

## **“Tonal Strategies and Rhetorical Processes in John Dowland’s Lutesongs: Two Case Studies.”**

**Jeffrey Meyer<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

---

The English Renaissance composer John Dowland is considered the preeminent composer of the lutesong, praised for his musical settings of Elizabethan poetry. This study argues such praise arises from how Dowland complements the poetic strategies found in a poem by employing a similarly designed and structured musical rhetoric, as well as how the composer represents the poem’s central conceit through purely musical means. Dowland’s musical rhetoric is rooted in general rhetorical training of the time and in the concepts articulated by Elizabethan music theorists to describe contemporary elements of tonality. This study employs a new, melodically- based analytical method to discover Dowland’s compositional and rhetorical approach to setting texts. The beauty and effectiveness of his compositions are demonstrated through the detailed study of two of his lutesongs: “Tell me true love” and “Weepe you no more.” Dowland’s compositional strategies of concision and abundance not only mirror the rhetorical strategies of these two poems, but also effectively interpret the poems through large-scale tonal organization and the manipulation of musical space.

---

**Keywords:** Dowland, music theory, rhetoric, lutesong, Elizabethan poetry, tonality

### **1. Introduction**

The English composer John Dowland is often lauded for the elegant and effective blending of music and text he delivers in settings of Elizabethan poetry.<sup>2</sup> Why has his particular musical response to the texts consistently engendered high praise from scholars and performers alike? In this study I will offer an explanation by focusing upon two interrelated aspects of his response. First, Dowland complements the poetic strategies found in a poem by employing a similarly designed and structured musical rhetoric. Second, the composer represents the poem’s central conceit through large-scale tonal organization and the manipulation of musical space.

In short, I will argue that Dowland responds to a poem most emphatically by tonal means, not simply relying on compositional techniques associated with rhythm, meter, and phrasing.

---

<sup>1</sup> Concordia College, 901 8th Street South, Moorhead, Minnesota, USA 56560. E-mail: [meyer@cord.edu](mailto:meyer@cord.edu). Phone: 218-299-4885

<sup>2</sup> See Jorgens (1982), Fischlin (1998), Doughtie (1986), Wells (1984), Toft (1993), and Ing (1969). Doughtie, as a typical example, thus describes Dowland’s ayre “Weepe you no more”: “It is first a beautiful whole, music and poetry balancing and complementing each other” (40).

## 2. Music and Rhetoric

Elise Bickford Jorgens (1982) has suggested the existence of a comprehensive approach toward the English ayre. She addresses the genre partially in the context of rhetoric, arguing that English songwriters of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period employ musical figures analogous to rhetorical figures of style in setting contemporary poetry. But she also claims that Dowland, in particular, surpasses this level of rhetorical practice:

I think it can be said that Dowland's stance would correspond to a ... more inclusive definition [of rhetoric], for it is apparent that he has taken much more than elocution or Delivery into account. His conventions of setting include means comparable even to the figures of invention and the construction of arguments. The most remarkable aspect of Dowland's genius is that his settings are responsive to their texts in multiple layers; not only do they interpret poetry rhythmically and through rhetorical gestures, but on a larger scale, they *represent the whole poem in what is ultimately a purely musical expression* (emphasis mine) (239). Jorgens acknowledges a level of musical rhetoric that occurs at the surface, analogous to elocution, or figures of speech. This is certainly one important way Dowland responds to the text, as will be shown. Figures such as alliteration, antithesis, ellipsis, climax, or personification, to name just a few, are part of classical rhetoric's categories of elocution (style) or delivery, whose purpose is to add "persuasive force to words through ornament, and to make the words effective through beauty and an appeal to emotions" (217).

But Jorgens' "purely musical expression" evokes another kind of musical rhetoric, distinct from musical figures in scope. She suggests a more integrative definition of rhetoric, one which includes classical rhetoric's invention and disposition. Disposition – a particular ordering, arrangement, or distribution – aptly describes the kinds of musical processes and pitch structures I will address here, namely, extended musical figures and more comprehensive aspects of tonal language. Invoking rhetorical constructs helps in conceptualizing the composer's approach toward setting a lyric poem. Indeed, rhetoric supplies an effective language for describing a song's essential features. This approach is appropriate, in part, because Dowland's compositional practice was likely based upon rhetoric; the constitution and training of a musician in Elizabethan England had a strong rhetorical component. Virgil Whitaker (1953) documents the education of Dowland's contemporary, Shakespeare, and contributes valuable insights concerning the kind of study undertaken by an Elizabethan student. Rhetoric was a central pursuit in upper school, where it was applied both in prose and in verse composition.<sup>3</sup> While there is no direct evidence of Dowland's specific grammar school education, it can be safely assumed rhetoric was included.

The composer would not only have been aware of rhetorical processes, but would have developed skills in their application to prose and, most importantly, to verse. It is also likely rhetoric affected more than writing and reading, including other arts, the sciences, and social life. Rhetoric's plasticity enabled it to influence all aspects of musical life, including, but not limited to composition (Trousdale, 2000, 628). Nevertheless, it is still difficult to recognize how rhetorical processes became integral to the creative act in general, and to demonstrate their application to musical processes. This study addresses that difficulty by employing rhetoric as an aid to understanding compositional practice. A rhetorical approach to music criticism is not new to early music scholarship or even Dowland scholarship. Many critics have perceived the way the music imitates the rhetorical devices already at work in the poems.

---

<sup>3</sup> Whitaker (1953) lists several texts Shakespeare and other Elizabethan students would have studied. One example is *Rhetorica ad C. Herennium* (attributed to Cicero), which covered, among other things, the five skills of the orator: invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and pronunciation. See also chapter five, "Rhetoric in the Schools of the Sixteenth Century," in Crane (1937).

