GRESHAM COLLEGE

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THE GUITAR IN THE AGE OF CHARLES I

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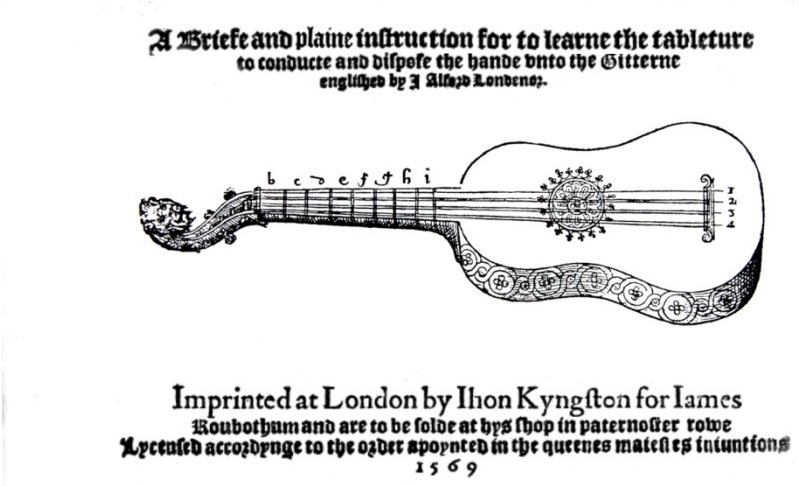
In 1599 a forgotten poet named Tailboys Dymoke published an allegorical poem so obscene that the Archbishop of Canterbury condemned it to be burned. Entitled *The Bumble Bee*, it recounts a love affair between the bee of the title, standing for Dymoke himself, and a royal maid of honour represented by a marigold. Eventually the bee undergoes a metamorphosis and turns into a musician who serves at the court of Elizabeth I. The queen rewards him with lavish gifts including

> The Kingly Harp, and the courtly Citheren,
> the Solace, Vyols, and the Vyolins:
> The litle fidling Kit, and ancient Gittern…

The full inventory of instruments runs to seventeen items, but the gittern is the only one described as 'ancient', as if it has become archaic. We might compare *The Faery Pastorall,* a play of 1603, by William Percy, where a scene begins with a character walking on stage playing 'an old getterne'.

You may remember that 'Gittern' was the common name in Tudor England for the four-course guitar of the renaissance, cultivated in London from at least the 1540s. Plays, probate inventories, letters, poems and many other documents refer to such gitterns and associate them with gentlemen, apprentices fleeing their masters, gallants and alehouse wastrels. In the 1550s, when they were the height of fashion, gentlemen like Thomas Whythorne valued them for being a foreign novelty, and the fortunes of the gittern were certainly shaped by developments across the Channel. In Paris, two publishing partnerships issued at least nine books of tablature for the four-course guitar during the 1550s. These handsome volumes contain fantasies, branles, galliards, almandes, chansons (in two books with a separate vocal part in staff notation), tourdions and pavanes, among other forms, all presented in the most elegant tablature. We heard much of that music in my first two lectures, available on the Gresham College website. There was even a tutor book published; in 1569 James Rowbothum in London published *A Briefe and plaine instruction for to learne the Tablature, to Conduct and dispose the hande unto the Gitterne,* translated from a lost original by Adrian le Roy and designed to school the player in the kind of repertoire le Roy and Ballard had been publishing in Paris.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1569

Five years after Tailboys Dymocke published his poem with its 'ancient Gittern' a writer in the north of England was surprisingly well informed about strummed music for the guitar in Spain. Thomas Wright of York compiled the second and extended version of his treatise *The passions of the minde in general* in 1604 to explore the workings of what would now be called the emotions. He notes the bearing of climate upon temperament and observes that the torrid weather of Iberia drives the Spanish to 'play their Zarabanda upon the Gittern, which moveth them (as I heare reported) to daunce, and doe worse'. For a writer of northern Europe this is an exceptionally early reference to the strummed music of the Spanish kingdoms and their dependencies from Galicia across to Naples. Some of these forms bore transparently Castilian names such as *passacalle* (approximately 'thoroughfare'), while others like *zarabanda* reflected some unknown romance dialect. A few bore titles that evoked Hispanic settlements in the New World such as *canarios* and possibly *chacona*. The vehicle for this strummed music was commonly called the *chitarra spagnuola*, or 'Spanish guitar' in Italy.

FOLIA.

