

**Classic Poetry Series**

**John Wilbye**  
**- poems -**

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# John Wilbye(7 March 1574 - September 1638)

John Wilbye, was an English madrigal composer.

## <b>Life</b>

The son of a tanner, he was born at Brome, Suffolk, near Diss, and received the patronage of the Cornwallis family. It is thought that he accompanied Elizabeth Cornwallis to Hengrave Hall near Bury St. Edmunds circa 1594 when she married Sir Thomas Kytson the Younger.

A set of madrigals by him appeared in 1598 and a second in 1608, the two sets containing sixty-four pieces. In 1600, he was chosen to proofread John Dowland's Second Booke of Songs. In 1628, on the death of Elizabeth Cornwallis, Wilbye went to live with her daughter Mary Darcy, Countess Rivers in Colchester, where he died. He is buried in the graveyard of Holy Trinity Church, in Colchester town centre. (The building is currently the CO1 cafe and young Christian centre.)

Wilbye is probably the most famous of all the English madrigalists; his pieces have long been favourites and are often included in modern collections. His madrigals include Weep, weep o mine eyes and Draw on, sweet night. He also wrote the poem, Love me not for comely grace. His style is characterized by delicate writing for the voice, acute sensitivity to the text and the use of "false relations" between the major and minor modes.

# A Silly Sylvan, Kissing Heav'N-Born Fire

A silly sylvan, kissing heav'n-born fire,  
Scorched his lips for his so fond desire:  
I, not so fond, but gaz'd whilst such fire burned,  
And all my heart straight into flames was turned.  
The sylvan justly suffer'd for his kiss,  
His fire was stol'n and stol'n things go amiss;  
But I, alas! unjstly for to have her,  
Her heav'nly fire the gods and graces gave her.

John Wilbye

# Adieu Sweet Amaryllis

Adieu, adieu  
sweet amaryllis.  
For since to part your will is.  
O heavy tiding  
Here is for me no biding.  
Yet once again  
Ere that I part with you.  
Amaryllis, amaryllis,  
sweet Adieu.

John Wilbye

# Ah! Cannot Sighs Not Tears

Ah! cannot sighs not tears, nor aught else move thee  
To pity me, who more than life do love thee?  
O cruel fates! see, now away she's flying,  
And fly, alas! alas! and leave me dying.  
Farewell, most fair, farewell, yet more disdainful:  
Was never grief like mine, nor death more painful.

John Wilbye

# Ah! Cruel Amarillis

Ah! cruel Amarillis, since thou tak'st delight  
To hear the accents of a doleful ditty,  
To triumph still without remorse or pity;  
I loathe this life, death must my sorrow right;  
And lest vain hope my miseries renew,  
Come quickly, death,  
'Reave me of breath,  
Ah! cruel Amarillis, adieu.

John Wilbye

# Alas What Hope Of Speeding

Alas what hope of speeding  
Where hope beguiled lies bleeding?  
She bade come when she spied me,  
And when I came she flied me.  
Thus when I was beguiled,  
She at my sighing smiled.  
But if you take such pleasure  
Of hope and joy, my treasure,  
By deceit to bereave me,  
Love me, and so deceive me.

John Wilbye

# Alas! What A Wretched Life Is This!

Alas! What a wretched life is this!  
Nay what a death! Where tyrant Love commandeth!  
My flow'ring days are in their prime declining,  
All my proud hope quite fall'n, and life untwining,  
My joys each after other, in haste are flying,  
And leave me dying for her that scorns my crying.  
Oh she from hence departs, my love refraining,  
For whom, all heartless alas! I die complaining.

John Wilbye



# All Pleasure Is Of This Condition

All pleasure is of this condition,  
It pricks men forward to fruition,  
But if enjoy'd, then like the humming Bee,  
The honey being shed, away doth flee;  
But leaves a sting, that wounds the inward heart  
With gnawing grief and never-ending smart.

John Wilbye

# And Though My Love Abounding

And though my love abounding,  
Did make me fall a sounding,  
Yet am I well contented,  
Still so to be tormented,  
And death can never fear me,  
As long as you are near me.

