

Chapter 3

ARBELLA, ORIANA, AND THE MUSIC OF MICHAEL CAVENDISH (1565–1628)

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MICHAEL Cavendish IS something of an enigma. He should be better known than he is, being of the Cavendish family (albeit a more obscure branch than the subjects of other chapters of this book) and a composer of lute ayres that are close in mood and texture to those of his more famous contemporary, John Dowland (1563–1626). He was a cousin of Arbella Stuart (1575–1615), the one-time possible successor to Queen Elizabeth. As Lisa Hopkins notes (see [Chapter 1](#)), Arbella was a key figure in the rise to prominence of the Cavendish family. Some sources suggest that Michael was a grandson of Bess of Hardwick (1527–1608), but this is not the case. Nevertheless, he is an important if somewhat neglected figure in the Cavendish narrative, being not only cousin to Arbella but also one of the grandsons of George Cavendish (1497–1562), the biographer of Cardinal Wolsey (see Gavin Schwartz-Leeper’s chapter). George was part of the Cavendishes of Cavendish Overall in Suffolk and had one son, William, who had three sons: William, Ralph, and Michael, the subject of this chapter. Michael’s eldest brother, William, sold Overhall Manor in 1596 to a Robert Downes of London. As Francis Bickley notes in an early twentieth-century biography of the Cavendish family, for a while after this date Cavendishes still lived in and around the Suffolk base.¹ Despite his heritage and connections, much of Michael’s life remains undocumented and his musical career was curiously short-lived. At present there are no recordings of the complete lute ayres, which, published in 1598, compare favourably with those of Dowland. He was a “gentleman” and he contributed to Thomas Morley’s (1557–1602) collection of madrigals (1597) and to a supposed paean to Elizabeth, *The Triumphs of Oriana* (1601), as well as composing his fourteen lute ayres and sundry madrigals and psalms.

Bess’s youngest son Sir Charles Cavendish, to whom the composer John Wilbye (1574–1638) dedicated his *First Set of English Madrigals* in 1598 for his “excellent skill in music, and great love and favour of music,” was a cousin of Michael, who remained at the old family house in Suffolk as “an amateur madrigalist” and “a good follower of Morley”² (who will turn up later). Then the trail grows somewhat cold. The sale of Overhall Manor in 1596 by Michael’s elder brother William really points to the coming end of the line that had begun with Sir John Cavendish (b. 1355). As Edmund Fellowes states in his 1925 introduction to Michael’s *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, “the branch

1 Francis Bickley, *The Cavendish Family* (London: Constable, 1911), 26.

2 G. A. Philipps, “John Wilbye’s Other Patrons: The Cavendishes and Their Place in English Musical Life during the Renaissance,” *The Music Review* 38 (1977): 81–93.

became extinct in the seventeenth century.”³ We do know that later, Michael became “servant in the bedchamber to Prince Charles,” and he also features in the list of Grooms of the Privy Chamber in Ordinary to Henry, Prince of Wales.⁴ But other than his service to the princes, almost nothing is known about his life after this until his death. His will is dated July 5, 1628; he died unmarried in the parish of St. Mary Aldermanbury (in the City of London—the church was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666). The *14 Ayres*, of which there is only one copy, acquired in 1917 by the British Museum, belonged to Lord Waterpark in the nineteenth century, Waterpark being a title given in 1792 to a branch of the family descended from an illegitimate son of Bess of Hardwick’s eldest son Henry. The contents page of the Ayres includes a woodcut of the Cavendish coat of arms of three bucks’ heads. The *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles* was printed by Peter Short, the printer of several works by Shakespeare as well as of Morley’s *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597).

Michael was also a contributor to Thomas East’s (ca. 1540–1609) *First Booke of Psalmes* (1592), dedicated to Sir John Puckering, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, who was involved in the trial and execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. This volume was a new edition of the psalter of William Damon (one of “Her Majesty’s Musicians”) containing extant tunes newly harmonized by composers that included Michael. The volume was close to resembling what we would now call a “score,” as opposed to the part-book organization of much music of the time. Michael was also recorded as being present at Chatsworth in September 1604 with a “Frenchman” named Lambert, thought to be a lutenist previously employed at the house, where many musicians assembled. According to David Price, Michael may even have become an agent or temporary household musician, for in April 1605 he purchased a “sett of singing books” for sixteen shillings and in June he was paid “four pounds, six shillings and eight pence.”⁵ He is often referred to as being a “country gentleman and arcadian,” but he is also a significant musical figure and composer of lute ayres and madrigals—the most popular musical genres of the day—during the extraordinary late years of Elizabeth’s reign.⁶ He does indeed refer to himself as “gentleman” in the volume of ayres and madrigals, but this was a practice followed by others, including Dowland, in order to stress their social position at a time when the title “musician” was still not wholly respectable. Cavendish, though, clearly was a man of good social standing, albeit hardly at the top of the Cavendish order. The book of songs and madrigals is similar in style to the work of his contemporary Thomas Greaves; both collections end with a group of five-part madrigals. Further, Greaves’s employer was Sir

