John Donne Journal,
Vol. 5 (1986)

The *Kōmos* in Milton

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A primary purpose of this essay is to try to define the power of Comus, the adversary in Milton's masque, in such a way as to see tradition recreated in occasion and to sense in Milton's invention certain urgent and continuing preoccupations in his thought. There is no fundamental mystery about the character of Milton's enchanter, for his significance is conveyed in his name, the usual Latin transliteration of *kōmos*, revelry. Yet it may be that the full challenge of that name for its occasion needs to be properly realized.[1]

A second purpose concerns iconography and in particular the difficulty of accounting for Milton's figure out of the familiar iconographical sourcebooks alone. Comus is a presiding spirit. As has been long known, he can be related to a figure in a late Greek text, the elder Philostratus' *Eikones* I.2 (third centuryA.D.),[2] hence in Renaissance handbooks like Cartari's;[3] in that sense he becomes a candidate for iconographical studies. For all that, the idea of Comus as presiding spirit of false festivity, in this masque of aristocratic youth, comes out of a Christian humanism so broadly based and a kind of poetic composition so freely inventive as to enfold iconography, if not to the point of invisibility, then to the point of being indivisible from literary and biblical tradition at large.

Milton was not one to work simply from iconographical and mythographical handbooks. His literary memory, already formidably stocked by 1634, probably furnished many points of reference for his conception of *kōmos*. In the light of this one might hesitate also to assume simple "influence" from two seventeenth-century texts featuring the god Comus and frequently

adduced by modern critics. Although Jonson's *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, performed in 1618, is most interesting to compare with Milton's masque on the themes of sport and the education of princely youth, there is no compelling reason to assume that Milton had read that masque, still in manuscript until 1640.[4] Neither can one be quite sure, though one is tempted by similarities in authorial attitude and by the fact that it was reprinted in Oxford in the same year as the Ludlow masque, that he had read Puteanus' satirical and moralistic dream-vision, *Comus*, of 1608.[5] That is to say, Puteanus offered some traditional characteristics and ready associations, in rather fuller form than usual. Perhaps we should hesitate to seek for any single "source" for Milton's Comus but rather respond to a familiar idea of social behavior, of the *kōmos*, built out of a whole set of possible associations, rooted in occasion but resting on the authority of literary and historical tradition.

To study the idea of Milton's Comus is as much to apprehend the inheritance of a word—*kōmos* (revel) or *kōmazein* (to revel), with related forms *kōmazontes* and *kōmastes* (revelers) and their Latin equivalents—as it is to tell the history of a god. Not only did the more lavishly produced iconographical books carry information about *kōmos* in their scholarly apparatus about the god, but more importantly (since Milton's program of reading in poetry and history is involved), information about Comus the god was often given in annotations of the common noun *kōmos* in scholarly editions of ancient texts. Comus the spirit is defined by his activity, the *kōmos* over which he presides, and may be evoked by commentators even when he is not in the text. What is more, translators and editors of Greek texts sometimes assumed the word *kōmos* to be a personification when it probably was not. Thus, given a context which could support personification, Renaissance scholars pushed back the history of the god to coincide with occurrences of the common noun, with the result that the god was read into Greek texts regardless of date.

The case of one of the Anacreontea may serve as brief initial example, of some significance for Milton since he evidently associated the spirit of revelry with an Anacreontic style. In the ode often dedicated to the rose but also sometimes entitled *Kōmos* these are the closing lines, celebrating dance and infectious, carefree, erotic, and redeeming youth in old men:

ὁ δ' Ἔρως ὁ χρυσοχαίτας
μετὰ τοῦ καλοῦ Λυαίου
καὶ τῆς καλῆς Κυθήρης
τὸν ἐπήρατον γεραιοῖς
κῶμον μέτεισι χαίρων.[6]

I translate:

And the god of love, golden-haired,
Together with Lyaeus the beautiful
And the beautiful Cytherea
Will join in the lovely dance (revel: *kōmos*)
Close to the heart of old men.

Two well-known sixteenth-century translators into Latin verse, in editions often used, treated the word differently: Henri Estienne translated it as a dance, whilst Elie André assumed personification and the presence of the god.[7] In his sumptuous French translation of Philostratus, Blaise de Vigenère remembered the Anacreontic verses in connection with Comus and noted the different decisions of the translators.[8] The case is instructive. If André was the less correct, here we have, nevertheless, a respected scholar assuming that the legendary Anacreon would have heard of the god Comus in the sixth century B.C. We shall see some other instances, a few amongst cases probably innumerable, in the kind of editions which Milton would have used, creating a whole network of associations around *kōmos* the common noun. Still further, as we shall also see, some godly students of the gods invented a history of Comus as demon or idol, in the interests of increasing his antiquity and connecting back to the Old Testament. For these scholars, as for many others, perhaps Milton included, certain biblical contexts were of paramount importance. In this wide world of association, literary and biblical, we may perhaps begin to capture the idea of Milton's adversary, the spirit of riot and intemperance in the masque.

I

We have evidence that Milton thought broadly in terms of the word *kōmos*. In the Trinity manuscript he used it twice, in the form *kōmazontes* (revelers or rioters). At the entry of Comus and his animal-headed rout the manuscript reads:

they come on in a wild &
antick fashion
intrant *komazontes*. (113-15)[9]

Milton did not leave the Greek word in the printed text, though he gave some of the sense of it: "they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands."[10] The transformed victims enter as nocturnal Bacchic revelers, Comus at their head.

The second instance occurs (also in the Trinity MS, but from the early 1640s) in the list of subjects drawn up from Old Testament history for possible use in a tragedy:

Comazontes or the Benjaminits or the Rioters.
Jud. 19.20.&c.[11]

This refers to a vivid, chaotic piece of invective in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of the book of Judges, against the tribe of Benjamin. It is a story which puritan polemists found useful and which Milton never forgot.

It tells of a Levite who had taken a concubine out of Bethlehem-Judah. She "played the whore against him" (19:2), and went back to her father's house. The Levite went to fetch her, with a servant. Returning, he came at night into Gibeah, a Benjaminite town. An Ephraimite put them up for the night, and they were making merry in his house, when certain "sons of Belial," a band of local young men out on the streets, clamored at the door, demanding that the visiting Levite be delivered up to them, so that they could commit sodomy with him. They were fobbed off with the concubine, whom they raped until daybreak, leaving her dead on the threshold. The Levite divided her corpse into twelve pieces, sending them round the tribes of Israel as a protest against the Benjaminites, "for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel" (20:6). A war followed, in which thousands were killed. This story, like others near it in Judges, is punctuated by repeated comments of the writer: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25), and "there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing" (18:7). These are the consequences of lack of leadership and unity. In such a context the *kōmos*, the nocturnal riot of those youths, is a sign of national degeneracy and prelude to national disaster.

In the epics, when he had all history in view, Milton enshrined his memories of this story in the fallen angel Belial, fair-seeming, voluptuous, and gamesome, a presider over degenerate courts even to the present time:

> In courts and palaces he also reigns
> And in luxurious cities, where the noise
> Of riot ascends above their loftiest towers,
> And injury and outrage: and when night
> Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
> Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.
> Witness the streets of Sodom, and that night
> In Gibeah, when the hospitable door
> Exposed a matron to avoid worse rape.
>
> (*P.L.* I. 497-505)[12]

That is the updated luxury, riot, and outrage of the *kōmos*, to which rich courts and palaces are said to be prone. Then again, during the consultation of the fallen angels, Belial's arguments for ease and sloth are said to be "clothed in reason's garb" (*P.L.* II.226); Comus' arguments to the Lady she calls "pranck't in reasons garbe" (812). In *Paradise Regained* Belial argues that Christ might succumb to women, and the sons of Belial seduce or rape fair women in court and country to beget a "race" (II.181). Comus and Belial, spoilers of the slackening aristocracy, come out of the same stable.

When he thought of giving a tragedy the title "Comazontes . . . or the Rioters," Milton was associating some of the features of the Judges story with an idea of *kōmos* established in his mind. Groups of youths at night, wine and drunken insolence at or after a party, outrage in the public streets, and manifestations of licentiousness are features which appear in other accounts of *kōmoi*.

