

When I look back

Edited by Jason Smart

Robert Parsons (d.1572)

Mean

Countertenor 1

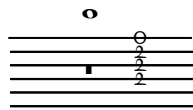
Countertenor 2

Tenor

Bass

Lute

(Transcription for comparison only)



When I look back and
When I look back
When I look back
When I look back
When I look back

3

in my self be - hold The wan-d'ring ways that youth could not des -
and in my self be - hold The wan - d'ring ways that youth could
and in my self be - hold The wan - d'ring ways that youth could
and in my self be - hold The wan - d'ring ways that youth could
and in my self be - hold The wan-d'ring ways that youth could

For performance options see the critical commentary.

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7

- - cry: _____ And mark'd the fear - ful course in youth too
 not des - cry: _____ And mark'd the fear - ful course in
 not des - cry: _____ And mark'd the fear - ful course in
 not des - cry: _____ And mark'd the fear - ful course in
 not des - cry: _____ And mark'd the fear - ful course in

11

bold, And met in mind _____ each step youth stray'd a - -
 youth too bold, And met in mind each step youth stray'd a - -
 youth too bold, And met in mind each step youth stray'd _____ a - -
 youth too bold, And met in mind each step youth stray'd a - -
 youth too bold, And met in mind each step youth stray'd a - -

15

- wry: My knees I bow, and from my heart I call,

- wry: My knees I bow, and from my heart I call,

- wry: My knees I bow, and from my heart I call,

- wry: My knees I bow, and from my heart I call,

- wry: My knees I bow, and from my heart I call,

19

O Lord, O Lord, for - get youth's faults and fol -

O Lord, O Lord, for - get youth's faults and fol - lies all, and

O Lord, O Lord, for - get youth's faults and fol - lies all, and

O Lord, O Lord, for - get youth's faults and fol - lies all, and

O Lord, O Lord, for - get youth's faults and fol - lies all, and

23

- lies all, for - get youth's faults and fol - lies all. For now I
 fol - lies all, for - get youth's faults and fol - lies all. For
 fol - lies all, for - get youth's faults and fol - lies all. For
 fol - lies all, for - get youth's faults and fol - lies all. For
 fol - lies all, for - get youth's faults and fol - lies all. For

28

see how void youth was of skill, And know right well youth's
 now I see how void youth was of skill, And know right
 now I see how void youth was of skill, And know right
 now I see how void youth was of skill, And know right
 now I see how void youth was of skill, And know right

44

of all — crimes, Par - don I ask, I ask — for youth —

of all crimes, Par - don I ask, I ask for youth ten

all crimes, Par - don I ask, — I ask for youth ten thou -

all — crimes, Par - don I ask, I ask — for youth ten

all crimes, Par - don I ask, I ask for youth ten

48

— ten thou - sand times, I ask for youth ten thou-sand times.

thou - sand times, ten thou - sand times, I ask for youth ten thou-sand times.

- sand times, ten thou - sand times, I ask for youth ten thou-sand times.

thou - sand times, ten thou - sand times, I ask for youth ten thou-sand times.

thou - sand times, ten thou - sand times, I ask for youth ten thou-sand times.

53

The hum - ble heart hath daunt - ed the proud mind, And

The hum - ble heart hath daunt - ed the proud mind,

The hum - ble heart hath daunt - ed the proud mind,

The hum - ble heart hath daunt - ed the proud mind,

The hum - ble heart hath daunt - ed the proud mind,

57

skill hath given to ig - no - rance the _____ fall: _____ Wis -

And skill hath given to ig - no - rance the _____ fall:

