renaissance’, in Paul Kristeller and Philip Wiener (eds), *Renaissance Essays* (New York, 1968), p. 342.

⁵⁶⁷ In Coventry, for example, a singingman was paid to bring ‘ye Bishops lettere’ to the Chamberlain in 1581 (REED, Coventry, p. 296). Beat Kümin has collected a number of examples of church musicians who crossed into other spheres. ‘Music in the English parish’, p. 75.

⁵⁶⁸ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 139,n.

prestige much higher than any tradesmen might expect. Indeed a number of singers eventually gained posts at the Chapel Royal, and Thomas Morley himself was called not composer nor organist (though he was those) but ‘singingman’ by Thomas Phellippes, secretary to Walsingham.⁵⁶⁹ In London, singingman Thomas Eve maintained his own eminent company of singers and musicians who were hired by local groups. His company was paid for performing at special occasions such as pageants; he was also paid ten pounds annually by the Skinners Company (at least) ‘for him & his children for a whole year’.⁵⁷⁰ Other singingmen chose careers in the church, such as Clement Woodcock (1540-1590), a lay clerk-singingman who later took holy orders.⁵⁷¹ A mid-century Snitterfield curate, though not a singingman, also combined his church career with music. He supplemented his income by teaching music and art. In these and many other cases, the men’s posts as singingmen did not necessarily lead to wealth, the court, or even prestige. The Snitterfield curate’s talent led to neither affluence, fame, nor even respect. He was considered rather ‘dumbe and unlearned’, and ‘far unfit for the minsterie’. He was, however, believed to be honest, so the people allowed him to carry on.⁵⁷² Rather than setting their sights on high and viewing their singing post as a stepping stone to greater things, it seems that most singingmen were resigned to poorly paid posts. Indeed by 1633 many were contented to be ‘yet a company of good fellows’, that ‘roare[d] deep in the Quire’ and ‘deeper in the Taverne’.⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁹ Michael W. Foster, ‘Morley, Thomas (b.1556/7, d. in or after 1602)’, ODNB. George Green and William Heather are two examples of singingmen who entered the Chapel Royal.

⁵⁷⁰ REED, *Ecclesiastical London*, p. xlvi.

⁵⁷¹ ‘Late Renaissance, 1536-1575, The Reformation’, *Ex Libris*. Available from <http://www.exlibris.org/eem/eem_reformation.html>, Jan 2008.

⁵⁷² *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon and Other Records 1553-1566*, (Dugdale Society, 1921) p. 2-8, cited in Ann Hughes, ‘Building a Godly Town: Religious and Cultural Divisions in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1560-1640’ in Robert Bearman (ed.) *The History of an English Borough Stratford-Upon-Avon 1196-1996* (Stroud, 1997), p. 102.

⁵⁷³ John Earle, *Micro-cosmographie*, cited in Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 81; also cited in Wulstan, *Tudor Music*, p. 67

Regardless of their motivation for joining a choir, singingmen were by far the most numerous of musicians employed by the church, and their experience in particular was linked inextricably to the changes of the Reformation. They were after all the point at which religion and music firmly met, as their purpose above all was to worship through song and please God. The lutenist John Dowland, himself no singer according to his biographer Diana Poulton (though others have claimed him to be a ‘virtuoso’)⁵⁷⁴, took an air of authority on the subject. In 1609 he published his translation of Ornithoparcus’ 1515 *Micologus, or Introduction: Containing the Art of Singing*, popularizing his list of ‘undesirable qualities in singers’: Dowland reminds the singingman to ‘above all things marke the Tone’ and to ‘conforme his voyce to the words’, and warns that changing vowels ‘is a signe of an vnlearned Singer’. Another point Dowland is sure to highlight was one that Helmich van Shelb might well have regarded: ‘Let a Singer take heed, lest he begin too loud braying like an Asse, or when he hath begun with an vneuen height, disgrace the song. For God is not pleased with loude cryes, but with louely sounds’. ‘Aboue all things,’ he concludes, ‘let the Singer study to please God, and not men’; for some, in ‘seeking for a little worldly fame...may loose the eternall glory: pleasing men that thereby they may displease God’.⁵⁷⁵

In sixteenth-century England such tensions were certainly in the forefront of many minds. Music had been tied in with the church for centuries, and the rumbling of the Reformation shook the base that singingmen stood upon. According to Whythorne (and a number of historians), the result was that parish churches ‘slenderly

⁵⁷⁴ Carol MacClintock, for example calls him so in *Readings in the History of Music in Performance* (Bloomington, 1979), p. 159. While Poulton understands the motivations for people to believe he was a singer, she quite convincingly argues that he was not. Diana Poulton, *The Life of John Dowland* (2nd edn, London, 1982), pp. 81-82.

⁵⁷⁵ John Dowland, *Micologus, or Introduction, Containing the Art of Singing*, in Poulton, *John Dowland*, pp. 182-183.

maintained' far fewer musicians than it had in the past.⁵⁷⁶ Indeed by 1580, Christopher Marsh suggests, congregational psalms 'were the only music likely to be heard in the majority of parish churches'.⁵⁷⁷ Employment opportunities declined in post-Reformation parish churches, which were negotiating 'an accommodation between the new Protestant settlement and elements of traditional musical practice'.⁵⁷⁸ From 1550 salaries were gradually reduced in churches across England, or the number of singingmen employed was reduced, or both, forcing singingmen to turn to other trades if they had not already done so.⁵⁷⁹ Music itself was not gone from churches, but there was a 'notable shift of emphasis': music was now the domain of the parishioners, who participated in church music rather than observing it.⁵⁸⁰

Not only were singers' posts as church musicians tenuous, but some were even questioning their identities as musicians. Whythorne, for example, would only have allowed singers to be called musicians if they understood music theory and the rules of composition. Some more prominent choirmen such as Morley and Greene would

⁵⁷⁶ Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 112-115; Wulstan, *Tudor Music*, p. 326; Kūmin, 'Music in the English Parish', p. 79; Temperley, *Music of the Parish*, I, pp. 39-76, esp. 75-76; le Huray, *Music and the Reformation*, pp. 12-13. The decay of church music may seem strange, since church composers like William Byrd heralded in the Elizabethan 'Golden Age', but this kind of music was the monopoly of a handful of Cathedrals and colleges (Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 135).

⁵⁷⁷ Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding Their Peace* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 36. The 1580s were indeed significant in church musical provision, according to Jonathan Willis, who found that it was not until that decade that there was 'no expenditure on prick-song by any church' in his sample (Willis, *Church Music*, p. 113).

⁵⁷⁸ Willis, *Church Music*, p. 113. Previous historians of church music have, like Woodfill, painted a bleak picture of church music after the Reformation, claiming that churches 'had very little music' (Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, pp. 136, 154). Jonathan Willis, however, has revisited these claims and, based on churchwarden's accounts, has concluded that the decline of music in the church was not as drastic as we might think (Willis, *Church Music*, esp. pp. 83-113). Willis and Alan Smith have both pointed to evidence that particular churches continued to maintain singers long into Elizabeth's reign. Still, as Beat Kūmin points out, there was nothing new in music as well as fewer employment opportunities (Alan Smith 'Parish Church Musicians in England in the Reign of Elizabeth I 1558-1603: an annotated register', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 4 (1964), pp. 42-93, cited in Kūmin, 'Music in the English Parish', pp. 79-80).

⁵⁷⁹ I agree with Jonathan Willis that simple statements like these (noting national trends), though necessary here, 'do not do justice to the diversity of local parochial circumstances'; certainly the fate of singingmen in one church was not necessarily similar to the fate of those in another. As Willis shows, the variety of musical adaptation in churches was significant (Willis, *Church Music*, p. 121).

⁵⁸⁰ Kūmin, 'Music in the Parish', p. 81; Marsh, *Music and Society*, Chapter 8; Marsh, *Popular Religion*, pp. 31-39.

have ‘qualified’, but many more singers did not, for they not only lacked knowledge of music theory but they could not read music at all. The loss of church patronage combined with slow stratification of the musical profession during the second half of the sixteenth century meant that for the great majority of church musicians, life was unsteady indeed.

Household Musicians

Whythorne’s career path shows that for some, transition from the church to household sphere was quite simple, for in youth Whythorne was a singer at Magdalen College, then he spent decades as household tutor, only to gain one of the most prominent church posts in the musical world. But since church posts were declining, musicians searched for opportunities in different spheres of the profession, and after the Reformation the great household presented different opportunities for employment. Musicians were required not for chapel choirs, but for the education of the gentry. Resident music tutors first appeared around the 1540s and increased in number throughout the sixteenth century as music became ever more fashionable.⁵⁸¹ The transition from old ways to new happened gradually, so that even as music tutors were brought into the household, traditional, almost Medieval-style performing musicians were retained. This created different categories of musicians in the household. There were groups who played at feasts and dances, who might also travel the country under licence of their patron and in his name. At the same time private tutors like Whythorne considered themselves a completely different lot. They interacted intimately with their patrons and their children, teaching them music and perhaps playing for them in more quiet, intimate settings. In Whythorne’s mind, there was a

⁵⁸¹ David Price, *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 12.

great divide between him and the distinctly *other* types of musicians, but just how distinct the groups were in the minds of the gentry is less clear.⁵⁸² The memorial portrait of Sir Henry Unton throws some light upon the subject, as two distinct groups of musicians are clearly featured in his household.



Figure 4.1: *Portrait of Sir Henry Unton, unknown artist.*

Unton's famous narrative portrait depicts the major events in his life and death, beginning with his birth on the far right and his burial on the far left. In between he attends university, goes on a Grand Tour, fights in Elizabeth's army, presides over his household, and serves as ambassador.⁵⁸³ Unton was known to be a skilled musician and enthusiastic patron of the arts, so it is perhaps no surprise that music features in a painting of his life. In Unton's household we see a broken consort of musicians surrounded by masquers performing for Unton and his guests at table.⁵⁸⁴ The

⁵⁸² Historians have until recently not made a distinction between the two types, either. Woodfill tends to meld the two groups together. An earlier example is Paul Jones, who referred to 'minstrel yeomen waiters', melding quite disparate groups in *The Household of a Tudor Nobleman* (Urbana, 1918), p. 233.

⁵⁸³ For an excellent examination of the portrait and Unton's life, see Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth, Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London, 1977), pp. 84-110. See also Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 6-7; Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c. 1500-1800* (London, 1991), pp. 14-16.

⁵⁸⁴ This scene is sometimes interpreted as a wedding feast, but Roy Strong argues convincingly against this, pointing most notably to the fact that no Elizabethan bride would have worn black. Strong, *Elizabethan Portraiture*, p. 104.

musicians are playing boisterous music, for they are accompanied by a drummer (above them to the right). Elsewhere in the house (in a room to the left), there is another group of musicians. These are not performers, for they encircle a table in a small, secluded room. While the musicians at the masque are all bare-headed, these musicians are wearing hats—they appear to be gentlemen, playing in a viol consort only for their own enjoyment.



Figure 4.2: Detail from *Portrait of Sir Henry Unton*

The two types of musicians in Unton's household are clearly defined. There were those whose job was to play at feasts, dances, masques, and celebrations; and there were those whose job was to teach the gentlemen (or women) of the household, and to play with them in quieter, more intimate settings.⁵⁸⁵ Whythorne was of course one of these gentleman tutors, a group of musicians that have remained largely overlooked by historians. The next chapter will therefore examine the role and status of such

⁵⁸⁵ It has been posited that John Dowland was somehow associated with Henry Unton, since he published the processional music for Unton's funeral in his *Lachrimae*. It was eight years after the funeral that the song was published, and Dowland was lutenist to King Christian IV of Denmark. John Dowland, *Lachrimae, or Seven Tears* (London, 1604), STC 7097-955.

resident music tutors in depth; here we will focus briefly on the *other* household musician, the performer.

These kinds of household musicians certainly had a great deal in common with minstrels. They played the same kinds of music, on the same kinds of instruments, and indeed usually spent a significant part of the year travelling around the country. In fact the only major difference between household performers and minstrels was that the former enjoyed the security of a steady patron. Not only did this mean the musicians could count on regular work, but they could also use the livery and name of their patron as they travelled in the hopes of drawing higher-paying audiences. After the vagabond legislation of 1572, household musicians were indeed the only legitimate ‘minstrels’ (that is, wandering musicians) left, since any musician independent of patronage was then forbidden to travel.⁵⁸⁶ But patronage, or lack of it, did not necessarily coincide with virtue or criminality. There were a great many honest minstrels, and there were also some household musicians whose behaviour was less than exemplary.

Sir Francis Drake’s musicians were a rougher sort— so much so that in 1594, Plymouth raised the hue and cry against them.⁵⁸⁷ And in Exeter, John Callard, gentleman harper and servant to Sir Thomas Denys, responded to the theft of his harp not by appealing to the law, but with violence. With ‘swarddes drawyn’ he and his fellow servants attacked the suspected thief, ‘strekyng hem a downe to the grond’ and carrying him away.⁵⁸⁸ Though a gentlemen, Callard’s behaviour was certainly of the sort that stereotypes would assign to vagrant minstrels— the ‘criminal types’. As a harper (not a tutor), Callard appears not to have had the kind of close relationship

⁵⁸⁶ Of course, false liveries could be got, as we have seen with the tailor, pavier and his wife who were discovered wearing false liveries and arrested as vagabonds.

⁵⁸⁷ REED, Devon, p. 256.

⁵⁸⁸ REED, Devon, p. 136. For the full account of the incident see pp. 135-138.

with his patron that Whythorne often writes of. When his harp was stolen, he turned not to his master but to other household servants, revealing where he placed himself in the social spectrum of the house. He was a gentleman, but he was not above the other household servants (as Whythorne often saw himself), nor was he above violent brawls in the streets. While we do not know how his patron, Sir Thomas Denys, responded to the incident, we at least gain some understanding of the world of the household performer as opposed to the tutor. It was much more close to, and indeed overlapped with, the world of minstrels.

Woodfill stated that in Elizabethan England, no noblemen, however wealthy, ‘maintained a great choral group for their own pleasure and prestige and for the encouragement of composers’.⁵⁸⁹ Woodfill assigns all credit for music patronage to the court and the city of London, but evidence from REED does not corroborate this. Indeed the patronage of musicians (if not ‘great choral groups’) extended far beyond the court, and far even beyond knights and barons: gentlemen of various levels displayed their education and their wealth by maintaining musicians. Even men without titles might keep musicians if they could afford it. In Worcester, the dyer William Sheldon maintained no fewer than five musicians in his household. In his 1571 will, he left ‘everye one of my five musicians’ four pounds.⁵⁹⁰ This is curious indeed, as a dyer would not normally be expected to keep such a household, but it reveals that the practices of the nobility could be imitated many notches down on the social scale. As a result, musicians could find employment in a great variety of houses.

When household musicians travelled, they found paying patrons in equally varied locations. Other households were popular stopping points, as well as cities and

⁵⁸⁹ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 160.

⁵⁹⁰ REED, *Worcestershire*, p. 360.

towns celebrating feasts and festivals. They also visited churches, inns, abbeys (in the earlier Tudor period), taverns and perhaps even alehouses.⁵⁹¹ John Huishe, for example, was household servant to William Poton of Litton but performed at ales and revels within a seven-mile radius of home often over the course of five years.⁵⁹² While I have yet to find specific evidence of the retainers of noblemen playing in lowly alehouses (for if there were no crime the event would likely go unrecorded), we do know that the tailor and pavier and his wife (whom we met before), had been performing in alehouses for weeks with fake liveries, pretending to be a nobleman's musicians. Since no one had thought to question them in those weeks, perhaps it was not too unusual to see liveried men playing in an alehouse. London's company of musicians had to take action to stop just such a thing from happening, for it was eating away at their own business. As we have seen, the company complained that musicians attached to courtiers were crowding the musical market to such an extent that local musicians could not survive. The resulting 1533 ordinance forbade foreign musicians to play 'in any common hall, inn, alehouse, or similar place', no matter 'what estate, degree or condition soever he or they be'.⁵⁹³ Presumably the lowly status of the alehouse alone was not enough to keep household musicians out.

The London ordinance of the company of musicians also highlights the fact that, as the household sphere overlapped with minstrels at one end, so did it also overlap with the court at the other end. It was, after all, musicians who had come to court with their patrons who were flooding the market. Whythorne himself must have experienced this overlap, while working in the household of John Heywood.

⁵⁹¹ REED abounds with records of musicians attached to some nobleman or gentleman who were paid by towns and guilds across England. James Gibson, editor of Kent's REED, suspects that itinerant musicians were paid according to the prestige of their patron, not their actual ability. REED, Kent, p. lv.

⁵⁹² REED, Somerset, p. 501.

⁵⁹³ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 11.

Heywood was a prominent court musician as well as a gentleman of the privy chamber, and though Whythorne's life would have revolved around the household wherein he was trained, that household revolved around the court.

The blurring of lines between the household sphere and all the rest can also be exemplified by comparing Unton's portrait to Morley's *First Book of Consort Lessons*. As Roy Strong points out, the broken consort pictured in the Unton feast is just the sort of instrumental group for which Morley's book was designed.⁵⁹⁴ Strangely, though, the full title of Morley's book would seem to imply that the book was actually meant for the group of gentlemen playing in the small room. The book was 'set forth at the cost and charges of a Gentleman, for his private pleasure, and for divers others his friends which delight in Music'. The dedication, however, tells an entirely different story. In it Morley suggests the desire to place the music squarely in the 'careful and skilful' hands of the London waits.⁵⁹⁵ Morley's book and Unton's portrait thus highlight again the fluid nature of the profession: household musicians, waits, or indeed the gentleman-patrons themselves might have played the same music, from the same music books, and their dominions overlapped.

Court Musicians

Like church musicians, court musicians have garnered a fair amount of historical attention. On the early Tudor era, John Stevens' study remains authoritative, while Elizabethan court music has been the subject of a number of recent studies.⁵⁹⁶ Rather

⁵⁹⁴ Strong, *Elizabethan Portraiture*, p. 106.

⁵⁹⁵ Morley, *Consort Lessons*, sig. A2.

⁵⁹⁶ John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (London, 1961). Andrew Ashbee is producing a multi-volume collection of court records of musicians; see also Ashbee, 'Groomed for Service: Musicians in the Privy Chamber at the English Court, c.1495-1558', *Early Music* (May 1997), pp.185-197; Hugh Baillie, 'Minstrels in Tudor London', *Early Music* (May 1998), p. 374; Fiona Kisby, 'Royal Minstrels in the City and Suburbs of Early Tudor London: Professional Activities and Private Interests', *Early Music* (May 1997), pp. 199-219; Fiona Kisby, 'Music and Musicians of Early Tudor Westminster', *Early Music* (May 1995), pp. 223-240.

than summarizing at length what has already been said, here again it is only necessary to emphasize how the court sphere intermingled with other realms of the music profession.

With the rise of the Tudors music at court was given a new birth, and it grew to its prime at the end of Elizabeth's reign. The 'extraordinary fertility'⁵⁹⁷ that the Tudor court provided for the development of music is perhaps best summarized by some brief statistics. While Edward IV had just five resident musicians, by Henry VIII's reign records show a large assembly of viol, sackbut, and rebec players, lutenists, flautists, harpers, minstrels, singers, and a virginalist, in addition to the chapel singers, totalling up to fifty-eight musicians.⁵⁹⁸ Elizabeth reported to the French Ambassador that she kept sixty musicians in 1598, but she seems on average to have kept about thirty.⁵⁹⁹ By this time, the court was firmly established as one of the 'final ambition[s] of all literate musicians'.⁶⁰⁰ Not only did a court post mean prestige, stability, and relative wealth (an average salary of £46 per year, some much higher),⁶⁰¹ but with such intimate access to the monarch it might also offer a whiff of power. Musical skill might have actually helped individuals to gain posts in the privy chamber; once there, if they were savvy, they might have the ear of the monarch to help them feather their nest, or gain favours for family and friends.⁶⁰² John Heywood, Whythorne's one time master, was such a musician— a gentleman of the privy chamber as well as a lutenist and virginals player.

⁵⁹⁷ Wulstan, *Tudor Music*, p. 250.

⁵⁹⁸ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. 12; Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 178.

⁵⁹⁹ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, pp. 178-179.

⁶⁰⁰ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. xv.

⁶⁰¹ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 179.

⁶⁰² Andrew Ashbee, 'Groomed for Service', pp. 185-197; Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 197. Woodfill stated that court musicians' political significance should not be exaggerated, arguing that court musicians' roles were, in the end, merely to entertain and signify wealth for the monarch, but Ashbee's more recent work would seem to confirm that there was an element of power associated with such a position.

Court musicians could also become powerful members of their communities, as Fiona Kisby has shown. Though she called these court musicians ‘royal minstrels’, provoking criticism that ties into the discussion of the term ‘minstrel’, Kisby showed that court musicians, particularly foreign ones, usually chose to live in neighbourhoods of their own countrymen, even if it meant living in a poor area.⁶⁰³ By this practice, the musician became in effect a ‘big fish in a little pond’. Wealthier than most residents in their neighbourhood, and with a more prestigious career, a court musician could become a major player in local politics, economics, and culture.

One of the clearest overlaps of musical spheres was in the Chapel Royal, which historians have variously assigned to the realm of the church or the court.⁶⁰⁴ Woodfill boldly stated that the chapel ‘must be considered part of the court’ because it was fully attached to and funded by the monarch,⁶⁰⁵ but the chapel’s function was entirely religious, and its recruits came from the sphere of church musicians, not the secular musicians of the court. Indeed a number of chapel singers retained their old posts as cathedral singingmen, collecting the salary even in absentia.⁶⁰⁶ Musicians at the chapel do not fit neatly into the church or court category; instead they built a career making music in the church, at court.

Court musicians’ relationship with minstrels is more complex. It has been claimed that minstrels served as a ‘link’ between court and popular culture in Tudor England.⁶⁰⁷ Minstrels have been described as the bearers of court art, the ones who brought the fine art of the court ‘down from the learned’ to the common people in

⁶⁰³ Fiona Kisby, ‘Royal minstrels’, p. 209. See also Beat Kümin, ‘Music in the English Parish’, pp. 77-78. For the response to Kisby’s use of the term ‘minstrel’, see Hugh Baillie, ‘Minstrels in Tudor London’, *Early Music* (May 1998), p. 374.

