

ARTICLES

‘HIS SPIRIT IS IN ACTION SEEN’: MILTON, MRS CLIVE AND THE SIMULACRA OF THE PASTORAL IN *COMUS*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between Drury Lane’s most popular eighteenth-century masque, Comus (1738), and the contemporary fashions in politics, literature and recreation that informed it. On one level, the masque was a revival honouring Milton, the author of its libretto, in a manner consistent with his eighteenth-century reception: as a genius whose merit was just being recognized, and as a patriot hero whose incorruptibility mirrored the aspirations of those pledging allegiance to ‘British’ values.

On another level, however, the pastoral entertainment seems to have been mainly concerned with popular notions of female propriety and the challenges posed to those notions by the production’s star soprano, Kitty Clive. Titillation was assured by interpolated musical scenes which had little to do with the libretto but much to do with composer Thomas Arne’s mastery of the discursive techniques of ballad farce. The personality cult around Clive, the ‘Goddess of Mirth’, imposed upon the masque her most celebrated musical characterizations (both in the type of song and in the specific lyrics sung) to grant full voice to her flaunting of social codes.

The overwhelming success of Comus caused the masque to be reinvented as a public diversion at Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens by its owner, John Tyers. A Milton statue was erected in the gardens to preside over ‘musical downs’, where instrumentalists played hidden behind bushes to the north of ‘The Temple of Comus’. Recontextualizing Comus at Vauxhall, Tyers created a site (nicknamed the ‘Rendezvous of Cupid’) in which lovers could further explore the transgressions of Mrs Clive’s musical scenes within a simulated pastoral myth.

Comus, a 1738 adaptation of a pre-Restoration masque, was one of Drury Lane’s most successful musical entertainments of the century.¹ The work invited not only spectatorship but participation, the latter crystallizing as a ‘Comus’ environment in London’s heavily trafficked Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. The transition from stage to gardens, from a passive to an active entertainment, suggests that the masque resonated uniquely with audiences. What did *Comus* contain that proved so appealing? By what means did it capture audiences’ imaginations? And did the owner of Vauxhall Gardens, John Tyers, deploy either the content or the procedures of Drury Lane’s *Comus* in his reinvention of this entertainment as an interactive

1 Roger Fiske characterizes the success of *Comus* as ‘enormous’, with eleven performances in its first season and sixty performances at Drury Lane alone by 1760, of which forty-three took place between the work’s premiere on 4 March 1738 and the end of the 1743–1744 season. As Michael Burden points out, *Comus* was the only masque to be composed as a full-length entertainment and the only masque to achieve box-office success during the eighteenth century. Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 180–181, and Michael Burden, ‘The British Masque, 1690–1800’ (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1991), part 1, 74.



landscape? Addressing these questions gives us insight into both the fashions – political, theatrical and literary – that shaped *Comus* and the viewing and listening practices of the period. Like so much musical theatre in eighteenth-century London, *Comus* fascinates not through its formal structure, but through its revelatory interface with Europe’s most frenetic and technologically advanced urban centre.

The genre under which *Comus* was classified unwittingly suggests the marketing strategy of its eighteenth-century producers: in the 1738 version of *Comus, a Mask* the pedigree of both its librettist, Milton, and its pastoral setting did indeed ‘mask’ the risqué elements of the production. Drury Lane was projecting Milton as the embodiment of British values and achievements, and this profiling – together with the Arcadian conceits inserted into the adaptation – sanctioned extended musical scenes in which social conventions were flouted. While the libretto reflected and reinscribed a politicized Milton reception that had been evident since the turn of the century, independent musical scenes showed Nymphs and their lovers engaging in revels and celebrations of love against a pastoral backdrop.² The relationship of the songs to the drama followed the discursive traditions of ballad opera; that is, they side-stepped the dramatic action to instruct the audience directly.³ Thomas Arne’s music, however, rather than probing the moral dilemmas explicated by Milton, indulged the viewer in brief tableaux of Arcadian licence, whose ‘moral’ was largely the delights of breaking social taboos.

The strategy proved a particularly efficient device for framing the star soprano of the entertainment, Catherine Clive. Mrs Clive’s meteoric rise to fame (1729–1732) had initially been driven by her singing, which in ballad operas and ‘additional songs’ in plays allowed her to step outside the character of the relentlessly formulaic heroines she played in order to deliver musical pronouncements on social issues. Through repetition, some of these ‘opinions’ became integrated into her public image, and the iteration of this persona in song evolved into her most characteristic method of (self-)representation. The ‘opinions’ attributed to her via song included a rejection of the need for a male partner, hostility towards fops, repudiation of luxury (in ‘Life of a Beau’) and an antipathy towards Italian opera singers (in her improvised

2 Noting the disjunction between the aims Drury Lane professed to hold (aggrandizement of the poet and the instruction of the viewer) and the theatre’s display of forbidden fruits, one anonymous critic observed: ‘To convey Instruction with Delight is certainly the noblest Aim of a Poet, and it must be confessed this great Author has extremely well hit the Mark, as the Musick, Songs and Dance charm the Senses and keep that Attention away.’ *A Companion to the Theatre, or A View of our most celebrated Dramatick Pieces* (Dublin: S. Powell, 1751), 55. The success of *Comus* surprised some critics, who thought that audiences forced to ‘hear only fine poetical sentiments & moral instructions’ would be bored; *The Universal Spectator* 454, quoted in Francis Peck, *New Memoirs of the Life and Poetical Works of Mr John Milton* (London, 1740), and cited in Ruth Smith, ‘Handel, Milton, and a New Document from their English Audience’, *The Handel Institute Newsletter* 14/2 (2003)[, 3]. As described below, it was not necessarily Milton’s libretto that occupied spectator attention.

3 Ballad opera, a genre invented by John Gay with *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728), wedded the Restoration theatre tradition of inserting ‘Critical Instants’ set to music with the voice of the street ballad singer. Diane Dugaw shows that in Restoration theatre ‘songs became increasingly discrete and self-contained “Instants” directed towards contemplative ends’. By interlacing independent musical scenes (‘intertexts’) with the dramatic text, Restoration authors encouraged audiences to ponder the story. In some later dramas, songs became an increasingly complex referent that might invoke parodies published concurrently or rival songs on the same theme for which the singer was known. Diane Dugaw, ‘“Critical Instants”: Theatre Songs in the Age of Dryden and Purcell’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23/2 (1989), 161. Restoration plays also included songs introduced largely because the music itself was in vogue: see Curtis Price, *Music in the Restoration Theatre* (London: UMI, 1979), 95–110. Gay’s innovation lay in mapping onto the songs of Restoration plays the tunes, lyric patterns and natural singing technique of the street ballad singer, who, as Natascha Würzbach shows, appealed to audiences by converting topical events into illustrative warnings. In *The Beggar’s Opera* the singer assumed a voice at once authoritative, didactic and familiar in order to interpret for the viewer the implications of the fictional character’s conduct. This discursive pattern was followed by the epigones of Gay. Natascha Würzbach, *The Rise of the English Street Ballad (1550–1650)*, trans. Gayna Walls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 32–38, and Berta Joncus, ‘A Star is Born: Kitty Clive and Female Representation in Eighteenth-Century English Musical Theatre’ (DPHil dissertation, University of Oxford, 2004), 39–54.



'Mimic Italian' songs). All of these were grafted onto various dramatic roles, contributing to the 'meta-character' she and her producers fostered in other forums, such as prologues, epilogues, *in propria persona* roles, mezzotints and various print items.⁴

In *Comus*, Arne and his librettist John Dalton were therefore juggling competing trends in contemporary theatre: the propagation of 'British' cultural values, the savouring of erotic encounters and the articulation of a public personality through song. In the original production, entitled simply *A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle*, Milton and William Lawes had pitted Vice against Virtue in order to celebrate Puritan values through Virtue's triumph. In Arne's version, by contrast, Vice was transmogrified into a familiar Pleasure (Mrs Clive) who had the last word. At Vauxhall, the pleasure principle overwrote the image of the poet: the former patriotic icon was refashioned as master of pastoral ceremonies whose effigy, in the form of an illuminated, life-size statue, presided over the amorous intrigues of the Gardens' visitors. Tyers deployed the myth of Comus rather differently than had Arne: he replaced educational tableaux with a pastoral playground that would allow visitors to escape social norms. The plot of *Comus*, in which the wine god tries to force the protagonists to give themselves over to sensual fulfilment, complemented Tyers's vision.⁵ While at Drury Lane the 'interspersed songs' cordoned off the enactment of social transgressions from the plot, at Vauxhall Milton's Puritan cautionary tale was transformed into a popular trope encouraging erotic adventure.

This article examines two distinct, though sometimes overlapping, fashions which helped determine how Milton's libretto was altered for production at Drury Lane. The 1738 producers of *Comus* pandered to two trends: first, the desire to represent Milton as a patriotic hero, and, second, the eagerness for access to the public personality of Mrs Clive. While the aggrandizing of Milton resulted in only superficial changes to the poet's original libretto, knowledge of Mrs Clive's persona forced the adapters of *Comus* to insert stage action, lyrics and a musical style for which she was renowned. The last section of the article examines how Tyers relied on *Comus* to articulate a simulated Arcadian idyll where Drury Lane spectators could participate directly in a pastoral fantasy divorced from moral convention.

APPEALING TO 'YE PATRIOT CROUDS': MILTON IN NATIONALIST COSTUME

Nationalist discourse was introduced into Drury Lane's *Comus* ostensibly to explain the significance of this work to its audiences. The producers suggested through their packaging that the masque exemplified Britain's sophisticated literary heritage and its moral superiority over other nations. Drury Lane infused

4 The fabrication of Mrs Clive's star persona on the stage and in print is the subject of my dissertation 'A Star is Born'. In the words of her friend and first biographer, the Drury Lane prompter William Chetwood, 'the Moment he heard her sing, [Colley Cibber] put her down in the List of Performers at twenty Shillings per Week . . . never any Person of her Age flew to Perfection with such Rapidity, and the old discerning Managers always distinguish'd Merit by Reward'. William R. Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage* (London: W. Owen, 1749), 127. The complex process of producing stars on the mid-eighteenth-century London stage, whose roots lay in Restoration theatre practices, is outlined in the first chapter of my dissertation. During this period, stars and their producers exploited London's advanced print industry and its diversified types of stage representation to cultivate audience curiosity about top-ranking actors.

5 The story runs as follows: three siblings, two Brothers and a Lady, become separated as they travel through woods to attend their Father's court. To protect them against Comus (son of Bacchus), Jove sends two Spirits who reveal how Comus tricks mortals: with his 'Liquor' he turns his victims into beasts; he then transforms these 'followers' back into human revellers whose seeming enjoyment ensnares other unwary travellers. The Lady meets Comus before the first Spirit can intervene, and Comus persuades her to follow him by pretending that he will lead her to her Brothers. The lost Brothers meet the second Spirit, who tells them of their sister's peril. After rebuffing Comus's followers, they set out to save her. The last act opens in the court of Comus, who stages entertainments (which feature the new character Euphrosyne) to seduce the Lady. The second Spirit, descending in a machine, emboldens the Lady to resist. The Brothers arrive and drive off Comus's followers. To release the spell-bound Sister, the Spirit invokes Sabrina, the goddess of Virgins, who rescues the Lady and banishes Comus.



Comus with patriotic sentiment by glorifying the original 1634 masque, by celebrating Milton as a national hero in the prologue and by weaving extracts from his other poems into the original libretto.

