SHAKESPEARE’S MUSICAL COLLABORATION WITH MORLEY

SHAKESPEARE’S intimate acquaintance with the music of his time and his enthusiasm for the art are well known, and there can be little question that he consorted to some extent with the London musicians of 1600. Certain of them may have been actively associated with the production, and possibly with the composition, of his plays. Precisely what form such association took, however, is a matter upon which investigation has hitherto yielded only meagre and confusing results. Speculation links Shakespeare’s name with many composers and performers of the period, some of whom must indeed have supplied both the incidental music so abundantly required for his stage productions and the earliest settings of his lyrics.

It would be of considerable value and interest to know by what procedure Shakespeare composed each of his songs. We do know that he often appropriated snatches of traditional ditties and ballads. Sometimes he undoubtedly had in mind a specific familiar melody—a folk


3 E.g., with John Dowland the lutenist, who was at the Danish Royal Court after 1598 and may have associated with Shakespeare when he came to England in 1601; with the two Danyl brothers, John the lutenist, who was also a poet, and Samuel, tutor to Lord Herbert, later the Earl of Pembroke, who has been mentioned as possibly the “rival poet” of the sonnets. See Peter Warlock, *The English Ayre* (Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 52–63; E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare, a study of facts and problems* (Oxford, 1930), i, 568.

4 A full discussion of the subject is provided by G. H. Cowling, *Music on the Shakespearian Stage* (Cambridge, 1913).

5 Besides the two Morley settings to be discussed in this paper, the following should be mentioned as important, although lack of space and certainty as to conclusions prevents their analysis here: Thomas Ford’s setting of “Sigh no more, ladies,” in *Much Ado*, found in a MS. of the mid-seventeenth century (MS. 726–28, Christ Church, Oxford); and Robert Johnson’s settings of “Full fathom five” and “Where the bee sucks,” in *The Tempest*, possibly for its first performance, published at Oxford in 1659; see J. Frederick Bridge, *Songs from Shakespeare* (London: Novello, n.d.), prefatory note; J. F. Bridge, *Shakespearan Music* (London: Dent, 1923), pp. 24–49.

song, a catch, or a popular ayre, to which he proceeded to fit suitable words for special purposes. But it is difficult to tell what were his methods of composing his entirely original lyrics, even when contemporary musical settings have survived. Did a musical idea always precede the words in his mind, or did he sometimes invent a lyric form independently, trusting to some composer to devise an appropriate melody and accompaniment for it? Finally, is it possible that he ever actually collaborated with any musician during the process of lyric composition?

Such questions have generally proved at least as baffling as they are important. Only in the case of the dramatist’s possible association with Thomas Morley in the composition of two of his lyrics has there seemed any promise of definite conclusions. Even here the available evidence has failed to lead musical and literary investigators into essential agreement. The purpose of the present study is to re-examine the facts with a view towards throwing some light on a few disputed points.

I. Morley was one of the most active practicing musicians and impresarios of the closing years of the sixteenth century. He was a Gentleman of the Royal Chapel, holder of the Queen’s license for printing music, had been organist of St. Paul’s, editor of anthologies, composer of madrigals, services, ayres for lute and voices, pieces for viols and virginals, and author of A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke, one of the most informative and readable treatises of its kind. His position was so well recognized that he was apparently consulted as a specialist on the licensing of musical plays. Between 1596 and 1599 he was Shakespeare’s neighbor in the parish of St. Helen’s in Bishopsgate Ward, which may be described without extravagance as a hotbed of musical activity.

7 The most striking instance of this procedure is provided by Shakespeare’s burlesque of Robert Jones’s ayre, “‘Farewell dear love,” which had appeared in Jones’s First Book of Songs in 1600, as “Farewell dear heart,” sung by Sir Toby Belch with interruptions by Malvolio and the Clown in Twelfth Night. See Chambers, Shakespeare, i, 405. The Jones music is found in The English School of Lutenist Song Writers, 2nd Series, vol. IV (London: Stainer & Bell, 1925), No. xi, pp. 24–25. Elson, op. cit., pp. 216–218, shows how Shakespeare’s actors divided Jones’s music amongst themselves. See also E. W. Naylor, Shakespeare Music (music of the period) (London: Curwen, 1912), pp. 22–24.


