This article will explore the role of the English madrigal as a means of expressing Truth in England around 1600, in the wake of new discovery and the first percolations of empiricism. It will consider the morphing contemporary conception of, and obsession with, truth and honesty in regards to travel writing, and how these changing ideas are reflected in the madrigal genre. With these shifting concepts of truth, the madrigal’s combination of text and harmony allowed music’s inherent subjectivity to invoke wonder and portray an evocative perception of reality. Music was an integral part of early modern natural philosophy; not only as a physical phenomenon to be observed, but also for the curious power it had over the ‘passions’—the bridge between emotion and action—that could move even the most rational of listeners. The madrigal, and its characteristic union of text and music, proves a fruitful source for interrogation of the emotional conception of Truth in early seventeenth-century England.

England around 1600 had a lot to be uncertain about—the discovery of the New World shook the authority of the Ancients and other established truths to their core. The ideological and philosophical ruptures created by the unearthing of this new landmass, combined with tides of theological insecurity generated in the wake of the Reformation, and uncertainty regarding the line of succession, left many people confused about which authorities to believe in. A people that was used to being spoon-fed truth through hierarchical structures such as feudalism, monarchy maintained by divine right, and Papal authorities, found itself in a position to question the old sources of truth and order, making room for new testimonies of ‘truth’ to gain status, eventually leading, as the story goes, to the Scientific Revolution. But the path towards empirical science as we know it now was certainly not a straightforward one. Though thought of as entirely separate disciplines today, poetry, music, and philosophy were firmly grafted in the roots of early modern science. As Stephen Greenblatt asserts, ‘great art is an extraordinarily sensitive register of the complex struggles and harmonies of culture’, and music perhaps uniquely so due to its notoriously abstract, highly subjective nature.

Perhaps not coincidentally, ideas about the nature of music were also changing around 1600. Music was classified by contemporary scholars as a science and, as modern academics like Florence Cohen and Penelope Gouk have demonstrated, it played a vital role in the discourse of the Scientific Revolution. But by 1700, for reasons I cannot hope to cover adequately in this paper, the perception, categorization, and discourse of music’s nature had altered drastically. As many scholars have observed, up until the 1550s, most composed music was produced in a sacred context, a tradition that would be completely changed by 1700. Over the course of the seventeenth century, movement away from a Church-centered printed music culture led to expected social-musical changes, such as an increase in music literacy amongst educated classes. London, in particular, became the world leader in commercial music printing and as Gouk points out, ‘music itself became more visible, with compositions being embodied in texts as much as their aural performance’. This transition towards secular music as a textual, tangible object inevitably changed the way in which people interacted with the genre, as music became not only an aural

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3 Changes in forms of patronage, printing, and the work of natural philosophers, to name a few reasons, all contributed to changing how music was made and thought about. Even advances in instrument technology vastly changed music making by 1700. Penelope Gouk, Music, Science, and Natural Magic in Seventeenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 4, 9.
performance, but also a printed commodity. Additionally, contemporary debates about the nature of music and poetry were inextricably intertwined with discussions on nature, philosophy, and Truth. But before I can properly unwind this conflation of seemingly disparate subjects, I must first go into some detail about the idea of representation in madrigal texts.

The English madrigal is a genre largely known in the history of the western canon for its mythical, pastoral topics—dancing nymphs, kissing shepherds, and lamenting lovers—mainly figures in the domain of fantasy, though certainly not exclusively. This study focuses on the madrigal genre, as it was the most popular secular genre of its day, and proves an interesting starting point for a contemporary exploration of musical-rhetorical relationships. Traditionally in madrigal compositions, a sense of realism was produced through the use of word painting, a compositional technique that represented and illustrated an underlying text. As the genre is mostly secular and intrinsically linked to its text, the madrigal allowed for more direct discussion of contemporary cultural phenomena. For the sake of interdisciplinary understanding, I intend to discuss music's historicized station in this debate without the use of highly technical musical analysis. Though this approach may seem incomplete to some, I believe it will still prove informative for audiences both inside and outside musicology.