John Wilbye

## As Fair As Morn

As fair as morn, as fresh as May,  
a pretty grace in saying nay,  
Smil'st thou sweetheart?  
then sing and say, Ta na na no,  
But O! that love enchanting eye,  
Lo, here my doubtful doom I try,  
Tell me my sweet, live I or die?  
She smiles, fa la la la,  
Ah, she frowns, Ay me, I die.

John Wilbye

# As Matchless Beauty

As matchless beauty thee a Phoenix proves,  
Fair Leonilla, so thy sour-sweet loves.  
For when young Acon's eye thy proud heart tames,  
Thou diest in him, and livest in my flames.

John Wilbye

# Away, Thou Shalt Not Love Me

Away, thou shalt not love me.  
So shall my love seem greater  
And I shall love the better.  
Shall it be so? what say you?  
Why speak you not I pray you?  
Nay then I know you love me  
That so you may disprove me.

John Wilbye

## Ay Me; Can Every Rumour

Ay me; can every rumour  
Thus start my lady's humour?  
Name ye some gallant to her  
Why straight forsooth I woo her.  
Then burst she forth in passion:  
You men love but for fashion.  
Yet sure I am that no man  
Ever so loved woman.  
Yet, alas, Love, be wary  
For women be contrary.

John Wilbye

## Change Me, O Heav'Ns

Change me, O heav'ns, into the ruby stone,  
That on my love's fair locks doth hang in gold:  
Yet leave me speech, to her to make my moan;  
And give me eyes, her beauties to behold.  
Or, if you will not make my flesh a stone,  
Make her hard heart seem flesh, that now seems none.

John Wilbye

# Cruel, Behold My Heavy Ending

Cruel, behold my heavy ending,  
See what you wrought by your disdain.  
Causeless I die, love still attending  
Your hopeless pity of my complaining.  
Suffer those eyes which thus have slain me,  
With speed to end their killing power,  
So shall you prove how love doth pain me,  
And see me die still your.

John Wilbye



## Dear Pity, How, Ah!

Dear pity, how, ah! how, wouldst thou become her!  
That best becometh beauty's best attiring;  
Shall my desert deserve no favour from her?  
But still to waste myself in deep admiring,  
Like him who calls to echo to relieve him,  
Still tells and hears the tale, Oh! tale that grieves him.

John Wilbye

# Despiteful Thus Unto Myself, I Languish

Despiteful thus unto myself, I languish,  
And in disdain, myself from joy I banish,  
These secret thoughts enwrap me so in anguish,  
That life, I hope. will soon from body vanish;  
And to some rest will quickly be conveyed,  
That on no joy, while so I liv'd, hath stayed.

John Wilbye

## Die, Hapless Man

Die, hapless man, since she denies thee grace,  
Die, and despair, sith she doth scorn to love thee.  
Farewell, most fair, tho' thou dost fair deface,  
Sith for my duteous love thou dost reprove me.  
Those smiling eyes, that sometimes me revived,  
Clouded of frowns, have me of life deprived.

John Wilbye

## Down In A Valley As Alexis Trips

Down in a valley as Alexis trips,  
Daphne sat sweetly sleeping.  
Soon as the wanton touch'd her ruddy lips,  
She nicely falls aweeping.  
The wag full softly lifts her,  
And to and fro he sifts her:  
But when nor sighs, Ah! nor kisses mov'd her pity,  
Nor sighs could move her pity,  
Nor tears could move her pity,  
With plaints he warbles forth this mournful ditty.

John Wilbye

## Draw On, Sweet Night

Draw on, Sweet Night, friend unto those cares  
That do arise from painful melancholy.  
My life so ill through want of comfort fares,  
that unto thee I consecrate it wholly.  
Sweet Night, draw on  
My griefs when they be told to shades  
and darkness find some ease from paining,  
And while thou all in silence dost enfold,  
I then shall have best time for my complaining.

