

If women could be fair

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

Superius [Alto]

Medius [Tenor]

Contratenor [Tenor]

Tenor [Bass]

Bassus [Bass]

If wo - men could be fair and nev - er fond, and nev - er

If wo - men could be fair and nev - er

If wo - men could be fair and nev - er

If wo - men could be fair and nev - er fond,

fair and nev - er fond, or that their beau -

fond, and nev - er fond, or that their beau -

fond, if wo - men could be fair, and nev - er fond,

fond, and nev - er fond, or that their

or that their beau - ty might con - tin - ue still:

-ty might con - tin - ue still, con - tin - ue still: I would not

-ty might con - tin - ue still, might con - tin - ue still: I would

or that their beau - ty might con - tin - ue still: I

beau - ty might con - tin - ue still: I

10

I would not mar - vel though they made men bond,
 mar - vel though they made men bond, though they made men
 not mar - vel though they made men bond, though they made
 would not mar - vel though they made men bond, though they made, though they
 would not mar - vel though they made men bond, though they made

by ser - vice long, by ser - vice long to pur - chase their good_
 bond, by ser - vice long, to pur - chase their good
 men bond, by ser - vice long, to pur - chase their good
 made men bond, by ser - vice long, to pur - chase their good will,
 men bond, by ser - vice long, to pur - chase their good will,

will. But when I see,
 will, to pur - chase their good will. But when
 will, to pur - chase their good will. But when I
 by ser - vice long to pur - chase their good will. But when I
 by ser - vice long to pur - chase their good will. But when I

20

how frail, how frail, these crea - tures are:

I see, how frail, these crea - tures are, I laugh that

see, how frail, these crea - tures are, I laugh,

see, how frail, these crea - tures are, I

see, how frail, how frail, these crea - tures are, I

I laugh, I laugh, that men for - get them - selves so

men for - get them - selves so far, so

that men for - get them - selves so far, so

laugh, that men for - get them - selves so far, so

laugh, I laugh, that men for - get them - selves so

far. But when I see, how frail, how frail,

far, for - get them - selves so far. But when I see, how frail,

far, for - get them - selves so far. But when I see, how frail, these

far. But when I see, how frail, these crea - tures are,

far, for - get them - selves so far. But when I see, how frail, how

30

these crea - tures are: I laugh, I laugh, that men for -
these crea - tures are, I laugh, that men for - get them-selves so far,
crea - tures are, I laugh, that men for - get them-selves so
these crea - tures are, I laugh, that men for - get them - selves so
frail, these crea-tures are, I laugh, I laugh, that men for - get them -
get them-selves so far, for - get them-selves so far.
so far, for - get them - selves so far
far, so far, for - get them-selves so far, for - get them - selves so far.
far, so far, for - get them-selves so far, so far.
selves so far, for - get them - selves so far.

Source: William Byrd, *Psalmes, Sonets, & songs of sadnes and pietie* (London, 1588), no.17.

III.4.2: e'

II.6-7, IV.7-8: *beauties*

I.21: underlay crowded; *crea* *tures* also possible. (Also in repeat in 30)

1. If women could be faire & never fond,
or that their beautie might continue still:
I would not mervaille though they made men bond,
by service long, to purchase their good will.
But when I see, how frail these cretures are:
I laugh, that men forget themselves so far.

3. Yet for our sport, wee fawne and flatter both,
To passe the time, when nothing else can please:
And traine them on to yeeld by subtill oath,
The sweet content, that gives such humour ease.
And then wee say, when wee their follies trie,
To play with fooles, Oh what a foole was I.

Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (1550-1604)

2. To marke what choise they make, and how they change,
how leving best the worst they chose out stil:
And how like haggards wilde, about they range,
Skorning after reason to follow will.
Who would not shake such bussards from the fist,
& let them flie (faire fooles) which way they list.

Part of my complete edition of the published vocal works of William Byrd made available through the Choral Public Domain Library (<http://www.cpd.org>).
For general editorial notes, please visit my user page at <http://www.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/User:DaveF>.
All scores are made freely available according to the CPDL Licence for downloading, printing, performing and recording. No further conditions are
or can be attached, although it's always good to hear of any performances.
Please do not, without consulting me, make copies of my scores available through other websites – there's no need, first of all, as CPDL is always here,
and secondly by doing so you put these editions beyond my control and so will miss out on any updates and revisions.