10 See Joseph Hunter, New Illustrations of the Life, etc., of William Shakespeare (London: Nichols, 1845), i, 76–79; Charles I. Elton, William Shakespeare, his Family and Friends
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It was shortly after Shakespeare's removal to the Clink on the Surrey Bankside\(^1\) that the first possible collaboration between the playwright and musician seems to have taken place. In Act v, Scene ii, of _As You Like It_, which was apparently completed by the summer of 1600,\(^1\) there was sung the lyric, "It was a lover and his lass." The same lyric was published at some time during the same year, as No. vi in Morley's _First Booke of Ayres or Little Short Songs_.\(^1\)

This provocative simultaneity has led commentators into the most distressingly divergent paths. They have not even definitely agreed that the words of the lyric are the work of Shakespeare, or of Morley, or of some unidentified poet. Anthologists and the majority of literary critics, such as Tucker Brooke,\(^1\) accept the poem unquestioningly as Shakespeare's. Some scholars, such as Chambers,\(^1\) admits only the probability that it was Shakespeare's invention. Moore holds it "not impossible" that Morley was responsible for the words,\(^1\) and E. H. Fellowes, steeped in the music of the period, flatly denies Shakespeare's authorship, holding it "evident that he was not its actual author."\(^1\) So far this sweeping

\(^{1}\) The first Professorship of Music at Gresham College in Bishopsgate Street was at this time held by the celebrated virtuoso John Bull. See J. F. Bridge, _Twelve Good Musicians_ (London: Kegan Paul, 1920), pp. 1–5. In the same parish lived the numerous Bassano family, prominent in musical annals from 1587 until well on in the seventeenth century; also Giles Farnaby, virginalist and madrigalist. See G. E. P. Arkwright, "Notes on the Parish Registers of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate," in _The Musical Antiquary_, October, 1909, pp. 41–42. John Wilbye, the most accomplished musical stylist of the period, spent at least some of his time in Broad Street Ward nearby. See _The English Madrigal School_, ed. by E. H. Fellowes (London: Stainer and Bell, vol. vi, 1914), pp. iii, vi, xxiii.

\(^{11}\) The first Professorship of Music at Gresham College in Bishopsgate Street was at this time held by the celebrated virtuoso John Bull. See J. F. Bridge, _Twelve Good Musicians_ (London: Kegan Paul, 1920), pp. 1–5. In the same parish lived the numerous Bassano family, prominent in musical annals from 1587 until well on in the seventeenth century; also Giles Farnaby, virginalist and madrigalist. See G. E. P. Arkwright, "Notes on the Parish Registers of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate," in _The Musical Antiquary_, October, 1909, pp. 41–42. John Wilbye, the most accomplished musical stylist of the period, spent at least some of his time in Broad Street Ward nearby. See _The English Madrigal School_, ed. by E. H. Fellowes (London: Stainer and Bell, vol. vi, 1914), pp. iii, vi, xxiii.

\(^{12}\) Chambers, _Shakespeare_, ii, 90. \(^{13}\) Chambers, _Shakespeare_, i, 401.

\(^{14}\) A note on the title page reads: _Imprinted at London in tylle S. Helen's by William Barley, the assigne of Thomas Morley, and are to be sold at his house in Gracious strete. 1600._

\(^{15}\) _Op. cit._, p. 125. \(^{16}\) _Shakespeare_, i, 402.

\(^{17}\) John Robert Moore, "The songs of the public theatres in the time of Shakespeare," _JEGP_, xxviii (1929), 182.

\(^{18}\) _English School of Lutenist Song Writers_, vol. xvi (Morley's First Book of Airs) (London: Stainer and Bell, 1932), pp. iii, 28 n. If Fellowes's conclusion is correct, there would still remain some doubt as to whether the words are to be attributed to Morley or to some other poet. See also note 26.
statement by a historian pre-eminent in the field has been neither sup-
ported and accepted nor seriously challenged. Did Shakespeare help
himself from Morley, or Morley from Shakespeare, or did they work
together in any kind of conference or consultation?

