# Gavin Bryars First Book of Madrigals

for unaccompanied male voices [ATTTBar] [1998-2000]

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#### 1. Web [ATTBar] - page 2

The spider's lurking-parlour its vestibule of thread the spin of its walls closing in and round us until the hall we entered hoping to visit life becomes the manor of our death. No skylight over the door no flue of air only the trap of shadows and darkness ripening in the heart of the sun.

#### 2. Stormy [ATBar] - page 4

I should have seen from your eyes and the lightning which broke in them the storms that lay ahead.

The white ecstasy of bedsheets, smashed pots and broken furniture, the forked static of your touch.

But storms pass like headaches do. Today the rain, in carpet-tacks. Alone together, we watch the rain.

# 3. Almond Tree [ATBar] - page 6

We met under the fork of an almond tree as March came slowly into leaf.
Our love blossomed like a snow-storm.
White confetti paved the street.

What are we to do now autumn's here? Your eyes are cold, my arms have shrunk. The years seem a tangle of dry twigs. Can we get through them without love?

### 4. Just as the ash-glow [ATTBar] - page 8

Just as the ash-glow and cinder-light of the skies lose all their lustre once you've seen the moon rise,

and the volted daisies and bruised delphiniums pale into nothing when the sunflower blooms,

and the swallows plinking on their long string sound merely garrulous if you've heard the lapwing,

so the women I'd been eyeing were a dimmed light when you walked into vision that first night.

#### 5. Within minutes [ATTBar] - page 10

Within minutes, our first conversation, I knew.
Out of nowhere, from the rim of a wine-glass, the flash of knowledge, as if there were no choice.
Sewn up.
Like the moment the plane drops through the clouds and the land spreads out its patchwork, and you see, in crushing detail, the future race to meet you. Just like that.

# 6. Our bodies in the shower [ATTBar] - page 14

Our bodies in the shower.
The hisp and plather
of skins under the water.
The smoke coming off us.
The stream within the stream.
We were rinsed clean
of everything but desire.

# 7. She'd buy things [TTBar] - page 16

She'd buy things, expecting our live, to flourish because the objects surrounding them had changed. My line was different: no matter how and where we lived, we were what we were, unalterably.

# 8. All the homely arts and crafts [TTTBar] - page 18

All the homely arts and crafts the soft plinth of a tongue, the Guggenheim of an ear, the weave of hands and hair are nothing next to the science of these eyes unseen until tonight, this lip lightly charred from the soft combustion of a kiss.

### 9. In April [ATTTBar] - page 20

In April we'll fly to the Lebanon and live among the vines and the vines will be young and tender and our bed will smell of cinnamon and I'll order them not to wake us till we please. I'll keep you safe If ever you're lost I'll go about the streets and broadways and find you and bring you to my bed.

## 10. Who's the more to blame? [TTTBar] - page 22

Who's the more to blame? You for having eyes a soul could drown in? Or me for falling in? Let's not argue who's to blame. The only points at issue are the ones that shrink and widen in your eyes.

My eyes have grown dim from patrolling the days like a camera lens, trawling for your eyes.

Here's you in New York. Here's you in London. Your eyes are everywhere. Where are your eyes?

# 11. The print of soles [ATTTBar] - page 24

The print of soles across the bathroom floor: finding them, I felt like Crusoe, and stooped to test their warmth and wetness, then rose to follow where they led, not caring that I knew the end already, as if she were a stranger, this woman meeting my eyes in the dressing-table mirror, one towel tucked just above her bosom, another knotted round her head, and waterbeads still fresh on her nape and shoulders, which I bent to kiss meeting your eyes again as I didfor the first time ever in the world.

### 12. My pomegranate [ATTTBar] - page 28

My pomegranate in the wilderness my sunlit fishpool my August torrent and winter coal.

No one can quench the flame of this ecstasy our love is strong as death and rich as fire.

#### 13. Against Dieting [ATTTBar] - page 30

Please, darling, no more diets.
I've heard the talk on why it's good for one's esteem. I've watched you jogging lanes and pounding treadmills.
I've even shed two kilos of my own.
But enough. What are love-handles between friends? For half a stone it isn't worth the sweat.
I've had it up to here with crispbread.
I doubt the premise, too.
Try to see it from my point of view.
I want not less but more of you.