New World and Truth in Travel Writing

When faced with the unknown, many people turned to something familiar to find a tangible answer. For example, John Wilbye’s 1598 madrigal *What needeth all this travail and turmoiling*, laments, ‘What needeth all this travail and turmoiling, / Short’ning the life’s sweet pleasure / ’To seek far-fetched treasure / In those hot climates under Phoebus broiling?’ Anxiety about the New World is here expressed in the only way an Englishman around 1598 knew how, through the rhetoric of Old World mythology. This is not so different from the rhetorical techniques, usually metaphor and analogy, use by travel writers to close the experiential gap between traveller and reader at home.

When Marco Polo first beheld a rhinoceros in the late-thirteenth century, he lacked the relevant terminology to describe the animals to people back in Europe who had not seen one themselves. Naturally, he turned to analogy, the use familiar words to help describe the new, and likened the animal to buffalo, elephant, and boar, and called it a Unicorn. Of course, what we know a rhinoceros to look like now is not exactly the beautiful horse-like stallion with a goat’s beard, pearl-white mane, and a single spiraled-horn as depicted in Dominic Zampieri’s 1604 fresco *Virgin and Unicorn*. Exemplified in travel literature and maps from the period, knowing the world became the key to political supremacy. In turn, by the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, public interest in, and consumption of, travel writing from abroad flourished. Though London was not the cultural crossroad that Basel or Venice was, the foreign, at least in concept and object, was in vogue, and even those at home who never left the Island experienced excitement, interest, and anxieties about stories from faraway places. Consequently, a

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5 Caveat: popular amongst a class of citizen that had access to published materials and musical interest/training.

6 For example, word painting might include descending, sad-sounding notes on the word ‘sighing’, notes going up on ‘ascending’ or ‘mountain’, or short, staccato notes on ‘laughing’, musically illustrating the textual underlay.

7 All madrigal texts may be found in the Fellowes Edition, and have been cross referenced with contemporary publications where possible. Edmund Horace Fellowes, *English Madrigal Verse, 1588-1632* (The Clarendon press, 1920).

8 Phoebus is another name for Greek and Roman god Apollo. Also, note the similarity between ‘traivail’ and ‘travail’.

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reliance on metaphor, this method of relaying unfamiliar ‘truth’ through an umbilical cord to the familiar, proved both problematic and profitable. That ‘unicorn’ came to represent an ambiguous yet wondrous space, both of reality and of myth, that captured readers, but also led to increased skepticism and uncertainty regarding the veracity of travel narratives. In madrigal texts, too, one can see understanding of new reality made possible through recourse to established tropes, tropes that all got melded into one ambiguous ‘Other’ fantasy. John Wilbye’s 1609 madrigal I live, and yet methinks I do not breathe raises several points of contemplation for the contemporary Englishman:11

There is a jewel which no Indian mines
Can buy, no chymic art can counterfeit;
It makes men rich in greatest poverty;
Makes water wine, turns wooden cups to gold,
The homely whistle to sweet music’s strain:
Seldom it come, to few from heaven sent,
That much in little, all in nought, --Content

The first line declares the subject (the spiritual ‘jewel’) superior to any real foreign gem, or anything created by modern science/alchemy (a coupling of New truths). Biblical references of ‘water into wine’ are meshed with, perhaps, a veiled reference to the mythical philosopher’s stone (wood into gold—a coupling of Old truths).12 This free melding of popular images of authority raises the question of what counted as true for early modern English people. Jonathan Sell puts forth the term ‘consensual truth’, which he uses in place of ‘historically/socially relative truth’, a concept that is highly relevant and revealing in this discussion.13 To early modern Europeans, a figure like a unicorn occupied a space somewhere between the mythical and the real—a creature of consensual truth. The inherent ambiguity in this sort of changeable, consensual understanding of truth produced reasonable confusion. The more stubbornly travel narratives insisted upon their credibility, the more their believability came into question. As Sell observes, intelligible lies are more easily believed than unintelligible truths.14 Richard Braithwaite, writing in 1631, believed that ‘travellars, poets, and liars are three words of one significance’.15 But much like consumers of today’s tabloids, perhaps actual truth did not matter to early modern readers—it was the perception of truth that sold copies. As will be discussed later, perhaps it is this ability to be perceived as real, where perhaps music’s abilities are most convincing.