Almost from the beginning the *kōmos* was associated with night.[13] Characteristic uses of the word from the sixth and fifth centuries onwards denote processional rites associated with the Dionysia. *Kōmastes*, reveler, is one epithet for Dionysus. The *kōmos* is Bacchic and associated with unrestrained festive mirth. It was from the *kōmos* of these festivities that some authorities derived the word comedy, and of course the processional and histrionic associations made the word, for Milton, even more appropriate for the occasion of a masque. Thereafter, the word came to

stand in a general way for various festive and jocular habits, involving smaller or larger groups of people, not simply in the actual Dionysian festivals.[14] Milton could have run across dozens of examples, with different shades of meaning, in Plato, Euripides, Xenophon and others, as well as in the bible and in Renaissance editions of Greek and Latin texts.

There is the bursting of Alcibiades into Plato's *Symposium* (212C). He is a leader of a band of revelers. Late in the party he enters noisily, rather drunk, with his companions, seeking more drink, carrying a wreath for Agathon, with flute-girl, ivy, violets, ribands on his head. This is genial stuff, but here are some typical features of the social habit: the nocturnal setting, a band of drunken young men coming through the streets and breaking into a house, erotic dancing to rhythmic music, festive crowns of flowers. This incident, like others, suggests that the *kōmos* had to do with the long continuance or last stages of festivity: "the after supper meetings of riotous persons," wrote the pious Robert Gell, a fellow of Milton's own Cambridge college.[15] Masques, of course, usually took place after supper and went deep into the night.

Another occasion is suggested by Euripides' *Alcestis* (l. 918), where revelers come in the train of Admetus' wedding. Or, a *kōmos* may be a more private affair, as when a young man, possibly accompanied by friends, servants, or musicians, clamors in the street late at night for entry into a house, standing at the door of his beloved, perhaps offering a tipsy serenade. (The Judges story, also focused on a street door, may have looked to Milton and others a darker version of this.) The young man may get in, break in, or more comically, sleep on the threshold until morning. Such is the result in Theocritus' third idyll, called in some manuscripts *kōmastes* or *kōmos*, where the shepherd-singer leaves the care of his sheep in the opening line: "I'm off to serenade Amaryllis."[16] The sentence was often noted in definitions because it showed a Doric form of the verb, *kōmasdō*. Theocritus' poem is whimsical, putting a bucolic into the role of Alexandrian gallant, but it illustrates again the connections between the *kōmos* and the erotic. This kind of *kōmos*, at the door of the beloved, became a conventional subject for poems, as Milton would have known, and several variants appear in Theocritus and in the Roman elegists, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid, as well as in Horace.[17]

More seriously, as Milton would also have known, Plato records a *kōmos* of ominous scale in the *Laws* (637B): "I saw the whole city drunk at the Dionysian festival." The note of censure at the ways of a whole community is not confined to Plato among moralists. In Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (5.5.15), Cyrus takes the city of Babylon by night, with no resistance, because it has been having a *kōmos* and is boozed asleep. Such an example might be seen as a warning to peoples and nations about the consequences of effeminate ease and sloth, as under Belial. Plato in the *Republic* (573) names the *kōmos* with other festive habits of intemperate kind as part of the generation of tyrannical man. And Plutarch, writing of the education of children, puts revels in the list of iniquities to which young blood is liable: "unlimited gluttony, theft of parents' money, gambling, revels [*kōmoi*], drinking-bouts, love affairs with young girls, and corruption of married women" (*Moralia* 12B).[18] Here *kōmos* seems to have lost specific association with the Dionysia or other customs, taking on the sense of generally riotous behavior.

The word is used in similar fashion by the New Testament writers, who much influenced glosses on noun and god in Milton's time. Three texts are commonly adduced, the best known being Romans 13:12-13:

> The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness [*mē kōmois kai methais*], not in chambering and wantonness.

In the fifth chapter of Galatians (verse 21), reveling [*kōmos*] appears in a list of works of the flesh. And in the first epistle of Peter (4:3-4) there is a passage which might serve as text for the debate in Milton's masque about the use of gifts of nature:

> For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings [*kōmois, potois*], and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot.

Luxurious feasting was often associated with the degeneracy of nations. The Tremellius bible cross-referred this passage with Amos 6:1-7: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion . . . That drink wine in bowls . . . Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive. . . ." The same bible also recalled the celebrated warning of Isaiah (5:11-13): "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink . . . And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge."[19] The degenerate nation puts itself into bondage of oppressors. "[T]ake example thereby," says Diodati in paraphrase of Amos, "not to grow proud in carnall security."[20] This kind of placement of the *kōmos* in high places is inevitably behind Milton's godly masque for the children of a magistrate.

The long entry on *kōmos* in the sixteenth-century Greek lexicon of Henri Estienne provides a fair measure of the range of interpretation commonly available in Milton's time. Estienne defines the common noun as *compotatio convivialis*, but also reports other definitions—*convivium luxuriosum, convivium lascivum*—which suggest wantonness. He notes the Pauline use of the word. He notes the use of torches, crown, and flute-girls. He says the word can refer to the band of revelers themselves. He takes some broader meanings, and cites *Kōmos heortēs* from Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, translating it as *hilaritas festi*. He also gives the meaning of a kind of dance or flute leading to inebriation. Then finally, at the end of the entry, he mentions "the god presiding over revels of this kind, or over the lasciviousness and shamelessness of men on the revel, a fair description of whom you will find in Philostratus." He quotes the opening of Philostratus' description.[21]

I come to Philostratus after tracing the common noun, not because he is unimportant—he was commonly referred to—but because, as the Estienne entry shows, the better scholarship of Milton's time already knew that the daemon could not be defined without prior reference to the common noun.

Philostratus offered his audience a description of the god, then of the revels over which he presides. Comus stands at the doors of a large chamber, within which a dimly lit revel of young people takes place, so that we have in effect a picture framed within a picture, the interior framed by the doorway beside which Comus

stands. This device creates some opportunity for psychological observation: the participants in the revel are subject to the eventual joylessness of their indulgences, whereas the daemon, though sleepy, is immune to such mortal effects.

Philostratus' god is a youth, "delicate and not yet full grown."[22] He stands erect, though cross-legged, sleeping, flushed, under the influence of drink. At the same time he holds a flaming torch, which lights his body but not his face. Philostratus, a sophist writing for a youthful audience, offers an instructive comment: "The moral, I think, is that persons of his age should not go revelling, except with heads veiled."

Comus wears on his head a crown of roses. The painting of these is praised as "dewy" and even "fragrant." The delicacy of this Cartari would understand to convey *laetitia* and absence of cares;[23] the mood, to this extent, is the Anacreontic one. But the more moral Philostratus also registers a contrast between the flowers in the crown of Comus and those which have become "crushed" and withered on the heads of the revelers within. Thus, to the moral eye, the joy and beauty of youth have been dissipated in immoderate excess. As Milton would have understood, if indeed he read the passage, it is a question of what leads to what. And the social situation in Philostratus' description is not too remote from those in which masques took place. The illustration of the scene in the French edition makes the association explicit (Figure 1), while the appended moralizing verses deplore the inconstancy of dance and disguising and conclude: "Tout ainsi faict Comus à celuy là qu'il ayme; / Car il se perd en fin dedans les voluptez."[24] In Philostratus the occasion is the marriage of some wealthy couple. Comus' torch, like Hymen's, signifies festivity by night; but in the drunkenness, immodest dance, loud music, unrestrained mirth and cloaking darkness, we have common features of the Bacchic *kōmos* as a social habit indoors. Though less puritanically than Plutarch or some austere Christian writers, the sophist is reading an instructive lesson to cultivated youth.