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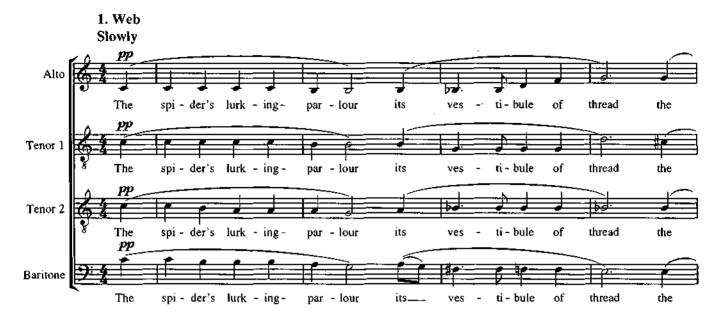
Note: The texts of these madrigals were commissioned from Blake Morrison to be set to music. Subsequently Blake published 11 of these poems, along with others, under the title "Madrigalia" in his volume of Selected Poems (1999). The first ("Web") and last ("Against Dieting") set in my collection do not appear in that edition. The third ("Almond Tree") and fifth ("Within minutes") set the original typescript versions of his poems, which differ slightly from those in the poetry collection.

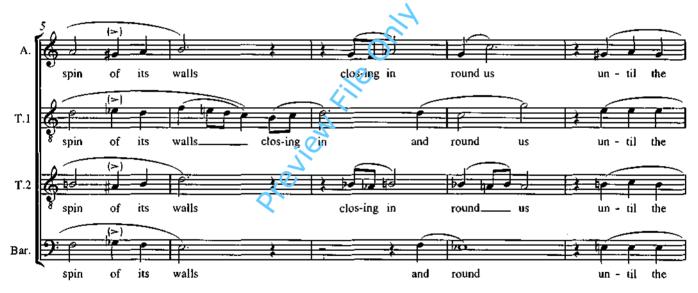
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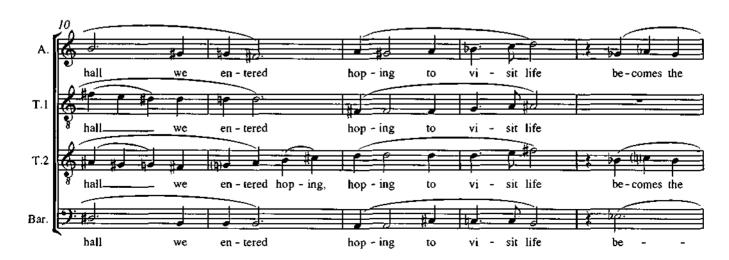
for unaccompanied male voices

