

Documentation for

Clear or Cloudy

A lutesong by John Dowland (1600), and

arranged for late period alfabeto-style five-course guitar by Johann von Solothurn

Documented and performed by Johann von Solothurn

Contents

- I. Abstract/Introduction
- II. The original lutesong
- III. The five-course guitar
- IV. The arrangement
- V. Summary
- VI. Contact Information
- VII. References

Appendix

Appendix A: Facsimile excerpts from John Dowlands “Second Book of Songs” (1600)

List of Figures

- Figure 1: Facsimile of “Clear or Cloudy” from John Dowland’s 2nd Book of Songs
- Figure 2: Comparison of French tablature for lute and modern staff notation
- Figure 3: Alfabeto chart from the Bezon Manuscript (1599)
- Figure 4: Alfabeto chart from Montesardo (1606)
- Figure 5: Comparison of Montesardo’s alfabeto notation to modern staff notation
- Figure 6: Alfabeto solo from Sanseverino alfabeto book (1620)
- Figure 7: Montesardo’s alfabeto chart, transcribed to modern staff notation and tablature
- Figure 8: Comparison of the original lute accompaniment and the alfabeto arrangement
- Figure 9: Complete alfabeto arrangement of “Clear or Cloudy” by Johann von Solothurn

I. Abstract/Introduction

The song “Clear or Cloudy” by John Dowland was originally published in 1600, in Dowland’s Second Book of Songs or Ayres. The piece as originally published is a lutesong, with the lute intended as vocal accompaniment.

During the late period, the five-course guitar (*guitarra spagnola*) was gaining popularity. There are a handful of lute-style (plucked) pieces for the five-course instrument from the mid-1500s, but towards the end of the SCA period, we begin to see alfabeto-style (strummed chords) music for the guitar (manuscript and print, in addition to a Amat’s chord treatise of 1597). While the five-course guitar was gaining popularity in Spain and Italy, and would eventually replace the vihuela, John Dowland was composing lute music in France and England.

My interest in both Dowland’s music and the five-course guitar naturally led me to hypothesize how a Spanish ambassador to England or France might have handled Dowland’s music on their five-course guitar (assuming they left their vihuela in Spain). So, I set out to arrange some of Dowland’s lutesongs in a manner that a Spaniard accustomed to playing alfabeto chords on their guitar might have played them in our period. Here, I will document my five-course guitar alfabeto arrangement of the Dowland lutesong, “Clear or Cloudy.”

When performing the piece, I often play the accompaniment on a classical guitar. For this particular performance, however, I will perform the piece on the instrument for which I arranged it, a reproduction five-course guitar. While I do not feel that performing the piece on the period reproduction instrument actually improves the performance, it is my hope that using the instrument (which is inferior to the modern guitar in many ways) will help set the mood for what I believe to be a performance that could have occurred in period.

II. The original lutesong

“Clear or Cloudy” was originally published in John Dowland’s Second Book of Songs in 1600 (Figure 1). The Second Book is a collection of lutesongs – art songs written to lute accompaniment. The lute accompaniment was written in French tablature. See Figure 2 below for a comparison of the French tablature for the lute and modern standard notation. French tablature was the most common style of tablature used by English and French lutenists and four-course guitarists during the SCA period. Dowland, Morley, Le Roy, etc. all used French tablature in their compositions. In short, French tablature uses letters, as opposed to numbers, to represent frets of the instrument. For example, the letter “b” above the uppermost line of the lute tablature indicates that the performer should play the first fret of the first string (the note “F” as played on a modern guitar). Note values were typically halved for printing in French tablature, as shown in Figure 2. For a more thorough discussion of French tablature, please refer to Tyler (1980) and Tyler and Sparks (2002).

XXI. CANTO.

Leare or cloudie Sweet as Aprill shewing, Smoth or frowning so is hir
 face to mee, Pleas'd or smiling like milde May all flowring, When skies blew silke and me- dows
 carpets bee, Hir speeches notes of that night bird that singeth, Who thought all
 sweet yet larring notes out- ring- eth.