And skill hath given to ig - no - rance the fall: _____

And skill hath given to _____ ig - no - rance the fall: _____

And skill hath given to ig - no - rance the fall: _____

61

- dom hath taught that fol - ly could not find, And age hath youth _____

Wis - dom hath taught that fol - ly could not find, And age hath

Wis - dom hath taught that fol - ly could not find, And age hath

Wis - dom hath taught that fol - ly could not find, And age hath

Wis - dom hath taught that fol - ly could not find, And age hath

65

_____ his sub - ject and his _____ thrall. There - fore I pray, _____

youth his sub - ject and his _____ thrall. There - fore I pray, O

youth his sub - ject and _____ his thrall. There - fore I pray, O

youth his sub - ject and his _____ thrall. There - fore I pray, O

youth his sub - ject and his thrall. There - fore I pray, O

69

— O Lord of life and truth, Par - don the faults, the faults —

Lord of life and truth, Par - don the faults, the faults com -

Lord of life and truth, Par - don the faults, the faults com -

Lord of life and truth, Par - don the faults, the faults —

Lord of life and truth, Par - don the faults, the faults com -

73

— com - mit - ted in my youth, the faults com -

- mit - ted in my youth, in my youth, the faults com -

- mit - ted in my youth, in my youth, the faults com -

— com - mit - ted in my youth, in my youth, the faults com -

- mit - ted in my youth, in my youth, the faults com -

77

- mit - ted in my youth. Thou that didst grant the wise king his re -

- mit - ted in my youth. Thou that didst grant the wise king

- mit - ted in my youth. Thou that didst grant the wise king

- mit - ted in my youth. Thou that didst grant the wise king

- mit - ted in my youth. Thou that didst grant the wise king

82

quest: Thou that in whale thy pro - phet didst pre - serve: _____

his re - quest: Thou that in whale thy pro - phet didst pre -

his re - quest: Thou that in whale thy pro - phet didst pre - serve: _____

his re - quest: Thou that in whale thy pro - phet didst pre - serve: _____

his re - quest: Thou that in whale thy pro - phet didst pre - serve: _____

86

— Thou that for - gav'st the wound - ing of thy breast: Thou

- serve: Thou that for - gav'st the wound - ing of thy breast:

— Thou that for - gav'st the wound - ing of thy breast:

— Thou that for - gav'st the wound - ing of thy breast:

— Thou that for - gav'st the wound - ing of thy breast:

90

that didst save _____ the thief in state to _____ sterve: Thou

Thou that didst save the thief in state to _____ sterve: Thou

Thou that didst save the thief in state _____ to sterve: Thou

Thou that didst save the thief in state to _____ sterve: Thou

Thou that didst save the thief in state to sterve: Thou

94

on - ly God, _____ the giv - er of all _____ grace: Wipe out, wipe
 on - ly God, the giv - er _____ of all grace: Wipe out, wipe
 on - ly God, the giv - er of all grace: Wipe out, wipe
 on - ly God, the giv - er of all _____ grace: Wipe out, wipe
 on - ly God, the giv - er of all grace: Wipe out, wipe

98

out of mind _____ the path _____ of youth's _____ vain race,
 out of mind the path of youth's vain race, of youth's vain race,
 out _____ of mind the path of youth's _____ vain race, of youth's _____ vain race,
 out of mind _____ the path of youth's vain race, of youth's vain race,
 out of mind the path of youth's vain race, of youth's vain race,

102

the path of youth's vain _____ race. Thou that, by power, to
 the path _____ of youth's vain race. Thou that, by power,
 the path of youth's _____ vain race. Thou that, by power,
 the path of youth's vain _____ race. Thou that, by power,
 the path of youth's vain _____ race. Thou that, by power,

107

life didst raise the dead: Thou that of grace re - stor'st the blind to —
 to life didst raise the dead: Thou that of grace re - stor'st the
 to life didst raise the dead: Thou that of grace re - stor'st the
 to life didst raise the dead: Thou that of grace re - stor'st the
 to life didst raise the dead: Thou that of grace re - stor'st the

111

— sight: — Thou that for love thy life and love out -
 blind to — sight: Thou that for love thy life and
 blind to sight: — Thou that for love thy life and
 blind to sight: — Thou that for love thy life and
 blind to sight: — Thou that for love thy life and

115

- bled: Thou that of fa - your mad'st the lame go —
 love out - bled: Thou that of fa - your mad'st the lame go —
 love out - bled: Thou that of fa - your mad'st the lame go —
 love out - bled: Thou that of fa - your mad'st the lame go —
 love out - bled: Thou that of fa - your mad'st the lame go —

119

right: Thou that canst heal _____ and help in all as - says,

right: Thou that canst heal and help in _____ all as - says,

right: Thou that canst heal and help in all as - says,

right: Thou that canst heal and help in all as - says,

right: Thou that canst heal and help in all as - says,

123

For - give, for - give the guilt _____ that grew _____ in youth's _____

For - give, for - give the guilt that grew in youth's vain ways, in

For - give, for - give _____ the guilt that grew in youth's _____ vain ways, in

For - give, for - give the guilt _____ that grew in youth's vain ways, in

For - give, for - give the guilt that grew in youth's vain ways, in

127

_____ vain ways, the guilt that grew in youth's vain ways. And now since

youth's vain ways, the guilt that grew in youth's vain ways. And

youth's_ vain ways, the guilt that grew in youth's vain ways. And

youth's vain ways, the guilt that grew in youth's vain ways. And

youth's vain ways, the guilt that grew in youth's vain ways. And

132

I, with faith and doubt-less mind, Do fly to thee by
 now since I, with faith and doubt-less mind, Do fly to
 now since I, with faith and doubt-less mind, Do fly to
 now since I, with faith and doubt-less mind, Do fly to
 now since I, with faith and doubt-less mind, Do fly to

136

prayer to ap - pease thy ire: And since that thee I
 thee by prayer to ap - pease thy ire: And since that
 thee by prayer to ap - pease thy ire: And since that
 thee by prayer to ap - pease thy ire: And since that
 the by prayer to ap - pease thy ire: And since that

140

on - ly seek to find, And hope by faith to at - tain my
 thee I on - ly seek to find, And hope by faith to at - tain my
 thee I on - ly seek to find, And hope by faith to at - tain my
 thee I on - ly seek to find, And hope by faith to at - tain my
 thee I on - ly seek to find, And hope by faith to at - tain my