John Wilbye

# Flora Gave Me Fairest Flowers

Flora gave me fairest flowers,  
None so fair in Flora's treasure:  
These I plac'd on Phillis' bowers,  
She was pleas'd, and she my pleasure  
Smiling meadows seem to say,  
Come ye wantons, here to play.

John Wilbye

## Fly Not So Swift, My Dear

Fly not so swift, my dear, behold me dying,  
If not a smiling glance for all my crying,  
Yet kill me with thy frowns.  
The Satyrs o'er the lawns full nimbly dancing,  
Frisk it apace to view thy beauty's glancing.  
See how they coast the downs.  
Fain wouldst thou turn and yield them their delight,  
But that thou fear'st lest I should steal a sight.

John Wilbye

## Fly, Love, Aloft

Fly, Love, aloft to heav'n and look out Fortune,  
Then sweetly, sweetly, sweetly her importune,  
That I from my Calisto best beloved  
As you and she set down be never moved.  
And, Love, to Carimel see you commend me,  
Fortune for his sweet sake may chance befriend me.

John Wilbye



# Happy Streams, Whose Trembling Fall

Happy streams, whose trembling fall,  
With still murmur softly gliding,  
Happy birds, whose chirping call,  
With sweet melody delighting,  
Hath mov'd her flinty and relentless heart,  
To listen to your harmony,  
And sit securely in these downs apart,  
Enchanted with your melody.  
Sing on, and carol forth your glee,  
She grants you leave her rays to see:  
Happy were I, could love, but so delight her!  
But Ah! alas! my love doth still despise her.

John Wilbye

# Happy, O Happy He

Happy, O happy he, who not affecting  
The endless toils attending worldly cares,  
With mind repos'd, all discontents rejecting,  
In silent peace his way to heav'n prepares;  
Deeming his life a Scene, the world a Stage,  
Whereon man acts his weary Pilgrimage.

John Wilbye

## Hard Destinies Are Love And Beauty Parted

Hard destinies are love and beauty parted,  
Fair Daphne so disdainful!  
Cupid, thy shafts are too unjustly darted;  
Fond love, thy wounds are painful:  
But sith my lovely jewel  
Is prov'd so coy and cruel,  
I'll live and frolic in her beauty's treasure,  
But languish, faint, and die in her displeasure

John Wilbye

# I Always Beg

I always beg, yet never am relieved,  
I grieve, because my griefs are not believed.  
I cry aloud in vain, my voice outstretched,  
And get but this, mine echo calls me wretched!

John Wilbye

# I Am Quite Tired With My Groans

I am quite tired with my groans;  
O'ercharged with a heavy load  
Of miseries, breaking all my bones,  
Laid on me justly by my God.

John Wilbye

# I Fall, I Fall

I fall, I fall, O stay me,  
Dear love, with joys you slay me,  
Of life your lips deprive me,  
Sweet, let your lips revive me,  
O whither are you hasting,  
And leave my life thus wasting?  
My health on you relying,  
'Twere sin to leave me dying.

John Wilbye

# I Live, And Yet Methinks I Do Not Breathe

I live, and yet methinks I do not breathe,  
I thirst, and drink, and drink, and thirst again,  
I sleep, and yet I dream I am awake,  
I hope for that I have; I have and want:  
I sing and sigh; I love and hate at once.  
Oh! tell me, restless soul, what uncouth jar  
Doth cause such want in store, in peace such war?

John Wilbye

# I Love, Alas! Yet Am Not Loved

I love, alas! yet am not loved,  
For cruel she to pity is not moved.  
My constant love with scorn she ill rewardeth,  
Only my sighs a little she regardeth:  
Yet more and more the quenchless fire increaseth,  
Which, to my greater torment, never ceaseth.

John Wilbye



# I Sung Sometimes

I sung sometimes my thoughts' and fancy's pleasure,  
Where then I list, or time serv'd best and leisure,  
While Daphne did invite me  
To supper once, and drank to me to spite me.  
I smil'd, yet still did doubt her,  
And drank where she had drank before, to flout her.  
But oh while I did eye her,  
My eyes drank love, my lips drank burning fire.