⁶⁰⁴ On music in the Chapel Royal see LeHuray, *Music and the Reformation*, pp. 57-89, and John Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, esp. Chap. 5.

⁶⁰⁵ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 161.

⁶⁰⁶ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, pp. 152, 170. Elizabeth supported them in this, even writing letters to music masters who tried to stop payments to singers who were never there.

⁶⁰⁷ Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2002), p. 9; Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 14.

inns, taverns and streets.⁶⁰⁸ But we need also consider Burke's point that the court was a 'closed culture', and independent minstrels were certainly not invited in amongst the ranks of court musicians.⁶⁰⁹ Musicians at court were a small, elite group, who in the mid and late Tudor period were selected from across Europe. Music at court functioned like 'a great academy', admitting and training only a privileged few, with a certain degree of nepotism to boot.⁶¹⁰ Minstrels did not travel to court to learn new music to take to the streets, as might be suggested by the idea that minstrels were a link between cultures. In fact it might be assumed that a minstrel would never set foot inside the royal court in his lifetime. How then have historians come to see minstrels as a kind of in-between group who brought the court to the people? Perhaps it stems from the acknowledgement that courtly tunes were sung by minstrels in the street, and that ballads hawked in alehouses were sung in noble households too.⁶¹¹ Certainly musicians' own repertoire exhibits this kind of versatility, as we have seen; they collected everything from sombre religious meditations to bawdy ballads. It is clear that there was certainly a musical overlap of cultures, but was this transmission the work of minstrels?

We must first acknowledge that it is too simplistic to see music (and the arts in general) as something that simply 'trickled-down' from the court. In the case of music at least, there was also a 'trickle-up'. Ballads, carols, and other popular songs passed swiftly from tavern to household to court, to the streets and even the church, and back again as people heard, and remembered new material to suit their interests. Tunes travelled not just across England but even 'from one end of Europe to the

⁶⁰⁸ Fox, *Oral Culture*, pp. 8-9.

⁶⁰⁹ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (3rd edn, Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT 2009), pp. 69-72.

⁶¹⁰ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 196; Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, Part II; Ashbee, 'Groomed for Service' pp. 185-197.

⁶¹¹ Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 1.

other— and beyond’ with impressive speed.⁶¹² Melodies were shared by court tunes, carols, and songs both moralistic and lewd, with each new audience suiting the song to its interests.⁶¹³

Minstrels did not set foot at court, but their music in some form did, and they managed to pick up new songs that originated in the court even though they had never been there. The agents of this transmission were, I suggest, people who must have had access to the ‘closed culture’ at court: it was the court musicians who came down from court and into taverns, and brought their music with them.

Even the royal musicians took to the road now and then. In the REED volumes they turn up every so often, playing at city pageants and festivals, and— most remarkably— in taverns at night. Indeed it seems to have been the practice of many musical groups to play for a particular function during the day, and then play again in a local tavern that night. Such was the tradition that the city, or usually the mayor, would pay for the musicians’ drinks after they played. Among Shrewsbury’s town payment claims is a significant amount spent in 1519 ‘upon the Kynges mynstrelles in wyne’.⁶¹⁴ And though Gloucester’s chamberlain employed the term ‘players’ freely, seemingly applying it to any sort of performer, court musicians could very well have been among the ‘the Quenes maiesties players’ who were given free drinks ‘at the taverne’ after their performance in 1562. Subsequent payments ‘at the

⁶¹² Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 90

⁶¹³ See also Marsh, *Music and Society*, Chapters 5 and 6, esp. pp. 411-434. In many cases not only the melody but the ditty or lyrics found a wide and varied audience across the social spectrum, as each audience honed in on different elements of the same song. The popular carol *The Holly and the Ivy*, for example, contains a great amount of religious symbolism and was sung in churches, but its sexual imagery was just as clear to a well-tuned audience. The large surviving corpus of English carols displays a cross-section of society, as around forty percent of carols place ‘great tradition’ Latin alongside the ‘little tradition’ vernacular in their lyrics. Before 1550, carols were a popular dancing/singing songs (*A Selection of English Carols*, ed. Richard Greene (Oxford, 1962), pp. 33-35). Carols were written by courtiers like Thomas Wyatt, but a great many others were credited to no one in particular and seemed to have been created by ‘the people’ in that mysterious way. Like ballads, carols struck every possible theme, from religion to religious parody, moralistic proverbs to nonsense songs (*English Carols*, pp. 50-51).

⁶¹⁴ REED, Shropshire, p. 174.

taverne' that year for Robert Dudley's 'servants and players' and the Duchess of Suffolk's retainers reveal that it was a policy to pay for 'their drinkinge', not a one-off. Indeed, the following years reveal more payments for the Queen's players' 'drinkyng at Mr swordberers'.⁶¹⁵ Rye seems to have had the same policy for travelling musicians in their town (before the town took a Puritanical turn), although the musicians were not from the court, and it was also common in Kent.⁶¹⁶ George Puttenham wrote, as we have seen, that taverns were the particular haunt of lowly minstrels, but evidence shows that this was an exaggeration.⁶¹⁷ Even the most elite musicians in England were not above performing at a local tavern, particularly if free drinks were involved. It therefore appears that the interplay between court music and popular music may have been at the hands of the elite musicians of the court, not the minstrels of the street.

Like musicians elsewhere, those at court were content to be called minstrels until the mid sixteenth century, when they turned into 'musitiens'.⁶¹⁸ This change of vocabulary reflected more significant changes in the musical world at court, for the 1550s saw 'strikingly new fashions in music'. With the coming of the lute, viols, cittern, and other quieter instruments, chamber music became increasingly fashionable and older musical forms such as the carol began to 'vanish totally from the scene'.⁶¹⁹ At the same time the court still required traditional dance tunes; chamber music simply would not do for masques, feasts, and dances. Church music was still needed for the chapel, but the Reformation was changing ideas about the role music should play in worship. Amid all these changes, court musicians produced

⁶¹⁵ REED, Gloucestershire, pp. 299-301.

⁶¹⁶ REED, Sussex, pp. 64-65; REED, Kent, p. lv

⁶¹⁷ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie, a critical edition*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca and London, 2007), p. 173.

⁶¹⁸ Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, p. 299.

⁶¹⁹ *English Carols*, p. 20.

what has been called a ‘bewildering variety’ or ‘unbelievable jumble of musical forms and styles’ in the middle two decades of the sixteenth century, as they shifted away from the older tradition toward what would become the Golden Age.⁶²⁰

A Revolution in Music?

When a courtier brought his retainers with him to the Tudor court, his household musicians rubbed shoulders with court musicians. These same men might also venture out into the city, playing at inns and alehouses as minstrels would. They might also sing with the choir on Sunday, be a member of a company of musicians, and perhaps even hold a university degree. One pithy example of all this overlap was a 1555 event in Barnstaple where ‘the Queen’s [Mary’s] minstrels played before the Lord Bishop at the Lord Mayor’s house’: court musicians, being called minstrels, played before a church audience at a civic function.⁶²¹ All these movements were not dramatic jumps from one rung on the social ladder to another; rather the musicians occupied places where professional identities themselves overlapped. It was possible for a single musician to make his living from the intersection of all the spheres of the musical profession.

In the latter half of the sixteenth century the fluidity of the musical profession came increasingly under fire. It was musicians themselves who were first to take aim: a new generation of literate musicians attempted to draw a line between themselves and those they saw as pettifoggers and ‘off scum’, ‘that do live by music and yet are no musicians at all’.⁶²² The decline of the minstrel, the rise of the private tutor, the organization of musical companies, and the greater attempt to control the musical

⁶²⁰ Howard Brown, *Music in the Renaissance* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1976), p. 250; Paul Doe, *Tallis* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1976), p. 36.

⁶²¹ *Barnstaple Records*, II, p. 155.

⁶²² Whythorne, p. 205.

environment⁶²³ were all part of the changing musical tide in Tudor England. A musician from the reign of Henry VII would have found his profession in Elizabethan times to be very different indeed. Court musicians— half of them from the continent!— wrote their songs with pen and paper, and performed from the page rather than memory; church opportunities were drastically ‘slender’ and singingmen worked in trades outside music to survive; musicians were retained in households not only to play for the master but to teach him; companies of musicians enforced rules about who could perform where and when; and, perhaps most shocking of all, minstrels no longer piped freely around the country. The musical world was certainly transformed, but was it beyond recognition?

‘Revolution’ is a heavily laden term. It is tempting to apply it to the Tudor music profession, especially since there are striking and remarkable parallels between music and the legal profession, about which Rosemary O’Day has indeed used the ‘R’ word.⁶²⁴ Music was inextricably entangled in the Reformation, which has also been variously labelled revolutionary. And it certainly seems that the realm of music notation could not have undergone its ‘revolution’ without an equivalent change in the profession itself.⁶²⁵ Certainly, from Whythorne’s birth to his death, ‘it was a new

⁶²³ For examples see Cockayne, ‘Cacophony’, p. 47.

⁶²⁴ Rosemary O’Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England 1480-1800* (Harlow and London, 2000), p. 120. See also C.W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers of the Commonwealth: The Lower Branch of the Legal Profession in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986). According to O’Day, the Tudor legal profession underwent a veritable revolution during the sixteenth century, one that ‘has been less emphasized by historians than the revolution in religion’. There are a great number of remarkable similarities between sixteenth-century law and music. The law was apparently hierarchical but highly fluid, so much so that historians ‘have difficulty explaining how the hierarchy related to the various “functions” over time’ (O’Day, p. 116). Not only historians, but contemporaries: ‘since there was no [expressed hierarchical] system, there is no simply definition of the lawyers who worked in it’ (Brooks, p. 12). The profession was contentious and polarized from the mid-Tudor period, with barristers insisting that attorneys ‘belonged to an inferior social class and were fitted for entirely different functions than were they themselves’. These protestations achieved a ‘complete transformation’ of the profession, toward strict hierarchy, by the end of the century (Brooks, p. 112). Unlike the law, however, music does not appear to have been seen as a ‘calling’ or a ‘vocation from God to be cheerfully and diligently fulfilled’ (O’Day, p. 11).

⁶²⁵ Richard Rastall, *The Notation of Western Music* (London, 1983), p. 105.

cultural era',⁶²⁶ and the dramatic, wide-reaching upheaval of the musical profession could seem so radical as to call it nothing short of a revolution. But there were continuities, too.

The profession was radically professionalizing and stratifying only with a great deal of resistance. Indeed, in many ways the changes in the Tudor music profession can be seen as only the beginning of a long transformation that was still playing out centuries later. Perhaps the best illustration of the extent to which attempts to stratify the musical profession succeeded is Hogarth's *The Enraged Musician*.



Figure 4.3: William Hogarth, *The Enraged Musician*, 1741

A hundred and fifty years later, the situation was still remarkably similar. Hogarth asked the same questions that were raised in the sixteenth century, revealing that there were as yet no clear answers: why is the violinist's music more valid than

⁶²⁶ Kümin, 'Music in the English Parish', p. 81.

others' 'noise' around him? Everything about him— from the wig to the music book to the fenced house— signals to the world that he is superior. But on the very bricks of his house is a poster advertising *The Beggar's Opera*, a fantastically popular eighteenth-century opera that satirized musical snobbery. Hogarth's inclusion of such details reminds us that famous musicians were also notoriously arrogant. Does the violinist really deserve to be admired?, Hogarth asks, juxtaposing him with a crowd of common people making 'real English music'. The ballad monger in particular is making music from her heart: she is selling '*The Lady's Fall*' (1674), a ballad describing the story of an unwed pregnant gentlewoman abandoned by her lover. 'Too true alas this story is,/as many one can tell', she sings with babe in arms.⁶²⁷ Her moralistic song from her own experience is not music according to the violinist in the window. We could easily place Whythorne in that window, a hundred and fifty years earlier. He was among the first to espouse such an attitude, in what must be called the musical watershed of the 1560s and 70s. As we have seen, Whythorne knew that his 'snobbery' might 'draw away the good wills of some', but those opinions did not matter. Indeed, he declared that anyone who 'love[s] the furtherance of the estimation of music' would agree with him. It was perhaps an invitation to the reader to join with him in his cause, to prove one's wisdom by promoting the stratification of the musical profession. While all of this 'has as yet peradventure been unknown to you', he tells his reader, it is not too late to come to an understanding, and promote the 'furtherance of ... music'.⁶²⁸

Whythorne participated in and contributed to the larger cultural shift in Elizabethan England towards the stratification of previously fluid professions, and the

⁶²⁷ *A Lamentable Ballad of the Ladies Fall* (London, 1674).

⁶²⁸ Whythorne, p. 192. Intriguingly, it is possible that other musicians' efforts to promote the 'furtherance of music' may have actually stifled Whythorne's own music career, especially when it came to publishing music. See Chapter 6.

gradual withdrawal of ‘professional men’ from popular culture.⁶²⁹ Indeed, across professions elite members of each group ‘sought to dissociate themselves from the practical training of their lower branches’.⁶³⁰ Dramatic increases in education and musical literacy contributed greatly to this process. Universities contributed to the rise of a new brand of musician: the gentleman-musician, whose musical interest was theoretical and intellectual. Whythorne’s book then served as propaganda, or perhaps an educational treatise, intended to inform his readers that a change was afoot of which they must take heed. But having come to know Whythorne, his life and world, the benefits of approaching his word with caution are clearer. The musical hierarchy that Whythorne laid out was not a reflection of reality but of the profession as its elites would have had it.

The old ways were achingly slow to disappear. Minstrels persisted as a group well into the seventeenth century, and for this reason the changes in the musical profession do not, in my mind, constitute a revolution. As Lawrence Stone put it, “‘revolution” should not come tripping too lightly from the historian’s pen. History lumbers jerkily on with few real breaks with the past’.⁶³¹ Clearly the growing movement to control music and put it firmly in the hands of the ‘competent’, along with attempts like Whythorne’s to ‘educate’ the literate public, did not succeed in making a clean or swift ‘break’ with the past. We have already seen that Lieutenant Hammond mused of the waits that ‘fiddlers I must not call them’ as if the necessity to distinguish was yet new and somewhat amusing.⁶³² This was in 1634, decades after people like Whythorne attempted to elucidate the importance of correct terminology,

⁶²⁹ Burke, *Popular Culture*, esp. p. 366; O’Day, *The Professions*, p. 43; Tittler, *Reformation and Towns*, esp. Ch. 14.

⁶³⁰ O’Day, *The Professions*, p. 43.

⁶³¹ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (abridged edn, Oxford, 1967), p. 12.

⁶³² Derby Mss. of the Duke of Devonshire, Bolton Ms. 94, f. 96b, quoted in Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 73.

but Hammond seems to show that it was as tenuous as ever. And a century beyond that, Hogarth showed that Whythorne's frustrations, and the questions they raise, were yet alive and well. Historians have traced the forming of cultural cleavages in England from 1600 to well into the Victorian period,⁶³³ but the initial rift in the music profession— what must be called the watershed moment— happened forty years earlier in that 'bewildering variety'⁶³⁴ of the changing spheres of the music profession in Elizabethan England.

⁶³³ Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England* (London and New Haven, 2007), p. 124.

⁶³⁴ Brown, *Music in the Renaissance*, p. 250.

Chapter 5

THE MUSICAL PROFESSION AND MUSIC TUTORS

*I have heard [that] diverse young women of quality
have suffered in their reputation and had such or worse mischa[nce]
by those who taught [them] to sing and dance.
-Sir Hugh Cholmley of Whitby, 1600-1657*

Like musicians in all spheres, music tutors confounded the early modern notion of order and hierarchy. The Great Chain of Being, illustrating how God had ordered the universe in a vertical hierarchy, was evoked and imitated by the state. Households in turn modelled themselves on the state, so that there was, in theory, a divinely ordained place for everyone and everyone in his place.⁶³⁵ Music tutors, however, caused a great deal of trouble since they appeared not to have an established ‘place’.

They enjoyed a booming business: there was an explosion of higher education in Tudor England, and musical skill in particular was newly and hugely fashionable among elites. Resident music tutors were brought into great households to teach children and sometimes parents the skills necessary to impress. But there was an inherent danger in the nature of music education, both for tutors and their pupils, for music itself was acknowledged to arouse the deepest passions and emotions. Isolated and intimate, the music room proved to be a place where power, intrigue, and even love could intersect.

As yet we know little about the tutors themselves. There is a remarkable dearth of historical records, and historians have widely accepted with Peter Burke that

⁶³⁵ E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London, 1943); Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), p. 24.

such a subject ‘virtually escapes the historian of this period’.⁶³⁶ Even Walter Woodfill (*Musicians in English Society*, 1953) was resigned to leave tutors hidden behind the veil of time, concluding that ‘now that scholars have searched for a century for biographical detail it is unlikely that positive evidence will come to light’.⁶³⁷

There are good reasons we have not been able to find much evidence. Compared to the continent, English music manuscripts survive in much smaller numbers and usually only in fragments; this is probably due to the ‘plundering of “obsolete” parchment manuscripts’ by English bookbinders and other frugal paper-recyclers.⁶³⁸ The lack of surviving sources is compounded by the fact that musicians were rarely identified as such in parish and household records.⁶³⁹ Most recently, Lynne Hulse has shown that in household accounts, instead of being listed as musicians, individuals were identified as ‘gentleman’, or by name only.⁶⁴⁰ In other cases names are listed but no role or function, making it very difficult indeed to determine just who was what—and by whom, and for what, they were paid. It is often only by providential overlap of sources that we are able to identify musicians for what they were. Musicians also had a habit of donning many hats, and could be categorized as any number of things—servant, schoolmaster, priest, poet, player, groom, secretary—simultaneously.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁶ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (3rd edn, Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT, 2009), p. 154.

⁶³⁷ Walter Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles I* (Princeton, 1953, reprint, New York, 1969), p. 61.

⁶³⁸ Margaret Bent, *Dunstable* (Oxford, 1981), p. 6. See also Howard Brown, *Music in the Renaissance* (Englewood Cliffs, 1976), p. 281.

⁶³⁹ Parish records on households rarely mention subordinate members (Capp, *Gossips*, p. 37).

⁶⁴⁰ Lynn Hulse, ‘The Musical Patronage of the English Aristocracy, c.1590-1640’ (PhD diss., King’s College, London, 1992), pp. 41-42.

⁶⁴¹ Even famous instrumentalists like Philip van Wilder would bear no sign of being a musician if we drew only on court records: ‘In official lists... he always appears among the Grooms of the Privy Chamber, usually called simply “Mr. Philip” and there is no mention of his musical abilities’. Andrew Ashbee, ‘Groomed for Service: Musicians in the Privy Chamber at the English Court, c.1495-1558’, *Early Music* (May 1997), p. 193.

The historiography of Tudor household music (scant as it is) shows an ideological pendulum-swing. In 1918, Paul Jones waxed nostalgic about the Tudor household, claiming that ‘it is delightful to record that most of the entertainment of the day was graced with an accompaniment of that “commendable sweet science”, music...*every* household had its “musitiansers”’.⁶⁴² Decades later, Woodfill’s stated purpose in his study was in part to correct the misjudgements of overly enthusiastic writers such as Jones, who painted every Tudor household as a musical utopia. Perhaps he was compelled by the romanticism of previous historians (Jones gushes over ‘the vigorous zest for life and its possibilities’ fostered by the ‘ever illustrious men of the Tudor Nobility, truly a stalwart and a mighty race!’),⁶⁴³ but it now appears that he swung the historical pendulum almost as far in the other direction. Indeed among all parts of his seminal work, it is his chapter on household musicians that is most out-of-date. Faced with the remarkable lack of evidence, particularly for household tutors, Woodfill concluded that not only had the presence of music in the home been greatly overestimated, but the upper sorts were actually ‘seldom accomplished musicians themselves’.⁶⁴⁴ Woodfill believed that few households maintained professional musicians and that, in the cases where musicians were associated with a particular nobleman, ‘the relationship was virtually nominal’.⁶⁴⁵

This conclusion is certainly understandable, given the void that engulfs tutors. Indeed historians and musicologists of the period tend to ignore the group completely, or acknowledge the lack of evidence briefly before moving on to more ‘fruitful’

⁶⁴² Paul Jones, *The Household of a Tudor Nobleman* (Urbana, 1918), p. 231. My italics.

⁶⁴³ Jones, *Tudor Nobleman*, pp. 229, 328.

⁶⁴⁴ See Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, pp. 59-223, especially pp. 211-216. It should be noted that Woodfill, like Jones and many before and after him, did not distinguish between different types of household musicians (i.e., performers vs. tutors).

⁶⁴⁵ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, pp. 64, 68.

topics.⁶⁴⁶ Most recently, Lynn Hulse made a brave effort to dig more deeply into household records to see what might be found. Her dissertation adds specific information, statistics, and examples to our knowledge of tutors; but it also confirms that not a great deal of especially fruitful evidence survives.⁶⁴⁷ All this led Woodfill to conclude that resident household musicians were actually not very common. But as Peter Marshall has put it, ‘silence from the extant documents is seldom in itself decisive evidence’,⁶⁴⁸ and while of hard evidence there is little, of ambiguous evidence there is much. Even Woodfill acknowledged this, though he was not inclined to pay it much attention.⁶⁴⁹ Its cumulative effect, however, leads away from Woodfill’s conclusion.

The literature of early modern England certainly depicts a society with a great interest in music. A great number of musicologists, literary critics, and historians have discussed all the key texts in depth (especially Castiglione, Peacham, and Elyot), and it would only be redundant to do so here.⁶⁵⁰ Here it may simply be said that the discourse of the time certainly advocated music, and the acquiring of musical skill for the gentry and nobility. In addition, the prominence of secular song in England and Europe would also seem to ‘testify [to the] popularity’ of household music.⁶⁵¹ The

⁶⁴⁶ For example Edward Lowinsky, ‘Music in the Culture of the Renaissance’, in Paul Kristeller and Philip Wiener (eds), *Renaissance Essays* (New York, 1968), p. 348; Alison Sim, *Masters and Servants in Tudor England* (Stroud, 2006) p. 71. In his *Music in Britain*, Harrison omits secular music completely due to lack of sources (Bent, p. 84).

⁶⁴⁷ Lynne Hulse, ‘Musical Patronage’. Hulse examined the household accounts of fifty-one Stuart peers, each of which was selected for the relative wealth of surviving records. Remarkably few records survive for the early and mid-Tudor periods, leading all historians bar one (John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (London, 1961)) to focus on the Elizabethan and Stuart periods instead.

