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Jonson's *Oberon* and friends: masque and music in 1611

Bringing in the New Year

1611 began in England with a flourish of culture in the court of King James. On New Year's Day the King, his family, his courtiers and several foreign ambassadors attended the performance of a masque in the Banqueting House of his court at Whitehall. Masques were an integral part of courtly celebrations and central to the iconography of royalty by 1611; their plots often incorporated rebellious energies shown to be overcome by peaceful authority, and their mixture of drama, music, dance and visual splendour was a symbolic display of learning, largesse and patronage. The masque to mark the beginning of 1611, *Oberon, The Faery Prince*, was no exception: it was the result of collaborative work by some of the greatest creative artists active in England at the time. The text, which includes dialogue, lyric verse, stage directions, scenic descriptions and learned annotation, was written by Ben Jonson; the songs were set to music by Alfonso Ferrabosco the Younger, Prince Henry's music tutor; the performance took place in costumes and on stage sets designed by Inigo Jones; its speaking parts were played by members of Shakespeare's company, the King's Men; its lively action included ballets devised by choreographers Confesse, Giles and Herne, and it concluded with courtly dances to the music of Robert Johnson. The patron and central figure of this glittering event was James's elder son, Henry, whose political coming of age had been celebrated for much of 1610 and had kept many writers, including Samuel Daniel, very busy with masques and other ceremonial 'solemnitie' (Daniel (1610), title page). The festivities surrounding Henry's investiture as Prince of Wales may be seen

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as reaching their completion with this new-year masque for 1611, reminding us immediately of the continuity of cultural history in which the start of this special year simultaneously represents the continuation and climax of other cycles of events and experiences.

The full title of the masque also evokes the recent past in textual culture. The character of Oberon played a key role in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in performance since the 1590s and available in print since 1600; Oberon also featured in Robert Greene's play, *The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth . . . Entermixed with a Pleasant Comedie, presented by Oboram, King of Fayeries*, staged in 1590 and published in 1598. The subtitle of Jonson's masque, identifying Oberon as the 'Faery Prince', was bound to call to mind a major work of recent English poetry, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and with it, no doubt, positive memories of the reign of Elizabeth I and the glorious triumphs of her Protestant kingdom. It is perhaps no coincidence that the poetic works of Spenser, who had died in 1599, were collected and published in a grand folio volume during 1611. Jonson's new-year masque therefore asserts, even in its title and subtitle, that there is no such thing as a clean slate on which to create new texts: the new year and its products are built on the continuing cultural memories of the preceding era.

The title page of *Oberon*, as printed in Jonson's own folio *Workes* in 1616, announces the text as 'A Masque of Prince Henries', indicating the young prince's sponsorship of the event, and on 1 January 1611 it was Henry himself who played the title role of the 'Faery Prince'. This early modern dramatic, musical and visual spectacle is a fitting place to begin our study of the textual culture of 1611 – not only because it was performed on the very first day of the year and is in itself a 'minor masterpiece' (Butler, 188) but also because it encapsulates the typically vital interconnections in this period between language, performance, politics and the moment. The simple plot – concerning a set of rebellious satyrs awaiting the arrival of Prince Oberon in their midst – focuses on excited anticipation: the dramatic impulse is forward-looking, intent upon the appearance of this splendid emblem of virtue and authority. The masque is preoccupied with time and is imbued from the start with a sense that the moment – aptly for a new year's celebration – must be seized. The spectacle opens with a night-time scene, described by Jonson as 'nothing . . . but a darke Rocke, with trees beyond it; and all wildnesse, that could be presented' (Jonson 7 (1941), 341). The first figure on stage is a 'Satyre', a mythological woodland creature whose presence and physical appearance, featuring 'cloven feet', 'shaggie thighs' and 'stubbed hornes' (345–6), would immediately suggest uncontrolled energies and excessive revelling. Although the emphasis is on 'play', it is already significant that there is an urgency about the Satyr's attempt to wake his playfellows with the sound of his cornet:

> Come away,
> Times be short, are made for play;
> The hum'rous Moone too will not stay:
> What doth make you thus delay?
>
> (341)

The 'hum'rous' moon 'will not stay': its brief pre-eminence and its shifting cycles, like the changing humours or moods of human beings, suggest the necessity of haste in the interests of pleasure. The prince whom they hope to see, Oberon, is himself the head of the fairy realm and thus a monarch of the night: even he is constrained by time. The impact of the initial nocturnal scene upon those present on New Year's Day 1611 is recorded in the extant eyewitness account of the diplomat William Trumbull. He refers to the 'great rock', the brilliantly craggy form at the centre of Inigo Jones's set, and specifically notes that the moon was 'showing above through an aperture, so that its progress through the night could be observed' (Jonson 10 (1950), 522–3). The passing of time is thus made a part of the set's visual effects and, as the action proceeds, the audience is constantly reminded of the temporal nature of the experience: 'O, that he so long doth tarrie', cry the impatient Chorus as they wait for Oberon, and later much is made of the cock's crow, a sign of the coming end of the night and so the exact time for the Prince to emerge – he who fills 'every season, ev'ry place' with his 'grace', and in whose face 'Beautie dwels' (Jonson 7 (1941), 343).

