

## 47 At a Solemn Music

*Date.* 1633? There is no firm evidence for dating. The Trinity MS has two heavily corrected preliminary drafts, followed by a separate draft of 17–28, followed by a fair copy of the whole (these four drafts are referred to in the notes as (a), (b), (c) and (d) respectively). The drafts begin on the reverse of the leaf containing the end of *Arcades*. *Solemn Music* can therefore be dated after, probably soon after, *Arcades* (itself not precisely dateable). The drafts are followed by the first draft of the letter to a friend (see headnote to *Sonnet VII*, p. 152 above) which is undated but perhaps as late as 1633 (W. R. Parker, *RES* 11 (1935) 278–9). *Time* and *Circumcision* do not appear until after the second draft of this letter: they appear, however, as fair copies, so no conclusion about their date of composition relative to that of *Solemn Music* can be drawn from this position. In 1645 *Time* and *Circumcision* precede *Solemn Music*, but it cannot be proved that the order of poems in 1645 is strictly chronological. Suggested dates range from early 1631 (Parker<sup>3</sup> 88–9, 762 n.53) to Sept.–Oct. 1637 (J. T. Shawcross, *MLN* 75 (1960) 11–17).

*Publication.* 1645 (6. concent,]content,) 1673 (the text followed here).

*Modern criticism.* The history of the idea of world harmony (*musica mundana*), with which *Solemn Music* is concerned, and of the related harmony of man (*musica humana*), is traced by L. Spitzer, *Traditio* 2 (1944) 409–64 and 3 (1945) 307–64. The second of these articles contains a detailed analysis of the poem, showing that it can be divided into three sections (Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian), according to the technical terms and concepts used. John Hollander relates the poem to contemporary ideas about music in *The Untuning of the Sky* (Princeton 1961) pp. 324–31. M. C. Pecheux, *SP* 75 (1978) 331–46, notes the significance of the octave in the poem's structure, and H. W. Gabler, *Archiv* 220 (1983) 54–61, traces neo-Platonic harmonic proportions. P. L. Heyworth, *BNYPL* 70 (1966) 450–8, attempts to reconstruct the poem's textual prehistory. J. Carey (Caldwell, Olleson and Wollenberg 245–57) relates the poem to M.'s habitual distrust of music without words, observing that 'Voice' and 'Verse' denote not (as they are often read) 'music and poetry', but unaccompanied solo or choral voices. The poem's orchestral music is entirely illusionistic.

*Versification in M.'s 'canzone poems'.* A. Oras, *N&Q* 197 (1952) 314–5, suggested that the model for the stanza form of *Circumcision* (a10b10c-

10b10a10c10c10d7d7c10e10f7f4e6) was Tasso's *canzone* to the Virgin of Loreto. Tasso's rhyme scheme, however, differs slightly from M.'s (his first six lines rhyme *abcb*). As Prince 62 demonstrates, M.'s actual model was Petrarch's *canzone* to the Blessed Virgin (*Vergine bella, che di Sol vestita*). *Time* and *Solemn Music* (which may have been written either before or after *Circumcision*) adopt the less taxing form of the madrigal – a single, unrepeat stanza of the *canzone* type.

Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heaven's joy,  
 Sphere-borne harmonious sisters, Voice, and Verse,  
 Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ  
 Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce,  
 5 And to our high-raised phantasy present,  
 That undisturbed song of pure concent,  
 Ay sung before the sapphire-coloured throne  
 To him that sits thereon

¶[47. 1–2. *sirens*] See *Arcades* 63–72n, p. 165 above. *pledges*] Earthly music is a pledge or assurance of heavenly bliss because it makes us recollect the divine music. James Hutton, *EM* 2 (1951) 1–63, indicates the currency of this idea among Renaissance neo-Platonists. *Sphere-borne*] carried on spheres. *sisters*] Cp. Marino, *Adone* vii 1: *Musica e Poesia son due sorelle*.

3. *Trin.* MS (a): [ . . . ]vine power and joint force employ. (b): *Mix your choice chords, and happiest sounds employ* (deleted, present version inserted).

4. *Dead things*] Alluding to the myth of Orpheus, whose music could attract trees, streams and rocks.