Text: Blake Morrison

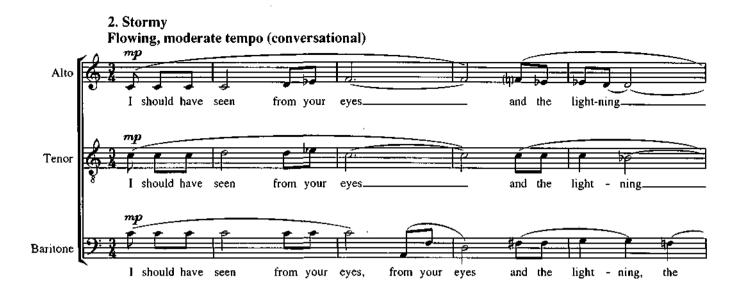
Gavin Bryars

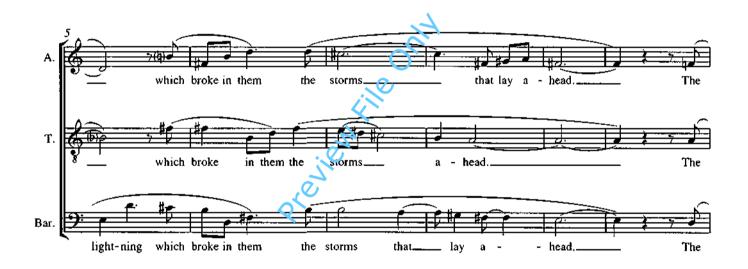


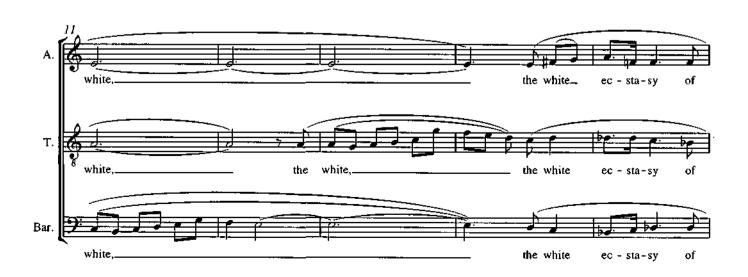


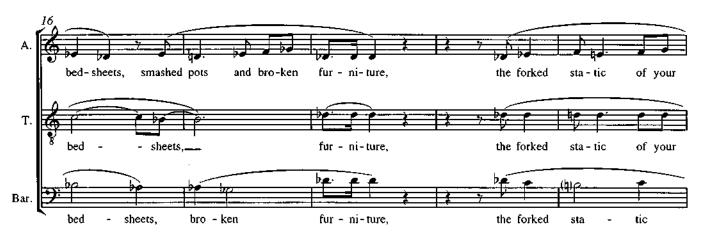


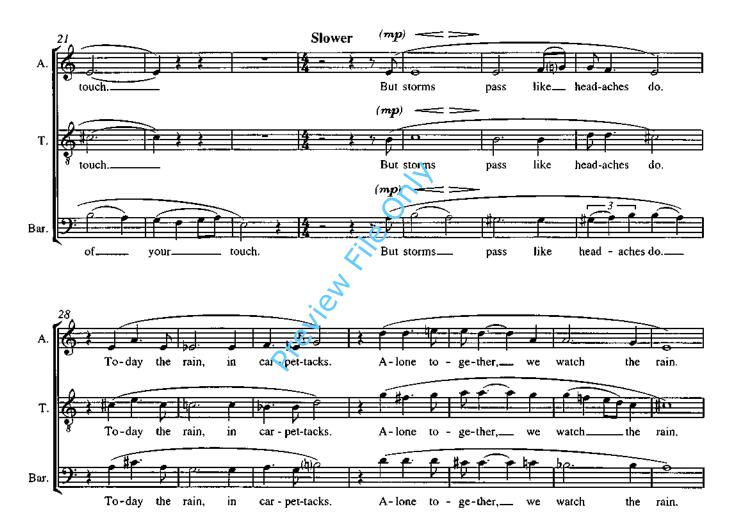


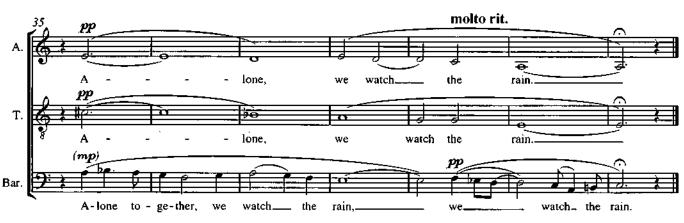




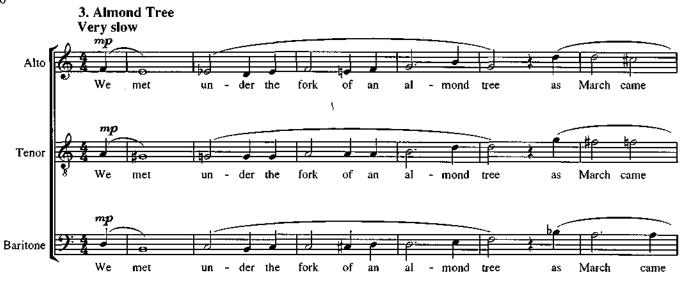


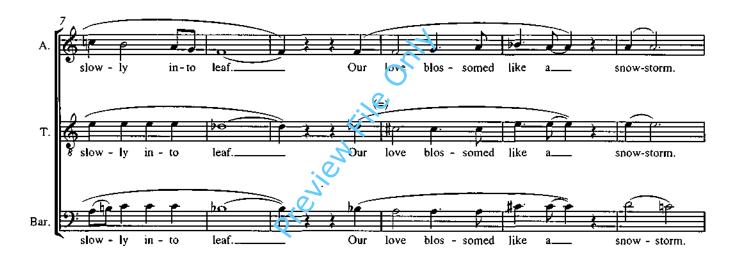


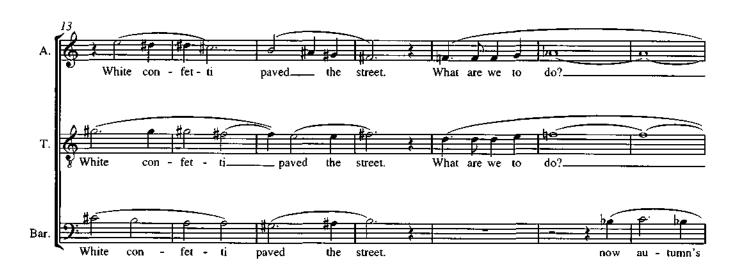


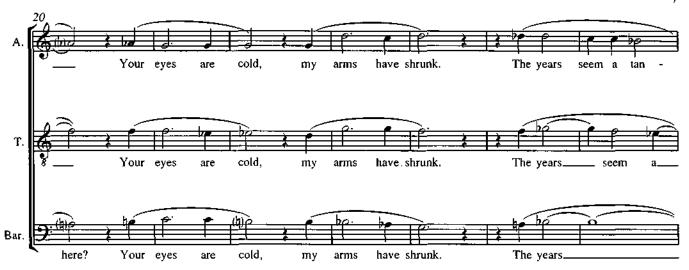


Monday December 7th 1998 Billesdon











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