From its opening lines, *Comus* sought to transport Drury Lane audiences back to the storied days of the pre-Restoration production.⁶ This approach contrasted with that at the King's Theatre, where the opera *Sabrina*, based on the same source, had flopped a year earlier (26 April 1737). Although the librettist of *Sabrina*, Paolo Rolli, eventually pioneered Milton's reception in Italy (on the Prince of Wales's payroll),⁷ the Italian poet's homage to Milton at London's opera house had omitted a strategy fundamental to the Drury Lane production: preservation of, and elaborate praise for, the original. Rolli transformed the plot, adding lovers, 'amorous intentions', mixed identities and lament arias. With Farinelli and Marchesini performing in Italian, the opera was seemingly too Italianized to appeal to its intended audience.⁸

By contrast, in 1738 Drury Lane marketed its *Comus* as a reconstituted Miltonic urtext. The title page of the libretto cleaved to the 1637 format, leaving out the names of its eighteenth-century adapters (Figures 1 and 2).⁹ Librettist John Dalton effectively erased most of his authorial presence by leaving the spoken dialogue largely intact.¹⁰ Some lines originally spoken became sung, and Arne reset four songs from the original.¹¹ Dalton's camouflage effected his disappearance from theatrical annals: by 1764 a theatre historian could declare that 'the additional Songs' were mostly 'Milton's own, or Part of the *Allegro* of the same Author, and other Passages from his different Works, so that he [Dalton] has rather restor'd Milton to himself than alter'd him'.¹²

Nostalgia and respect for the original production were linked to Drury Lane's praise for its original author. Admiration for the poet's genius had animated English literati since the end of the seventeenth century; the prologue marketed *Comus* as yet another Miltonic text worthy of veneration on these grounds. By 1738 Milton had acquired the status of a literary grandee: in the words of Dustin Griffin, he was for men of letters 'a central and dominating figure' whom they revered as a 'classical' poet of merit equal to the ancients. The *Comus* prologue reaffirmed many of the characteristics ascribed to Milton in the course of his earlier eighteenth-century reception: his neglected genius, his originality and his moral insight through his

6 'Our stedfast Bard, to his own Genius true, Still bade his Muse, fit Audience find, tho' few'. Prologue to John Milton, *Comus, a Mask . . . as alter'd from Milton's Mask*, second edition (London: J. Hughs, 1738).

7 Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725–1742* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 61.

8 Paolo Rolli, *Sabrina. An Opera for the Theatre Royal in the Haymarket* (London: J. Chrichley, 1737). Although in his Preface Rolli called Milton an 'English Homer', he did not shrink from radically altering his text. According to Julian Herbage, *Sabrina* was probably a pasticcio. Despite running to eleven performances, Charles Burney noted that 'it was found necessary to tack an intermezzo constantly to the performance of this opera . . . it was at this that Farinelli sometimes sung to an audience of five and thirty pounds' (that is, only this sum was taken at the door). Cited in the Introduction to *Comus*, ed. Julian Herbage (London: Stainer and Bell, 1951), x.

9 Publishers retained this format in all five librettos issued by Robert Dodsley in 1738–1740, and Millar reused Dodsley's imprint in three editions, 1750–1764. The publication details of these editions are given in the online *English Short Title Catalogue*, and all *Comus* librettos issued 1738–1791 are listed in Burden, 'The British Masque', part 2, 74. The six music editions of *Comus*, 1737–1765 (all listed in *RISM*), did name Arne but not Dalton.

10 Herbage and Burden have summarized the variants in the 1637 and the 1738 librettos. Besides his added song lyrics (his only notable contribution as an author), Dalton divided the First Spirit's long passages (originally performed by the composer William Lawes) between two Spirits and added individual lines in Acts 2 and 3. Details of Dalton's deletions of, and additions to, Milton's text are listed in *Comus*, xi, and Burden, 'The British Masque', part 2, 76.

11 The spoken lines set by Arne are cited in *Comus*, xi. The four songs in the 1637 libretto taken up by Arne were 'By Dimpled Brook and Fountain' (1637, page 5), 'Sweet Echo' (1637, page 8), 'Sabrina Fair' (1637, page 29) and 'By the Rusted Fringy Bank' (1637, page 30). John Milton, *A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle* (London: Humphrey Robinson, 1637). The last two numbers of the 1637 version were in fact merged by Arne into an accompagnato recitative and air.

12 David E. Baker, 'Comus', in *The Companion to the Playhouse* (London: T. Becket [and others], 1764), volume 1.



Christian faith.¹³ But Drury Lane broke from traditional literary reception in one important respect: whereas writers perceived Milton as belonging to a 'world one could no longer inhabit' (Griffin), the Prologue promised to conjure him up for the spectator ('Like some bless'd Spirit he to Night descends, Mankind he visits, and their Step befriends'). Through *Comus*, Milton's spirit would materialize, or be 'brought forth', in as pure a form as possible:

Excuse what we with trembling Hand supply,
To give his Beauties to the publick Eye;
His the pure Essence, Ours the grosser Mean,
Thro' which his Spirit is in Action seen.¹⁴

Revivifying Milton at Drury Lane also involved tapping into a rich vein of Milton iconography: images of the poet had proliferated in frontispieces, prints, medallions and monuments since the end of the seventeenth century. Once adorned with celebratory epigrams, such iconographic representations allowed his reputation for literary greatness to overshadow his anti-Royalist background.¹⁵ During the early 1730s the Patriot opposition had seized upon his image for their platform: they proclaimed that the poet now symbolized the incorruptibility and love of liberty which Walpole and his followers had compromised. To impress this equation upon the public, Viscount Cobham erected a bust of Milton in his celebrated 'Temple of British Worthies' on his estate, Stowe Gardens. Cobham, whose opposition to Walpole's Excise Bill of 1733 had resulted in his dismissal from government, organized the major party against Walpole (the 'Cobhamites') and attempted to bring down the government. At Stowe, Cobham pressed the poet and other well known British historical figures into service as Patriot heroes. Cobham encouraged public interest in, and access to, his gardens, whose architecture and iconography were generally devoted to representing allegorically the devolution of Britain under Walpole and the nation's potential for reconstitution.¹⁶ Besides hosting large Opposition gatherings (for example, 'the grand meeting' of 1735),¹⁷ Cobham opened his estate

13 Dustin Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 33–44. The prologue says of Milton that 'He too was scorn'd . . . to Britannia's shame' but 'to his own Genius true [was] . . . like some bless'd Spirit'. When *L'Allegro* was adapted for the stage, it inspired the same veneration. James Harris, who prepared a preliminary libretto for Charles Jennens and Handel to turn into a musical setting, begged Jennens in a letter of 6 January 1740 to 'prevent any of Handel's minor poets . . . by presumptuous additions to marr Milton'. Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, eds, *Music and Theatre in Handel's World: The Family Papers of James Harris, 1732–1780* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 85.

14 Prologue to Milton, *Comus, a Mask*.

15 Griffin identifies four political profiles ascribed to Milton during the eighteenth century: the 'notorious Traytor', an opinion famously supported by Samuel Johnson in his *Lives of Poets* (1779); the misguided defender of liberty (the most common view); a republican in the tradition of Greece and Rome; and a radical visionary. Griffin, *Regaining Paradise*, 11–21. The history of Milton iconography is complex, with over 180 portraits listed in George C. Williamson, *Milton Tercentenary: The Portraits, Prints and Writings of John Milton, Exhibited at Christ's College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: J. Clay at the University Press, 1908). The early engravings of Milton and their subsequent dissemination are catalogued in John Rupert Martin, *The Portraits of John Milton at Princeton* (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 1961), 1–21.

16 'Nowhere was the garden programme more elaborate and detailed than at Stowe', notes the National Trust guide to this estate. Once Cobham officially broke from Walpole in 1733, he erected the British Worthies in the Elysian Fields, where they functioned as a 'key piece in the iconographical theme'. Scholars attribute the essential features in Cobham's estate (the Great Cross Walk and the Temples of Ancient Virtue, Worthies and Modern Virtue) to an allegorical dream related by Joseph Addison (*The Tatler* 123, 21 January 1710). Roughly speaking, statuary embodied Patriot ideals, allegorical illustrations showed Walpole's deleterious effect on the nation and the architecture alluded to Patriot virtues, such as Gothic representing the vigour and love of freedom of the Goths. [Anon.,] *Stowe Landscape Gardens* (Lingfield: The National Trust, 1997), 6–7.

17 Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, 35–37.



Comus, a Mask:

(*Now adapted to the STAGE*)

As Alter'd from

MILTON's Mask

A T

LUDLOW-CASTLE,

Which was never represented

But on *Michaelmas-Day*, 1634;

BEFORE THE

Right Hon^{ble}. the Earl of *Bridgewater*,
Lord President of *W A L E S*.

The principal Performers were

The Lord <i>Brackly</i> ,	} {	The Lady <i>Alice</i>
Mr. <i>Tho. Egerton</i> ,		<i>Egerton</i> .

The Mufick was composed

By Mr. *Henry Lawes*,

Who also represented the *Attendant Spirit*.

— *Quid vocis modulamen inane juvabit
Verborum sensusque vacans numerique loquacis?*
MILTON. ad Patrem.

L O N D O N :

Printed by J. HUGHS, near *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*,
For R. DODSLEY, at *Tully's-Head, Pall-Mal*

MDCCLXXXVIII.

(Price One Shilling.)

Figure 1 The title page from John Milton [and John Dalton], *Comus, a Mask* (London: J. Hughs for R. Dodsley, 1738), GB Lbl 841.f.55.(2.) in 8°. Reproduced by permission of the British Library



A MASKE

PRESENTED

At Ludlow Castle,

1634:

On Michaelmasse night, before the

RIGHT HONORABLE,

JOHN Earle of Bridgewater, Vicount BRACKLY,
Lord President of WALES, And one of
HIS MAJESTIES most honorable
Privie Counsell.

*Eheu quid volui misero mihi! floribus anstrum
Perditus*

LONDON,

Printed for HUMPHREY ROBINSON,
at the signe of the *Three Pidgeons* in
Pauls Church-yard. 1637. 4 E

Figure 2 The title page from [John Milton,] *A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle* (London: Humphrey Robinson, 1637), GB Lbl C.34.d.46 in 4°. Reproduced by permission of the British Library



to visitors (presumably only from the upper social strata), commissioned guidebooks to explain his Patriot landscape and disseminated the inscriptions to his busts via popular travel literature.¹⁸

This co-opting of Milton did not go unchallenged: Walpole's ally William Benson tried to reclaim the poet as a Hanoverian icon of British achievement. Benson financed a bust of Milton in 1737 for Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, but the Opposition seized on the bust's tablet advertising Benson's patronage as further evidence of the purported Whig propensity for plundering national treasures.¹⁹ Still, the trend was established: Milton's effigy, like Handel's in Westminster Abbey, now became currency in the discursive exchange over 'undying truths' of national identity.

The *Comus* prologue appealed to this fashion, framing a then-evolving national figurehead in patriotic terms on the Drury Lane stage and promising to make concrete his 'Spirit'. Unlike the competing Milton busts at Stowe and Westminster Abbey, the prologue smoothed over political ruptures, inviting any declared Briton to glory in the poet's achievements.²⁰ It projected the artist as a national hero: first, imagining Milton's physical presence; second, reminding audiences of the aptitudes or values he represented; and third, insisting that the significance of *Comus* lay in its clear mediation of the values ascribed to the hero.²¹ This proved a tenacious marketing scheme. On 10 April 1750, when he produced the masque in a benefit performance for Milton's granddaughter Elizabeth Foster, David Garrick spoke a new prologue he had written himself that reduced the poet to a metonym for native Genius:

Ye patriot Clouds, who burn for England's Fame,
Ye Nymphs, whose Bosoms beat at MILTON's Name,
Whose gen'rous Zeal, unbought by flatt'ring Rhimes,
Shames the mean Pensions of Augustan Times . . .²²

18 William Gilpin's period guidebook emphasized that public access was essential to Cobham's conception: 'I would have our country Squires flock hither two or three times in a Year . . . and return Home with new Notions'; or 'A Place like this is a kind of keeping open House, there is a Repast at all times ready for the Entertainment of Strangers . . . A Sunday Evening spent here adds new Relish to the Day of the Rest'. William Gilpin, *A Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham, at Stow in Buckinghamshire* (London: B. Seeley, 1748), 48–50. Given the conventions of the period, it is unlikely that Cobham admitted those from the 'lower orders', who in any case could hardly afford to travel to his estate. Oddly, I have found no modern discussion of Stowe as a public garden; in fact, David Bindman characterizes the gardens as 'private'. David Bindman, 'Roubiliac's Statue of Handel and the Keeping of Order in Vauxhall Gardens in the Early Eighteenth Century', *The Sculpture Journal* 1 (1997), 24. Other eighteenth-century guidebooks included Gilbert West, *Stowe, the Gardens of the Right Honourable Richard Lord Viscount Cobham. Address'd to Mr. Pope* (London: J. Wright, for Lawton Gilliver, 1732), and [anon.], *A Description of the Gardens of Lord Viscount Cobham, at Stow in Buckinghamshire* (Northampton: W. Dicey, 1744). See also J. d. C., *The Charms of Stow; or, a Description of the Pleasant Seat of the Right Honourable my Lord Cobham* (London: J. Nourse, 1749), and George Bickham, *The Beauties of Stow: or, a Description of the Pleasant Seat, and Noble Gardens, of the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Cobham* (London: E. Owen, for George Bickham, 1750). These books all ran to several editions. The National Trust guidebook records that 'the message of the Temple of British Worthies received much wider currency when the inscriptions were published in full in the *London Magazine* of July 1740 and again in the 1742 edition of Defoe's *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*'. *Stowe Landscape Gardens*, 30.

