

*The Milieu of Milton's Comus:
Judicial Reform at Ludlow and the
Problem of Sexual Assault*

Margery Evans was an illiterate fourteen-year-old servingmaid who, according to her own testimony, was accosted by the roadside in Herefordshire near the Welsh border on Midsummer eve, 1631, by one Philbert Burghill and his man, raped, robbed, and left at the edge of a village with the warning that she would be killed if she told anyone what had happened.¹ Ignoring the threat, she gave hue and cry, pursued her attackers to a nearby town, and accused them in the presence of numerous witnesses, whereupon she herself was thrown into jail, without formal charge or the possibility of bond. We have no way of knowing how often such apparent reversals of justice occurred in seventeenth-century England: surviving records show relatively few convictions for rape, although in the Welsh border country where Margery Evans was attacked, the abduction and ravishing of young virgins was alleged by contemporaries to be commonplace.² What makes Margery Evans's case different from others which may have existed is that we have such detailed information about it. The girl was by no means silenced by her imprisonment. Despite her youth and poverty, she appealed for redress to King Charles I and her appeal was heard: his majesty's privy council eventually called upon John Egerton, First Earl of Bridgewater, Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales, to make inquiries into the case.

The Earl of Bridgewater took his task quite seriously: although he was by no means convinced of the truth of her charges, at least at first, he proceeded in an efficient and fairminded way to disentangle the web of conflicting testimony surrounding the alleged crime, to keep his skeptical underlings in the Council of Wales from prejudging the case against her, and to try to ensure her a speedy and impartial trial. Indeed, it is only through his meticulous preservation of the major documents, now part of the Bridgewater collection at the Henry E. Huntington Library, that we know of the case at all, or of his attempts to obtain justice for Margery Evans.

Beyond its inherent interest, however, and its depiction of intrica-

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cies and pitfalls in the workings of law in the early Stuart period, the case of Margery Evans is worth our attention for literary reasons—that is, for the light it casts on the milieu of John Milton's "MASKE PRESENTED At Ludlow Castle, 1634: On Michaelmasse night, before the RIGHT HONORABLE, IOHN Earle of Bridgewater, Vicount BRACKLY, Lord President of WALES, And one of His MAIESTIES most honorable Privie Counsell."³ As Stephen Orgel and others have demonstrated, masques performed at the Stuart court were always at least implicitly political: for all their seeming delicacy and rarefaction, they were grounded in the theory of divine right, shaped to celebrate royal power in its interaction with specific events and pressing national problems, designed at least on some occasions even to measure the ideal of Stuart absolutism against limitations imposed by existing political circumstances. The performance of *Comus* was much less elaborate than the usual masque at Whitehall, but by no means divorced from that milieu. The Earl and his Lady were important figures at court; members of their immediate family—including the three children performing in *Comus*—had danced regularly in court masques during the years before the Ludlow production; and Henry Lawes came to his task of putting together the Ludlow performance for the Earl of Bridgewater after several years' experience with masques for Charles I.⁴

Moreover, as recent critics have begun to discover, *Comus* was not just a private family celebration, but a political event: part of a ceremonial structure marking the Earl's formal installation as Lord President of the Council in the Marches, a judicial body and also the central government's chief administrative unit in Wales. Even in terms of its immediate political context, *Comus* can be read on a number of levels. It comments on several issues of immediate national and local concern.⁵ Here I should like to concentrate on only one of these, the problem of judicial reform—a matter of pressing importance for Charles I and his privy council, and for the Earl of Bridgewater in particular as he assumed the Presidency of the Council of Wales, a powerful court of law, but troubled by laxity and corruption. I would like to contend that for the first audience of *Comus*, the Margery Evans case would have formed part of a political background against which the masque's meaning was interpreted. The parallels between the case and the masque are so extensive that we should entertain the possibility that Milton knew of the matter. Seen in light of the Evans affair, *Comus* takes on new significance as an analysis of the administration of justice—the difficulty of the task, its impor-

tance, and the stumbling blocks to be encountered in the course of carrying it out.

We do not know how many members of the Council of Wales were in attendance at the performance on Michaelmas night, 1634, but some of them—particularly the four officials in permanent residence at Ludlow—would certainly have been there. For them, the masque would have carried a clear message of criticism. Their negligence and prejudice in the Evans affair had been a perversion of justice—a virtue, like courtesy which belongs as much to “lowly sheds” as to the “Courts of princes” (89). While still in London the Earl had been obliged to combat their lethargy from afar. But the actual installation of this “Peere of mickle trust and power” and his household at Ludlow would create a strong new center from which justice could emanate outward. With the Earl would come a new emphasis on rectitude—a distrust for mere appearances, a zeal for the sifting of truth from falsehood, and a new energy for the righting of wrong, whatever the social status of the victim. From this perspective, Milton’s masque becomes a mirror for the judges of the Council of Wales: it shows them their own failings by recasting elements of the Evans case in terms of the Earl’s own family, allowing the judges in attendance to measure their own principles as demonstrated in their conduct of the case against the principles in action in the masque.

We might suppose that a personage of the Earl of Bridgewater’s stature would bridle at the drawing of public parallels between his own daughter and a humble serving maid, particularly a victim of rape. To be sure, Milton’s masque keeps the parallels subtle: the basic pattern of the Evans case is generalized, absorbed into a paradigm for the handling of all similar cases. But the Earl’s young daughter is nonetheless displayed in a series of difficult and unsavory predicaments. In an important 1971 article, Barbara Breasted pointed out that only a few years before the performance of *Comus*, relatives of the Earl of Bridgewater had been embroiled in a sexual scandal of their own; Breasted has suggested that Milton designed his masque as a cleansing ritual which deliberately elicits comparison with sordid details of the Castlehaven scandal of 1630–31 in order to demonstrate the Egerton family’s purity, their refusal to assent to pressures like those which had destroyed their relatives.⁶ Without wishing to deny that the masque does function to vindicate the family’s honor, I would like to suggest that its emphasis on sexual jeopardy has a wider public dimension, carries a ceremonial meaning particularly appropriate for the night of its performance. One of the key liturgical

themes for Michaelmas is the enlightenment and humiliation of judges. Just as masques at court sometimes confessed practical limitations upon royal power even while exalting it in theory, so Milton's masque at Ludlow both praises the Earl for his work in pursuit of justice and acknowledges limits upon what he can accomplish. As our discussion of the Margery Evans case will make evident, even a man of the Earl's considerable authority was sometimes severely hampered in his attempts to right injustice. Indeed we do not know what final steps he took in resolution of the case. But we can observe in his pursuit of the matter some important elements of proper judicial humility: a willingness to suspend personal prejudice in the pursuit of truth and to attend to lowly circumstances in order to right a wrong. The Michaelmas occasion of Milton's masque afforded the Earl and his family an opportunity to confront their own vulnerability—to acknowledge their basic kinship with the lowly and less fortunate, and the limits imposed on them and everyone by the human condition itself. Michaelmas marked the beginning of a new judicial term at the Council of Wales. As the Earl and his subordinates were about to assume their exalted offices, Milton's masque reminded them through the example of the Earl and his family to recognize their own human weakness before they presumed to weigh and cast judgment upon the weaknesses of others.

I

The first evidence we have of the Earl's involvement in the matter of Margery Evans appears in a memorandum added "At Whytehall the 21:th of August 1633" to Margery Evan's August 16 petition to the privy council, and recommending "the Consideracion of this Petition to the Lord President of the Councell established for the Marches of Wales, Willing his Lordshipp that a Course may be taken for the Releefe of the Peticioner, and for punishing of the offendoures: if vpon further Examinacion of the Busines, there shall be found iust Cause for the same."⁷ At that point, the case was already more than two years old. Margery Evans's petition to the privy council provides the fullest account of the alleged crime and its aftermath, along with a less detailed description of the legal steps she had taken prior to the 1633 appeal. According to her petition, in June, 1631, she

being then about fourteen yeeres of age and travailing out of Hereford Shire into Brecknocke Shire was by the way overtaken by one Phillipp [Philbert] Burghill, and John Williams

both on horsebacke; and the said Burghill after some questions would haue had the petitioner to ride behind him, on his horse which shee refused to doe, wherevpon the said Burghill vsed many threatening wordes. But not prevayling, hee alighted from his horse with his Sworde drawne, and caused the said Williams to alight, and put the petitioner vpon his horse, whence shee removed her selfe to the grounde three tymes, but in the ende shee was enforced by the said Burghill to ride about a quarter of a mile, where shee alighted and would haue escaped. Then the said Burghill called to Williams to staie her, who caught fast holde on the petitioner and delivered her into the said Burghills handes saieing, Master doe not lett her goe againe, wherevpon the said Burghill did there most inhumanlie and vnchristeanly seize vpon the petitioner and forceable defloured and ravished her being then not aboue fourteen yeeres of age as aforesaid, and alsoe tooke awaie from her a bundle of Clothes, a purse and four shillings sixpence in money, Renting and tearing her wascoate and apron in peeces, and afterwordes the said Burghill Compelled your petitioner to ride vpon the same horse to a village called the Bage aboute one mile and a halfe thence distante, and at the townes ende left her vowing her death with his sword in his hand drawne if shee should discover what had passed betweene them.

