

- In notes, with many a winding bout
 140 Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
 With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
 The melting voice through mazes running;
 Untwisting all the chains that tie
 The hidden soul of harmony.
 145 That Orpheus' self may heave his head
 From golden slumber on a bed
 Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
 Such strains as would have won the ear
 Of Pluto, to have quite set free
 150 His half-regained Eurydice.
 These delights, if thou canst give,
 Mirth with thee, I mean to live.

42 Il Penseroso

Date. Summer 1632? See headnote to previous poem.

Publication. 1645 (21. offended,]offended. 170. spell]spell), 1673 (the text followed here, except in 49, where 1673 misprints a semi-colon after 'Leisure', and in 81, 88, 143 and 156, where it misprints full stops after 'mirth', 'unsphere', 'sing' and 'pale').

For modern criticism see headnote to previous poem.

139. *bout]* circuit, orbit. Nan C. Carpenter, *UTQ* 22 (1953) 354–67, suggests that in ll.139–44 M. has in mind the Italian aria as it was developing in the early seventeenth century. She points out that his father associated for some years with a London colony of Italian musicians, headed by Ferrabosco and Coperario.

145–50. Cp. Virgil, *Georg.* iv 453–527, and Ovid, *Met.* x 1–77 and xi 61–6. See C. M. Bowra, *CQ* new ser. 2 (1952) 113–22.

146. Cp. Dekker, *Patient Grissil* IV ii 99: 'Golden slumbers kisse your eyes.'

151–2. Echoing the conclusion of Marlowe's popular lyric ('Come live with me and be my love'): 'If these delights thy mind may move, / Then live with me, and be my love.'

Title. M.'s *Penseroso* ('pensive') is not the modern spelling, but W. H. David, *N&Q* 7th ser. 8 (1889) 326, justifies it by reference to a French–Italian dictionary published by Chouet at Geneva in 1644.

- Hence vain deluding Joys,
 The brood of Folly without father bred,
 How little you bestead,
 Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys;
 5 Dwell in some idle brain,
 And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
 As thick and numberless
 As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,
 Or likest hovering dreams
 10 The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
 But hail thou goddess, sage and holy,
 Hail divinest Melancholy,
 Whose saintly visage is too bright
 To hit the sense of human sight;
 15 And therefore to our weaker view,
 O'erlaid with black staid wisdom's hue.
 Black, but such as in esteem,
 Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
 Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove

¶42. 1–2. Perhaps an echo of Sylvester (Du Bartas² 1084): 'Hence, hence false Pleasures, momentary Joyes; / Mock us no more with your illuding Toyes.'

2. *brood of Folly]* The same phrase occurs in Jonson, *Love Freed from Ignorance* 274. Leo Carey, *N&Q* 241 (1996) 268–9 compares *Romeo and Juliet* I iv 96–100.

3. *bestead]* help.

6–10. Cp. Sylvester's description of the Cave of Sleep (Du Bartas 396) where Morpheus sleeps and 'fantastick', 'gawdy' swarms of dreams hover like 'Th' unnumbered Moats which in the Sun do play'. In Voragine, *Legenda Aurea* 5,189 (Temple Classics), the air is full of wicked spirits 'as the sunbeams be full of small motes'.

10. *pensioners]* members of royal bodyguard. *Morpheus]* son of Sleep and god of dreams.

14. *hit]* suit, fit.

16. *black]* Melancholy is black bile, and the type of melancholy caused by the influence of Saturn (1. 24) was traditionally associated with a black face as Z. S. Fink, *PQ* 19 (1940) 309–13, points out, referring to the same idea in Burton I iii 1 iii and I iii 2 iii.

18. *Memnon's sister]* called Himera by Dictys Cretensis, *Ephemeris Belli Troiani* vi, as E. Venables, *N&Q* 8th ser. 1 (1892) 149–50, notes. M. Day, *MLR* 12 (1917) 496–7, adds that her beauty is commented on by Guido della Colonne, *Historia Destructionis Troiae* viii.