144

just de - sire; Lord, mind no more youth's er - ror

just de - sire; Lord, mind no more youth's er - ror

just de - sire; Lord, mind no more youth's er - ror and

just de - sire; Lord, mind no more youth's er - ror and

just de - sire; Lord, mind no more youth's er - ror and

148

and un - skill, And a - ble, a - ble age to do

and un - skill, And a - ble age to do thy ho - ly

un - skill, And a - ble age to do thy ho - ly will,

un - skill, And a - ble age to do thy ho - ly

un - skill, And a - ble age to do thy ho - ly

152

thy ho - ly will, to do thy ho - ly will.

will, to do thy ho - ly will, to do thy ho - ly will.

to do thy ho - ly will, to do thy ho - ly will.

will, to do thy ho - ly will, to do thy ho - ly will.

will, to do thy ho - ly will, to do thy ho - ly will.

Editorial Conventions

The nomenclature of the voice-parts follows the Tudor convention.

The original clef, staff signature, mensuration symbol and first note of the surviving second countertenor voice part and the original beginning of the lute part are shown on prefatory staves at the start of the piece.

The first countertenor, tenor and bass voice parts have been reconstructed from the lute tablature. The mean is lost and has been composed by the editor. Editorially reconstructed music is presented in full size notation. The editorially supplied portions of the second countertenor voice are enclosed between square brackets. I am most grateful to Dr Andrew Johnstone for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this reconstruction.

The lute tablature has been transcribed into staff notation. A digital reproduction of the original can be viewed at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_31992.)

Spelling of the text has been modernised.

Sources

A Oxford, Christ Church Mus. 986 (1581–8 with later additions; Ct2 only, incomplete, anonymous).

(Ct2) No.99b [no attribution]

B Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mus. Sch. e. 423 (c.1577–1595; Ct2 only, textless).

(Ct2) Section 1, no.25 at end: parsons

C London, British Library, Add. MS 31992 (c.1610; lute only).

(lute) f.51^v at beginning: Mr Parson :

Notes on the Readings of the Sources

Parsons's song is a setting of a poem by Thomas Vaux. A few years after the composer's death it was published in Richard Edwards's anthology *The Paradyse of daynty deuises* (London: Henry Disle, 1576), p.11. This publication has been used to complete the underlay in the edition. The text given in source **A** differs from Edwards's version in some small particulars; its readings have been retained.

As explained below, each of the sources implies a different mode of performance.

1. As a partsong for five singers.
2. As a consort song for a solo mean with four accompanying instruments.
3. As a song for solo voice with lute accompaniment.

Source **A** is the set of partbooks compiled by Robert Dow. Dow began to copy Parsons's song, but completed only the first page of the Ct2. The reverse side of the page, which would have carried the remainder of this voice, is blank, as are the corresponding pages in the accompanying partbooks into which the other voices would have been entered. The notation for the first verse survives complete with the words of both verses 1 and 2 underlaid. The notation is then repeated with verses 3 and 4 underlaid, but the page ends after the third note in bar 65 in the middle of the word 'subject' in verse 3 and after 'thief' (bar 91) of verse 4. Had Dow completed copying the composition no doubt all of the voices would have been texted for singing.

Source **B** is the only survivor of a set of five partbooks copied by John Bentley, who worked for John Petre at Thorndon Essex. It preserves the same voice, but this time without any underlay, among a group of textless consort songs. Since there is no text, the music is written only once. This is probably the original form of the work: a consort song for solo mean.

Source **C**, copied by a scribe who worked for Edward Paston in Norfolk, is a manuscript collection of motets and other music arranged as lute songs. Originally the manuscript would have been partnered by a book for the singer, but this has been lost. As usual with the Paston lute books the lute intabulation omits the singer's part and arranges only the lower voices, in this case four. As with source **B**, only one verse is notated.

Apart from one rhythmical variant and differences in specifying accidentals **A** and **B** agree. The lute intabulation fits the surviving voice without problem except in one striking particular: it sharpens many of the B flats to produce G major chords. These have been left in the transcription, although they can hardly have been intended by Parsons.

Accidentals and Staff Signatures

A 4 Ct2 no # for F / 25 Ct2 no # for F / 56 Ct2 no # for F /

Because verses 2 and 4 are underlaid to the notation of verses 1 and 3, these references also apply in bars 30, 51 and 82 respectively.

B 1 Ct2 Staff signature lacks *b* for E throughout / 13 Ct2 no *b* for E / 17 Ct2 *b* for E. This *b* may continue to affect the subsequent Es on the same staff in 19–21 since none has an accidental /

Underlay

A 20 Ct2 slur for crotchets FED / 23 Ct2 slur for crotchets AG /

Because verses 1 and 2 are underlaid to the same notation these two references also apply in bars 46 and 49.

Rhythm

B 17–18 Ct2 The two semibreve Cs are divided into the following rhythm: minim, minim, dotted minim, crotchet./