In this skeptical environment regarding real and fake testimony, authors, composers, and travel writers alike became highly concerned with asserting the authenticity and veracity of their work. In 1588, explorer-astronomer Thomas Harriot wrote A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia in order to ‘set the record straight’:

Thus much vpon my credit I am to affirme: that things vniuersally are so truly set downe in this treatise by the author therof, an Actor in the Colony & a man no lesse for his honesty then learning commendable: as that I dare boldly avouch it may very well passe with the credit of truth euens amongst

11 This title is reminiscent of Charles I’s famous motto ‘while I breathe, I hope’ (dum spiro spero). The difference between how the phrase appears in Wilbye’s madrigal is rather prophetic of the impending changes in the perception of truth signified by Charles I’s execution in 1649, as well as to the shift from faith in regicentric truth to parliamentary truth, or faith in the people.
12 Alchemy, poignantly, fits into both categories, as it was both a myth and a popular ‘science’. One must keep in mind that the Bible had at least the same truth-value as scientific treatises; a faith somewhat connected with the authority of ancient texts. One way to unarguably prove your case was to invoke the Bible or ancient scholars like Aristotle, even simply by printing their image on your cover page.
13 Sell, p. 24.
14 Sell, p. 25.
15 Sell, p. 23.
the most true relations of this age.\textsuperscript{16}

Even though Harriot is now considered one of the first champions of the empirical method (along with Francis Bacon), his assertion of truth in this introduction is less based on any empirical technique, and more on a personal testimony of his own honesty and quality of character. Harriot’s assertion also highlights his skepticism of other travel writers and their accounts of the New World (an assertion that comes with clear financial perks to his own account).\textsuperscript{17} Surely, the general mistrust of travel writers contributed to an already muddled perception of truth, leaving readers even more confused about whom and what to believe. But this need to assert one’s reliability is apparent in other printed genres as well. In William Byrd’s lengthy title to his 1588 set, he attests to his work’s authenticity:

\begin{quote}
Psalmes, Sonets, and Songs of Sadness and pietie, made into Music of five parts: whereof, some of them going abroad among diners, in untrue copies, are here truly corrected, and th’other being Songs very rare and newly composed, are here published, for recreation of all such as delight in Music.
\end{quote}

Not only is Byrd clearly concerned with asserting his work’s veracity, but this also shows that by going abroad, his music has been in some way tainted by fakery or subjected to false alteration. In this environment where one is supposed to observe and report the real and the truthful, one can see the Other, as well as those who have claimed to have seen the Other, being accused as a source of false testimony.

\section*{Poetry and Parody: a ‘truthful counterfeit’}

Poetry offered one way for early modern thinkers to write about the New and render a sense of reality, but without ever explicitly putting themselves at risk for being disgraced as liars. Poet and traveller Sir Philip Sidney wrote that poetry was different from other forms of rhetoric because it was a ‘truthful counterfeit’. To him, historians cannot help but lie, but in poetry the author ‘never affirmeth’.\textsuperscript{18} For Sidney, poetry is an art of imitation, ‘a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth— to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture- with this end, to teach and delight’.\textsuperscript{19} Since poetry is inherently a representation or counterfeit of reality, it cannot possibly attest to be actual reality, and therefore it, or rather, its author, cannot lie. This, of course, contradicts Richard Braithwaite’s assertion that poets and travellers are the very definition of liars. Yet somehow, by employing metaphor to better portray a convincing sense of Truth (whilst teaching and delighting), poets and travellers alike become simultaneously accused of, as well as excused from, lying. How, then, might the science of music work with poetry to further this ‘figuring forth’ of reality?