For the text of “It was a lover” there are three important source
documents. The first is the 1623 Folio edition of the play; there was no
earlier Quarto. The second is a manuscript found in the National
Library of Scotland at Edinburgh, dating from some time before 1639.
This contains the lyric together with Morley’s tune, but without his lute
and bass viol accompaniment. That it represents an earlier version of the
words than the Folio text seems to be indicated by the fact that its
words have proved to be identical with those in the unique surviving
copy of Morley’s First Book of Ayres.

The differences between the Folio and the Morley texts of the lyric
are not extensive. The Morley transposes the order of the second and
fourth stanzas of the Folio; it has the obviously correct “ring time” for
the misprint “rang time” of the Folio; for the first line of the Folio
stanza 2, “And therefore take the present time,” it reads, “Then prettie
louers take the time,” which is probably of better Shakespearean quality
in point of style. For “prettie Country folks” in line 3 of stanza 3 of the
Folio, it reads (in line 3 of stanza 2) “prettie Countrie fooles.” Such
textual evidence as we have, therefore, indicates that the Morley version
is probably closer to Shakespeare’s original draft.

Our main problem, however, seems to be a matter of chronology. If
we could accurately date the work of both the poet and the musician
on this song, we could then tell definitely whether Morley applied music
to a lyric from a new play which he had seen at the theatre or read in
manuscript, or whether Shakespeare inserted into a nearly finished play
a song he had just found in a new book of airs. Either answer would
depend on the location of two dates sufficiently separated in time to allow
for a period of composition, either of scenic arrangement by Shakespeare
or of music by Morley.

Now there can be no doubt that Shakespeare wrote his play during the

19 Chambers, Shakespeare, i, 401-402.
20 Formerly the Advocates’ Library. See Warlock, English Ayre, p. 118; R. Noble,
Shakespeare's Use of Song (Oxford, 1923), p. 76 n.
21 The First Booke of Ayres, or little short songs, to sing and play to the lute with the base
viole. Newly published by Thomas Morley, Bachiler of Musicke, and one of the Gent. of her
Maisties Royall Chappel. 1600. The copy is incomplete, ending at the middle of the
fourteenth song. Songs 15-21 are missing and also the two final instrumental numbers, a
pavan and galliard. After many vicissitudes this volume, now in the Folger Library at
Washington, was edited and printed by Dr. Fellowes in 1932, as vol. xvi of The English
School of Lutemist Song Writers (see notes 14 and 18).
spring and early summer of 1600. He could hardly have worked on it earlier, for this was a period as busy as any in his entire career; his production was averaging better than two plays per year, and he had just before completed his *Julius Caesar*. At any rate his manuscript of *As You Like It* had been finished to the point of requiring copyright protection by August 4, on which date its title was entered in the registers of the Stationers’ Company, with the notation “to be staid.”

The title page of Morley’s book is dated simply 1600. Since the title does not appear in the Stationers’ Register, we can only conclude (so far) that it could have appeared at any time between March 25, 1600 and the same date in 1601. This indicates that there could not have been an interval of more than a few months between the work of the dramatist and musician. Fortunately, Morley’s prefatory remarks in his book supply two significant clues. In his address to the reader he mentions “Gods visitation in sicknesse.” For the past three years, indeed, he had apparently been complaining of ill health. More important, in his dedication of the book to Ralph Bosvile, Esquire, he declares these songs “were made this vacation time.” When was Morley’s vacation time?

The only official post from which he could conceivably speak as being on vacation was his position as Gentleman of Her Majesty’s Royal Chapel, which he occupied from 1592 to October of 1602. Now the Chapel Royal was in active service all through the winter. But its members traditionally enjoyed an “auntient tyme of liberty,” extending from the breaking up of the Chapel at a banquet on St. Peter’s day, June 29, to the resumption of full activity on Michaelmas Day, September 29. This period corresponded roughly with the time when the Queen went off on her summer Progresses, leaving most of the singing men and boys of her Chapel behind, particularly those who were old or infirm. Morley’s vacation would therefore seem in all probability to fall in July, August and September of 1600. The time of his work on the lyric in question thus falls surprisingly close to what we can infer as to the date of Shakespeare’s composition of it.