They have found musical parallels to such devices as *climax*, *auxesis*, *gradatio*, *quaestium*, *anaphora*, and *articulus*.<sup>4</sup> Even Dowland's contemporaries recognized the relationship between figures of speech, or ornaments, within elocution and musical figures. Henry Peacham (1593a) writes, "Yes, in my opinion no rhetoric more persuadeth or hath greater power over the mind [than music]; nay, hath not music her figures, the same which rhetoric?" (103). He continues by matching rhetorical figures to musical figures: *antistrophe* to revert, *anaphora* to report, *antimetaboles* to counterchange of points, *prosopopoeias* to passionate arts.<sup>5</sup>

Because Peacham limits his discussion of rhetoric to elocution, the musical figures he enumerates are mostly stylistic and small-natured in detail – melodic motifs, consecutive intervals, durations of pitches, and the like. But this application is only a peripheral concern in this study, since I seek to determine the rhetorical use of music at the more extensive level of tonal structure, a use analogous to the rhetorical categories of invention and disposition.<sup>6</sup>

I believe Dowland conceived of tonal structures rhetorically by specifically employing these two categories. Peacham's statements on music and rhetoric imply that music has its own figures existing apart from those in the text, yet most scholars of Dowland's work only treat musical figures as they directly relate to the words. Dowland wrote music which is responsive to, but not fully dependent on the poem for meaning. His songs are complete rhetorical expressions in their own right, fulfilling the definition of rhetoric by presenting ideas in clear, persuasive language and exhibiting beauty in the art of discourse.

The English theorist Charles Butler (1636) seemed to recognize that music is rhetorical at a level beyond elocution. In *The Principles of Musik* he addresses the maintenance of the air, or mode, a theoretical construct which involves the song's temporal process (entrance, progress, and close). Butler presents the maintenance of the air within the section entitled 'Formaliti,' categorized under the heading 'Ornament.' Formaliti, in fact, is called the *Ornamentum*

*Ornamentorum* – the Ornament of Ornaments. Even though ornaments typically refer to elocution, the implication in *The Principles of Musik* is that tonal processes are part of the formal organization of the oration, or the separate rhetorical category of disposition.

Gregory Butler (1980) interprets this facet of the treatise in his study of musico-rhetorical relationships in seventeenth-century England: Butler includes [formality] here [under ornament], realizing that it is a rhetorical-musical element. . . . Its inclusion under ornaments is evidence of the almost indissoluble associations between rhetoric and ornamentation in England. That it is included at all and presented as the most important of the ornaments is proof of the shift of rhetoric and of rhetorical-musical application away from the Renaissance concept of rhetoric as embellishment. Rhetoric in England entered the domain of logical structure and became a principle preoccupation of encroaching rationalism (63).

---

<sup>4</sup> Those scholars who have studied the relationship between music and rhetoric, and take as one of their musical subjects the English lutesong repertoire include Horner (1998), Toft (1993), and Wells (1984).

<sup>5</sup> Throughout my study Peacham's works are cited as much as it is helpful. Though not the only authority on rhetoric during John Dowland's lifetime, his works are nevertheless still the best resource for contemporary understandings of the figures in this musical context

<sup>6</sup> Steven Krantz (1989) employed this kind of approach in his study of Josquin, specifically studying the rhetorical use of mode.

For the Elizabethan and Jacobean musician, rhetoric was more than embellishment and included aspects aimed at order and logic – those aspects equitable to disposition. The ordering of pitches, best described as tonal language, is as much a part of musical rhetoric in Dowland's England as are the musical figures within elocution that Peacham and others mention.

Thus, Charles Butler's concept of maintaining the air (or mode) is a rhetorical process: the order and logic of how an air's tonal characteristics are projected and applied, and how its musical space is manipulated within a song. Dowland's lute songs are fine examples of this fundamentally musical rhetoric.

### 3. Analytical Application of English Music Theory

Elizabethan theorists used at least three terms to refer to the pitch collection in which a song is composed: air, key, and tone. In her work on sixteenth-century English music theory, Jessie Ann Owens (1998) has a lengthy and thorough discussion of these terms, where she groups them all under the rubric "tonalities" (216-230). While this study would not suffer by using key or tone instead of air, I have chosen to use air because key and tone carry greater risk of confusion with other theoretical definitions of those terms from different times and places, and air best captures the deeper understanding of tonality that is important to a rhetorical analysis of Dowland's lute songs. English music around 1600 is based upon a tonal system of four airs, identified by the solmization syllable on which each air is centered. In the context of the one-flat scale, where C=Ut, the four airs begin on *Ut*, *Re* (C), *Fa* (F), and *Sol* (G) (see figure 1). Approximately forty percent of Dowland's lute songs are in *Sol*, with the majority of these centered on G. (*Sol* songs can also be centered on D or C, as part of the no-flat or two-flat scale, respectively.) The particular characteristics of this air will become clearer as we discover how Dowland creates musical structures within this air.

As Elizabethan theorists describe the air, they focus on melodic movements. As one example, noted earlier, Charles Butler describes the maintenance of the air in relation to the entrance, progress, and close of musical ideas. Applying Butler's ideas analytically requires paying attention to the beginnings and endings of the melodic ideas in a song, and secondarily to the harmony (ies) that support these melodic ideas. In order to describe Dowland's tonal strategies I have chosen to particularize the features of the air through a melodically derived analytical tool – the gesture.<sup>7</sup> As melodic reductions, gestures encapsulate Dowland's compositional process and elucidate the essential pitches within the airs. The ascending and descending gestures in Dowland's *Sol* songs are shown in figure 2.

Labels identify the boundary pitches of the gestures – the important beginning and ending pitches of the melodic movement. A slash (or arrow) separating the two numbers represents the direction of movement. (Gestures that maintain the same pitch from start to finish are also designated with an upward slash/arrow, since these gestures seem to be functionally related to ascending gestures.) In figures 4, 5, and 7, each gesture within the song (or song section) is bracketed and labeled. The pitches comprising the gestures have larger heads and/or stems. As illustrated in these figures, gestures can describe melodic movement of just a few notes, such as a movement that occurs at a surface level (the very beginning of either song, for example). But they can also detail inherent melodic movement at more extensive levels, even movements covering an entire section or song. Such an example is the 3↘1 setting an entire closing couplet (figure 5). Of course, gestures also portray movements that occur between these two extremes, most commonly covering the length of a phrase or textual line.

<sup>7</sup> Though developed for this study, this analytical method resembles those of a handful of early music analysts, most notably Judd (1992)

## 4. Case Studies

### 4.1 "Tell me true love"

To demonstrate Dowland's tonal strategies and rhetorical processes, I have chosen two representative examples from *Sol*: "Tell me true loue," from *Pilgrimes Solace* (1612) and "Weepe you no more," from *The Third Booke of Songs* (1603).