3 Edmund Fellowes, ed., *Songs Included in Michael Cavendish’s Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles* (1598) (London: Stainer and Bell, 1926), unpaginated introduction.

4 Thomas Birch, *The Life of Henry, Prince of Wales, Eldest Son of King James I* (Dublin: Faulkner, 1760), 452.

5 David Price, *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 116.

6 Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 116.

Henry Pierrepont, whose wife, Frances Cavendish, was a daughter of Bess of Hardwick and cousin to Michael's father, William.

Michael's *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles* of 1598 was dedicated to his cousin, Arbella Stuart. At Hardwick Hall in the 1590s, it is reported that Arbella purchased a set of viols, and she may have employed the Queen's Players between 1596 and 1600. The household accounts for the Cavendishes at Chatsworth and Hardwick for January 1600 show 4s. 8d. spent on Michael Cavendish's "booke of musike."⁷ The title page of the volume is damaged and, as Fellowes notes, the principal title is missing. The rather lengthy subtitle is as follows:

14. Ayres in Tabletorie to the Lute expressed with two voyces and the base Violl or the voice & Lute only. 6. more to 4. voyces and in Tabletorie. And 8. Madrigalles to 5. Voyces. By Michaell Cavendish Gentleman. At London Printed by Peter Short, on bredstreet hill at the sign of the Starre: 1598.⁸

In the diary of one John Ramsey, gentleman, Cavendish, along with Dowland, is commended as being a "fine Musitian."⁹ That Michael had some reputation as a musician is shown by the fact that Ramsey "was not merely interested in what Dowland and Cavendish could teach him about music, but also in the prestige that personal contact with them could generate."¹⁰ According to Price, a "Mr Starkey," a music teacher to the Chatsworth Cavendishes, bought a copy of the *Booke* in 1600 for "Master William."¹¹ Michael's presence in the Hardwick and Chatsworth accounts from this time may indicate that he took charge of his second cousin's musical training. The importance of music in the Cavendish household is stressed by Price, who notes that William spent eight years between 1597 and 1605 learning the viol. Morley's treatise, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597/1608), was purchased by the Cavendish and Sidney families.¹² The records of the Cavendish family show that the household spent £11 12s. 5d. on English music prints and another £2 4s. 2d. on music paper and blank music books in the period from 1599 to 1614, as well as £3 13s. on twenty-two sets of mostly Italian vocal music, some of it second-hand, between 1599 and 1614. The Cavendish family had perhaps the best-stocked music library in the country, having amassed volumes by Dowland, Weelkes, East, Rosseter, Wilbye, Younge, Farnaby, and of course Michael Cavendish, to name but a few—all contemporary lute or madrigal composers. As Price notes of the Cavendishes in general:

Undoubtedly the Cavendishes were a remarkably cultivated family, even without their musical interests. Their passion for literature, science and travel marked them out as

⁷ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 117.

⁸ Fellowes, *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, unpaginated introduction.

⁹ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 187.

¹⁰ Michael Gale, "John Dowland, Celebrity Lute Teacher," *Early Music* 41 (2013): 205–18 at 208.

¹¹ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 115.

¹² Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 117.

worthy rivals of the Howards, Herberts and Sidneys. Yet none of these compared with a passion for music, which, because of the nature of the surviving evidence, seemed to be as intense as it was short-lived.¹³

This notion of a short-lived, intense musical career is certainly applicable to Michael Cavendish.