⁶⁴⁸ Peter Marshall, *Mother Leakey and the Bishop, A Ghost Story* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 213-214.

⁶⁴⁹ Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, p. 62.

⁶⁵⁰ For example Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), Chapter 1; Jonathan Willis, *Church Music and Protestantism in post-Reformation England, Discourses, Sites and Identities* (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT, 2010), Chapter 1; Woodfill, *Musicians in Society*, pp. 211-223; Hulse, ‘Musical Patronage’, pp. 137-142; Elizabeth Baldwin, *Paying the Piper, Music in Pre-1642 Cheshire* (Kalamazoo, 2002), Chapter 1; David Price, *Patrons and Musicians in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 3-9.

⁶⁵¹ Lowinsky, ‘Music in the Renaissance’, p. 348.

domain of the madrigal, the chanson, the lute song, etc. was, after all, a private household setting. Household accounts and inventories are quite full of references to the purchase and maintenance of instruments and music.⁶⁵² The rise of interest in music contributed to the dramatic changes in the musical profession, as we have seen, particularly leading in the 1540s to the creation of a new area of employment for musicians: music teaching.⁶⁵³

If music was undertaken on a scale anything like the contemporary literature, discourse, and household inventories would indicate, there must have been a host of music tutors in early modern England. Indeed music was so popular among the upper sorts in the mid-Tudor period that Jane Grey's tutor, John Aylmer, asked the Zurich reformer Henry Bullinger to 'prescribe to her the length of time she may properly devote to the study of music, for in this respect people err beyond measure in this country'. The 'whole labour' of the English was consumed by music, he said, 'and exertions made for the sake of ostentation'.⁶⁵⁴ The Stuart period is better-documented than the Tudor period, and from it, Lynn Hulse has drawn up a considerable list of adult musicians who were 'hired primarily to carry out musical duties'.⁶⁵⁵ But even then, we can in no way produce any kind of reliable statistics, since the survival of household records is so uneven.

⁶⁵² Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 294; Hulse, 'Musical Patronage', p. 107. Perhaps fittingly, the account books and inventories are rarely specific enough to reveal exactly which music collections were owned. There is however one notable exception: in the household papers of the earls of Rutland, the letter of a servant reports from London that he was able to purchase all the requested singingbooks, 'save the duos, which cannot be gotten for my lady Elizabeth' (cited in Hulse, 'Musical Patronage' p. 339 or Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. 139) This was in 1592, when Thomas Whythorne's *Duos* was the only so-titled music book in print. This is especially curious since all sources seem to indicate that Whythorne's music was remarkably unpopular. See Chapter 6.

⁶⁵³ See Chapter 3 as well as Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, pp. 2-3, 47.

⁶⁵⁴ *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, ed. H. Robinson (Cambridge, 1846-7), p. 279, cited in Eric Ives, *Lady Jane Grey, a Tudor Mystery* (Oxford, 2009), p. 54.

⁶⁵⁵ Hulse, 'Musical Patronage', p. 40 and Appendix III. It is worth noting that, at least by the 1650s, there were a great many music tutors in London.

The dearth of sources for the Tudor period, however, might understandably lead historians of music to shrug their shoulders and move on, turning their sights instead to the more fruitful topics of music patronage, or to musical discourse.⁶⁵⁶ (Similarly, studies of education in the home say very little indeed about music tutors specifically.)⁶⁵⁷ While extremely valuable, studies of patronage and discourse reveal public (and sometimes private) attitudes toward music and musicians, but little about the roles and experiences of the musicians themselves. That was where our understanding of Tudor household musicians was fated to remain, but for the unexpected emergence of Whythorne's manuscript. He tells us a great deal about life as a music tutor, as we shall see; but of course we cannot rely on his word alone. In the hope that a fresh approach might lead to new information, or at least a new point of view, this chapter will explore possible new ways to get at tutors' personal experience. I have intentionally avoided drawing on the same sources as historians in the past and have turned to the 'voices' of tutors themselves, in the form of their music.

The Suds-of-Soap Widow

An episode from Whythorne's own experience will help to illustrate all the major aspects of life as a private music tutor. In the late 1540s, at the very birth of the music tutor's profession, young Whythorne was hired by a wealthy (unnamed) widow as domestic tutor, teaching both the children and her. From the beginning, Whythorne saw that he was dealing with a strong and complex woman. She interfered with his

⁶⁵⁶ See for example Price, *Patrons and Musicians*; Hulse, 'Musical Patronage'; Baldwin, *Piper*, Chapter 3; Iain Fenlon, ed., *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Patronage, Sources, and Texts* (Cambridge, 1981); E.D. Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (London and Toronto, 1964).

⁶⁵⁷ For example Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion, and Education in Early Modern England* (London and New York, 1999).

teaching, but was also a pupil herself— one he calls ‘negligent and heedless’. Whythorne was naturally reluctant to ‘use sharp words as with other scholars’, because although he was her tutor, she was the mistress of the house. She also required that he wait on her cup (a task he hated so much that he shirked his duty and was reprimanded); still, she was known to heap portions of meat on her trencher and order him to remove it, hinting that she meant it as a gift to him.⁶⁵⁸

She was, it seems, the embodiment of the frequently satirized wealthy lusty widow who cried crocodile tears.⁶⁵⁹ She gave him gifts and money, told him how she wanted him to dress, and was intensely jealous, especially if he had ‘talked with any woman in her sight’. She even visited him in his London chamber (a small room he always kept as his ‘worldly refuge’, as we have seen). At first he resisted her, claiming that unrequited love was the folly of fools; he would ‘bestow love whereas I both see and find it well bestowed’.⁶⁶⁰ But the widow persisted, and Whythorne eventually decided to pursue her in earnest. He did not love her, he admits, but suspected that she did not truly love him either, and ‘to dissemble with a dissembler is no dissimulation’. And if she was in earnest, ‘I was not willing to lose [her], because of the commodities that might be gotten by such a one as she, either by marriage or otherwise’.⁶⁶¹ To show that he was interested, he wrote and sang her a song that declared his intentions. There was safety in expressing such potentially dangerous sentiments through song:

If she would take it to be written to herself, she might best do it...But if she would not take it to herself or in good part, but would scoff thereat ... yet it is

⁶⁵⁸ Whythorne, pp. 29-30.

⁶⁵⁹ Capp, *Gossips*, p. 38.

⁶⁶⁰ Whythorne, p. 30.

⁶⁶¹ Whythorne, pp. 30-31. Contemporaries believed that, because of these very ‘commodities’, that servants were the ones to initiate such relationships (Capp, *Gossips*, pp. 159-160). Still, most such relationships ended badly for the servant, and, in Whythorne’s case at least, it was the widow who was the aggressor.

so made as neither she nor none other could make any great matter thereof,
specially if I might have come to the answering thereof.⁶⁶²

She took it well, and as their 'relationship' progressed, Whythorne says 'she would sometimes give me both money to buy...things, and ... stuff ... to make...things. And so, by policy, I gat that at her hands the which otherwise I might peradventure have gone without'. He wrote another song about it:

Since I embrace
My lady's grace,
In sort as I desire,
I will rejoice
With pleasant voice,
Since quenched is my fire.⁶⁶³

But anticipating his readers' train of thought, he immediately clarifies the meaning of the song:

Whereas you and such other suspicious heads would think, peradventure, that so much friendship as I spake of in the foresaid song could not be, except a conjunction copulative had been made...to the which I must say, and say truly, that neither my hand, not any other part of mine did once touch that part of hers where the conjunction is made.⁶⁶⁴

That being said,

thus much may I say, that I, being loath that she should withdraw her good will from me, was very serviceable to please her... After the which times, she would sometimes tell me in a scoffing manner that I ... lacked audacity. But I [knew] those words ... did proceed from one who did know her game...⁶⁶⁵

She knew her game indeed. She began, he said, to 'use me as she would use one, to whom she was willing to give the slip', beginning a long confusing game of hard-to-get. Whythorne redoubled his efforts to win her. He hung a portrait of her in his own chamber, wrote her songs, and even wore hops in his hat and russet-coloured clothing

⁶⁶² Whythorne, pp. 31-32.

⁶⁶³ Whythorne, p. 32. The song continues for three more stanzas.

⁶⁶⁴ But his distinction suggests that he did indeed touch other intimate parts!

⁶⁶⁵ Whythorne, p. 33.

‘the which colour’ he said, ‘signifieth the wearer thereof to have hope’.⁶⁶⁶ In the mean time, the whole affair was ‘not so closely handled but [was] espied and much talked of in the house’. One particular ‘busybody’ was the subject of another song, and also the recipient of a letter from Whythorne on the shamefulness of having ‘an oar in every man’s boat’. But all his efforts seemed in vain, and he became ‘very sad and...in such a quandary and fear’. ‘I felt accursed’, he wrote, especially ‘inasmuch as she was my scholar, I thought her somewhat the more bound to use me well’.⁶⁶⁷

For a constant reminder of the realities of his situation, ‘I made me a ring of gold’ on which was engraved a phrase that would ‘put me in mind to beware in all my sayings and doings, especially afore common whisperers. For the greatest sort of them will buy and sell one before his face’.⁶⁶⁸ Although she persisted in testing ‘whether I was a right Cupidian or no’, her favour continued to fade. After Whythorne sang her a song about his own hope, the widow declared, ‘If you have any hope in me, the suds of soap shall wash your hope’.⁶⁶⁹ To test whether this was true, Whythorne wrote a long song covertly containing ‘much point and circumstance that had happened before this time between us’, hoping that by singing it to her he could provoke her to finally ‘show herself in deed what she meant towards me’. But when he sang it, ‘she seemed not to be anything moved or troubled withal one whit’.⁶⁷⁰ The tortured affair dragged on, with Whythorne and the widow both refusing to declare outwardly what they really felt. Whythorne felt unfairly used and sometimes declared that ‘I cannot nor will not suffer it’. But it was the outside world that finally ended the drawn-out affair. ‘Fortune’ (in the form of the accession of Queen Mary in 1553),

⁶⁶⁶ I have yet to find any other such references to hops being used as symbols of hope. Presumably it is a play on words.

⁶⁶⁷ Whythorne, pp. 36-46.

⁶⁶⁸ Whythorne, p. 38. Perhaps the ring was one of the widow’s favors?

⁶⁶⁹ Whythorne, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁷⁰ Whythorne, p. 43.

‘changed my mistress’ estate from high to low, the which hindered me also’.⁶⁷¹ This was bad luck indeed, because looking back, Whythorne felt ‘certain that, if she had continued in prosperity, I should have been in better case to have lived than I was afterwards’.⁶⁷² Instead, his own reputation was ‘hindered’ by association with his mistress, who was probably a notable Protestant, and may have been linked to the ill-fated John Dudley. This was only the beginning of a string of remarkably bad luck that haunted Whythorne most of his life. ‘I fell out flatly with fortune’, he lamented, and wrote a song about it. In the context of the events that led to the widow’s ‘hindrance’, it is particularly evocative:

Whoso that list his chance to try
 On fortune’s fickle wheel,
 He shall soon see and also spy,
 Her pleasures strange to feel.
 For as soon as she hath him set
 Aloft on that high stage,
 From high to low she will him fet [fetch],
 All his pomp assuage.⁶⁷³

As for romance, Whythorne had ‘drowned in the lake of love’, and would forever ‘swim and never sink’—that is, ‘ever be afeard to [love] again’.⁶⁷⁴

In this episode (which recalls Gascoigne’s Master F.J., or indeed Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*),⁶⁷⁵ Whythorne illustrates all the major aspects of a tutor’s role, status,

⁶⁷¹ Whythorne, p. 47.

⁶⁷² Whythorne, p. 47.

⁶⁷³ Whythorne, p. 48. Fet: fetch (OED). Osborn, perhaps unable to resist the temptation to improve Whythorne’s verse, added ‘and’ to the beginning of the final line, but this is not present in the manuscript. It is clear that Whythorne maintained a sustained relationship with the Dudley family. One of his first posts was as tutor to the Suds-of-Soap widow, who was probably closely linked to the family. During this time, Lady Dudley herself attempted to lure Whythorne out of his post to come and teach her daughter. Later, Whythorne served Ambrose Dudley until his household was broken up. Intriguingly, Sir Henry Unton (featured in the portrait, Chapter 4) was also connected to the family; he even named his son Ambrose. Roy Strong has suggested that anyone familiar with the Unton family and their circle would have been able to identify the guests and musicians in the portrait, and the possibility exists that Whythorne was one of these. Strong illustrates the strong connections between a group of families: the Untons, Dudleys, Walsinghams, Devereauxs, and Hattons, suggesting that they were likely the guests at the feast in the portrait. Did Whythorne move in this circle as well? Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth, Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London, 1977), pp. 103, 106.

⁶⁷⁴ Whythorne, p. 46.

and experience. Not only was the music profession changing rapidly, as we have seen, but the religious and political climate in his most formative years (and indeed throughout his lifetime) was in a state of upheaval. Clearly he was not far from the action, at least in the case of the Dudleys' fall; still, he rarely wrote of the world at large. Instead he dwelled on the details of his own life: who said what to him and what he thought about it, how much money he had been promised and lost, and how particular experiences inspired him to write a song. From this, we gain an intimate picture of a musician's life in the household. Whythorne was positioning himself professionally, socially, and sexually, and with him as our case study, we might conclude that music tutors lived in a state of liminality. Professionally, they occupied a nebulous space somewhere between the gentleman and the lowly 'minstrel'—respectable enough for the household mistress to consider romantically, but still undeniably mere employees. Socially, they walked a delicate line between master and servant—being simultaneously one and the other, which created for Whythorne much anxiety about how he should treat the widow and vice versa. And in their (sometimes intimate) daily interactions with household females, tutors operated within the complex, gendered dynamics of sex, love and power.

The Tutor's World

The household environment in which a music tutor worked could be crowded, even claustrophobic. Elite households were miniature societies, whose populations

⁶⁷⁵ George Gascoigne, *A Hundred Sundrie Flowers* (London, 1573, reprint, Menston, 1970), pp. 201-293. On Malvolio and Whythorne, see Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Tracing a Heterosexual Erotics of Service in *Twelfth Night* and the Autobiographical Writings of Thomas Whythorne and Anne Clifford', *Criticism*, XL (Winter 1998), pp. 1-21.

reached into the dozens and occasionally even hundreds.⁶⁷⁶ Service in a household could become part of one's identity, as servants were not simply adjunct to the household but part of it; a formal 'household of family' consisted of husband, wife, children, and servants.⁶⁷⁷ The hierarchy of the household was based upon 'the natural order, in exactly the same way as the hierarchy of the state'.⁶⁷⁸ But where in this hierarchy did music tutors belong? Whythorne tells us that he certainly believed that he was 'an ace above' the other household servants, 'by means of my teaching the young gentlefolks in the house'. This distinction was also recognized by others. A neighbouring gentleman 'bid all the servingmen of our house' to a feast, but Whythorne, seen as a superior individual who merited a personal invitation, was 'solemnly bidden'.⁶⁷⁹ If servants could be, as Mary Abbot suggests, sometimes the master's 'surrogate children', Whythorne was different. He saw himself as more of an equal, sometimes even sitting at table with his master and mistress, even daring to argue with their guests.⁶⁸⁰ Indeed Whythorne enjoyed a comfortable life of privilege compared to the majority of household servants in his time, who could expect drudgery or even misery.⁶⁸¹ Since so many of Whythorne's posts involved a romance with his mistress or pupil, we can be quite sure that Whythorne perceived himself as someone far above a mere servant.

The well-known musician and composer John Wilbye (bap. 1574, d. 1638) also seems to have enjoyed a relationship with his employers that was more familial than professional. He was given his own lavishly furnished chamber, and chose to

⁶⁷⁶ Mary Abbot, *Life Cycles in England 1560-1720, Cradle to Grave* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 111, 118; Meredith Skura, *Tudor Autobiography, Listening for Inwardness* (Chicago, 2008), p. 109; Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (abridged edn, Oxford, 1967), p. 269; Jones, *Tudor Nobleman*, p. 9.

⁶⁷⁷ Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 59; Stone, *Crisis*, p. 269; Jones, *Tudor Nobleman*, p. 9.

⁶⁷⁸ Mark Girourard, *Life in the English Country House* (Harmondsworth, 1980), p. 87. See also Capp, *Gossips*, p. 24.

⁶⁷⁹ Whythorne, p. 74.

⁶⁸⁰ Whythorne, p. 137.

⁶⁸¹ Capp, *Gossips*, p. 151, and, on relationships between household servants, pp. 162-166.

remain in service with the family even though his wealth at death was four hundred pounds, in addition to his land and other property. In his will he left twenty pounds to his patron Countess Rivers, suggesting a close relationship.⁶⁸² Whythorne was not so lucky financially. But rather than wealth or birth (neither of them impressive in his case), it was the ‘special importance of his craft’⁶⁸³ that elevated his status in his own mind:

And I, for my part, seeing that my profession hath been and is to teach one of the seven sciences liberal, the which is also one of the mathematical sciences; and in the respect of the wonderful effects that hath been wrought by the sweet harmony thereof, it passeth all the other sciences; I do think that the teachers thereof (if they will) may esteem **so much of themselves** as to be free and not bound, much less to be made slave-like. And even so did I...⁶⁸⁴

Wilbye likewise seems to have felt elevated by his musical expertise, and styled himself gentleman at his death, even though he had previously been content to be yeoman.⁶⁸⁵ Elizabeth Baldwin also confirms that in Cheshire, ‘musicians who enjoyed quite high status could mix on equal or near-equal terms with gentlemen’.⁶⁸⁶

Music tutors were not always so highly regarded, though. In 1607, Edward Clarke, ‘by profession a Musicioner’, left the house of the Legh family of Lyme after teaching their daughter for a year. He was later interrogated on suspicion of having stolen jewels from the family and seems to have been regarded as a dubious character. As Elizabeth Baldwin observes, ‘Clarke was not regarded as being of any higher status than any other former servant’.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸² David Brown, *Wilbye* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 9-10; David Brown, ‘Wilbye, John (bap. 1574, d. 1638)’, ODNB; E.H. Fellowes, *English Madrigal Composers* (2nd edn, Oxford, 2007), pp. 209-212.

⁶⁸³ Katharine Hodgkin, ‘Thomas Whythorne and the Problems of Mastery’, *History Workshop Journal*, 29, 1 (1990), p. 27.

⁶⁸⁴ Whythorne, p. 46.

⁶⁸⁵ Brown, ‘Wilbye, John’, ODNB.

⁶⁸⁶ Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 26.

⁶⁸⁷ Baldwin, *Piper*, p. 26. Baldwin goes so far as to suggest that Clarke was regarded as merely a ‘wandering minstrel’, but the complexities of minstrels’ identities, especially after the Statute of Vagabonds, make this statement problematic. It should also be noted that while evidence suggests that Clarke was tutoring Mr. Legh’s daughter, it cannot be known for sure.

The result was cultural ambiguity about the status of music tutors.⁶⁸⁸

Certainly individual character was taken into account, but even in households where a tutor enjoyed elevated status, the fact remained that he was still a servant. His status in relation to other servants would also have to take into account age, gender, and seniority, so that his exact role and status in the household would be subtly defined by himself, his master, and his fellow servants. Naturally this led to contention: the widow treated him worse than he felt he deserved: ‘inasmuch as she was my scholar, I thought her somewhat the more bound to use me well’.⁶⁸⁹ In another household, it was a fellow servant who misjudged him. The young girl wrote him anonymous love notes, shocking the household when it was revealed she was the author. She was dismissed, and Whythorne felt bad for the young girl— but worse still for himself, for he had hoped the author was his mistress.⁶⁹⁰ In another household, Whythorne was employed by people he considered his ‘friends’, but they deeply upset him by failing to treat him with the respect he felt he deserved:

At my first coming, both he and his wife gave me many fair promises of good and grateful consideration for my painstaking with their children. But those promises were not only slenderly performed, but also they would sometimes offer to abridge me of that which I had already in use. And then, lo, I would sometimes bestow a little choler on them. And they, seeing this, and perceived that I would carry no coals, would talk of it behind my back as who would say that I was not well advised in that I would not bear with such worshipful folks as they be... But considering that they both had been my scholars, as well as their children... I would shoot their bolts back unto them again. And in the end I went from them; immediately whereupon I wrote [a song].⁶⁹¹

It seems that for his expertise and service in music Whythorne expected respect and even ‘gratitude’, and was not averse to ‘bestowing choler’ on anyone who could not

⁶⁸⁸ This was a problem encountered by many servants who enjoyed superior positions in great households. Capp, *Gossips*, p. 152.

⁶⁸⁹ Whythorne, p. 46.

⁶⁹⁰ Whythorne, p. 23.

⁶⁹¹ Whythorne, p. 172.

appreciate his special status. In both instances, Whythorne justified his insistence on special treatment by reminding his readers that his masters were (or had been) also his scholars. He was simultaneously master and servant, and the position was troublingly ambiguous.

There was no consensus on music tutors' status even among tutors themselves. When Whythorne went to Cambridge to tutor the son of London merchant William Bromfield, he found that other tutors' ideas of his status did not match his own. Bromfield's son had another tutor, who presumably focused on academic subjects. The tutor believed his university degree was far superior to Whythorne's musical expertise, rejecting the latter's insistence that music's 'sweet harmony...passeth all the other sciences':

This tutor...envied me very much, because I was appointed to be also a tutor to his pupil; and also because that I would not do to him such reverence and cap courtesy as he looked for, (as that is a thing much used and looked for, with giving of the wall when they meet in the street, especial of such who come up to degrees from the plough and cart, and such base occupations). The which I would not do of duty, but in courtesy to him, because that I came thither to live with him, and not by him at his charges.⁶⁹²

Whythorne felt that, residing in the Fellows' Commons with 'both lords' sons, knights' sons, and gentlemen's sons', he was an equal or near-equal. 'I did not owe unto him so much reverence...as he looked for,' Whythorne assured his readers, but he 'accounted me proud because I would not embase and humble myself'. While Whythorne chose to gauge status by occupation and expertise, the other tutor had a different set of tools, by which Whythorne did not measure up. Naturally Whythorne retaliated by claiming that only those who rise 'from plough and cart' cling to 'proud,

⁶⁹² Whythorne, p. 101.

foolish fantasies'.⁶⁹³ But whatever their reasons, not everyone was willing to see the special status of music and its professors the way he would have wanted.