5. *high-raised phantasy*] Phantasy was thought of in the seventeenth century as intermediate between sense and reason (see *PL* v 100–13). The idea that music could produce an ecstasy, separating soul from body, was common. For a discussion of the whole subject see G. L. Finney, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 8 (1947) 153–86, and for *phantasia* in M.'s early poems see S. Cumberland and L. V. Sadler, *MQ* 3 (1974) 50–55. Between 4 and 5 *Trin.* MS (a) inserts: [ . . . ]whilst your 'equal' raptures tempered sweet / [ . . . ]happy spousal meet / [ . . . ]th a while / [ . . . ]home-bred 'woes' beguile. *Trin.* MS (b): And whilst 'as' your equal raptures tempered sweet / In high mysterious holy 'happy' spousal meet / Snatch us from earth a while / Us of ourselves and home-bred 'native' woes beguile. *high-raised phantasy present*] *Trin.* MS (a): [ . . . ]fancies then 'phantasy' present. *Trin.* MS (b): high 'up' up-raised 'high-raised' phantasy present.

6. *concent*] harmony, concord. Each of the *Trin.* MS drafts reads 'concent'. In a Bodleian copy of 1645 (8<sup>o</sup> M168 Art) a hand possibly M.'s has altered 'content' to 'concent'.

7. *Trin.* MS (a): [ . . . ]ounds [ . . . ]ay surrounds the sovereign 'sapphire-coloured' throne. *sapphire-coloured*] Cp. *Ezek.* i 26: 'the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone'.

- With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee,  
 10 Where the bright seraphim in burning row  
 Their loud uplifted angel trumpets blow,  
 And the cherubic host in thousand choirs  
 Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,  
 With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,  
 15 Hymns devout and holy psalms  
 Singing everlastingly;  
 That we on earth with undiscording voice  
 May rightly answer that melodious noise;  
 As once we did, till disproportioned sin

9. *Trin. MS (a)*: [...]vers a[...] and solemn cry. (Not deleted; present version inserted).

10. *Trin. MS (a)*: [...]e the ser[...] princely row. (b): Where the bright seraphim in *tripled* 'burning' row.

11. *Trin. MS (a)*: [...]ire loud unsa[...]trumpets blow 'Loud symphony of 'silver' trumpets blow'. (b): 'Their' *high-lifted* loud 'uplifted' *arch*-angel trumpets blow.

12. *Trin. MS (a)*: And *the* youthf[...]jubim 'heaven's henchmen' sweet-winged squires.

13. *Trin. MS (a)*: In ten thous[...]jes.

14. *Trin. MS (a)*: With those just[...] that 'bear' wear the *fresh green* 'blooming' 'victorious' palms. (b): With those just spirits that wear the blooming 'blooming or victorious' palms. *palms*] Cp. *Rev. vii 9*: 'a great multitude . . . clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands'.

15. *Trin. MS (a)*: In hymns d[...] and sacred psalms. (b) Hymns devout and sacred 'holy' psalms.

16–17. *Trin. MS (a)* and (b) insert two lines between 16 and 17. *Trin. MS (a)*: 'While' *that* all the f[...]e of 'whilst the whole frame of' 'while *then* all the starry' heaven and arches blue / Resound and echo Hallelu. (b): *While all the starry rounds and arches blue / Resound and echo Hallelu*.

17. *Trin. MS (a)*: That we *below may learn with* 'with undiscording' heart and voice (b): That we 'on earth' with undiscording *heart and* voice.

18. *May rightly answer*] *Trin. MS (a)*: 'May' Rightly *to* answer.

19. *Trin. MS (a)* and (b) omit ll. 19–25 and read instead, (a): By leaving out those harsh chromatic jars / Of sin that all our music mars / And in our lives and in our song. (b): By leaving out those harsh *chromatic* 'ill-sounding' jars / Of clamorous sin that all our music mars / And in our lives and in our song. *Trin. MS (c)*: As once we could 'did' till disproportioned sin. (d): As once we *could* 'did' till disproportioned sin.

19–24. Cp. Du Bartas 256, where it is explained that the 'hidden love' which still exists between 'steel and Load-stone' or 'Elm and the Vine', 'Is but a spark or shadow of that Love / Which at the first in every thing did move, / When as th' Earths *Muses* with harmonious sound / To Heav'ns sweet *Musick* humbly did resound. / But *Adam*, being chief of all the strings / Of this large

- 20 Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din  
Broke the fair music that all creatures made  
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed  
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood  
In first obedience, and their state of good.
- 25 O may we soon again renew that song,  
And keep in tune with heaven, till God ere long  
To his celestial consort us unite,  
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light.