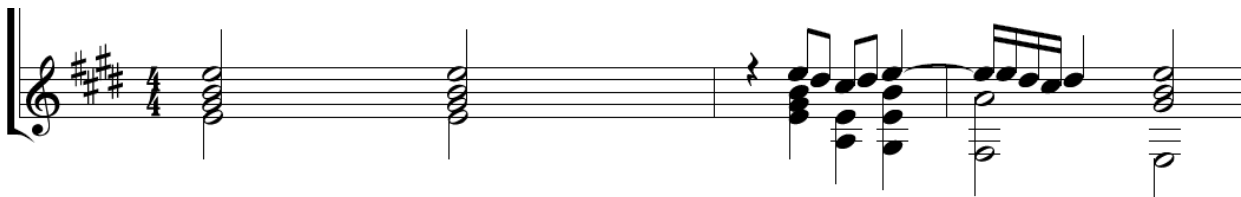
Hir grace like Iune, when earth and trees bee trimde,
 In best attire of compleat beauties height,
 Hir loue againe like sommers daies bee dimde,
 With litle cloudes of doubtfull constant faith,
 Hir trust hir doubt, like raine and heat in Skies,
 Gently thundring, the lightning to mine eies,

Sweet sommer spring that breatheth life and growing,
 In weedes as into hearbs and flowers,
 And sees of seruice diuers sorts in sowing,
 Some haply seeming and some being yours,
 Raine on your hearbs and flowers that truly serue,
 And let your weedes lack dew and duely sterue.

Figure 1: Facsimile of "Clear or Cloudy" vocal and lute accompaniment from Dowland's Second Book of Songs.



a



b

Figure 2: a) Facsimile copy of first 3 measures of "Come Again" from J. Dowland (1597)

b) Lute accompaniment for first 3 measures of "Come Again" transcribed to standard notation

III. The Five-Course Guitar

The five-course guitar (also referred to as the Spanish guitar "chitarra/guitarra spagnola" and often called "Baroque Guitar") had five courses, or pairs, of strings. It is a direct descendent of the four-course guitar ("renaissance guitar") and appears to have been developed in the mid-16th century (Tyler 1980, 1997, 2002). Both 4-course and 5-course guitars share the figure-eight shape of the Spanish vihuela, and appear to have evolved from that instrument. The instrument referred to by Fuenllana in 1554 as a "vihuela de cinco ordenes" is very likely the five-course guitar, as the music he composed for it was written for an instrument tuned to the same intervals as the guitar (different than the lute and vihuela). The five-course instrument was (or, became) larger bodied than the four-course guitar, but was still smaller bodied than the modern guitar. The five-course guitar was tuned to the same set of intervals as the modern guitar (at least initially), with the 4th and 5th courses tuned as octave pairs (Amat, 1596). The instrument was strung with gut strings and had tied gut frets. The printing of Amat's 5-course guitar treatise in 1596 indicates that the instrument was likely quite popular by the late 1500s. The guitar seemed to largely replace the vihuela by the early 1600s. The earliest surviving

5-course guitar dates from 1581 (Royal College of Music, London) and has a vaulted back. A larger 5 – course guitar with a flat back and built c. 1590 also survives is preserved at the Royal College of Music, London (Tyler and Sparks 2002).

IV. Alfabeto

Alfabeto was an alternative to tablature, where various letters and symbols were used to represent certain chords on the guitar. The letters used to depict alfabeto were in no way related to the modern chord names, although the alfabeto chords themselves are equivalent to those played today on the modern guitar (minus the 6th string). By the early 1600s, numerous alfabeto books were printed. There are at least three surviving pre-1600 alfabeto manuscripts, including one, the Matheo Bezon MS from 1599, with an alfabeto chart (Zuluaga, 2013).