More significant beyond the brief biographical details available is the fact that Cavendish was part of that complex of musicians and patrons which included, besides himself and Arbella (who had the lutenist Thomas Cutting in her service), John Wilbye, serving the Kitsons of Hengrave (see Crosby Stevens's chapter), and Thomas Greaves, serving Sir Henry Pierrepont—two patrons who were related by blood or marriage to Arbella. Greaves published a collection of lute songs in 1604 dedicated to the Catholic magnate Pierrepont (whose brother Gervase was arrested for treason at the printer Thomas East's shop in 1600). The set of songs was based on Cavendish's (earlier) collection, so clearly Michael had some influence in musical circles. Though clearly having an interest in the arts, it appears that Arbella was not a particularly active patron.¹⁴ The reason must in part be financial, as Arbella, as noted by her biographer Sarah Gristwood, could not afford such commissions.¹⁵ Although a number of composers dedicated volumes to her, such figures were not intimately associated with the court. At one point between 1611 and 1614 William Cavendish patronized at least six players, including Cutting, Hewett, Molsoe, Pierce, Robert, Dowland, and, according to Lynn Hulse, possibly Michael Cavendish, who was at that time gentleman of the bedchamber to the prince.¹⁶ As Hulse further notes, William's lutenists are known to have played three-part consort music, popular among private gatherings as well as at court during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

The Musical Context

Two important musical forms were flowering at this time, and both were extraordinarily short-lived: the lute song and the madrigal. Michael Cavendish wrote both and is known particularly for one piece in each of the two genres, the madrigal "Come, Gentle Swains" and the lute song "Wandering in This Place." Lyrically, and to some extent musically, his madrigals are rather conservative, although it is the case with madrigals generally, having rather quaint and backward-looking words, typically dealing with nymphs and swains and other jolly elements of a mythical rural life:

Down in a valley, down in a valley
Shady vales are pleasant ports,

¹³ Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 117.

¹⁴ Sara Jayne Steen, ed., *The Letters of Arbella Stuart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 57.

¹⁵ Sarah Gristwood, *Arbella: England's Lost Queen* (London: Bantam, 2003), especially 262.

¹⁶ Matthew Spring, *The Lute in Britain: A History of the Instrument and Its Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 207; Lynn Hulse, "The Musical Patronage of the English Aristocracy, 1590–1640" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1992), 222.

For merry, merry
 Merry, merry, merry lads' resorts.
 Such was our hap to catch a swain
 O happy valley!

(Michael Cavendish, "Down in a Valley")¹⁷

Both of the Cavendish pieces noted above were originally compositions for lute, "Come, Gentle Swains" being recast in madrigal form for Thomas Morley's *The Triumphs of Oriana* (1601)—the collection of madrigals in supposed homage to Elizabeth and containing works by Cavendish, John Wilbye, and Thomas Weelkes among many other (primarily church) composers. One or two of Cavendish's lute compositions certainly compare well with Dowland, and the volume as a whole is quite early in the history of the flowering of lute-song composition that ended so suddenly after the first quarter of the seventeenth century. As Fellowes notes:

Michael Cavendish was the author of a Madrigal "Come Gentle Swains" published by Morley in *The Triumphs of Oriana*, 1600. He also published in the previous year "14 Ayres ..." Imprinted by Peter Short, 1599 folio. This work is among the rarest of its class. It is not mentioned by Hawkins or Burney, nor does it occur in any sale-catalogue.

Of the *Ayres*, Fellowes further states that "[T]his book is one of the rarest of its kind."¹⁸

The two volumes that Michael Cavendish wrote music for—his own *Ayres and Madrigalles* and Morley's *The Triumphs of Oriana*—supplement the little we know of his life and provide fresh and interesting insights into his relationship to contemporary society. Both collections have mysteries behind them which may well never be solved given the scant details of Cavendish's life. However, I am going to investigate Cavendish's connections, through his relations with Arbella, with conspirators in the Essex rebellion of 1601 and (more generally) with Catholic patrons of the arts. We start with the dedications of each. Arbella Stuart, as noted, was a patron of the arts (albeit in a relatively modest way) and especially music (she apparently played the lute and the viol), who, as a contender in the line of succession to the queen, was unavoidably implicated in the political struggles of the day. Though a Protestant, she was apparently well disposed towards Catholics, and there is the further complication of her (and others') relationship with the Earl of Essex, as we shall see. Here is the dedication to Arbella from the *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*:

TO THE HONOURABLE PROTECTION OF THE LADIE ARBELLA

Notwithstanding your rare perfections in so many knowledges, which have adorned you and you them, let not, worthie Lady, one sole qualitie of mine seeme the rather insufficiency

¹⁷ Fellowes, *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, 30. Christopher Hogwood's brief biography of Michael in the *Dictionary of National Biography* suggests that Michael's madrigals are musically somewhat backward-looking.