19. *queen]* Cassiopea, wife of Cepheus, king of Ethiopia, and mother of Andromeda, was turned into a constellation for boasting that she was more beautiful than the Nereids. D. T. Starnes (Taylor² 44–5) cites versions of the story in Renaissance dictionaries.

- 20 To set her beauty's praise above
The sea-nymphs, and their powers offended,
Yet thou art higher far descended,
Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore;
- 25 His daughter she (in Saturn's reign,
Such mixture was not held a stain)
Oft in glimmering bowers, and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
- 30 Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come pensive nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,
- 35 And sable stole of cypress lawn,
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
- 40 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast,
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
- 45 And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,

23. Vesta's motherhood is M.'s invention: she was virgin daughter of Saturn, goddess of flocks and herbs and of the household; cp. Hesiod, *Theog.* 454.

25–6. Saturn, ruler of the Golden Age (commonly imagined as a time of sexual licence), is linked with Mt Ida in Crete by Diodorus Siculus 5.66, 70 (see *PL* 1 514–5).

33. *grain*] dye.

35. *cypress*] could mean 'fine linen' (like 'lawn') but with funereal connotations (see *Winchester Epitaph* 22*n*).

42. Cp. *Shakespeare* 14 (p. 127). A possible source for both is Thomas Tomkins's *Albumazar* I iv 4: 'Marvel thyself to Marble.' The idea originates in the Niobe legend, employed in an epitaph by Browne ii 294: 'Some kind woman . . . / Reading this, like Niobe / Shall turn marble, and become / Both her mourner and her tomb.'

43. *sad*] serious.

- And hears the Muses in a ring,
Ay round about Jove's altar sing.
And add to these retired Leisure,
50 That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring,
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The cherub Contemplation,
- 55 And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,
- 60 Gently o'er the accustomed oak;
Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee chantress oft the woods among,
I woo to hear thy even-song;
- 65 And missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
- 70 Through the heaven's wide pathless way;

47–8. M.'s second *Prolusion* (Columbia xii 154–5, Yale i 237) alludes to the dance of the Muses around Jove's altar, as described by Hesiod, *Theog.* 1–10.

49. *Leisure*] P. Dust, *N&Q* 39 (1992) 30–1, compares *otium* as used in M.'s Lat. poems.

53. See *Passion* 36–40*n* (p. 125)

54. *cherub Contemplation*] In the pseudo-Dionysian *Celestial Hierarchy* II i 31–7 the function of the cherubim is to contemplate God. Neo-Platonists such as Pico endorsed this tradition.

55. *hist*] First recorded occurrence of the word in the sense 'summon with the exclamation "hist!"'

56. *Philomel*] See *Sonnet I* headnote (p. 91).

57. *plight*] state of mind.

58. *brow*] Cp. *Romeo and Juliet* III ii 20: 'black-brow'd night'.

59. *Cynthia*] The moon. *dragon*] See *Prae E* 56–8*n* (p. 29).

62. *Most musical*] M. refers in the seventh *Prolusion* (Columbia xii 283, Yale i 303–4) to Aristotle, *Hist. Nat.* IV ix 536b, where the nightingale is said to teach her chicks music.

66. *smooth-shaven*] Echoes Sylvester (Du Bartas 539): 'new-shav'n Fields', which comes eight lines after a reference to the nightingale.

67. *wandering moon*] From *M.N.D.* IV i 101.