The Jacobean court was exceptionally supplied with well-travelled men of cosmopolitan culture such as John Harrington, Henry Wotton and Dudley Carleton. All had visited the Continent in early adulthood with a tutor, mostly after a period of residence at a university. John Danvers 'travelled in France and Italy and made good observations', according to his relative John Aubrey, while the many notes Robert Dallington compiled on his journeys formed the basis for his two books *The view of Fraunce* (1604) and *A survey of the great duke's state of Tuscany* (1605). Such men might later be sent abroad as envoys or ambassadors, giving them ample opportunity to source the fine goods which show the English court becoming more open to the culture of baroque Europe under James I (who died 1625) and his son Charles (executed in 1649). The courtiers with great houses along The Strand in London, for example, bought many of their fine paintings with the help of Henry Wotton, England's first resident ambassador to Venice since 1550, and his successor Dudley Carleton.

The terms used for guitars, many of which came as private or commercial imports from abroad, are another example of this new openness to Europe. The word 'gittern', borrowed from French, had been current in English by now for some three hundred years and was thoroughly naturalized. The new, *five*-course guitar, however, came with a new name and the sound of foreign voices. In English documents of the seventeenth century it may appear in an Iberian guise (*guitarra*), in an Italianate form (*kittar*) or as straight French (*guitarre*, *gittar*). The spelling *gitter* also appears and shows the stress being shifted to the first syllable with reduction of the vowel in the second, as commonly found in English speech; rhymes such as *guitarre/air*, however, show that speakers sometimes affected a French pronunciation, stressing the second syllable and modelling their enunciation upon the French form *guiterre*, widely used in the sixteenth century by Ronsard, among others, and still current in the seventeenth, but in decline. As far as guitars are concerned, the answer to the question 'What's in a name?' is 'a good deal'.

This comparison illuminates one aspect of a developing conjunction between the increasingly chordal basis of compositional art and the idioms of the five-course guitar as a strummed, chordal instrument. This convergence had been taking place in Italy for some considerable time by 1600 and there were many Italian musicians in Stuart London to import it. The English court musician Alfonso Ferrabosco II was the son of an Italian immigrant, himself a distinguished composer and the grandson of an Italian madrigalist. More Italian musicians were to be found among the various ambassadorial retinues generated by the complex political structure of transalpine Europe. In 1618 Constantijn Huygens encountered a 'collège de musiciens, touts Italiens' at the house of the Savoyard ambassador, and one of the grooms in the Queen's Privy Chamber was Giovanni Maria Lugaro, a groom valued for his 'verie speciall quallity in Musicke'. Antonio Foscarini, the Venetian ambassador in London from 1611 to 1615, was a guitarist. One of the charges later laid against him by the Venetian state rested on the testimony of an Italian gentleman, Lunardo Michielini, who claimed that the ambassador once compelled his coachman to drive through a crowded part of London in a carriage – it's probably Cheapside – with eight or ten horses. Foscarini had a *commedia dell'arte* actor with him at the time who sang; a *chitara* was played at the same time, and the way the story is told implies that the musician was Foscarini himself.

> Lunardo Michielini [testifies] that ambassador Foscarini went through London and in the most crowded area journeyed in a coach with eight or ten horses and had a clown with him, and he played a guitar and made the clown sing in a loud voice, and children followed him.

Most of the music guitarists played in the reign of James I and his son Charles I was never written down. But if we move on a little in time we do find music copied out, and some of it undoubtedly represents older styles. The library of Lambeth Palace, for example, holds the songbook of Lady Ann Blount, a collection of works in English, French and Italian. There are songs for voice and theorbo, all of which were presumably entered before 1655 when Ann, who signs the book using her maiden name, was married. At some stage an unknown scribe commandeered a spare leaf for the guitar, and in a tolerably accomplished hand he or she copied three strains of a chaconne in French tablature:

BLOUNT

We have heard something of Italy. What of Spain, so often thought of as the home of the guitar? When James I came to the throne of England in 1603 he immediately took steps to end England's protracted war with Spain. A political settlement, first formulated in Brussels as the capital of the Spanish Netherlands, was agreed in London at the Somerset House Conference of 1604. The visiting lords from Spain and the Netherlands came with substantial retinues and it is possible that guitars were heard among the 'mucha musica de differentes instrumentes' that sounded at the various balls and festivities in Whitehall palace, according to the official Spanish account of the visit. Indeed, the report of such performances may underlie Thomas Wright's remark, published the very same year of 1604, that the Spanish 'play their Zarabanda upon the Gittern, which moveth them (as I heare reported) to daunce...'