¹⁸ Fellowes, *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, unpaginated introduction.

to your iudgement, or breed lesse acceptance for being offered alone. It commeth out of a profession worthie some grace, and hath in it humors variable for delights sake. I offer them as that wherby I can best expresse my service to you, and you may (if it please you) make use of them at your idlest houres. Manie causes I have to imbolden mine attempts of dutie to you, and your favours stande in the top of them: others there are more secrete, and lie in the nature of your owne apprehension. And howsoever the policie of times may hold it unfit to raise men humbled with adversities to titles of dearnesse, whether to shunne charge, or expresse pride, I rather know not, yet you I hope out of the honour of your nature, will vouchsafe your favours to a forward servant, so nearly tied to a dutifull devotion. In what ranke you please to place me, I will not change mine order. It shall be promotion to me that you account of me in any place, and all the commendations I seeke to my labors in this woorke, if you will be pleased to heare it at some times, and protect it at all times. Thus your ladyship having heard what I can say in this first leafe, you may (if it please you to vouchsafe acceptance) heare what I have song in the rest that follow. And so I rest: Yours humbly to be commaunded: MICHAELL CAVENDISH.

From Cavendish this 24 of Iuly.¹⁹

The rather curious reference to the “policie of times” in among the more usual praises and expressions of humble devotion is striking, yet no one so far has known quite what to do about it. Who are those “humbled with adversities”? It could certainly apply to Arbella, somewhat ironically, who was at this time restricted to Hardwick Hall (from the 1590s to 1603) and would have had many “idlest houres” in which to sing or play. The most likely reading, however, is that it is Michael himself, who did better after Elizabeth had died inasmuch as he seemed to lead a fairly content life without the need to make further music and therefore risk possibly aligning himself with Catholic heretics. And, of course, the “policie” of those times was not glorious and benevolent. The years 1585–1603, the so-called “second reign” of Elizabeth, have been called years of “ambition, apprehension, insecurity, authoritarianism, self-interest, discord, aggression, resentment, veniality, paranoia and claustrophobia,” culminating in the execution of Essex in 1601 and the queen’s own death in 1603.²⁰ During this extraordinary time, Michael Cavendish was represented both in a volume of madrigals supposedly as a paeon to Elizabeth (although, as we shall see, this is by no means straightforward) and in a volume dedicated to Arbella—a possible successor to Elizabeth. The question remains as to the extent to which Michael was sympathetic both to Catholicism and to Robert, Earl of Essex (1566–1601), the one-time favourite of Elizabeth, who was executed for treason in 1601 (many believing he was tolerant of Catholicism). Lillian Ruff and Arnold Wilson go as far as to say that the madrigal and lutenist composers were “*overwhelmingly* of Essex sympathies” (my italics).²¹ The link between the Roman Catholic church,

¹⁹ Fellowes, *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, unpaginated introduction.

²⁰ John Guy, ed., *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7–8.

²¹ Lillian Ruff and Arnold Wilson, “The Madrigal, the Lute Song and Elizabethan Politics,” *Past & Present* 44 (1969): 3–51 at 23.

music publishing, and music patronage is significant here, as David Price suggests, although a crude linking of composers with Catholicism is to be avoided:

[Yet] it does remain possible that many published composers were at some time involved in Roman Catholic activities, that this often drew them to the patronage of Roman Catholic families or their sympathisers, and that this connection influenced their choice of musical collaborator, of musical titles, even of musical text.²²

Ruff and Wilson make the more specific contention that “the course taken by the Elizabethan madrigal displays ... a remarkable correlation” with “the meteoric rise and fall of the young earl of Essex.” Examining the registering of madrigal collections, they note:

Weelkes, Wilbye and other composers brought the madrigal to its acme in quality and quantity in 1598 when Essex was at the apex of his career. This is followed by the five years which saw his downfall and ruin, the aftermath, and the death of the Queen, paralleled by a deep trough in the publication of madrigals.²³

Of course, Michael Cavendish’s collection of ayres and madrigals was published in 1598 and includes the *Oriana* refrain, which appears throughout the *Triumphs*. With its association with the competitor for the throne, Arbella, it was hardly likely to be met with delight by Elizabeth.