Before examining how Dowland responds to the text of "Tell me," I will briefly consider some of the poem's rhetorical and poetic strategies and offer an interpretation of its central conceit based in part on Daniel Fischlin's perceptive analysis (1998, 184-190). The anonymous poet of this verse (figure 3) employs a number of both smaller and larger figures of speech. In the second and third lines of the first stanza, the poet makes use of *commoratio*, the repetition of a point several times in different words, according to Henry Peacham.<sup>8</sup> The related words in these lines are hypothetical answers to the initial line's question of where love's being can be found: in thoughts, words, vows, promise-making, reasons, looks, and passions. The author also utilizes *epanaphora*, the repetition of one word in the beginning of diverse clauses – in this case, the 'in' that ties together the separate sources from which elusive love may arise. The poet locates these figures within the larger device of *auxesis* – a gradual increase in intensity of meaning. It becomes increasingly clear that Love's being is not found in any place thus yet mentioned, for the question persists throughout the couplet and remaining stanzas.

Fischlin interprets this poem in the context of the figure of *metalepsis*, seen here in the repetition of material and concepts, their displacement in the course of the poem, and their resulting transformation. In response to the opening question of the poem, Fischlin suggests that "the reiteration of concepts, the parallels between the first two stanzas, and the dense rhetorical patterning of these first two stanzas energize the metaleptic process of the poem, as the poem localizes love by a statement of where it is not to be found" (186). While *metalepsis* is difficult to define, Fischlin's statement elsewhere is helpful: "[*Metalepsis* is a] persuasive and characteristic . . . figure for the movements and displacements associated with repetition, which contribute to the lyric's effects of rhetorical depth and copiousness and the coincident affects associated with such depth and copiousness" (172). For example, Fischlin perceives the second stanza as "dependent on the first, using the same matrix of words (such as 'thoughts,' 'words,' 'vowes,' and 'promises') in a different rhetorical figuration in order to increase their significative appeal through repetition." The third line of stanza two continues the parallel stanzaic developments by introducing the reason/passion conflict, while the fourth line of stanza two parallels the fourth line of stanza one in its assertion that love is never firmly set in either of the sexes.

"The rhetorical interdependence between the two stanzas is particularly evident in line eleven, in which the incremental figure of *auxesis* is used to answer indirectly the question posed in the concluding line of stanza one." Furthermore, he observes how the couplets that end each of the four stanzas "summarize the poem's developments and displace the reader from the central question ('where shall I seek thy [true love's] being') to the final *ecphonesis* ('O happy Loue')" (186). The couplets serve as a device "that permits repetition and summary, the crucial structuring elements in lyric that I associate with its metaleptic effect." Specific tropes undergo "rhetorical displacement and the significative transformation" as they are reiterated through the text.

---

<sup>8</sup> The definitions of the figures in this section are based on Peacham's definitions found in *The Garden of Eloquence*: *commoratio* (152), *epanaphora* (41), and *auxesis* (167).

In the end, repetition, along with the resulting displacement and transformation, become an “illusion of plenitude and copiousness that in turn structures the affective discursive play of the poem” (187).

Dowland complements these poetic strategies with a similarly conceived musical rhetoric. At one level, a matching of figures of speech with analogous musical figures occurs often, as noted at the time by Peacham in *The Compleat Gentleman*: “Hath not music her figures, the same which rhetoric?” (103). Yet a higher level of complementarity occurs with regard to far-ranging tonal strategies.

While the figure-to-figure parallels are often more audible because they are located on the musical surface, it is the strategy-to-strategy parallels that carry more expressive potential, even though they are also more disguised. To establish how Dowland’s tonal strategies resemble the poetic strategies of the text, it is necessary to examine the composer’s creation of a purely musical expression that is rhetorically nuanced even apart from the text. Figure 4 illustrates the setting of the quatrain, and figures 5 the concluding setting of the couplet. The opening notes of “Tell me” introduce G as the key-note. But after reiterating the G on “true loue,” Dowland intentionally avoids a strong presentation of the pitch until the song’s conclusion – a common strategy for the composer, but done more emphatically here. Over the first three lines he effectively delays movement to the key-note by reiterating 2 and moving away from a G toward a D-centered pitch complex which supports A, the second degree. This movement toward a secondary pitch area, accompanied by an increasing amount of pitch use outside the key, prolongs the second degree while sustaining interest by changing the context in which that pitch is heard. G is established as the key-note in the opening notes.

But with two different harmonic cadences closing the next two phrases, and with accidentals added to both the upper and lower parts, D as a center and A as a related secondary pitch rise in importance. E-flat, important in the first phrase’s cadence, is absent from the remainder of the first section and replaced by E-natural, while B-natural and C-sharp lead more potently into D. This 2 ↗ 5 gesture, followed by 5 ↘ 2, doubly highlights the fourth of a D-centered tonality (A up to D). The second phrase, then, intensifies a movement away from G that began with the close of the first phrase. A 5 ↘ 1 on 5, setting the third phrase (“In reasons, looks, or ...”), suggests the D-centered tonality even more by engaging the fifth (the primary definer of mode) on D and employing a D chord that includes a flat third. The 5 ↘ 1 on 5 does not, however, definitively move to a new key-note on D, for the cadence is interrupted with a rest in the melody between “looks” and “or,” and the cadence resolves somewhat deceptively from a sonority built on A to one on B, supporting the melodic D. In the second half of the phrase Dowland presents the two divisions of the D to D octave, first highlighting the G on “passions” and then reiterating A, with the descent from D down to A at the close of the phrase.

Over the first three phrases, Dowland creates a sense of ambiguity and unsettledness through the changing tonal structure, depicting themes present within the poem itself, e.g., “thoughts unseen and words disguised,” “in neither sex is true Love firmly set,” “believe not ... put trust in neither,” etc. The shifting of tonal structure embodied in these first phrases aptly reflects the tensions within the poem. The reiteration of a single pitch, here A, is likened to the figure of speech found in these first lines – *commoratio*. Perhaps even *epiphora*, “a figure which endeth diverse clauses still with one and the same word” and the complementary figure of *epanaphora*, discussed earlier, is an appropriate description of the reiteration of A at the end of the first three phrases. The level to which Dowland sustains A is striking. He not only closes the first three phrases on that pitch, but begins the second and third phrases with it, employing consecutive 2 ↗ 2 gestures and deferring melodic movement downward to 1.