At this point most victims would probably have held their peace, but, whether out of outrage, courage, or foolhardiness, Margery Evans did not:

Notwithstanding the said Threates the Petitioner raised Hue & Cry and followed and overtooke them in the Burrough towne called the Haie in the said County of Breconshire [some three or four miles further] and charged them both with Rape and felonie, They being then in the howse of one James Lloyd, Bailiffe of the said Burrough [and also an inn-keeper; his house was the inn], of whome the Petitioner desired that they might bee put into safe custody and carried before one of his Majesties Justices of the peace to bee proceeded with according to iustice; But for all the Petitioners iust complainte the said Bailiffe and his wife and Katheryne the wife of Davie James did not onlie sore hurte and wounde the petitioner and comitt her to prison, where shee remained by the space of two daies and two nightes, But did alsoe suffer the said felons without comeing before a Justice of the peace to departe and goe awaie and delivered them their

horses which were seized on by the Sheriffe of the said County.

Although the sentiment of local officials was clearly against Margery Evans (and in fairness to them, she is not likely to have cut much of a figure, being penniless, disheveled, probably exhausted and frantic), Burghill seems to have felt threatened by her accusations, for he took steps to ensure her silence: "The said felons procured a warrant from Sir Henry Williams, knight, and Thomas Price esquire or one of them, being Justices of the peace of the said County, directed to the Constable of the said Burrough of Haie who by vertue thereof brought the petitioner before the said Mr. Price, and hee the said Mr. Price or Sir Henry Williams or one of them Comitted her to the Gaole for the said Countie, Refusing to accept of anie baile, where shee remained for the Space of 25 daies without any examination and vntill the Justices of the peace discharged her in the open quarter Sessions then held for the said County." It is significant that in all that time, according to her testimony, she was never charged with any offense: if she had been, the sordid episode would have had to come out in court.

At the point of Margery Evans's release from prison, unfortunately, her story becomes murkier. We are told "that vpon a peticion exhibited to his Majestie hee was graciouslie pleased to give order to Edward Games, Roger Vaughan, Charles Vaughan and Blanch Parrey Esquires, Justices of the peace, to examine the truth of the cause vpon oath which was done accordingle." But we are not told how or with what help she had taken the enormous step of carrying her troubles to Charles I. She seems to have had no powerful allies: her employer was later described as "Alice Hadnocke, widdowe" (EL 7385), and is not likely to have had great means or influence, nor did her own family. Nevertheless, her story was compelling enough to precipitate the creation of a special Commission of the Peace, by whom "vpon the testimony of Divers witnesses the said Burghill and Williams were both found guiltie of the Rape and felonie, and the same was soe certified and returned by his Majesties direccions vnto Mr. Attorney generall by the said Edward Games and Roger Vaughan, two of the referees. Wherevpon Mr. Attorney was pleased to wish the petitioner to goe into the Country and prosecute against the said offenders" at Hereford Assizes, since the crime had taken place within the boundaries of Herefordshire.

Despite the help from on high, Margery Evans had serious misgiv-

ings about returning to the area: Burghill and his "Adherentes" had threatened her with death, and earlier, when "your petitioners mother had beene formerly Slaine in the Countrie noe course could bee obtained against the offenders"—a mysterious statement which never receives any clarification. So far as we know, there was no connection between the mother's death and the alleged attack on the daughter, except that the earlier misfortune had given her a taste of the treatment she might expect. Nevertheless, Margery Evans went "downe according to the direccion of Mr. Attorney in lent assizes laste," that is, in March, 1633, only to see her case vanish into air. "Although the Justices of the peace or one of them who had examined the proofes vpon oath did preferr a Bill of indictment against Burghill & williams for the said offences yet Burghills frendes soe prevailed that the Indictment would not bee accepted." In other words, the grand jury at the assizes, probably consisting like its counterparts elsewhere of gentlemen or at least respectable freeholders of the county,⁸ did not (or would not) find the commission's evidence compelling enough to send Burghill up for trial. Apparently, Margery Evans had also opened a case in the Court of the Marches against the JPs responsible for her imprisonment and "other losses by her sustained," but with equal lack of success. The matter was ticklish because the Sir Henry Williams named as one of the defendants is probably the same Sir Henry Williams listed in 1633 as a member of the Council (EL 7571, p. 4). She finally appealed to the privy council because she was convinced that she and her aunt Elizabeth Evans, who was prosecuting on her behalf, "dare not for feare of their lives repaire into the said Counties to prosecute the said parties" (EL 7383).

Charles I's privy council had recently taken up the problem of corruption and undue influence in the courts, which may help account for their attention to her case. The Earl of Bridgewater was a privy councillor particularly noted for a special interest in legal matters and fairmindedness in disentangling them; in addition, of course, he had already been appointed President of the Council of Wales, a body with legal jurisdiction over both Breckonshire and Herefordshire; although he had not formally assumed office, he had been a member of the Council for a number of years and possessed considerable influence in the area. Charles I's letter appointing him to the Presidency had praised his "Discretion, Wisdom, Dexterity, Fidelity, Courage and Integrity, in the executing of Iustice without respect of persons."⁹ The Council was required to "examine, search, and re-

presse" all felonies including rape. So Bridgewater was the logical person to investigate Margery Evans's allegations. The Attorney General who had been involved in the matter in 1632 was William Noy, a longtime friend and associate: Noy may have suggested that Margery Evans approach Bridgewater via the privy council.

As Barbara Breasted's study has shown, the Earl's family had only shortly before been troubled by a rape case of its own. His wife's brother-in-law the Earl of Castlehaven had been tried by the privy council for rape and sodomy, convicted, and executed in 1631. Breasted implies that the Castlehaven affair may have tarnished the reputation of the whole family.¹⁰ But the choice of Bridgewater to handle the Evans case suggests that they hung under no heavy cloud. Evidently the king and court officials did not see the scandal in Bridgewater's own family—from which he and his wife and children had in any case kept distance, though he had assumed much family business in connection with the problem of Castlehaven's survivors—as disqualifying him as a disinterested judge of the sexual crimes of others. Indeed, his handling of that painful episode may have demonstrated his ability to deal fairly with cases of that sort.

When Bridgewater received Margery Evans's petition in 1633, he had no particular reason to believe her story. It was not until several months later that he saw the most compelling evidence in her behalf—a series of depositions taken in August and September of 1632 in Herefordshire by the king's special commission. There had been no witnesses to the alleged robbery and rape (except for Williams, the accomplice). However, four men deposed in 1632 that they had heard Margery Evans "howlinge and cryinge" as she ran along the highway in pursuit of Burghill and Williams. One of the witnesses rode her into town, another rode ahead to detain Burghill and Williams until she got there, and heard her charge the two men with robbery and with doing her a "worse turn." He also testified that the bailiff used the young girl "very roughly," pushing her before him towards the town jail (EL 7384, p. 1).

There were also two 1632 depositions from women who had visited Margery Evans within a few days of the alleged rape in Breconshire County Jail. Unfortunately, the depositions are befuddled by a serious confusion in the names. Margery is several times called Elizabeth in the first deposition, and the error corrected only in the second. But the deposition is clear enough. Elizabeth Thomas informed the commission that "shee beinge at Breconshire the last day of the faire of Breconshire aforesaid beinge in the yeare of our Lord 1631, a

Sister of one Margery Evans desired this deponent to see her said Sister beinge then in the Gaole of Breconshire. and when shee came to her, shee sawe her weepeinge and leaninge her arme vpon a table board. And as shee removed from the place shee leaned vpon, shee did halt. who then towld this deponent that a strainge man ravished her, and that his servant did helpe to howlde her twice, or else shee hadd escaped, and then this deponent gaue her fower Farthings the which the said Elizabeth [Margery] Evans deliuered back to this deponent sayinge, shee should haue noe neede thereof or of any worldly sustenance" (EL 7381). As Elizabeth Thomas was leaving, "the Grandmother of the said Elizabeth [Margery] Evans desired this deponent to see in what case this said Elizabeth [Margery] was."¹¹ and then the said Elizabeth [Margery] shewed her secrett partes to this deponent whereby this deponent verely iudged that shee was ravished. for her Fleshe aboute those parts, was bruised and torne, but who did it this deponent knoweth not but by the words of the said Elizabeth [Margery] Evans" (EL 7381). The second woman was Joane John, a midwife according to later testimony (EL 7385), who corroborated Elizabeth Thomas's statement completely—deposed "in all points as the former deponent Elizabeth Verch Thomas hath done. shee beinge present with the said Elizabeth Verch Thomas the tyme when shee sawe the said Margery Evans [this time, the JP or clerk taking the deposition had also written "Elizabeth," but crossed out his error and corrected it] in the Gaole of Breconshire" (EL 7381).