The alfabeto chart in the Bezon manuscript (Figure 3) matches the printed chart contained in Montesardo's 1606 guitar book (Figure 4), except that the Bezon MS is missing some of Montesardo's chords. The chords that are included in Bezon MS, however, are identical to those in Montesardo. Although Montesardo is just post-period (by 6 years), I believe the information contained in his publication is pertinent to the SCA musician. Montesardo provides insight into how the guitar had likely been played for some time. He does not invent a new alfabeto system, rather he devises a way to depict rhythm patterns with the alfabeto notation. Figure 5 below shows an example of a galliard from Montesardo, and the modern staff notation of the same piece. In addition to showing the chord and strumming rhythm, Montesardo's notation also tells the guitarist whether to use an upstroke or downstroke when strumming (letters below the bar line in Fig. 5a are downstrokes, letters above the line are upstrokes). In this system, rhythm is depicted by whether the letters are upper or lower case (lower case chords are half the note value as upper case) and dots (similar to dotted notes in modern notation). Montesardo's system is not utilized by later alfabeto sources, as a more efficient system of depicting rhythm evolved by the 1620s (see Figure 6 for an example), but his work is invaluable in providing us with information on how the guitar was likely strummed in period. Modern staff notation and tablature of Montesardo's alfabeto chart is presented in Figure 7.

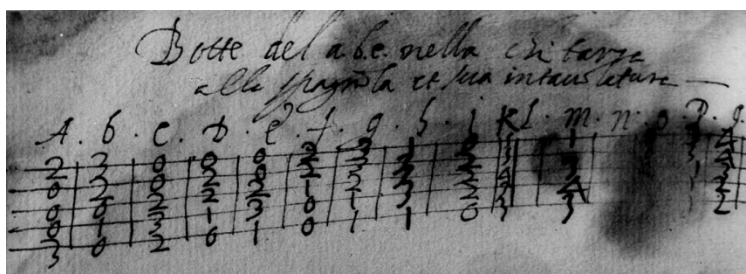
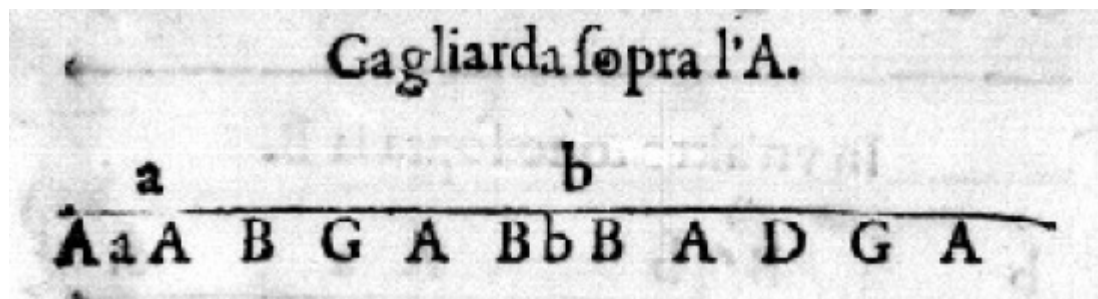


Figure 3: Alfabeto chart from the Bezon Manuscript (1599)



Figure 4: Alfabeto chart from Montesardo (1606)



a.

Gagliarda sopra l'A



b

Figure 5: a. Gagliard from Montesardo (1606)

b. chords and rhythm of 5a, in modern notation (from Dean, 2009)

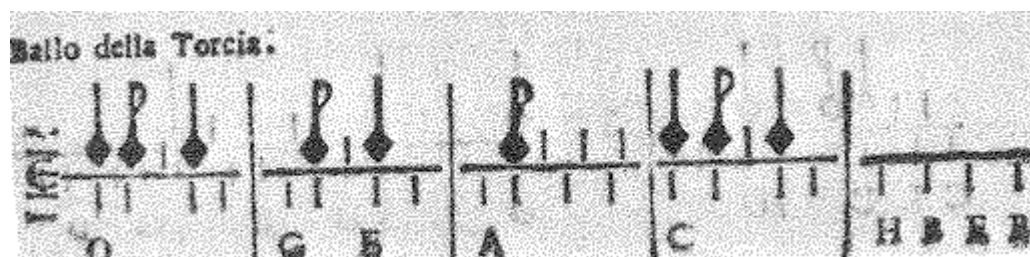


Figure 6: Alfabeto solo from 1620 (B. Sanseverino). Typical of alfabeto in the later 1600s (post-Montesardo)

Alfabetto per la Chitarra Alla Spagnola

Montesardo (1606) alfabeto chords

Transcribed by Johann von Solothurn (mka John Surber, Jr.)