19 Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship 1660–1769* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 134–139.

20 'To choicer Spirits he bequeath'd his Page. / He too was scorn'd, and to Britannia's Shame, / She scarce for half an Age knew Milton's Name. / But now, his Fame by every Trumpet blown, / We on his deathless Trophies raise our own'. Prologue to Milton, *Comus, a Mask*.

21 For a discussion of the methods by which Handel's effigy was subject to a similar process see Suzanne Aspden, "'Fam'd Handel Breathing, tho' transformed to Stone": The Composer as Monument', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55/1 (2002), 39–90.

22 David Garrick, *A New Prologue spoken by Mr Garrick . . . at the Representation of Comus* (London: J. Payne and J. Boucquet, 1750). Garrick portrayed Milton's legacy as a national heritage; Milton's heiress he confined to the private



MILTON VERSUS MRS CLIVE: THE CONTEST OF 'BEAUTIES' IN THE 'PUBLICK EYE'

In the actual production of *Comus*, Milton's nationalist profile dissolved within Drury Lane's strange cocktail of star production and pastoral libertinism. Dalton may have safeguarded Milton's verses, but the expansion of the musical portions – from five songs to roughly an hour of vocal music – tipped the balance in the drama away from a 'moral pastoral' to focus instead on the 'nocturnal Sport' of the wine god Comus. Such slippage can be detected in the renaming of the masque: as E. H. Visiak points out, Milton named his poems only after virtuous characters; dubbing the Drury Lane version *Comus* was therefore itself at odds with authorial intent.²³ This deviation from the 1637 libretto trained the spotlight, as it were, on the figure of Vice, whom Milton and Lawes had originally omitted from the title page.

Identifying Comus as the dominant dramatic figure allowed producers of the masque both to modernize and to enrich the plot's central issue: the temptation for women to lose their virginity. During the mid-eighteenth century, as feminist historians have observed, notions about what constituted femininity were increasingly prescribed in theory while being broken down in practice.²⁴ Earlier ballad operas and musical farces had relied upon this dichotomy to entertain audiences: part of their attraction lay in dramatizing its tension by inserting songs about female misconduct which had nothing to do with a work's sentimental plot.²⁵ John Gay had established this dramatic syntax in *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), as, for instance, in Polly's disquisition on sluts during the scene in which she reveals her marriage to Macheath.²⁶ In *Comus*, Arne and Dalton drew on the same practice, using musical sections to interpolate cavorting Nymphs and lovers into Milton's plot. While the libretto extolled virgins and denounced fallen women, the songs and dances did the opposite. Not surprisingly, the producers selected their most popular rebel, Mrs Clive, to give

sphere: 'Hers the mild Merits of domestic Life / The patient Sufferer, and the faithful Wife. / Thus grac'd with humble Virtue's native Charms / Her Grandsire leaves her in Britannia's Arms.'

- 23 Introduction to E. H. Visiak and H. J. Foss, eds, *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634* (London: Nonesuch, 1937).
- 24 Many scholars have described instructions for women in period educational literature and the varying responses of educated women to these restrictions. 'Advice' to women inevitably focused on sexual conduct; in the words of Vivien Jones, 'the concern of all eighteenth-century "conduct manuals" is how women might create themselves as objects of male desire, but in terms which will contain that desire'. Models interrogating proper female conduct came from various sources, most notably in popular fiction by writers such as Daniel Defoe (*Moll Flanders*, 1722) and Samuel Richardson (*Pamela*, 1740), as well as in the works of female writers such as Eliza Hayman and Charlotte Charke, who were roundly condemned. Period writings both prescribing and challenging models of female sexuality, together with a selected modern bibliography, are found in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. Vivien Jones (London: Routledge, 1990). The interplay between female iconography, conduct manuals and musical performance is analysed in Richard Leppert, *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology and Socio-Cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- 25 The most notable musicals belonging to this category were Henry Fielding's popular musical farces written for Mrs Clive, such as *The Lottery* (1732) and *An Old Man taught Wisdom, or The Virgin Unmask'd* (1735). Other ballad operas using musical musings on female wantonness to spice up a plot expurgating its heroine include *The Country Wedding and Skimmington* (1729), *The Stage Coach Opera* (1730), *The Wanton Jesuit: or Innocence Seduced* (1731), *The Boarding School Romps* (1733), *Livery Rake and the Country Lass* (1733) and *The Wanton Countess: or Ten Thousand Pounds for a Pregnancy* (1733).
- 26 Gay's social satire functions partly by deflating the exalted sentiments of pastoral courtships in which lovers, because they are divorced from social constraints, revel in emotions untarnished by material concerns. William Empson, 'The Beggar's Opera: Mock-Pastoral as the Cult of Independence', in *Modern Critical Interpretations: John Gay's The Beggar's Opera*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York, New Haven, CT, and Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1988). In Act 1 Air 6 Polly devalues her attachment to Macheath, and by mentioning specific London brothels, invokes scenes of promiscuity intimately familiar to many male audience members. Dorcas, in Air 6 of *The Mock Doctor*, does the same. John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*, third edition (London: John Watts, 1733), 9–11, and Henry Fielding, *The Mock Doctor, or The Dumb Lady Cur'd* (London: John Watts, 1732), 14.



voice to Arne and Dalton's central *provocateuse*. But *Comus* departed from the tradition of ballad opera because it split this disorderly Other into two separate musical characters: a 'Woman' in *Comus's* Crew and the Goddess of Mirth, 'Euphrosyne'.

This curious casting reflects the complexity that Mrs Clive had acquired as a signifier. The unruliness she communicated in her *Comus* songs for the most part diverged sharply from that called for by the libidinous female of Milton's Bacchanal scenes. Instead of extolling love's virtues, she described in song her personal style of emancipation: a scorn of romance, an unshakeable self-confidence and the jettisoning of rules inhibiting the realization of her ambition.²⁷ In *Comus*, Mrs Clive's musical character unfolded in a manner that curiously mirrored the evolution of her own public persona since her debut.

During her first three years at Drury Lane, Mrs Clive was known primarily as an English shepherdess. Her vocal excellence as Phillida in 1729 had reportedly salvaged an otherwise epic flop, Colley Cibber's pastoral *Love in a Riddle*.²⁸ Mrs Clive's outstanding performance restrained audiences from forcing the players to quit the boards mid-performance; although Cibber would later claim that his opponents had sabotaged the premiere because of his Whig allegiances, a less partisan report blamed Cibber's execrable singing for audience rejection of his work.²⁹ The comic subplot featuring Mrs Clive was discreetly recycled as a newly titled anonymous one-act afterpiece, *Damon and Phillida*, and iconography of the singer-actress as Phillida – in oils, mezzotints after the oils and frontispieces to the playbook – circulated after 1729.³⁰ The assumption by her later biographers that she achieved her initial popularity through her performances, rather than her

27 Until 1734 her singing teacher, the songwriter Henry Carey, furnished Mrs Clive with musical farces and compositions projecting her rebellion against male dominion over women. Carey consistently promoted women's rights, and his works for the stage touching on this theme – *The Contrivances* (1729), the *Six Cantatas* (1732) and the songs and prologue to *The Honest Yorkshireman* (1736) – were all written for Mrs Clive. Norman Gillespie, 'The Life and Works of Henry Carey, 1687–1743' (PhD dissertation, University of London, 1982), 167, 365–366.

28 '*Love in a Riddle*; a Pastoral Opera, with very bad Success, in the Year 1728. It is an Imitation of the celebrated *Beggar's Opera* that came out the Year before. The first Night there was a great Disturbance in every Part of the Performance but when Miss Raftor (now Mrs Clive) sung . . . she was received with much Applause, and greatly encouraged for her musical Voice, and more especially for her exceedingly modest and bashful Behaviour'. Thomas Whincop, *Scanderberg, or Love and Liberty . . . to which are added a List of all the Dramatic Authors* (London: W. Reeve, 1747), 197. This same version of events is reported in Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage*, 127–128.

29 'The People in the Beginning of the Play [*Love in a Riddle*] seemed inclinable to attend, and give it a fair Hearing; but when you [Colley Cibber] appeared, and began to sing in the character of Philautos . . . not in a mimick, not in a false, but in your own real natural Voice, and they found that you intended to impose upon them for Harmony, which they perceiv'd hurt their Ears extremely, they did grow somewhat outrageous, and in the second Act they call'd aloud several Times to have the Curtain dropt, but Philautos came forward and humbly petition'd, that they would hear him sing one more Song. They granted his Request, and then damn'd his *new-fangled innocent Performance*'. [Anon.,] *The Laureat or the Right Side of Colley Cibber, Esq* (London: J. Roberts, 1740), 110. Standard secondary sources such as the *London Stage Calendar* (under 7 January 1729) cite Cibber's account in Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber*, second edition (London: John Watts, 1740), 243–244, 248–249.

30 Both the engraver and publisher of the first mezzotint of 'MISS RAFTER [Mrs Clive] in the Character of PHILLIDA' (c1729) are unknown. One should note that this portrait was not a likeness of the actress, as maintained in modern biographies of Mrs Clive and in museum catalogues, but a generic pastoral scene painted by Gottfried Schalken around 1695; the publisher simply appended the actress's name to the print. Schalken's oil is listed in the *catalogue raisonné* by Thierry Beherman, *Gottfried Schalken* (Paris: Maeght Editeur, 1988), 344–345. The 'real' Mrs Clive first appeared in her 1734 oil portrait by Pieter van Bleek. This was engraved twice as a mezzotint: first by John Faber, 'The Celebrated Mrs Clive, late Miss Raftor in the Character of Phillida', in 1734; and again a year later as 'Mrs Clive in the Character of Phillida', in reverse by van Bleek. Descriptions of these mezzotints are found under 'Clive, Catherine' in John Chaloner Smith, *British Mezzotinto Portraits* (London: Henry Sotheran & Co and J. Noseda, 1883), volume 1. Watts published a frontispiece showing Mrs Clive as Phillida rejecting her suitors in his first (1729) edition of *Damon and Phillida* 'with the Musick prefix'd to each Song' and reissued this volume five times (1732, 1736, 1737, 1749, 1765 (the last published by Tonson)).



iconographic representations, as Phillida attests to the efficacy of images in moulding audience perception of an actress. According to the *London Stage Calendar*, the Little Haymarket Theatre's rival productions of *Damon and Phillida* vastly outnumbered those at Drury Lane featuring Mrs Clive.³¹ None the less, practically every publisher of the pastoral farce until 1765 listed the singer-actress as Phillida, and these editions, together with the Phillida/Mrs Clive frontispiece, effectively faked an *aide-mémoire* about her performance history.³² Cibber, who was a manager at Drury Lane, continued to feature her as a rustic shepherdess in ballad operas, none of which sustained audience interest.³³

Ironically, Arne's role for her as 'Woman' in Milton's masque constituted her first successful casting in a pastoral – nearly a decade after she had entered the viewer's fantasy in this setting. Her Act 1 songs in *Comus* circulated time-worn tropes about the sexual licence enjoyed by Arcadian inhabitants: 'Decked in Daisies', she attempted to 'waken love' in the spectators both on stage (the Brothers) and off (Drury Lane audiences). After this song, her duet with John Beard ('From tyrant laws and customs free') celebrated the irresistibility of her siren call. To set the lyrics of her first air, Arne selected a dance type and key (gavotte in G major) to reinforce the pastoral associations. The Beard–Clive duet relied on other pastoral signifiers – a siciliano in C major, for example – to enhance the idyllic tone. A second gavotte, sung by Beard, and a danced siciliano closed the first musical section. Here Arne deployed normative musical procedures to create a 'high-style' baroque representation of the pastoral by alternating appropriate dance types: siciliano (the first tenor air) – gavotte (Mrs Clive) – siciliano (duet) – gavotte (tenor) – siciliano (dance).

In Mrs Clive's Act 2 music, Arne switched from generic, mood-setting compositions to airs whose lyrics and discursive approach were closely bound up with Mrs Clive's 1730s history. Her initial Act 2 air, 'Fame's an Echo', warned listeners of the vagaries of popular favour. Within the context of Milton's libretto, the song was a non sequitur: her air should have supplemented the 'poison'd sweets' from Comus's Cup, proffered by one of Comus's wanton female followers, which would transform the Brothers into Bacchanals.³⁴ Yet the song failed to deliver any erotic charge; instead it reinterpreted the current understanding of the notion of 'fame'. During this period 'fame' referred to one's reputation, which in the case of women was defined chiefly by their sexual conduct. Rather than warning how fame might impinge upon virtue, the lyrics described the main properties of fame according to contemporary stardom: its fickleness, its fragility and, most importantly, its openness to manipulation. Here Arne broke up the pastoral idyll (see Example 1): the G minor tonality darkened the song's siciliano landscape, and the echo-interpolations, redolent of grotto scenes, fragmented the periodicity of the dance. Phrases assumed independent tonal centres (relative major, bars 10–12; dominant minor, bars 13–19; relative major, bars 21–24) to depict harmonically the shifting sands of public taste.