When Oberon, played by Prince Henry, is pulled forward in a chariot at this crucial moment in the masque, his arrival is hailed by a song which reminds the audience that the ultimate purpose of the masque is the glorification not of Henry but of King James. The reason given for Oberon's visit is that he is to pay his 'annuall vowes' to the legendary King Arthur (Jonson 7 (1941), 352) in a new-year statement of homage. This is yet another way in which the masque is explicitly shaped by the significance of time, but it is also an assertion of the hierarchical authority celebrated by the performance. In the mythology of the drama, Oberon pays his respects to 'ARTHURS chayre', but the words of the song explicitly point out that there is only one monarch higher than King Arthur, and that is 'JAMES', the 'wonder' of 'tongues, of eares, of eyes' (351). Seated on his throne in pride of place above the audience at Whitehall, James is the off-stage focus of the nocturnal masque. As Jonson's text asserts, James is the glorious sun by whose reflected light the moon and her prince can shine:

> The solemne rites are well begunne;
> And, though but lighted by the moone,
> They show as rich, as if the sunne

> Had made this night his noone.
> But may none wonder, that they are so bright,
> The moone now borrowes from a greater light.
>
> (354)

Through the mirroring effect of the masque's rhetoric and movement, in which the actions on stage are intimately bound up with the relationships in and with the audience, *Oberon* reasserts James's position as the rightful descendant of Arthur. Indeed, Trumbull's account of the one-off performance of the masque makes it clear that James's political concerns were prominent: the 'very large curtain' which hung in front of the set until the performance began was 'painted with the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland, with the legend above *Separata locis concordi pace figantur*', meaning 'May what is separated in place be joined by harmonious peace' (Jonson 10 (1950), 522). James's regal identity was firmly associated with keeping war at bay – his personal motto was the biblical phrase *Beati Pacifici* [blessed are the peacemakers] – and one of the major priorities of his reign was to maintain the several kingdoms of the British Isles in relatively peaceful coexistence. In an allegory of James's political concerns, the factions and orders of the fairy world who appear in the masque – the playful satyrs at first, followed by the sylvans who guard Oberon's palace and the more elevated fays in the prince's entourage – are all reconciled in the action of the masque before the Prince and his company conclude the spectacle in paying homage to King James and Queen Anna on their dais. In Trumbull's words, at the conclusion of *Oberon*, 'the masqueraders approached the throne to make their reverence to their Majesties' (Jonson 10 (1950), 523), with the poetry of peaceful reconciliation and the graceful harmonies of the dance music ringing in their ears.

The Originality of Jonson's *Oberon*

Appropriately, then, the satyrs and other lowly imaginary creatures are not banished from the concluding celebrations but are brought together, like the nations of James's kingdom, in order to pay due reverence to Oberon and, allied with him, to the king. Indeed, the whole thrust of the masque, in its temporal urgency, textual detail, personnel and performance, is towards unity. The masque as a genre brings together words and music, tableaux and movement, sight and sound, while Prince Henry united in his own person a Scottish dynasty, an English court and a Welsh title. The visual effects of *Oberon* similarly emphasise continuity and transformation rather than opposition. Whereas in most masques there is a firm contrast between the 'anti-masque' – a preliminary section emphasising disharmony – and

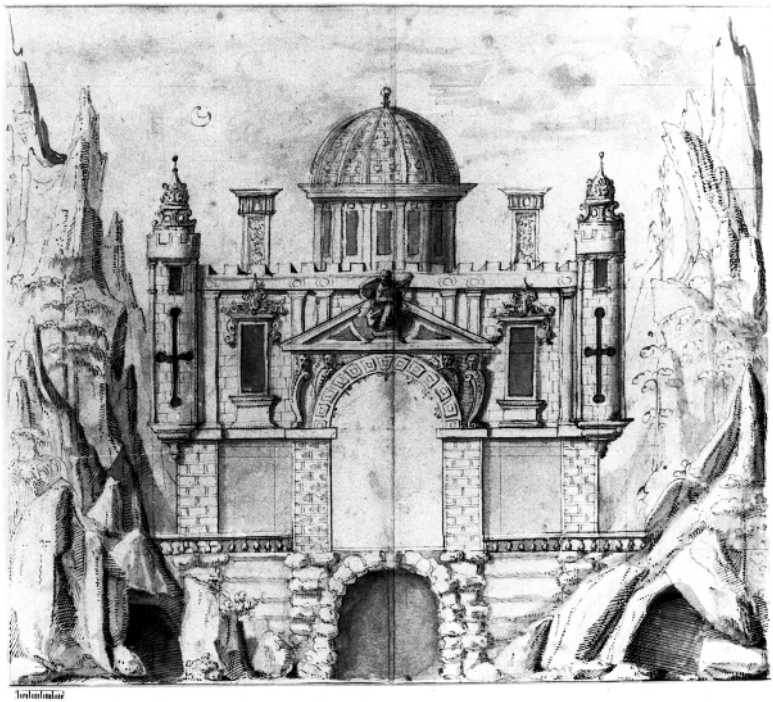

Figure 1 Inigo Jones, design for the palace of the fairy prince in Ben Jonson's masque *Oberon*. Image from the Devonshire Collection, reproduced by kind permission of the Duke of Devonshire and the Chatsworth settlement. Photographic survey, Courtauld Institute of Arts.

the masque proper with its elegance and order, these differences are underplayed in *Oberon*. Inigo Jones's designs radically suggest inclusion rather than opposition: the rocks of the opening scene are not removed before the main action begins but instead open to reveal Oberon's palace within them (Figure 1). Jonson uses the term 'discovery' for this scene change, implying a process of uncovering or showing forth what has been present all along: '*There the whole* Scene *opened, and within was discouer'd the* Frontispice *of a bright and glorious* Palace, *whose gates and walls were transparent*' (Jonson 7 (1941), 346). This fabulous second set is yet superseded by a third in which the 'whole palace' is fully opened and a '*nation of* Faies' is also 'discover'd'; deeper within the palace, the fairy knights are seen 'farre off in perspectiue' and finally, 'at the further end of all', Oberon himself is visible 'in a chariot' (351). The dramatic effect of this carefully staged

spectacle evidently amazed the assembled company at Whitehall: Trumbull noted that 'the rock opened discovering a great throne with countless lights and colours all shifting, a lovely thing to see' (Jonson 10 (1950), 522). Only after this transformation of rugged rocks into dignified external architecture and decorative inner splendour is Oberon himself permitted to appear and move forward to the centre of the stage. His chariot is said to have been pulled by 'two white beares' (Jonson 7 (1941), 351), an exotic touch probably provided by the polar bears sent as a gift to James by the Muscovite Company and known to have been in the Bankside bear garden in London at this time (Ravelhofer, 203). In this detail, once again, unity and government are symbolised: the whole world – polar and temperate, nocturnal and diurnal, mythological and political – is brought together under James's rule.