Standard tuning

Standard tuning

1 (cross) A B C D E F

8 G H I K L M N

15 O P Q R S T

21 V X Y Z U 9 Be

Figure 7: Montesardo (1606) alfabeto chart, in modern staff notation and tablature.

V. The Arrangement

To derive the arrangement presented here, I initially studied the original lute accompaniment. My goal was to produce an alfabeto (strummed chord-style) arrangement of the song, so I looked at the chords within the original lute accompaniment and then transposed the original staff notation and chords to a key more suitable for the five-course guitar (Figure 8). I attempted to use the rhythmic elements and chord movement of the original Dowland piece as much as possible, while maintaining the typically strict strumming patterns documented in extant alfabeto sources (e.g. Montesardo 1606, Figure 5). This arrangement represents a best guess, based on the resources briefly mentioned above and others,

as to how this Dowland lutesong might have been played by a five-course guitarist in Period. The final arrangement, along with modern staff notation for the chords, and alfabeto arrangement in Montesardo’s notation, is included in Figure 9.

Clear or Cloudy

Lute Notation compared to Alfabeto Chords

John Dowland

Transcribed by Johann von Solothurn

Original Key

Voice

Lute

Alfabeto

1

Clear

or

cloud--

y

Lute

Alfabeto

0

0

1

2

2

2

4

4

4

2

0

0

1

2

2

2

4

4

4

2

Transposed for Alfabeto Arrangement

2

Clear

or

cloud-

y

Lute

Alfabeto

2

2

0

0

0

0

0

0

0

0

2

2

0

0

0

0

0

0

0

0

Figure 8: Comparison of lute accompaniment and alfabeto accompaniment for the first measure of “Clear or Cloudy”

Clear or Cloudy

John Dowland

Music by Johann von Solothurn (John Surber)

N-Gt

1

Clear or cloud- y sweet as A- pril show'r- ing
Her grace like June when earth and trees be trimm- ed
Sweet- Sum- mer- spring that breath- eth life and grow- ing

alfabeto

Alfabeto notation

C I C I x. x x Q Q

3

Smooth or frown- ing so is her face to me
In best at- tire of complete beau- ty's height
In weeds as in- to healing herbs and flow'rs

a C + c I i i C c c

5

Pleas'd or smil- ing like mild May all flow'r- ing When
Her love a- gain like sum- mer's days be dimm- ed With
And sees of ser- vice div- ers sorts in sow- ing Some

A a a C c + + R + +

Figure 9 a: Page 1 of "Clear or Cloudy" alfabeto arrangement

skies blue silk and mea- dows car - pets be Her
lit- tleclouds of doubt- ful con - stant faith Her
Hap- ly seem- ing and some beau - ty yours Rain

speech- es notes of that night bird that sing-
trust her doubt like rain and heat in skies
on your herbs and flowr's that tru- ly serve

eth Who thought all sweet yetjar- ring notes out- ring- eth
Gent- ly thun- der- ring shlight- ning to mine eyes
And let your weeds lacklew and du- ly starve

Alfabeto: + i i C c c I i i C c

Alfabeto: C F I I i i c i x +

Alfabeto: + A C C c a i + C c I i i C

Figure 9 b: Page 1 of “Clear or Cloudy” alfabeto arrangement

VI. Summary & Contact Information

“Clear or Cloudy” was published in Dowland’s Second Book of Songs in 1600. The alfabeto arrangement of “Clear of Cloudy” presented in this documentation represents my interpretation of how a Dowland piece might have been played on the five-course guitar, in period, by a capable musician who could read lute/vihuela tablature in addition to playing the guitar (or at least, had a very good ear). I hope you enjoyed the performance. If you would like to discuss further, I can be contacted at:

Johann von Solothurn (mka John Surber)