There must have been additional depositions in 1632, for the pages of the documents are numbered and several are missing. But the evidence which remains is compelling: Margery Evans was in evident distress as she ran along the highway—more distress than the loss of her money alone would be likely to justify. There is a minor discrepancy in the amount alleged to have been stolen: four shillings twopence according to witnesses, four shillings sixpence according to her 1633 petition. There is also the problem of her reticence in admitting that she was raped at the time of her confrontation with the assailants in James Lloyd's house, but that reticence actually supports her charge: if she had accused Burghill and Williams falsely, she might be expected to be quite open about the matter; her reluctance to admit it, especially in front of men, reveals the mortification and shame we would expect in a genuine victim. None of the 1632 witnesses corroborated her claim that she had charged Burghill and Williams with "Rape and felonie" in the house of James Lloyd, but only one of them was actually inside the house and that witness left almost im-

mediately, before events had reached their conclusion. The testimony of the two women as to Margery Evans's physical and psychological condition in jail after the event seems to leave little doubt that a rape had been committed: in an age before modern medical evidence, it is hard to know what more credible proof a victim could present. Of course the two women could have been lying, but it is hard to know why they would: they knew neither the victim nor her family well, and that family had neither money nor influence. Margery Evans appears to have been telling the truth—that was the conclusion of the royal commission, and the conclusion we modern readers of the 1632 materials are also likely to reach. But 1632 was the last time any of the evidence seemed so clear.

When he took over the inquiry, the Earl of Bridgewater had only the 1633 petition to go on. He was in London, but quickly set wheels in motion at Ludlow: by September 4, 1633, only two weeks after the case had been referred to him, Margery Evans's father had appeared at Ludlow to offer his evidence. This deposition adds useful information: on the way from The Hay to Breconshire County Jail Margery "was brought by two Constables" to his house, so that the family knew where she was; in jail she "fell sicke"; the father and Margery's sister Anne had been responsible for getting the women to visit her "to serch hir whether she had bin rauvished" and "vpon the serch it appeared she had bin deflowred" (EL 7385). According to the father, "Burghill was Kept in Mr. Price's house at the Priory for a weeke of the time that the said Margery was ymprisoned." This could have been a detainment pending trial, but was more likely an effort to protect Burghill: it later came out that Burghill was Price's "cosin" or "his verie familiar frend at least" (EL 7394). But by September 8, only Elizabeth Evans, neither Margery nor any further witnesses, had appeared at Ludlow.

The Earl's main Welsh associate and confidant while in London was a man named Tymothy Tourneur, who held a judicial post at Shrewesbury and had good connections at Ludlow though apparently no official position there until 1634 or later (EL 7398). But Tourneur was not much help in this particular case. For him, the fact that only the father had appeared to testify showed the groundlessness of Margery Evans's claims since, of course, fathers will say anything to support their daughters. Tourneur offered Bridgewater his own theory as to the actual facts of the case in a letter of September 8: "Now my Lord I am suspicious the yonge wench is put on by hir Aunt one Elizabeth Evans named in the peticion, a woeman I heare

of light conversacion hir husband by hir owne confession lately hanged for felony; And in the peticion it self and maynteyned by this Elizabeth Evans in hir discourse of the history of the busynes to me there is a notable circumstance of ymprobabilitie of the fact which is that presently after the fact Burghill put the wench on his mans horse and sent his man on foote two mile of the Common rodeway and that Burghill compelled the wench to ride with him that Comon way on the mans horse two mile, from the place of the fact to a village called the Bache and as soone as he had brought hir through that vilage did set hir downe and let hir goe" (EL 7386). Tourneur seems to have forgotten the important legal principle, reaffirmed in the Castlehaven trials, that a woman's loose life or connections are immaterial to the issue of rape.¹² For Tourneur, it was improbable that a rapist would carry his victim along with him for any distance; Burghill had seduced her, then abandoned her, upon which she had concocted the rape story in order to get revenge or make a bit of money; Margery Evans and her unsavory aunt were merely bothersome distractions from more important business, and the Earl's interest in the case, inexplicable. Nevertheless, he states that the Council of Wales "to shew their dilligence & desire to discover the truth" had sent out a request for information from the 1632 commissioners.

During the next several months, there was an active correspondence between the Earl in London and Tourneur and other subordinates in Wales. Most of the Earl's letters have not survived, but his position is clear from the responses he received: he kept up a constant pressure for further investigation of the case; his subordinates grumbled politely and expressed their doubts, but managed a "shew" of diligence; as the complexities of the case came to light, they began to take it a bit more seriously, but only because the Earl forced them to. They seem never to have developed much enthusiasm for their task of discovering the truth.

As early as September 10, 1633, in fact, the Council seems to have hoped that its duties in the matter were done: a formal letter signed by Sir John Bridgeman, Chief Justice of Chester and the most powerful man on the Council of Wales, along with the three other officials required to be in permanent residence at Ludlow, describes the efforts they had made and offers some damaging information regarding Margery Evans's suit before the Council for false arrest and other "losses by her sustained," in hopes of rounding off the inquiry. Margery Evans had brought her charges of false arrest before them in November, 1631; a commission had been formed to examine the case

and the defendants had denied all charges; upon her complaint "that she could have noe indifferencie with commissioners in the Countrey" one of the Council of Wales's own examiners had been added to the commission to insure its impartiality; the case had been ready for hearing before the Council by April, 1632, "sithence which tyme the plaintiff hath noe further proceeded in her suite" (EL 7387). Margery and Elizabeth Evans had apparently failed to appear: perhaps because of illness or lack of funds (both problems were to plague them later on); more likely as a result of continuing intimidation—the "fear of their lives" which they still felt a year later when they made their 1633 appeal to the privy council. If Sir Henry Williams was a member of the very Council which was to decide their case, their hesitation made sense. Kafka would have understood. But such possibilities seem not to have occurred to Sir John Bridgeman and the rest. So far as officials of the Council of Wales were concerned, the Council had done what it could: it was up to the plaintiffs to resume the initiative. Sir John Bridgeman followed up the official notice with a private letter of September 20 assuring the Earl that "vpon perusall of the bookes at the councell I find much more clamour then truth" (EL 7388).

But the Earl of Bridgewater took a different view of the matter, for within a month, we find, twelve witnesses—four of the six 1632 deponents along with eight others—had appeared before the Council, almost certainly by direct order of the Earl.¹³ New interrogations were undertaken before members of the Council at Ludlow the 9 and 10 October, and a copy has survived among the Earl's papers. It is a vague and puzzling document, full of contradictory evidence. Some of the witnesses had radically altered their testimony since 1632. The two men who had helped Margery Evans catch up with her assailants both stuck to their stories. Significantly, however, in their 1633 statements we find no mention of the violence done her by the Bailiff of the Town of Hay, although the fact that he had used her "very roughly" had figured prominently in one of their 1632 depositions.

There is also considerable uncertainty in the 1633 depositions about what Burghill had actually been accused of: according to the Sergeant of the Mace who had held her overnight, she claimed only that Burghill had robbed her, "throwne her downe & endeauored to ravish her [*italics mine*]"; his seventeen-year-old son and another witness corroborated this statement. On the other hand, according to another deponent, the general report was that "Margery Euans did giue out in speeches that she was ravished & robbed." Yet another

witness who visited the town jail of Hay to "know the cause of her Imprisonment did heare the said Margery say that she was rauished & robbed by Philbert Burghill & John Williams & shewed the stringe of the purse that remayned hanging at her girdle" (EL 7395, pp. 6-9). These discrepancies are strange, but not inexplicable: the victim may have been confused, or reluctant to admit the full extent of her injury. But the shift in testimony of the women who had examined her in Breconshire County Jail is not so easily accounted for.

The Ludlow interrogations include a statement by Anne Evans, Margery's sister, who had taken the two women to visit her in jail. According to Anne Evans, she "went to her said sister Margery to the said Goale & the deponent & others upon searche made found the smocke & other cloathes of the said Margery bloody & this deponent was forced to prouide her cleane lynnens." Elizabeth Thomas, who in 1632 had described the victim's despairing behavior and the unmistakable physical evidence of the rape, was now much more general in her testimony: "The said Margery seemed to bee lame & hurt & bruised. And vpon searching of her the smocke of the said Margery was bloody & she was hurt in her boddy" (EL 7395, pp. 1-2). The Council member who signed this deposition was elderly and did not have long to live: perhaps he failed to report the testimony accurately, or omitted the precise description of her injuries out of decorousness or reticence. But Elizabeth Thomas may deliberately have generalized her description: the midwife Joane John who had been the plaintiff's "expert" witness in 1632 and corroborated the physical evidence of the rape, had by 1633 completely altered her story. She still admitted that she had visited Margery Evans in "the said goale," but now claimed that she "did not see any hurts or woundes vpon her" (EL 7395, p. 3). Interestingly enough, it is not only her testimony, but also her name, which is turned upside down: although it is clearly the same woman in both cases, in 1632 she is called Joan John; in 1633 her name appears as "Johan Jones." Might she have meant this reversal as a signal that she had changed her tale under pressure? Or is it a result of scribal error? We will never know. What we do know is that the shift in her testimony, along with the uncertainties produced by town officials of The Hay as to the actual crime Burghill and Williams had been accused of immediately after the fact, made what had been a clear case against the two in 1632 inconclusive by 1633.