Somewhere between the servants and the family, tutors had to carve out their own role in each individual household. In this way music tutors were similar to academic tutors, being treated with 'widely varying degrees of respect and friendship'.⁶⁹⁴

Getting the Job

In his meandering career path, Whythorne secured his successive posts as a household music tutor in different ways, though he usually did not mention the precise circumstances. In the case of the Suds-of-Soap widow, she seems to have sought him out: 'there was a gentlewoman', Whythorne remarked, 'that was desirous to have me to be both her servant and also her schoolmaster, the which I was let to understand by a friend of mine'. Whythorne, loath to be her 'water-spaniel' as well, wanted to refuse the post. But 'being earnestly provoked thereto, partly by the persuasion of my said friend, who said that my service should be easy enough, and yet should be very well considered of ... I forced my will to yield to reason'.⁶⁹⁵ Perhaps it was this same friend who later communicated to Whythorne that the duchess of Northumberland was in need of a tutor for her daughter. The duchess had in fact employed Whythorne's friend 'to procure...one who could teach on the virginals...the which preferment my said friend bespoke unto me'. Later, in another case, he was also 'spoken unto by one to teach a gentleman's children'.⁶⁹⁶ These men (or man, if it was the same person in every case) operated as brokers, making

⁶⁹³ Whythorne, p. 102.

⁶⁹⁴ Stone, *Crisis*, p. 309.

⁶⁹⁵ Whythorne, p. 28.

⁶⁹⁶ Whythorne, pp. 44, 80.

available posts known to select musicians.⁶⁹⁷ According to Bernard Capp this was not unusual, and most employers ‘hired servants on the strength of personal impressions and recommendations’.⁶⁹⁸

In another case Whythorne may have been introduced to his patron through his former employer, John Heywood. As Heywood was a favourite of Queen Mary, it was perhaps through him that Whythorne found a post in the household of a (now anonymous) member of Mary’s privy council. Still one other employer, a country gentleman, appears to have been Whythorne’s friend even before he went to work as his household music tutor.⁶⁹⁹

While little biographical information can be found for early modern music tutors other than Whythorne, there are at least two others whose employment can be traced. John Wilbye, the son of a tanner/lutenist, was likely placed in service to the Cornwallis family at Brome Hall as a young boy. Young Wilbye and Elizabeth Cornwallis seem to have formed a particular attachment, and when she married, he followed her to serve in her own household.⁷⁰⁰ Household accounts confirm that the practice of bringing up young servant boys as household musicians was not unusual. It seems to have been more common in the early Tudor period, when some great households still maintained choirs. Boys were drawn from a great variety of social ranks.⁷⁰¹

In his dedication to his 1609 *New Citharen Lessons*, Thomas Robinson indicated that his relationship with the Cecil family had been one forged over

⁶⁹⁷ In other cases Whythorne is less specific about his method of finding employment. He came to work for Ambrose Dudley, he says, because he ‘did know where to have...good entertainment’ (Whythorne, p. 70). Presumably someone had notified him that the position was available.

⁶⁹⁸ Capp, *Gossips*, p. 132.

⁶⁹⁹ Whythorne, pp. 73, 130.

⁷⁰⁰ Brown, *Wilbye*; Brown, ‘Wilbye, John’, ODNB.

⁷⁰¹ Hulse, ‘Musical Patronage’, p. 28; see Jones, *Tudor Nobleman*, p. 232 for further examples.

generations. Dedicating his work to William Cecil, Viscount Cranborne, Robinson offered

Love to your Honour, sprung from the root of your Lord and Grandfather's bountiful and most Honourable kindness towards my father, who was (until his dying day) his true and obedient Servant. Duty bindeth me, for that I was myself sometime Servant unto the Right Honourable, Thomas Earle of Exeter, your Honour's uncle, and always have tasted of the comfortable liberality, of your Honour's Father.⁷⁰²

In this case it appears that the relationship was quite familial: Thomas Robinson's father had worked for William Cecil (the grandfather). Both men had sons named Thomas, who continued the relationship for another generation. The dedicatee would have been the third generation of the Cecil family to employ Thomas Robinson.

In addition to the examples of these particular tutors, Lynn Hulse has been able to summarize the ways music tutors found posts in the Stuart period based upon the household records she examined. Her conclusions would seem to confirm that the above examples are to some extent representative. Common methods of securing a post included being related to someone already in service at the house (or, like Robinson, inheriting the position from a father, although Hulse states that 'inheritance' of a position was rare); being 'apprenticed' in childhood, like Wilbye; or they may have shared local or political ties with the master, which was sometimes the case with Whythorne.⁷⁰³

A tutor's duties and responsibilities might vary as widely as the methods of securing a post. Whythorne himself served as both tutor and 'water-spaniel' to the widow; in other cases, in addition to teaching music, he was a schoolmaster, a steward, a chief waiting-man, and a 'friend'. Indeed finding a music tutor who was able and willing to take on additional roles seems to have been considered desirable.

⁷⁰² Thomas Robinson, *New Citharen Lessons* (London, 1609), STC 21127-1003, f.1-1v. Spelling and punctuation modernized.

⁷⁰³ Hulse, 'Musical Patronage', pp. 48-50.

Of course, it is possible that the situation was in fact vice versa— that masters sought out servants who could also play and teach music. This seems to have been the case with one James Whitelocke, whose great love of music led him to hire servants who were also musicians. In this way, he could surround himself with people who both appreciated and could participate in his own interests.⁷⁰⁴ While past historians have assumed that the latter example was far more common, Hulse has disproved it (for the Stuart period at least) with an extensive collection of household evidence showing that men were hired primarily for musical duties. After all, a servant who could *play*, and a servant capable of *teaching* were two very different things. A person well skilled in music was rarer than a capable steward, and as Hulse points out, as a result, employers had to ‘cast a much wider net’ to find a good music tutor. Whythorne was hired primarily for his musical abilities in nearly every instance; other duties were merely extras.⁷⁰⁵

Virtually nothing is known about music tutors’ salaries for most of the Tudor period, as household account books do not survive in large enough numbers to provide any kind of representative sample. We do know that Whythorne was promised salaries ranging from nothing (lodging and ‘entertainment’) to twenty pounds a year. Hulse found a similar variation in Stuart household accounts, with stipends ranging from two to twenty-six pounds a year, but again the specific arrangements of particular tutors is unknown.⁷⁰⁶

Was a music tutor’s career desirable, then? Meredith Skura postulated that Whythorne chose such a career out of desperation. It was his bout with ague early in life, she wrote, that ‘reduced him to seeking a job he hated as a private tutor in other

⁷⁰⁴ Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 295.

⁷⁰⁵ Hulse, ‘Musical Patronage’, p. 51. There was just one instance when Whythorne worked in a completely non-musical job, as a secretary to William Bromfield (Whythorne, pp. 115-129).

⁷⁰⁶ Hulse, ‘Musical Patronage’, pp. 62-65.

people's households' — he was, in essence, 'doomed', and suffered 'an angry fury he could barely control'. Skura's reading of Whythorne amplifies his occasional references to anger, and fashions an image of Whythorne as one whose 'career in service began with suppressed rage'.⁷⁰⁷ But Whythorne's 'anger' does not seem to be directed at his career choice. He expressed frustration and bafflement with women, anger at 'busybody' servants, and near-despair at Lady Fortune, but of his musical pursuits he had only good things to say. Far from having a 'job he hated', Whythorne felt that in tutoring Lady Dudley (and serving as chief waiting-man), 'fortune in this point was ever very favourable unto me'.⁷⁰⁸ Indeed, in a moment of profound reflection about 'the whole ... of all my former life', Whythorne realized that nothing was better than teaching: 'I had proved to live many ways and could find no such security and stability in any way that I had proved as I did in the profession of the teaching of music'.⁷⁰⁹ Besides devising ways to 'profit myself the better' by making himself 'to be known of many',⁷¹⁰ Whythorne appears to have been quite contented with his career as a music tutor. Even after four years as Music Master at Canterbury, Whythorne seemed happy to return to his previous role: 'I began anew to read and rhyme, and to consider again of worldly affairs, and to make ever as my leisure served me'.⁷¹¹ As that job would have had fixed commitments, perhaps he was happy to return to his own autonomy. His lifetime of experience with women was full of regret, resentment, and resignation, but his attitude toward music was that it was admirable, for even Plato 'saith that music doth contain all kind of learning, and...cannot be worthily entreated of without all kinds of knowledge'.⁷¹² Tutoring

⁷⁰⁷ Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*, pp. 121-122.

⁷⁰⁸ Whythorne, p. 70.

⁷⁰⁹ Whythorne, p. 140.

⁷¹⁰ See Chapter 6.

⁷¹¹ Whythorne, p. 212.

⁷¹² Whythorne, p. 196.

music, in his eyes, was a worthy pursuit that aroused not suppressed rage, but a sense of dignity. Fashionable new instruments— the gittern and cittern, for example— were, Whythorne tells us, much esteemed by ‘the best sort’,⁷¹³ and so musicians who could teach such skills possessed the power of knowledge as well as the power of being in high demand. It was indeed a great deal more difficult to find a music tutor than it was to find other kinds of servant; Whythorne seems to have found a post whenever he needed it. Indeed Lady Dudley, in her search for a tutor for her daughter, resorted to attempting to lure Whythorne out of his current post. And again it was the ‘special importance of his craft’⁷¹⁴ that elevated Whythorne’s status in his own mind. Music tutors, he believed, ‘may esteem so much of themselves as to be free and not bound, much less to be made slave-like’.⁷¹⁵

In the biographies of other music tutors, we find hints of the same attitude. For even the great John Wilbye, named among the greatest English composers of the period, chose to remain in household service. He certainly had connections to the court (he left his viol to the Prince of Wales, the future Charles I),⁷¹⁶ but he never sought employment there, choosing instead the quieter life of the household. And long-standing relationships like Thomas Robinson’s with the Cecil family reveal that for musicians, life in household service could offer, as Whythorne states, ‘security and stability’. Simply to have that, in a world where ‘unless one belonged somewhere, life could be “poor, nasty, brutish, and short”’, was itself a sanctuary.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹³ Whythorne, p. 21. According to Elizabeth Baldwin the gittern was new in 1547, making Whythorne truly on the cutting edge of musical fashion. He learned to play them c. 1546-8. (Baldwin, *Piper*, p.153)

⁷¹⁴ Hodgkin, ‘Problems of Mastery’, p. 27.

⁷¹⁵ Whythorne, p. 46. See p. 214.

⁷¹⁶ Brown, *Wilbye*; Brown, ‘Wilbye, John’, ODNB.

⁷¹⁷ Gamini Salgado, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (London, 1977), p. 65; Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. 65; Hulse, ‘Musical Patronage’, p. 37.

Tutors in Love and Liminality

Whythorne was befuddled by his relationship with the ‘Suds-of-Soap’ widow. He felt it appropriate to resist using ‘sharp words’ as her tutor, because of the ‘reverence’ he was obliged to bear toward his mistress. The widow herself did not like this at all: ‘she would therefore reprehend me, saying that whosoever would be a scholar must not disdain the due and lawful reprehensions of their teachers and schoolmasters’.⁷¹⁸ His situation presents a major point of tension for music tutors: who was the master? How should the relationship be negotiated?

It was not unusual, at least in the mid-Tudor period, for tutors to be employed teaching not only the children but the master and mistress of the household. The period was, after all, when the fashion of musical skill was only beginning, and there were a great many individuals who needed to learn. Whythorne actually taught his master and/or mistress at nearly half of the tutoring jobs in his life.⁷¹⁹ This may be a phenomenon particular to the mid-Tudor period, when adults were busy acquiring fashionable new skills that they perhaps had not learned as children. In the Elizabethan and Stuart periods, scholars seem to agree that tutelage was focused ‘of course on the child’.⁷²⁰ For earlier decades, this was not the case.

Hired to be a master to the master (or at least the master’s family), the music tutor walked a fine line. Superior to his master in musical skill, he possessed a kind of social capital, but just what that capital was worth was disputable.⁷²¹ Perhaps it was the constant need to establish and defend his status— both in relation to the master and the other servants— that was the source of what Skura calls his ‘perennial

⁷¹⁸ Whythorne, p. 30.

⁷¹⁹ Whythorne mentions teaching the master/mistress in four of the nine separate tutoring jobs. In two cases, he mentions almost nothing about the job, the people or the situation.

⁷²⁰ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. 46.

⁷²¹ In this way music tutors seem to have been similar to household chaplains, who were considered socially inferior but spiritually superior.

touchiness about his position'.⁷²² Skura interpreted his attitude as a sign of 'hatred' of his career, but it was rather a sign of his frustration with people who failed to offer the respect and gratitude he felt he deserved.

The problem of mastery⁷²³ could be, and indeed was likely to be, further complicated by interwoven gender dynamics. For tutors most often taught the women and girls of a household. While elite boys were sent away to school, girls were kept at home and tutored; Whythorne taught women in at least seven of his nine posts. There the vagaries of the master-servant relationship collided with social gender roles in an intriguing and unique way. Though traditional gender roles meant he was superior, he was in the employ of his female pupil, giving her power over him.⁷²⁴ The hierarchy was disputed, and it was happening in the context of music, acknowledged to arouse and express the deepest and most powerful emotions. There was perhaps no job that inflamed what Anthony Fletcher has called the 'disruptive erotic potential of service'⁷²⁵ more than tutoring music.

It is of course possible that Whythorne's experience was isolated, even unique, and that he tells us little of tutors as a group. However, there is one untapped well from which we can perhaps get at tutors' experience directly: their music. If as Edward Lowinsky claims, 'society's history can be gleaned from seeing what texts were set to music',⁷²⁶ then perhaps tutors' history can be gleaned from seeing what texts *they* set to music.

⁷²² Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*, p. 122.

⁷²³ Hodgkin, 'Problems of Mastery', pp. 20-41.

⁷²⁴ On patriarchy in early modern England, see Capp, *Gossips*, esp. pp. 155-146 and Chap. 2; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven and London, 1995); Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), esp. chap. 3. Shepard has shown that patriarchy was a contradictory and complicated aspect of English culture.

⁷²⁵ Fletcher, *Gender*, p. 91.

⁷²⁶ Lowinsky, 'Music in the Renaissance', p. 350.

Any exegesis of the printed music of tutors has its pitfalls, not least the fact that Tudor aires are notoriously full of ‘apparently uncompromising banality’,⁷²⁷ and appear to be nothing more than niceties designed to soothe and nullify. The songs seem to reveal much more about convention than they do about the person or situation that inspired the song— indeed, they seem so generic as to suggest they are completely distinct from the musicians’ life experience. There is also the fact that these music collections were published, mass-produced, and therefore cannot be a simple snapshot of the music tutor and his pupil in the music room. These are legitimate concerns, but are overshadowed by the fact that without Whythorne’s autobiography, his music would seem to be no different. Yet he has shown the depth of emotion that inspired his songs. Meredith Skura noted that Whythorne’s songs, while seemingly conventional, were inspired by a ‘complex, if unusually unverballed, inner reality’, suggesting that ‘it is worth looking in seemingly reticent texts like his for traces of “secret meanings”, even when at first there seems there are none’.⁷²⁸ Jeremy Noble likewise asserted that Whythorne’s text ‘if anything, should justify scholars in a detailed study of the texts of other composers’ songs, to see what clues they afford’.⁷²⁹ Whythorne has revealed that a composer’s life experience might directly and consistently inspire his compositions, and Ilona Bell made a similar argument for Elizabethan courtship poetry, citing a need to redress decades of scholarship that ‘either tacitly disregards the woman to whom Elizabethan love poems are addressed, or expressly denies that she could be the real reader of the poem’.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁷ Robin Headlam Wells, ‘Ars Amatoria: Philip Rosseter and the Tudor Court Lyric’ *Music and Letters*, 70, 1 (1989), p. 58.

⁷²⁸ Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*, pp. 114, 124.

⁷²⁹ Jeremy Noble, Review of *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne*, *The Musical Times*, 102, 1418 (April, 1961), p. 238.

⁷³⁰ Ilona Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 32. Arthur Marotti has also shown that manuscripts preserve the social context of a poem that seem, out of context, to have a more general meaning. *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY, 1995), p. 9.

Janet Pollack adds a musical layer to this, arguing that composers' personal experience, and their muses, needed to be factored into our understanding of their music.⁷³¹

With the help of Woodfill I have therefore identified the extant music of a number of early modern household tutors.⁷³² As always, besides Whythorne's stories very little survives from the early and mid-Tudor periods, leaving us with samples mostly from the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods.

Composer	Publication	Year
Richard Alison	<i>An Howres Recreation in Music</i>	1606
John Attey	<i>The First Book of Ayres</i>	1622
John Danyel	<i>Songs for the Lute Viol and Voice</i>	1606
Thomas Greaves	<i>Songes of Sundrie Kindes</i>	1604
George Kirbye	<i>The First Set of Madrigals</i>	1597
Henry Lichfield	<i>The First Set of Madrigals</i>	1613
Thomas Robinson	<i>New Citharen Lessons</i>	1609
John Wilbye	<i>The First Set of Madrigals</i> <i>The Second Set of Madrigals</i>	1598 1609
Henry Youll	<i>Canzonets to Three Voyces</i>	1608

Table 5.1: *Printed music collections composed by musicians in household service*

⁷³¹ Janet Pollack, 'Princess Elizabeth Stuart as Musician and Muse', in Thomasin Lemay (ed.), *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women, Many-Headed Melodies* (Aldershot and Burlington, 2005), pp. 399-424.

⁷³² Music was selected on the basis that it was written in the private household environment. This was established through biographical evidence or, more commonly, the composer's own dedication. Special attention was paid to the implications of composers' dedications, to ensure as far as possible that the composer was actually resident in the patron's household (as opposed to the much looser relationship that some composers had with their patrons). As is clear, publications of this kind exist only from the late Elizabethan and early Stuart periods; Whythorne's earlier publications were indeed ground-breaking. Whether the composers wrote the ditties themselves as Whythorne did, or merely selected them, the songs were created in a very particular setting.

Tutors' Music

Turning to other tutors whose music survives, we might be able to determine the extent to which Whythorne was a one-off. One tutor, John Danyel lived in similar circumstances to Whythorne.⁷³³ His lengthy dedicatory poem in *Songs for the Lute Viol and Voice* (1606)⁷³⁴ is addressed to Anne Greene, daughter of William Greene of Milton, whom he must have tutored, for he states that all the songs were 'only privately composed for [her] delight'.⁷³⁵ The dedication in fact makes it clear that the songs within (mostly love songs) were very private indeed, and that he only ventured to publish them because, with his songs in manuscript circulation, he was afraid someone else would claim them by doing so. One of the songs in his collection hints at a secret musical affair between the writer and his mistress:

Shee is to mee
More then to any others she can bee
I can decerne more secret notes,
That in the margine of her checkes Love quotes
Then any else besides haue art to read.

The collection includes a series of songs that consider the 'certaine proper vents' of 'our passions', each verse ending with the bold double-entendre of a heart 'that knows more reason why, [to] pyne, fret, consume, swell, burst and dye'.⁷³⁶ One can hardly imagine William Greene listening to his daughter sing such music with her tutor without great discomfort.

⁷³³ Danyel attended Oxford University and was awarded a bachelor's degree in music in 1603. Thomas Weelkes graduated the year before him (David Scott, 'John Danyel: His Life and Songs', *The Lute Society Journal*, 13 (1971), pp. 7-8). He seems to have remained as unknown in his lifetime as Whythorne, but it is possible that John Danyel is also Daniel Bachelar, the court musician. See Anthony Rooley, 'The Lute Solos and Duets of John Danyel', *The Lute Society Journal*, 13 (1971), pp. 18-27.

⁷³⁴ John Danyel, *Songs for the Lute Viol and Voice* (London, 1606), STC-6268-954. It is a table book designed for two musicians (one cantus, one bassus, presumably a male and female): the performers would sit across from each other, reading from the same book. One trio and one quartet are included at the end.

⁷³⁵ Danyel, *Songs for Lute*, f.2. David Scott reasons that if Danyel had composed music for Anne Greene, it seems unlikely 'that a musician would have been tolerated in any other capacity [than teaching]; he would have too little money to be cultivated for his company alone'. Scott, 'John Danyel', p. 9.

⁷³⁶ Danyel, *Songs for Lute*, fos. 12v-13, 10-12 respectively.

John Attey's 1622 *Songs* are even bolder. He was tutor to the two daughters of the Earl of Bridgewater, and his music collection, which he noted were mostly composed in the earl's house, is full of sexual innuendo:

A fraile delight, like that Waspes life,
Which now both friskes and flies,
And in a moments wanton strife,
It faints, it pants, it dyes.

And when I charge my Lance in rest,
I triumph in delight:
And when I have the ring transperst,
I languish in despite.

Or like one in a luke-warm Bath,
Light wounded in a vaine:
Sperts out the spirits of his life.
And fainteth without paine.⁷³⁷

In the context of a large courtly audience, these songs may seem bold but mostly playful and generic in their expressions of desire. Previous critics have been very conscious of the public nature of the court, and have assumed that music was generally performed for a group rather than for a single person. The songs, though, are consistently directed at a single, seemingly specific person (the singer's mistress), and in the setting of the song, the singer and his mistress are entirely alone. Scholars assuming a more public context for performance have labelled these song-texts as mere 'convention': they are, it is argued, not indicative of actual events or relationships, but simply a framework used in a courtly game. Even songs that express deep emotion are viewed as 'simple and stereotyped', showing us 'nothing of the poet's inner feelings'.⁷³⁸

But in the context of a private and isolated music room, where an unmarried man and his young female pupil are singing together, these songs can hardly be seen

⁷³⁷ John Attey, *First Book of Ayres* (London, 1622), STC-901-819, f. 10v-11.

⁷³⁸ Wells, 'Ars Amatoria', p. 61. Wells argues against this view.

as harmless convention. Indeed, the apparent conventionality of tutors' music may have been quite intentional. As Whythorne tells us, concealing genuine feeling and real messages in a seemingly generic love song offered a safety net that was almost essential in a position as precarious as a tutor's. He used his songs to convey messages that were too dangerous to be spoken—it kept him safe from 'busybodys', who would have to assume that he was singing a merely conventional love song. At the same time, in singing he could safely distance himself from his own message: if she did not take it well, he could pretend that it was not meant to be personal, 'for singing of such songs and ditties was a thing common in those days'.⁷³⁹ Whythorne was not simply imitating the courtly conventions of addressing a love song to a mistress. Sentiments expressed in his songs were certainly not simple stereotypes that reveal nothing of the composer's inner self. His music, and, we might infer, the music of other tutors also, was rooted in the very real erotics of service and mastery.