Johann_von_solothurn@yahoo.com

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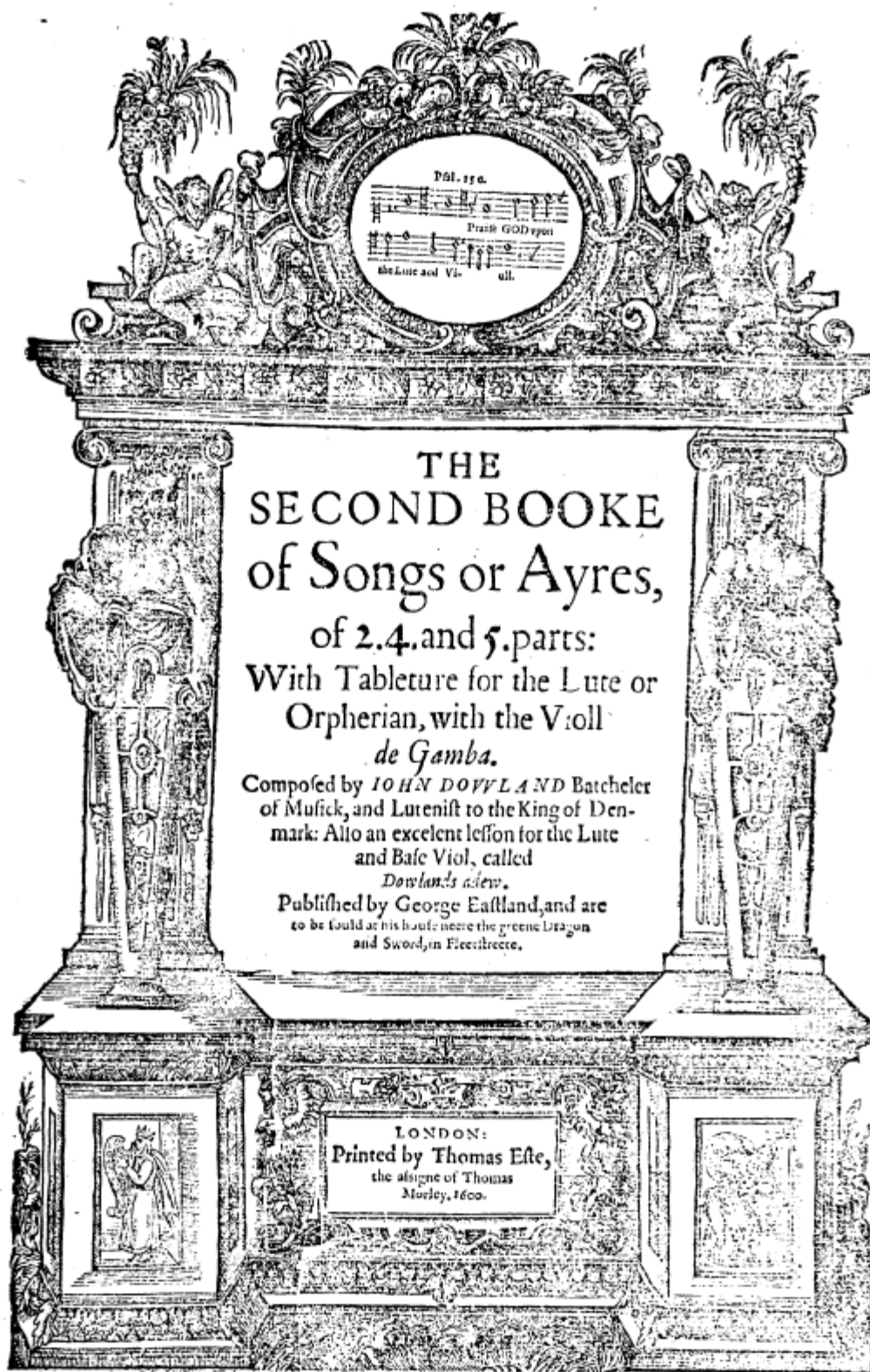
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Appendix A

Dowland's 2nd Book of Songs: Cover and Complete Score for "Clear or Cloudy"



THE
SECOND BOOKE
of Songs or Ayres,
of 2. 4. and 5. parts:
With Tableture for the Lute or
Orpherian, with the Violl
de Gamba.