We are now ready to consider Dr. Fellowes’s bold theory that Shakespeare lifted the song bodily from Morley’s book. His play had been completed by August; Morley’s collection (of twenty-three compositions in all) could not have been ready until near the close of his vacation,

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23 He refers to “the solitarie life which I lead (being compelled to keepe at home)” in his *Plaine and Easie Introduction*, page 1 of the address “To the curteous Reader.”
i.e., in September. Unless Morley worked with unbelievable rapidity, finishing all his songs and seeing the volume through the press well before July was over; and unless Shakespeare fairly pounced upon the book with an acquisitive hand the moment it saw the light, this theory seems untenable. The only possibility remaining in this direction is the hypothesis that the song did not appear in the play until possibly years later, and was added from Morley's book some time between 1600 and 1623, to meet a growing taste for song. This "interpolation" theory, hinted at by Noble, again is extremely unlikely, since the lyric contains vital points of similarity to the one found in Lodge's Rosalynde, the source which Shakespeare closely followed for the action of his play. As in Shakespeare, so in Lodge it appears near the close of the story, at the time of the revelation of the disguised heroine's identity (in Shakespeare just before, in Lodge just after, the revelation). Lodge's opening rhyme is "lass" and "grass," Shakespeare's is "lasse" and "passe"; Lodge sings "heigh ho," Shakespeare "with a hey, & a ho"; the subject matter, the spirit and the atmosphere are similar in both. Consequently it is impossible to doubt seriously that Shakespeare used his acknowledged source, and not the song book, and that the words are his. Anthologists may still print them without serious misgivings.

Let us now consider the opposed theory, equally bold, that Morley

Noble, op. cit., p. 76. Dr. Fellowes has kindly supplied an ingenious argument in support of this position, in a letter to the writer, dated July 2, 1938. Referring to the alteration of Morley's arrangement of the stanzas and the juxtaposition of the first two in the Folio without any space between them, he remarks, "It is thought by many that in any case this scene and the song hold up the action rather unduly, even if only two verses are sung. If Shakespeare wrote the whole song (as in Morley) why did he write so many stanzas if he only needed two, as seems indicated, altering the first line of Morley's fourth stanza so as to make it follow better as a second and concluding stanza? The alteration of the order, the alteration of this line, and the spacing of the four stanzas in the Folio all point strongly in my mind to the adaptation of Morley's song by Shakespeare for his purpose in As You Like It. It is also quite possible as an explanation that the song was not included in the play at its first production, but added later, possibly even after Shakespeare's death."

This argument seems doubtful, and its evidence may point in another direction. The jamming together of the two stanzas in the Folio was possibly a typesetter's error; but if it has any significance it might in even greater likelihood indicate that the entire lyric, as it appears in the Morley text, was composed by Shakespeare and sung in the first production of the play; that its compression and alteration took place between 1600 and 1623 as experiences with stage performances seemed to make a speeding-up of the action desirable. Further, if no more than two stanzas were ever used on the stage, how did the whole song get into the Folio? More conclusive evidence seems needed before Shakespeare's authorship of the words can be confidently denied, or before the whole scene can be rejected from the play.

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heard the song at one of the first performances of the play, or read it in manuscript, and proceeded immediately to give it an independent setting. This again would require incredible agility on the part of the ailing composer. He would have been nearly through with his vacation labors before he could see the play; he would have been compelled to take down the words in shorthand at a performance, or to obtain access to a manuscript jealously guarded by the men of the theatre, to dash off his setting in record time, insert it as no. vi in a collection of twenty-three pieces, and see it through the press by the end of the year. This is unlikely in the extreme. Yet he must have used Shakespeare's words.