Admittedly, not every collection is full of songs with such hidden or ambiguous meanings. Thomas Robinson's *New Citharen Lessons* (1609), was merely an instructional book addressed to 'gentlemen' readers. Youll's *Conzonets*, Greaves' *Songes of Sundrie Kindes*, and Alison's *Howres Recreation* are not instruction books, but all three are quite bland. They contain harmless pastoral tunes, and religious sentiments. But a glance at the dedications of these collections reveals a key reason for the difference. Greaves' collection was dedicated to Sir Henrie Pierrepont, and Greaves himself was an elderly man when he published the book. Alison's book was dedicated to Sir John Scudamore in whose house he had enjoyed 'quiet days', and Henry Youll was tutor to the two sons of Edward Bacon.⁷⁴⁰ These were masculine

⁷³⁹ Whythorne, p. 40.

⁷⁴⁰ David Brown, 'Thomas Greaves' in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1980), VII, p. 656; Richard Alison, *An Howres Recreation in Musicke* (London,

collections, where songs of bursting, dying, and secret love would have been most unwelcome. Clearly, not all tutors were in positions that encouraged romantic dalliance, and age would certainly have factored in as well. For indeed there were old music tutors as well as very young pupils.⁷⁴¹ But for those whose circumstances were just right, teaching music offered the opportunity to launch a love affair with one's pupil that could potentially set up an ambitious tutor for life. It was an opportunity that, despite its dangers, appears not to have gone unseen, or unseized.⁷⁴²

This led people in turn to treat music tutors with even more suspicion. Indeed, even among the most prominent people in early modern England we find evidence of this attitude. The unfortunate musician Mark Smeaton was selected as a likely candidate to provide 'evidence' against Anne Boleyn. The son of a carpenter, Smeaton overestimated the social capital he could claim by music, failing to see that flirting with the queen was far too bold an attempt to 'compete above his station'.⁷⁴³ Given his intimate access to the queen, this made him an easy target, upon whom suspicion might easily be heaped. Mary Queen of Scots' favourite, the musician-secretary David Riccio, was also readily perceived as adulterous in the jealous eyes of Lord Darnley.⁷⁴⁴ Who could say what was going on inside the music room each day? It was easy to frame a music tutor, or implicate him in some kind of scandal, given his regular intimate and unsupervised access to his pupil. Given the ever-present anxiety

1601), STC-356-818, f. 2; Robert Kimball, 'Henry Youll' in Sadie (ed.), *New Grove Dictionary*, XX, p. 577.

⁷⁴¹ Children could begin learning music at a very young age, as Whythorne did; as the prime example to the nobility, Henry VIII gave lutes to his children and arranged for their instruction at age seven. Matthew Spring, 'Henry VIII: his musical contribution and posthumous reputation' in M. Rankin et al, eds., *Henry VIII and His Afterlives* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 195.

⁷⁴² A physical representation of this tension of opportunity can be found at Bolsover Castle, where the small music antechamber was attached to the bedroom.

⁷⁴³ Eric Ives, *Anny Boleyn* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 367-368.

⁷⁴⁴ Rosalind K. Marshall, 'Riccio, David (c.1533–1566)', ODNB; Julian Goodare, 'Mary [Mary Stewart] (1542–1587)', ODNB. Although too late for our period, it is worth noting that Pepys was deeply jealous of his wife's music/dancing teacher, Mr. Pembleton, even though he admitted he had no grounds. See his diary entry for Saturday 25 April 1663 in *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Phil Gyford, available from <<http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1663/04/25/index.php>> (6 August 2010).

about cuckoldry in early modern England, the presence of an unmarried resident male⁷⁴⁵ who also wielded the powers of music, and sang of love, was a threat indeed.

Perhaps worse than the threat of cuckoldry (for a tutor had his livelihood to maintain and therefore his reputation), was the threat of love: it was one thing if a tutor made off with a kiss, but what if he made off with the woman? A tutor could circumnavigate the accepted forms of courtship and go straight for her heart, and her marriage bed. This was Hortensio's plan with Bianca in *Taming of the Shrew*, wherein Shakespeare plays on the special status of tutors, and Whythorne shows that in this case, art was imitating life. For indeed he once attempted the very same feat, secretly wooing his pupil, a lawyer's daughter. He used remarkably masculine and aggressive language when describing this episode in his life, referring to his suit as 'the assault', and a 'conquest and enterprise'— clearly it was an operation to be undertaken with planning, stealth, and a degree of masculine vigour.⁷⁴⁶ Though he knew that he was not her equal and should have been 'marvelously daunted and abated', he told himself that his musical gifts were supplement enough, and besides, 'faint heart never got fair lady'. Further, he recalled the memory of 'how a great many that I did know had achieved as great enterprises as that'.⁷⁴⁷ Did this, then, happen often enough that Whythorne himself could know a 'great many' who had won the 'conquest and enterprise' of women far above them? The influence a strong-minded servant could have over a young girl was certainly in the consciousness of parents.⁷⁴⁸ And for independent women (i.e., widows) of the upper sorts, social codes were a surrogate for parents, condemning romantic involvement with, and especially marriage to, servants. It was an 'appalling social misdemeanour', but it happened

⁷⁴⁵ It should be noted that I have found no evidence of female music tutors for the Tudor period.

⁷⁴⁶ Whythorne, p. 63.

⁷⁴⁷ Whythorne, pp. 63-65.

⁷⁴⁸ Capp, *Gossips*, p. 161.

often enough to fuel social anxiety.⁷⁴⁹ In 1553, gentleman usher Richard Bertie made his ‘short cut to fortune’ by marrying his widowed employer, Katherine Brandon, dowager Duchess of Suffolk. The duchess’ widowed step-daughter (also dowager Duchess of Suffolk) later followed in her mother’s footsteps, marrying her master of the horse.⁷⁵⁰

But widows were not the only target, as Whythorne makes clear. Around the same time he attempted the ‘conquest’ of the lawyer’s daughter, another tutor attempted the same with the daughter of Sir Richard Cholmley (1515-1583), ‘the great black knight of the North’. Cholmley had his daughter’s marriage to Lord Lumley all arranged, with one thousand pounds towards the dowry paid, when she dropped to her knees before him and declared ‘she might rather be carried to her grave than married to that Lord whom she could never love’. The reality was that she had been having a secret love affair with her penniless music tutor, known only as Dutton. Surprisingly, Cholmley agreed to their marriage, though he was probably dismayed. Indeed a cryptic reference to it being ‘too late to prevent’ the marriage may imply that she was already pregnant.⁷⁵¹

The penniless Dutton indeed won his prize, and then some: ‘This daughter was [Sir Hugh’s] darling; of which he gave good testimony ... at his death when he left her ... the value of five or £600 a year in land and leases’. The pair ‘seem to have lived long and happily on their Cholmley inheritance’.⁷⁵² Like Whythorne, Dutton was described as a gentleman, but a younger brother, suggesting that his social status was marginal and ambiguous. Whythorne, however, was never so bold, nor was he ever successful in his suits. George Kirby mirrors Whythorne’s romantic frustration

⁷⁴⁹ Girourard, *English Country House*, p. 83.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ *The Memoirs and Memorials of Sir Hugh Cholmley of Whitby 1600-1657*, ed. Jack Binns (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 153, 2000), p. 64. Spelling modernized.

⁷⁵² *Hugh Cholmley*, pp. 64, 56.

in his songs of unrequited love: 'Is faithfull seruice thus cruelly rewarded/ why, then vaine hope, adew, adew foreuer'.⁷⁵³ But though some tutors failed, Cholmley's tale reveals that others succeeded, confirming Whythorne's suggestion of a larger pattern among music tutors. Indeed Hugh Cholmley (Richard's grandson) was careful to include with his grandfather's tale a warning to his seventeenth-century readers:

[This] may be a good monition to posterity to be cautious how they entertain persons of that profession and quality, or if they do, not to suffer their daughters to have much familiarity or to be at any time alone with them, for [in] my own time I have heard [that] diverse young women of quality have suffered in their reputation and had such or worse mischa[nce] by those who taught [them] to sing and dance.⁷⁵⁴

Hugh Cholmley confirms that music tutors had, in the mid seventeenth century, not changed their ways since the incident with Dutton seventy years earlier.

Another example from the 1650s also indicates that a pattern had developed. William King, a surgeon at St Bartholomew's hospital, employed John Stone as a resident tutor to his daughter. Stone was soon betrothed to his pupil and became a trusted family friend. So well trusted was he that when King wanted to evade the land grant he had promised as his other daughters' dowries,⁷⁵⁵ he settled the property in a trust to John Stone. Realizing that at this point that marriage to his pupil was no longer his only way to fortune, Stone 'instead made off with the bulk of their lands and goods', and King was arrested for trespass!⁷⁵⁶ A musician's intimate access to the family could be dangerous indeed.

We can trace this pattern back through the Tudor period, with examples chronologically flanking Whythorne and Dutton. In 1600, Gracia Maysters became pregnant by her music tutor, George Hooper. In this case, her tutor was not resident

⁷⁵³ George Kirbye, *First Set of English Madrigals* (London, 1597), STC-15010-252, f. 8.

⁷⁵⁴ *Hugh Cholmley*, p. 64.

⁷⁵⁵ King was facing lawsuits by a number of daughters and their husbands.

⁷⁵⁶ King later recovered most of his lands through litigation. Andrew Gurney, *Brave Community: the Digger Movement in the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 69, 71, 217.

in her household, for she ‘did goe to Crewkern to learn to play vppon the virginals’, and found her tutor to be ‘verie familiar’.⁷⁵⁷ In 1536, the music tutor of the young Katherine Howard, ill-fated future wife of Henry VIII, was found ‘embracing’ her music tutor, Henry Manox, though she was as young as twelve. Though the couple ‘stopped short of intercourse’, Manox clearly hoped his fate was tied up with the girl, for he continued to pursue her even after she moved to Lambeth.⁷⁵⁸

Knowing all this, one cannot help but see more than the conventional in the songs music tutors sang to and with their pupils. John Attey, tutor to two sisters, must have been playing a flirtatious game with his pupils when he sang ‘Shall I tell you’:

Shall I tell you, shall I tell you whom I love?
Hearken, hearken, then a while to me,
And if such a Woman move,
As I now shall versifie,
Be assur’d tis Shee or none,
That I love and love alone.⁷⁵⁹

This kind of romantic love between tutor and pupil was something to be dreaded and feared by the upper sorts of society— music tutors could be dangerous indeed, stealing away daughters like that. Dangerous, but also necessary. For what woman would ever find the right kind of husband if she could not sing and play the virginals? Indeed Robert Burton scoffed at parents’ habit of seeking musical tuition for their daughters even ‘before she can say her paternoster’, for ‘tis the next way their parents think to get them husbands’.⁷⁶⁰

Andrew Mousley has called Whythorne ‘an aggressive, predatory fortune-hunter’,⁷⁶¹ but in most of his troubled relationships, Whythorne— at least by his own account— was not the initiator, nor was he aggressive. It was only with the lawyer’s

⁷⁵⁷ REED, Somerset, p. 85.

⁷⁵⁸ Retha M. Warnicke, ‘Katherine [Katherine Howard] (1518x24–1542)’, ODNB .

⁷⁵⁹ Attey, *Ayres*, f. 5v-6.

⁷⁶⁰ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1621, reprint New York, 1862), III, p. 103.

⁷⁶¹ Andrew Mousley, ‘Early modern autobiography, history and human testimony: The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne’, *Textual Practice*, 23, 2 (2009), p. 224.

daughter that he made a ‘conquest’; even so, ‘when it came to making of love by word, sign or deed, especially in deed’, Whythorne confessed, ‘I had no more face to do that than had a sheep’.⁷⁶² So while this label seems too strong for Whythorne, it is quite possible that not all Tudor music tutors ‘lacked audacity’, as did the self-described chronically ‘bashful’ Whythorne.

It is clear that music tutors operated in a very different sphere from court musicians. In the intimate setting of the music room, much more than a music lesson could pass between a tutor and his lady. Since a tutor’s precise ‘place’ in the world was undefined, it had to be continually negotiated. Life revolved around a somewhat smaller axis than that which was moving the world outside: martyrs were burning and adventurers were returning with tales of the new world, but the music tutor was navigating his own perils in a household that did not quite know where to place him. Power, sex, and sometimes love combined with music’s ability to arouse passions, creating the setting for a complicated gamble that could result in triumph or despair. Unfortunately for Whythorne, in his case it was mostly despair.

⁷⁶² Whythorne, p. 24.

Chapter 6

MUSIC PRINTING, SELF-FASHIONING, AND SELF-PROMOTION

*I do add unto my name the title of a gentleman,
so I mean to show myself to be one, as well in the
outward marks as in the inward man.*

-Whythorne

In 1570, a gentleman came to dine at the country house where Whythorne resided as music tutor. The man was— in Whythorne’s eyes at least— ‘one who, for his wit and learning, thought as well of himself as there was cause and somewhat more’. He ‘loved to hear himself speak and looked to have all the words’, and Whythorne dared speak to him only once, afterwards wishing he had ‘said no word to him at all’.

Whythorne and other members of the dinner party endured the gentleman’s ranting from dinner through supper, when he finally ‘entered such a slough or puddle of errors, that all who heard him crossed him and laughed at him’. Whythorne dared only smile, but that was enough to incur the gentleman’s wrath; as all the guests but Whythorne were the gentleman’s betters, he ‘bent all his ordinance at me, shouting at me thundering shot with vehement words’. Resisting the urge to retreat, Whythorne stirred up his courage and fought fire with fire, ‘to prove whether one heat would drive out another. And then I began to shoot at him as fast as he shot at me, so that we were like to have had a hot skirmish, but that our betters were in place’.⁷⁶³

After the event, Whythorne ‘could not by-and-by put it out of my mind’, and eventually concluded that ‘I should not keep company with my greater’s’. Naturally he wrote a song about it:

⁷⁶³ Whythorne, pp. 136-137.

I have not only read, but eke by proof have tried,
How such who daily haunt their greater's company
Cannot shun great offence, on th'one or th'other side:
Wherefore happy are they, who such an ill can fly.⁷⁶⁴

For a man who had, as we have seen, spent most of his life in the company of his 'greater's', this was a significant departure indeed. It led him to 'call to my remembrance the whole discourse of all my former life', considering 'how I had been many times in hope of prosperity, and then presently out of security; and then tossed from post to pillar, now up, now down, by the illusions of flattering and fickle fortune'. So it was, indirectly, the dinner guest who led Whythorne to take a bold and innovative step in a new direction: no longer pandering to 'greater's', in whose service he had been tossed from post to pillar, he sought a wider net of patrons. His new venture would be to 'make myself to be known of many in the shortest time that might be', and, he believed, 'there was no better way for that purpose than to set and publish some music of mine own making in print'.⁷⁶⁵ His aims and methods, though seemingly straightforward, were numerous and complicated, for exposure came with great risks, and might bring only small profit.

Whythorne has often been brushed aside as simply a strange blip in the narrative of music printing history, but in fact he was a pioneer. This chapter will explore the world of music printing and Whythorne's operations within it, assessing the degree to which his expectation of music printing as a way 'to be known of many' was realistic. Through Whythorne we have an unparalleled window into the beginnings of music printing in England. Both his printed music and his autobiography intended for print⁷⁶⁶ reflected Whythorne's social and professional ambitions as well as his efforts to fashion a desirable self. Several critics have argued

⁷⁶⁴ Whythorne, p. 138.

⁷⁶⁵ Whythorne, p. 140. Whythorne included the secular songs he had written to that point as well as a number of psalm settings and also a 'Grace before meat'.

⁷⁶⁶ See Chapter 2.

that Whythorne's manuscript presents a perfected self-image— that he created a fictionalized and idealized self.⁷⁶⁷ I would argue that, as in his music, Whythorne was different. If many Renaissance men and women were creating idealized selves to put on show, Whythorne was not. For he deliberately exhibits innumerable faults and failures, embarrassing situations, and never ending frustration. As Meredith Skura has noted, 'Whythorne's manuscript sets forth the secrets entombed in his heart'.⁷⁶⁸ Indeed he leads his reader to wonder, in the end, if his is a story of success or failure, of a wise man or a fool, of genius or hopeless mediocrity. It is, of course, this tension stemming from his surprising humanity that draws the reader into his tale.

The English Music Printing World

J.W. Saunders encouraged those who study the Tudor poets to ask first whether the poet intended his work for manuscript or print.⁷⁶⁹ Indeed the importance of understanding the writer's audience is long established, but Saunders pointed to another factor: the stigma of print.⁷⁷⁰ In sixteenth-century England one could publish one's work only if one had a suitable 'excuse' for doing so; openly seeking public

⁷⁶⁷ Andrew Mousley argued that Whythorne attempted to paint himself as 'a picture of consistency of virtue and action' in 'Renaissance Selves and Life Writing: The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 3, 3 (1990), pp. 222-230. Elizabeth Heale made a similar argument in *Autobiography and Authorship in Renaissance Verse* (Basingstoke and New York, 2003), pp. 43-51, arguing that Whythorne modelled on every cultural ideal, even conflicting ones, and embodied paradox as a result. Alison Harl stated that Whythorne 'chooses to perceive himself – by presenting himself – as invulnerable and unconquered', 'the object of desire', in 'Passive, Pursued, and Powerful: Construction of the Male Self in Renaissance Autobiography', *Discoveries* 22, 2 (2005), no pagination. Katherine Hodgkin makes a similar point in 'Thomas Whythorne and the Problems of Mastery', *History Workshop Journal*, 29 (Spring 1990), pp. 20-41. Mary Ellen Lamb does the same in 'Tracing a Heterosexual Erotics of Service in *Twelfth Night* and the Autobiographical Writings of Thomas Whythorne and Anne Clifford', *Criticism*, XL (Winter 1998), pp. 1-21. For further examples and summaries of critics seeing Whythorne as nothing more than conventional self-fashioning, as well as a brief argument against them, see Meredith Skura, *Tudor Autobiography, Listening for Inwardness* (Chicago and London, 2008), pp. 99-100.

⁷⁶⁸ Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*, p. 100.

⁷⁶⁹ J.W. Saunders, 'The Stigma of Print', *Essays in Criticism*, 1 (1951), p. 164.

⁷⁷⁰ While Saunders has been challenged (for example by Stephen May, 'Tudor Aristocrats and the Myth of the "Stigma of Print"', *Renaissance Papers*, 10 (1980), pp. 11-18), I believe his general idea still holds. For though there were undeniably a great number of elite men who did not 'shun' print (as Stephen May shows), they were still obliged to offer an excuse for doing so, thus perpetuating the stigma, or at least print's association with taboos.

recognition and exposing one's work to the common gaze was frowned upon. According to Saunders 'the poet who went to market with his wares was a universal butt'.⁷⁷¹ And if the situation was similar in music printing (indeed at the time the two printing 'worlds' were intricately entwined), we might place Whythorne squarely in the role of the 'butt'.⁷⁷² He was undeniably going to market with his wares, in an attempt to gain fame and, if possible, fortune.⁷⁷³ Was he then committing an appalling social misdemeanour?

The trouble with the stigma of print lay in the fact that print could be a 'gateway to social advancement' as well as a way to make a living. While those inside the court were free to shun it, people like Whythorne lingering just outside the court might see it as a helpful step up, and perhaps even an 'economic necessity'.⁷⁷⁴ Because of the potential benefits, ambitious men were willing to risk the stigma associated with sending their wares to the press. The trick was to appear as if one had not really wanted to do it—to claim, as courtiers did, that it was only upon the insistence of friends, or perhaps in the interest of religion, that one reluctantly allowed one's work to meet the printing press. Here Whythorne does not fit the mould. The preface to his 1571 *Songes* does not depict a composer reluctant to allow his creations into print, but a man happy to present his wares to the world. His songs are presented as practical and useful:

Songs for three, four, and five voices composed and made by Thomas Whythorne, gent., the which songs be of sundry sorts, that is to say, some long, some short, some hard, some easy to be sung, and some between both: also, some solemn and some pleasant or merry: so that according to the skill of

⁷⁷¹ Saunders, 'The Stigma of Print', p. 141.

⁷⁷² Lynn Hulse and David Price surmised that the 'stigma of print' applied to music as well. By contrast, Jeremy Smith thought it did not apply, based on the fact that William Byrd utilized print for his own advancement. Lynn Hulse, 'The Musical Patronage of the English Aristocracy, c.1590-1640' (PhD diss., King's College, London, 1992), p. 154; David Price, *Patrons and Musicians in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 179; Jeremy Smith, *Thomas East and Music Publishing in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 2003), p. 61.

⁷⁷³ See Chapter 2.

⁷⁷⁴ Saunders, 'The Stigma of Print', p. 141.

the singers (not being musicians), and disposition or delight of the hearers, they may here find songs for their contentation [sic] and liking.⁷⁷⁵

The 1590 *Duos* are even more practical as well as didactic, being designed for music tutors to play with their pupils, or for any musical group of varied skill levels. In his dedication to Francis Hastings, Whythorne cited public demand as his motivation for publishing:

Having understanding (right worshipful sir) that neither before nor since that I published in print Music for three, four and five voices, which is now almost twenty years past, there hath not any one of our nation published in print any Music for two voices (as divers strangers in foreign countries have done heretofore) And I knowing that many of our nation have been very desirous to have some published... In consideration whereof I have now published in print these Duos, or songs for two voices, to pleasure them and all others that be so affected.⁷⁷⁶

The *Duos* have since been cited as evidence that composers were aware of the practical needs of amateur musicians and were willing to publish music for inferior skill levels, ‘well aware that such provisos were called for by the conditions of the time’.⁷⁷⁷ It is notable, however, that no composer had done so before Whythorne (as he was keen to note in the dedication), and it was not until a year or two after Whythorne had published his second such volume that other composers followed suit.⁷⁷⁸

Whythorne’s *Book of Songes and Sonnets*— his autobiography— professed the same didactic motive. ‘If you do mark well all the actions and speeches’, he told his reader, ‘it may be for your good, if ye chance to have the like happen to you’.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁵ Thomas Whythorne, *Songes for Three, Fower and Five Voyces* (London, 1571), STC: 25584-1844, title page.