As for the parallel story of the lute song: no lute songs were published in 1599 when Essex’s collapse occurred, and there was a general clamping down on publication. In 1600 and 1601, the years of Essex’s house arrest and his death, 120 songs were published, including the best work of the best composers: John Dowland, Philip Rosseter, and Thomas Campion. Tellingly, however, there was nothing further from Cavendish. This might seem to suggest a worsening of Michael’s situation, but, as I have intimated, I think it more likely that during this time his life improved and he had no further desire to compose. Although his considerable talents as a composer were not to be utilized again, he may well have continued his lute playing in the service of the sons of James I. It may also have been the case that Michael had exhausted his interest in this bright-shining but brief compositional genre.

Some extravagant claims have been made for the sudden flowering and swift demise of the lute song. Its heyday between 1597 and 1623 (that is, between Dowland’s first and last collections) spans the final years of Elizabeth’s reign and almost all of James’s. The overarching emotion of the lute ayres is melancholy, but this cannot be fully accounted for by recourse to the conventions of courtly love. Daniel Fischlin suggests that the melancholy of the ayre suggests a *fin de siècle* of Elizabeth’s reign and the *weltanschauung* of James’s.²⁴ Certainly the final years of Elizabeth’s reign (as noted earlier)

²² Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 155.

²³ Ruff and Wilson, “The Madrigal,” 4, 7.

²⁴ Daniel Fischlin, *In Small Proportions: A Poetics of the English Ayre, 1596–1622* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 21.

were discordant—and this is where we find Cavendish's *14 Ayres* with its dedication to Arbella.

Ruff and Wilson suggest that madrigal verse of 1597 to 1599 would *probably* include some bearing an openly pro-Essex slant. This is more difficult to substantiate, as madrigal verse is notoriously bland; the better poetry tended to feature in the lute songs. Though expressing the conventions of courtly love in its intimacy, the lute song was able to make subtle connections between the private and the public. Cavendish's ayres contain words from Gaspar Gil Polo's *Diana Enamorada* (1564), translations of Petrarch sonnets (which are more conventional), and a verse from Fulke Greville's *Caelica*. Greville's poetry is rather sombre and Calvinist, though the poem in question ("Loue the delight of all well thinking minds") is little more than a conventional blazon. There is a nod to Dowland's "Flow My Tears" in Cavendish's most famous ayre, "Wandering in This Place":

O deus, deus, non est dolor, sicut dolor meus. ("O God, God—there is no sorrow like unto my sorrow.")

Following a quotation from Michael's lute song "Why Should I Muse?", Arbella's biographer, Sarah Gristwood, notes with reference to Arbella's plight that "even the songs were gloomy."²⁵ Part of this "gloom" can of course be accounted for by the conventions of courtly love, as the quoted verse shows:

Why should my muse thus restless in her woes
 Summon records of never dying fears?
 And still revive fresh springing in my thoughts,
 The true memorial of my sad despairs?

The words to the song as a whole are taken from a late fifteenth-century work at first wrongly attributed to Chaucer, "Lamentation of Mary Magdalen." The lamentation was a fairly common subject in religious poetry and art in general up until the high baroque period (ca. 1700), but its transposition into a lute song here is striking. In its original context the words are a mournful evocation of the period between the death of Jesus on the Cross and his being placed in his tomb, with the complex figure of the penitent Mary Magdalen in attendance. Given the largely secular nature of lute song lyrics, it is curious that such words are set here. In their new context the words look less like a religious elegy and more like a fairly conventional lover's lament, with the rhetorical questioning of the lover, the references to sadness and despair, and the oblique reference to death. But the interweaving of contexts produces a more startling reading. However, I think that the combination of this noted gloom and the dedication suggests an unhappy state for Michael Cavendish—as one might say for the country as a whole. We do not know how long he remained in Overhall or the surrounding area, for details of this kind are almost impossible to establish without some kind of public record. But it is plausible that the latter part of the sixteenth century was a dark time for Michael. Essentially a "country gentleman," he operates on the fringes of the Cavendish family and does not

²⁵ Gristwood, *Arbella*, 175.

regain a public face until after Elizabeth's death. His book of lute ayres and madrigals, with its dedication to Arbella Stuart, seemed similarly to lie dormant, in this case virtually unheard of until discovered in the twentieth century. And yet it was published only a year after Dowland's *First Book of Songs and Ayres* (1597), suggesting that Cavendish was at the forefront of lute-song writing in the late sixteenth century. It is curious that he should pass so quickly out of musical life.