The 1633 interrogations produced major evidence in Margery's favor: her sister Anne testified that both Burghill and Williams had

confessed the rape to her, and Burghill had claimed "that if hee had seene some of her freindes sooner he would haue made her amends for her wrong" (EL 7395, p. 2). Presumably this was the usual way assaults on young servingmaids were handled. Since in the 1633 depositions the nature of the crime was unclear, however, Anne's evidence was suspect: she could, in sisterly fashion, have lied to help Margery's case.

Not surprisingly, the Council found the October depositions unconvincing. According to Tymothy Tourneur, Edward Waties, the elderly Council member who had signed most of the October interrogatories, was not impressed by what he had heard: "Mr. Justice Waties who hath seene all tells me he findes in it litle or nothing of weight" (EL 7389). By November 10, Tourneur himself had read the depositions and found "nothing to towch the pretended offenders but the proof of a yong woman who is the sister of the peticoner who deposeth that Burghill did confesse the rape to hir and that John Williams his servant confessed to her also that he caught the petitioner and brought hir to his master" (El 7390). Margery Evans herself had still not appeared.

Her aunt Elizabeth Evans, who had taken over the case for her by this time, had appeared at Ludlow, however, and been denied any sight of the October transcripts and other key documents. We do not know why Margery had left the business of pursuing the prosecution to her aunt: perhaps she was ill or had given up hope; at this point she was in any case only sixteen years old. But Elizabeth had enough determination for both of them. Fearing that the case had again reached an impasse, on November 13, 1633, she dispatched a new petition to the Earl of Bridgewater, informing him of the Council's refusal to give her sight of their documents, reminding him that the case had been certified in the plaintiff's favor in 1632, and informing him that the 1632 materials were "in the handes of one Mr. Gravell of Cliffordes Inn, whoe is either Clarke, or deputie Clarke, of Assizes" for the County of Hereford, where in the previous March the case had failed to reach trial.¹⁴ She pleaded with the Earl to examine all the evidence himself, "That your Lordship haveing found out the truth, may inflict due punishment vnto each offendour."

By this time, we can sense, the Earl was becoming weary of the business. His subordinates were ready to drop it altogether and he himself had as yet no particular reason to trust the plaintiffs. Nevertheless, as Elizabeth Evans had hoped he would, he doggedly pursued the truth. He wrote a note to himself at the bottom of her

petition dated 15 November, 1633, and stating, "These Allegacions for ought appeareth to me may be as well false as true. yet I haue geuen order to haue the clerke of the Assises (if he be in towne) to come unto me; that I maye the better enforme my selfe of the Latter parte of this Petition." And, at the bottom, "Keepe this" (EL 7391). Only a day later one of his London solicitors had gleaned some information from the "Clerke of the Assize his man." At the Lenten Assizes there had been "a Rumor of an Indictment for a Rape vpon the bodie of this Margerie Evans, but nothings done that he could take notice of" (EL 7392). Margery had gone down to the assizes, but Elizabeth had not, "by reason," she later swore, "of hir tedious sickness whereof shee then and for manie monthes after languished" (EL 7393). Inclosed in the solicitor's letter was a formal statement from Richard Gravell confirming that on March 25, 1633, at Hereford Assizes, "An Indictment was preferred by Margery Evans and other prosecutours against Filbert Burfield [for Burghill] Late of Dorston in the Countie of Herefordshire For a Robberie vpon the highway, which indictment was fownd ignoramus" (EL 7402). But the family continued to follow the case. At the summer assizes there had appeared before Gravell an "old woman," Margery's grandmother, "that was verie inquisitive after the proceedinges and whether or noe there was an indictment for a Rape" (EL 7392). And of course, the answer was no.

By late November information was coming in faster. On November 22 the Earl received yet another letter from Tymothy Tourneur re-exponing his pet theory that Margery Evans had merely been seduced and abandoned, but offering important observations. Thomas Price, the JP who had thrown her into jail, was either Burghill's relative or his very close friend and, Tourneur admitted, "I find none there [at The Hay] willing to examine a rape against Burghill." Although the defendant's reputation was none of the finest, Tourneur was almost laughably reluctant to consider him capable of the crime with which he was charged: "The man (as I heare) is reputed to be of evill behavior but not of soe highe a straine as felony vnlesse he may come somewhat neere a rape" (EL 7394).

Sometime during November or December, the Earl also received copies of the 1632 depositions in the possession of Mr. Gravell, and was therefore able to see for himself the devastating shifts in testimony between 1632 and 1633. As his later conduct in the matter made clear, sometime before January, 1634, he became convinced of what he had suspected all along: Margery Evans had indeed been

denied justice as a result of Burghill's powerful influence in Hereford and Breconshire; some witnesses had probably been intimidated or bought off; others, especially town officials of The Hay, who were obliged to get along with their own JPs and bailiff, had probably agreed among themselves to suppress evidence which might lead to the charge of false imprisonment.

The Evans case, then, was a particular example of a more general political problem. The JPs of the Counties of the Marches—the four English counties under jurisdiction of the Council in the Marches of Wales—and also many of their colleagues within Wales itself, were reputed to be unusually given to placing family and friends above the law, and even members of the Council itself were not immune to this failing: Charles I's instructions had called upon them to discharge their duties "leauinge aparte all respects and affections in all matters althoughe the same maie touch their kinsmen, freindes, servantes or anie others" (EL 7571, pp. 4–5). Local officials bore strong resentment against Council jurisdiction on the grounds that it diluted their own authority. The Council of Wales was one of the so-called "prerogative courts" established by royal decree to supplement the common law and ecclesiastical courts, and an affront, in the view of its enemies, against local autonomy, an illegal infringement upon an ancient system of law.¹⁵ But in the case of Margery Evans, local autonomy had produced a miscarriage of justice. The Earl of Bridgewater had been charged by the king with strengthening the Council and forging it into an agent for judicial reform. Whatever our view of the prerogative courts generally, we need to concede that in the hands of a careful and fairminded leader such as the Earl of Bridgewater for the most part was,¹⁶ the Council of Wales could sometimes infringe on local autonomy for the better, especially when justice had been flouted by the very officials obliged under oath to maintain it.

Bridgewater wrote at least two letters to Tymothy Tourneur before the end of January, 1634—crucial letters containing extensive commentary on the Evans case. Although these have not survived, we can judge from the defensive tone of Tourneur's reply, and from his newly brisk and efficient manner, that the Earl had galvanized him into a more serious view of the affair. In one of his letters, Bridgewater had presented Tourneur with five points requiring comment or action; in a letter dated January 28, Tourneur notes each of these and carefully responds to them in order. The first point had to do with the Earl's opinion of the case, which, however cautiously expressed, seems to have been that the rape had been committed. Tourneur re-

plies, "I doe highlie suspect the offense to be morbus (and as your Lordship notes complicatus) And for that or some other reason hard to become explicatus," and offers a tedious reminder that the issue was whether the act had been voluntary or compulsory, all of which the Earl well knew; the same point had come up in the Castlehaven trial. Secondly, the Earl had called for secrecy, to which Tourneur replies, "difficult in respect of the inequalitye of the prosequiter & defendent, the first a woman poore and frendlesse. The second (though a man famed to be wicked) yet having many frendes of power both in the English & Welsh [parts]¹⁷ whereabouts the fact was perpetrated." He goes on in a gingerly manner to express the hope that the Earl's call for secrecy was not "enioyned me out of any dowbt your lordship hath of me; but that your lordship notes your intent that you would not have it discovered till your lordship may haue cause to doe it your self, wherein I shall observe your commands."

The third point was a request for "further discoverie" of details of the case, to which Tourneur (predictably) protests that nothing more can be done. The fourth part was "the importunitie of the petitioners" (EL 7399, p. 1), a sore point indeed. In the previous months Elizabeth Evans had sent the Earl no fewer than two other petitions, in addition to the one of November 13 urging him to examine the evidence for himself. The first of these is undated, but must have been made during the fall of 1633; the second is dated January 8, 1634. Sometime during the Ludlow interrogations, the attorney who had handled Margery's case for her all along had suddenly refused to proceed further, and being "quite decayed in her estate" Elizabeth asked that she be assigned an attorney and be allowed to plead *in forma pauperis* (EL 7404). On November 19, she swore under oath that both she and Margery were worth less than £5, their debts paid (EL 7393).¹⁸ Her lawyer may have felt that the political pressures surrounding the case had become too intense, or he may simply have tired of not getting his fees, for in the petition of January 8 Elizabeth Evans informed Bridgewater that in her prosecution of the case she had "spent almost her whole estate and borrowed much money of severall persons for that purpose, which for the present shee is noe wayes able to satisfie and her Creditors are soe eager and violent against her that they will noe longer forbear her insomuch that shee hath of late beene 3 tymes arrested and is in danger of further trouble for other debtes, and to bee cast in prison and soe to bee prevented from further prosecution whereby the said notorious malefactours are like to escape vnpunished" (EL 7396). She pleaded with the Earl to

arrange a respite from her creditors until her suit was concluded. Since she remained out of jail and the prosecution continued, Bridgewater must have granted both petitions. If he wished to avoid further pleas to him personally, Tourneur advised, the Earl could send the case back to the privy council with his report; they could then recommend it for trial, or the Earl himself could refer her to a trial at Hereford Assizes, in which case a "caveat of circumspection" should be issued to the judge and a warrant procured for Burghill's arrest (EL 7399, p. 1). This second alternative is the one which was actually followed a little later; according to Charles I's instructions to Bridgewater, felony cases were to be examined, searched, and repressed by the Council but actually tried at assizes.