⁷⁷⁶ Whythorne, *Duos, or Songes for Two Voyces* (London, 1590), STC: 25583-1192, f. 1.

⁷⁷⁷ E.D. Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (London and Toronto, 1964), p. 67.

⁷⁷⁸ Volumes of duets were the first imitations, but as late as 1622 Thomas Tomkins’ *Songs of 3, 4, 5 and 6 Parts* notably echoed Whythorne. Tomkins dedicated the collection to the Earl of Pembroke, but promoted the songs as ‘suitable to the people of the world, wherein rich and poor, sound and lame, sad and fantastical, dwell together’. Thomas Tomkins, *Songs of 3, 4, 5 and 6 Parts* (London, 1622), STC2 24099, f. 1. See Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 223-224.

⁷⁷⁹ Whythorne, p. 170.

In his book, he promised, ‘youths are learned lessons large’;⁷⁸⁰ so while his goal was ‘to be known of many’, he was not interested in seeming the reluctant courtier. He was a practical musician offering up his tools. Still, there were risks, as he well knew. During the long process of preparing his music for print, he pondered them time and again:

One while would I think to myself, what do I mean now thus to travail and beat my brains about this matter? Do I not daily see how they who do set out books be by their works made a common gaze unto the whole world, and hang upon the blasts of all folks’ mouths and upon the middle-finger pointings of the unskilful and also upon the severe judgments of the grave and deep wits?⁷⁸¹

There was the threat of disdain from above and below, and Whythorne was well aware that putting his work out into the ‘common gaze’ invited criticism. In Italy, Vincenzo Galilei remarked upon the same risks, acknowledging that if musicians published inferior works, it ‘brought discredit on them if it [came] into the hands of this or that man of understanding’.⁷⁸² The stigma, in reality, may not have fallen automatically on anyone who published their music, but on those who published when they should not have—revealing that they thought too much of their own talent. The situation was similar in England, and not just in music: Ben Jonson and John Taylor were both famously mocked for their publication of ‘folio works’. Even managing to circumnavigate the stigma of print by imitating elite reluctance, there was still the distinct possibility that those ‘men of understanding’ could dismiss one as a pretentious musician of poor quality. It was a bold social move, as well as a great expense, that Whythorne undertook.

He must have been greatly dismayed, then, when his printer, John Day, told him the music was not selling well. He blamed faulty printing, and lack of

⁷⁸⁰ Whythorne, p. xvi.

⁷⁸¹ Whythorne, p. 140.

⁷⁸² Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogo della musica antica e della modernai* (Venice, 1581), trans. Oliver Strunk, in Oliver Strunk (ed.), *Source Readings in Music History* (London, 1981), p. 131.

advertising— and not the quality of his music.⁷⁸³ While we may be inclined, as earlier critics have been, to interpret the event as a sign that Whythorne indeed failed the test of ‘the severe judgments of the grave and deep wits’, when we look closer at early English music printing we find that Whythorne may have been at least partly right. For even William Byrd and Thomas Tallis met with spectacular failure on first publishing.

When Whythorne published his *Songes* in 1571, John Day (‘premier printer to the Protestant regime’)⁷⁸⁴ may have owned the only set of music type in London. Armed with the patent to print psalm books, Day must have had music printing ambitions.⁷⁸⁵ His venture to print Whythorne’s music was a departure from his usual psalm books, and Elizabeth Evenden has suggested that it marked Day’s attempt to extend his printing to the secular music market.⁷⁸⁶ Whythorne and Day were breaking new ground: the only other collection of secular music printed in England was an anthology of composers’ works printed in 1530, most of which is lost.⁷⁸⁷ John Day was therefore probably as disappointed as Whythorne when the music did not sell, and although he was enthusiastic about Whythorne’s idea to advertise, he did not print any more music.⁷⁸⁸ It was not only Day who gave up music printing ventures: no known collection of secular music was printed again until 1588, making Whythorne’s

⁷⁸³ Whythorne, p. 180.

⁷⁸⁴ Elizabeth Evenden, *Patents, Pictures and Patronage, John Day and the Tudor Book Trade* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 119.

⁷⁸⁵ Smith, *Thomas East*, p. 24. See also D.W. Krummel, *English Music Printing 1553-1700* (London, 1975), pp. 3-12.

⁷⁸⁶ Evenden, *John Day*, p. 73, n.18.

⁷⁸⁷ *XX Songes* (London, 1530), STC2 22924. The book was printed by the prolific Wynkyn de Worde, who tended to print popular – and cheap – literature and was less adventurous than contemporaries when it came to printing books requiring ‘considerable outlay’. Henry Plomer, *A Short History of English Printing* (London, 1900), p. 25.

⁷⁸⁸ See Chapter 2. Whythorne, p. 180: ‘I told him that I had written into a book all the songs and sonnets which I had made to be sung with my music ... And if he thought good, as I did, to put this book into print, I thought that it would be an occasion to manifest and make known the same the more and farther off ... The which device of mine my printer liked well; and because he had then so much work to do of his own already, he procured another printer to do and print the said book’. On John Day’s output: Evenden, *John Day*, pp. 73, 142.

collection remarkable indeed. But we are left with the question of whether it was the quality of his music, or simply the lack of demand that led to the failure of this pioneering publication. The fact that no other secular music was printed points to the latter, and a glance at religious music printing supports the theory as well. Perhaps religious music would fare better, especially bearing the names of prominent court composers? Indeed not; Byrd and Tallis' *Cantiones Sacrae* was a great failure, judging by the fact that 717 copies of the book remained on the shelves of prominent bookseller Henry Bynneman eight years later.⁷⁸⁹ It is clear that the quality of the printing cannot be blamed in either Whythorne's case or this one,⁷⁹⁰ and in the case of Byrd and Tallis especially it seems impossible to blame the quality of the music, so what was truly at the root of these failures? Jeremy Smith cited the same problems for Byrd and Tallis' publishing that Whythorne himself cited: there was a lack of public demand, lack of adequate distribution, and a general lack of interest in high-end printed music.⁷⁹¹ Manuscript copying was, after all, part of the process of learning and *doing* music.

It was not until 1588 that anyone published secular or religious music again, and it was not until 1590 that Whythorne returned to music publishing. This yawning gap in the development of English music printing has provoked a fair degree of speculation, especially because at the time, music printing on the continent was booming. Perhaps the halt was imposed by Byrd and Tallis, who held a powerful

⁷⁸⁹ Marc Eccles, 'Bynneman's Books', *The Library*, 5th series, 12 (1957), p. 83. Eccles assumes these are reprints but Smith convincingly argues that these were the first edition. See Smith, *Thomas East*, pp. 29-30.

⁷⁹⁰ There are no notable printing errors in either book. For Whythorne's *Songes*, the compositor sometimes had to use stemless note heads (usually used for plainchant) – perhaps he had run out of stemmed notes? There is also an inexplicably larger type size for 'Thy Secrets Told'. Day used a type face that was previously exclusive to Archbishop Parker's psalms. While this makes yet another link between Parker and Whythorne, it is difficult to know what to make of it. Krummel speculated that 'Thy Secrets Told' was perhaps an important song, and that Parker, Day, and Whythorne 'all became close friends' during the printing process, but there is no mention of this in Whythorne's text. See Krummel, *English Music Printing*, pp. 81-82.

⁷⁹¹ Smith, *Thomas East*, p. 30. Smith here makes no mention of Whythorne.

music patent beginning in 1575 (printed in *Cantiones Sacrae*) and may have wanted no one to succeed where they had failed.⁷⁹² Or perhaps Byrd and Tallis slowed the development of music printing in the interest of a grand mission to ‘advance the science of music’, refusing publication to any music that did not meet their approval.⁷⁹³ Or perhaps there was simply no interest in printing until the political atmosphere of 1588 acted as ‘a psychological turning point’, triggering a sudden explosion of printing that year.⁷⁹⁴ Other theories note that 1587 was the year of the death of Vautrollier, a prominent and influential printer and exiled Huguenot.⁷⁹⁵ Aside from printing Byrd and Tallis’ *Cantiones Sacrae* in 1575, Vautrollier did not appear to have been much involved in music printing, however. A more significant death was that of Tallis in 1588. Some speculate that he had an aversion to secular music and had successfully halted the presses, creating at his death ‘a scramble’ to print.⁷⁹⁶ This scenario seems most plausible; indeed Jeremy Smith asserts that England’s music printing world was so different from that of the continent because musicians themselves ‘could simply stop the entire nation’s music presses’.⁷⁹⁷ What Howard Brown called an ‘astonishing burst’ of musical innovation in 1588 was perhaps not so much a burst of talent as the loosening of a stranglehold.⁷⁹⁸ Whatever the cause, the halt of music publication in England until 1588 affected Whythorne as well as anyone else. When the door to publication reopened, Whythorne seized the opportunity, publishing his *Duos* in 1590. If we gauge from his earlier project, he would have needed about two years to prepare his *Duos* for print, placing his renewed

⁷⁹² In 1582 the Company of Stationers complained that Tallis and Byrd had compositions that they would not print. Cited in Henry Davey, *History of English Music* (2nd edn, London, 1921), p. 127.

⁷⁹³ Smith, *Thomas East* pp. 56-57, 4, 28; Krummel, *English Music Printing*, pp. 15-16, 103

⁷⁹⁴ James Sharpe, *Early Modern England, A Social History* (London, 1987), p. 288; Mackerness, *Social History*, p. 60.

⁷⁹⁵ Andrew Pettegree, ‘Vautrollier, Thomas (d. 1587)’, ODNB; Krummel, *English Music Printing*, pp. 19-20.

⁷⁹⁶ David Wulstan, *Tudor Music* (London, 1985), p. 28; Krummel, *English Music Printing*, p. 20.

⁷⁹⁷ Smith, *Thomas East*, p. 5.

⁷⁹⁸ Howard Brown, *Music in the Renaissance* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1976), pp. 324-325.

publication efforts at the 1588 turning point. Byrd's patent was still in effect at this time, and East was his sole printer,⁷⁹⁹ so we may infer that Whythorne's music met whatever standards were enforced. He was, therefore, certainly not shunned despite his earlier failure; he must have been seen as a musician of standing. But his story is not as straightforward as that.

Whythorne's Music Printing Innovations

In addition to being one of only two sets of secular music published in England before 1588, Whythorne's *Songes for Three Four and Five Voyces* contains the first song printed for solo voice with instrumental accompaniment. It is also the only Tudor music book to contain an image of the composer, something Whythorne added deliberately.⁸⁰⁰ But it is Whythorne's note printed in the tenor book that makes his music, in the words of Philip Heseltine, 'of great historical importance'.⁸⁰¹

Whythorne described the measures he took to ensure accurate music from limited type:

For that there wanted at the printing of these books such sharps as was needful to be set in the spaces, therefore I was forced to use this order for that matter as followeth: when ye shall find a sharp standing in a rule set next before a note that standeth in the space, understand that it is set there for no other cause than to direct the sharpness of that note, and likewise of all others following in that space, except there be a flat set in the same space to alter their sounds or sharpness into flatness.⁸⁰²

Whythorne's careful distinction of his use of accidentals is remarkable because it reveals that composers did pay scrupulous attention to their placement, and his system is still in use today. With this in mind it is perhaps less possible for modern

⁷⁹⁹ Smith, *Thomas East*, p. 56.

⁸⁰⁰ See Chapter 2. Possible sources of his inspiration were close at hand: John Day and John Heywood had both printed images of themselves in their printed works.

⁸⁰¹ Philip Heseltine (alias Peter Warlock), *Thomas Whythorne, An Unknown Elizabethan Composer* (London, 1925), p. 6.

⁸⁰² Whythorne, *Songes for Three Four and Five Voyces* (London, 1571), STC25584-1844, p. 94 (tenor partbook, sig. 13).

performers of early music to add sharps and flats wherever they deem them necessary in the name of *musica ficta*. At least in the case of Whythorne we know that the melody was meant to be precisely what was written on the page.⁸⁰³ Based on this passage, it is also clear that Whythorne himself was involved in the printing process, working out how to make do with what John Day's type could offer. Krummel posited that composers may have worked with the 'composer looking over his shoulder', and indeed this was true in Whythorne's case.⁸⁰⁴ He was working out the puzzles of music printing, at the cutting edge of the profession in England.

The 1590 *Duos* were as innovative as the 1571 *Songes*. They were the first set of duets published in England, and over the next four years his collection was imitated in print by Farmer and Morley.⁸⁰⁵ Recalling also that Whythorne's music *must* have measured up to whatever standards Byrd enforced with the patent, it is indeed mysterious that Whythorne's reception seems to have been quite negative, in his lifetime and for centuries afterward. The 1571 *Songes* were a failure, but there are plenty of explanations beyond Whythorne's own faults. Of the 1590 *Duos* we know less, not least because Whythorne's manuscript ended before he got to that part of the story. We do have two other clues to the outcome of his second publishing venture, however. Thomas East, who printed Whythorne's *Duos* (and indeed everything Tallis and Byrd approved), published and printed his own collection of psalms two years after Whythorne's *Duos*. In it, East gathered songs by prominent composers of the day, and Whythorne, whom he must have known very well, was omitted. While it may have been mere oversight, East's preface strongly suggests that any omission was intentional. Any composers excluded, he explained, deserved it:

⁸⁰³ Heseltine, *Thomas Whythorne*, p. 6.

⁸⁰⁴ Krummel, *English Music Printing*, p. 14.

⁸⁰⁵ Wulstan, *Tudor Music*, p. 87. Farmer and Morley were not explicit in their imitation but in form and function the relation is clear.

In setting of these psalms in four parts...I have entreated the help of many, being such as I know to be expert in the art and sufficient to answer such curious and carping musicians whose skill hath not been employed to the furthering of this work.⁸⁰⁶

Among the contributing musicians were the household tutors Richard Alison, George Kirbye, and Edward Johnson.⁸⁰⁷ John Dowland was also included, as well as John Farmer, who had imitated Whythorne's *Duos* the year before. It is difficult to know whether Whythorne's exclusion necessarily placed him among the 'curious and carping', but it is remarkable nonetheless. Indeed it was not only East who failed to name Whythorne among the 'expert in the art': no one ever put Whythorne on a list of prominent musicians in his time. And if East's later actions offer any further clues, Whythorne's music was neither valued nor *valuable*. For when Byrd's patent expired in 1596, East moved fast to register all of his previously printed music. There were, however, a few exceptions: he did not register music by William Damon, John Farmer, or Thomas Whythorne.⁸⁰⁸ This fact only adds to the mystery surrounding Whythorne and his reception in the music world. What were East's motives in abandoning his claims on these works? If it was simply a reflection of the status of the musicians, it is curious that Farmer was excluded when he had been included in the 1592 *Psalms*. If they were excluded because their collections had simply failed to make any money, it is strange that East did claim other commercial failures. Jeremy Smith explained away the oddities by claiming that 'the works by Farmer and Whythorne were probably not of as much concern to East, and, more important, they were not East's to sell. In both cases, the address of the musical composer was given

⁸⁰⁶ Thomas East, *The Whole Book of Psalms* (London, 1592), in Oliver Strunk (ed.), *Source Readings in Music History* (London, 1981), p. 163.

⁸⁰⁷ Smith, *Thomas East*, p. 89.

⁸⁰⁸ Smith, *Thomas East*, pp. 82-83. East also did not register his own *Whole Book of Psalms*, but as he had, with some bravado, printed it in defiance John Day's long-standing psalm-book patent, its exclusion was probably in the interest of his own safety.

on the title pages as the location to buy copies'.⁸⁰⁹ While this would conveniently solve the mystery, in Whythorne's case it is not true. There is no mention of Whythorne's address on the title page of the *Duos*, nor is there any indication of any selling place at all. It may be that East's shop was simply assumed (and not printed), or perhaps there was some kind of falling out during the production process. Piecing together the fragments of evidence, it does seem that the latter was quite possible.

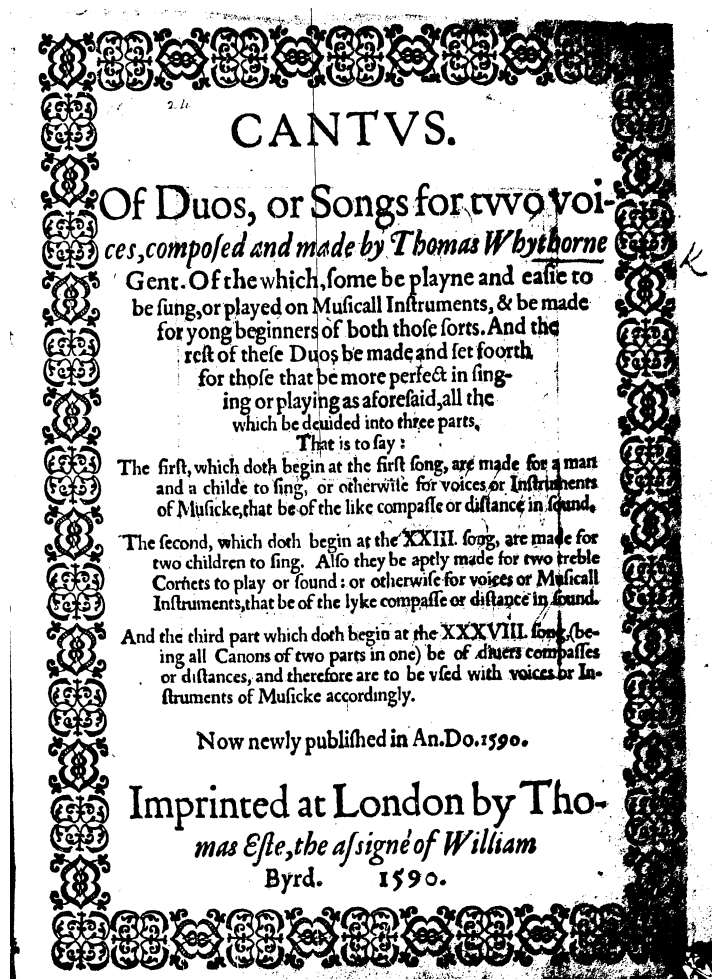


Figure 6.1: Title page of Whythorne's 1590 Duos

There are two more fragments to add to the puzzle. First, in 1592 a servant reported back to Lady Elizabeth Manners that he had managed to find all the music

⁸⁰⁹ Smith, *Thomas East*, p. 83.

books she requested in London ‘save the duos, which cannot be gotten’.⁸¹⁰ While Farmer’s duets were also in print at this time, only Whythorne’s bore ‘duos’ in the title and it seems safe to presume the servant was referring to Whythorne’s music.⁸¹¹ Why was the music unavailable for purchase? Either his music was so popular that it was sold out, or it was so unpopular that no one was selling it. It would therefore appear that Whythorne’s second publishing venture ended either as a great success or great failure.

Second, Elizabeth Evenden has interpreted Whythorne’s interaction with John Day as very negative. Reading into Whythorne’s own account of the printing process at Day’s shop, Evenden concluded that ‘if Whythorne’s songs were second-rate, his ability to insult John Day was first class’. In Whythorne Evenden perceived a patronizing nature that she thought John Day would have resented: ‘There is a sense that Whythorne had become a thorn in Day’s side to get the works printed and then a further irritation when they did not sell’.⁸¹² While her ardent defence of Day is highly speculative and involves some misreading of the text,⁸¹³ her idea that Whythorne’s personality was to blame is worth exploring.

Commercial failures were not unusual and cannot be interpreted as evidence of the quality of Whythorne’s music, but his exclusion from elite musical circles (so

⁸¹⁰ HMC, 24, Rutland MSS (London, 1888-1905), I, 299, cited in Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. 139 and Hulse, ‘Musical Patronage’, p. 339.

⁸¹¹ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. 139; Hulse, ‘Musical Patronage’, p. 339.

⁸¹² Evenden, *John Day*, p. 142.

⁸¹³ Whythorne’s is the only surviving record of Whythorne and Day’s relationship. Evenden reads Day’s side of the story into the text, anticipating and/or imagining his reactions. Evenden assumes that the eminent printer would have been greatly insulted by Whythorne’s assumption that his music did not sell well because Day had previously printed faulty music. A further misreading of Whythorne’s account of his creation of a preface (he wrote it for the anticipated ‘advertising’ book, not for the music *already printed* as she states) leads her to condemn Whythorne as a pretentious and meddlesome ‘foolish musician’. She reads Whythorne’s statement that Day liked his idea to advertise (‘the printer of mine liked well’) as a sign that Whythorne was blind to his own stupidity. Still, she imagines, Day, who rubbed shoulders with elites at court and church, had no trouble dealing with ‘the verbal abuse of a minor musician’ who had forgotten his place (Evenden, *John Day*, pp. 142-143). Krummel had a very different interpretation: Day had stepped outside his comfort zone, he thought, and lacked the tools and experience to ‘set complicated music type and [find] buyers for music books of this kind’ (Krummel, *English Music Printing*, p. 82).

far as we can tell) bears signs of something amiss. His exclusion from East's *Psalms*, and East's apparent abandonment of any claim to the *Duos*, are especially intriguing in light of the fact that Whythorne was excluded from every known contemporary list of musicians of standing, and that his *Duos* could not 'be gotten' even by those who wanted it. All this suggests that something was awry in Whythorne's professional relationships. Was he indeed the 'curious and carping' musician Evenden envisioned, insulting and irritating elite professionals? Whythorne certainly had a habit of refusing deference to those who felt he owed it (see page 263); more revealing still is the fact that he believed enough in his own importance to write an autobiography when such a thing was not done. It would be no surprise then to find that his self-importance shone even in the presence of John Day, Thomas East, William Byrd, or anyone else whom he considered more of an equal than they did him. The possibility must be admitted that Whythorne's personality won him a number of enemies, and stymied his career, in the music world.