Michael Cavendish and Oriana

The other important volume where we find the music of Michael Cavendish is in Thomas Morley's collection *The Triumphes of Oriana*. Here is the dedication of *The Triumphes* (to Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham):

I Have aduentured to dedicate these few discordant tunes to be censured by the ingenious disposition of your Lordships Honorable rare perfection, perswading my selfe, that these labours, composed by me and others, (as in the survey hereof, your Lordship may well perceiue) may not by any meanes passe, without the malignitie of some malicious *Momus*, whose malice (being as toothsome as the *Adders* sting) couched in the progres of a wayfaying mans passage, might make him retire though almost at his iourneyes end.²⁶

Ruff and Wilson note:

These words surely express the disappointment and weariness of a man who has accomplished a thankless task against obstacles and ill-will which have made him lose heart; and there is evidence that this was indeed so.²⁷

Jeremy Smith argues convincingly that the allegorical identification of "Oriana" (who originated in the fourteenth-century romance *Amadis de Gaulle*) with Queen Elizabeth is inappropriate, given the fictional character's marriage, fecundity, and impulsive nature.²⁸ Instead, he proposes that "Oriana" represents James VI's wife, Anna of Denmark (with "Amadis" as James himself). The later amendment of the dedication was doubtless due to the execution of Essex, which made it incumbent upon Morley and his collaborators to pay tribute to Elizabeth instead. But not all traces of the original intent were effaced. This may well have been the case, but it is not clear that this reflected a political statement in support of Essex on Morley's and his collaborators' part rather than a commercial response to the growing expectation of a Jamesian succession. Certainly, Morley seems eventually to have played safe, dedicating the volume to the Earl of Nottingham (1536–1624), who had been prominent both in the prosecution of Mary, Queen of Scots and as Essex's commander of the English forces against the Armada. It has been said that the reason was purely financial, but Smith has again shown that there is much more

²⁶ Thomas Morley, *Madrigales: The triumphes of Oriana, to 5. and 6. Voices* (London, 1601).

²⁷ Ruff and Wilson, "The Madrigal," 22.

²⁸ Jeremy Smith, "Music and Late Elizabethan Politics: The Identities of Oriana and Diana," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58 (2005): 507–58.

to the case than a simple matter of finance. The eventual printing was dated 1601: in fact, there were two printings so dated, with two sets of part-books set up in different type. There is no mention whatever of the queen, and the work was not registered with the Stationers' Company until October 15, 1603, seven months after the queen had died and seven years after Morley may be presumed to have launched the project. Moreover, evidence of the circulation of any copies before 1603 is found in only one case: this was recorded as having been purchased in 1601 for Sir William Cavendish of Hardwick Hall, the future 1st Earl of Devonshire. Each madrigal ends with the following phrase, which is from Michael's madrigal; thus his voice is obliquely heard throughout this important and paradoxical collection:

Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana:
Long live fair Oriana

Thomas Elias, in the liner notes for the Hyperion recording of the *Triumphes*, says:

In search of the best music, Morley drew upon England's richest source of musicians, the organists and singing men of the chapels and cathedrals. Although many of the composers now seem obscure, in the 17th century the list of contributors to the *Triumphs* would have read like a list of the great and the good of *English church music*.²⁹

(My emphasis.)

But the madrigal is a secular genre, and Morley's choice of composers has some startling omissions. Jeremy Smith rightly questions why, of all names, that of William Byrd was missing, whose spirit, more than anyone's, had set the whole thing in motion.³⁰ There were other notable court composers, such as Farnaby and Greaves, who were not represented. One madrigal, by Michael East, arrived so late that it was printed not in the body of each part-book but in the preliminary pages (which, peculiarly, were always printed last). Another madrigal by Bateson was not included in the set at all (and does not appear on the Hyperion recording), but it was printed in Bateson's own set of 1604 with the admission, "This song should have been printed in the set of Orianas." Of the composers represented in Morley's volume, Daniel Norcombe was lutenist to Christian IV of Denmark. Kirbye, Wilbye, and Edward Johnson were employed in private houses around East Anglia, part of the extensive network of musical households in which William Byrd also participated. But beyond that, it is hardly drawing on the great composers of the day.