The masque thus consciously displays the beneficence of royal patronage in bringing opposing forces into harmony. The satyrs, who threaten disorder within the kingdom, are not punished but reformed: 'Though our forms be rough, & rude, / Yet our acts may be endew'd / With more vertue' (Jonson 7 (1941), 351). These 'rough' creatures remain on stage until the end of the dances with which the masque concludes; they, too, witness the reconciling of darkness and light in the 'brightnesse of this night' (356). The reconciliation of a variety of traditions could even be seen in the design by Inigo Jones for Oberon's costume: Trumbull describes the armour of this peace-loving, almost Christ-like figure of grace and beauty as resembling that of the 'Roman emperors' (Jonson 10 (1950), 522), and Jones's sketch includes warlike leonine faces on the sleeve, breastplate and boots, linking Oberon with classical heroism as well as the aggressive energy of the satyrs. The physical impression made by the young prince in his role as Oberon must indeed have been splendid. His costume far outshone even those of his fairy entourage as Jones's design makes clear. Trumbull's report speaks of all the 'gentlemen' in the masque wearing 'scarlet hose', 'white brodequins full of silver spangles', 'gold and suilver cloth' and 'very high white plumes'; however, whereas each of these fairy knights wore 'a very rich blue band across the body', Henry's band was 'scarlet, to distinguish him from the rest' (Jonson 10 (1950), 522). Since his role was a silent one – Henry was the focus of the spectacle and the dances but had no text to speak or sing – the Prince's visual presence in the masque was of crucial importance. The Venetian ambassador's report supplies evidence that Henry carried off his corporeal ceremonies and dancing with great success: 'On Tuesday the Prince gave his Masque, which was very beautiful throughout, very decorative, but most remarkable for the grace of the Prince's every movement' (*CSP*, 106).

Though the Prince does not speak a word in the course of the masque, and much of the impact of the work depends upon design, colour and music,

the role of language in this entertainment should not be underestimated. Words are, in themselves, a recurring topic in the verse, as well as its medium. The leader of the unruly satyrs, Silenus, overhears two of them discussing the wooing of 'Nymphes' and immediately rebukes them:

> Chaster language. These are nights
> Solemne, to the shining rites
> Of the *Fayrie* Prince, and Knights.
> (Jonson 7 (1941), 343)

As Jonson's learned note to these lines points out, the classical Silenus shared none of the 'petulance, and lightnesse' of the other satyrs but 'on the contrarie, all gravitie, and profound knowledge, of most secret mysteries' (343). Nor does Jonson's Silenus share the rough language of his 'wantons', the shaggy satyrs (345); by contrast, Silenus is eloquent in his praise of Oberon and, pointedly, stresses the prince's own skill in the use of language. He likens Oberon to Mercury, the 'god of tongue' who was said to have wooed Penelope with winning words, and draws a parallel between Oberon and Apollo, the god who sang expressively to the accompaniment of his harp (344). Facility with language, the very basis of the textual culture with which 1611 is so rich, is already to be seen here as fundamental to the projected ideal of royalty. The King, who in *Oberon* is simultaneously both the Arthur of romance and the James of reality, is said to 'teach' his people 'by the sweetnesse of his *sway*', his persuasive rhetoric, 'And not by force' (353): language, literally, rules. Jonson himself is attentive to the craft of rhetoric in *Oberon*, and not least to the symbolic power of poetic metre. While the satyrs speak in shorter lines of verse, mainly trochaic, Jonson uses a more dignified iambic pentameter as the norm for the fairies' songs and dialogue. Nor are the words of the masque ignored or obscured when dressed in their musical settings. Ferrabosco's extant songs highlight the differences of style between the mythological beings: those with clay-like feet and 'knottie legs' (354) are given word settings with a somewhat plodding harmonic movement, while the supernatural quality of the fairies is aptly suggested by their more expressive and mellifluous melodies. In the setting of the song 'Gentle Knights', no listener could mistake the importance of the word 'fairy' with its melismatic melodic phrase rising across 12 different notes in a long smooth scale, or the upward leap to the highest note of the melody for the phrase 'bright and airy' (Chan, 236–7). The combination of words, music, movement, costumes and set is a triumph of expression and design.