Through its disjunction from Milton's libretto and its unusual interpretation of fame, the air assumed an extra-narrative function. Its didacticism, typical of the lyrics in the ballad farces she had popularized, allowed Mrs Clive to extract herself from the role of temptress in order to sermonize on celebrity status. The inclusion of these lyrics in *Comus* only makes sense in the context of Mrs Clive's much-publicized 1736 battle with the Drury Lane management to retain the leading role in the *Beggar's Opera*. The song echoed the

31 Mrs Clive sang the role of Phillida at Drury Lane a mere eleven times between 1729 and 1738; during the same period the pastoral farce enjoyed an average of twenty productions per season at the Little Haymarket Theatre. Her early biographers – Thomas Whincop, William Chetwood and David Baker – dated her success from her debut in this role. See note 30 and David E. Baker, 'Clive, Catherine', in *The Companion to the Playhouse*, volume 2.

32 The *English Short Title Catalogue* lists twelve editions of *Damon and Phillida* published in London between 1729 and 1765; of these, only two (J. W[atts], 1729; J. Millan, 1731) omitted the Drury Lane cast, citing instead the players of the Haymarket Theatre and the comedians of Tottenham Court Fair respectively. Editions of the ballad opera published in Ireland and Scotland during this period referred to both local and Drury Lane companies in their title pages.

33 Other rustic pastoral farces featuring Mrs Clive included *Rural Love, or The Merry Shepherd* (1732) and *Damon and Daphne* (1733), both of which were performed only once.

34 The Brothers angrily reject the drink and the female who offers it to them: 'Forbear, nor offer us the poison'd sweets, / That thus have render'd thee thy sex's shame, / All sense of honour banish'd from thy breast'. *Comus*, 62.



Sung by Mrs Clive in Comus

Example 1 Thomas Arne, 'Fame's an Eccho', in *The Musick in the Masque of Comus* (London: William Smith, 1740), GB Lbl G.320.d in folio format, pages 21–22. Reproduced by permission of the British Library



22



... certain smiles to gain. Oke her Sister Fortune blind. To the best she is
oft unkind. and the worst her Favour find and the worst her Favour find.
For.
Ad^o
Ad^o
and the worst her Favour find.

Example 1 continued



leitmotiv of her 1736 press campaign: that popular support does not necessarily indicate merit ('To the best she's oft unkind / And the worst her Favour find').³⁵ Arne suitably mottled her pastoral music to communicate this dark warning. The lyrics recalled Mrs Clive's public image, overwriting the libretto's notion that fulfilling female desire destroyed moral rectitude: Mrs Clive, as a 'shameless Advocate of Shame', stood not for lubricity but publicity. (By this date Mrs Clive was in any case renowned for her chastity, which was a key to her popular appeal.³⁶) In other words, Arne's song, because it related to Mrs Clive's trials in theatrical politics, transformed Milton's seventeenth-century angst over the loss of one's maidenhead into a warning against the potential perfidy of stardom.³⁷

In Act 3 Mrs Clive metamorphosed into Euphrosyne, the 'Goddess of Mirth' found in Milton's *L'Allegro* (from the paired evening poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*). The joining of *Comus* with *L'Allegro* reflected a parallel strategy: first, to bolster the 'presence' of Milton in Drury Lane's *Comus* and, second, to equip Mrs Clive with a role more in keeping with her star status at Drury Lane. Contextualized within Mrs Clive's career, the emblematic figure of Euphrosyne would surely have crystallized into an *in propria persona* role celebrating Drury Lane's 'Muse with Justice'.³⁸ The nomenclature of her new *dramatis persona* in *Comus* signified her transcendence over the other 'additional characters' in the 1738 adaptation. In librettos of the period, Euphrosyne was the only new character listed in the *dramatis personae* (the Second Spirit being a clone of the Attendant Spirit), the only member of *Comus*'s Crew identified by name and the only Bacchanal who both spoke and sang. (*Comus*, performed by the great tragic actor John Quin, was a non-musical role.) Euphrosyne also enjoyed a unique literary pedigree amongst the 'additional characters': *L'Allegro* was seminal to the eighteenth-century reception of Milton and spawned a fashion for similar 'evening poems' from around 1720.³⁹

35 Compare this usage of the word 'fame' to that in the epigram printed three times during Mrs Clive's 1736 battle: 'Two RIVALS in Theatrick Fame/Fell out in France – and fight; / Two Nymphs in England did the same, / But cooler, chose to write'. [Anon.,] *The London Evening Post*, 20–23 November 1736, and [anon.,] *The Grub-Street Journal*, 25 November 1736. A longer version of the poem appeared in [anon.,] *The London Daily Post*, 27 November 1736. The writings referred to in the epigram argued over which actress was better qualified to play Polly, with the Clive supporters arguing that Mrs Cibber had been cast in the role merely because she was well connected, unlike Mrs Clive: '[Mrs Clive has] acquired . . . through *sole force of merit* the character of being EXCELLENT in a greater variety of Walks than any Actress'. [Anon.,] *The Daily Journal*, 14 December 1736. The 'Polly row' was front-page news for two months, spawning thirty-six press articles, two stage entertainments and commentary interpolated into two plays. The press articles on this subject are listed in *A Register of English Theatrical Documents, 1660–1737*, ed. Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), volume 2, 883–892. Observations in plays, such as Henry Fielding's sarcasms about the contretemps in his *Historical Register* (1736), are partly discussed in Dane Farnsworth Smith, *Plays about the Theatre in England, from The Rehearsal in 1671 to the Licensing Act in 1737* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 184–185, 194–201.

36 The means by which Mrs Clive cultivated her reputation for sexual correctness – through alliances, press reports and epilogues – are documented in the section 'Catherine Clive: An Actress Secure from Sexual Scandal' in Kimberly Crouch, 'Attitudes towards Actresses in Eighteenth-Century Britain' (DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 1995), 198–227.

37 While the lyrics might be read as a traditional eighteenth-century warning against women entering public life, acting was during this time becoming a socially acceptable activity. See Kimberly Crouch, 'The Public Life of Female Actresses: Prostitutes or Ladies?' in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalais (London and New York: Longman, 1997), 220–227.

38 [Anon.,] *The Theatre turned upside down, or The Mutineers. A Dialogue. Occasioned by a Pamphlet, called The Theatric Squabble* (London: A. Dodd, 1733), 7.

39 Poets imitated Milton's paired poems, both in form and content, from the turn of the century until at least 1761. The flourishing of this poetic genre, called 'evening poems', after Milton is described in Griffin, *Regaining Paradise*, 72–82. 'Evening poems' combined Milton's delicate rhythms, structure (tetrameter couplets, addressed to an emblematic figure) and related themes (pleasure, rural settings).



I would argue that Dalton introduced Mrs Clive/Euphrosyne to counterbalance the figure of Milton invoked in the prologue. This pairing, as we shall see, eventually filtered down to the Vauxhall Gardens, where Milton's effigy in the 'attitude of *Il Penseroso*' presided over the gardens behind the 'Temple of Comus', a pavilion adjacent to a sweep of supperboxes, one of which contained an image of the actress playing one of her most celebrated scenes. Euphrosyne complicated what had originally been a straightforward Puritanical argument for Virtue's triumph over sensuality by mixing together the cult of the dead poet with that of a live actress. The *L'Allegro* verses that Dalton added to *Comus* to herald Mrs Clive's Act 3 entry outlined the profile her producers had toiled to establish. She was 'the Goddess fair and free', or the emancipated female cultivated by her first promoter and song-writer Henry Carey; the 'nymph' of 'youthful jollity' (Phillida) tinged with 'quips and cranks' (the defiant rebel of 1736); she summoned up 'Laughter, holding both his sides' in accordance with her celebrated 'Comic Genius'.⁴⁰

Most importantly, Milton's Euphrosyne underlined Mrs Clive's function as a performer: to banish Melancholy through illusion. The *L'Allegro* verses announcing Euphrosyne were in essence a mini-prologue for Drury Lane's Goddess of Mirth, just as the opening prologue had praised Milton, the English literary hero. Dalton's merging of Mrs Clive with Euphrosyne proved enduring: in 1761, Benjamin Victor eulogized the actress with the same verses used to describe her in *Comus*.⁴¹ The performance history of *Comus* indicates that Mrs Clive 'owned' not only the Woman/Euphrosyne lead soprano role(s), but the production itself: besides being the only singer-actress to perform Woman/Euphrosyne until 1744, she took the masque with her on tour for its debut in Dublin, where she sang all three main soprano roles (Sabrina and Woman/Euphrosyne) to great acclaim; similarly, when she absconded to Covent Garden during her 1744 dispute with Drury Lane, she transported *Comus* for its first production at the rival theatre.⁴² As crowning testimony to Mrs Clive's identification with the singing Euphrosyne, her most elaborate oil portrait, painted by William Verelst in 1740, portrayed her holding an aria from Handel's setting of *L'Allegro*.⁴³

40 To announce Euphrosyne, Dalton wove together the three stanzas from *L'Allegro*: 'Hence loathed Melancholy . . . In heaven ycleasped Euphrosyne, / And by men, heart-easing Mirth; / Whom lovely Venus, at a birth, / With two Sister Graces more, / To Ivy-crowned Bacchus bore. / Haste thee Nymph and bring with thee, / Jest and youthful Jollity, / Quips, and Cranks, and wanton Wiles, / Nods, and Becks, and wreathed with Smiles, / Such as hang on Hebe's Cheek, / And love to live in dimple sleek; / Sport that wrinkled Care derides, / And Laughter holding both his Sides. / Come and trip it as you go, / On the light fantastick Toe'. *Comus*, 96. In Milton's poem Euphrosyne was, like Comus, an offspring of Bacchus. Unlike Comus, however, she was also one of the Graces, having been born of Venus.

41 'I cannot better introduce this Lady, than by the following Lines from MILTON. "Haste thee Nymph . . . both his Sides" [see note 40]. As strong Humour is the great characteristic Mark of an English Comedy, so was this laughter-loving, Joy-exciting actress! – To enumerate the different Parts in which she excelled, would be feebly describing, what the Audiences have felt so powerfully'. Benjamin Victor, *The History of the Theatres of London from the Year 1760 to the Present Time* (London: T. Becket, 1771), 141–142.

42 According to *The London Stage*, the masque was performed with its original cast over sixty times exclusively at Drury Lane until Mrs Clive departed in 1744. Herbage also notes that she selected the masque for her 1743 benefit before she brought it with her to Covent Garden. *Comus*, xi. Her 1741 Dublin performances in *Comus* moved one critic to comment: 'The Sublimity of the great Milton, the Eloquence of Mr Quin and the Harmony of Mrs Clive delighted and charmed everyone'. *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 4–8 August 1741; cited in Brian Boydell, *A Dublin Musical Calendar* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1988), 73. After 6 August she apparently played Woman/Euphrosyne and Sabrina for another four performances. Patrick J. Crean, 'The Life and Times of Kitty Clive' (PhD dissertation, University of London, 1933), 234.

43 The aria was 'Sweet Bird'. The music she held symbolized Mrs Clive's reputation as Drury Lane's pre-eminent soprano. Although she sang in Handel's *L'Allegro*, there is no record that she ever sang this aria, which was unsuited to her voice type. James S. Hall and Martin V. Hall, *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato: Kritischer Bericht* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969), 7–43, 59–74. The portrait now hangs in the Garrick Club of London, and is reproduced in Geoffrey Ashton, *Pictures in the Garrick Club: A Catalogue of the Paintings, Drawings, Watercolours and Sculpture* (London: Garrick Club, 1997), 70.