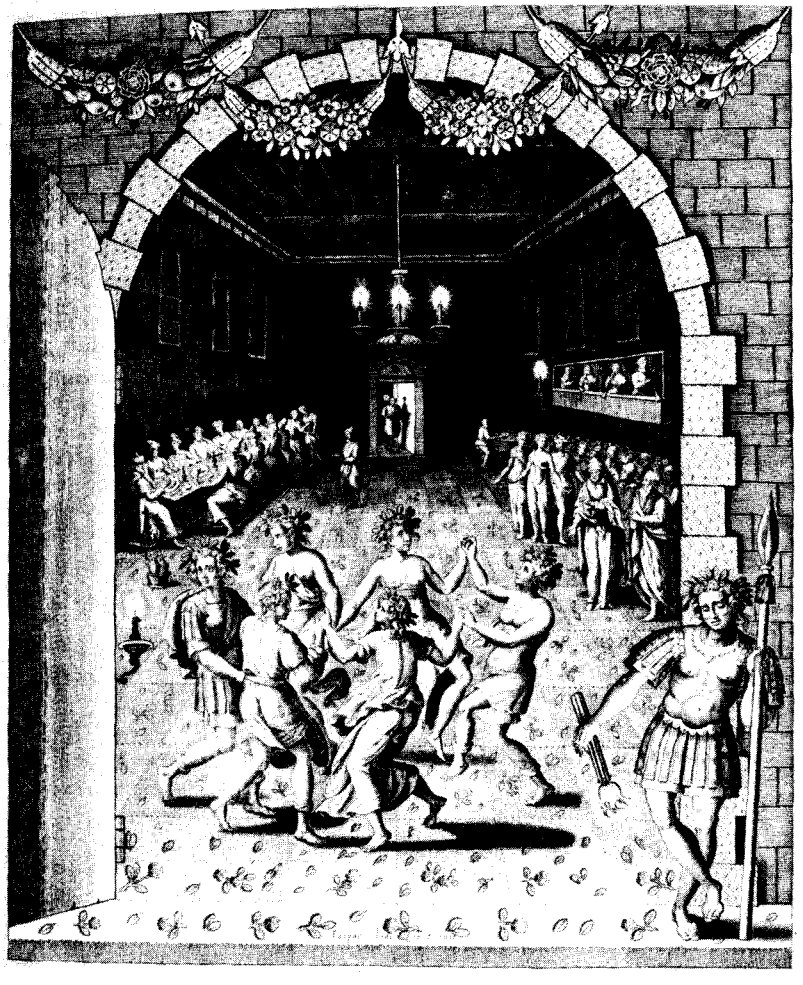
Though Cartari also associates Comus with Bacchus—the young Bacchus—and more or less copies parts of the description in the *Eikones*, he omits all mention of exactly what the reveling is like, thus avoiding the necessity of moralizing. Indeed, he seems more interested in the connection between Bacchus and the Muses, to which he soon turns.[25] Lorenzo Pignoria, however, in his revised

edition of Cartari in 1615, adds a reference to temperate and intemperate feasting, in the caption below the illustration.[26] Of greater possible interest for students of Milton, as Steadman observes, is the figure of Comus as sanguine man in Caseneuve's *Hieroglyphica* of 1626.[27] The commentary gives a full sense of the range of meanings of *kōmos* and refers to stately feast and the activities of jocular youth in his own time in mummings. However, the suitability of Comus to masque is apparent in many other ways, and Caseneuve has merely consulted obvious sources.

Much information about Comus the god was readily available outside mythographical sources, in many glosses on the common noun and in some instances when the noun was turned into god or personification in translation. The significance of such influences should not be underestimated for a poet of such wide reading as Milton. Indeed, one does not have to look too far to see the currency of scholarship of this kind, for it regularly occurs in connection with the bible itself.

The most commonly repeated case of personification of *kōmos* in a Greek text may post-date Milton's *Comus*, but it shows the great currency and persistence of the habit. In 1663 Thomas Stanley read the god Comus into Cassandra's speech about the house of the Pelopidae in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.[28] This reading persists in works of scholarship about both Aeschylus and Milton right into the twentieth century: it is in Thomas Warton's edition of Milton of 1785;[29] was elaborated by a well-known book on Greek theater, J. W. Donaldson's *The Theatre of the Greeks*, in the nineteenth century; and was embraced by one early twentieth-century translator of Aeschylus; whilst John Conington, in 1848, had actually associated Comus in Aeschylus with the sons of Belial "flown with insolence and wine" in *Paradise Lost* (I.502).[30] The reading of god Comus into the text of the Anacreontic ode, by André in 1554, also has a long subsequent history. The future Mme Dacier was happy to echo André in her version of 1681; Addison followed suit in 1735, as did Tom Moore as late as 1800.[31]

Or, to give an example of such personification outside poetry, here is the opening sentence of one of the chapters of Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus*, written for the instruction of youth: "Let the *kōmos* be absent from our rational banquet." A sixteenth-century scholar, in his Latin edition, used personification, not in



Le maſque eſt bien ſeant à l'ame deſguiſee,
Et la dance & le bal conuient à l'inconſtant,
L'vn cache ſon deſſein & voille ſa penſee,
Et l'autre nous faict voir qu'il n'eſt iamais contant.

Comme on void ce flambeau ſe cõſommer ſoy-meſme,
Et ces chappeaux de fleurs deçà delà ſeruez;
Tout ainſi COMVS à celuy là qu'il ayme,
Car il le perd enfin dedans les voluptez.

Fig. 1. *Comus*. Engraving by Jasper Isaac, from Blaise de Vigenère, *Les Images . . . des Deux Philostrates*, 1615

the text but in his commentary: "a Christiano convivio vult abesse Comum" (he wishes Comus to be absent from the Christian banquet).[32] For the readers of this edition Clement, like Milton in his Ludlow masque, would seem to be banishing Comus from the festivity.

The most strained of pious readings of *kōmos* was that which went beyond Comus the god to identify him with the Old Testament idol Chemosh, or Baal-Peor. This god was often identified with Bacchus or Priapus and associated with Saturnalia. For example, in an early seventeenth-century Latin treatise on convivia among the ancients, Johann Wilhelm Stuck has a chapter on nocturnal convivia, in which he gives much of the usual material on *kōmos*, then says:

> There are some who wish to derive the Greek *kōmos* (from which word take their meaning the god of drunkenness, the wanton convivium, the singing, and the lascivious dancing) from Chemosh, which is the name of the god or idol of the Moabites. . . . The Seventy translate *Chamas*. . . . Perhaps this god is named from CAMAS, that is, to hide or conceal, as Bacchus is *nuktelios* [nightly].[33]

The conjecture is common: it appears in Drusius' biblical commentary,[34] and in the following passage (which comments on I Peter 4:3-4), Robert Gell of Milton's own Cambridge college in effect reads Comus/Chemosh into the New Testament text:

> He [our Lord] foresaw that the worship of *Chemosh* or *Bacchus*, even by name would be more countenanced, even by professors of the Gospel, than the worship of the true God in Spirit, and Truth. That it would be more safe to worship the will of the Gentiles, walking in lasciviousnesses, lusts, excess of wine, *kōmois*, surfeitings, worshipping *Chemosh* or *Bacchus*, Revellings, Banquetings, and abominable Idolatries, than to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.[35]

We do not know whether Milton himself trusted the derivation of Comus from Chemosh, but the moral definitions afforded by

it are not dissimilar to his own: his masque does indeed instruct how to be governed by Truth and "to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." What is more, Gell's reference to "professors of the Gospel" makes it possible that he, like Milton perhaps, had the supporters of the notorious Book of Sports in mind, a work I shall return to below.

And the Chemosh conjecture was widespread in connection with the subject of heathen pastimes. This is Edward Leigh, in *Critica Sacra* (1639, 1641), elaborating the sense of *kōmos* in Romans 13 by reference to the idol:

> From hence the heathen called their god of wantonness and revelling, *Kōmos*, and hereby was signified those pastimes that they used in their festivities, as Saturnalia, in honour of the heathen gods; like which be our Whitsun ales, mummings, etc. This was likewise that abominable Idol of Moab, Chemosh, so called from some filthy behaviour used, or seen in the worship of the Idol.[36]

The conjecture, like the tradition of personifications in Greek texts, had a long history: in Francis Peck's *Memoirs* (1740) Comus in the masque is compared to Chemosh, who appears in *Paradise Lost* I.406 as "the obscene dread of Moab's sons."[37]

Whatever exactly had been in his literary memory, we can be sure that Milton worked from a Christian placement of the *kōmos*, though even here caution is necessary in assuming influence from any one source. Recently, it has been pointed out that in Erasmus' annotations to the Greek New Testament of 1516 (a text Milton seems to have used in *De Doctrina Christiana*), *kōmos* is glossed in the comment on Romans 13:

> *Kōmos* is the god of drunkenness for the Greeks and a rather shameless and lively party is described by the same name. But both lively songs and dances are called *kōmazein* by the Greeks: whence also the name *commoedia*. And they are said "to revel" who garlanded and well-drunk break into another's party, not without their own music: as in Plato, Alcibiades crashed the party of Agathon. Athenaeus states in several places that this is the custom among the Greeks.[38]

The incident from the *Symposium* is a good one to remember, and Erasmus has much of the range of the word, but in the light of the complex of references seen above there is nothing in Erasmus' gloss that could not have been gathered in many other ways by Milton's time. This is a literary and biblical commonplace.