One of the difficulties with a masque of this kind, linked to a specific moment in history, is that the special nuances of its occasion can never quite be recreated. We do have Jonson's extremely detailed text, with the printed

dialogue centred on the page and encased in stage directions, description and annotation, which function almost as a textual staging, a printed impression of the perspectives and complexity of the genre (Ravelhofer, 206). We are also lucky enough to have surviving copies of the music for some of the songs and the concluding dances, as well as elaborate sketches for the scenery and costumes. However, even if an accurate rendering of its visual and aural impact could be reproduced, the full effect of the masque would continue to elude us since its meanings depended so intricately and fundamentally, on the day of its performance, on a web of personal tensions and hierarchical relationships. The implicit tension between the moon and the sun at the end of the masque, for example, would have had overtones of some less harmonious aspects of the actual relationships in James's family and court. While James is praised for holding a course 'as certayne as the sunne', we have seen that Henry's 'solemne rites', though 'lighted by the moone', are said to 'shew as rich, as if the sunne / Had made this night his noone' (Jonson 7 (1941), 353–4). The masque did indeed turn night into noon, being set in Oberon's night-time realm but dazzling the audience with its lights as bright as day. Tactfully, Jonson's verse reminds the audience that the moon's light is borrowed from the sun. However, the very idea that Prince Henry's apparently lesser light might outshine the King's rays had been an underlying anxiety to James since the birth of his son and heir, whom he sent away as a very young child to be fostered, apparently in order to prevent court factions clustering around Henry and threatening James's own authority. This was greatly resented by Henry's mother, Anna of Denmark, and was one of several reasons for the deep rift between the king and queen, which had led to the separateness of their lives and courts by 1611. Henry, too, had begun to go his own independent way now that he had come of age and was gathering a coterie around him at St James's Palace. Thus the blurring of the distinctions between night and day, as well as the integration of the satyrs and fairies in the nocturnal kingdom, would seem to be part of the masque's covert strategy as it attempts to hold together the several royal courts in Jacobean London. The masque dances subtly across political and familial fault lines, suggesting that the Latin motto on the stage curtain might refer to local palaces as well as more distant lands which required bringing into harmonious peace [*concordi pace*] under James's rule.

In these circumstances it is surely significant that when Henry, as Oberon, stepped out of his carriage towards the end of the masque and began to dance, his partner was his mother. According to Trumbull, Henry 'took the queen to dance' three times: in 'an English dance resembling a pavane', followed by a 'coranta' and later, after a galliard had been danced by others present (including Henry's sister, the Princess Elizabeth, and the Earl of Southampton), 'the prince took the queen a third time for *los branles de*

Poitou' (Jonson 10 (1950), 523). Music for these and other dances from the masque has survived, some of it by Robert Johnson and some unattributed, and we have extant documents detailing the costs for the masque and indicating that many musicians were involved, including lutenists and violinists, and players of 'hautboys', 'flageolets' and cornets (Jonson 10 (1950), 519–22). After all of this entertainment, the king was reportedly 'somewhat tired', which is surprising given that he is the only significant person present who had not been involved in the dancing. Had he perhaps seen enough of his son and queen – his perceived rivals in the public's affection – on display in their dances? 'See you not, who riseth here?' asks the satyr in the opening speech of the masque (Jonson 7:341), referring to the moon. At the time of the masque's performance, however, this question would have hovered over the entire action: Oberon, too, rises in the course of the plot, and in the contemporary London to which the masque points, the young prince was rising at court and coming into his own (Bishop, 109). Whether James was simply weary or, possibly, rendered uneasy by Henry's evident success and Anna's association with it will never be known, but for whatever reason, as Trumbull records in his account of the evening, at this point the king firmly 'sent word that they should make an end' (Jonson 10 (1950), 523), and the entertainment was concluded.

Masques were transitory events – rich, expressive, influential, but generally limited to their specific moment of performance and symbolic effect. *Oberon* with its splendid sets of jagged rocks opening up to 'discover' the fabulous fairy palace, its fine music and energetic verse, and its implicit tensions between the Princely Oberon and the King to whom he paid homage, was over before 1 January 1611 had even run its course. The new year had been ushered in, yet its first cultural festivity, powerful but ephemeral, had already faded. Trumbull's description of the masque concludes poignantly with a puzzled sense of waste: when the 'king and queen with the ladies and gentlemen of the masque' had left the hall, 'in a moment everything was thrown down with furious haste, according to the strange custom of the country' (Jonson 10 (1950), 523). Trumbull was a diplomat in the Spanish Netherlands (Butler 191, Anderson) and is likely to have been reporting back to contacts in Brussels, which explains his rationalisation of the hasty dismantling of the sets in terms of the 'strange custom' of the English. It is tempting to draw a parallel with the description of an abandoned masque in a play performed on 1 November of the same year in the same Whitehall Palace – Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. There, too, the 'baseless fabric' of Prospero's 'insubstantial pageant' quickly fades, and the 'cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces' dissolve 'into thin air', leaving 'not a rack behind' (*The Tempest*, 4.1.150–5). For all its elaborate artistic skill, the masque is an emblem of fleeting revelry, paradoxically emphasising the illusory nature of the authority that it seeks to celebrate.

Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly

In spite of – or perhaps because of – the inbuilt obsolescence and extravagance of the genre, masques were a regular feature of Jacobean London, and a second masque by Jonson and Jones was performed in 1611 a little more than a month after *Oberon*. This time the sponsor was not Prince Henry but his mother and dancing partner, Queen Anna, who was a significant patron of masques in this period, notably associated with Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605) and *Masque of Queens* (1609). Anna held her own court in Somerset House (renamed Denmark House) in the Strand, but it was the Banqueting House in Whitehall that was again the setting for the performance of her new masque in 1611. The occasion of the celebration was the liturgical feast of Candlemas, when the church commemorates the presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple. The masque had not originally been intended for this time of year (Butler, 362), and the topic of the masque for 3 February 1611 was a secular, classical subject, though fortunately a theme relevant to all seasons: *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly*. 'Love' in this case is not an abstract notion, nor the spiritual ideal signified by the term in so much writing of this period, but rather the imperfect character of Cupid himself, who tends to treat his 'bow' as though it were a 'scepter' (Jonson 7 (1941), 359). As the title of the masque suggests, this figure of Love appears in captivity at the opening of the action: the 'bands / Of [his] eyes', normally rendering him blind, 'now tye [his] hands' instead (359). In this anti-masque world of inverted values, suggested in the accompaniment of 'strange Musique of wilde Instruments', the normally 'lordly' Love is paraded as the prisoner of the Sphynx or Ignorance, which is 'alwaies', Jonson's note asserts, 'the enemie of *Love, & Beauty*' (359). Love's only means of escape from the Sphynx – and the only way of setting free the Queen 'of the Orient' and 'Eleven Daughters of the morne' whom he was accompanying in their search for Phoebus, the sun god (361) – is to solve a challenging riddle:

> First, *Cupid*, you must cast about
> To find a world the world without,
> Wherein what's done, the eie doth doe;
> And is the light, and treasure too.
> This eye still moves, and still is fixed . . .
>
> (364)

The paradoxes to be unravelled here are initially a puzzle to Love: what is this 'world' that he must identify? Tentatively he suggests that it might be the moon, or perhaps a 'Lady', since every human creature is 'a world in feature' (364). As these answers are shown to be false, Love becomes

increasingly desperate until he is 'divinely instructed' by 12 priests of the Muses and with their aid discovers the key to unlock both the riddle and the prisoners: this special 'world' that he must identify is Britain itself, and the 'eye' is none other than James, the 'sunne' of Albion who is both its 'light' and its 'treasure' (367–8).

Once again, then, the focal point of the masque is not its sponsor (in this case Queen Anna, and in the previous month Prince Henry) but the King himself: his is 'the brightest face here shining' in the audience of the entertainment (Jonson 7 (1941), 368). The allegory turns out to have very little to do with love and a great deal to do with patriotism and royal authority. As soon as James is identified as the solution to the riddle, the anti-masque gives way to the glorious masque proper. The stage is filled with emblems of wisdom – the Muses' priests – and folly is banished: the Sphynx, female 'monster' of Ignorance, and her accompanying 'shee-fooles' are said to 'praecipitate themselves' off the 'cliffe'. These wildly dancing female figures of folly, who have taunted and threatened Love in the anti-masque, are symbolically replaced by the Queen and her far from foolish ladies, the Daughters of the Morn, released from their captivity and descending as from a cloud to dance before James, the British Phoebus. With the overthrow of the Follies, the masque's music ceases to be 'strange' and discordant and becomes, by contrast, elegantly 'ayry'. There are 'Revells' in the main masque but no hint of uncontrolled energies: here the dancers are graceful and dignified, moving 'in time, and measure meet' (Jonson 7 (1941), 359, 366–71). Now that Love has been set free from the 'bands' of Ignorance and her Follies, order is restored and the light of wisdom, mainly in the form of the British sun king, shines over the proceedings as the masque concludes.

Love himself asserts from the beginning that he strives

> . . . to keepe the world alive,
> And uphold it; without mee,
> All againe would *Chaos* bee.
>
> (360)

The male figures of the masque's final scene – the newly liberated Love, the priests of the Muses and, most importantly, James – are presented as emblems of ordered authority, holding chaos at bay. They are complemented by the female Graces and, at the climax of the masque, the arrival of the Queen and her 11 ladies, whose beauty is an emblem of all that is natural: had the women not been released from captivity, in 'losing these, you lost her [Nature] too' (Jonson 7:370). At the close of the masque, the Queen – in the fiction of the masque as well as the reality of the court – is united

with her spouse, the King who is Phoebus and Albion, James the royal sun. The triumphant ending is entirely dependent on the traditional hierarchies of man as rational order and woman as complementary beauty – man as head and woman as body, man as the fixed point and woman drawn towards him. Despite the fact that this masque was sponsored by the Queen, a woman known for her determination and independence of mind, it begins with an anti-masque that vividly dramatises the threat of rebellious female ignorance and folly, and its eventual resolution in the masque itself centres on emblems of male control and authority. From the learning of the priests to the sun-like glory of Phoebus, the patterns and roles in *Love Freed* not only form an allegory of Britain's power but also enact the gender relations of early modern English society.

Jonson's text for *Love Freed* is briefer than that for *Oberon*, largely because he provides very few stage directions and none of the lavish descriptions of the special effects that we find in *Oberon* and are known also to have been part of this second masque of 1611 in performance. From the surviving records relating to *Love Freed*, it is clear that the dancers were costly – Monsieur Confesse was paid £50 for the choreography and training of the dancers, whereas Jonson received £40 for the text (Jonson 10 (1950), 529) – and the costumes for the female dancers were extremely daring. Inigo Jones's sketch for the Daughters of the Morn suggests that they were clad (if that is not too generous a term) in deliberately exotic dress, revealing their breasts and navels and allowing the contours of their arms to be glimpsed through the layers of translucent fabric. The captive Queen and these companions of hers are all described as beauties from 'the utmost East' (Jonson 7 (1941), 361) who are travelling towards the Sun – Phoebus, James – 'throned in the West' as the closing words of the masque assert: the underlying impulse of the masque is thus not only the politics of gender but also the assumption of imperial superiority. In a year when the East India Company continued to advance English trade from east to west, the same westward movement forms the triumphal structure of *Love Freed*: the tantalising qualities of the east are brought to the 'civilised' west and there displayed under its authority and celebrated in the context of its measured control. 'Measure', when used in the final song of *Love Freed* (369), refers to the steps of the dance and the ordered rhythms of its music; it also applies, however, to the metre of Jonson's own verse, as well as more profoundly implying the social and political control exercised by King James. The masque asserts that he is a monarch who has got the measure of the worlds of culture, trade and diplomacy over which he rules.