The Earl's fifth and final point in the January letter to Tourneur was his "conclusion upon the whole" and must have been an assertion that there had been judicial malfeasance in the case, for we find Tourneur offering—very cautiously and cryptically—additional evidence as to the corruption of an unnamed judge in "Eutopia," probably either Thomas Price or Sir Henry Williams, against whom Margery had brought suit for false arrest, or one of the other Council members involved in the case. There had been gross disparities in the amounts he had fined different people for the same offense, which suggested bribery or favoritism. And beyond that "it were strange to tell your lordship that a Judge in Eutopia put downe his opinion while he was a Judge one way vnder his hand and at last in court Judged it quite contrarye and he that had his hand in court to shew durst not shewe it. These are misteries which simple honest men know not what to thinke of but hope all is well. I will wade noe further in to this gulf for feare of drowning. Your lordship sees by this I put my self into your hands And humbly pray that of your lordship which your Lordship hath enioyned me," that is, secrecy (EL 7399, p. 2). Accusing a well entrenched judge of corruption was clearly a tricky and dangerous matter, in which the Earl would have to proceed with caution.

The only letter from Bridgewater about the Evans case to have survived (in his own draft copy) was sent to Tourneur February 28, 1634. By this time, the Earl was ready to report the case for trial if Margery and Elizabeth still wanted to proceed. Bridgewater sent Tourneur all the materials in his possession and ordered, I "wische & desire you to Lett Margery verch Evan or suche as are to prosecute the Businesses for her (if shee proceede therein) to have sight thereof & Copies of all or any of them if they doe seeke or demande the

same" (EL 7400). Margery and Elizabeth *did* want to proceed. Philbert Burghill was actually thrown into jail, and the case brought to trial in Hereford, probably at Lenten Assizes, March, 1634. It is likely that the Earl of Bridgewater did offer the judge at assizes, Baron Thomas Trevor, some private words of "circumspexion" before he went on circuit about the damaging power of the defendant, for we find that Trevor went far beyond the bounds of ordinary impartiality in order to counteract Burghill's influence and secure a conviction. Baron Trevor was himself a member of the Council of Wales and likely to have been sympathetic with the Earl's efforts at reform.

But after so much time and effort a conviction—alas—was still not to be had. Our report of the trial comes from Elizabeth Evans's own undated account: "At the Last Assizes at Herefford Philbert Burghill gent. and one Williams his man were indicted for a rape and felonie Comitted vpon the said Margery and the said Burghill appeared was araigned and the Bill formed and the matter appeared soe odious to Baron Trevoir Judg there that hee caused Burghill to bee taken from the barr to the Gaole and in open Assizes, saide hee should not come thence till he came to be hanged. Yet Neverthesse the Jury vpon life and death acquitted him to the Admiration of the Judge and the whole Court" (EL 7403). At least the two women had the satisfaction of knowing that Philbert Burghill had been jailed and hauled into court like any common criminal: he was not, after all, invulnerable. But we can imagine the almost unbearable frustration his acquittal must have caused all those concerned with the prosecution. Although Elizabeth Evans may have magnified the response of the "whole Court" out of her own sense of outrage, it seems clear that Judge Trevor and other officials regarded the plaintiffs' evidence as decisive. Perhaps the jury was put off by Trevor's melodramatic attempts to instill horror; more likely, they voted as they did out of intimidation or misplaced loyalty.

But that dramatic scene was not the end of the matter of Margery Evans. After Burghill's acquittal, Elizabeth still had hopes of prosecuting in the Council of Wales against those responsible for Margery's arrest and "divers other abuses": if she won that suit she would right a serious wrong, but also get reimbursement for at least some of the legal expenses which had put her so heavily into debt. She journeyed to London to get a copy of Burghill's indictment (which she needed to support the charge of false arrest) but as usual, received no response from court officials there; she therefore petitioned the Earl of Bridgewater "for Godes cause to assist her in theis

her lamentable and heavy suites that by your honours meanes Shee maye haue the coppie of the said indictment and may alsoe prosecute against the said Sir Henry Williams, Mr. Price and the rest in the Marches without imprisonment or other damage by their power in those partes" (EL 7403). This petition is undated, but was made shortly after the trial and probably in late March or April, 1634; we have no record of the Earl's response. But the document appears to have been followed quickly by another, also undated, giving us the last information we have of the case.¹⁹ The final petition shows that Elizabeth Evans recognized the burden she had imposed in her "long and tedious suite (wherein your poore petitioner was inforced to bee soe much troublesome to your honour)" but as always, she had good reason for her importunity. Having escaped hanging, Burghill seems to have decided to take revenge for the indignities he had suffered and give the plaintiffs a bit of their own medicine, but in a yet more intimidating court: "Philbert Burghill the original and graund Malefactour hath . . . preferred a bill into his Majesties Court of starchamber against your petitioner, and her said Neece and others (The said Burghill having already by his vile and wicked Lewdnes caused your petitioner to wast her whole estate); And now thinketh that your Petitioner and her said Neece will neither bee able to answeere his malicious sute nor to prosecute for the vnsufferable and palpable wronges suffered in the matters aforesaid" (EL 7401). Elizabeth Evans therefore besought the Earl for his help and permission to answer the suit *in forma pauperis*. Since this suit was a clear case of harrassment and Brigdewater was a member of the Star Chamber, he was surely able to get it quashed according to her desire by certifying the Lord Keeper his "honorable opinion touching the said matter" (El 7401).

But there had still not been justice for Margery Evans. In her final petition, Elizabeth mentions that the defendants in her suit for false arrest had begun to send letters "vnto her, and her friendes thereby pretending that they have much desired a finall end": having seen what the Earl's power could accomplish, they were now anxious to reach some accommodation. She also notes that the Earl had offered to settle the case himself in person: "Your honour conceaving that your petitioner and her said Neece were poore people thought fitt that either some friendly agreement might bee made or otherwise that your honour would bee pleased at your Lordships next retorne vnto Ludlowe finally to determyne the same; for the good of all parties therein" (EL 7401). And that is probably what happened. The Earl was in residence at Ludlow by early July, 1634. Then, if not earlier,

he probably gathered all those concerned to settle the matter as fairly as he could. Such a solution would have been quite characteristic of him: he was reticent by nature and tried to avoid open confrontations, preferring to use his power indirectly and get his way by quiet and adroit maneuvering. Elizabeth would certainly have rather had public vindication in court. But there is no record of a trial or verdict in the hearing books from the Council of the Marches which have survived. Nor do we have any record of new charges brought against Burghill and Williams there or in any other court.²⁰

The case must have been settled at least to the plaintiffs' partial satisfaction, however, for there appear to have been no more petitions. It would have gone quite against Elizabeth's adamant nature to have given up her long struggle before at least some of her goals had been achieved. And it would have been equally unlike the Earl and his usual meticulousness to have allowed a matter which had assumed such political importance to go unresolved. It is possible that the matter was still pending at the end of September, 1634, when the Earl was formally installed as Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales. But it is more likely that during the summer before his installation he had managed to achieve at least some measure of justice for Margery Evans. He had also served notice on the members of his own Council of Wales and the JPs and other county officials under his wide jurisdiction that his own notions of justice were more stringent than some of theirs, and that they would be called upon to modify their apparent belief that the law could be openly bent to serve their private ends—called upon to afford the same consideration to an illiterate girl of fourteen as they would their own cronies and kin. And the likes of Philbert Burghill might think twice the next time he felt the impulse to drag a young girl into the bushes.

II

Comus used to be viewed as "essentially private and personal," a rather intimate entertainment for the Egerton family, "some of them watching it and others performing in it."²¹ But the evening of the Earl's installation as Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales is not likely to have afforded much time for privacy and intimacy. Although details of the day's activities have not survived, the Earl's formal assumption of office was at least as elaborate an affair as other seventeenth-century events of comparable significance—the inauguration of a new Lord Mayor of London, or Chancellor of one

of the universities, or the consecration of a bishop, or the reception of a new ambassador at the court of Charles I. Such events tended to be celebrated with elaborate processions, church services, public oath-takings, ceremonies and entertainments of various sorts which were likely to comment on the occasion at hand. Furthermore, as we noted earlier, Michaelmas was a holiday traditionally associated with justice and the law. It was the day on which rents and various types of contracts came due, on which autumn court sessions were opened, and on which magistrates and other local officials assumed the burdens of office.²² The newly reconstituted Council of Wales over which the Earl was to preside had been greatly expanded, and new members may well have formally assumed office along with the Earl himself. A masque commissioned for such an occasion could scarcely have been devoid of public significance.