By resembling *auxesis* – a gradual increase in intensity of meaning – this musical construction mirrors the poem's construction. The reiteration of the second degree is one of Dowland's primary tonal strategies in this piece and is unique among *Sol* songs. The high expectation for G renders the 5 ↘ 1 concluding the first section as a closure, for the descent from 5 happens quickly, with only three notes instead of five given importance: 5, 2, and 1. Furthermore, only these three pitches find support with separate bass notes. Dowland applies just enough closure to end the quatrain and adhere to the formal demands of the poem, but not enough to achieve a fulfilling and effective arrival on the key-note. The final section of the song, corresponding to the couplet, is one of Dowland's most remarkable moments in his lutesongs. In the course of the first phrase he iterates all three of the functionally open melodic pitches – 5, 7, and 2 – by way of simultaneously occurring descending gestures from 3 (illustrated by the stacked gestures at the beginning of figure 5.)

Through these gestures Dowland avoids resolution on G, most often through reiteration of the A; even the raised seventh degree setting 'living' does not immediately resolve to 1, despite the strong tendency to do so and a bass movement (from 5 to 1) that would support it. The tonal strategy applied over the quatrain, a deferment of closure on G, is renewed, repeated, and extended in the couplet. The final phrase quickly ascends from 1 to 5 before beginning an expansive descent back toward the key-note. This 5 ↘ 1 descent begins quite conventionally, a *romanesca*-like pattern supporting the first four notes of the reduced gesture (see the second half of figure 5). But after arriving on 2, setting "why," Dowland deflects closure on G and extends the phrase by moving the bass up to the lowered sixth degree, from D to E-flat. The bass eventually moves back to 5, and 2 is regained in the melody at "expel" before arriving on G at the song's final chord. The extension of the second degree in this final phrase recalls the now familiar tonal strategy and creates further anticipation. The pause on 2 (between "why" and "expel") is likened to the rhetorical gesture of *aposiopesis*, "maintaining silence," where the speaker leads up to a key word until his listeners have it clearly in mind, but then stops (Peacham, 1593b).

As such, Dowland leads up to closure on the key-note with the strong ascent to 5 followed by the gradual and extended descent towards 1; this goal of arrival on the key-note is clearly in mind for the listener. But Dowland stops the descent with literal silence in the melody and continues only after a flourish and reiteration of 2. Greater reduction of the entire couplet reveals two different paths toward closure on the key-note. The first is an extended 3 ↘ 1, as illustrated in the third system's large note heads of figure 5. The third degree at the beginning of the section eventually moves down to the second by the end of the first phrase, only after moving to two other open degrees (5 and 7). Dowland then extends the second degree through the subsequent ascent, descent, and deflection which follow. The final sonority of the song, with the key-note in the melody, completes the 3 ↘ 1. The second and separate reduction uncovers a quite different path toward the end. Instead of moving downward from 3 to begin the section, the melody ascends from 3, through 4, (setting "living"), and on to 5 (3 ↗ 5), preparing a strong 5 ↘ 1 descent to finish the song. Though these two reductions reveal different paths toward closure, it is not necessary to choose analytically between them.

Rather, the two movements toward the key-note work simultaneously, as a means of advancing toward G by distinct means and through slightly divergent spaces. The two together add a certain expressive weight to the finish, balancing the considerable avoidance of the key-note and the prolongation of the second degree that had occurred to this point. The second path to the end – 3 ↗ 5 followed by 5 ↘ 1 – is gesturally identical to the notes setting the first words of the ayre.

When Dowland sets these four words, "Tell me true loue," with a 3-4-5-1 melodic group, he not only outlines the primary sonority of the song (a flat third triad built on G), but anticipates two other occurrences of this pattern. The two extended gestures over the couplet, just discussed, is one of them, and the other spans the last line of quatrain, apparent at an intermediate level of reduction (the end of figure 4). Here Dowland sets the first part of the line, "In men on earth" with a brief 3 ↗ 5, followed in the second half of the line, "or women's minds partaking," with the extended fifth degree descending to 1.

The separation of the 3-4-5-1 pattern into two parts echoes the two segmental gestures that began the song (that is, a very brief 3 ↗ 5 followed by an equally brief 5 ↘ 1). In addition to the connection to the opening, the separation of the two gestures at the end of the quatrain helps elucidate the poem's meaning and syntax, differentiating two more areas of the search for Love's being (men, then women) and drawing attention to the two persons between which love exists.

This melodic motto of 3 ↗ 5 ↘ 1 thus occurs three times in "Tell me": a sparse occurrence covering the first half-line, a phrase gesture on the fourth phrase, and a multiphrase manifestation over the entire closing couplet. Together, these three account for nearly two-thirds of the song. Dowland uses the motto as a unifying device, audible to the listener, even in extended form. His repetition and transformation of the motto over the course of the song highlight the song's primary space – the fifth from G to D – and shape it into a distinctive property of "Tell me:" an ascent through the upper third and a descent through the fifth. The preceding analysis is meant to explicate the musical beauty inherent in so many of Dowland's lute songs, showing how the composer has used the character of the air for musically expressive ends and crafted a tonal structure that is efficient, effective and exquisite.

Perhaps this is sufficient for discovering the meaningfulness of the lutesong, but deeper meaning arises from knowing how Dowland's tonal strategies intersect with the larger poetic strategies of the text. In the case of "Tell me true loue," the play between conciseness and abundance exhibited in the music, as seen in his succinct use of the 3 ↗ 5 ↘ 1 motto and his prolonged application of the second degree, is also central to the genre of the ayre's poetics. Daniel Fischlin observes: The predominant literary characteristics that define the lute song may be grouped under the rubric of *brevitas*: the genre's condensed formal structures, concise expression, and "small proportions" are at the core of its aesthetic. At the same time, the rhetorical dominance of *brevitas* is opposed by *exergasia*, a rhetorical figure that repeats the same thought in many different ways. Repetition leads to "copiousness" and to the related figure of *metalepsis* or *transumptio*, defined by John Smith [1657] as "divers Tropes . . . shut up in one word." The ayres' opposition between epigrammatic concision and copious expression is the cornerstone of the literary interest that its lyrics had for composers (50-51). Dowland responds to the play between concision and abundance in the poem by creating similarly structured musical forms through similarly conceived tropes.