Love Freed is a fascinating text for at least two further reasons. First, while all masques are built upon the mutual mirroring of stage and

audience, especially the reflections of royalty among spectators and masquers, *Love Freed* establishes a particularly powerful bond between the character of Love and those watching his plight. From his opening speech onwards, Love appeals directly to the audience:

> Hath this place
> None will pittie CUPIDS case?
> Some soft eye, (while I can see
> Who it is, that melts for mee)
> Weepe a fit. Are all eyes here
> Made of marble? But a teare,
> Though a false one; It may make
> Others true compassion take.
>
> (Jonson 7 (1941), 360)

This striking passage, with its nimble use of questions cutting across the lines of verse to dramatic effect, makes the power of theatre and rhetoric its overt subject. Since Cupid is, for once, not blind, he can see his audience and is disconcerted by what he finds – a lack of sympathy for his imprisonment as might be expressed by a 'soft eye', a melting heart betrayed by tears. Where is your compassion? he asks his watchers boldly, even asking for a false tear that might then inspire genuine emotion in others. Love's words are an exploration of the affective nature of drama, by which individually expressed or enacted emotions can lead to both personal and communal responses. And despite the fact that he gets no reaction from the audience – at least, no scripted response at this point – a few minutes later he tries the audience again. Unable to crack the riddle set for him by the Sphynx, and therefore facing no release but even greater punishment, Love appeals specifically to the women among the spectators:

> Ladies, have your lookes no power
> To helpe LOVE, at such an hower?
> Will you loose him thus? adiew,
> Thinke, what will become of you . . .
>
> (367)

Melodramatic though this speech undoubtedly is, it is an unusually direct expression of the two-way relationship between actors and audience in early modern masques and, potentially, in the wider theatre practice of the period. The speech is also an indication of the affective rhetoric used in the masque, a genre sometimes assumed to be rather too formal and politically compromised to be expressive. As Cupid goes on to say to his female audience, if he is not saved, then 'Who shall bathe him in the streames / Of your blood, and send you dreames / Of delight?' In this

highly sensuous appeal to a specifically gendered audience, *Love Freed* breaks new ground. In place of an overt reliance upon special effects and dramatic changes of set during the masque (Chan, 241), Jonson gradually establishes a new and vital relationship with the sympathies of those who watch.

The second thread of interest running through *Love Freed* is its deeply Jonsonian concern with language itself. In this year the power of words was central, from the translated word of the Bible and the rhetoric of verse and narrative to the enacted words of proclamations, plays and sermons. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this masque performed at the beginning of the second month of 1611 is itself obsessed with the pull and play of persuasive (and evasive) language. The ostensible purpose of the opening scene is not to display a spectacle, as might normally be expected of a masque, but to tell a 'storie': Love promises to 'recite / Every passage' (Jonson 7 (1941), 360) of what has happened to the Orient Queen and her ladies. When Love is set a challenge by the Sphynx that, if completed, will free him and the imprisoned women, he is not asked to carry out physical tasks – Cupid's equivalent of the labours of Hercules – but is required to decipher a riddle instead. He who is so adept at 'tying, and untying hearts' finds himself struggling to untie the punning language of the riddle, even complaining that the Sphynx is 'too quick of tongue' and he cannot discover her meaning (363–4). In fact, he is only able to make sense of the riddle with the assistance of the Muses' Priests, who direct him to read the King's face as he 'would a booke' and therein find the answer. It is the wit of language, overtly identified and teasingly present throughout the masque, that both traps and ultimately saves Love; the release of the captives, the turning point in the drama, is actually achieved through Love's 'happie wit' (369) in stating the exact meaning of the riddle. This linguistically orientated masque envisages words as obstacles and fetters but also, when properly read and used, as the source of true freedom. Masque allegories typically compose a confrontation between forms of good and the threatening presence of evil. In *Love Freed*, the precise nature of evil is the false use of words. The Sphynx is said to have been inspired originally by the Muses but, now that she embodies Ignorance, she abuses the meanings of words 'in uttering' them, rendering them 'lame' and perplexing those who listen to her (367). In true Platonic tradition, the monstrous Sphynx turns words into monsters, while those characters in the masque who are beautiful or good speak in poetic language of rhetorical symmetry and attractive grace.

The physical beauty of the queen and her companions is celebrated in the song 'How neere to good is what is faire', finely set by Ferrabosco – an elegant summary in words and music of the ideal relationship of internal virtue to external expression:

> How neere to good is what is faire!
> Which we no sooner see,
> But with the lines, and outward aire
> Our senses taken be.
>
> (Jonson 7 (1941), 370)

Drawn to the 'lines, and outward aire' of visual beauty, the song asserts, we are then brought into the presence of the true goodness so aptly expressed in physical form. Jonson's terms for the contours of beauty – 'lines' and 'aire' – may also be applied to the 'lines' of verse, which equally delight the senses, especially when set to the melodies or musical 'aires' within the masque. Indeed, the integral role of music is specifically highlighted in the conclusion to *Love Freed*: at the 'going out' of the masquers, full of joy in the knowledge that 'Gentle *Love* is free, and *Beautie* blest', the chorus calls for 'ayry *Musique*' to 'sound, and teach our feet, / How to move in time, and measure meet' (371). We have already noted the political and cultural significance of keeping 'measure'; here it is music that teaches this fundamental principle and, in so doing, redeems the time. In the penultimate song of the masque, Time is said to be 'aged' and 'wearie', but with the intervention of music, it is possible to 'move in time' with appropriate dignity and purpose.