Arne subordinated his musical scenes for Euphrosyne/Mrs Clive to the reinforcement of Mrs Clive's image. Her opening song, 'Come bid Adieu to Fear', the light-hearted gavotte in G major, restated the actress's power to summon an imaginary empire of 'love and harmony' free from social constraints. Thereafter Comus ordered his followers to depict a lament scene designed to move the Lady, the virgin heroine of the masque, to 'pangs of Love'. Although Euphrosyne did not sing at this juncture – such lachrymations ill befit a Comic Muse – she reinterpreted the recitative/aria section through mime. The stage directions read:

After this Dance [a minuet performed by Naiades] the Pastoral Nymph advances slowly, with a melancholy and desponding Air, to the side of the Stage, and repeats by way of Soliloquy the first six lines [the recitative], and then starts the Ballad [a minuet]. In the mean Time she is observed by Euphrosyne, who by her Gesture expresses to the Audience her different Sentiments of the Subject of her Complaint, suitably to the Character of their several Songs.⁴⁴

How did this translate into stage action? It appears that the Pastoral Nymph (Cecilia Arne) sang from stage right or left, while Euphrosyne, who had been left standing beside the Lady and Comus after her last air, performed the choreographed gesture. Functioning as a dramatic conduit, Mrs Clive thereby maintained her 'Muse' authority, remaining centre stage to interpret the air for the public. She then rebutted the Nymph's self-pity with a stereotypical representation that she had popularized from 1732 – the narcissistic 'Fine Lady' of the Town:

[recitative]
 Love the greatest Bliss below,
 How to taste few Women know,
 Fewer still the Way have hit,
 How a fickle Swain to quit.
 Simple Nymph, then learn of me,
 How to treat Inconstancy.
 [air]
 The wanton God, that pierces Hearts,
 Dips in Gall his pointed Darts,
 But the Nymph disdains to pine,
 Who bathes the Wound with rosy Wine.
 Farewell Lovers, when they're cloyed;
 When I am scorn'd, because enjoy'd,
 Sure the squeamish Fops are free,
 To rid me of dull company.⁴⁵

Again, the foibles alluded to in the air diverged sharply from those required by the libretto (the dialogue calls for a 'culling' of 'Nature's sweets' in music). Despite the gigue-like tempo, Arne eschewed periodicity for what Roger Fiske terms a 'sublimated ballad style'. Norman Gillespie has shown that Henry Carey, not

⁴⁴ Milton, *Comus, a Mask*, 36.

⁴⁵ *Comus*, 106–109. Mrs Clive's initial burlesque of the Fine Lady – the spoiled female who indulges her every whim and enjoys the company of fops – emerged as the misguided Lucy in Henry Fielding, *The Lottery* (London: John Watts, 1732). This stereotype became central to her repertory after 1745.



Arne, had pioneered this strain of song composition, and that Mrs Clive was its chief exponent.⁴⁶ Careyesque features typical of this style – the upsetting of antecedent/consequent structure through repetition of the final phrase, word-painting through unprepared harmonic shifts – resurface in this song. Arne's reliance on a musical vocabulary identified with Mrs Clive helped the myth of the actress to overshadow that of the fictional Euphrosyne. Her subsequent air, 'Preach not me your musty rules', drew likewise on a Clive-style line of songs expressing an independence that sat uneasily with Milton's verses.⁴⁷

Euphrosyne's appearance concluded with a dervish-like pastoral tableau: a sung minuet ('Ye Fawns and ye Dryads') whose accelerating B section segued into a presto bourrée. This melted into two contrasting sections, a Largo (accompanied recitative) and an Allegro (air).⁴⁸ Throughout this musical scene Euphrosyne literally called the tune: stage directions indicated that for the bourrée, dancers should appear to react to her directions. The alternating triple- and duple-metre segments in her accompanied recitative (see Example 2a) hovered above the constraints of a time signature or a tonal centre, with the orchestral responses to her vocalizations growing increasingly wayward. Euphrosyne asserted control over her accompaniment by shifting abruptly to the closing Allegro air in 3/8 (see Example 2b).

To imagine how a contemporary audience member might have heard Mrs Clive's music – the 'sublimated ballad style', the sly joking, the extra-narrative allusions to fame or her authority over her followers (dancers and instrumentalists) – one must grasp the genesis not of the work, but of the star performer for whom it was constructed. The composer and lyricist were in this sense amanuenses for the player's persona, transmitting established patterns of representation that audiences could easily recognize. Anticipating that Drury Lane audiences would filter any Clive representation through her reputation, Arne and Dalton created compositions to be decoded with reference to her public personality – her performance history, her iconography and her mimetic skills.

The Epilogue completed the Milton–Euphrosyne counterbalance. It toyed with the semiotics of *Comus*'s costume (Figure 3): speaking 'in the character of Euphrosyne', Mrs Clive brandished *Comus*'s Wand and Cup, Miltonic symbols for the god's power to effect transformations (and thereby mask evil with the appearance of innocence). What had been instruments of deception became, in her Epilogue, objects referring to the actress's own Thalian eminence. Her power to create stage caricatures – that is, to change quotidian characters into absurd reflections – was perhaps her most celebrated talent, and the Wand and

46 One of Gillespie's principal aims in his research on Carey is to show that the composer, 'by fusing the popular ballad with the sophistication of the modern Italian style . . . established the characteristics of that mid-century "English style" identified principally with Thomas Arne'. His research discounts Fiske's assertion that a 'sublimated ballad style' was 'invented' by Arne. Gillespie, 'The Life and Works of Henry Carey'. See also Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 179–188. Gillespie consistently notes that Carey designed his most popular and demanding works for his star pupil, Mrs Clive.

47 The dialogue preceding 'Preach not me' demands a song celebrating carnal pleasures; Mrs Clive's air instead broadcasts her indomitable will ('Preach not me your musty rules / ye Drones that mould in idle Cell'). Lyrics and music poke fun at stylistic conventions: the drone over the dominant apes the lyrics ('Ye drones that mould in idle Cell', bars 25–27), the main rhythmic motif teases through its persistence and the repeated phrase rises to deliver the triumphant message 'They only live who life enjoy'. Note that Arne emphasized the word 'me' by placing it on the downbeat, a detail lost in the *Musica Britannica* edition, in which the editor chose to place 'me' on the second beat. Compare Thomas Arne, *The Musick in the Masque of Comus* (London: William Smith [1740]), 36, and *Comus*, 121–124.

48 This scene did not appear in the earliest printed music edition, which typically included only the overture, songs, duet, trio and dances (as an appendix, 'The Dances in *Comus*'), and excluded choruses, recitatives and instrumental interludes. To fit the accompanied recitative into Mrs Clive's solo air ('Ye fawns and ye dryads'), the 1740 editors reduced this section to two-bar echoes after lines one, two and seven. Arne, *The Musick in the Masque of Comus*, 37–38. This scene survived in the c1785 manuscript *GB-Lbl AddMS 11518* that was copied from theatrical material. See 'List of Sources' in *Comus*, xii. As Fiske notes, the manuscript and printed source together make *Comus* the 'only major theatrical work' by Arne to have survived 'virtually complete'. The stage directions for the dancers to 'attend to the theatrical directions [of Euphrosyne]' appeared in the first printed libretto, but are omitted from the modern edition. Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 186–187.

JONCUS



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Example 2a Thomas Arne, 'Now cold and denying', in *Comus*, ed. Julian Herbage (London; Stainer & Bell, 1951), 130 and 132. Copyright The Musica Britannica Trust. Reproduced by permission of Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, England



[Exeunt Dancers.]

Com.

List, Lady, be not coy, and be not cozen'd
 With that same vaunted name, *Virginity*.
 Beauty is Nature's Coin ; must not be hoarded,
 But must be current ; and the Good thereof
 Consists in mutual and partaken Bliss,
 Unsavoury in th' Enjoyment of itself.
 If you let slip Time, like a neglected Rose
 It withers on the Stalk with languish'd Head.
 Beauty is Nature's Brag, and must be shown
 In Courts, at Feasts, and high Solemnities,
 Where most may wonder at the Workmanship.
 It is for homely Features to keep Home ;
 They had their Name thence. Coarse Complexions
 And Cheeks of sorry Grain will serve to ply
 The Sampler, and to tease the Housewife's Wool.
 What need a Vermeil-tinctur'd Lip for that,
 Love-darting Eyes, or Tresses like the Morn ?
 There was another Meaning in these Gifts ;
 Think what, and be advis'd ; you are but young yet,
 This will inform you soon.

Lady.

To him that dares
 Arm his profane Tongue with contemptuous Words

*"Repeat the Tambourine" in M.S.

Example 2b



Cup, according to her closing monologue, now symbolized this gift.⁴⁹ Ending the masque with this paean to her expertise in playing farce washed away any ‘feminist’ tinge her onstage representation may have acquired. From the Restoration onwards writers of comedy had excused the enactment of taboos in their plays by claiming to educate the viewer; the exaggerated manner of representation associated with farce allegedly protected audiences from empathizing with the dangerous characters represented. The Epilogue reminded viewers that Mrs Clive’s performance manifested her talent for burlesque rather than unveiling her private personality; in other words, it assured viewers that her expressed desire for emancipation was merely a display designed for public opprobrium. *Comus* thereby joined the ranks of countless English farces of the period that justified their awkward shuttling between transgression and prescription by claiming to answer a didactic purpose.⁵⁰

How are we to characterize the difference between the two icons, Milton and Mrs Clive, who framed *Comus*? Suzanne Aspden postulates that mythologizing an established artist according to nationalist rhetoric allowed the eighteenth-century Briton to identify and organize patriotic principles; recognizing this process should help us understand why critics of the period pasted a specific reading onto a figure like Milton and his creative output. Theatre stars, however, even when symbolizing patriotic principles, occupied another realm of fantasy, distinct from the ‘imagined community’ implied by theories of nationalism.⁵¹ Players were ideologically heterodox and alive, interceding constantly in the process of their own image production. Patent theatres marketed principal players as ‘knowable’ individuals: as today, star production simulated an intimacy, on stage and in print, between actor and devotee. Principal players therefore adopted, or were ascribed, views perceived as popular without regard to any ideological coherence. Rather than organizing ideologies, they scrambled them, presenting a disorderly clutch of perspectives within their own idiosyncratic personae.

‘TO VIEW THE HARMLESS JOYS WITHOUT’: *COMUS* AND THE VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS

Wherein lay the enduring appeal of *Comus*? The inclusion of a principal player, no matter how cleverly reconstructed in music or dialogue, did not guarantee a work’s success, as the many flops featuring Mrs Clive

49 ‘Beyond all Bounds of Truth this Author shoots; / Can Wands or Cups transform Men into Brutes? . . . One Stroke of . . . This [the wand], as sure as Cupid’s Arrow, / Turns the warm Youth into a wanton Sparrow. / Nay, the cold Prude becomes a Slave to Love, / Feels new Warmth, and coos a billing Dove . . .’. ‘Epilogue. To be spoken by Mrs. Clive, in the Dress of Euphrosyne, with the Wand and Cup’, in Milton, *Comus, a Mask*.

50 By the beginning of the eighteenth century the earlier debate over the immorality of Restoration comedy – spear-headed by Jeremy Collier – had bred two strains of comic writing: Richard Steele’s sentimental comedy on the one hand and farce on the other. Defenders of the latter maintained that farce, although featuring disreputable characters, educated viewers on behaviour to avoid and that the exaggerated style of acting safeguarded against audiences empathizing with unsavoury fictional characters. The history of criticism of comedy during this period is outlined in John Loftis, ‘Dramatic Theory’, in *The Revels History of Drama in English, 1660–1750* (London: Methuen, 1976), volume 5. In countless prefaces to mid-eighteenth-century farces, didactic value was cited to justify the production. One revealing example of an eighteenth-century playwright invoking Horatian truisms to excuse onstage improprieties is found in Fielding’s defence of his *Covent Garden Tragedy* (1732). In this mock-tragedy Fielding depicted one of London’s most infamous brothels and its clientele. His play provoked outrage, which he tried to deflect by claiming he had sought to ‘educate’ his audience. The exchange between Fielding and his critics is reprinted in *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Ronald Paulson and Thomas Lockwood (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Barnes & Noble, 1969), 59–63.

51 Aspden relies on Benedict Anderson’s theory of ‘imagined community’ to help explain the genesis of British ‘national identity’. Anderson conceives of ‘a nation’ primarily as a collective fantasy which citizens both consume and help generate. Suzanne Aspden, ‘Opera and Nationalism in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain’ (DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 1999), 3–30.



Habit of Comus, in the Masque of Comus.

Comus dans le Masque de Comus

Figure 3 An engraving of the 'Habit of Comus' in [anon.,] *A Collection of the Dresses of Different Nations* (London: Thomas Jefferys, 1757), volume 2, 240. Reproduced by permission of the British Library



attest. Nor did promoting Milton ensure a box-office hit, a lesson that Rolli had learned through his experience with *Sabrina*.