John Wilbye

# Lady, When I Behold The Roses Sprouting

Lady, when I behold the roses sprouting,  
Which clad in damask mantles deck the arbours,  
And then behold your lips, where sweet Love harbours,  
My eyes present me with a double doubting.  
For, viewing both alike, hardly my mind supposes  
Whether the roses be your lips or your lips the roses.

John Wilbye

# Lady, Your Words Do Spite Me

Lady, your words do spite me,  
Yet your sweet lips, so soft, kiss and delight me,  
Your deeds my heart surcharg'd with overjoying,  
Your taunts my life destroying.  
Since both have force to spill me,  
let kisses sweet, Sweet, kill me.  
Knights fight with swords and lances,  
Fight you with smiling glances,  
So, like swans of Leander,  
My ghost from hence shall wander,  
singing and dying.

John Wilbye

## Love Not Me For Comely Grace

Love not me for comely grace,  
For my pleasing eye or face;  
Nor for any outward part,  
No, nor for my constant heart:  
For those may fail or turn to ill,  
So thou and I shall sever.  
Keep therefore a true woman's eye,  
And love me still, but know not why;  
So hast thou the same reason still  
To doat upon me ever.

John Wilbye

# My Throat Is Sore

My throat is sore, my voice is hoarse with skriking,  
My rests are sighs, deep from the heart's root fetched;  
My song runs all on sharps, and with oft striking  
Time on my breast, I shrink with hands outstretched;  
Thus still, and still I sing, and ne'er am linning,  
For still the close points to my first beginning.

John Wilbye

## O Fools! Can You Not See

O fools! can you not see a traffic nearer,  
In my sweet lady's face, where nature showeth  
Whatever treasure eye sees or heart knoweth,  
Rubies and diamonds dainty,  
And orient pearls such plenty,  
Coral and ambergris, sweeter and dearer,  
Than which the South Seas or Moluccas lend us,  
Or either Indies, East or West, do send us.

John Wilbye

# O God, The Rock Of My Whole Strength

O God, the rock of my whole strength,  
Let thy sweet mercy soothe mine anguish;  
And grant me help, O Lord, at length,  
Lest that I faint, despair, and languish.

John Wilbye

## O Wretched Man!

O wretched man! Why lov'st thou earthly life?  
Which nought enjoys but cares and endless trouble;  
What pleasure here, but breeds a world of grief?  
What hour's ease, that anguish doth not double;  
No earthly joys, but have their discontents;  
Then loathe that life, which causeth such laments

John Wilbye



# O, What Shall I Do

O, what shall I do, or whither shall I turn me?  
Shall I make unto her eyes? O, no, they'll burn me!  
Shall I seal up my eyes and speak my part?  
Then in a flood of tears I drown my heart,  
For tears being stopped will swell for scope,  
Though they overflow love, life and hope,  
By beauty's eye  
I'll choose to die.

At thy feet I fall, fair creature rich in beauty,  
And for pity call; O kill not love and duty.  
Let thy smooth tongue fan on my sense thy breath,  
to stay thine eyes from burning me to death.  
But if mercy be exiled  
From a thing so fair compiled,  
Then patiently  
By thee I'll die.

John Wilbye

## Of Joys And Pleasing Pains

Of joys and pleasing pains I late went singing,  
O joys with pains! O pains with joys consenting!  
And little thought as then of now repenting;  
But now think of my then sweet bitter stinging,  
All day long I my hands, alas! go wringing,  
The baleful notes of which, my sad tormenting,  
Are ruth and moan, frights, sobs, and loud lamenting,  
From hills and dales, in my dull ears still ringing.

John Wilbye

## Oft Have I Vow'D

Oft have I vow'd how dearly I did love thee,  
And oft observ'd thee with all willing duty,  
Sighs I have sent, still hoping to remove thee:  
Millions of tears I tender'd to thy beauty,  
Yet thou of sighs and silly tears regardless,  
Suff'rest my feeble heart to pine with anguish,  
Whilst all my barren hopes return rewardless,  
My bitter days do waste, and I do languish.