'Ayry *Musique*' in 1611

The idealised perception of music as a means of ordering time, as well as being an emblem of beauty, a source of pleasure and a crucial element of humanist education, was integral to the culture of early seventeenth-century England. This was an era in which music was regarded as both a 'Liberall Science' and 'the earthly *Solace* of Mans *Soule*' (Ravenscroft (1614), ¶2^{r}, ¶3^{r}). The double aspect of music suggested by these two phrases from Thomas Ravenscroft's defence of the art – asserting that it has both a practical and a metaphysical application – was never far from the music written and experienced in 1611. The song settings provided by Alfonso Ferrabosco for Jonson's two masques, for example, were vitally important to both the practical and the symbolic effect of their performances at Whitehall in the early months of 1611. Ferrabosco's melodic gifts, tending towards the new declamatory style of music developing in Jacobean England under Italian influence, added dignity and expressive poise to Jonson's well-crafted verses in the masque songs. Robert Johnson's compositions for the dances at the end of *Oberon* combined courtly elegance with rhythmic energy in order to inspire the graceful movement of Prince Henry that was so warmly

admired by those who watched the masquers dancing on New Year's Day. The young prince was already becoming a patron of music in his own right: he had been taught the art of music by none other than Ferrabosco, and Henry's newly established court at St James's Palace had a large number of fine musicians on its payroll. According to Henry's treasury accounts for 1611, the prince was paying more than a dozen performers and composers in residence, including the distinguished writer of keyboard music 'John Bull doctor of music', to whom an annual pension of £40 was paid in June 1611 (Evans, 59). Equally well reimbursed for their services were Robert Johnson himself, the lutenist Thomas Cutting and the Italian composer Angelo Notari, referred to in the accounts simply as 'Sig. Angelo' (Evans, 59). Henry's palace was a meeting place for many of the leading musicians of 1611, which suggests the perceived importance of professional musicians to the establishment of a cultured court as well as the interaction of textual and oral cultures in this period.

The court by its very nature combined the variety of locations vital to music-making in general in the early modern period: the theatre, the banqueting house, the chamber and the chapel. The theatre, whether courtly or public, was a regular source of commissions for incidental music, song settings, dances, fanfares and other musical flourishes for new plays; Robert Johnson's exquisite settings of the lyrics from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, for example, a play known to have been performed on 1 November 1611 (see Chapter 9), suggest the fine quality of dramatic music in this year. The plays performed in London playhouses in 1611, particularly comedies such as Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*, also drew on the traditions of popular music such as ballads, catches and rounds, some of which were brought together in Thomas Ravenscroft's publication, *Melismata*, entered in the Stationers' Register on 19 March and said to contain 'Courte, Citty, and Country varietyes, conceites and pastimes, to 3, 4, and 5 voyces' (Arber, 207). By uniting the 'Musicall Phansies' (Ravenscroft, title page) sung in a country inn, at the marketplace, on the stage and in the royal household, Ravenscroft's collection bears witness to the overlapping realms of English life in 1611. The 'Table of All The Songs contained in this Booke' makes clear that the ballad of the 'Three Ravens', the round 'He that will an Ale-house keepe' and the courtly song 'Will yee love me' all rub shoulders in this fascinating cross section of early modern musical material (Ravenscroft, B1^{r}).

The second key location where music was required in 1611 was the banqueting house, scene of masques and other musical entertainments associated with hospitality and ostentation. These occasions were at their grandest in the royal court, as we have seen, but something of the ambience and patronage associated with royal festivities was also found, on a

smaller scale, in the halls of aristocratic houses throughout the country. Many country estates employed musicians to train the children of the household in this 'Liberall Science', as well as to compose and perform music for the assembled family and guests. In 1611, for example, the madrigal composer John Wilbye was in the service of Sir Thomas and Lady Kytson of Hengrave Hall in Suffolk, while his fellow madrigalist, John Ward, was employed by Sir Henry Fanshawe at Ware Park in Hertfordshire. As Thomas Morley had noted in his 1597 handbook, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musick*, it was 'the custome' in households to gather round in the evenings, 'supper being ended', and to bring the 'Musicke bookes' to the table, ready for some singing of part songs (Morley, B2^{r}). The vogue for madrigals, a genre of part song originally imported from Italy but by this time adapted and domesticated in Britain, was almost at an end in 1611; however, the composer Orlando Gibbons was yet to publish in printed form his famous madrigal, 'The Silver Swan', though it was no doubt being sung from handwritten parts during 1611. It was published the following year in *The First Set of Madrigals and Mottets of 5. Parts Apt for Viols and Voices* (Gibbons A3^{r}), setting an anonymous verse that laments the prevalence of foolish 'geese' over wise 'swans' in contemporary society (see 'Introduction'). At about this time the madrigal was gradually being superseded by the lute song, a solo musical form more kindly disposed to the expressive setting of texts giving voice to opinions and emotions, and thus also suitable for the intimate space of the smaller chambers in a court or household. One of the most famous of all English lute songs, John Dowland's intensely melancholic 'In darkness let me dwell', had just been published in 1610 (in his son Robert's collection, *A Musicall Banquet*) and was in circulation for chamber performance during 1611. This song of despair calls for music's 'hellish jarring sounds' to accompany the desperate mood of one who is 'wedded' to his 'woes' and, while yet living, 'bedded' in his 'tomb' (Dowland, x). In retrospect, these lyrics in their intensely beautiful musical treatment have come to typify the era. By contrast to the enforced optimism of the masques' political allegories, or the cheerful ballads and rounds sung in comedies on the public stage, the lute song is the perfect vehicle for the anguish of the lonely secular individual.