Dowland is concise and straightforward, focusing primarily on only two tonal features in "Tell me:" the second degree and the three-note motto. The composer also infuses the entire song with repetitions, dislocations, and transformations of these two. For example, as the second degree is continually reiterated throughout the song, Dowland dislocates and transforms that pitch by placing it in different contexts, including the various gestures emphasizing the degree and the subtle shift to the D-A division of the musical space. Dowland also repeats the other feature – the 3 ↗ 5 ↘ 1 pattern – throughout most of the piece. In addition, it is transformed, not by appearing in different gestural contexts, but by moving through a range of structural levels from the surface melody to the background of a section. His complementary tonal strategies of concision and abundance are decidedly rhetorical, developing from the same principles that governed the poet's writing.



Cumulative strategies appeal to the emotions above the intellect. Edward Doughtie (1986) suggests that the tendency of these songs is “to hover about a central idea rather than to develop an argument,” implicitly recognizing the strategies of concision and abundance in the music as well as the poetry (to which he is primarily speaking) (37).

The stacking of gestures, the two-pronged path to the end, and the recurrence of the refrain every stanza, within the repetitions of the stanzas themselves (all essentially metaleptic in nature) give rise to the density of the music and the pronounced effect of the refrain. Additionally, Dowland calls attention to the refrain by explicitly scoring it for parts. Dowland’s musical expression, as persuasive and rhetorically nuanced as it is on its own, clearly maintains strong connections to the poet’s rhetorical strategies. This does not imply the music is of necessity dependent upon the text, but that each springs from similar expressive ideals. The music essentially parallels the larger figures found in the poem, but poetic and musical rhetoric combine to create a stronger effect than either is capable of on their own. Fischlin summarizes this idea aptly when he suggests “The refrain/couplet thus serves as a combined musico-literary structure that permits repetition and summary, the crucial structuring elements in lyric that I associate with its metaleptic effects” (187). While Dowland’s tonal strategies are responsive to the poetics in ‘Tell me’ specifically, and to the range of poetic strategies typical of the lutesong in general, the musical expression also embodies the composer understands of the poem’s central meaning – the search for the seat of true Love.

The opening line of the lyric asks a question toward Love, a question which persists throughout the whole of the poem. This question, “Where shall I seek thy being,” cadences on the second degree at the end of the first phrase, and Dowland carries forward the questioning with the abundant and persistent use of 2 throughout most of the song. Using the second degree to highlight an ongoing question is meaningful, since the second degree acts as a tonal foil against the key-note. Significantly, the key-note’s initial appearance corresponds with the words “true Love” (a fine example of the trope of *prosopopoeia*). Dowland adroitly sets this personified Love on the pitch G, and love is linked at this moment with that pitch. The composer’s intent of amplifying the link between the key-note and love is clear; no other *Sol* song so clearly outlines the defining musical space of the air (the fifth from G to D, marked through the opening 3 ↗ 5 ↘ 1 motto) or reiterates the key-note so forcefully at the beginning. The search for Love’s being in the poem becomes the search for the key-note G in the music and Dowland creates a tonal structure that consistently reiterates the second degree and seeks the key-note in both the first and second sections, emphasizing the singularity of the quest for Love’s seat.

#### 4.2 “Weepe you no more”

Diana Poulton (1982) regards “Weepe you no more” (figure 6) as one of “the most beautiful of all Dowland’s song.” She notes how “he has freed himself from all conventions of word-painting, and relies on the purely musical perfection of each phrase to express the words” (283). Poulton’s observations echo Elise Bickford Jorgen’s statement, quoted earlier, that Dowland represents poems with a purely musical expression. As will be shown, the composer not only writes a beautiful song, but responds rhetorically to the poem by closely attending to metrical form and syntax, as well as elegantly portraying the poem’s themes and images. Dowland respects the metrical form and syntax of the poem, as is typical of his approach to the genre. In “Weepe you no more” he adheres to the caesura in the opening line by setting the first four syllables to a very brief 5 ↗ 5 while setting the remainder of the line with a 5 ↘ 2 (see figure 7). Dowland then supports the close textual connection between the first and second lines through two means.

First, only a short rest occurs between the lines, compared to the break found between lines two and three. This complements the rhyme scheme by linking the first two lines together while separating them from the following pair with which they rhyme. Second, Dowland joins the first and second lines through a gesture. "What need you flowe so fast" is set with a 5 ↗ 5 gesture, giving the line independence while linking it to the first through a multiphrase 5 ↗ 5. The composer begins to delineate the metrical form and rhyme scheme, while also carefully following the syntax of the poem. The emphasis on 5 in the first two lines begins a multiphrase 5 ↘ 1 over the entire section.

Dowland starts to move downward from the fifth degree in the third line and employs a 3 ↘ 1 over the final phrase to close the quatrain and complete the descent. By musically pairing the first two lines, which contain the fifth degree, and the last two lines of the quatrain, which contain the descending movement, Dowland highlights the abab rhyme scheme of the poem's first half. The gestural parallel between lines 1 and 3 (descents with similar melodic contours) further supports the poetic structure. The entire section represents a well-crafted descent in the way it spans an entire poetic structure, links four phrases together, and defines the essential musical space of the *Sol* air. The ascent beginning the second section, setting "But my sunnes heau'nly eyes," could be construed as word-painting. But Poulton correctly discerns that "the voice rises, as might have been expected, more to balance the preceding descending phrase than in deference to convention [of word-painting]" (284).

As such, Dowland balances the first half descent with a 2 ↗ 5 ascent back to the beginning pitch, followed by a lingering on 5 resembling that in the first section. This balancing is not only of ascent to descent, but of musical space, by rising back to the top of the previous space, reconfirming that pitch, and transversing the fifth that serves as core in *Sol*. In all these practices Dowland enlists a musical form of *antithesis*, juxtaposing contrasting ideas in balanced phrases. The application of this rhetorical device not only highlights the ascending and descending movements, but also increases the listener's awareness of the musical space. The effect of the ascent, which like most ascents in Dowland functions as a means of opening up musical space and anticipating descents, is amplified by this device and the reiteration of 5 in the subsequent 5 ↗ 5. The musical contrast at the beginning of the second section is not only motivated by a desire to produce a balanced expression, but by a shift within the poem. The conjunction "but" alters the progression of the poem, introducing an idea in opposition to what has gone before. In this case the opposition is of mild contrast, and the musical variance is consequently more subtle. The ascending gesture and musical *antithesis* highlight the conjunction and anticipate the statement to follow.