In view of all this evidence, it seems strange indeed that the most interesting theory of all has not yet been advanced. The conclusion seems inevitable that the song was a joint composition, a collaboration: poem by Shakespeare and music by Morley, worked out in conference between the two and then immediately and almost simultaneously exposed in the play and in the book of airs. The probabilities amount almost to certainty that (1) Shakespeare and Morley were acquainted, (2) Shakespeare composed his lyric late in the spring of 1600, (3) Morley had access to it, with Shakespeare's permission, early in the summer, (4) Morley composed music for it as one of the items in the collection on which he was working, (5) Shakespeare, pleased with the music, and by way of fair exchange for the use of his words, had it produced at the first performance of his comedy.

It needs only to be added that a playwright-producer would naturally be looking for the most competent settings for the stage performances of his lyrics, and that Shakespeare could hardly have failed to be impressed both by Morley's great popularity and by his undoubted success with this song, which is in his most engaging and joyous manner, melodically and rhythmically infectious. And as for Morley's use of Shakespeare's words without giving the poet credit in the printed book, we need only remember that authorship of words was seldom indicated in musical works of the time. The London madrigalists were undoubtedly on casual personal terms with the London poets. One of Weelkes' madrigals refers definitely to convivial meetings at the Mermaid Tavern. And, in the words of Dr. Fellowes, "Nothing could be more probable than that the poets were constantly giving, and being asked for, a few lines of verse suitable for a madrigal, without any thought of perpetu-

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There is little question, then, that “It was a lover and his lass,” as we find it complete today in the Morley book, was the outcome of both friendly and professional intercourse between Shakespeare and the musician.

Before Morley’s 1600 vacation was over, Shakespeare was already at work on his next comedy, *Twelfth Night*, which appeared early the following year and which used a good deal of incidental and lyrical music. Herein also is found an example of a different kind of possible collaborative enterprise with Morley. In Act II, Scene iii, the Clown sings the two-stanza song, “O mistress mine, where are you roaming?”

In 1599 Morley had published a book of twenty-four instrumental pieces, drawn from various sources and including some of his own compositions, under the title of *Consort Lessons*. The first two numbers, a pavane and galliard, are signed by Morley himself; some of the others are known to have been popular at the time both as vocal and as instrumental divertimenti. One of these is the famous “Lachrymae” of Dowland; there is also a version of Dowland’s song, “Can she excuse my wrongs?” Other titles are “Phillips pauin,” probably by Peter Phillips, “Goe from my window,” a popular song of the day, “My Lord of Oxenfords maske,” and “The batchelars delight.” No. XVIII is entitled “O mistress mine.” What is the relationship, if any, between this composition and Shakespeare’s lyric?

The answer would seem to depend to some extent on the closeness with which the tune fits the words in the play. But the comparison is tantalizingly inconclusive. Here is Morley’s tune, the treble viol part:

**Music Examples**

A.

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Note 1} & \text{ Note 2 } \text{ Note 3 } \text{ Note 4 } \\
\text{Note 5} & \text{ Note 6 } \text{ Note 7 } \text{ Note 8 }
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Note 9} & \text{ Note 10 } \text{ Note 11 } \text{ Note 12 } \\
\text{Note 13} & \text{ Note 14 } \text{ Note 15 } \text{ Note 16 }
\end{align*} \]

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The title page of the second edition reads, *The First Booke of Consort Lessons, made by divers exquisite Authors, for size Instruments to play together: vis. the Treble Lute, the Pandora, the Citterne, the Base-Violl, the Flute, and the Treble-Violl. Collected by Thomas Morley, Gentleman, now newly corrected and enlarged. Printed by Thomas Snodham for John Brown... The Assigne of William Barley, 1611. 198 pp. The New York Public Library has issued a copy in score, in “a black and white direct positive contact print of MS. (1932), made by Sydney Beck, from the citterne and bass-violl parts of the 1599 ed., and pandora, flute, and treble-violl parts of the 1611 ed.... Photostat reproduction of 1611 t.-p., dedication, and table of contents.”
It will be seen that the words and tune may be quite successfully wedded up to the word "roaming," for which a single minim or half-note is provided; this must be changed into two crotchets or quarters to suit the text. From this point on there are some further difficulties of adjustment, though they are by no means insuperable. Many attempts at singable versions have been made, with more or less success. Sir Frederick Bridge's second attempt is about the smoothest of the lot, the vocal part of it running as follows:

By comparing the above with the Morley version of the tune, one can readily see how much juggling of verse lines and individual notes is necessary for a demonstration that Shakespeare had this melody in mind for his song. The possibility still remains that words and tune were independent compositions, with a mere coincidence as to title. Pursuit of several lines of evidence will help us discover the probable truth.