In Thomas Weelkes’s 1608 composition \textit{Ha ha! ha ha! This world doth merrily pass}, the composer set a seemingly whimsical text to a seemingly whimsical tune.\textsuperscript{20} On first examination this appears to be a silly strophic ditty without much historical weight. Yet the irony of Weelkes’ capricious musical setting is substantial. When

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} Thomas Harriot, \textit{A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia}. (London: 1588), Early English Books Online 1 September 2011
\item \textsuperscript{18} Diana B. Altegoer, \textit{Reckoning Words: Baconian Science and the Construction of Truth in English Renaissance Culture} (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000), p. 72-3.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Altegoer, p. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{20} I use the word seemingly twice, because, as Eric Altschuler and William Jansen have argued, Thomas Weelkes was probably a ‘man of letters’ of far greater sophistication than previously supposed, and may have even written some of his own texts. Amusingly, one modern publisher of \textit{Ha! Ha! This world doth pass}, states that the lyrics are ‘nonsense’, which is itself a statement of nonsense! The composer who chose (or wrote) the texts to madrigals such as \textit{Ha ha!} or \textit{Thule, the Period of Cosmography}, was certainly not an ignoramus choosing random words to set to music. Eric Lewin Altschuler and William Jansen, ‘Thomas Weelkes’ Text Authors: Men of Letters’, \textit{The Musical Times}, 143 (2002), pp. 17–24.
\end{itemize}
read straightforwardly, the text comes across as rather nonsensical, though perhaps amusing in its social commentary. It is the coupling of the text with an overtly playful musical setting that makes this piece particularly interesting.

Ha ha! ha ha! this world doth pass
Most merrily, I'll be sworn;
For many an honest Indian ass
Goes for an Unicorn.
Farra diddle dino;
This is idle fino.

Ty hye! ty hye! O sweet delight!
He tickles this age that can
Call Tullia's ape a marmosyte
And Leda's goose a swan.
Farra diddle dino;
This is idle fino.

So so! so so! fine English days!
When false play's no reproach:
For he that doth the coachman praise,
May safely use the coach.
Farra diddle dino;
This is idle fino.

The mixing of images from the New World with classical mythology is readily apparent: Leda and Tullia are both characters stemming from Greek mythology, and appear in company with Indians, marmosets, and the ambiguous Unicorn. New and ancient authorities come together, once more making a search for truth at the heart of the poem. Even though the uncertainty of 'truth' is directly commented on in this text, the musical setting amplifies this haziness yet further. The overall musical effect is one of madrigalized (word painted) laughter, skipping rhythms, and transparent homophonic writing that may initially give the impression of a more stereotypical pastoral English madrigal, like Thomas Morley’s *Now is the Month of Maying*. Yet in conjunction with the double-edged words, these musical features seem exaggerated to the point of parody. When interpreted as a piece of satire, a very different impression emerges from the frolicking fantasy, as if the composer was amused by the very theatricalities of daily life, expanding on the common early modern theme of 'all the world's a stage'. As the onlooker watches life, and all its falsities, he cannot help but chuckle to himself. He will be 'sworn' (in itself an easily falsified act of testimony) that many an 'honest' Indian ass (objects from the New World are somehow portrayed as more 'real'—but also more mundane than the vivid European imagination might allow) may be mistaken for, or even maliciously passed as, a Unicorn—a creature that here implies the realm of fantasy, but is also of ambiguously consensually true origin. The next stanza suggests that the merchant (the used-car salesman of yore), or other man of hypothetically reputable power, has the ability to 'tickle this age' by misrepresenting and