This relationship also holds true in the second stanza, where the consequent idea is set up with "then." Composers usually wrote with only the first stanza in mind, so either Dowland read both stanzas together as he composed, or the poem was written so well that the parallel stanzaic structure allowed it to be easily set to music. Both Edward Doughtie (1986) and Catherine Ing (1969) call attention to the excellence of this particular poem and to an accomplished poet's adeptness at writing stanzas meant to be sung to the same music. Ing writes: The repeating tune of most airs made the sensitive poet acutely aware of arrangements of stress, so that he became capable, as here, of repeating the most complex and subtle of syllabic structures. . . . Air poetry could take a phrase that might seem to be dictated entirely by needs of logic or emotion, and treat it as a model on which to mould another, following it in every artless detail (135).

While the poet has certainly carefully crafted this poem with the idea of singing in mind, Dowland has just as carefully crafted a music that responds to both stanzas structurally and, as we will see, in terms of the whole poem's conceit. The setting of the poem's first six lines shows Dowland's persistent interest in the more extensive poetic strategies of concision and abundance postulated by Fischlin and exhibited in "Tell me true loue."

A single pitch, this time the fifth degree, is reiterated in diverse gestural contexts (5↘2, 5↗5, 2↗5, 5↘1, etc.). As a group, the fifth and second degrees account for most of the gestural boundary pitches. This focus on a single pitch and the use of a multi-pitch group resembles the strategies Dowland employs in “Tell me,” though the 5-2 group is not as persistent as the 3↗5↘1 motto. In miniatures such as the lute songs, it is necessary to choose a single topic or two and focus on them throughout, in order to create a coherent expression, both musically and poetically. Dowland follows the ascent to and perpetuation of 5 that opens the second section with one of the most expressive passages in his lute songs. A sweeping descent through the entire range of the air sets the final lines of the poem, seamlessly constructed with little or no indication of the line break. The textual connections between the lines (“lies sleeping” occurs in both) prompt Dowland to treat these final lines as a single unit and to articulate that wholeness with a long descent. The 8↘5 phrase gesture that sets this first of the two final lines is hardly noticeable as a distinct unit. The fluid rhythm of the melody over both lines, represented as a somewhat regular set of alternating longer and shorter durations that carefully follows the rhythm of the text, also contributes to the perception of a single, longer phrase.

The beginning of this descending gesture in the melody echoes the lute accompaniment – two octaves above the bass descent (figure 7) and a fourth above a descent in the lute’s treble line (not notated in the figure). These echoing acts as a trope, another indication of the broad copiousness within this and other ayres. These multiple and parallel descents add to the effectiveness of the solo line, a type of *synathoismes*, a piling up of adjectives. Fischlin suggests this is essentially a metaleptic procedure, or movements and displacements associated with repetition (172). In addition, until this descent the fifth degree served as the essential upper boundary of the space, strengthened not only by the repetition of this pitch within different gestural contexts, but also by the upper neighbor function of the E-flat. So when the melody rises to the eighth degree, it breaks through this upper boundary, opening up the space and increasing the expressive potential of the line. The ending of this line would likely surprise a listener, for it is the only *Sol* song which concludes on the raised seventh degree, with support by 5 in the bass, and one of only three which do not finish melodically on the first degree.

Furthermore, *Sol* songs, particularly those in *The Third Booke of Songs*, typically do not even close an internal phrase on the raised seventh degree. Its appearance is unforeseen and is likened to the rhetorical figure of *paraprosdokian*, an unexpected ending of a phrase or series. The ending remains open and does not reach tonal closure. Why did Dowland choose to end “Weepe you no more” on this pitch and with such a long descent? Certainly it is musically arresting, but the reason may arise more from the composer’s desire to embody the poem’s meaning. Both Edward Doughtie (1986) and Robert Toft (1993) view one major theme of “Weepe you no more” as the reconciling effect of sleep. Doughtie, in particular, suggests the two stanzas are carefully matched poetically to bring about this reading: In juxtaposing the two stanzas, the music produces a phenomenon that is possible only in strophic song.

After a few hearings, the listener may hear echoes of the first stanza in his memory as the second is sung, which heightens the resolution offered in the second stanza. “Sleep is a reconciling” corresponds to the opening line [“Weepe you no more, sad fountains”] and “look how the snowie mountaines,/ heav’ns sunne doth gently waste” in the first stanza becomes “Dothe not the sunne rise smiling,/ When faire at ev’n he sets” in the second (132-33). Toft suggests the repetition (*epizeuxis*) embedded in the final lines of both stanzas is a means of emphasizing the reconciling effect that sleep has on a troubled mind (22). Reconciling sleep is one context that can elucidate the final phase of the song. With this in mind, it may be helpful to imagine the words and music of the final lines as intending to bring sleep upon the listener. The rhythm and sounds of the words convey a rocking effect, enhanced by the textual repetitions.

Dowland acknowledges the textual repetition already present in these two lines and adds even more: "That nowe lie sleeping, that nowe lie sleeping,/ Softly, softly, now softly lies sleeping." Dowland's additional repetitions effectively stretch the two lines, enabling the lengthy descent that occurs in the melody. The interior of the musical line also includes repetition, for the pattern of descending fourth and ascending third continues throughout the phrase. At this crucial moment in the ayre, Dowland applies what is best described as *exergasia*, in which the same thought is repeated in several different configurations: the recurring pattern of intervals, the multiple parallel descents, the nearly replicated pattern of rhythmic durations, and even the repeated sounds issuing from the word repetition. Fischlin's description of this trope as it affects lyrics is also germane in describing the music of the ayres, particularly at this specific point: The trope allows the displacement of a relatively static idea to create a cumulative effect that gives the semblance of interpretive depth. . . . This technique is evident in the obsessive reiterative patterns that occur in the ayres, as well as in the ayres' pervasive use of rhetorical figures that amplify.