In the first place, it cannot be established that the tune itself was Morley's own composition. Like many of the other contents of the

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Consort Lessons, it may have been a popular song of the time, of uncertain authorship. This seems very likely in view of the fact that William Byrd, some time before 1619, wrote a set of variations on it for the virginals.\textsuperscript{65} It was thus apparently common property, whatever its origin might have been.

Did Shakespeare then use this familiar tune, with its familiar words, without change, in his play? This is not possible, for in that case the words would precisely fit the tune. Again, although Shakespeare frequently lifted scraps and snatches of popular song, it was by no means his habit to appropriate entire lyrics without alteration. Finally, Dr. Furness,\textsuperscript{66} on the basis of internal evidence, has declared, "Oxen and wainropes cannot hale me from the belief that this song is Shakespeare's own. Its phraseology, its histrionic quality, its sententiousness... all these proclaim its author to be either Shakespeare—aut Diabolus."

Was Shakespeare's song then composed entirely independently of the Consort Lessons tune? This position is defended by such authorities as Warlock\textsuperscript{37} and Fellowes.\textsuperscript{58} To accept it, however, one would have to entertain a few very unlikely coincidences. There is the identity in title,\textsuperscript{39} the closeness in date between 1599 and 1601, and the evidence, already advanced in this paper, that Shakespeare and Morley had previously been professionally associated. There is the almost clinching coincidence that Shakespeare's words can after all be, and have been by various hands, readily made to fit a slightly modified form of the tune. The mathematical chances are decidedly against a given stanza pattern such as this being suitable to a tune chosen at random.

Adjustments of words to tune, and tune to words, were by no means uncommon at the time. Dr. Fellowes himself has pointed this out, calling attention to the fact that successive stanzas of the same lyric do not always correspond metrically, syllable for syllable, even in the work of Dowland, one of the most meticulous of musical craftsmen.\textsuperscript{40} In the words of the present song, too, the first and second lines of the second

\textsuperscript{65} In the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book ed. by Maitland and Squire (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1894–99), no. lxvi, i, 258–262. The Fitzwilliam MS. was probably written between 1608 and 1619 by the younger Francis Tregian while in the Fleet Prison—see Introduction, vol. i, pp. viii–ix. Bridge presents an additional setting, adapted to Byrd's harmonization as well as his rearrangement of the tune, in his Songs from Shakespeare, pp. 4–6.

\textsuperscript{66} Quoted in Noble, op. cit., p. 81.

\textsuperscript{37} The English Ayre, pp. 120–121.


\textsuperscript{39} There is still another "Mistress mine," no. viii in Morley's First Book of Airs; but this has nothing to do with the present song, its opening line being "Mistress mine, well may you fare," and its tune being entirely different.

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stanza both lack the first and unaccented syllable of the corresponding lines in the first stanza. You cannot sing "What is love" and "Present mirth," note for note, to the tune used for "O mistress mine" and "O stay and hear"; in both places a note must be omitted from the vocal part. If such manipulation is necessary within the lyric itself, whatever tune is used, then manipulation of the tune to fit the whole lyric is more than conceivable.

With two opposing theories again proving themselves unacceptable, we are once more driven to a hypothesis that points to a form of collaboration. The one weakness in the conclusion here suggested is our uncertainty that it was Morley himself through whom Shakespeare became acquainted with this piece of music—but Morley is certainly the likeliest person for that rôle.

To summarize the matter in few words, Shakespeare had heard a popular tune, "O mistress mine," probably in the arrangement devised by his musical friend and co-worker. Having in mind the opening words, the general melodic lilt and the musical atmosphere of the song, he proceeded to compose the lyric we know, giving free rein to his fancy as he did when working on his literary sources. Whereupon Morley very conceivably again entered the picture as a musical journeyman, made the necessary small alterations in his notation, and the piece was ready for the stage.