II

The heart of the action in the Ludlow masque is the confrontation between the Lord President's children and the enchanter Comus. This is a ritualistic testing of young nobility against the evils appropriate to occasion. If we isolate the encounter between Comus and the Lady, the moral significance of the debate is not difficult to follow. It turns about the maintenance of chaste temperance in the face of devilish persuasions to luxury. In such a context, Comus himself can easily be grasped as "son" of Circe, the most common Renaissance image of seductive intemperance, and of Bacchus, god of wine and excess. That is to say, his parentage presents him as the deceptive spirit of that kind of excessive, luxurious feasting which perverts its company. The princely feast is apt to have the *kōmos* hidden within it.

Milton's art shows its vigilant protestantism in nothing so clearly as in a dynamic, detailed presentation of deceptive evil. Evil delights in perverting "God's dearest . . . benefits," he noted out of Tertullian.[39] The significance of Comus is defined against the very benefits of the occasion for which he is produced, the gratulatory festivity inaugurating the Lord President, with its masque of children, its ritualistic display of nobility, its context of government, in a region of Britain associated in myth with a heroic race.

The poet seems to invite some such approach in the opening speech of the Attendant Spirit, whose "taske" (37) is to explain the conjunction of forces gathering at Ludlow Castle. In this speech Milton gathers his presences with marked elaboration, evidently fond of playing with fictions. The authority of the Lord President is derived from the sovereignty of Neptune over seas and islands, including "this Isle / the greatest & the best of all the maine" (45). This touches familiar celebrations of the nation: "megalon nēson," the great island; "Britannia insularum optima," Britain the best of islands.[40] Then the Spirit rehearses another

encomium, of Wales as home of an ancient heroic race from Troy ("o hinc populum . . . belloque superbum," *Aen.* I.21)—"an old and haughtie nation proud in armes" (52). To a place thus invested with authority and decked with tokens of national greatness, the children are imagined to be traveling, "to attend thire fathers state / and new entrusted scepter" (54-55). But because their faith and their young virtue are to be subjected to trial in the dark wood, the Spirit has been summoned to the spot, sent from heaven itself to guard them.

When he comes to explain the nature of the evil seeking to spoil the event, the Spirit's revelation of Comus is not simply factual or even complete. Instead, Milton chooses this moment in which to make the first large, open invitation to the audience to share the pretences of symbolic drama. The Spirit seeks an appetite for new myth and romantic story: "and listen why, for I will tell you now / what never yet was heard in tale or song" (62-63).

He feigns a cumulative progress westwards from the lands of Greek myth. Combining elements of Ovidian metamorphosis, he produces a new parentage and a "roaving" towards western parts which look satanically ominous:

> Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
> crush't the sweet poyson of mis-used wine
> after the Tuscaine mariners transform'd
> Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as y^{e} winds listed
> on Circe's Island fell, (who knows not Circe
> the Daughter of y^{e} sun, whose charmed cup
> whoever tasted lost his upright shape
> & downeward fell into a groveling swine)
> this nymph that gaz'd upon his clustring locks
> wth ivie berries wreath'd, & his blith youth
> had by him ere he parted thence, a son
> much like his father, but his mother more
> w^{ch} therfore she brought up, and Comus nam'd
> who ripe and frolick of his full growne age
> roaving the Celtick, & Iberian feilds
> at last betaks him to this ominous wood
> & in thick shelter of black shade imbour'd
> excells his mother at her might[ie] art. . . . (65-82)

By mentioning the incident of Bacchus' transformation of the sailors into dolphins,[41] Milton makes his conjunction with Circe believable. It is easy to suppose that the winds drifted the ship westwards, west of Italy, in the Tyrrhenian sea, where Circe's island Aeaea is to be found. There, his powers of transformation join with those of Circe, famous for changing men into beasts. Exact weight falls on key words like "upright" and "downeward fell," terms of moral definition, and a way has been found of joining Circe's degrading magic with "blith youth": she is taken with the sight of young Bacchus, fair youth in festive jollity. The result of the union is an evil power perniciously adapted to youth in festivity by night.

The latter part of the passage, in which Comus, trained by his mother in her arts, "roav[es]" further westward over France and Spain until "at last" (80) he arrives in the region of Ludlow, looks forward to another passage about ominous westward progress, in *Paradise Lost*. There the poet is picturing the history of fallen angels as gods of the ancient world, "who with Saturn old / Fled over Adria to the Hesperian Fields, / And o'er the Celtic roamed the utmost isles" (I. 519-21). The flight of Saturn westwards to the edge of the ancient world also suggests the spread of idolatrous evil into countries such as Britain. (Protestant writers seem sometimes to have posited a westward "progress" of good and evil, shaping the history of the church and the world.)[42] In the epics Satan is said to roam or rove through the earth, seeking occasion for evil.[43] All this recalls the satanic walking about of I Peter 5:8 and the going to and fro and walking up and down in the earth of Job 1:7. But the ominous presence of a devilish agency at the Ludlow feast is conveyed with a playful casualness, as if the sequence were merely one of chance: "as y^{e} winds listed . . . roaving . . . / at last betaks him to this ominous wood." The way to definition is through the delights of fictive play.

The Spirit is informing the audience what to expect: an enchanter employing Circean arts, with cup and wand, and a palace in a wood. The audience can immediately place the animal-headed rout, which bursts in to open the action proper. They are like Circe's victims of intemperance. The journey of the children, too, is given helpful mythical placement, being somewhat like the heroic journey of Odysseus past Circean temptations to a "home" (95). But the information is provisional, or seems deliberately

fictional. It makes a strange kind of sense to have "every wearie travailer" crossing this particular wood (83) and of these to have "most" (86) fall to intemperance. The unlikelihood of it, in relation to this specific occasion, invites audience or readers to register some general symbolism superimposed over the specific ritual of the occasion. Curiosity is whetted. The precise, though generalized, nature of the dangers of the occasion, the workings of the adversary within the masque, through festivity itself, Milton will allow the action to reveal only by stages.

The audience's curiosity about Comus' powers is met quickly, for the enchanter's first speech gives a dramatized definition of his name. The speech has often been admired for its lively protean verse and its vivid self-revelation. It is indeed a *poetic* and allusive revelation. The enchanter's first words are not immediately ominous, though they welcome darkness, the time of this son of Bacchus. They have a quick relish to them:

> The starre that bids y^{e} shepheard fold
> now the top of heav'n doth hold
> and the gilded carre of day
> his glowing axle doth allay
> in the steepe Atlantick streame. . . . (116-20)

Only in the following lines does he begin to advertise the dangers which are the consequence of the mood of carefree excess. A process is being imitated. Provocation begins with "midnight shout" and "tipsie dance" (126-27). The tone becomes darker, the language wilder. In Comus' thoughts, joy and feast lead to the obscene rites of Cotytto. Revelry becomes riot. The audience is being drawn into understanding a dark design behind the light Teian strain. The Spirit will present virtuous festivity "as in the day," with an eye to the eternal; Comus presents vice in festivity on earth, "works of darkness" (Rom. 13:12-13).

Comus' mirth is not innocent, even at the beginning of his speech, for the moral signposts already given in the prologue are plain, and visual display enforces the point. Young people are visibly bestialized, their divine image of reason defaced. The audience is not deceived (to adopt an idea familiar to critics of *Paradise Lost*), but it is made to understand how men are deceived by devilish illusion.