The manner in which John Tyers reinvented *Comus* at Vauxhall Gardens suggests which aspects of the masque he judged most alluring to his public, and the success of the gardens to some extent validated his assessment. The improved Vauxhall, reopened by Tyers in 1732, flourished as a venue where tensions between the desires for edification and self-gratification could play themselves out. After taking over the gardens in 1728, Tyers systematically redesigned every aspect – the landscaping, the entertainments, the entry system, the art and architecture – to transform the location's reputation from one of infamy to one of polite taste. He offered a medley of delights: after paying admission, the visitor might consume an expensive dinner in the supperboxes, wander on tree-lined gravel paths or through sweeping colonnades, listen to an evening concert, dance in the Great Hall, admire the statuary and painting in the gardens and pavilions, wonder at the over one thousand lamps illuminating nocturnal skies or revel in the seclusion of the downs and woods.⁵²

Working against the gentility of Tyers's environment was the lucrative, yet fraught, business of pleasure-seeking. One of Vauxhall's chief attractions was its intermingling of social ranks; historians hold it up as one of the earliest public spaces where class distinctions were dissolved.⁵³ On this democratized site visitors could also feed less genteel appetites for promiscuity, drinking and dancing. Such a combined meltdown of social hierarchy and abandonment to self-indulgence is generally associated by scholars with the notion of the 'carnavalesque' in London's urban life.

Led by David Solkin, historians have suggested that Tyers largely opposed carnivalesque behaviour at Vauxhall. Solkin claims that Tyers constructed models, both in his gardens and in his publicity, of 'polite subjectivity' in order to obscure, and eventually overcome, the baser pleasures available on his grounds.⁵⁴ The theory suggests that Tyers was consciously acting to offset the libidinous impulses of his guests by imposing models of approved conduct. This article offers an alternative model. Rather than pitting order against disorder – which would inhibit the release of carnivalesque impulses – Tyers appears to have simulated a pastoral theatre where goings-on in the bushes conveniently removed themselves to an 'imaginary realm'. The simulacrum of Arcadia suspended social mores, allowing visitors to surrender to the carnival's promiscuous energies.

The ontology of the carnival speaks against the model proposed by Solkin. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, and more recently Terry Castle, the carnivalesque of the eighteenth century manifested itself in the exploration of alternative identities and taboo impulses. Such experimentation depended on scrambling the codes essential to ordered social conduct: cross-dressing, hiding one's identity, inverting social hierarchies or shedding decorum opened doors to hitherto unexplored frontiers of the libido. The carnival erased social conventions by rendering them meaningless, and this 'decontextualization' relieved individuals from responsibility for their actions. Eighteenth-century masquerades, through their disguises, extravagance, jumbling of social stations and nocturnal timing, constituted an ideal forum in which carnivalesque behaviour could unfold.⁵⁵

52 Before Tyers bought the Gardens, they were renowned as a venue for sexual trafficking. The evolution of the gardens is vividly described in David Coke, *The Muse's Bower, 1728–1786* (Sudbury: Gainsborough's House, 1978).

53 Coke, *The Muse's Bower* [9], and David Solkin, 'Vauxhall Gardens; or The Politics of Pleasure', in *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 106–107. See also Bindman, 'Roubiliac's Statue of Handel', 23–26.

54 Solkin, 'Vauxhall Gardens; or The Politics of Pleasure', 138. Solkin's interpretation is informed by descriptions of the gardens found in Teri J. Edelstein, 'The Gardens', in *Vauxhall Gardens*, ed. Teri J. Edelstein (New Haven: Yale Centre for British Art, 1983). Bindman backs Solkin's interpretation of Vauxhall as a forum where guests were invited to construct notions of civic virtue, as does Aspden. Bindman, 'Roubiliac's Statue of Handel' and Aspden, "'Fam'd Handel Breathing'".

55 'Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people': Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Introduction', in *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helen Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), 7. Castle writes, 'the carnivalesque occasion intimates an alternate view of the "nature of the things"'.



Yet the 'heteroglot exuberance' described by Castle was notably absent from Vauxhall masquerades, because costumes, the principal means of releasing participants from social strictures, were largely omitted.⁵⁶ Participants in the heavily guarded 1732 *ridotto*, who were hand-picked by Tyers, limited their costumes to black dominoes and lawyers' gowns. In 1760 one witness observed that amongst over 5,000 guests, only eight or ten guests were costumed. Writing in the same year, Horace Walpole complained that the masquerades were 'nothing better than a common night'.⁵⁷

The persistence with which Tyers reminded Vauxhall visitors of conventions (the inscriptions on sculptures and structures, the rational layout of the walks) might also suggest an enforcement model.⁵⁸ Yet contemporary reports make clear that integrating libidinous occasions into the Gardens was essential to Tyers's business. He placed visitors in a make-believe idyll whose classical roots forgave any exploration of its erotic heritage. The Gardens, like the Disney World hypostatized by Baudrillard, fabricated a live fantasy and invited individuals to consider this world a self-sufficient, independent empire.⁵⁹ The Vauxhall pastoral world enveloped all of the visitor's senses, and in so doing freed (as did masquerades) the individual from quotidian strictures. The measure and types of indulgences belonging to the pastoral were more limited than those of the masquerade, but the pastoral had this crucial advantage: while masquerades exiled the very concept of 'polite' conduct, the cultural heritage of Arcadia allowed the 'polite' and 'impolite' to merge into a fuzzy propriety. Tyers's combined encouragement of Dionysian dalliances and homage to the antique world prompted one critic to protest:

Methinks I already see the *Votaries* of both Gender (after the *Moral Lecture* is over) . . . taking in the luscious *Dainties* at their rosy Lips, and innocently drinking whole Rivulets of *Love* at their bright Eyes: whilst *Bacchus*, *Venus* and *Cupid* are peeping thro' the Sail-Cloth Canopy.⁶⁰

Terry Castle, 'The Carnivalization of English Narrative', in *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 103.

56 Describing the costume's role in unleashing the carnivalesque, Castle notes that 'travesty eroticized the world' and analyses how disguise inserted the wearer into a 'symbolic lexicon of libidinous possibility'. Terry Castle, 'The Culture of Travesty', in *The Female Thermometer*, 87–91.

57 The description of the 1732 *ridotto* states that 'One hundred Soldiers were posted to prevent disturbances and the whole was conducted with good order'. Item 52/2 in [anon.,] *GB-Ob* GA Surrey C21, 'Vauxhall Roy. Gardens . . . material relating to Vauxhall Gardens consisting of Cuttings, Songs, Plates'. See also Item 139/2: 'The Company was very genteel . . . there were not more than eight or ten [costumes]: Among whom were a Lady in the Character of a pastoral Nymph, dressed in a Jacket and Coat of White Satin, trimmed with Green [and] a Lady in an old English Dress of chequered Silk, the Ground yellow trimmed with Gold. A Gentleman appeared in the Character of a Turk . . . Another Gentleman assumed the Character of a Highlander . . . There was also a young Gentleman habited like a Spaniard. Several Gentlemen appeared in the Character of Lord Foppington.' Walpole noted 'Nothing diverted me but a man in a Turk's dress and two nymphs, in masquerade without masks, who . . . seemed to surprise nobody.' Letter from Horace Walpole to George Montague, 11 May 1769; cited in *Vauxhall Gardens*, 13–14.

58 'There were didactic inscriptions everywhere to inspire, as a satirist remarked with some irony, "a love of Wisdom and the Spirit of Bravery of the Old Romans"'. Bindman, 'Roubiliac's Statue of Handel', 24.

59 Baudrillard's theories of simulacra are wedded to his conception of 'hyperreality', of which Disney World is one example. He postulates that in the modern world representations of events, be they in theme parks, news broadcasts, films or interactive therapies, have displaced the 'real' with the 'unreal'. The Platonic division between essence and projection dissolves into reproductions of experiences whose meanings, because they are detached from any 'reality', are open to endless reinterpretations. These reproductions always seek to hide their own hollowness. I do not believe that simulacra, or simulated phenomena, functioned in this manner in eighteenth-century London, where technologies and living standards did not admit, or invite, reproductions of its grim cityscape. However, facets of Baudrillard's model for a simulacrum – its enveloping of the participant, its reliance on phantasmagoria and myth – are found in Tyers's pastoral fantasy at Vauxhall Gardens. Jean Baudrillard, 'The Precession of Simulacra', in *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

60 *The Universal Spectator*, 3 June 1732, in [anon.,] *GB-Lbl* Cup401k7, 'Vauxhall Gardens: A Collection of Tickets . . .', 106.



This reading is further borne out by the two main collections of Vauxhall ephemera, whose dominant motif (in puffs, ballads, poems and iconography) was the location's power to transport visitors into a pastoral dreamscape.⁶¹ For his landscaping Tyers turned to the English gentleman's garden that between 1700 and 1750 drew its primary inspiration from the Renaissance reconstructions of the classical Roman villa. The most sought-after designer of this school was William Kent, who aimed primarily to recreate the surroundings of the *beatus ille* or 'happy man' of antique times whose contentment arose from his relationship to nature. Visual quotations from Italian Renaissance villas and Roman ruins, secluded areas and estate edges trailing off into 'untouched' nature became the hallmarks of this fashion, into which Tyers tapped.⁶² At Vauxhall painted constructions simulated antique ruins and arches, and an obligatory 'ha-ha' border marked the Garden's southern boundary, exposing outlying fields. The cityscape was blocked by the other walls enclosing Vauxhall, and tree-lined avenues shielded those promenading. Seclusion also allowed for less rational pursuits: for instance, the fields bordering the South Walk accommodated 'indecencies' which were 'so much complained of' that magistrates eventually ordered Tyers to fence in the fields. The fields were also conveniently dark, and Tyers, when erecting the obligatory fence in 1763, elected also to illuminate the Walk for the first time. Both steps provoked the ire of 'foolish Bucks'.⁶³

Vauxhall's classically-based landscaping simultaneously made accessible to guests the 'polite taste' of landed gentry and supported Tyers's pastoral project. To foster the latter, the proprietor added song in various guises, supplying for visitors what had been a key ingredient of pastoral literature from Theocritus's seminal poem, the first *Idyll*, onward.⁶⁴ This 'atmosphere enhancement' through music was not unprecedented: nightingales had been a feature of the Gardens from the seventeenth century, and, once the birds disappeared in 1730, individuals were hired to imitate their calls from hidden perches.⁶⁵ Tyers invested heavily in improving the aural surround. He concealed instrumental bands in bushes and hollows to waft 'Fairy Music' into the fields behind the Chinese pavilion (see the quotation below); in 1735 he upgraded the orchestral stand from a raised platform to a cylindrical pavilion; in 1737 he added an organ; and in 1745 he expanded the evening entertainment to include English singer-actors. For his *ridottos* he regularly installed extra bands on platforms throughout the Gardens.⁶⁶

61 These are collections of newspaper cuttings, songs and engravings pasted into bound volumes titled 'Vauxhall Gardens'. One is at the British Library (shelfmark Cup401k7); the other is at the Bodleian Library (shelfmark GA Surrey C21). Both are cited in this article.

62 The relationship between the landscaping at Vauxhall and that practised by William Kent is traced in Bindman, 'Roubiliac's Statue of Handel'. Kent's devotion to the Italian country villa and its classical roots, as well as the architect's indebtedness to French landscape painting and theatrical set designs, are described in John Dixon Hunt, *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden 1620–1820*, revised edition (Boston: MIT Press, 1988), 8–31.

63 Coke, *The Muse's Bower*, 1728–1786[16].

64 In each of the first two verses Theocritus compares the herdsman's music to that of nature. This poem is reprinted in Paul Alpers, 'What is Pastoralism?', *Critical Inquiry* 8/3 (1982), 448. Scholars of the pastoral consider Theocritus's *Idyll* the primary impetus for Virgil's *Eclogues*; Virgil's model was taken up by Renaissance writers such as Sannazaro, whose imitation of Virgil (in *Arcadia*) was seminal. Two standard references on the literary traditions of the pastoral are W. W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1959), and Frank Kermode, *English Pastoral Poetry from the Beginnings to Marvell* (New York: Norton, 1972).

65 'It was then call'd Spring Gds Vauxhall. The number of nightingales in the Trees having left their retreat persons were placed there to imitate their Notes. This was not discovered for some Years. The Birds it was thought was the original attraction to this Spot – this was Tyers time about 1730.' Item 4/2 [MS note] in [anon.,] 'Vauxhall Roy. Gardens . . . '.