As William B. Hunter, Jr., noted ten years ago, *Comus* is shaped to reflect the major themes of the liturgy for the feast of St. Michael and All Angels. The collect for the day beseeches God for angelic succor and defense like that offered by Milton's Attendant Spirit; the epistle recounts St. Michael's battle with Satan from the Apocalypse, a cosmic prototype for the lesser struggle against *Comus* and the spirits of darkness in the masque.²³ The gospel for the day is Matthew 18:

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. . . . Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven (Matt. 18: 1-6, 10).

This text has obvious applications to the three children of *Comus*, implications also for the masque's theme of the humbling of those who sit in judgment. But in the lessons proper for Michaelmas, the subjects of law and public administration are considerably more prominent. Milton's masque looks forward to the lesson for Evensong in its

praise for the Earl of Bridgewater. That text moves from children to fathers, particularly fathers in positions of political authority: "Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through his great power from the beginning. Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for their power, giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies: Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people, wise and eloquent in their instructions. . ." (Ecclus. 44: 1-4). As Hunter has noted, Even-song was very likely celebrated some time after the performance of the masque, so that the closing passages of *Comus* which honor the parents through the successful trial of the children would lead naturally into the liturgical lesson.²⁴

Even more important for our purposes, however, is the lesson proper for Matins, which offers a portrait of the man fit to "sit on the judges' seat" and "declare justice and judgment" (Ecclus. 38: 33):

But he that giveth his mind to the law of the most High, and is occupied in the meditation thereof, will seek out the wisdom of all the ancient, and be occupied in prophecies. He will keep the sayings of the renowned men: and where subtil parables are, he will be there also. He will seek out the secrets of grave sentences, and be conversant in dark parables. He shall serve among great men, and appear before princes: he will travel through strange countries; for he hath tried the good and the evil among men (Ecclus. 39: 1-4).

Comus is itself a "dark" and "subtil" parable which reaches beyond the literal in a number of directions, and it would be a pity to reduce its meaning to the Michaelmas subject of the humbling and edification of judges. Nevertheless, the masque is steeped in passages from the liturgy which invite a measuring of actual judges and administrators against an ideal of judicial office. On Sept. 29, 1634, members of the Council of Wales in attendance at the Ludlow performance were confronted with an entertainment which reenacted on a higher social and intellectual plane elements from one of their most significant and troublesome cases of the previous year—a case in which they had forgotten their role as protectors of the downtrodden and had neglected the "little ones" in favor of the powerful, in which they had shown small capacity to read "dark" evidence or to try "the good and the evil among men" before proceeding to judgment.

We do not know how Milton knew of the case of Margery Evans,

or even that he did. But, as I shall argue elsewhere, "A Maske at Ludlow" shows such extensive familiarity with the Earl's political goals and conditions at Ludlow that Milton must have had excellent sources of information—most likely the Earl of Bridgewater himself, or someone personally and politically close to the family.²⁵ There are striking parallels between the predicament of the Lady in *Comus* and the case of Margery Evans, which had absorbed so much of the Earl's attention in the year before the masque and which had probably been settled only a few months before its performance. The Lady was an earl's daughter and Margery only a servingmaid, but the two were nearly the same "tender age," Margery fourteen at the time of the assault and the Lady fifteen at the time of the masque's performance. Both Margery and the Lady were travelling westward through the lonely and dangerous border country from England toward Wales, both solitary (though the Lady, only temporarily and accidentally so). Margery was probably on her way to Breckonshire Fair when she was waylaid by the roadside; the Lady in *Comus* was travelling to attend a more elevated festival occasion, the installation of her father as President of Wales. Both young girls were virgins, both accosted by a seducer well established in his territory: Burghill with many connections among county officials of the area, Comus with his court and a retinue of monsters. Both encounters took place during a time of holiday license. Margery Evans was ravished on Midsummer eve, a festival celebrated much as Mayday eve was, with sexplay and rowdiness in the forest: we may wonder whether Burghill saw himself merely as carrying on the time-honored traditions of Midsummer when he encountered Margery Evans by the road. Comus's action is associated with Michaelmas eve, a time which had its own traditions of disorder and lawlessness, but the masque seems to have been shaped to recall Midsummer as well. The masque's menacing revellers, with their wakes and morrises in the forest, are more characteristic of Midsummer, when Margery was travelling, than of Michaelmas eve, when the Lady was.²⁶

Of course the two seducers operate very differently. Burghill began by questioning Margery Evans and trying to coax her to ride along with him, using force when words failed to gain him his object. Comus is considerably more subtle, as befits the Lady's station and sophistication. He lures her to his palace through lies and "bleare illusion," appearing to her in the guise of a simple shepherd. But he too must eventually resort to force, immobilizing her in her chair when she attempts to escape. The Lady is not raped—the parallel

with Margery Evans breaks down there. But she is placed in an atmosphere of seemingly gratuitous sordidness and increasing sexual menace. Comus likens her first to a near victim of rape—Daphne fleeing Apollo (137).²⁷ Then, along with the "cordiall Iulep heere / that flames, and dances in his christall bounds" (139), he offers her a chance to surpass "love-borne *Hellena*," an actual victim of abduction who complied with her abductor. But when it becomes evident that his sugared language has failed to move her, he takes a harsher tone which suggests the possibility of physical aggression against her: he vows not to "suffer" her "meere morrall babble" further (157) and touches the cup to her lips—seemingly in an effort to compell her to drink.²⁸ At that moment her brothers and the Attendant Spirit enter, the brothers break the glass and disperse the seducer's retinue, but Comus escapes and the Lady remains "in stonie fetters fixt, and motionlesse" (159).

Our sense of the full sordidness of her situation comes only at the moment she is freed from it, when Sabrina describes the "marble venom'd seate / smeard with gumms of gluttenous heate" (173) in which the Lady has been imprisoned. The precise meaning of these lines has been a matter for much controversy lately, but most readers seem to agree that there is something distinctly seamy about them: Milton's vagueness, if anything, heightens the atmosphere of sexual innuendo by allowing our imaginations to work on the images he provides.²⁹ There have been various attempts to account for the poet's strategy here, among them Barbara Breasted's suggestion that Milton designed the masque to recall the Castlehaven scandal of 1630–31 and reaffirm the Egerton family's purity. But the Evans case was structurally much closer to the action of the masque than the Castlehaven affair had been, and also much more immediate, since it was probably resolved only a few months before the performance, and had involved so many Ludlow officials. The Lady is not ravished, as Margery Evans was, but she is placed in a position of similar powerlessness, trapped and surrounded with defiling substances, brought into involuntary association with a pollution she despises. Her fate is not that of a victim of rape, but her predicament is morally identical. Milton places a young aristocrat of obvious and unquestioned innocence in a position analogous to that of a mistrusted servingmaid in order to open up the whole question of volition in cases of physical compulsion, and to open the minds of his audience to the complexity of issues they had considered easy and straightforward. In light of the Evans affair, the masque becomes a strenuous exercise in legal and moral judgment.

If Comus had sexually assaulted the Lady while she was in his power, would the assault have compromised her innocence and virtue? If the Earl of Bridgewater's colleagues on the Council were to judge the Lady by the same standards they had applied to Margery Evans, the answer would be yes: those who reviewed the case seem to have made the age-old but illogical assumption that a young girl who has been attacked must in some way have provoked the encounter, and must therefore share the blame. But one of the key points in the Evans case was "the disagreement of the woman at the tyme of the act . . . soe that the issue is not vpon th'external Act whether it was done or not but whether it was in the patient voluntary or compulsary" (EL 7399, p. 1). The Lady argues, similarly, that she is guiltless so long as she has reserved her mental assent: although the enchanter can "immanacle" her "corporall rind," he cannot "touch the freedome" of her "mynde" (137). It is worth noting at this point that the Lady's specific praise for virginity (the "sage / And serious doctrine of Virginitie" (155), as opposed to chastity, appears only in the 1637 version of *Comus*, by which time the Evans case and the masque's immediate Ludlow occasion would have faded from people's minds, and his audience expanded to encompass numerous readers with no knowledge of the affair. In 1634, the central issue in *Comus* is not virginity, but chastity, a virtue which does not automatically perish along with the loss of virginity, even in cases of rape, despite the assumption of some in power at Ludlow that it did. In making hue and cry and demanding justice against her violators, Margery Evans had implicitly assumed the separability of virginity and chastity, and had been thrown in jail for her pains, her charges ignored or turned against her. But the eloquent appeal of the Lady—particularly *this* Lady, the daughter of the Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales—is less easy to ignore. She has assumed the position of one of the powerless, and her voice becomes their voice. She challenges her listeners to abandon their stereotyped view of rape victims in particular, but her words expand to echo and interpret afresh the gospel message for the day. Those holding high office at Ludlow are reminded that he who comes to the aid of a child, or any of the similarly mute and powerless, is serving no less a person than God himself, and that failure to render such assistance is an offense against the Lord: "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned.