Why was there such a scramble at the finish that East's madrigal was late and had to be squeezed in at the front without a number? Why were the great lutenists, Dowland, Campion, Daniel, Ferrabosco, Pilkington, and Rosseter, not represented when there were six names short of the desirable twenty-nine and when some who had been included were minor composers such as Lisley, Hunt, Marson, and Nicolson? Morley also

²⁹ Thomas Elias, CD liner notes to *The Triumphs of Oriana*, sung by the King's Singers (Hyperion Records, 2006).

³⁰ Smith, "Music and Late Elizabethan Politics," 511.

included two by himself and two by Ellis Gibbons, suggestive of a “padding out” and perhaps the loss of named composers previously anticipated for inclusion. Finally, it is surely odd that the circulation of something that was expressly designed for the queen was subject to such mystery in 1601, when she was alive, and then publicly released in 1603 when she had been dead for seven months. All in all, it does not suggest the joyful tribute to an adored queen that had been the accepted description since John Hawkins first suggested it in 1776.³¹

The most well-known contributor to the *Triumphes* was undoubtedly John Wilbye. Famous as a leading madrigalist, he was a friend of the music printer Thomas East and lived for many years at Hengrave Hall (near Bury St. Edmunds; see Crosby Stevens’s chapter), a recusant household. This seeming innocent connection actually just shows us how intricate was the web of politics, music, and publishing in the late Elizabethan era. For two decades until 1596, music publishing was virtually a monopoly under the composer William Byrd. Byrd wrote music for Anglican congregations but became a Catholic in 1570, a somewhat perilous path to take under Elizabeth. Byrd had no interest in lute music, and when his monopoly ended and his licence transferred to Thomas East, there was a tremendous flowering of music publication—particularly of lute ayres but including madrigals and other secular works. Significant in this renaissance of publishing is Morley. He called William Byrd his “mentor” and was also a Roman Catholic, albeit one who ultimately recanted to avoid execution.

David Price suggests that Michael Cavendish was especially acquainted with Morley because of his purchase in December 1601 of *The Triumphes of Oriana*, which he claims, though printed that year, was not sold until after the queen’s death.³² While it is true that Morley’s publication was not entered in the Stationers’ Register until October 15, 1603, it was listed with other items published up to six years earlier. It is certainly possible that their relationship predated the publication of the *Triumphes*.

On April 2, 1600 several English Catholic recusants were arrested for treason at the house of Thomas East, at whose press the *Triumphes* was printed. East, it will be remembered, was also the publisher of the volume of psalms to which Michael Cavendish contributed. East had produced secret editions of Byrd’s *Masses and Psalms, Sonets and Songs*, the content of which was broadly consonant with the pro-Essex party. It is clear that many musicians and composers were caught up in the net of political intrigue and plotting, and this would include Michael Cavendish by virtue of the timing and ambiguous context of his compositions. The political turmoil and disillusionment that followed the execution of Essex in 1601 is evident in the bitter dedication of Morley’s in the *Triumphes*. Morley resigned from the Chapel Royal in 1602 and died the same year. Smith states:

Morley himself might well have shared the political disillusionment, yet his ambition and his love of music would impel him to proceed with the publication in order that

³¹ Cited in “‘The Triumphs of Oriana’: A Collection of Madrigals,” *Musical Times* 6 (January 1855): 258.

³² Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 116.

the labour of years should bear some fruit. The profoundly disturbed atmosphere that followed Essex's execution, with almost a reign of terror and intense antagonisms on all sides, would make 1601 a most unfortunate year for publication. But, after the accession of James, when he sought to utilize Essex's popularity by rehabilitating his supporters in 1603, more favourable conditions would have prevailed.³³

And, of course, very little is really heard of Michael Cavendish after this until after Elizabeth's death, despite the continued interest in and patronage of lutenists such as Thomas Cutting (who had also been employed by Prince Henry in 1607) within the Cavendish family. Yet he wrote and published in the two short-lived but dominant musical forms of the time, which in turn were part of the extraordinary relationship that existed between music publication and political intrigue. When James I ascended the throne, Cavendish was evidently much more settled and content to see out his days as a gentleman in service. His few short years of composing coincided not only with the heyday of lute and madrigal compositions but also with the final "terror" years of Elizabeth's reign. Though undervalued at the present time, Michael Cavendish's music, in particular the lute ayres, remains an important contribution to this fascinating and volatile period of English history.

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33 Smith, "Music and Late Elizabethan Politics," 542.

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