The self-revelation of Comus' speech amounts to quite a full definition of the traditional idea of the *kōmos*. His cue is the expectation of mirth in the masque night,

> meane while welcome joy & feast
> midnight shout & revelry
> tipsie dance & jollity. . . . (125-27)

The infectious verse measure fits. It seems to be an English version of the Anacreontic line, associated with carefree mirth, wine and love.[44] The next lines suggest that, like some Cavalier poet, he is actually imitating the Anacreontea: "braid yo^{r} locks wth rosie twine / dropping odours, dropping wine" (128-29). The call is for the spirit of youth, against the restraints of sober age. Nevertheless, the President and other elders of the judicial council sit in the hall, watching and listening. This is amusement by provocation; they have not "gon to bed" (130). Apparently picking up a phrase of courtly contemporaries ("of purer fire," 134),[45] Comus celebrates dance by night, citing the motions of the heavenly bodies and moon-drawn seas, fairies and nymphs. The disparity between these delicate harmonies and the heavy-moving, grotesque and noisy rout must have made the boast all the more obvious to the audience:

> wee that are of purer fire
> imitate the starrie quire
> who in thire nightly watchfull spheares
> lead in swift round the months & yeares
> the sounds & seas wth all thire finnie drove
> now to the moone in wavering morrice move
> and on the tawnie sands & shelves
> trip the pert fayries, & the dapper elves.
> by dimpled brooke & fountayne brim
> the wood nimphs deck't wth daysies trim
> thire merrie wakes & pastimes keepe
> what hath night to doe wth sleepe. . . . (134-45)

This is a mind of literary, theatrical fancy: like Randolph's or Carew's, only better. And like Bacchus *nuktelios*, it becomes active with the dark. Comus watches for Venus, the evening star, to waken love: "night has better sweets to prove" (146). But love turns into sports of obscenity, the shamelessness of *dea*

impudentiae. When Cotytto is named, the unstable verse becomes for four lines theatrical decasyllabics (to which it returns in two more single lines):

> Come let us our rights begin
> tis only daylight that makes sin
> w^{ch} these dun shades will ne're report
> Haile goddesse of nocturnall sport
> Dark-vaild Cotytto, to whome the secret flame
> of midnight torches burnes, mysterious Dame
> that neere art call'd but when the dragon womb
> of Stygian darknesse spitts her thickest gloome
> and makes one blot of all y^{e} aire
> stay thy clowdie ebon chaire
> wherein thou ridst wth Hecat & befriend
> us thy vow'd preists till utmost end
> of all thy dues bee don & none left out. . . . (148-59)

"Rights," "dues," "preists" and "sin" and the association with Hecate, witch-goddess, ensure the galling of pious sensibilities. The speech ends in the full display of perversion in "conceal'd sollemnity" exposed to the audience, for Comus' sense of privacy, like Satan's, is a delusion:

> ere the blabbing eastreane scout
> the nice morne on th'Indian steepe
> from her cabin'd loopehole peepe
> and to y^{e} telltale sun discry
> our conceal'd sollemnity. . . . (159-63)

The appeal is of boyish excitement, pitched against the telltale blab; but workers of darkness fear the day. The final opposition of day and darkness and the sense of shame confirm the underlying religious judgment. This is the mind of a refined dissolute, an image of effeminate aristocracy seen through the glass of a precise Protestant conscious of Romans 13. Comus' reversion to more innocent invitation now sounds more hollow than ever: the next two lines are not in the mood of the "light fantastic toe" of *L'Allegro* (34), despite a final recovery of the Anacreontic seven-syllable line: "Come knit hands, & beate y^{e} ground / In a light fantastick round" (164-65).

The originality of Milton's dynamic, poetic conception is evident in his working of the Circean element into the pastoral, romantic fiction. Some of the characteristics of Comus and his rout are Bacchic, others both Bacchic and Circean, while others relate to the literary tradition of the *kōmos*. Conscious of the mixture, and sensing that critics heretofore had underplayed the Bacchic elements, John Steadman sought to redress the balance: "They are characteristics not only of the god of wine, but also of his *son*, the Bacchic revel."[46] Still, the words are "much like his father, but his mother more" (76).

Facing the Lady, Comus first conceals his identity within that of a rustic. In this typically protestant way the action resembles that of *Paradise Regained*, where the adversary also tries first a pastoral disguise. In the masque the second "scene" (699) reveals to all that Comus' true home is not the country but the luxurious palatial hall. Attention is repeatedly directed to the behavior of the privileged class. Comus' offering "to every wearie travailer / his orient liquor in a crystall glasse" (83-84) is an invitation to think of the way easy-hearted men take to rich refreshment: "most doe tast" (86). And the full delicacy of fine living has been suggested, the drink sparkling like a precious eastern pearl, the glass expensive ware from Venice. Such moral challenges are everywhere in Milton's text: spirituality is rare in this "sin-worne mould" (36); Comus gloats over the growing size of his herd; the world will not "in a pet of temperance feed on pulse" (754). The myth of Circe offered special possibilities for the provincial Ludlow occasion: a palace within a wood, a court in pastoral wilds, the significance of which travelers may discover. The discoveries which the children enact are therefore both of what is true and false in the princely and of what is true and false in the pastoral.

There is a challenge to see something pervasive: "who knows not Circe" (69). The recognition has much to do with intemperate habit, but it is also of the prevalent powers of the influence of falsehood. Comus is referred to as sorcerer, necromancer, enchanter, and damned magician. The dwelling on enchantment has a religious force. At the same time, it means that the fiction can freely exploit myth and especially romance, with its motifs of magic. The poet offers symbols of satanic deception, whilst allowing his young masquers to insist in knowing innocence that they are caught up in something merely fabulous.

In this, Comus emerges as lively inheritor of Archimagan guile. The general influence of Spenser is felt, too, in the showing of delight in poetic fiction whilst pointing to religious truth. Thus the inviting assertion of the Spirit:

> Ile tell you. Tis not vaine or fabulous
> (though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)
> what the sage poets, taught by th'heav'nly Muse
> storied of old in high immortall verse
> of dire chimaera's and inchaunted Isles
> & rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell.
> for such there be, but unbeliefe is blind[.] (556-62)

Blind unbelief is a Pauline formulation (2 Cor. 4:3-4). And various details of the Circe story maintain pretence and make religious points at the same time, as when Comus' victims "thire freinds & native home forget" (95). This does not sort with specific occasion: the children have not come from a mundane Ithaca to which they are trying to return. "[N]ative home" recalls the biblical distinction between earthly and heavenly "house" or "country" (2 Cor. 5:1; Heb. 11:16). In this idiom, to forget one's native home is to live according to the flesh, choosing not to keep in mind the home from which the Spirit descends.

Comus' likeness to Circe points, then, beyond intemperance to the diabolical magic powers of perverting the truth by illusion and false argument, the hugging into snares. That is the fatal enchantment, and it is a matter of right education to learn to resist it. That is why, having heard the Lady's steps, Comus begins his campaign by hurling spells into the air "of power to cheate the eye wth bleare illusion / and give it false praesentments" (178-80). The Lady's first test with Comus, which she must partly fail, as all men do before such falsehood, is to detect the truth beneath the false image of pastoral humility. Romance magic is the intensifying vehicle, whilst the gesture of sheer familiarity—who knows not Circe?—conveys the protestant assumption that Duessa follows Una, from east to west, until the end of time.

Masques commonly enacted virtues appropriate to their occasions. Comus was a richly appropriate choice for adversary: he engaged the chief delights of masque festivity with his infectious evil. As the most lavish of nocturnal festivities of the contemporary court, masques concerned wealth and influence of "some few,"

those castigated by the Lady (824), and their splendors accompanied a banquet. Never had masques been more conspicuously lavish than in the 1630s. Writing in 1634, Milton cannot have been unaware of Prynne's notorious *Histriomastix* (written against the stage in general but construed to be against the court), published and prosecuted the year before. Calling upon the figure of Comus enabled Milton to frame an action for distant Ludlow which debated the nature of princely festivity itself, though with finer discrimination than Prynne had used against the stage. No masque ever examined the moral bases of its own rituals more directly than this.