Then, in 1605, a substantial company of British lords and their attendants had many opportunities to hear the guitars of Spain. Charles Howard, earl of Nottingham, left England that year with a huge entourage bound for Valladolid where Philip IV was due to ratify the Treaty of London. Among those making the journey were Sir George Buc, deputy master of the Revels Office, Dudley Carleton 'on the threshold of a brilliant career as a diplomat and purchasing art agent' and Sir Robert Drury, soon to be a patron of the poet John Donne. On 11 May 1605 the cavalcade came to La Bañeza 'where in the way comming we were mette with divers Gypsies (as they termed them) men and women dauncing and tumbling, much after the Morisco fashion', while at the next town they saw 'a company of Gypsies likewise, singing and dauncing, playing and shewing divers feats of activity'. The earl of Nottingham entered Valladolid in mid May, and was there for the Procession of Corpus Christ. Spanish documents of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are rich in references to the kind of music and dance that such *fiestas* entailed, and guitars are often mentioned. The Corpus Christi procession at Madrid in 1579, for example used 'dos laudes, dos bihuleas de arco, dos guitarras y dos zitaras', while a relic procession of 1596 at Andújar in Andalusia included a series of dances by gypsies and giants to the music of a five-course guitar and percussion ('una guitarra de cinco ordenes, y un tamborino'). The festivities commissioned for the entry of Margaret of Austria into Madrid in 1599 included dancing masters with instruments including *guitarras*; a few days later there was a 'dance of the acrobats' with musicians playing a lute and *guitarra*.

On June 1 the English delegation attended a masque in Valladolid where the Spanish king and queen, together with various English and Spanish nobles, danced galliards and pavanes. An anonymous guardsman in the British retinue reports two occasions that evening when six Spanish women arranged in couples 'danced a country dance with snappers [i.e. castanets] on their thumbs'. This 'country dance' was probably a saraband, often associated with castanets and sometimes performed as a couple dance; this is precisely what the Swiss physician Thomas Platter saw at Barcelona in 1599, complete with castanets. The saraband was the guitar and castanet genre *par excellence.*

Madonte with castanets

The first sure allusion to the guitar from the Jacobean court appears in a masque with a marked Spanish flavour:

The Gypsies Metamorphos'd of 1621 by Ben Jonson. The performers of this masque included some of the most important art-collectors and dealers of the day, notably Endymion Porter, Nicholas Lanier and George Villiers, so it may be no accident that the masque has a rich visual context. Scenes showing fortune-tellers, musicians and cardsharps, some of whom are clearly gypsies, were common by the first decades of the seventeenth century. A portrait sometimes attributed to Bartolomeo Manfredi (d. 1622), for example, shows a fair-skinned innocent being tricked at cards as a guitarist signals information about his hand with a gesture directly imitated from Caravaggio's painting 'The Card Sharps' of the mid 1590s.

James I saw *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd* given three times in 1621. The first performance took place at Burley-on-the-Hill, the estate of George Villiers, then Marquis of Buckingham, the second at Belvoir Castle, seat of the Duke of Rutland and the third, by royal command, at Windsor Castle. Significant alterations were made between the first two performances and the third, but they did not diminish the role of the chief gypsy, called The Jackman, who is required to play a *guittarra* and sing to its accompaniment. The word *guittarra* must have seemed exotic at a time when even Michael Drayton, writing for Prince Henry, reached for the old word 'gittern', but Jonson is seeking other associations. Having called for his *guittarra,* The Jackman commands there be 'roome for our Chiefe', the cue for George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham, to make his first entrance and dance to the music of the Jackman's guitar. Next, The Jackman sings about the gypsy life to his own accompaniment.

The guitar was rapidly coming to be considered a fitting accomplishment for the court women of Whitehall. This is revealed by the masque of *Britannia Triumphans* (1637), presented at court two years later*,* which mentions a lady well suited to standing by a queen's chair with a lapdog, for she seems altogether

> …more fit far
> To play on Virginals, and the Gittar,
> Than stir a seacole fire, or scumme a Cauldron...

The repertoire such amateur guitarists performed at court is illuminated by the activities of the composer Nicholas Lanier. In 1625 Lanier was sent to Italy by Charles I to discuss terms for the sale of the Gonzaga picture collection; in 1627-8 he was in Italy again, notably Venice. One of Lanier's earliest songs is a set of variations over an ostinato bass implying harmonies commonly associated with strummed chaconnes for the guitar. Lanier's choice of poem for this composition, 'No more shall meads be deckt with flowers' by Thomas Carew, even appears in a composite volume of seventeenth-century English literary manuscripts bearing the title *ciacono*. This may have been Lanier's original title, for it was certainly not Carew's; the models for the composition are probably to be sought in Italian guitar books, using *ciaccona* and *passacaglia* harmonies, found well into the 1630s.