21 The final stanza offers the most overt commentary, with a sarcastic ‘fine English days!’ where ‘false play’s no reproach’, implying that there are no consequences for falsifying information/representation—as long as you give the people what they want to hear, you gain fame and glory in return. The couplet at the end of each stanza punctuates the frivolity of the falseness of life with the nonsense phrase ‘Farra diddle dino’. The meaning of ‘This is idle fino’, is somewhat unclear, but may signify ‘useless end’, or ‘all useless’ if ‘fino’ derives from the Spanish or Italian ‘fin’, but this is just pure conjecture; a self-conscious if not humorous way of acknowledging earthly life’s temporal limits.
upselling mythical stories as real creatures. Despite the ‘realism’ created by Weelkes’s more straightforward madrigalizations, such as the punctuated laughter, the music adds a further layer of false impression to textual ambiguity, one that thrives on parody rather than literal representation. The piece seems to offer an indirect commentary on music’s capacity to create an illusion of reality, regardless of whether that reality is indeed true or false. Weelkes’s capricious setting thus enhances rhetorical meaning by musically illustrating its satirical character, but also engages with the pressing questions surrounding truth, illusion, and false representation associated with New World exploration.

Truth in the Illusion

In his bipartite madrigal *Thule, the Period of Cosmography* and *The Andalusian Merchant* (1600), Thomas Weelkes, a composer who never left England, paints a scene of strange spectacle complete with merchants from far off places, flying fishes, foreign islands, and exotic volcanoes. Upon first glance, this could be a madrigal like many others of its kind, full of lighthearted fantasy and myth. But perhaps the most curious thing about this madrigal is that, in addition to the sense of otherworldliness created by the musical illustrations, the ‘fantastical’ elements and events described in the text are not only real, but musically depicted with well-informed accuracy. ‘Thule’, was the northernmost region of the habitable world to ancient Greek geographers. The phrase ‘Period of Cosmography’, refers to the end of the mappable universe, making *Thule, the Period of Cosmography* an apt title for a piece in which Weelkes musically reports on marvelous phenomena that had been discovered around the world, such as the eruptions of volcanoes Hecla, Ætna, and Fogo:

THULE, the period of Cosmography,  
Doth vaunt of Hecla, whose sulphurous fire  
Doth melt the frozen clime and thaw the sky;  
Trinacrian Aetnae flames ascend not higher.  
These things seems wondrous, yet more wondrous I,  
Whose heart with fear doth freeze, with love doth fry.

The Andalusian merchant, that returns  
Laden with cochineal and China dishes,  
Reports in Spain how strangely Fogo burns  
Amidst an ocean full of flying fishes.  
These things seem wondrous, yet more wondrous I,  
Whose heart with fear doth freeze, with love doth fry.

Though this piece has the usual and expected word painting, such as ascending notes on the text ‘ascends not higher’ and a brief interruption of triple meter on the phrase ‘trinacrean Aetna’ (referring to Sicily’s triangular shape), there is more to the way Weelkes set this text to music than initially apparent. Weelkes most likely had some outside knowledge of, or had done his own research on, the phenomena described in the poem, and worked that information into his musical depictions. Hecla, a real volcano in Iceland, erupted in 1597, just before *Thule*’s publication in 1600, and it is not far fetched to suppose that news of this event probably reached England, piquing the poet’s, and Weelkes’s, interest. Weelkes makes musical comparisons between Hecla and Ætna that suggest that it is worth considering that Weelkes had some knowledge of the actual physical attributes of each volcano, as well as accurate knowledge of the particulars of each volcano’s eruption. For example, with Fogo, a volcano and island in Cape Verde, Weelkes’s musical description of a strange burning is quite precise, but in such a way that it

is not obvious from the poem alone. Unlike Hecla’s showy explosion of semiquaver runs, Weelkes properly depicts Fogo’s ‘strange’ slow burn, like gooey melting magma and floating ash, through descending chromatic lines. In 1657, Samuel Clarke wrote, ‘the Isles of Cape Verde are nine; they were first discovered, Anno Christi 1440…’ Del Fogo, so called, because it burns perpetually: They were taken by Sir Anthony Sherly, Anno Christi 1596. who had in one night such a showre of ashes, as hee did lie by Del Fogo, that in the morning you might have written with your finger upon the Deck of his ship’.24 While this account by Clarke is of a later date than one Weelkes may have encountered to inform his composition, it presents at least one example of a comparable possibility.