The moral realism of the writing in this celebratory text makes one wonder how much the political implications of the *kōmos* may have been in Milton's mind. In Gibeah, in the infected Israel of the prophets, or in Babylon falling to Cyrus—and doubtless in other historical examples—the luxurious *kōmos* had been a sign of degeneracy and a prelude to national disaster for city or people. By the time he thought of a tragedy called "Comazontes" in the 1640s, Milton was clearly drawing on the full political significance of the *kōmos*. The dire admonitions of the Judges story might fit the Ludlow context of the Presidency, as well as the England Milton would have alluded to by type in that projected work: "there was no magistrate in the land."

The idea of the failure of civil and spiritual leadership through moral degeneration was to become a fixed part of Milton's thought. In the poetry it is seen in the reign of Belial in courts and palaces (*P.L.* I.497ff.), in the "court amours / Mixed dance, or wanton mask, or midnight ball, / Or serenade" of "starved lover" (IV.767-69), and in the special relish of the catastrophe in *Samson Agonistes*, where providence orders that the flower of Philistia, nobility and youth, be cut down in the moment of drunken idolatrous festivity. Just such a phase of history, too, is that which ends with Noah, who preaches to the people at "assemblies," "Triumphs or festivals":

> All now was turned to jollity and game,
> To luxury and riot, feast and dance,
> Marrying or prostituting, as befell,
> Rape or adultery, where passing fair
> Allured them; thence from cups to civil broils.
> (*P.L.* XI.714-18)

When he wrote that, Milton was sure that he had also lived through such a phase of history at home.

In the second book *Of Reformation* (1641), after rehearsing the view that national leadership depends upon godliness—"this is the true florishing of a Land, other things follow as the shadow does the substance"—Milton lamented that modern leaders enslave the people "by count'nancing upon riot, luxury, and ignorance . . . having thus disfigur'd and made men beneath men."[47] His mind, like those of many more radical Protestants, was on King James's infamous Book of Sports (1618), reissued the year before the Ludlow masque. In an uncompromising mood of national remembrancer he wrote of the authorities who gave license for Sunday pastimes in 1633:

> so have they hamstrung the valour of the Subject by seeking to effeminate us all at home. Well knows every wise Nation that their Liberty consists in manly and honest labours, in sobriety and rigorous honour to the Marriage Bed . . . and when the people slacken, and fall to loosenes, and riot, then doe they as much as if they laid downe their necks for some wily Tyrant to get up and ride. Thus learnt *Cyrus* to tame the *Lydians*, whom by Armes he could not, whilst they kept themselves from Luxury; with one easy Proclamation to set up *Stews*, dancing, feasting, & dicing he made them soone his slaves. . . . Thus did the Reprobate hireling Preist *Balaam* seeke to subdue the Israelites to *Moab*, if not by force, then by this divellish *Pollicy*, to draw them from the Sanctuary of God to the luxurious, and ribald feasts of *Baal-peor*.[48]

Context and function have changed, but this is *kōmos* on a Sunday, looseness and riot in the image of Chemosh/Baal-Peor at work by devilish policy in the degeneration of a people. If one should wish to seek for topicality in the design of *Comus*, remembering the "loose unletter'd hinds . . . thank[ing] the gods amisse" (199-201), the Book of Sports is probably of more relevance than the book of Prynne, and probably than the Castlehaven trial as well.[49]

The choice of Comus for adversary carried with it the possibility of such analysis. Centering on the children of a

magistrate, it engaged the education of those who lead and suggested a pattern whereby princely masquing could be made godly and an example to the people. Without such leadership, men fall to cups, and thence to civil broils, or at least to bondage, a paralysis in the chair.

III

By way of a coda, and with an eye more to the riotous comasts of Gibeah in *Paradise Lost*, I would like to speculate about some possible connections in literary and iconographic tradition. I wonder how far the scene of a door might have acted as a trigger to memory.

Following the description of Comus in Philostratus, iconographers were concerned with, amongst other things, the door of the chamber in which the reveling takes place. In this tradition the figure standing by the door indicates the activity within. The point is made in the illustration to the French Philostratus of 1615 noted above (Figure 1), and in the various editions of Cartari, as for example the Latin translation of 1581 (Figure 2).[50] It is reinforced in the influential 1615 Cartari published at Padua, also referred to above, the new edition of Lorenzo Pignoria with new illustrations in the form of woodcuts by Filippo Ferroverde.[51] In the new illustration of Comus (Figure 3) a second image of the figure was added, in the form of an oval picture hanging on the wall, replacing the window of earlier designs. In this inset picture, Comus stands by a door, with drooping torch, beside a wine-vessel on a pedestal.[52]

This new inset image of Comus, deriving (I would suggest), from a mid-sixteenth-century engraving by Enea Vico (Figure 5), itself probably a copy in reverse of one of the same period by G. B. Franco (Figure 4),[53] was evidently based on an ancient artifact and so thought to be a "true" picture of the god, a confirming authority perhaps not directly indebted to Philostratus. (The notes in the Pignoria edition [1615, p. 559; 1626, p. 513] indicate in fact that the cameo copied in these engravings was in the possession of Monsignor Patriarca Grimani.) The Vico plate had apparently survived in Rome, and was altered and reissued there by Philippe Thomassin about 1610.[54] Perhaps this new publication of the print helped to draw attention to the image for the researchers on the 1615 Padua edition of Cartari. At any rate,

Fig. 2. *Comus*. From Vincenzo Cartari, *Imagines Deorum*, 1581

Fig. 3. *Comus*. Woodcut by Filippo Ferroverde, from Cartari, *Le Vere e nove Imagini*, 1626

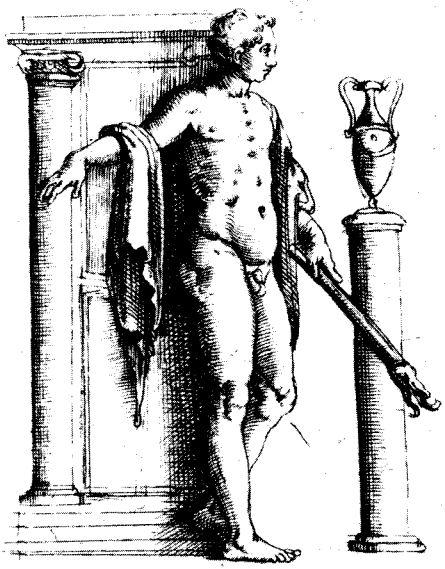


Fig. 4. *Comus*. Engraving by G. B. Franco

Fig. 5. *Comus*. Engraving by Enea Vico

Fig. 6. *Comus*. Engraving from D. Panaroli, *Ex Gemmis et cameis antiquorum aliquot monumenta . . .* , c. 1650

the image had further currency through the seventeenth century, since the "new" Cartari illustration was repeated in subsequent Padua editions in 1626 and 1674, whilst the Vico plate was reissued at least once more, in a volume edited by Domenico Panaroli in about 1650 (Figure 6), where inscriptions were also added.[55] The title reads *Comes Conviviorum Deus* (the god of drinking companions), and the words below draw attention to the chief attributes: the doorway (*janua*), the torch, and the wine-vessel.

In the descriptions of *kōmoi* as social habits in literary tradition, the focus was sometimes also on a door, usually in this case a house door. Coming through the streets, the band of revelers break into a house through the door or clamor for entry like Alcibiades in the *Symposium*; or, in the case of the *paraklausitheron* (serenade), the house door is the place at which the serenade is performed, and on it the comast may hang a garland, or he may sleep there until morning. In these situations, unlike that in Cartari, the door is the barrier between comasts and households.

When Milton chose to interpret the story of the Sons of Belial from Judges in the light of the *kōmos*, in *Paradise Lost*, he fixed attention on the door at which the revelers clamored and where the sexual depravities took place. And the phrase "hospitable door" wonderfully caught the stark contrast between civilized and barbarous behavior: "that night / In Gibeah, when the hospitable door / Exposed a matron." The Ephraimite's house had indeed been hospitable and then took desperate care "to avoid worse rape." The door, representing the house, is the symbol therefore both of open welcome, gracious conviviality, and also of separation from riot.