Doughtie's comments on *exergasia* confirm its metalaptic properties, by stressing the development of central ideas or tropes not as part of an argument but rather as part of a "cumulative" affective strategy, whose appeal is to the emotions, not the intellect (171). Dowland relies on this rhetorical strategy at this point precisely because it provides interpretive depth and because of its cumulative effect. The repetition and accumulation direct the music downward and enable a focus on a significant goal – the closing of both the stanza and the poem. In addition, we not only hear this descent and close twice (once for each stanza), but the final quatrain is repeated in performance. The last two lines function quite naturally as the cumulative structure of refrain. The final descent and its close on 7 conform to the poetic content in a number of ways. Generally, the musical construction suggests a dropping off into sleep or a reconciling mode. The dropping melodic line portrays the almost physical sensation of moving into sleep, slowly losing focus and dropping into a more relaxed state. One does "fall" to sleep, after all. Additionally, falling into a reconciling sleep, as differentiated from a restless sleep, is effortless; musical descents generally feel effortless. The tension is greatest at the top of the range, particularly after the breakthrough from below. But as the line descends, the tension decreases and the music relax.

The act of falling asleep seldom happens abruptly, and the line between being awake and sleeping is difficult to clearly define. The process is continuous, matched by an uninterrupted melody that includes no break between the two final lines of text and durations of notes that capture a sense of fluid regularity without meter. As the visual image of sinking down into slumber is evoked by the drop in melodic line, the end result of the descent is sleep itself. Dowland suggests sleep with an anomaly in *G-Sol* songs – a tonally open ending. The descent into sleep is a movement from one realm of human activity into another, that other represented by the lower seventh degree, positioned as it is outside the norms for the air. In addition, an open cadence is less abrupt than full closure, for the latter effectively stops tonal movement because the goal has been achieved. In order to emulate the subtle shift into slumber, Dowland ends in a position which does not sound like an ending. In fact, the descent passes by the key-note, as if one enters sleep unaware of the immediate surroundings. Sleep and the resulting reconciliation eliminates, or at least postpones the tears that result from grief, sorrow, and pain.

In Dowland's lute songs, weeping and its associated emotions are linked to a particular area of musical space. The space below the fifth degree, particularly from the third degree down to below the key-note takes on this character, partly because of its lower range and partly because it is common to a group of *Sol* songs with texts that display the controlling power of grief, sorrow, and/or tears. This group of songs utilize the lowest range possible in *Sol* – between the upper and lower fifth degrees. There are thus clear associations of space with poetic content: the space below the fifth degree down to below the key-note represents themes of sorrow and tears. The implications for the lute songs, including "Weepe you no more," are significant.

When the final lines break through the upper fifth degree boundary at their beginning, they are not only expressive in the sudden explosion into the upper range, but they are breaking through the confinements of sorrow and tears, overcoming the debilitating effect such emotions and states of mind have on the human soul. The phrase that follows this moment is freely flowing and expressive of the reconciliation gained. Though “Weepe you no more” generally concerns the reconciliatory nature of sleep, questions remain regarding the poem. Who is weeping? Who is sleeping? One possible interpretation is that sleep has not come to the poem’s speaker, and the descriptions of sleep are directed only at the “she” of the second stanza. He is awake; she is sleeping. Peace has come to her, but not to him. Therefore, the situation is not as resolved as it first appeared. Reconciliation and healing may not have come to both parties, though there is the hope that it will come when she wakes. If this is how Dowland read the poem, it helps explain why the final cadence is left open. The ending does not reach closure in order to depict the unresolved nature of the speaker and generate an effect of uncertainty and struggle, instead of resolution and rest. The interpretation of the final descent and cadence need not be limited to only a single option, though, for Dowland in all likelihood simultaneously represents the reconciliatory nature of sleep and the conflict of remaining awake. Music is uniquely able to facilitate these kinds of concurrent readings of a poem, and Dowland has crafted a rhetorically sensitive setting that might easily match the poetic text in multiple ways.

## 5. Conclusion

Dowland responds to “Tell me true love” and “Weepe you no more, sad fountains” through tonal strategies that complement the poetic strategies typically found in ayre lyrics: metalepsis, concision, and abundance. But though his musical responses parallel these general poetic strategies and reflect the ayre’s miniature character, each setting also responds to the individual conceit(s) of the poem itself, intensifies the poem’s expression through deeply seated tonal means, and moves beyond representation of the poem to what is indeed a purely musical expression. These tonal responses go a long way toward explaining why Dowland’s ayres have been, and continue to be, highly regarded as exemplary settings of English poetry.

## References

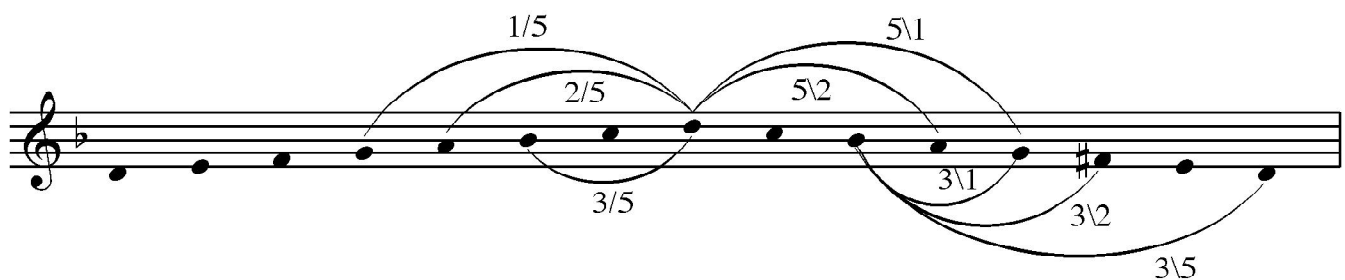
- Butler, C (1636). *The Principles of Musik in Singing and Setting: With the Two-fold Use thereof, Ecclesiasticall and Civil*. London. Facsimile with an introduction by G. Reaney (1970). New York: Da Capo.
- Butler, G (1980). Music and Rhetoric in Early Seventeenth-Century English Sources. *Musical Quarterly*, 66/1, 53-64.
- Crane, W. (1937). *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: The Formal Basis of Elizabethan Prose Style*. New York: Columbia.
- Doughtie, E (1986). *English Renaissance Song*. Boston: Twayne.
- Doughtie, E (1970). *Lyrics from English Airs, 1596-1622*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Dowland, J. (1603). *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*. London. Facsimile (1970), D. Poulton (Ed.). Menston: Scholar Press.
- Dowland, J. (1612). *A Pilgrimes Solace*. London. Facsimile (1970), D. Poulton (Ed.). Menston: Scholar Press.
- Fischlin, D. (1998). *In Small Proportions: A Poetics of the English Ayre, 1596-1622*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Horner, B. (1998). *The Rhetorics of Seventeenth-Century English Songs*. Diss. University of Pittsburgh.
- Ing, C. (1969). *Elizabethan Lyrics*. New York: Barnes and Noble.
- Jorgens, E.B. (1982). *The Well-Tun'd Word: Musical Interpretations of English Poetry, 1597- 1651*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Judd, C.C. (1992). Modal Types and *Ut, Re, Mi* Tonalties: Tonal Coherence in Sacred Vocal Polyphony from about 1500. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 45, 428-67.