This hypothesis, although it cannot yet be established beyond some reasonable doubt, at any rate fits all the known facts and is in entire accordance with Shakespeare’s known habits of composition. If we accept it at least tentatively, we are now confronted by a kind of collaboration that is just the opposite of Shakespeare’s procedure in "It was a lover." There the words saw the light first, and the music was added later; here the music came first and the words followed. It is interesting to see Shakespeare using both methods, and thus again displaying flexibility and versatility in his creative procedure.

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A REPLY AND A SYMPOSIUM

Most of us come back to Shakespeare’s songs through the restorations of Sir Frederick Bridge and others—which are, like the restorations made by Victorian architects, largely guesswork. When we approach the subject from the original music, we find only an accidental recurrence of name to indicate that Morley’s instrumental music has any connection with Shakespeare’s song. Even with the alterations which Bridge made
from time to time, the music fits the words rather badly. Bridge drags
some of the syllables (like the first part of “every”) over much of the
gamut, and he arbitrarily shortens the melody to fit the words by
omitting two of the measures which Morley had scored for repetition.
Without Bridge’s alterations the music does not fit at all; e.g., Shake-
spere’s numerous feminine rhymes (the most characteristic metrical
features) could not be sung to the single notes of Morley’s original music.

Since the statement is often made that musical scholars are in dis-
agreement on this question, I have not only examined the writings of
the principal authorities, but I have also written letters of inquiry to
those who are still living. I have been unable to find any recent authority
who does not seem to hold that Morley’s music had originally no relationship
with Shakespeare’s “O mistress mine.”

One of the most eminent musical scholars in the field, the late “Peter
Warlock” (Philip Heseltine), condemned Bridge’s “extremely untrust-
worthy volume of Shakespeare Songs.” Of “O mistress mine” he wrote:
“There is no authority whatever for associating Shakespeare’s poem
with this tune; the words do not even fit the music, which is metrically
of a quite different construction.” Professor Edward J. Dent casts doubt
on the relation between the words and the music of both the songs com-
monly assigned to Morley:

It is still a matter of uncertainty . . . whether ‘It was a lover and his lass’ (As
You Like It) and ‘O mistress mine’ (Twelfth Night) were written by Shakespeare
and set to music afterwards by Morley, or whether Morley’s settings were in
existence before Shakespeare wrote his plays; in any case Morley’s music and
Shakespeare’s words do not agree as satisfactorily as one would expect if Morley
had composed the music for the actual first performance. It is further uncertain
whether the tunes are Morley’s own composition or whether he did no more than
arrange tunes already well known.

Dr. Percy A. Scholes informs me that his old friend Sir Frederick
Bridge “was not a real scholar,” and that the combined judgments of
such scholars as Dr. Fellowes and Philip Heseltine far outweigh Bridge’s
judgment. He concludes, “As you see I strongly incline to believe you
to be right, but I dare not say I have any right to a personal opinion.”

Sir Percy C. Buck writes:

I have discussed the question you raised with my friend Dr Fellowes, and as
we were in entire accord he said he would write. Will you consider I also sign his
letter.

2 Ibid., p. 120.
3 “Shakespeare and Music” in (A Companion to Shakespeare Studies, ed. H. Granville-
4 From a letter to me (Jan. 9, 1938).
He is the real scholar—the first in Europe in such matters—and you may take his word as in accordance with the latest evidence.6

Dr. E. H. Fellowes writes:

In reply to your letter, there is no evidence whatever to show that Morley & Shakespeare “collaborated.” Both lived in St. Helen's Bishopsgate in 1598, when both their names appear in the Subsidy Rolls. Both names were among those that had “affid” (=affidavit) written against them; but the meaning of that is uncertain. However, it is immaterial. As near neighbours they were probably acquainted.