- And oft, as if her head she bowed,
 Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
 Oft on a plat of rising ground,
 I hear the far-off curfew sound,
 75 Over some wide-watered shore,
 Swinging slow with sullen roar;
 Or if the air will not permit,
 Some still removed place will fit,
 Where glowing embers through the room
 80 Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
 Far from all resort of mirth,
 Save the cricket on the hearth,
 Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
 To bless the doors from nightly harm:
 85 Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
 Be seen in some high lonely tower,
 Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
 With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
 The spirit of Plato to unfold
 90 What worlds, or what vast regions hold
 The immortal mind that hath forsook
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook:
 And of those demons that are found
 In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
 95 Whose power hath a true consent
 With planet, or with element.
 Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
 In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
 Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
 100 Or the tale of Troy divine.

73. *plat*] plot.

76. *sullen*] Cp. *II Henry IV* I i 102: 'sullen bell'.

83-4. For an example of the kind of 'charm' recited by bellmen see Herrick
 121 *The Bell-man*.

87. *outwatch the Bear*] the Bear, symbolizing perfection in Hermes (Allen 13),
 never sets. 'Outwatch' is first used in Jonson vii 709, by a melancholy student.

93. *demons*] E. C. Baldwin, *MLN* 33 (1918) 184-5, points out that these element-
 inhabiting spirits are found in Hermes. Ficino's discourse on them in his com-
 mentary on Plato's *Symposium* is cited by G. L. Finney, *Musical Backgrounds*
for English Literature (New Brunswick, N.J. 1962) 105-6. J. A. Humphreys-
 Edwards, *N&Q* 16 (1969) 93, compares lists of demons in the Orphic hymns.

98. *pall*] robe. *Pall* (*palla*) and sceptre occur in Ovid's description of tragedy,
Am. III i 11-13.

99-100. See *Elegia I* 45-6n, p. 21 above.

- Or what (though rare) of later age,
 Ennobled hath the buskined stage.
 But, O sad virgin, that thy power
 Might raise Musaeus from his bower,
 105 Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
 Such notes as warbled to the string,
 Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
 And made hell grant what love did seek.
 Or call up him that left half-told
 110 The story of Cambuscan bold,
 Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
 And who had Canace to wife,
 That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
 And of the wondrous horse of brass,
 115 On which the Tartar king did ride;
 And if aught else, great bards beside,
 In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
 Of tourneys and of trophies hung;
 Of forests, and enchantments drear,
 120 Where more is meant than meets the ear,
 Thus Night oft see me in thy pale career,
 Till civil-suited Morn appear,
 Not tricked and frownced as she was wont,

102. *buskined*] See *L'Allegro* 132n, p. 143 above.

104. *Musaeus*] Mythical seer and priest, pupil of Orpheus and founder of
 priestly poetry in Attica.

105-8. See *L'Allegro* 145-50n (p. 144). Horace, *Odes* II xiv 6-7 (*ill-acrimabilem*
Plutona), makes Pluto unable to weep.

109. *him*] Chaucer, whose *Squire's Tale* is unfinished. M. clearly knew
 Spenser's completion of it (*FQ* IV ii 30-32, iii 52) and possibly his father's
 friend John Lane's, written 1615. See F. P. Magoun, *MP* 25 (1928) 133-4, and
 F. W. Emerson *MLN* 47 (1932) 153-4.

113. *virtuous*] endowed with magical power. Allen 12 suggests that M. refers to
 the *Squire's Tale* here because he saw ring, glass and brass horse as symbols of
 intellectual power.

116-20. Referring probably to 'our sage and serious Poet *Spencer*' (Columbia
 iv 311, Yale ii 516) and perhaps to Ariosto and Tasso as well, whose epics had
 been allegorized by Renaissance critics.

120. Cp. Seneca, *Epist.* cxiv 1: *In quibus plus intelligendum esset quam audiendum*
 (in which more was to be understood than heard).

122. *civil-suited*] Echoes *Romeo and Juliet* III ii 10-11: 'Come, civil night, /
 Thou sober-suited matron.'

123. *tricked and frownced*] decked out and with curled hair.