Since the English madrigal gene was largely known for its mythical, pastoral topics, perhaps Weelkes was able to use this preconception of the genre (well-established by 1600) to convincingly compose about seemingly fantastical topics that were essentially rooted in consensual reality, not fantasy, with a poignant ambiguity of truthfulness. In this case, when the poetry is musicalized, Sidney’s ‘truthful counterfeit’ receives an additional layer of consensually/empirically based understanding, in addition to the aural illustration of the text. Though the ‘realness’ of the events described in Thule were enhanced by the musical setting (and further observation-based meaning brought to the descriptions of the eruptions that were not readily apparent in the text), the effects of the music are still only an illusion, a representation of reality printed on paper.25 Yet musical representation is never straightforward; as Gary Tomlinson reminds us, ‘it is a serious if common error to underestimate the complexity and diversity of text-music conjunctions that a late-sixteenth-century composer could command’.26 This model by Weelkes is just one example of the potential complexities of the textual-musical relationship in terms of representation of reality. When faced with uncertainty, perhaps a most realistic representation of truth allowed for listeners and composers to address anxieties, express wonder, and take (arguably false) comfort in that representation, but with the caution offered by subjectivity—the idea that poetry, and in this case music, ‘never affirmeth’ so it can never be wrong. As Greenblatt states, ‘representations are not only products, but producers, capable of decisively altering the very forces that brought them into being’.27 Clearly, the relationship between representation and reality is quite complicated, and a distinction not easily reconciled. Greenblatt warns that it is ‘a theoretical mistake and a practical blunder to collapse the distinction between representation and reality’, since ‘[t]hey are locked together in an uneasy marriage in a work without ecstatic union or divorce’.28 If the madrigal sought to convincingly represent reality in its texts, whether this was a true or false reality did not really matter as long as it rang true to its listeners. I do not mean to imply that composers intentionally tried or did not try to deceive their listeners, but rather that, in conjunction with poetry, music’s unique subjectivity could offer a palpable sense of reality to willing recipients. Using music and poetry, Weelkes could present to his audience a realistic picture of the real world, using illusion—a testament to the complexity of musical-textual relations in the period and the multifarious relationship between truth and artistic representations thereof.

If, as Susan McClary has argued, the illusion created by music potentially allowed for a wider spectrum of independent responses than other less subjective art forms such as literature, conceivably it is this very quality that helped early modern composers express uncertainty and other emotions in a way literature alone could not.29 This

25 As Plato would have argued all Art is.
28 Greenblatt, p. 7.
29 Though as McClary logically cautions, ‘if music is to figure as anything other than a mere epiphenomenon … then we must find approaches that will allow us to examine its meanings. Otherwise, we will continue simply to graft music onto an already-
is particularly thought-provoking when combined with an explicit narrative-style poem, such as William Byrd’s 1588 setting of one of Sir Philip Sidney’s songs from *Astrophel and Stella*, called *O You that heare this voyce.* This poem shows a different sort of confusion about Truth, one not as directly related to anxieties about new discovery, but one that elucidates philosophical questions about music and reason that are likely related—an emotional and philosophical response to anxieties of the age. This relatively simple strophic song is another interesting case that speaks to the diversity and complexity of rhetorical-musical conjunctions within the madrigal repertory. Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella*, thought to have been written in the 1580s, was a series of sonnets plus eleven ‘songs’ (of the lyrical, not musical type). Sidney’s poetry was quite popular amongst several madrigal composers, and many of his poems were set to music. This musical setting by Byrd is a sweet, relatively homophonic tune with readily understandable lyrics. The same music is repeated for each stanza of text (though it is thought perhaps not all the verses were sung, or the last only halfway through, as there are basically 4.5 stanzas in the poem), in similar format to a hymn.

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O You, that heare this voyce,  O you that see this face,
say whether of the choice, may have the former place.
Who dare judge this debate,  that it be void of hate:
This side doth beautie take,  for that doth Musick speak,
Fit Orators to make,  the strongest judgements weak.
The bar to plead their right,  is only true delight.