One cannot claim "the hospitable door" as a specifically iconographic memory in connection with *kōmos*, and this figurative use of the door bears little in the way of direct relationship to the scenario of the *kōmos*. Yet the door is a common feature and, moreover, is the particular focus of attention in a story which elsewhere, in his plan for a tragedy, he would entitle "Comazontes." Perhaps this attribute, and the figurative device, can serve as symptoms of the kinds of association at work in Milton's poetry. Expressive details are matters of broad syncretism from Christian humanist reading, and if the *kōmos* known from iconographical

sources is somewhere present, it has been wholly assimilated to contexts of great urgency and given a new poetic symbolism more searching.

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Notes

1 Amongst those who have made special studies of Milton's figure of Comus are John Arthos, *On "A Mask Presented at Ludlow-Castle"* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1954) and John M. Steadman, "Iconography and Renaissance Drama: Ethical and Mythological Themes," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 13-14 (1970-71), 84-120. The present essay borrows material from the third chapter of my book, *John Milton's Aristocratic Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), but adds new details and emphases. Use of i and j, u and v has been normalized throughout. Biblical citations are from the King James version.

2 Because of confused manuscript transmission Philostratus' description gained further currency by being appended verbatim to Renaissance editions of the *Speculatio de Deorum Natura* of Phornutus (L. Annaeus Cornutus), who wrote in the first century A.D. Phornutus was usually printed with other mythographical material: with Hyginus from 1549 (Basle) and with Aesop and Palaephatus from 1505 (Venice). See e.g. *Speculatio, s.v.* Comus in the collection beginning with Hyginus, *Fabularum . . . liber* (Leyden, 1608).

3 Vincenzo Cartari, *Le Imagini de i Dei de gli Antichi* (Venice, 1571), pp. 414-16; *Imagines Deorum*, tr. A. du Verdier (Lyons, 1581), pp. 277-78. For Cartari's debt to Philostratus, see below.

4 On attitudes to sport, see Leah S. Marcus, "The Occasion of Ben Jonson's *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*," *SEL* 19 (1979), 271-93, and her forthcoming book, *The Politics of Mirth*. Also Mary Anne McGuire, *Milton's Puritan Masque* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1984). For Comus in Jonson, Dekker, and others, see *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton*, 6 vols. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1970-), II (*The Minor English Poems*, ed. A. S. P. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush), pt. iii, 768-73. Also Richard S. Peterson, "The Iconography of Jonson's *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*," *JMRS* 5.1 (Spring 1975), 123-51.

5 Erycius Puteanus (Hendrik van der Putten), *Comus, sive Phagesiposia Cimmeria. Somnium* (Louvain, 1608; Oxford, 1634). Possible influence is discussed by R. H. Singleton, "Milton's *Comus* and the *Comus* of Erycius Puteanus," *PMLA* 58 (1943), 949-57, and Steadman, "Iconography," p. 99. However, it may simply be that those responsible for the new edition were responding to the present historical context.

6 Numbered 41 amongst the Anacreontea in Theodore Bergk, ed., *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, 4th ed. (Leipzig, 1882), III, 321-22.

7 First editions of the Anacreon translations: *Anacreontis Teii odae . . . Ab Henrico Stephano* [Estienne] . . . *Latinate nunc primum donatae* (Paris, 1554); *Anacreontis et aliquorum lyricorum odae . . . ab Helia Andrea factae* (Paris, 1556). On the subsequent history of André's reading, see below.

8 Blaise de Vigenère, tr., *Les Images ou Tableaux de Platte Peinture des deux Philostrates* (Paris, 1615), I.2, "Comus," p. 13; also in 1614 and 1629 eds.

9 Quotations from the Trinity manuscript from the facsimile with transcript issued by the Scolar Press (Menston, 1972). The state of the text quoted represents a stage of development probably soon before performance; for further detail, see *Aristocratic Entertainments*, xiii. A convenient transcript of the masque text in manuscript can be found in *John Milton: A Maske: The Earlier Versions*, ed. S. E. Sprott (Toronto: Univ.

of Toronto Press, 1973), which contains an analysis of stages of development. The line numbers provided below for quotations from the masque are from Sprott's left-hand pages (TMS) on their right-hand margins.

10 Quotations of Milton's printed poetry from *The Poems of John Milton*, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London: Longmans, 1968).

11 Trinity Manuscript f. 34, the page beginning "The Deluge, Sodom" (not in Sprott; see *The Works of John Milton*, ed. F. Patterson et al., 18 vols. [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931-40], XVIII, 236).

12 This adopts the reading of the second edition (1674). The first reads ". . . Dores / Yielded thir Matrons to prevent worse rape."

13 But, in the earliest ancient use of the word *kōmos* cited by dictionaries, that in the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* (l. 481), the joy of festivity is said to belong to both day and night, and there is no note of disapproval.

14 For example, Plato (in addition to those places noted below), *Theat.* 173D; Xenophon (in addition to the Babylonian victory noted below), *Symp.* 2.1, *Cyr.* 7.5.25; Heliodorus, *Rape of Chariclea*, IV.12(17); and many references in Euripides, such as *Alc.* 343, 804, 918; *Bacc.* 836, 1167; *Cyc.* 451, 492, 508; *Hipp.* 55; *Ion* 1197; *Phoen.* 791; *Supp.* 390; *Helen* 1469.

15 Robert Gell, *Remaines: Or, Several Select Scriptures of the New Testament Opened and Explained*, 2 vols. (London, 1676), II, 515. Many dictionaries pointed to *symposia* and after-dinner parties.

16 *Theocritus*, ed. and tr. A. S. F. Gow, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1952), I, 30-31 (tr. adjusted); on the MSS see p. 30 n. and Gow's commentary, II, 64-75.

17 The subject is treated at length by Francis Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh: Univ. of Edinburgh Press, 1972).

18 *Plutarch's Moralia*, tr. F. C. Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library, 14 vols. (London and New York, 1927-), I, 57.

19 *Testamenti Veteris Biblia sacra . . . ex Hebraeo facti . . . brevibusque illustrata ab Immanuelle Tremellio et Francisco Junio . . . novi Testamenti libros . . . a Teodoro Bezo . . . conversi* (London, 1580), under Rom. 13:12.

20 John (Giovanni) Diodati, *Pious and Learned Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, 2nd ed. (London, 1648), p. 650, under Amos 6:2. With regard to *kōmos*, some seventeenth-century scholars also noted two passages in the Apocrypha: 2 Maccabees 6:4 and Wisdom 4:23. See for example Hugo Grotius, *Annotata* (Paris, 1644) on Rom. 13:13, where he refers to Theocritus, Idyll 3 and these two passages. 2 Macc. has a feast and procession of Bacchus.

21 H. Estienne (Stephanus), *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, 4 vols. (Geneva, 1572), II, 531-32 (my translation). A similar set of references can be found in the entry on *kōmos* in Guillaume Budé (Buddaeus) et al., *Lexicon . . . Dictionarium: graeco-latinum* (Basle, 1584), p. 812.

22 The translation here and below is that of Arthur Fairbanks, *Philostratus: Imagines*, Loeb Classical Library (London and New York, 1931), pp. 9-13.

23 Cartari, *Imagines* (1581), p. 277.

24 *Les Images* (1615), p. 9; engraving by Jasper Isaac, signed and dated 1613, reproduced by permission of the British Library. This illustration of Comus has been a favorite with modern scholars, though we have no clear evidence that Milton consulted Philostratus in the French edition.

25 Cartari, *Imagines* (1581), p. 278.

26 "Imagini di Como Dio de Convivii, secondo Filostrato, significante, che li Conviti modesti allegrano li huomini & svegliando li spiriti li fanno divenir arditi, & che all'incontro l'immoderato cibo fà l'huomo sonnolento, inetto, ottuso d'ingegno, & debole di corpo." Lorenzo Pignoria, ed., [Cartari,] *Le Vere e nove Imagini . . .* (Padua, 1615), p.

369; cf. *Seconda Novissima Editione delle Imagini* . . . (Padua, 1626), p. 341. See Steadman, "Iconography," p. 102 and n. For the illustration see below.