> No more shall meads Catherine King and CP.

Nicholas Lanier, the composer of that song, was a court musician in a recognisable sense: a salaried denizen of the chambers and galleries of the royal palaces. During the reign of Charles I, however, the court developed in ways that made it less of an enclosed and bounded space. In common with some other European monarchs, the first Stuarts curtailed the tradition of the court progress undertaken in summer and autumn before Michaelmas and spent more time in Whitehall palace; this residence became the core of an elite built environment that extended and thickened the Tudor footprint. By the mid 1630s the palace gave on to a line of great houses, many of them courtiers' or ambassadors' residences that were new or remodelled, following the line of the Thames to the City. A nascent West End now formed a continuously built-up district running downriver from the seats of royal, parliamentary and legal authority in Westminster to Covent Garden with its handsome new piazza designed by Inigo Jones. Contemporaries referred to this western district in various ways that reflected its important place in the human and physical geography of London. Since the entire area lay within the jurisdiction of the City of Westminster, some needed no other name than that. Others passed through saying they were going to court. Many simply called it 'The Town'.

Although The Town contained some disreputable quarters (Covent Garden did not remain an elite quarter for

long) it was especially perceived as the domain of the *mode*. The term *alamode*, entered the language in the sense 'in accordance with the fashion' in the 1630s. During the sixteenth century it had been used in English, as in French, to identify the style and origin of a manufactured object, and was commonly not one word but three; a cloak or a glove, for example, could be '*a la mode* of Paris', in the Parisian style. The second quarter of the seventeenth century, however, brings a new usage whereby *alamode,* contracted from three words to one, denoted whatever The Town deemed to be fashionable. *Alamode* therefore acknowledged the importance of fashion, but often entailed a wry implication that fashion ruled the lives of some persons but not of oneself. That is one of the reasons why it proved so congenial to satire. Attention to fashion in its most extreme form was caricatured in the figure of the fop, a male whose concern to be *alamode*, especially in relation to French forms of dress and speech, has become obsessive. As represented on the stage, fops prefer the company of women but have no real sexual designs upon them, they carry a sword but lack the courage to use it and they dress with excessive interest in lace or ribbon. They are human parrots whose chatter and plumage divert the women whose company they seek.

A fop on the Caroline stage provides an early sign that the guitar was becoming an *alamode* pursuit of The Town. *The Country Captain* is a play by William Cavendish, first duke of Newcastle, performed in the early summer season of 1641, at Blackfriars theatre. Newcastle caricatures the country squires who were then being appointed to mobilise the local militias, for the performance took place amidst mounting political disorder that eventually led to civil war, but he also mocks the gentlemen who aspired to be fashionables in The Town as if nothing were amiss. The country captain is Sir Richard Huntlove, eager to escape the smoke of London for rural sports, while the gentleman is 'precious Alamode Monsir Device', a fop or 'English Monsier' who dressed himself like 'a race Nagg trick'd with ribbands'. Since the fop is somewhat fantastical he is not poor company, which explains why he is invited to join the family of Sir Richard Huntlove in the country for the summer. He gladly accepts and offers to bring his guitar:

> You invite me to my happines. I can play well o' the kittar; I thinke your musique is but course there; wee'le have a Conntry dance after supper and a song. I can talke loud to a Theorbo, and thats cald singing.

Device evidently knows something of the fashion for declamatory ayres, or what he calls talking 'loud to a theorbo', and believes himself well equipped to take the summer's entertainments in hand by bringing the diversions of The Town to the country, including the *kittar*. (The Italianate form of the word is perhaps to be understood as a foppish affectation).

Une jeune fillette

The Varietie, another of Newcastle's plays performed at the Blackfriars Theatre, satirises the London aldermen who study how to make a 'reverence' and dance a 'Cereban' with their French dancing master Monsieur Gaillard. The play is dateable between 1639 and 1642 so this reference to sarabands among City officials belongs to the period of *The Country Captain* with its guitar-playing fop. Long afterwards, Newcastle looked back on the same period, the early 1640s, and pondered the court of Charles I as it had been on the edge of civil war. In a treatise of 1660 composed for that monarch's son, Charles II, Newcastle blames the king's fall on the influence of those who had learned how to make 'le Bon Reverance' and could 'dance a Sereban with castenettes off their fingers'. This is the same polemic as before: gentlemen like Monsieur Device, and those of the wealthier middling sort like London aldermen, are at best a laughable and at worst a dangerous set whom Newcastle, as a highly conservative aristocrat, associates with Frenchified manners, sarabands, castanets and guitars.

Madonte with castanets reprise