In her rebuttal of Comus, the Lady carries the revolutionary implications of the gospel text even further:

If every Iust man that now pynes with want
 had but a moderate and beseeming share
 of that which leudly-pamper'd luxurie
 now heap's vpon some fewe, with vast excesse
 natures full blessinge, would be well dispenst
 in vnsuperfluous even proportion. (153)

It is hard to be sure how far Milton wished the implications of these lines to be carried. But the Lady's mode of argument runs parallel to the gospel for the feast of Michaelmas and its injunctions for the abasement of the powerful. In terms of the holiday's emphasis on law and administration, her arguments suggest, at the very least, that anyone concerned with "greatness" should "humble himself" as a "little child," place himself imaginatively in the position of those he is to serve, and model his dispensing of justice upon the example of nature herself, who meant her "full blessings" to be allotted in "even proportion," not lavished on a privileged "few" and withheld from others equally or more deserving.

Comus offers a prototype of such judicial humility in the quiet figure of Sabrina. She is a supernatural being, but so curiously modest and unassuming in Milton's portrayal that we may be tempted to overlook her historical connections with judgment and the law. Sabrina carries many associations pertinent to the larger political task the Earl of Bridgewater faced in Wales, as well as to the more limited subject of rape. According to standard accounts, among them Milton's own, she had herself been the guiltless product of a forced sexual relationship, her mother a hostage of war, the daughter cast into the flood despite her own innocence, and transformed into the goddess of the Severn. Even as a goddess, however, she encountered the problem of rape: according to Michael Drayton's account, which Milton unquestionably knew, her nymphs were so frequently ravished by satyrs emerging from Dean Forest that she finally had to appeal for help to Neptune—a reference, according to a contemporary commentator, to the actual problem of rape along the Severn.³⁰ So the goddess Milton chose to come to the aid of the Lady had double grounds for empathy with the powerlessness of such a victim. Milton's Sabrina assures her suppliants, "tis my office best / to helpe ensnared Chastitie"; she applies drops from her "fountayne pure" to free the Lady from Comus's loathsome bondage, to remove the ritual

and formal pollution the Lady has suffered on hand and lips through her contact with the cup, and to reaffirm her purity.³¹

The Earl of Bridgewater's colleagues may or may not have remembered Sabrina's traditional association with rape, but the most experienced of them were well aware of her significance as a political symbol. As the River Severn, Sabrina spanned the border between England and Wales; she was also a famous judge who presided over border disputes. In Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612), she is a mediator between England and Wales, sitting "with countenance grave . . . Like some great Learned Judge, to end a waightie Cause, / Well furnisht with the force of Arguments and Lawes." In Drayton, Sabrina's function is much like one of the chief functions of the Council of Wales. She ends the wrangling between England and Wales by forecasting their union under the king (James I). Drayton wrote *Poly-Olbion* at a time when the dispute between the Council of the Marches and the English counties attempting to throw off its jurisdiction was coming to a crisis. The Earl of Bridgewater's father Lord Ellesmere, Lord Chancellor of England, had been a key figure in constructing the case for James I in favor of the Council's jurisdiction, and Drayton's account of Sabrina also supports the Council in its struggle to retain the four English counties under its authority: in case contemporary readers missed the political allusion, John Selden obligingly explained it in his notes to Drayton's poem.³² By 1634 the issue was still not settled: members of the Council of Wales had been intimately acquainted with the earlier challenge to their authority, and were still involved in the struggle to preserve their power. In the period before the performance of the masque the Earl and his associates were combing ancient records and compiling lists of precedents in which the River Severn figured prominently, to support their arguments for the Council's jurisdiction.³³ It is inconceivable that they would have been unaware of Drayton's poetic vindication of their position, or unacquainted with Sabrina's symbolic relevance to their cause.

So Sabrina was an ally: her basic judicial aims and functions were the same as those of the Earl and the Council. It was all the more crucial, then, for members in attendance at the masque to pay heed to her conduct toward the Lady. As a judge, she had been grave and awe inspiring, yet a peacemaker. In Milton's masque, she is much less distant, a figure of power but gentle compassion, who comes not as a judge to punish a victim of abduction, but as an advocate to extricate her from her snares. And her mild willingness to intervene

would surely not depend upon the social class or family connections of the victim. It would be naive to assert that Sabrina is meant to "represent" the Earl of Bridgewater or anyone else involved in the Evans case.³⁴ But her talents and special strengths are precisely those that all the judges involved in the Evans affair with the exception of the Earl himself (and perhaps Baron Trevor, the judge at assizes who had tried to get Burghill convicted) had very notably lacked. She thus offers a paradigm for the proper handling of such cases—an example not of censoriousness, but compassion, offering the victim not judgment but grace. She is above all constructive: her quiet ministrations give the Lady not merely formal vindication, but a reaffirmation of her integrity and self worth. Sabrina demonstrates how a holder of high judicial office can temper his power with humility and stoop to consider the "little ones" when called upon to do so, without losing authority or respect.

Of course Sabrina has one distinct advantage over most judges in that she is immortal. She embodies an ideal of rectitude which no fallible human judge could ever hope to reach. If Milton's masque sets forth an ideal of justice, it also makes evident how difficult that ideal is to attain. Part of the problem is perceptual. As Stanley Fish has noted, *Comus* is structured upon a series of doubles and double perceptions: the earth is a "pestered pinfold" and a glorious tract fronting the falling sun; shepherds are not necessarily shepherds, but may be other creatures in disguise, either good (the Attendant Spirit) or evil (Comus); woods, enclosures, and seemingly hospitable courts may be wholesome or ensnaring, so that the masque forces us to "perceive essential differences in the context of surface similiarities."³⁵ It forces us, in other words, to become good judges of equivocal evidence like that produced in a trial of law, in which the same witnesses, words, or events can be made to support opposite interpretations and carry opposite moral implications, depending on how they are viewed and the context in which they are placed. In the masque, the Lady and her brothers are "on trial" in the sense that their judgment, virtue, and powers of discrimination are tested by a series of equivocal events. They are also "tried" in that they are confronted with the limitations of their own perceptions and powers. Along the difficult road to Ludlow, they learn, or display their possession of, many of the attributes of a good judge. They already have the paramount qualification—a love of virtue—but beyond that, they must come to a recognition of how closely virtue can resemble its opposite, and how easily it can appear to be compromised. They

learn how essential it is to test each situation independently in order to discover its defining elements and particular nature. In the words of the liturgy for the day, they learn to be like the wise judge who does not leap to conclusions but is "conversant in dark parables," whose experience fits him to "serve among great men" because "he hath tried the good and the evil among men."

They also learn patience, for the task of extricating an innocent victim from the sticky snares and innuendo which surround her is, finally, a more than human one. *Comus's Lady*, though in genuine peril, always has helpers close at hand, her brothers and the Attendant Spirit: such human and angelic guardians were in short supply along Margery Evans's road in Herefordshire. But for all their good will, they have serious difficulty in freeing the Lady. The first attempt fails, and they succeed only by invoking the aid of the goddess Sabrina, who is finally able to undo *Comus's* charms. There are similarities between this labored and fallible process and the case of Margery Evans, in which theoretically adequate tactics also failed of their proper effect. Indeed, reading over the materials from the case, we may sense that it would have required nothing less than supernatural intervention to get Margery Evans the complete vindication she sought. *Comus* escapes; so did Burghill. And so, we may suspect, did many other perpetrators of similar crimes who possessed the same level of influence. Even if, through heroic measures, they were actually tried, they were not likely to be convicted: there were limits to what justice could accomplish.

On their journey toward Ludlow, the Earl of Bridgewater's children demonstrate their "faith their patience, and their truth" (179), but also gain inklings of the humility of the genuinely wise—those who recognize their own and the world's limitations, and are willing to cull out "unsightly" weeds and attend to seemingly insignificant circumstances in order to undo injustice. The Earl had demonstrated this basic humility in his conduct of the Evans affair in that, in the absence of any certainty, time after time, he had patiently taken the next step required of him to uncover the facts of the case. At the end of his children's journey, he welcomes them to "Ludlow towne" and the President's castle as worthy and "goodly growne" branches of his own virtue and discretion. They have won their trial and righted an injustice, even though evil remains in the world and will test them on other occasions.

Milton's masque praises the Earl and his family for their virtue and their capacity to cut a path of rectitude through a world beset by

snare and pitfalls. But *Comus* also serves as a ceremonial expression of the family's own humility. It may not have been easy for the Earl and his Lady to allow their young daughter to be publicly displayed in a situation of leering sexual jeopardy, made a paradigm for victims of sexual assault. But the Bridgewater family, like Sabrina, had suffered in the past from an involuntary association with sordidness and sexual violence. They had been forced into a recognition of their—and everyone's—vulnerability to such associations through the Castlehaven affair. The ability to tolerate a basic kinship with the less fortunate is an aspect of wise humility, and a virtue particularly appropriate for Michaelmas. By allowing their own daughter to assume the symbolic position of one of the powerless, they made a moving public acknowledgment of their own vulnerability, demonstrating their willingness to humble themselves before imposing humility on others.