The chief English musical publication of 1611 was a collection of pieces designed to overcome melancholy, whether stemming from worldly sorrow or spiritual uncertainty; its composer, William Byrd, dedicated his work to 'all true lovers of Musicke' and wished them 'all true happinesse both temporall and eternall' (Byrd, A4^{v}). Byrd's *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnets: Some Solemne, Others Joyfull* contained some non-religious songs such as his madrigal 'This Sweet and Merry Month of May' (first published as part of *Italian Madrigals Englished* in 1590) and the rousing 'Come Jolly

Swaines'; however, the volume was destined mainly for use in the reassuring solemnity of the chapel, the fourth of the early modern musical locations identified earlier. Byrd's collection contains a dozen sacred anthems, in itself a reminder that the church was, collectively, the most significant patron of music in the period. The Chapel Royal with its residential musicians and composers, the cathedrals and their choirs, the major parish churches, and the chapels of aristocratic homes – all of these sites of worship required a steady supply of new anthems and liturgical settings to build a repertoire for singing the vernacular texts of the Church of England. This established reformed church had been effectively settled only during the reign of Elizabeth I, a mere 50 years earlier. Indeed, Byrd himself had been one of Elizabethan England's greatest composers, producing *Cantiones Sacrae* with Thomas Tallis as early as 1575; he was also one of the longest-lived musicians of the era, still going strong in 1611 when his new collection was entered into the Stationers' Register on 22 April. By this time Byrd was around 70 years old (his exact birth date is unknown), and in the prefatory epistle to his *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnets* he refers to these compositions as his 'last labours' after a long career of 'travailes in Musicke' (Byrd, A4^{v}); as Thomas Morley commented in dedicating *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* to him a decade and a half earlier, Byrd was possessed of a very 'deepe skill' in all aspects of musical composition, theory and performance (Morley, A4^{r}). In an irony typical of this complex religious era, Byrd was in fact a Roman Catholic who had continued to compose settings of pre-Reformation Latin liturgical texts for use in recusant households while also producing some of the most admired public music of the Church of England. The title page of *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnets* describes the composer as 'one of the Gent. of his Majesties honourable Chappell', thus continuing under James the association of Byrd with the Chapel Royal begun by Elizabeth in 1572.

More significant for the music of this collection is another phrase used on the title page, in this case to describe the music itself rather than its author: the song settings are said to be 'framed to the life of the Words'. This brief comment reiterates a fundamental humanist principle: that vocal music should take its shape from the poem or biblical verses that are provided, rather than imposing a preconceived musical form or idea on the given text. The ideal was a balanced and, appropriately, harmonious relationship between words and music, led initially by the text but concluded in the fulfilment of the music. As Thomas Campion would assert 2 years later in his *Two Bookes of Ayres*, the specific aim of good word setting was to 'couple' the 'Words and Notes lovingly together' (Campion A1^{v}); the sensual metaphor hints at the mutual attraction and loving partnership of the two art forms. Byrd's late-flowering songs and anthems in 1611 certainly confirm the success of this principle, as did the settings by Ferrabosco of

the verses by Jonson in *Oberon* and *Love Freed*. Among the most notable works of Byrd's collection is the five-part madrigal, 'Come wofull Orpheus', with its aptly chromatic harmonies matching the inviting phrases 'mournful accents', 'sourest sharps' and 'uncouth flats' in the text. The many fine sacred settings in the volume include the magnificent Christmas anthem, 'This day Christ was borne', in which the opening words are repeatedly set to an expressively shaped melodic pattern, reaching a high note on 'Christ' and then descending – as in the process of incarnation – with 'was borne'. The rich timbre of six parts is fully exploited as the setting increases in complexity, with vocal flourishes sounding like heavenly trumpets on the words 'the archangels are glad' and a great upward leap in the melody for 'God on high'. The old master was still well able to 'frame' his music 'to the life of the Words'; compositions such as these form a vital part of the textual culture of 1611.

In some ways, the intimate partnership of words and music in this year marked the end of an era. While Byrd was nearing the close of his long career, the masques *Oberon* and *Love Freed* were also the last occasions on which Jonson collaborated with Ferrabosco, with whom he had worked on his 1606 play *Volpone* and at least four other masques. In a commendatory poem prefacing Ferrabosco's *Ayres* of 1609, Jonson praised the songs of 'my loved Alphonso' as 'proofes' of the power of music to 'sweeten mirth, and heighten pietie' (Ferrabosco, A2^{v}, later published by Jonson as Epigram 130, 'To Alphonso Ferrabosco, on His Book'). However, as we will often encounter in this study, the close observation of a cultural moment reveals new trends too: 1611 is widely thought to have witnessed the first edition of *Parthenia* – the first ever printed collection of keyboard music and the sign of music's increasing independence from words. No copy of the first edition survives, but the 1613 edition boasts that the volume is 'The maydenhead of the first musicke that [eve]r was printed for the virginalls' (Byrd et al., title page). Ravenscroft's *Melismata* was noted in the Stationers' Register as 'the first parte of Musicall Crochettes, or Courte, Citty, and Country varietyes' (Arber, 205^{v}), a forward-looking description of a musical venture continuing the partnership of words and music by boldly bringing together courtly and popular traditions, optimistically intended to appeal to widely differing audiences. Past and future interlock in a collection such as this: one of the 'Citie Conceits' included in *Melismata*, the four-part song 'My Master Is So Wise', had featured 6 years earlier in Middleton's comedy, *A Trick to Catch the Old One*. Textual culture is a fluid process, linking tradition, innovation, inspiration and – sometimes – opportunism. The composer John Maynard brought out *The XII Wonders of the World Set and Composed for the Viol de Gambo, the Lute, and the Voice* in 1611, based on 12 satirical poems by Sir John Davies. The poems were originally printed in Francis Davison's *Poetical Rapsodie* in 1608, a collection of

'Diverse' poems by many hands that was reissued in 1611. However, as we shall explore in Chapter 3, Maynard in fact had a strong and accurate perception of the year 1611 itself as a moment when fascination for such 'Wonders' as these – indeed, for the strange and the wonderful in general, both serious and ironic – was definitely in vogue. The interrelation of text and music, whether in masque, madrigal, anthem, lute song, ballad or satire, can function as an accurate barometer of the age.