- Krantz, S. (1989). *Rhetorical and Structural Functions of Mode in Selected Motets of Josquin de Prez*. Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota.
- Owens, J.A (1998). Concepts of Pitch in English Music Theory, c. 1560-1640. In C.C. Judd (Ed.), *Tonal Structures in Early Music* (pp. 183-246). New York: Garland.
- Peacham, H. (1593a). *The Compleat Gentleman*. London: Constable.
- Peacham, H. (1593b). *The Garden of Eloquence*. London. Facsimile with introduction by W.G. Crane (1954). Gainesville, Florida: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints.
- Poulton, D (1982). *John Dowland*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Toft, R. (1993). *Tune Thy Musicke to thy Hart*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Trousdale, M (2000). Rhetoric. *A Compendium to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* (pp. 623-33). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wells, R.H. (1994). *Elizabethan Mythologies: Studies in Poetry, Drama and Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, R.H. (1984). The Ladder of Love: Verbal and Musical Rhetoric in the Elizabethan Lutesong. *Early Music*, 12, 173-189.
- Whitaker, V.K. (1953). *Shakespeare's Use of Learning: An Inquiry into the Growth of His Mind and Art*. San Marino, California: The Huntington Library.

"Tonal Strategies and Rhetorical Processes in John Dowland's Lutesongs: Two Case Studies."



**Fig. 1: Solmization Syllables in the One-Flat Scale.**



**Fig. 2: Gestures in Sol.**

Tell me true Loue where shall I seeke thy being,  
 In thoughts or words, in vowes or promise making,  
 In reasons, looks, or passions neuer seeing,  
 In men on earth, or womens minds partaking.  
 Thou canst not dye, and therefore liuing tell me  
 Where is thy seate, why, doth this age expell thee?

When thoughts are still vnseene and words disguised;  
 vow are not sacred held, nor promise debt:  
 By passion reasons glory is surprised,  
 In neyther sexe is true loue firmly set.  
 Thoughts fainde, words false, vowes and promise broken  
 Made true Loue flye from earth, this is the token.

Mount then my thoughts, here is for thee no dwelling,  
 Since truth and falsehood liue like twins together:  
 Beleeve not sense, eyes, ears, touch, taste, or smelling,  
 Both Art and Nature's forc'd: put trust in neyther.  
 One onely shee doth true Loue captiue binde  
 In fairest brest, but in a fairer minde.

O fairest minde, enrich'd with Loues residing,  
 Retaine the best; in hearts let some seede fall,  
 Instead of weeds Loue's fruits may haue abiding;  
 At Haruest you shall reape encrease of all.  
 O happy Loue, more happy man that finds thee,  
 Most happy Saint, that keeps, restores, vnbindes thee.

**Fig. 3: "Tell me true Loue", from A Pilgrimes Solace**

Tell me true Loue where shall I seeke thy be-ing in thoughts or words in vowes or pro-misc-mak-ing

in rea-sons lookes or pas-sions or pas-sions neu-er see-ing In men on earth or wo-men's minds par-tak-ing

The score consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes various figured bass notations such as 3/5, 5/1, 2/5, 2/2, 5/2, 5/1 on 5, 3/5, and 5/1. The lyrics are: "Tell me true Loue where shall I seeke thy be-ing in thoughts or words in vowes or pro-misc-mak-ing" and "in rea-sons lookes or pas-sions or pas-sions neu-er see-ing In men on earth or wo-men's minds par-tak-ing".

Fig. 4: Quatrains of "Tell me, true Loue"

Thou canst not dye, and therefore liu-ing, there-fore liu-ing tell me where is thy seate, is thy seate, thy seate why why doth this age ex-pld thee?

The score consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes various figured bass notations such as 3/5, 3/5, 3/7, 2/2, 1/5, 5/1, 3/1, 3/5, and 5/1. The lyrics are: "Thou canst not dye, and therefore liu-ing, there-fore liu-ing tell me where is thy seate, is thy seate, thy seate why why doth this age ex-pld thee?".

Fig. 5: Couplet of "Tell me true Loue"



Weepe you no more sad fountaines,  
 What need you flowe so fast,  
 Looke how the snowie mountains,  
 Heau'ns sunne doth gently waste.  
 But my sunnes heau'nly eyes  
 View not your weeping,  
 That nowe lie sleeping,  
 Softly now softly lies sleeping.  
 Sleepe is a reconciling,  
 A rest that Peace begets:  
 Doth not the sunne rise smiling,  
 When faire at eu'n he sets,  
 Rest you then, rest, sad eyes,  
 Melt not in weeping,  
 While she lies sleeping,  
 Softly, now softly lies sleeping.

Fig. 6: "Weepe you no more, sad fountaines," from Third Booke of Songs.

Weepe you no more, sad foun-taines, what need you flowe so fast, looke how the snow-ie moun-taines, heau'n'sunne doth gent-ly waste.

But my sunnes heau'n - ly eyes view not your weep-ing. That nowe lie sleeping, that nowe lies sleeping, softly, softly, now softly lies sleeping

Fig. 7. "Weepe you no more, sad fountains," from Third Booke of Songs.