27 Ludovicus Casanova, *Hieroglyphicorum et medicorum Emblematum* . . . (Lyons, 1626), pp. 31-39; Steadman, "Iconography," pp. 103-07, fig. 15. There are of course some other references to Comus in iconographical works: L. G. Gyraldi, for example, in *De Deis Gentium* (Lyons, 1565), p. 46, mentions him briefly, whilst Cesare Ripa borrows from Philostratus' account of Comus in his figure of Convito (Banquet): see *Iconologia* (Padua, 1630), p. 14.

28 Thomas Stanley, tr., *Aeschyli tragoediae septem* (London, 1663), p. 377 (l. 1198).

29 Thomas Warton, ed., John Milton, *Poems Upon Several Occasions*, 2nd ed., rev. (London, 1791), p. 146, correcting Thomas Newton's opinion (1761) that "Comus is a deity of Milton's own making": "But if not a natural and easy personification, by our author . . . it should be remembered, that COMUS is distinctly and most sublimely personified in the AGAMEMNON of AEschylus."

30 J. W. Donaldson, *The Theatre of the Greeks*, 6th ed. (London, 1849), p. 58; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, tr. Walter Headlam (Cambridge, 1910), p. 137; *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus*, ed. and tr. John Conington (London, 1848), pp. 129-30.

31 Ann Lefèvre, *Les Poésies d'Anacréon et de Sapho* (1681, 1698, 1699, 1716); *Works of Anacreon*, tr. Joseph Addison (London, 1735), pp. 7-8; *Odes of Anacreon*, tr. Thomas Moore (London, 1800), p. 160.

32 Clement Alexandrinus, *Opera*, ed. Gentien Hervet (Paris, 1590), p. 201.

33 Johann Wilhelm Stuck, *Antiquitatem Convivialem* (Frankfurt, 1613), I.x (my translation). A connection between CAMAS, "to hide or conceal," and Milton's "conceal'd sollemnity" (163) is of course tempting.

34 Joannes Drusius the elder, *Annotationes in Pentateuchum*, on Numbers 21:29, in J. Pearson, ed., *Critici Sacri* (London, 1660), I, 1047. Cf. the classic account of Comus as god and concept in Gerard Vossius' well-known work on comparative religion, *De Origine et Progressu Idolatriae* (Amsterdam, 1641), p. 345.

35 Gell, *Remaines*, I, 585. In a Christmas sermon, Gell also implies the Comus/Chemosh connection: "Men receive and believe in their Mammon, trust in their Riches, receive and believe in *Chemosh*, the God of riot and drunkenness" (I, 622). Gell had been a fellow of Christ's College in the 1630s and some of these addresses were given in college.

36 Edward Leigh, *Critica Sacra*, 2nd ed. (1650), Part II, p. 154. When Leigh glosses the idol, he goes straight from Chemosh to comedy: "Camos, nomen idol, quod Moabitae colebant . . . Hinc *kōmos* et *kōmazein*, & comoedia. Rom. 13.13" (Part I, p. 112).

37 Francis Peck, *New Memoirs of the Life and Poetical Works of John Milton* (London, 1740), p. 12. Cited by Warton (p. 147), who disagrees with the identification.

38 Desiderius Erasmus, *Novum Testamentum*, in *Opera Omnia* (1705; rpt. London, 1921), V, 637. Cited by Georgia B. Christopher, *Milton and the Science of the Saints* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), p. 34n.

39 Translated from the *De Spectaculis* in Milton's Common-Place Book; *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe *et al.*, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953-82), I, 362.

40 William Camden, *Britaine*, tr. Philemon Holland (London, 1610), p. 2, citing "Aristides and other Greek writers"; Hieronymus Commelinus, *Rerum Britannicarum* (Heidelberg, 1587), p. 1, citing Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historiae* I.ii.

41 *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* (7); Ovid, *Met.* III.582-691; Philostratus, *Eikones* I.19.

42 George Herbert, "The Church Militant," ll. 235-47. Some analogues are given in the unpublished Ph.D. dissertation of Graeme Watson, "The Eschatological Thought of Henry Vaughan" (Univ. of Reading, 1983), pp. 163-66.

43 *P.L.* IX.82-83, "thus the orb he roamed / With narrow search"; *P.R.* I.33-35, "That heard the adversary, who roving still / About the world, at that assembly famed /

Would not be last"; *P.R.* II.178-80, "Before the flood thou with thy lusty crew, / False titled Sons of God, roaming the earth / Cast wanton eyes on the daughters of men."

44 See the thumbnail definition of Milton's nephew, Edward Phillips: "a kind of Verse that consists of seven syllables, without being tied to any certain Law of Quantity" (*World of Words*, 6th ed. [London, 1706]). Meters do not translate, but there are signs that the heptasyllabic line was adopted as one equivalent to the Anacreontic: cf. the Anacreon translations in *Poems and Translations of Thomas Stanley*, ed. G. M. Crump (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), pp. 74-100.

45 Thomas Randolph, "An Eclogue to M[aste]r Johnson" (c. 1630), l. 98 (in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. [Oxford, 1925-52], XI, 394, 396); and Carew's *Coelum Britannicum* (1634), l. 982, where masquers are described as stars (*The Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. Rhodes Dunlap [Oxford, 1949], p. 179).

46 Steadman, "Iconography," p. 110.

47 *Complete Prose Works* (Yale), I, 571-72.

48 *Complete Prose Works* (Yale), I, 588-89; cf. also the preface to Bk. II (Yale, I, 819). See Christopher, *Milton*, p. 55.

49 The alleged influence of this episode on Milton's masque is discussed critically by John Creaser, "Milton's *Comus*: The Irrelevance of the Castlehaven Scandal," *N&Q* 31 (Sept. 1984), 307-17. See also my reservations in *Aristocratic Entertainments*, pp. 17-20, 175-78, 184n.

50 *Imagines*, 1581, p. 278; reproduced by permission of the British Library. Despite subtle differences, the illustrated Cartaris of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries all show the same composition in their figure of Comus (based on the engraving of Bolognino Zaltieri, Venice ed., 1571), until the different designs of the Pignoria editions. On Zaltieri see Robert L. McGrath, "The 'Old' and 'New' Illustrations for Cartari's *Imagini . . . ,*" *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 59 (January-June 1962), 214-18.

51 On Ferroverde see McGrath, pp. 218-24.

52 *Le Vere e nove Imagini*, 1615, p. 369. The identical illustration in the Padua edition of 1626 (p. 341) is reproduced here by permission of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University. The new composition rendered some slightly altered meanings. Through the window of the old design some hills can be seen, beneath clouds of a daylight sky. The implication would seem to be that Comus' long presiding over the revels within persisted to the morning after. In the new design not only has the glimpse of daylight gone, but a moon has been added, seen through a new, small window higher up. There were, then, clearer indications of Comus' reign by night, as in Milton and many other texts, though without the same explicit mention of long continuance.

53 The Bartsch references for these prints are: XVI, p. 151, no. 85-2 (Franco) and XV, p. 320, no. 110 (Vico). (For illustrations of this and other work of Franco after the antique, see *The Illustrated Bartsch 32, Italian Artists of the Sixteenth Century School of Fontainebleau*, ed. Henri Zerner [New York: Abaris Books, 1979], pp. 237-46.) There is no certainty that Franco's work preceded Vico's. I assume the priority of Franco on the authority of the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, by whose permission these illustrations are reproduced.

54 Philippus Thomassinus, *Ex Antiquis cameorum et gemmae delineata. Liber secundus et ab E. Vico Parmen. incis.* (Rome, 1610?), pl. 11; British Library copy. This set of prints is the same as British Museum, Prints and Drawings, 163* a.20, except that they are printed on different format paper. In this reworking of Vico's plates, some detail was reinforced, and the whole background hatched horizontally, as in the later Panaroli edition (below), in which only the inscriptions seem to be new.

55 *Ex gemmis et cameis antiquorum aliquot monumenta ab AE. V. . . . incis. . . . D. Panarolo . . . I. D. de Rubeis D. D.* (Rome, 1650?), no pagination; reproduced by permission of the British Library.