John Wilbye

# Ong Have I Made These Hills And Valleys Weary

Long have I made these hills and valleys weary,  
With noise of these my shrieks and cries that fill the air;  
She only, who should make me merry,  
Hears not my prayer:  
That I, alas! misfortune's son and heir,  
Hope in none other hope but in despair.  
O unkind and cruel! If thus my death may please thee,  
Then die I will to ease thee:  
Yet if I die, the world will thee control,  
And write upon my tomb, O sweet departure,  
Lo! here lies one, alas! poor soul,  
A true love's martyr.

John Wilbye

## So Light Is Love

So light is love, in matchless beauty shining,  
When she revisits Cypris' hallow'd bowers,  
Two feeble doves, harness'd in silken twining,  
Can draw her chariot 'midst the Paphian flowers.  
Lightness to love, how ill it fitteth,  
So heavy on my heart, O! on my heart he sitteth.

John Wilbye

## Softly, O! Dropp Mine Eyes

Softly, O! dropp mine eyes, lest you be dry,  
And make my heart with grief to melt and die.  
Now pour out tears apace,  
Now stay, O heavy case!  
O sour sweet woe!  
Alas! O grief! O joy! Why strive you so?  
Can griefs and joys at once in one poor heart consent?  
Then sigh and sing, rejoice, lament.  
Ah me! O passions strange and violent!  
Was never poor wretch so tormented:  
Nor joy, nor grief can make my heart contented.  
For while with joy I look on high,  
Down, down I fall with grief, and die.

John Wilbye

# Stay, Corydon, Thou Swain

Stay, Corydon, thou swain,  
Talk not so soon of dying:  
What though thy heart be slain,  
What though thy love be flying?  
She threatens thee, but dares not strike,  
Thy nymph is light and shadow-like;  
For if thou follow her, she'll fly from thee;  
But if thou fly from her, she'll follow thee.

John Wilbye

# Sweet Honey-Sucking Bees

Sweet honey-sucking bees, why do you still  
surfeit on roses, pinks and violets,  
as if the choicest nectar lay in them  
wherewith you store your curious cabinets?

Ah, make your flight to Melisuavia's lips.  
There may you revel in ambrosian cheer,  
where smiling roses and sweet lilies sit,  
Keeping their springtide graces all the year.

[Part 2:

Yet, sweet, take heed, all sweets are hard to get:  
Sting not her soft lips, O, beware of that,  
for if one flaming dart come from her eye,  
was never dart so sharp, ah, then you die.  
]

John Wilbye



## Sweet Love, If Thou Wilt Gain

Sweet love, if thou wilt gain a monarch's glory,  
Subdue her heart, who makes me glad and sorry,  
Out of thy golden quiver,  
Take thou the strongest arrow,  
That will, thro' bone and marrow,  
And me and thee of grief and fear deliver;  
But come behind, for if she look upon thee,  
Alas! poor love, then thou art woebegone thee.

John Wilbye

# The Lady Oriana

The Lady Oriana

Was dight all in the treasures of Guiana;  
And on her Grace a thousand graces tended:  
And thus sang they, fair Queen of peace and plenty;  
The fairest queen of twenty:  
Then with an olive wreath, for peace renowned,  
Her virgin head they crowned:  
Which ceremony ended,  
Unto her Grace the thousand graces bended.  
Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana,  
Long live fair Oriana.

John Wilbye

## There Is A Jewel

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 comes, to few from Heaven sent,  
That much in little, all in nought content.

John Wilbye

# There, Where I Saw Her Lovely Beauty Painted

There, where I saw her lovely beauty painted,  
Where, Venus-like, my sacred goddess shineth,  
There, with \*precellent object mine eyes fainted,  
That fair, but fatal star, my dole divineth.  
As soon as morning in her light appeareth,  
Her sweet salute, my mind o'erclouded, cleareth;  
When night again the day's delight bereaveth,  
My heart's true sacrifice she quick receiveth:  
But night and day she craftily forsakes me,  
To tedious day, to loathsome night betakes me.