The song “It was a lover” was published by Morley in a set of 21 songs in 1600. As is well known, it comes in “As You Like It”; but this was first printed in the first folio in 1623. There are many variants; and it may be said without hesitation that Morley's text is in every instance better than that of the folio. The text of the folio may have been prepared by someone from faulty memory or it may have got corrupted as passed on from memory in the 23 years. I think that Shakespeare incorporated Morley’s song (not that Morley wrote the words). The whole scene is thought by some to be inserted so as to introduce the song. It does in fact hold up the action. The words were probably older than Morley or Shakespeare. Anyhow, there it is! and Shakespearean scholars, one & all, have entirely ignored the existence of Morley’s text. They did notice a transcription of the melody and the words in a MS. in the National Library of Scotland (formerly the Advocates’ Library) but attached slight importance to it on account of its date (circa 1635); but this MS. consists of a collection of some 36 songs made by some enthusiast in the manner of the time, transcribed from well-known song-books. Fourteen of these are manifestly copied from the song-books of the English lutenists. I have identified these. The Morley song, like the rest, is so collected in this MS., and with one or two exceptions the text is Morley’s.

I wrote to the Literary Supplement of The Times (London) some years ago about the variants as compared with the folio 1623.

As to “O Mistress Mine,” I myself am of opinion that the tune has nothing to do with Shakespeare’s song. I agree, it doesn’t fit. And “Mistress Mine” & similar openings are common & need not refer to the same song. For instance in Morley’s song book “Mistress mine” (No. 8) goes on “well may you fare.” It has often been said that this song is Shakespeare’s (as judged by the 2 words as indexed), and of course that is nonsense. It is quite likely that half a dozen songs were in vogue at this time with a similar opening phrase.

Bridge did not know the exact text of Morley’s “It was a lover.” The only known copy was hidden from the world for many years till it emerged in the Folger Library in Washington D. C. in 1932.

I have edited & published the Morley song-book in 1932 . . . I have also discussed the possible association of Morley & Shakespeare in my introduction to the recent facsimile issue of Morley’s “Plaine & Easie Instruction” (Oxf. U. Press). I may say however, that I must withdraw the explanation of “affid” as

6 From a letter to me (Jan. 11, 1938).
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meaning that such a person appealed. And I have never said that M & S appealed jointly as has been stated recently.

Against the uncritical enthusiasm of Sir Frederick Bridge I have quoted the opinions of his successor as King Edward Professor of Music in the University of London, of the Professor of Music in Cambridge University, of the author of the very recent Oxford Companion to Music, and of the two foremost authorities in this particular field of music. I cannot find, either in the songs themselves or in the considered judgment of competent musicologists, any evidence whatever to show that Shakespeare and Morley collaborated.

John Robert Moore

Indiana University

POSTSCRIPT

Professor Moore's "Reply and Symposium" does not seem to offer any materials which have not already been reviewed in my original discussion. It must be noted also that his authorities wrote their opinions not on my detailed arguments but apparently as answers to categorical queries. None of them had, so far as I know, read my paper before presenting their comments. What evidence they offer is identical with mine. Their conclusions are otherwise, but these need not necessarily be considered infallible under such circumstances.

By way of preventing literary scholars from being impressively misled in the purely musicological field, I must point out that my hypothesis nowhere rests upon the late Sir John Frederick Bridge's opinions as those of acceptable modern scholarship; and it specifically recognizes Dr. Fellowes's pre-eminence in this department. Bridge's conjectural reconstruction of "O mistress mine" is offered as only one of a number of interesting possibilities. And even with regard to the rearrangement of entire phrases, Bridge's practice was not so barbarian nor Victorian as might be supposed; it was in fact established Elizabethan procedure. This very rearrangement Bridge took from the venerable Byrd himself.

A final significant point: Bridge does not "drag" the first part of the word every "over much of the gamut." He uses two notes, minim and crotchet, separated by an interval of a single tone. One could hardly find less of the gamut over which to do a bit of dragging.

Ernest Brennecke, Jr.

Columbia University


1 In a letter to the writer, dated July 2, 1938, Dr. Fellowes remarks, "I have only now had time to read through your paper on Shakespeare and Morley."

2 Byrd's arrangement, structurally identical with Bridge's, may be consulted in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, 1, 258.
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John Robert Moore; Ernest Brennecke, Jr.
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[Footnotes]

10 The Joint 'Appeal' of Morley and Shakespeare
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