66 On the 'Fairy Music' see John Lockman, *A Sketch of the Spring Gardens, Vaux-hall. In a Letter to a Noble Lord* (London: G. Woodfall[1750]), 19–20. Sections from this publication are quoted below. Tyers's cultivation of musical entertainments in his gardens is described in the following sections: Item 4/2 (on the orchestra stand and organ), Item 76/1 (on the introduction of vocal performances) and Item 139/2 (on music for the *ridottos*), in [anon.,] 'Vauxhall Roy. Gardens . . .'. Vauxhall's musical installations are also described in Coke, *The Muse's Bower*, 1728–1786[13–14], and Solkin, 'Vauxhall Gardens; or The Politics of Pleasure', 113–115.



Even before Tyers enlisted singers to enrich this bucolic atmosphere, he used airs to advertise his Elysian paradise (an early example of the medium being the message). These appeared largely as lyrics in newspaper puffs and as engraved songs (in George Bickham's *Musical Entertainer*, from 1737); John Lockman, Tyers's publicity agent, contributed to both. The promotional ballads celebrated pastoral clichés also present in Drury Lane's *Comus* dreamscape: the Vauxhall Gardens' independence from the outside world (*Comus*'s court), its fusion of reality with fantasy (*Comus*'s power to transform) and the liberty visitors enjoyed to indulge amorous passions (the revels of *Comus*'s band).⁶⁷ After 1745 Vauxhall ballads were not only published but performed in the evening by theatre singers. The song lyrics focused on music's capacity to 'transport' the listener to another realm, thereby fusing dream with reality. At Vauxhall, natural and man-made songs became both a paradigm for the visitor's inability to distinguish the real from the staged and a means for achieving this altered state.⁶⁸ The lyrics also hounded listeners with images of the gardens as a place for a love tryst: countless Phillidas, Damons, Jockies and Jennies sang ballads almost exclusively on the perils, joys, hopes, errors and pleasures of love, such as in the Vauxhall song 'To Molly':

Lo! The magician waves his wand,
 And in some monarch's court we seem,
 Such crowds move round, so bright each band,
 The whole is a delicious dream.
 Soon distant bells, in tuneful peal;
 Soon feather'd choristers we hear;
 Next rival flutes, melodious steal;
 Next the full concert charms our ear . . .
 The lust here each night be blest;
 The Moon at our return, shall guide;
 Thy voice shall lull my love-sick breast,
 Whilst down the silver Thames we glide.⁶⁹

Such ballads and puffs, rather than 'prescribing a code of behaviour',⁷⁰ constructed for the consumer an imaginary identity within the *locus amoenus* of Vauxhall Gardens, temporarily disengaged from the duties of urban London. Songs participated in what scholars have long argued is the pastoral's basic means of regeneration: the depiction of a mode of being that dissolves the complexities of civilization, unrelated to any

67 The pastoral is described as 'erotic bliss made absolute by its own irresponsibility' in Renato Poggiolo, *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 14.

68 John Lockman's lyrics to William Boyce's song 'Rural Beauties' offer one example among several: 'With this blissful Spot delighted, / Here ye Queen of May of retreats, / Belles and Beaus are all invited, / To partake of varied Sweets . . . Hark! What Heaven'y Notes descending, / Break upon the listn'ing Ear, / Musick All its Graces tending, / O tis Extasy to hear!'. *Bickham's Musical Entertainer* [ed. anon.] (London: C. Corbett [1738]), volume 2, 2. In another poem, 'The Farewell to Spring Gardens. By Mr Lockman from his own manuscript [1738]', music is again the means for transporting the visitor to a fairy realm: 'Must we, no more, in sweet delusion stray, / Midst these gay bow'rs & their mixt charms survey; / The choirs of nymphs and swains; the proud . . . alcove; / The winding glade where beauty loves to rove . . .'. Item 66 in [anon.,] 'Vauxhall Roy. Gardens . . .'.

69 Item 69 in [anon.,] 'Vauxhall Roy. Gardens . . .'.

70 Solkin argues that Vauxhall songs tended to 'celebrate the constancy of emotional attachment' and that the introduction of a first-class orchestra and vocalists structured the relationship between performers and audience to confirm the listening public's refinement. Solkin, 'Vauxhall Gardens; or The Politics of Pleasure', 113–115. Although many Vauxhall ballads celebrate fidelity, the lyrics also speak of rebelliousness, naughtiness and passion (see below). Solkin also overlooks the difference between eighteenth- and twentieth-century viewing practices in the theatre. Until the late eighteenth century spatial relationships between theatre performers and spectators provoked interaction rather than reverence. The often raucous exchanges between players and audience are documented in Leo Hughes, *The Drama's Patrons: A Study of Eighteenth-Century London Audiences* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971).



specific images or setting (such as the antique world or shepherds).⁷¹ The classicist Paul Alpers argues persuasively that the ‘representative anecdote’ constitutes the main tool for drawing the observer into this vision. Such ‘anecdotes’ both summarize and invigorate the conventions through which an observer identifies with a state of mind acted out in classical poetry by herdsmen.⁷² Taking this model a step further, recent scholarship suggests that the power of such ‘anecdotes’ resides in their relation to liminality. The shepherd (and his later counterparts) is a threshold figure who ‘invites idealization as a privileged escapee from social complexity and constraint’.⁷³

Vauxhall ballads generated a stream of such ‘anecdotes’, whose range – from abjectly sentimental to slyly suggestive – offered a flexible model of love-making.⁷⁴ Mediated by a rustic songster, the airs suggested various stages of courtship, from sighs to sensual satisfaction. Onto these practices Tyers grafted the Arne–Dalton *Comus*. Some time after 1738, Tyers erected a lead statue of Milton, either by or after Roubiliac, in his ‘musical Downs’ behind the Chinese Pavilion.⁷⁵ Milton appeared ‘seated on a rock, and in an Attitude listening to soft music . . . as in *Il Penseroso*’. Harnessing the ‘new quality of realism’ for which critics had

71 Halperin’s much-cited definition is useful for grasping the implications of the pastoral setting for the *Comus* of Drury Lane and Vauxhall. Summarized briefly, he defines the pastoral as: 1) literature set in the country featuring herdsmen whose activities conventionally centre on caring for animals, music- and love-making; 2) contrasts of values embodied in this country world and those outside its realm (usually posing natural simplicity against the complexities of civilization); and 3) a manner of representation that contrasts harmonious, comprehensible and meaningful realities with one that is confused and conflict-ridden. David M. Halperin, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 70–71. In other contexts the meaning of the pastoral and its defining characteristics shifted according to the literary and dramatic work in which it featured. In England particularly, the pastoral assumed a dizzying range of forms and meanings, ranging from the moral pastorals of Spenser and Milton (as in the 1634 *Maske presented at Ludlow Castle*) to the private musical entertainments modelled after Italian poets to the ‘urban pastoral’ of John Gay or the ‘nostalgic’ pastorals of Patriot poets. For literature on the history of pastoral English poetry see note 64 and James E. Congleton, *Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England, 1684–1798* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1952). Ellen Harris traces the transmission of the Renaissance Italian pastoral in English musical productions in *Handel and the Pastoral Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). The link between nostalgia for the pastoral and the ideals propagated by Patriot poets – incorruptibility, conservatism, distance from misguided centres of power – is explored in Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope, 1731–1743* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), and Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole, 168–179*. Further writings on the pastoral are listed in the bibliographies to Robert C. Cafritz, Lawrence Gowing and David Rosand, *Places of Delight: The Pastoral Landscape* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1988), and John Dixon Hunt, ‘Introduction: Pastorals and Pastoralism’, in *The Pastoral Landscape*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1992), 18–19.

72 Here I have simplified Alpers’s sophisticated model explaining how readers and writers identify and redefine literary genres. Alpers, ‘What is Pastoralism?’

73 Leo Marx, ‘Does Pastoralism have a Future?’, in *Places of Delight*, 212.

74 Although the focus of many surviving ballads is the value of monogamy, singers couched their sentimental narratives in the pastoral’s sensual terminology (such as ‘ravishing Pleasures’, ‘varied Sweets’, ‘awful lustre of charms’, ‘love-sick breast’). Lockman was particularly adept at conflating the two. Examples of his writings, as well as openly erotic lyrics by others (such as ‘The Court of Vauxhall’, ‘Woman’, ‘A New Song by Miss Stevenson’) are collected in [Anon.,] ‘Vauxhall Roy. Gardens . . .’.

75 Bindman and others have cast doubt on the Roubiliac attribution, which did not appear until the second edition of *The Ambulator* (1782). Warwick Wroth (quoting a nineteenth-century author, Arthur Dobson) suggests the sculptor was Henry Cheere, who ‘made such leaden statues for gardens’. Warwick Wroth and Arthur E. Wroth, *London Pleasure Gardens* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 302. However, Roubiliac’s earlier biographer Katherine Edsdaile includes the Vauxhall statue in her *catalogue raisonné* of the artist and documents a bust of Milton by Roubiliac, possibly commissioned by the Milton admirer Benson out of enthusiasm for David Garrick’s 1750 benefit production of *Comus*. Katherine A. Edsdaile, *The Life and Works of Louis Francois Roubiliac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), 40–44, 104–105.



praised Roubiliac's Handel statue, Tyers created a *Comus*-like environment, simulating the presence of the Poet, now captive in his own magic realm:

At the Extremity (to the Left) of the wide gravel *Walk* in question, are the rural *Downs* . . . with little Eminences, after the Manner of a *Roman* Camp. In these *Downs* were three Openings (last Season) covered with Shrubs; whence some styl'd them *the musical Bushes*, whilst others call'd the subterraneous Sounds heard there, the *Fairy Music*. – This *Music* is now heard, as we walk from under Ground; as also from the Trees in the Thickets: a romantic Pleasure to some Dispositions, and may put them in mind of that imaginary Being, call'd the *Genius of the Wood*; or rather may image to them the *vocal Forest* . . . On one of the above Eminences in these *Downs*, is a Statue representing our great Poet *Milton*, as drawn by himself in *Il Penseroso*, seated on a Rock . . . The Company were very fond, last season, of straying in the Hollow or Descent of these *Downs*. This Spot seemed to be the Rendezvous of *Cupid*; it being as much crouded in an Evening with Lovers, as the *Royal Exchange* is at two o'clock, with Men of Business.⁷⁶

Using Lockman as his mouthpiece, Tyers implanted, literally and figuratively, the notion that Vauxhall invited erotic encounters; in this 'verdant Abode' of 'feather'd Minstrels who . . . ravish the Ear' couples could 'muse in the lonely parts of the Garden'. Lockman, who wrote this puff probably in 1750, ended the description by equating Vauxhall Gardens with Drury Lane's *Comus*:

Then Giving a farther Loose to his Imagination, he might fancy the above Wildernesses to be inhabited by *Comus* . . . Heated by his Enthusiasm he might Hail:

Its lengthen'd Walks, where reverend Elms aspire,
Its gay Alcoves, and its harmonious Choir:
Its moss-grown Thickets, where the Sylvans sport;
And *Comus* keeps, unseen by Man his Court:
Leads up the giddy Train, with Chaplets crown'd,
Quaffing and tripping wildly, round and round:
Stopping, at Intervals, his giddy Rout,
Envious, to view the harmless Joys without.⁷⁷

To justify this parallel, Lockman asserted that in a stage production of *Comus* the wine god had 'proclaimed' that he would transcend his fictional stage life to inhabit Tyers's Gardens.

The Mention of the Revelling God, recalls to my Memory a supposed *Proclamation*, used by that Deity, two or three Days before the closing of this *Entertainment*, a Season or two since:

O Yes! O Yes! O Yes! – Be it known,
In the Grove of Vaux-hall, I, this Night, fix my Throne.
By my Courtiers hemm'd round; a broad Laugh on my face,
The Hyp I'll dispel, and the Vapours I'll chase.⁷⁸

Under Lockman's pen, the Drury Lane *Comus* became a springboard for the imaginative leap into the Vauxhall 'Elysium' where boundaries between innocence and concupiscence faded. At Vauxhall, Milton's invocation functioned quite differently than at Drury Lane, Westminster Abbey or Stowe, where it was infused with patriotic sentiment. Roubiliac's verisimilitude was a visual language that invited viewer participation; rather than imposing values, the sculptor persuaded the viewer to empathize with an individual and thereby enter the 'theatre' of the representation.⁷⁹ Frozen in the act of listening, 'Il Penseroso'

⁷⁶ Lockman, *A Sketch of the Spring Gardens*, 19–20.

⁷⁷ Lockman, *A Sketch of the Spring Gardens*, 22.

⁷⁸ Lockman, *A Sketch of the Spring Gardens*, 22–23.