What, then, can we make of Whythorne and his printed music? He was certainly an English music printing pioneer and his innovations were, according to himself, entirely his own idea, inspired by his conviction that pandering to 'greaters' was no longer desirable. He devised the project, found the printer, and was the publisher. While this alone is evidence of a man thinking 'outside the box', his autobiography reveals that he was capable of even more creative schemes. The manuscript, intended for print, would advertise his music already in print, explaining the events that inspired his songs, and hopefully serving to further his goal to be 'known of many'. His innovations may, indeed must have stemmed from his own life experience, for John Heywood, one of the most influential people in Whythorne's life, had involved him in his own publication projects. Heywood was a freeman of the

Stationers' Company⁸¹⁴ and collaborated with his father-in-law John Rastell, himself an innovator in the music printing world.⁸¹⁵ Whythorne had inherited from his mentor a belief in the potential power of the press, but perhaps he discovered that, though the press was powerful, even more powerful were the men behind it.

A tidy narrative of the history of music printing is more easily hung on the pegs of famous composers, which is probably why Whythorne's place as a pioneer is neglected. Byrd and Tallis are more easily placed in the spotlight as 'nearly pioneers of music printing in London'.⁸¹⁶ In this case, Whythorne explains the 'nearly'. Byrd is hailed as the first English composer of part-songs, though Whythorne published such songs almost two decades earlier. The editors of one history of English song were at least aware of this fact, but merely stated that 'Thomas Whythorne, who published [part-songs] in 1571 and 1590, need not be considered'.⁸¹⁷ It appears that Whythorne's marginalization continued after death.

Simple neglect appears generous, however, when compared to the fierce derision of some music critics. Echoes of distaste for Whythorne's personality found their way into musical criticism, for it seems the first critic to glance at Whythorne's music was affected by the fact that 'it is not now certain that they [the music books] were ever in much public favour'. Whythorne's historically-established place on the fringe of Tudor music seems to have justified Charles Burney's amused derision in

⁸¹⁴ Peter Happé, 'Heywood, John (b. 1496/7, d. in or after 1578)', ODNB.

⁸¹⁵ John Rastell, a fascinating early Tudor 'Renaissance Man', made a number of significant innovations in music printing. His achievements include England's first single impression music and first mensural music; the earliest broadside ballad with music in Europe; the earliest song printed in a dramatic work; and the first attempt to print a score in any country by any method (Hyatt King, 'The Significance of John Rastell in Early Music Printing', *The Library*, 5th series, 26, 3 (September 1971), pp. 197-214, esp. p. 214.) He died poverty-stricken in the Tower in 1536, 'a prime example of the turn of fortune's wheel in Tudor England' (Cecil Clough, 'Rastell, John (c.1475-1536)', ODNB). This would have been yet another example to Whythorne of 'fickle fortune'. See also James Raven, *The Business of Books, Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (London and New Haven, 2007), p. 27.

⁸¹⁶ Smith, *Thomas East*, p. 31.

⁸¹⁷ A.W. Ward and W.P. Trent, et al., *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature* (New York, 1921), IV. Available from <<http://www.bartleby.com/214/0602.html>>, no pagination.

his 1789 *History of Music*. Whythorne's work was 'truly barbarous', he said, but we must not condemn all Elizabethan music based on the chance survival of these inferior works that were probably 'never performed or heard of by any contemporary judged and lovers of good Music' anyway.⁸¹⁸ Others followed his lead. Henry Davey devoted only a half of one paragraph to Whythorne in his *History of English Music* (1895), dubbing him 'the worst composer of the time' though a man 'with plenty of belief in his own powers'.⁸¹⁹ Ernest Walker (1907) noted the existence of Whythorne's music only as a useful reminder that 'downright bad music could be written in the sixteenth century'. Whythorne songs were, Walker thought, 'as miserably feeble rubbish as can well be imagined'.⁸²⁰ His ditties were the 'worst poetry that ever appeared in print'; his preface was purely 'execrable'. But none of these critics offered specific examples nor indeed any sign that they had actually seen or heard the music.⁸²¹

Philip Heseltine (alias Peter Warlock), however, examined the music itself and came to quite a different conclusion. According to Heseltine, it rather reveals a composer who was 'master of more than one form of musical composition'. Heseltine was full of praise: 'most original', 'magnificent polyphonic writing', 'delightful little scherzos', and 'most attractive air of quiet gravity' are some of his descriptions of Whythorne's work. The composer was, in his opinion, capable of expressing 'strength and dignity', 'real mastery' and 'suave melodic beauty'. And in

⁸¹⁸ Charles Burney, *History of Music* (London, 1789), III, p. 119; Burney continues, 'we have at present music books published in England, everyday, without genius or science to recommend them. Now, if it should Happén that one of these, by escaping the broom of Time, should reach posterity, and fall into the hands of some future antiquary, critic, or historian, who should condemn *all* the compositions of the present age by *one*, that had, perhaps, been never performed or heard of by any contemporary judged and lovers of good Music, the sentence would surely be very unjust'.

⁸¹⁹ Davey, *History of English Music*, p. 126.

⁸²⁰ Ernest Walker, *History of Music in England* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1939), p. 58.

⁸²¹ John Hawkins, *History of Music* (1843), quoted in Osborn, Introduction to Whythorne (original orthography), pp. xiii-xv; J.A.W., Review of *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne* ed. James Osborn, *Music and Letters*, 42 (July 1961), p. 276.

a gentle jab at previous critics, Heseltine stated that ‘if studied intelligently’, Whythorne’s music would reveal a man of great talent. Indeed, in Heseltine’s view, Whythorne was ‘but little behind the finest ... of the succeeding generation of English composers. Until we come to Dowland we find no tunes more lovely than these in all Elizabethan music’.⁸²² High praise indeed, for one who remains so marginal. Heseltine’s writings were, in fact, a great force behind the modern revival of Dowland’s work, for he had fallen out of fashion even before he died. Did Heseltine overstate the case, or has Whythorne simply continued to be unfairly overlooked and neglected?

Self-Fashioning

As readily as critics have found doggerel in Whythorne’s music, literary critics have found self-fashioning in his writing. This is certainly justified, for in his music and his autobiography, he created a distinctive personality and demeanour through his use of speech and actions. This is surely a prime example of Greenblatt’s self-fashioning.⁸²³

Whythorne’s life circumstances certainly match the conditions Greenblatt identified as most commonly producing self-fashioning: he did not inherit a title; he submitted to an absolute power or authority; he fashioned himself in relation to something alien (the ‘threatening other’); and he experienced a perceived threat to himself.⁸²⁴ The nature of the music profession (wherein musicians’ identity as such, along with their status, was determined by societal consensus)⁸²⁵ meant musicians

⁸²² Heseltine, *Thomas Whythorne*, pp. 7-8.

⁸²³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London, 1980), pp. 2-3.

⁸²⁴ Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, p. 9.

⁸²⁵ This is true not just for the early modern period but for a wide variety of human cultures over time. Alan Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, 1964), p. 125.

inevitably *had* to fashion themselves for the outside world. At the time, the music profession also presented Whythorne with a perfect ‘threatening other’, the minstrel, against which he defined his work, his skill, and his own identity. He perceived the minstrel as a personal threat, as an alien who had the potential to destroy the reputation of music as a whole, and with it Whythorne’s livelihood and identity. Minstrels made the perfect ‘other’, and this inevitably must have contributed to the ‘fall’ of the minstrel discussed in Chapter 3.

Whythorne’s figure of ‘absolute authority’ is less clear. Though he turned to the Bible for comfort and guidance, religion does not seem to have been the absolute authority in Whythorne’s life (indeed it may well have been England’s tumultuous religious climate that directed him elsewhere). He had a passion for the classical world, and perhaps it was a Humanist dedication to Reason that became his authority. On the other hand, his obsession with, and submission to, Dame Fortune may indicate that the figure personified for him the ultimate disorder and unfairness of life. Fortune, in the end, may have been his ultimate authority.

While it is relatively straightforward to label Whythorne’s writing self-fashioning, it is less easy to define exactly what ‘self’ he intended to create. Critics have tended to see in Whythorne a classic example of perfected self-fashioning; that is, that he cast an ideal version of himself within his own life ‘fiction’. His story, it is argued, is constructed of scenarios that make him look good, and he offers his tale as an ‘exemplary life’.⁸²⁶ While Whythorne may have been flattered to be considered ‘exemplary’, I do not believe that fictionalizing or idealizing was ever his intention. He offered up his story as an *example*, indeed— but not as *exemplary*.

⁸²⁶ Hodgkin, ‘Problems of Mastery’, p. 39; Harl, ‘Passive’, no pagination; Mousley, ‘Renaissance Selves’, pp. 225-227.

If he was attempting to create an ideal self, he would have done better to have left out a large part of his narrative. He based his narrative on events that were personal and embarrassing; he admitted that women he courted tired of his company; he spoke of being driven to his ‘wits’ end’ in the absence of a master; and he was never reluctant to admit to feeling ‘very sad’, or to slipping into ‘a quandary and fear’. He also freely recounted at length an instance when he tried and failed to woo his pupil by stealth even though he knew her father would never approve.⁸²⁷ In short, there are elements of Whythorne’s autobiography that certainly depict him as less than ideal, sometimes even pathetic. This is not an idealized, perfected Whythorne, but a surprisingly honest and human one. His social ambitions remained paramount, but to become ‘known of many’ did not, in Whythorne’s mind, require him to become someone he was not. He seemed to believe that the true stories behind the creation of his music would themselves be of great interest to amateur musicians everywhere, and encourage public appreciation of his music. Rather than create a life ‘fiction’ to attract admirers, Whythorne used methods that reveal just how calculating a self-promoter he was.

Self-Promotion

Printing offered the promise of public recognition as well as profit. Though manuscript retained its own appeal, books themselves were symbols of social advancement, and socially ambitious authors utilized them in many ways.⁸²⁸ With great benefits came great risks, as we have seen, so that in the end ‘books and print variously brought fortune, fame, poverty, bankruptcy, insanity, and martyrdom’.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁷ Whythorne, pp. 99, 10, 36, 64-68.

⁸²⁸ Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY, 1995); Raven, *Business of Books*, pp. 16, 372.

⁸²⁹ Raven, *Business of Books*, p. 3.

The risks were not enough to deter Whythorne, along with other ambitious men in and out of the music profession, from trying his hand.

Examples abound of early modern English musicians following Whythorne's lead and benefiting from publication. Thomas Weelkes was appointed organist of Winchester College after dedicating his works to two prominent Elizabethans: George Philpot (who lived near Winchester), and Edward Darcy, a gentleman of the Privy Chamber.⁸³⁰ George Kirbye and John Wilbye both achieved a significant level of wealth and fame based on the strength of their reputations, and as they both resided in country houses far from London, it seems that the printing presses were their most important social stepping stone.⁸³¹ Jeremy Smith has also pointed out the remarkable example of Charles Tessier, a young French musician who made a calculated attempt to secure employment in the household of Penelope Rich, the music-loving sister of Robert Devereaux. In 1597 he dedicated a music collection to Rich, and had it printed by Thomas East. He also made personal appeals through Rich's friends. It is unfortunate that we do not know whether his tactics worked, but his behaviour certainly supports the claim that ambitious musicians 'sought to use East's press as a means of self-promotion in London'.⁸³² Even William Byrd published motets knowing that they would not sell well, in the interest of self-promotion.⁸³³ Indeed Smith goes so far as to posit that Thomas East may have sometimes offered a 'service' similar to today's vanity press: if the composers were willing to cover the costs, East would print their work whether he thought it would sell or not.⁸³⁴ This was probably not true for the period before East (pre-1588), when Tallis and Byrd

⁸³⁰ Smith, *Thomas East*, p. 89.

⁸³¹ David Brown, 'Wilbye, John (bap. 1574, d. 1638)', ODNB; David Brown, 'Kirbye, George (d. 1634)', ODNB.

⁸³² Smith, *Thomas East*, pp. 88-89.

⁸³³ Smith, *Thomas East*, p. 62.

⁸³⁴ Ibid.

maintained a stranglehold on the press. But later, John Dowland, in addition to the examples already cited, seems to have believed that keeping himself in the public eye could save his lagging career.⁸³⁵ In this way Whythorne's motives for publishing seem in tune with other musicians of his time—it was social rather than monetary gain that drew musicians to the press.

'What? Shall a Minstrel Be Made a Gentleman?'

Whythorne's name itself reveals his social ambition, for he was not born with 'gentleman' attached to his name, but put it there himself. Even after the publication of his manuscript, readers tend to have accepted at face value Whythorne's social status; that is, that he was a minor gentleman with arms and motto inherited from his father, John Whitehorn of Ilminster.⁸³⁶ But there are some parts of the story that Whythorne left out, in his music and in his manuscript. Whythorne wrote (in his manuscript) that he included his portrait and arms in his 1571 *Songes* because 'the books with the music in them [were] as my children'. 'Because they contained that which my head brought forth,' he reasoned, 'also because they should bear my name, I could do no less than set in every one of them their father's picture'.⁸³⁷ It was strange reasoning indeed, and one suspects his real motives had more to do with his desire to be 'known of many' than to send his 'children' into the world with a memory of their loving father. The arms, he wrote,

I have found to be left unto me by my poor ancestors; with the which, although they have left me no great revenues to support and maintain them withal, yet thereby they have left me a remembrance that I am as free a man born, both by father and mother's side, as he that may dispend thousands of pounds of yearly inheritance.⁸³⁸

⁸³⁵ Diana Poulton, *The Life of John Dowland* (2nd edn, London, 1982), pp. 48-49.

⁸³⁶ For example, Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*, p. 105.

⁸³⁷ Whythorne, p. 175.

⁸³⁸ Whythorne, pp. 175-176.

Here again is an instance where we may not be able to take Whythorne at his word. It was he himself who registered them in the visitation of 1568, tracing his gentry family back three generations.⁸³⁹ While it is certainly possible that Whythorne ‘found’ the arms and simply had them entered that year, one must acknowledge that in this period ‘as often as not these were invented’.⁸⁴⁰ Aristocrats complained of the ‘granting of titles of honour for cash not merit, in too great numbers, and to too unworthy persons’.⁸⁴¹ Indeed in extreme cases, counterfeit genealogies ‘might involve the most elaborate fantasy and naked fraud’.⁸⁴² There were certainly a number of musicians doing that in some form— William Hunnis and John Dowland were both of unknown parentage but became gentlemen as their careers progressed.⁸⁴³ And of course there was Shakespeare himself, who rose from an obscure background to register his ‘inherited’ arms, prompting Ben Jonson to take aim at such social climbers in *Every Man Out of His Humour*:

Sogliardo: Nay I will have him, I am resolute for that, by this parchment gentleman, I have been so toiled among the Harrots yonder, you will not believe, they do speak i’ the strangest language, and give a man the hardest terms for his money, that ever you knew.

Carlo: But ha’ you armes? Ha’ you armes?

Sogliardo: I’ faith, I thank God. I can write myself gentleman now, here’s my Patent. It cost me thirty pounds by this breath.

Puntarvolo: A very fair coat, well charged and full of armory.

⁸³⁹ He was listed as ‘Thomas Whithorn of London gentleman now lyvinge in A doi 1568 at this present visitacion of the age of forty yeres or nighe there abowtes’. Robert Cooke, *Visitation of London, 1568*, ed. H. Stanford London and Sophia Rawlins (Harleian Society, 109-110, 1963), I, p. 88.

⁸⁴⁰ Richard Cust, ‘Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour: The Writings of Sir Thomas Shirley’, *Midland History*, 23 (1998), p. 42.

⁸⁴¹ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, (abridged edn, Oxford, 1967), p. 350.

⁸⁴² Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 34.

⁸⁴³ Hunnis registered his arms in 1569. Hunnis’ verses were set by a number of prominent musicians including Byrd, Morley, and Weelkes; his *Seven Sobs of a Sorrowfull Soule for Sinne* probably influenced Dowland’s *Lachrimae, or, Seven Teares Figured in Seven Passionate Pavans*. These two may have been musicians on the rise together. Andrew Ashbee, ‘Hunnis, William (d. 1597)’, ODNB; David Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, p. 192. In his forthcoming book, Ian Harwood is also expected to show that Richard Alison’s arms were fabricated (*Sweet Broken Music: the Elizabethan and Jacobean Consort Lesson*, forthcoming from Ashgate).

Sog: Nay, it has as much variety of colours in it, as you have seen a Coat have, now like you the Crest sir?

Punt: I understand it not well, what is't?

Sog: Marry sir, it is your Bore without a head Rampant.

Punt: A Bore without a head, that's very rare.

Carl: I, and Rampant too: troth I commended the Herald's wit, he has deciphered him well: A Swine without a head, without braine, wit, anything indeed, Ramping to Gentilitie. You can blazen the rest, signor, can you not?⁸⁴⁴

It is likely that Whythorne was the type at whom Jonson's mockery was aimed. His language in the manuscript hints that this was the case. In addition to his justification that he placed his portrait and arms in his music because the songs were his 'children', Whythorne suggested another motive: 'the users of those books should see that...I do add unto my name the title of a gentleman, [and] so I mean to show myself to be one, as well in the outward marks as in the inward man'.⁸⁴⁵

Whythorne's arms might therefore be seen as 'the outward marks', the visual representation of the gentleman he presented to the world. And if he did construct the arms himself, as he did the motto, then an examination of the emblems may tell us a great deal about the self he fashioned.

⁸⁴⁴ Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour* (London, 1600), STC 14768-441, Act III, scene i.

⁸⁴⁵ Whythorne, p. 175.



Figure 6.2: *Thomas Whythorne's coat of arms, from 1590 Duos*

Every emblem seems to suit Whythorne perfectly, adding to the impression that he created it all himself.⁸⁴⁶ Masculine symbols of strength and courage, the lion and the cock, flank the right side. The quarters on the left are more curious, where crenelated towers are grouped with an escallop shell (top left). While the shell indicates long journeys and travel to distant places, the towers denote safety and strength. Perhaps this is Whythorne showing himself to be a man of the world, who has travelled far, but who also appreciates the safety and comfort of home. His 'long journey' might also be interpreted as metaphorical—a lifelong quest in search of the stability and safety that eluded him for most of his life. The division between the shell and towers is lined with fleur de lis, symbolizing purity. The crest of the arms is

⁸⁴⁶ Interpretation of emblems based on Thomas Woodcock, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry* (Oxford, 1990) and Fleur-de-lis Historic Crests and Arms, 'Meanings Behind the Symbols', available from <<http://www.fleurdelis.com/meanings.htm>>.

a group of lances, denoting a particular devotion to honour; this sentiment is repeated in the shield (lower left), where a fret representing persuasion is girdled by a fess symbolizing honour and the readiness to serve. So while valuing persuasion (something perhaps related to his teaching), Whythorne also wanted to show that it was bridled by virtue and honour, or perhaps that it was in the interest of service that he used persuasion. While any other additions to the arms could simply be in the artist's own taste, it is worth noting that squares (flanking both sides of Whythorne in the centre) suggest constancy, and that gems (just above the motto) symbolize supremacy. There is nothing unusual about the emblems selected for Whythorne's arms— indeed it seems a typical declaration of 'brave, strong, and true'— but the motto which he did in fact create himself (as he tells us) is intriguing indeed. *Aspra ma non troppo*, 'sharp but not too much', was the phrase Whythorne selected as the ultimate representation of himself and his ideals. 'Sharp', he wrote, 'may be taken either for an adjective or else for the imperative mood of the verb "to sharp"', so it was both a description of himself as well as a bit of advice. It described him well, he thought: 'sharp' was not only a play on the 'thorn' in his name, but it also referred to his mental ability, of which he would 'make you my judge; and though I am sharp, yet not too sharp'. It might also represent the hot temper he had learned to control. Whythorne was pleased that in his multi-meaning motto, 'sharp' could also be a verb (similar to today's 'sharpen'), so that his motto advised readers to sharpen their minds and their selves, to be assertive— but not too much.⁸⁴⁷ He was immensely proud of the motto, dwelling on it at length in the manuscript and recording all the poems written about it by his friends. In addition, on the inside cover of the manuscript, beneath his image that he had sewn onto the page, he wrote simply, 'sharp'.

⁸⁴⁷ Whythorne, pp. 177-179.

Whythorne's amusing combination of humility and confidence in his motto captures well the 'self' in his manuscript. He was tall, 'but none of the tallest'; he was virtuous, but flawed; he was pursued by women but failed in love; he was a good musician but never placed himself among the greatest. He showed no signs of anger that he never secured a place at court, but neither was he happy in the service of his 'greater'. He had social ambitions, but they were, he felt, reasonable—he was climbing the social ladder, 'but not too much'. This was likely the reason that Whythorne was willing to say outright in his manuscript that he had created his family motto, but did not go so far as to say that he had created his arms (if in fact he had): there was a great risk of ridicule in being Jonson's figure of mockery. Indeed John Ferne expressed the same attitude in *The Blazon of Gentry*, where his characters discuss the gentrification of musicians:

Torq: What? Shall a Minstrell be made a Gentleman? Haha he, me thinks laws should not have that reverend opinion of so base a profession, especially, since that both the civil continuations of olde Rome, and eke the sages of our County have abandoned them from the society of the honest members of our Commonweale, and have determined them for rogues and vagabonds, enemies to the public good of our Country.

But Bartholomew gives the same answer to this that undoubtedly Whythorne would: 'You are no good expounder of laws, for the law reacheth only a certain sort of bastard and mechanical practitioners in this faculty, there called minstrels ... but it extendeth not to the learned professor of that Science'.⁸⁴⁸ Through his music, and through the printing press, he hoped to present himself to a public who could appreciate him as a man somewhere in the middle. But crucially, with 'gentleman' attached to his name.

⁸⁴⁸ John Ferne, *The Blazon of Gentry* (London, 1586), STC 10825-225, pp. 50-51.

In Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Carlo offers advice to a newly-gentrified friend:

Nay look you sir, now you are a Gentleman, you must carry a more exalted presence, change your mood and habit to a more austere form, be exceeding proud, stand upon your Gentility, and scorn every man. Speak nothing humbly, never discourse under a Nobleman, though you ne'er saw him but riding to the Star Chamber, it's all one. Love no man, Trust no man, Speak ill of no man to his face, nor well of any man behind his back.⁸⁴⁹

Based on our fragments of evidence it seems quite possible that Whythorne matched Jonson's description of a stereotypical upstart well. There was of course John Day, as well as Thomas East and William Byrd, all of whom may have found Whythorne irritating. On more than one occasion Whythorne exhibited a scorn and pride that others resented. The Cambridge tutor, to whom Whythorne refused to give the wall and 'such reverence and cap courtesy', and the dinner guest with whom he exchanged 'fire', both thought he showed a pretentious refusal to show deference.⁸⁵⁰ But Whythorne always perceived the fault in the other. The Cambridge tutor was 'a poor scholar...and lived off alms at the relief of the college...and after grew to that place which made him so proud'. Whythorne saw him as a quintessential *obsecro* (from Latin beseech or supplicate), who had 'copen up this year a degree higher than he was in the year past; which made [him] to look so high above me as he did'. This kind of attitude was, in Whythorne's opinion, common among scholars: 'when they have taken degrees, the first year after taking them they do bear daggers in their sleeves to kill as many as they do meet that be prouder than they be. And yet, for all that, they do kill nobody'. And so the *obsecro* 'accounted *me* proud because I would not embase and humble myself unto him'.⁸⁵¹ The dinner guest was equally shocked by Whythorne's refusal to humble himself, so it seems that those who newly 'carried

⁸⁴⁹ Ben Jonson, *Every Man*, Act III, scene i.

⁸⁵⁰ Whythorne, pp. 101, 137.

⁸⁵¹ Whythorne, pp. 101-102. My italics.

a more exalted presence’ — including Whythorne — could not quite agree upon who deserved deference and who did not. Whythorne condemned proud social climbers without ever perceiving himself as one.

Perhaps the confusion was rooted in the unprecedented social mobility of Elizabethan England. Honour and respect could no longer be commanded based on the strength of one’s lineage alone; Humanist ideals had seeped into the social strata and blurred the definition of honour. Virtue, in all its varied definitions, was now something factored into honour (or good name, for the lower sorts), and for some it even trumped lineage.⁸⁵² For long-established noble and gentry families, especially Catholics, this caused anxiety. But it was good news for Whythorne, who was confident in his virtue and reassured by his university education and the fact that anyone skilled in one of the seven liberal sciences could legally bear arms. He fashioned an educated and honourable self; all he needed was a coat of arms.

He got it, in 1568, but since the year comes so near the end of his manuscript narrative, it is difficult to assess lasting effects on Whythorne’s activities and identity. However, we do know that it was not until Whythorne was ‘officially’ a gentleman that he undertook any publication efforts. As an expert musician, a teacher, and a gentleman, Whythorne had now acquired a *curriculum vitae* that would justify his foray into the public eye. He backed his gamble in his *Songes* by describing the limits and complications of music printing, and explaining how he had cleverly overcome them. He also assured his readers that the music was ‘perfect, sung and tried in all points by men of good skill and judgement in the science of music’.⁸⁵³ Whythorne’s

⁸⁵² Mervyn James, *English Politics and the Concept of Honour 1485-1642* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 4-28, 58, 63, 65; Cust, ‘Gentry Honour’, pp. 40-70; Stone, *Crisis*, p. 304; Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England, Honour, Sex and Marriage* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 8-9, 35; Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 9.

⁸⁵³ Whythorne, *Songes for Three Four and Five Voyces* (London, 1571), STC 25584-1844, p. 94 (tenor partbook, sig. 13).

subtle message was, in short, that he was skilled and honourable enough to deserve the spotlight. But again, ‘not too much’: in his manuscript and to some extent in the short notes in his music, Whythorne presented himself as a man who knew his place, somewhere just below the upper sorts. He was not so bold as to list himself among the greatest musicians of the day, and always remembered that he had never earned a university degree.

A linguistic analysis of the manuscript uncovers some of the signs that Whythorne’s intended audience was the middling sorts as well as the elite. Since orthography interested only the educated elite, Whythorne was consciously appealing to that audience. But crucially, his own orthography was much simpler, and less scrupulously applied, than those he imitated. It seems that he wanted to add a high-minded element to his manuscript, but was careful to keep his spellings ‘recognizable enough to the reader’ as to ensure its accessibility to anyone who could read.⁸⁵⁴

At the same time, it appears Whythorne may not have been able to successfully construct a more complex orthography if he wanted to. He seems not to have understood the distinction between voiced and voiceless phonemes, using the symbols somewhat interchangeably.⁸⁵⁵ This may rather reveal him as a socially ambitious pseudo-intellectual, enthusiastically using a system he did not quite understand. He kept a foot in both elite and middling worlds, by dedicating his music to courtiers but presenting it as something for all literate people interested in music; by appealing to intellectuals through his orthography but keeping it simple enough that all literate people could read it. Such an approach seems to have been intentional, but it may well have stemmed from necessity. The son of a yeoman with an

⁸⁵⁴ Rupert Palmer, *Thomas Whythorne’s Speech* (Copenhagen, 1969), p. 24.

⁸⁵⁵ Palmer, *Thomas Whythorne’s Speech*, p. 22.

incomplete university education may not have been *capable* of writing music or words that were more complex, more exclusive.

John Stow (1525-1605), a near exact contemporary of Whythorne, also built his career through the press, though he had neither university education nor title. (Stow was also under the patronage of Archbishop Parker, so it is possible Whythorne knew him.)⁸⁵⁶ Stow was, in terms of volume, ‘the dominant historian of his era’.⁸⁵⁷ He managed to fashion a successful writing career, but unlike Whythorne he never styled himself a gentleman, though he certainly moved in ‘upper’ social circles.⁸⁵⁸ While Whythorne’s prime motivation for publishing was probably social, Stow’s interests were financial, but both had the same goal: to appeal to a wide audience.⁸⁵⁹ Like Whythorne, Stow avoided topics that might be considered too high-minded for most, and in so doing garnered the same kinds of critiques that Whythorne did, being called a ‘naïve and unsophisticated mind’ by modern critics.⁸⁶⁰ But Stow’s books were aimed at the wider public, and he assumed that a single culture existed, not a polarized one, wherein elite readers, as well as lowlier ones, would be just as interested in monster stories as the histories of eminent men. And it seems he was right: a continued demand for his books revealed that few ‘understood the taste and the buying habits of the reading public better than he’.⁸⁶¹ Whythorne was as calculating in his own publishing endeavours, aiming his books at that ‘single’ culture wherein courtiers and householders alike wanted to play music for their own skill

⁸⁵⁶ Stow called Parker ‘my especial benefactor’. Ian Archer, ‘John Stow’s *Survey of London*: The Nostalgia of John Stow’, in David Smith, et al. (eds), *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576-1649* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 29.

⁸⁵⁷ Barrett Beer, *Tudor England Observed: The World of John Stowe* (Stroud, 1998), p. 20.

⁸⁵⁸ He was friends with John Dee, Robert Dudley, Ben Jonson, and William Camden, and seems to have enthusiastically exchanged books with and manuscripts with his friends (Beer, *Tudor England Observed*, pp. 9-11).

⁸⁵⁹ Beer, *Tudor England Observed*, p. 23.

⁸⁶⁰ Beer, *Tudor England Observed*, p. 53. Beer does not support this label.

⁸⁶¹ Beer, *Tudor England Observed*, pp. 53-54.

level. Still, unlike Stow who displayed no ‘fawning for advancement’,⁸⁶²

Whythorne’s inclusion of his portrait and newly acquired arms, and the ferocity with which he poured scorn on minstrels, reveal that his career pursuits were wrapped up with social ambitions.

Another early modern writer and ‘publicist of genius’, John Taylor (1578-1653), makes an interesting comparison.⁸⁶³ The London waterman styled himself the Water Poet, and took the press by storm. He published poetry and travel stories, as well as journalistic observations of popular politics, building a successful fifty-year literary career. Taylor was no gentleman, but like Stow and Whythorne, found himself in the company of the educated elite as his fame grew. It was in fact Taylor’s curious background that was his appeal: as a waterman poet, he was a lowly rower circulating among courtiers. Rather than concealing his background Taylor utilized it, portraying himself as the working fellow with famous friends. Taylor never purchased arms or tried to style himself a gentleman, for his lowliness was so much of his appeal. And like Stow, he managed to appeal to both elites and middling sorts—a feat which led, as it did with Stow, to some financial success and even fame. But this very success only created for Taylor a ‘lasting unease about his social and cultural identity’.⁸⁶⁴ For who was he, a waterman who became famous by being so lowly?

For all three of these ambitious early modern men who utilized print in their self-fashioning, appealing to a wide audience meant operating in the overlap between two worlds.⁸⁶⁵ The promise of wealth, recognition, prestigious jobs, and even fame, also carried with it the risk of the stigma of print and the criticisms of ‘the grave and

⁸⁶² Stow expressed a nostalgia for the past, and a regret that social change was altering long-held traditions. See Archer, ‘Nostalgia of John Stow’, pp. 17-34.

⁸⁶³ Bernard Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water Poet 1578-1653* (Oxford, 1994), p. 56.

⁸⁶⁴ Capp, *John Taylor*, p. 54.

⁸⁶⁵ The divide between the elite and middling sorts was, as Capp notes, not so stark as we might have thought (Capp, *John Taylor*, p. 195).

deep wits'. By appealing to many, they risked alienating a few at the top. Conversely, if they earned the respect and admiration of elites, where did that then leave them on the social ladder? Mass appeal could lead to an inevitable tension: Who am I? Who do I deserve to be? And who are my 'greater's', really?

Whythorne's own self-fashioning presents all these tensions. He defined himself against other writers, other servants, other musicians, other gentlemen, and other intellectuals. He chose to depict himself as virtuous but flawed, a man who tried hard, who was attractive and self-confident— but 'not too much'. His 'self' was defined by virtue and education, but he hedged his bets by registering possibly fabricated arms.

Whythorne's 'self' offers an intriguing study in the context of Renaissance self-fashioning. As we have seen, critics have been quick to identify self-fashioning in Whythorne's writing, but always in an idealized form. In recent literary trends, self-fashioning has come to be closely associated with self-idealization, so much so that the former often implies the latter. Whythorne's example is starkly counter to this, for his self-fashioning is clear but his depictions were certainly not ideal. Critics seeking to look beyond idealization rather removed his identity altogether: Whythorne was not an individual, but an expression of generalities, representing 'a period when ... most people did not have to find a place in the world but inherited it and knew what it was'.⁸⁶⁶ Whatever the approach, there is a widespread habit of taking Whythorne's text out of the context of his life. An identity, a personality, a self, cannot be constructed in a few select passages. It is only in looking at Whythorne's life and book as a whole that an examination of his identity can be justified. Whythorne's case confirms the importance of Jeff Titon's call to caution, 'let us not

⁸⁶⁶ Ronald Bedford, et al., *Early Modern English Lives: Autobiography and Self-Representation 1500-1660* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 19. See p. 71 for fuller quotation and further discussion.

use a life story too quickly; let us know it first'.⁸⁶⁷ When we 'know' rather than 'use' Whythorne, it becomes clear that his personal identity was paramount. At the same time Whythorne's life story highlights an interesting paradigm shift in the study of the Renaissance individual. At a time when family identity shifted against individual identity (especially in the context of honour), and when education and social mobility both underwent dramatic changes, did the individual heroically emerge from a cloud of superstition and ignorance, or is the individual simply an illusion imposed by modern critics on the past?⁸⁶⁸ Whythorne would seem to rest somewhere between these two theoretical extremes. Indeed the notion that the Renaissance individual gloriously emerged from the 'Dark' past has long been defunct, but John Martin has also pointed out that too often New Historicists remove all human agency from history as well. The individual, without ontological existence, is seen as a construction of place and time.⁸⁶⁹ But the individual, Martin argues, was not a blank tablet for culture to write on.⁸⁷⁰ Though insightful and of course useful, New Historicist (i.e., self-fashioning) readings of Renaissance texts highlight cultural continuities to such a degree that individuality can be not only ignored but removed. Taking a wide-lens view of Whythorne's life story, together with his music, his individual identity is quite clear. 'Why would someone write about himself at such length when there was no tradition for doing so?' Meredith Skura asked.⁸⁷¹ That

⁸⁶⁷ Jeff Todd Titon, 'The Life Story', *Journal of American Folklore*, 93, 369 (1980), p. 291.

⁸⁶⁸ Jakob Burkhardt's claim, in the 1860s, that the individual finally broke free from the veil of ignorance and faith has long become the claim against which modern historians define their own stance; Greenblatt and the New Historicists, on the other hand, have swung the pendulum in the opposite direction, finding that personal identity is merely a construction of culture. For a concise discussion, see John Martin, 'Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe' *American Historical Review*, 102, 1309 (December 1997), pp. 1309-1342.

⁸⁶⁹ Jonathan Goldberg argued that this applied to all early autobiography, and used Cellini's *Vita* as a case-study. 'Cellini's Vita and the Conventions of Early Autobiography', *Modern Language Notes*, 89, 1 (January 1974), pp. 71-83.

⁸⁷⁰ Martin, 'Inventing Sincerity', pp. 1316, 1339.

⁸⁷¹ Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*, p. 101.

Whythorne was breaking new literary ground is itself a sign of a sense of individuality. This was not cultural miming.

Whythorne's was a searching and divided self. His Protestant understanding of the importance of emotions (for they shaped both relationship to God and personal identity), is a near constant in his text. His fear, anger, despair, and confusion sculpted his character in a profound way of which he was very conscious. He was also keenly aware of the tension between his private and public worlds, dwelling on the difference between seeming and being. Whythorne's unparalleled record of 'self', when taken as a whole, supports Martin's assertion that the Renaissance self was a 'complex interplay between nature and culture', emerging from the desire to be both prudent and sincere.⁸⁷² Whythorne's text certainly lends itself to a Greenblatt-style New Historicist reading, but only when the text is taken in bits; as a whole his expressed personal identity, and his internal struggle with the external world, could not emerge from someone who did not believe himself to be an individual self. Through his works Whythorne was trying to discover himself, shape himself, and also present himself to the world. He harboured at once a Humanist desire for self-knowledge, a Renaissance sense of self-fashioning, and a strikingly modern flair for self-promotion.

⁸⁷² Martin, 'Inventing Sincerity', pp. 1334-1337.

Conclusion

What I am ... I will make you my judge.
-Whythorne

The sixteenth century in England witnessed huge changes but also remarkable continuities. How are we to understand the ways tectonic shifts played out in people's lives? Surveys that span large geographic areas and great expanses of time allow us to both see and measure change and continuity over time. But a much smaller lens, focused on a single place or time, or indeed a single individual, can also offer an illuminating perspective, as biographies as often have shown. How did humble individuals grapple with the changing world around them? To what extent did they retreat into their own private worlds? What did they think of the cultural changes going on around them, and what social forces made up the rhythm of their lives?

This study has begun to explore the ways Whythorne's life story illuminates various roles and experiences of early modern middling sorts in England, and musicians in particular. It offers a unique access to the heart and mind of a musician often spinning on fortune's wheel, and adds a new dimension to scholarly debates in several different disciplines. In literature, the manuscript marks the emergence of a new genre, and stands as the first autobiography in English, contributing to discussions about the nature and use of life writing; it also adds a body of verses (however dreadful) to the corpus of Tudor poetry, while also presenting a wealth of Tudor proverbs and sayings, many of which are the first recorded usage.⁸⁷³ In

⁸⁷³ For example, 'goodnight John Lyne', 'keep your breath to cool your pottage', and 'Joan is as good as my lady'. Mark Eccles, 'Words and Proverbs From Thomas Whythorne', *Notes and Queries*, 21, 11 (November 1974), pp. 405-407. See also note on p. 37.

linguistics, Whythorne's orthography offers the opportunity to 'hear' an individual speaking across the centuries, presenting a rare resource to philologists. For literary critics, Whythorne's manuscript is an important case study for debates about selfhood, self-fashioning, and the ways individuals negotiated their inner and outer worlds (if indeed these were distinct). To manuscript studies Whythorne's text shows that a manuscript itself can sometimes offer many clues about its own creation. It also contributes to conversations about the relationship between manuscript and print, offering a snapshot of a manuscript being made ready for print. For print studies, in turn, the manuscript offers a primary account of pioneering music printing activities, and a discussion of the benefits and pitfalls of publishing in sixteenth-century England. It also reminds us that a sixteenth-century printed text was not necessarily as detached from the author's experience as is often supposed. For social historians, it offers richly detailed descriptions of gender relations, master-servant relations and courtship, as well as the inner thoughts of a self-conscious social climber. For historians of the Reformation, Whythorne's negotiation of the rapidly changing religious environment is especially relevant, and his engagement with Humanism and a vast library of classical and early modern books will be of interest to intellectual historians. Even in the history of medicine, Whythorne's story has proved useful (such as in one fellow graduate student's history of despair in early modern England). This study, the first overall assessment of Whythorne's work and significance, has shown the need for a reevaluation of many previous claims (often about Whythorne himself) in most of the above fields.

But above all, it is music history that has most to gain from a close reading of Whythorne, and it is here that this study has focused. His text offers a rare glimpse into the professionalization of music through the eyes of one of its advocates. His

discussion of the different sorts of musicians in the period, together with the divisions between them (or lack thereof), illuminates our understanding of the structure of the profession. By investigating the social context of Whythorne's strict hierarchical model, it has become clear that his was wishful thinking. Musicians were not positioned on a ladder but moved with some ease around a profession made up of intersecting 'spheres'. Whythorne's book also grants us unique access to the lives of private music tutors, together with an unparalleled view of a Tudor composer at work. The household, where tutors' peculiar roles as master-servant were further complicated by gender and class dynamics, magnified the uncertainty present in English society about where musicians belonged in the broader social hierarchy. The question of whether a musician could become a gentleman, even without gentle birth or a degree, was answered by the College of Arms: he could. But whether he *should* was open to debate. Musicians exploited their special social opportunities, skills, and education with varying degrees of calculation, ambition, and success, and it is Whythorne's text that has brought all these scenes into focus.

The scope of this project, however, has necessarily excluded a number of fruitful avenues of research and comparison. Perhaps the most serious omission is a musicological analysis of Whythorne's music alongside his autobiography. Christopher Marsh has proved the importance of musical analysis in understanding church music as well as in 'reading' early modern ballads,⁸⁷⁴ and it is certainly possible that a thorough investigation of Whythorne's music may reveal a great deal more about the man and his musical world. I am, however, satisfied that any secret meanings in the songs were, as was Whythorne's habit, laid out in his autobiography,

⁸⁷⁴ Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), Chapter 8; Christopher Marsh, 'The Sound of Print in Early Modern England: the Broadside Ballad as Song', in Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (eds), *The Uses of Script and Print 1300-1700* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 171-190.

to ensure the reader missed none of his wit. This study has also been able to show only the tip of the textual iceberg; his book is as densely packed with cultural and historical riches as any better-known Tudor text. In many areas of literary criticism and social history, much still remains to be uncovered through further close reading—but crucially, with consciousness of the wider context from which episodes or anecdotes are excerpted. It is this context that has been missing from almost all previous work on Whythorne's text. A further comparison of English musicians to those on the continent would also enhance our understanding of the extent to which Whythorne and his contemporaries were part of a cross-cultural professional group.

In annotating an extended chronological collection of his verses, Whythorne, aged at least sixty-five, embraced the opportunity to reflect on his life, ponder his turns on fortune's wheel, and seek an understanding of his role in the world. Perhaps that is why his narrative sometimes stretched for pages between songs: caught up in the story, he wrote to bring not only the reader, but himself, to a place of understanding. Life had been neither easy nor fair, and he saw himself as 'the very receptacle of all worldly troubles and perturbations'. The world itself was only a place where people 'pay their debits to nature and ... then do follow the same way that their fathers went before them'.⁸⁷⁵ Was Whythorne thinking of his own life when he wrote, 'Lament we should at children's birth/ And at their death to show some mirth'?⁸⁷⁶

When Archbishop Parker needed a new master of music in 1571, there was no shortage of eminent musicians to hand who were capable of the job. Passing over even Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, Parker chose Thomas Whythorne. Was Whythorne, who had written just a handful of religious songs during his life, more

⁸⁷⁵ Whythorne, pp. 174-175.

⁸⁷⁶ Whythorne, p. 227.

distinguished than we might have thought? Or was he a surprise recruit— a dark horse?⁸⁷⁷ Gazing through our admittedly foggy lens it does not appear that Whythorne was greatly esteemed in his own age, at least as a composer. After all, he was, by his own account, ‘sharp, but not too much’.⁸⁷⁸ ‘Marginal to the end’ were the words Bernard Capp used to describe John Taylor, and they may suit Whythorne as well.⁸⁷⁹ Hopefully modern scholarship can begin to rectify this, for the historical value of his book demands his release from the margins. His autobiography provides a rich, multi-faceted and unparalleled window into sixteenth century England as contemporaries experienced it. We must only remember to know it before we use it.

⁸⁷⁷ Tallis was growing old, and Byrd’s known Catholic leanings may have ruled him out. Still, it is possible that, though Tallis and Byrd were considered better composers, Whythorne had other attractive skills— teaching ability, perhaps? Or was it a willingness to work for a lower salary? Norman Jones has pointed out Parker’s curious choice as well: *Birth of the Elizabethan Age, England in the 1560s* (Oxford, 1993), p. 263.

⁸⁷⁸ Whythorne, p. 176.

⁸⁷⁹ Bernard Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water Poet 1578-1653* (Oxford, 1994), p. 162.

Appendix 1

Chronological list of Whythorne's patrons, with approximate dates he worked for them.

Master/Patron		Dates
1.	John Heywood	1545-1548
2.	'Gentleman...in the country'	1549
3.	'Suds of Soap Widow'	1550-53
4.	Lawyer	1555
5.	Ambrose Dudley	1556-57
6.	Privy Councilman (to Mary)	1557-58
7.	'Court Lady'	1558-59
8.	Couple four miles from London	1559
9.	William Bromfield	1560-62
10.	Country Friend	1564-66, 1568-69
11.	Archbishop Matthew Parker	1571-75
12.	Francis Hastings	1590

Appendix 2

Chronological list of cities and towns Whythorne visited on the continent, as taken from the song in his autobiography (Whythorne, pp. 48-58).

London	Ulm	Bologna
Calais	Weishorn	Mantua
Bruges	Augsburg	Piacenza
Ghent	Innsbruck	Milano
Brabant	Trenta	Turin
Brussels	Padua	Savoy
Louvain	Venice	Chambery
Malines	Ferrara	Lyons
Antwerp	Urbino	Paris
Tricht	Abruzzo	Boulogne
Cologne	Naples	Calais
Mainz	Capua	London
Frankfurt	Rome	
Worms	Florence	

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