John Wilbye

# Thou Art But Young, Thou Say'st

Thou art but young, thou say'st,  
And love's delight thou weigh'st not.  
Oh! take time while thou may'st,  
Lest, when thou would'st, thou may'st not.  
If love shall then assail thee,  
A double, double anguish will torment thee.  
And thou wilt wish, but wishes all will fail thee.  
Oh! me that I were young again! And so repent thee.

John Wilbye

# Thus Love Commands

Thus love commands, that I in vain complain me,  
And sorrow will that she shall still disdain me:  
Yet did I hope, which hope my life prolonged,  
To hear her say, alas! His love was wronged.

John Wilbye

## Thus Saith My Cloris Bright

Thus saith my Cloris bright,  
when we of Love sit downe and talke together,  
Beware of Love, deere, Love is a walking sprite,  
And Love is this and that,  
And O I wot not what,  
And comes and goes againe,  
I wot not whither,  
No, no, these are but bugs to breed amazing,  
for in her eies I saw his torch light blazing.

John Wilbye

# Unkind, O, Stay Thy Flying!

Unkind, O, stay thy flying!  
And if I needs must die, pity me dying.  
But in thee, my heart is lying  
And no death can assail me,  
Alas! till life doth fail thee,  
Oh therefore, if the fates bid thee be fleeting,  
Stay for me, whose poor heart thou hast in keeping.

John Wilbye



# Weep, O Mine Eyes

Weep, O mine eyes and cease not,  
Out alas, these your spring tides methinks increase not.  
O when begin you  
to swell so high that I may drown me in you?

John Wilbye

# What Needeth All This Travail?

What needeth all this travail and turmoiling  
Shortening the life's pleasure  
To seek this far-fetched treasure  
In those hot climates under Phoebus broiling?

John Wilbye

## When Cloris Heard

When Cloris heard of her Amyntas dying,  
She grieved then for her unkind denying:  
Oft sighing sore, and with a heart unfeigned,  
I die, I die, I die, she thus complained.  
Whom, when Amyntas spied,  
Then both for joy outcried,  
I love, I love sweet Cloris' eye,  
And I Amyntas till I die.

John Wilbye

# When Shall My Wretched Life

When shall my wretched life give place to death?  
That my sad cares may be enforc'd to leave me.  
Come, saddest shadow, stop my vital breath,  
For I am thine, then let not care bereave thee  
Of thy sad thrall but, with thy fatal dart,  
Kill care and me, while care lies at my heart.

John Wilbye

# Where Most My Thoughts

Where most my thoughts, there least mine eye is striking;  
Where least I come, there most my heart abideth;  
Where most I love, I never show my liking;  
From what my mind doth hold, my body slideth:  
I careless seem, where most my care dependeth;  
A coy regard, where most my soul attendeth.

John Wilbye

# Ye Restless Thoughts

Ye restless thoughts, that harbour discontent,  
Cease your assaults and let my heart lament,  
And let my tongue have leave to tell my grief,  
That she may pity, though not grant relief.  
Pity would help, alas, what love hath almost slain,  
And salve the wound that fester'd this disdain.

John Wilbye

# Ye That Do Live In Pleasures

Ye that do live in pleasures plenty,  
and dwell in Music's sweetest Airs,  
whose eyes are quick, whose ears are dainty,  
not clogg'd with earth or worldly cares,  
come sing this song, made in Amphion's praise,  
who now is dead, yet you his fame can raise.

Call him again, let him not die,  
but live in Music's sweetest breath;  
place him in fairest memory,  
and let him triumph over death.  
O sweetly sung, his living wish attend ye.  
These were his words, 'The mirth of heav'n God send ye.'

John Wilbye

## Yet, Sweet, Take Heed

Yet, sweet, take heed, all sweets are hard to get;  
Sting not her soft lips, Oh beware of that:  
For if one flaming dart come from her eye,  
Was never dart so sharp, ah, then you die!

John Wilbye