⁷⁹ Bindman believes that the naturalism of Roubiliac's sculptures, such as the 'relaxed' attitudes of their poses, became an important component of English rococo style. David Bindman and Malcolm Baker, *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth-Century Monument: Sculpture as Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).



enjoined wanderers to sink with him into a musical reverie; this impression increased at night, when the figure was lit with oil lamps from below.⁸⁰ With the Milton statue, his second full-length effigy for the Gardens after Handel, Tyers restyled the ‘classical’ vernacular poet into a pre-romantic hero who both heightened and sanctioned the visitor’s experience. In a typical fusion of anomalies, one writer imagined the Roubiliac figures of Milton and Handel (now a naturalized citizen) jointly ‘guiding’ the soprano Cecilia Arne through a presentation whose sensuality rendered virtue seductive:

See *Handel*, careless of a foreign fame,
 Fix on our shore, and boast a *Briton’s* name:
 While plac’d marmeric in the vocal Grove,
 He guides the measures listening throngs approve.
 Mark silence at the voice of *Arne* confess’d,
 Soft as the sweet Inchantress rules the breast . . .
 So while she varies the impassion’d song,
 Alternate motions in the bosom throng!
 As heavenly *Milton* guides her magic voice,
 And virtue thus convey’d allures the choice.⁸¹

Although the lead statue disappeared after 1822, a contemporary lead statue by John Cheere (who was renowned for copying other artists) and similar porcelain miniatures of Milton may provide some visual clues to its original appearance (see Figures 4 and 5).⁸² The *Comus* myth was taken up by engravers, who in 1751 dubbed the Chinese Temple next to the musical downs ‘The Temple of Comus’, despite the irrelevance of Milton’s story to the pavilion’s decorations (Figure 6).⁸³ Sometime after 1760 Tyers had a transparency depicting *Comus* erected to terminate one of the gravel walks.⁸⁴ But where was the female temptress in Tyers’s Vauxhall *Comus* fantasy?

Mrs Clive’s image presided over another occupation: the eating and socializing in the supperboxes encircling the Grove where the orchestra played. To decorate the supperbox interiors in the mid-1730s, Tyers

80 Arthur Dobson, *Eighteenth-Century Vignettes* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1892), 244, and Marcia R. Pointon, *Milton & English Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), 46.

81 ‘On our late Taste in Musick. By a Gentleman of Oxford’. Published in *Gentleman’s Magazine* 10 (1740), 520; in [anon.,] ‘Vauxhall Gardens: a Collection of Tickets . . .’, 130. One should note that Mrs Clive never sang at Vauxhall. This may have been because of her enmity with Thomas Arne, who directed these musical entertainments, as well as the stigma attached to appearing in this venue, where during the 1740s and 1750s top-ranking actors usually did not perform.

82 ‘In many cases they [the statues of Cheere] follow a known and popular classical prototype’. Margaret Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain 1530 to 1830* (London and Bungay: Penguin, 1964), 123.

83 The earliest record of this designation appears in advertisements for the engraving of Canaletto’s view of the Pavilion; the print, issued by Robert Sayer, carried the same title. The precise date of the Temple’s construction is not known, and another undated engraving, also issued by Sayer, called the structure ‘The Chinese Pavilion’. The pavilion combined Gothic architecture, chinoiserie and mythological iconography: ‘The Ceilings are painted Gothic. Each Temple has a Dome, with Pediments and a beautiful Turret. The uppermost Temple is the most magnificent; it being adorned with *Sun, Stars, Pinnacles, wreathed Columns, and other . . . rich Gothic Ornaments. The Ceiling . . . has been decorated . . . the subject being Vulcan, catching Mars and Venus in his net, the whole drawn in Chinese taste*’. Lockman, *A Sketch of the Spring Gardens*, 18.

84 ‘At the end of one of the gravel walks is an elegant transparent painting, the subject of which is allegorical; the principal figure represents liberality standing at the portico of her temple, attended by a lion; she is respectfully approached by *Comus*, while mirth and her companions join in festive dance around the statue of plenty. In the sky is the inscription of the word “Gratitude” which is supported by three cherubs, and in the back ground the cathedral of St Paul is placed’. Item 126 [no date] in [anon.,] ‘Vauxhall Roy. Gardens . . .’. Transparencies, an invention of the theatre, were large scenes made from translucent paint on material such as linen; at Vauxhall they were lit from behind to surprise the visitor at night. The installation of transparencies dates from the end of the eighteenth century. Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 95.



Figure 4 A lead figure of John Milton after a plaster statue by John Cheere, c1749. Reproduced by permission of the York Museums Trust



Figure 5 A Derby porcelain figure of John Milton, c1770. Reproduced by permission of the owners



Figure 6 An engraving by Johann Sebastian Muller after Antonio Canaletto, *A View of the Temple of Comus &c in Vauxhall Gardens* (London: Robert Sayer, 1751). GB Lbl Maps K.Top.4127.F. Reproduced by permission of the British Library



Figure 7 An engraving by Robert Parr after an oil painting by Francis Hayman, *Jobson, Nell and the Doctor . . . from the Original Painting in Vauxhall Garden* [1743]. Reproduced by permission of the British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings

began installing a series of large oils (fifty-five inches by ninety inches) by the theatrical scene painter Francis Hayman; by 1762 there were forty-eight of these. The pictures depicted familiar games, sports and scenes from popular fiction and plays. Solkin’s claim that Hayman, by submitting low pastimes to high-style academy techniques, helped to ‘define a refined public sphere against the vulgar’ would seem to overemphasize the symbolic value of these paintings.⁸⁵ At least three of the early pictures that Tyers installed recalled not symbols, but real-life actors, whom Hayman doubtless observed while painting sets at Drury Lane.⁸⁶ Two of the three Drury Lane productions Hayman painted – *The Devil to Pay* and the *Mock Doctor* – depicted Mrs Clive’s most famous vehicles, and the first depicted her performing. That Hayman sought to recall Drury Lane’s *Devil to Pay* production in his oil is evidenced by his composition, which he based on the frontispiece he had designed for the playbook advertising the original cast; the Vauxhall version of this image

85 The theories espoused by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986) form the basis for Solkin’s interpretation of the supperbox oil paintings: ‘A recurrent pattern emerges: the “top” attempts to reject and eliminate the “bottom” for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover . . . that the “top” includes the low symbolically as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life’. Solkin, ‘Vauxhall Gardens; or The Politics of Pleasure’, 139.

86 The three stage works depicted were *The Devil to Pay* (1731), *The Mock Doctor* (1732) and *The King and the Miller of Mansfield* (1737). The first two hung in supperboxes on the north side of the Grove, but the placement of the last is unknown because it was removed at an early stage, probably by Tyers, for his private collection. *The King and the Miller of Mansfield* was an overtly Patriot play; by commissioning this oil, Tyers may have signalled his support for the politics of his patron, Frederick Prince of Wales. The political implications of this and other Vauxhall installations, most notably of the Prince’s ‘Patriot’ Pavilion, are described in Teri J. Edelstein, ‘The Paintings’, in *Vauxhall Gardens*, 31–32.



Figure 8 Act 1 Scene 3. From left to right: Nell (Mrs Clive), Jobson (Mr Harper), the Doctor (Mr Oates). The engraved frontispiece by Michael van der Gucht after an oil painting by Francis Hayman in Charles Coffey, *The Devil to Pay . . . the sixth edition* (London: John Watts, 1738). GB Lbl 11775.c.25 in 8°. Reproduced by permission of the British Library



circulated in prints from 1743 (see Figures 7 and 8). Hayman's supperbox paintings seemingly provoked the same reaction as Roubiliac's Handel statue, touted as a breathing facsimile of the composer.⁸⁷ In 1755 the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported that 'At Vauxhall . . . they have touched up all the pictures, which were damaged last season by the fingering of those curious *Connoisseurs*, who would not be satisfied without feeling whether the figures were *alive*'.⁸⁸

Although Tyers based his designs on the English country estate, the phantasmagoric quality of his installations reminded guests that they moved within a projection. Visitors interacted differently with Vauxhall structures than they did with the solid edifices at Stowe, where the Patriot platform had to be processed through a cerebral decoding of allegorical references. Brian Allan has labelled the Gardens 'powerfully theatrical': their architecture and vistas were often literally stage sets.⁸⁹ To cite a few examples: the Gothic Obelisk at the end of the Dark Walk consisted of 'boards fastened together . . . covered in canvas' and painted to 'deceive the eye'; and the Triumphal Arches spanning a perpendicular walk were another wood-and-canvas construction by an 'ingenious Italian' who was probably a visiting theatrical scene painter. After 1751 Tyers gave full rein to his passion for creating *trompe-l'oeil* environments, adding gimmicks such as the 'Tin Cascade' and illuminated transparencies, as well as more fake vistas at the termini of the walks. The 'Cascade' in particular provoked commentary: a mechanical landscape, it utilized hydraulics, clockwork figures and strips of tin to fabricate the impression of viewing a cascade flowing by a miller's house.⁹⁰ The supperbox oils, the Roubiliac statues, the wall-sized oils terminating vistas, the fake ruins and the Fairy Music, all openly fabricated experiences (encompassing pastoral escape, aristocratic ease and contact with celebrities) that were otherwise unavailable to most London consumers. A chief attraction of Vauxhall was its compendium of technical ingenuities which – like other automata in London shows such as wax works, peepshows and marionettes – enthralled spectators by reproducing natural phenomena by hidden mechanical means.⁹¹

Tyers used such trickery to move his pastoral fantasy beyond the confines of society: his gardens mythologized Arcadia not only by peddling popular pastoral illusions but also by recreating a patently unreal environment. Drury Lane's *Comus*, with its beefed-up naughtiness and necromancy, resonated with this dual strategy, and in a feedback cycle Tyers reworked features of this production – the illustrious Poet, the illusion of *Comus*'s court, the potential for erotic encounter – into his Arcadian theme park. In Lockman's 1750 puff, Drury Lane's *Comus* became a touchstone for interpreting the meaning of the visitor's experience to Vauxhall.

87 'Fam'd Handel breathing, tho' transform'd to Stone', in John Lockman's 'Seeing the Marble Statue (carv'd by Mr Roubiliac) representing Mr Handel' (1738), reprinted in Otto E. Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London: A & C Black, 1955), 462.

88 Item 130 in [anon.] 'Vauxhall Roy. Gardens . . .'. This passage is also reprinted in Solkin, 'Vauxhall Gardens; or The Politics of Pleasure', 148.

89 Brian Allan, 'The Landscape', in *Vauxhall Gardens*, 17.

90 On the Obelisk see *A Description of Vauxhall Gardens* (1762), 7; cited in Allan, 'The Landscape', 20. In 1762 Tyers transferred the Obelisk to the top of the Grand Walk. Allan believes that the 'ingenious Italian' was one of the itinerant scene painters in London during the 1740s. He describes Tyers's post-1751 painted vistas (*The Temple of Neptune*, *The Ruins of Palyrma* and the *Alcove of Flora and Genii*). Allan, 'The Landscape', 20. Coke describes the genesis of the Gardens' design as follows: until the mid-1740s the classical English gentleman's garden according to William Kent; the introduction of rococo design (launched with the Rotunda of 1743) and its obsession with chinoiserie and Gothic Revival; and after 1750 the 'superficial tableaux' designed to 'thrill' the public. 'Architecture and Design', in Coke, *The Muse's Bower*], 3–4]. Edelstein lists commentaries on the cascade in contemporary literature in Edelstein, 'The Gardens'. Details on the mechanics and history of the Cascade are traced in Altick, *The Shows of London*, 95.

91 A fascinating account of these 'shows', which, like Vauxhall, attracted visitors from all social stations, is found in Altick, *The Shows of London*. My personal favourite is the life-size anatomically correct model of a woman eight months pregnant: 'The Circulation of the Blood is imitated (by Liquors resembling the Arterial and Venous Blood, flowing through Glass Vessels whose Figure and Situation exactly correspond with the natural Blood Vessels) also the action of the Heart and Motion of the Lungs in Breathing. The whole making a most wonderful and beautiful Appearance'. Cited in Altick, *The Shows of London*, 55.



With *Euphrosyne*, Drury Lane inserted the independent story of Mrs Clive into Milton's pastoral masque; she constituted an added feature, 'the Comic Muse', whose recognition might attract bigger audiences. At Vauxhall, Tyers divorced the myth of Milton from that of Mrs Clive, transforming the poet into a high priest of pastoral experience and the soprano into an intimate friend, accessible to supperbox visitors. In both cases Tyers refashioned personae which the London entertainment industry had popularized. The *Comus*-world at Vauxhall allowed the most alluring aspects of the 1738 masque to burst the confines of the stage and become a lived experience, the reality of which might, when convenient, be obscured.