- With the Attic boy to hunt,
 125 But kerchieft in a comely cloud,
 While rocking winds are piping loud,
 Or ushered with a shower still,
 When the gust hath blown his fill,
 Ending on the rustling leaves,
 130 With minute drops from off the eaves.
 And when the sun begins to fling
 His flaring beams, me goddess bring
 To arched walks of twilight groves,
 And shadows brown that Sylvan loves
 135 Of pine, or monumental oak,
 Where the rude axe with heaved stroke,
 Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
 Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
 There in close covert by some brook,
 140 Where no profaner eye may look,
 Hide me from day's garish eye,
 While the bee with honied thigh,
 That at her flowery work doth sing,
 And the waters murmuring
 145 With such consort as they keep,
 Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep;
 And let some strange mysterious dream,
 Wave at his wings in airy stream,
 Of lively portraiture displayed,

124. *Attic boy*] See *Elegia V* 49–52n (p. 85).

127. *still*] quiet.

130. *minute*] Perhaps 'falling at intervals of a minute' (though this sense is unrecorded before M.); or 'small' (D. Bush, *Variorum* ii 331, cites *Minutae guttulae* from Erasmus, *Adagia*).

131. *fling*] Probably echoing Drayton, *Muses' Elizium* i 1–2: 'When Phoebus with a face of mirth / Had flung abroad his beams'; cp. also Beaumont and Fletcher, *Maid's Tragedy* I i: 'the day that flings his light'.

132. *flaring beams*] Marlowe uses the same phrase, *Hero and Leander* ii 332.

134. *Sylvan*] The Roman wood god.

139. *close covert*] A. Burnett, *N&Q* 227 (1982) 28–32, notes the phrase in Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* 'The Thirteenth Song' 84–6, and Spenser, *Amoretti* xii 7: 'the close covert of her guilefull eyen'.

141. *garish eye*] Echoes *Romeo and Juliet* III ii 25: 'the garish sun'.

142–4. Echoing Drayton, *The Owl* 117–21: 'the small brookes . . . murmuring. / Each Bee with Honey on her laden thye.'

145. *consort*] musical harmony.

148. *his*] Sleep's: cp. the address to 'Phant'sie' in Jonson's *Vision of Delight* 45–54: 'Spread thy purple wings; / Now all thy figures are allow'd, / And

- 150 Softly on my eyelids laid.
 And as I wake, sweet music breathe
 Above, about, or underneath,
 Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
 Or the unseen genius of the wood.
 155 But let my due feet never fail,
 To walk the studious cloister's pale,
 And love the high embowed roof,
 With antique pillars' massy proof,
 And storied windows richly dight,
 160 Casting a dim religious light.
 There let the pealing organ blow,
 To the full-voiced choir below,
 In service high, and anthems clear,
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
 165 Dissolve me into ecstasies,
 And bring all heaven before mine eyes.
 And may at last my weary age
 Find out the peaceful hermitage,
 The hairy gown and mossy cell,
 170 Where I may sit and rightly spell
 Of every star that heaven doth shew,
 And every herb that sips the dew;
 Till old experience do attain
 To something like prophetic strain.
 175 These pleasures Melancholy give,
 And I with thee will choose to live.

various shapes of things; / Create of ayrie formes, a streame; / . . . And though it be a waking dreame; / Yet let it like an odour rise / . . . And fall like sleep upon their eies, / Or musick in their eare.'

152. M. is probably remembering the magic music in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, particularly I ii 390: 'Where should this music be? i' th' air or th' earth?'

154. *genius*] See *Arcades* 26n (p. 163).

156. *pale*] enclosure.

157. *embowed*] vaulted.

158. *antique*] The old spelling 'antic' in 1645 and 1673 could mean 'grotesque' or 'old'. *massy*] made of great blocks of masonry. *proof*] impenetrability.

159. *storied*] ornamented with scenes from (biblical) history.

165–6. See *Solemn Music* 5n (p. 168).

170–1. *spell Of*] find out about.

175–6. See *L'Allegro* 151–2n (p. 144).