Thus doth the voyce and face,  these gentle lawiers wage:
Like loving brothers case,  for fathers heritage:
That each, while each contends,  it selfe to other lends.
For beautie beautifies,  with heavenly hew and grace,
the heavenly harmonies,  and in that faultlesse face,
the perfect beauties bee,  a perfect harmonie.

Musick more loftie swells,  in phrases finely plac’d:
Beautie as farre excells,  in action aptly grac’d:
A friend each partie drawes,  to countenance his cause.
Love more affected seemes,  to beauties lovely light,
and wonder more esteemes,  of Musick wond’rous might,
but both to both so bent,  as both in both are spent.

Musick doth witnesse call,  the eare his truth doth trye:
Beautie brings to the hall,  eye witnesse of the eye,
each in his object such,  as none exceptions touch.
The comon sense which might,  bee arbiter of this:
To bee forsooth upright,  to both sides parciall is:
He layes on this chiefe praise,  chiefe praise on that hee laies.
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formulated narrative of historical developments; more important, we will fail to learn what music might have to teach us or to question seriously what may be incomplete accounts of the past’. Susan McClary, Modal Subjectivities: Self-Fashioning in the Italian Madrigal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 7.

30 Technically, this work by Byrd (indeed all the settings in this 1588 set) is a consort song, not a madrigal (a piece for solo voice and viols). But for various reasons, Byrd (or his publishers) decided to publish the works for voices or viols, allowing the viol parts to be sung by multiple voices as well, perhaps due to the fashionable nature of the madrigal.
which sits in throne of minde:
and Musicke can in Skye,
with hidden beauties finde,
say whether thou wilt crowne,
with limit lesse renowne.

In this song, Sidney describes a trial-like setting for a philosophical discussion about which character, Music or Beauty, 'may have the former place'. From the first stanza, it is clear that the two parties are more in cahoots with one another than competitors. The 'lawyers' are the voice and the face, the 'witnesses' the ear and the eye. Love is partial to beauty, but wonder is the domain of music. Both beauty and music are equally persuasive in their own ways, and even have a symbiotic relationship. The conclusion is left open, as the ultimate judgment is left up to Reason, who sits 'in throne of minde', as Reason is the only power capable of making such a verdict. 'Musicke can in Skye' is most likely a reference to Pythagorean ‘Music of the Spheres’, a theory on the nature of music based on numerical sequences that was well-known but controversial amongst natural philosophers in sixteenth/seventeenth-century Europe.

It seems only appropriate to set such a text to music, although naturally I cannot attest that this was in any way an intentional comment on music’s individual power in the debate. If, according to the poem, music’s power is wonder, then such philosophical questions can only be heightened by music employing its power. Socrates called wonder the ‘beginning of philosophy’, as wonder is what drives us to seek answers. And according to Sidney, what better way to invoke wonder than with music? In a way, it might seem this poem couldn’t be aesthetically complete on its own without music. According to Tomlinson, for Italian composers like Monteverdi:

the expressive power of music was a function of its relation to text ... The highest goal that music could seek … especially in works from the years around 1600, was to form a syntactic and semantic union with its text so perfect that the distinction of musical and nonmusical elements seemed to fade before the heightened oratorical power of a single musical speech.31

In a way, by setting this text to music, Byrd completes the message of the poem, unifying verse, philosophy, and music as ideologically indistinguishable. What makes this piece an interesting case study is how straightforwardly it brings together contemporary debates about the nature of philosophy, poetry, music, and wonder. Straightforwardly, yet inherently not, as it is all mediated though narrative metaphor. Sidney was taking his own advice about the poet who teaches and delights, yet 'never affirmeth', thereby pardoning himself from any accusations of falsity.