Composed by *JOHN DOWLAND* Batcheler
of Musick, and Lutenist to the King of Den-
mark: Alto an excelent lesson for the Lute
and Base Viol, called
Dowlands adieu.

Published by George Eastland, and are
to be found at his house neere the Greene Dragon
and Sword, in Fleetstreete.

LONDON:
Printed by Thomas Este,
the assigne of Thomas
Morley, 1600.

TO THE RIGHT

Honorable the Lady Lucie

Comptesse of BEDFORD.



Excellent Ladie: I send vnto your La: from the Court of a forreine Prince, this volume of my second labours: as to the worthiest Patroneſſe, of Musicke: which is the Nobleſt of all Sciences: for the whole frame of Nature, is nothing but Harmonie, as wel in ſoules, as bodies: And becauſe I am now remoued from your ſight, I will ſpeake boldly, that your La: ſhall be vntankfull to Nature hir ſelfe, if you doe not loue, & defend that Art, by which, ſhe hath giuen you ſo well tuned a minde.

Your Ladſhip hath in your ſelfe, an excellent agreement of many vertues, of which: though I admire all, Yet I am bound by my profeſſion, to giue eſpecially honor, to your knowledge of Musicke: which in the iudgement of ancient times, was ſo proper an excelencie to Women, that the Muſes tooke their name from it, and yet ſo rare, that the world durſt imagin but nine of them.

I moſt humbly beſeech your La: to receiue this worke, into your fauour: and the rather, becauſe it cometh far to beg it, of you. From Helſingnoure in Denmarke the firſt of Iune.

1600.

Your Ladſhips

in all humble deuotion:

John Dowland.

A.ij.

For a little while.

XXI. CANTO.

Leare or cloudie sweet as Aprill showing, Smooth or frowning fo is hir
 face to mee, Pleas'd or smiling like milde May all flowing, When skies blew filke and me-
 dowers car-
 pets bee, Hir speeches notes of that night bird that singeth, Who thought all
 sweet yet having notes out sing- eth.

XXI.

Leare or cloudie sweet as Aprill showing, Smooth or frowning fo is hir
 face to mee, Pleas'd or smiling like milde May all flowing, When skies blew filke and me-
 dowers car-
 pets bee, Hir speeches notes of that night bird that singeth, Who thought all
 sweet yet having notes out sing- eth.

Hir grace like Iure, when earth and trees bee trimd,
 In bell attire of comely beautes height,
 Hir loue againe like sommers daies bee climd,
 With little cloudes of doubtfull constant faith,
 Hir trust hir doubt, like raine and heat in Skies,
 Gently thundring, the lightning to mine eyes,

Sweet sommer spring that breatheth life and growing,
 In weedes as into heards and flowers,
 And loe of feruice diuers sorts in fowling,
 Some haply seeming and some being yours,
 Raine on your heards and flowers that truly frue,
 And let your weedes lack dew and duely frue,

notes of that night bird that singeth, who thought all sweet yet having notes out singeth.

XXI.

Leare or cloudie sweet as Aprill showing, Smooth or frowning fo is hir face to mee, pleas'd or
 smiling like milde May all flowing, when Skies blew filke blew filke and Medowes car-
 pets bee, hir speeches
 notes of that night bird that singeth, who thought all sweet yet having notes out singeth.

BASSO.

XXI.

Leare or cloudie sweet as Aprill showing, Smooth or frow-
 ning fo is hir face to mee, pleas'd or smiling like milde May all flowing, when
 Skies blew filke and Medowes car-
 pets bee, hir speeches notes of
 that night bird
 that singeth, who thought all
 sweet yet having notes out singeth.

XXI. TENORE.

Leare or cloudie sweet as Aprill showing, Smooth or frowning fo is hir face to mee, pleas'd or
 smiling like milde May all flowing, when Skies blew filke blew filke and Medowes car-
 pets bee, hir speeches
 notes of that night bird that singeth, who thought all sweet yet having notes out singeth.

Mij.