As Gouk has written, '[p]oetry, rhetoric, and music are persuasive arts which exert their moral and ethical effects through emotions rather than by reason'.32 Contemporary discussion of music’s emotional effects stemmed from a reinterpretation of an Aristotelian approach to music as a sounding phenomenon, in addition to some natural philosophers’ shift away from Pythagorean cosmology.33 While some, like Joannes Kepler, maintained that music was a product of mathematics, others like Francis Bacon were not satisfied with that theory, and believed that there was something more to discover about the source of music’s power over man’s emotions and behaviors. Gouk theorizes that Bacon’s fascination with music was not a simple plight for Truth, but 'an essential element of his ambitious scheme to dominate and control the forces of nature and the elements, to tame them for the service

31 Tomlinson, p. 7.
33 Gouk, ‘Music in Francis Bacon’s natural philosophy’, p. 143.
of man … [for Bacon, music was] an integral part of natural philosophy’. It is not difficult to see why Bacon would have been, for lack of a better word, concerned about the emotional power music holds over man. It is a truth universally experienced, yet far from universally understood. Bacon thought of wonder as ‘broken knowledge’, and if music wields the power of wonder, as Sidney thought, it is not surprising that a man of science like Bacon saw music as a central tenant in an understanding of the philosophy of nature. Wonder, like the discovery of the New World, was a force of both fascination and great fear: for in wonder, knowledge and Truth, are fundamentally incomplete.

The Moving Science of Music

The madrigal, a genre of song that by nature tries to integrate music with poetry, holds a lot of aesthetic responsibility for modern understanding of the period around 1600, far more than it ostensibly seems. It appears that in an environment of political, religious, and philosophical upheaval, the search for a source of security, for Truth, amongst ‘certainties’ both old and new, was at the forefront of the conscious and subconscious mind. As the rules of faith shifted and ancient authorities were challenged by new ‘proofs’, like objects and stories from the New World, testimony of truthfulness became a national preoccupation, as shown in both travel literature and other forms of printed word. This newfound demand for proof in the form of observation piqued wonder in the first empiricists, already supported by Aristotle’s correspondence theory of truth. Yet these well-known men of natural philosophy—Francis Bacon, Robert Hooke, and Isaac Newton—all wrote about music because it wields undeniable emotional power, raising wonder and complicating the search for truthful knowledge, whether one of mathematical, religious, astronomical, historical or other foundation. Music and poetry are our remnants, the existing representation of such emotions from 1600. Moreover, representation is crucial to the study of emotions, as it is impossible to have emotion in any unmediated form. The madrigal is one body of such representation; the physical item that we have that links us to an emotional history of the past.

Philip Sidney’s *Defense of Poetry* addresses the line between philosophy and poetry, asserting (against critics like Plato) that poetry could indeed satisfy the demands of philosophy by rousing men to virtue through pleasure. Sidney was not only a poet, but also a mathematician and astronomer, a combination of professions not so uncommon in the seventeenth century. To study the history of Truth in the early modern period, it is necessary to also study the emotional element, the ‘passion’, that was integral to understanding of even the most empirical of sciences. Though there is plentiful modern scholarship on English poetry and drama in terms of the Scientific Revolution, hopefully I’ve made a case for musicology to enter this discourse, as the English madrigal offers an unlikely but interesting portal to further inquiry into the historicized emotional side of empirical Truth—providing the wonder, the necessary realistic representation, and the metaphoric yet subjective understanding—that moves men like, in Baconian terms, a force of nature.

34 Gouk, ‘Music in Francis Bacon’s natural philosophy’, p. 149.
36 Some, such as twentieth-century philosopher Martin Heidegger, have argued that this concept of truth, based on how early modern thinkers interpreted Aristotelian principals, is actually a misinterpretation. Heidegger offers, instead, ‘aletheia’, or ‘unconcealment’ a separate concept explaining how things appear in the world contextualized as part of a background of meaning.
37 As Susan James points out, ‘the contrast between this all-encompassing knowledge and our confused, passionate ideas is sometimes conceived in musical terms … Bacon resorts to this image when he casts Orpheus, the master of all harmony, as Universal Philosophy’. Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, New Ed (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), p. 195.