Milton's masque offered a stringent challenge to all those officials who served under the Earl of Bridgewater's authority—even a veiled threat to the most corrupt among them, men like the JP's Thomas Price and Sir Henry Williams who had openly flouted the law in the service of self interest. According to the gospel for the day, such offenders deserved to be cast into the depths of the sea—suffer for their guilt a fate like that Sabrina had suffered in her innocence. But despite the undertone of warning, the masque's overriding purpose, like Sabrina's and like the Earl of Bridgewater's in his usual conduct of business, was constructive. Milton's immediate goal on the occasion of the masque was to make better judges by making the judges better men. The judges in the audience on Michaelmas night, 1634, at least those who cared enough to consider themselves good judges, and who in the previous months had yet obstructed or failed to further the tedious case of an ignorant fourteen-year-old girl who had complained of rape and robbery, would have gone away from the masque both chastened and uplifted. A new legal term at Ludlow—the Michaelmas term—was about to begin under the authority of the Council's new President, and with him, Milton suggests, there would commence a new order of rectitude. As the judges of the Council in the Marches of Wales took up their busy round of trials, depositions, and other related matters, they would be afforded an immediate opportunity to act upon what they had learned on Michaelmas night and rededicate themselves to the truth.

Notes

1. My special thanks are due to the Henry E. Huntington Library, where I received a research fellowship to work on the Bridgewater materials, and to the Research Board of the University of Illinois for a travel grant.

2. See J.S. Cockburn, "The Nature and Incidence of Crime in England 1559-1625: A Preliminary Survey" in *Crime in England 1550-1800*, ed. J.S. Cockburn (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), p. 58; Suzanne Gossett's survey of other evidence in "'Best Men are Molded out of Fault': Rape in Jacobean Drama, forthcoming in *ELR*; and for Wales and the border country, G. Dyfnallt Owen, *Elizabethan Wales: The Social Scene* (Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 1964), p. 47.

3. *John Milton, A Maske: The Earlier Versions*, ed. S.E. Sprott (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 37. I have quoted the 1637 title page, because it gives the most elaborate exposition of the occasion. Further quotations from the masque will be from the Trinity and Bridgewater versions in Sprott, and will be indicated by page number in the text.

4. For the general political significance of the masque at court see in particular Stephen Orgel's *The Illusion of Power* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975); and for Lawes and the Egerton family's ties to masques at court, Willa McClung Evans, *Henry Lawes: Musician and Friend of Poets* (New York: Modern Language Assoc., 1941), pp. 85-96; and John G. Demaray, *Milton and the Masque Tradition: The Early Poems, "Arcades," & Comus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), esp. pp. 74-82.

5. For previous work on aspects of the masque's occasion see John D. Cox, "Poetry and History in Milton's Country Masque," *ELH*, 44 (1977), 622-40; William B. Hunter, Jr., "The Liturgical Context of *Comus*," *ELN*, 10 (1972), 11-15; and James Taaffe, "Michaelmas, the 'Lawless Hour,' and the Occasion of Milton's *Comus*," *ELN*, 6 (1968-69), 257-62. There is also valuable work still in manuscript, especially William S. Miller, Jr., "The Mythography of Milton's *Comus*," unpublished dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1975 (I am indebted to Stephen Orgel for this reference); Mary Ann McGuire's *Gracefull Inticements: Milton's Comus and the Reform of Sports* is forthcoming from the University of Georgia Press; and David Norbrook of Magdalen College, Oxford, is completing a book ms. which will include materials on Puritanism and the masque, especially *Comus*.

6. Barbara Breasted, "Comus and the Castlehaven Scandal," *Milton Studies*, 3 (1971), 201-24. See also Rosemary Karmelich Mundhenk's elaboration of Breasted's argument in "Dark Scandal and the Sun-Clad Power of Chastity: The Historical Milieu of Milton's *Comus*," *SEL*, 15 (1975), 141-52.

7. HEH EL 7383, verso. All my quotations from the 1633 petition to the privy council are from this document; further quotations from the Bridgewater collection at the Huntington Library will be indicated by ms. number (and where necessary, page number) in the text. For quotations, I have expanded contractions and occasionally added punctuation to aid readability. This quotation and all of those that follow are reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

8. Mary Sturge Gretton, *Oxfordshire Justices of the Peace in the Seventeenth Century*, Oxfordshire Record Society Series Vol. 16 (Oxford: Oxfordshire Rec-

ord Soc., 1934), pp. lxxxvi–lxxxvii (Hereford Assizes, somewhat surprisingly, were on the Oxford Circuit); and the partial corrective in J.S. Cockburn, *A History of English Assizes, 1558–1714* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 66–67, 110–13.

9. Quoted from the printed version available in Rymer's *Foedera*, 2nd ed., XIX (London: for J. Tonson, 1732), 350. See also EL 7571. The phrase is probably formulaic, having appeared in the 1617 instructions to the Earl's predecessor, but nevertheless illustrative of the reputation Bridgewater held at court.

10. Breasted, pp. 211–17. See also Mundhenk, pp. 143–45.

11. Additional evidence of the confusion of the man taking the deposition is that he here wrote "in what case this deponent was," then crossed out "deponent was" and substituted "said Elizabeth"—still confusing the name of the deponent with the name of the victim.

12. See the account of the trial in T.B. Howell, ed., *A Complete Collection of State Trials, III* (London: Hansard and Longman, 1816), col. 414. This collection is also to be found under the title *Cobbett's State Trials*.

13. In her petition dated Nov. 13, 1633, Elizabeth Evans states that she had appeared at Ludlow "by your Lordships order" (EL 7391); since she was the plaintiff and the most anxious to continue the case, it is likely that the witnesses were also ordered to appear.

14. Cockburn, *History of Assizes*, lists Gravell as Associate Clerk of Assizes only for the years 1639–1650, p. 317; before that period he was an assistant clerk.

15. The standard works on the Council of Wales are Penry Williams, *The Council in the Marches of Wales under Elizabeth I* (Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 1958); and for our period, Caroline A.J. Skeel, *The Council in the Marches of Wales*, Girton College Studies II (London: Hugh Ries, 1904); this study is a bit superficial in its examination of documentary evidence: see also the information in A.H. Dodd, *Studies in Stuart Wales*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 1979), pp. 49–64; Dodd, however, portrays the Earl and the Council in a very negative light. On council jurisdiction see also J.S. Cockburn, *History of Assizes*, pp. 35–38. There is also a wealth of material in the Bridgewater Collection.

16. Bridgewater was later impeached by Parliament (1641) for his conduct of the Muster Master's affair, which involved the removal of a judge from office; however, even in that case, it is by no means clear that he used unfair means, and he escaped the impeachment proceedings with only a fine to pay. See EL 7614–7710 for the history of the case. In general, his rectitude is likely to have created problems for him which would not have existed had he been willing to act more deviously or use direct displays of force.

17. This word as written appears to be "poile"—perhaps a conflation of "soile" and "parts"?

18. The sworn statement comprises a separate document, and there are two petitions mentioning the plea *in forma pauperis* to which it could have been attached: EL 7404 or EL 7401. I suspect it belongs with the former. That one refers to an "oath Annexed"; the words are underlined and a different hand in the margin notes, "no oath annexed"; the other petition makes no reference to a separate oath (perhaps one sworn statement would have

served for both). Probably the omission of the oath from EL 7404 was noted some time after the petition was offered, and the oath then supplied for the plea in *forma pauperis*. Although the hands are similar in all three documents, none of the three hands is identical.

19. If this petition (EL 7401) belongs with the oath for plea in *forma pauperis* of Nov. 19 (EL 7393), then it is not the last document we have from the case, but must date from late November. There seem to me several reasons for rejecting this earlier position for the document, but the chief one is that in her petition of Nov. 13, Elizabeth Evans had pleaded with the Earl to examine the case—in other words, so far as she had been able to determine, he had no direct knowledge of it and had formed no firm opinion. In the undated petition EL 7401, she sounds utterly confident that he is behind her, and has taken her side. It is almost impossible that so radical a shift would have occurred, and she would have known about it, within a mere six days.

20. That is, so far as I have been able to find: I have searched through several years of the Ludlow Council Books in the Bridgewater Collection at the Huntington Library and found no mention of a case; records from Hereford Assizes have not been published and may not have survived. The only likely remaining place for the rape case to have come up would have been the ecclesiastical courts, but the Earl is unlikely to have referred the case to them because of his Council's jurisdictional conflicts with the ecclesiastical courts.

21. David Wilkinson, *The Escape from Pollution: A Comment on "Comus," Essays in Criticism*, 10 (1960), 32–33.

22. Taaffe, p. 259.

23. See Hunter, pp. 13–15. I have used the 1634 Book of *Common Prayer* and for biblical quotations, the Cambridge Pitt Brevier edition of the King James Bible.

24. Hunter, p. 15.

25. A longer study of other aspects of the political occasion is nearing completion in my book ms. "The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes."

26. Except, of course, that their revelry is associated with harvest. For Michaelmas customs, see Taaffe, no. 5 above, and for a hostile contemporary account of Mayday and Midsummer lawlessness, sexual license, and their ill effects, [Henry Burton], *A Devine Tragedie Lately Acted, Or . . . Gods judgments upon Sabbath breakers* (London, 1636). According to contemporaries, both sylvan holidays caused a rise in the bastardy rates.

27. It is not clear from Ovid's account whether Apollo would have stooped to rape; however, Ovid was interpreted as implying that in the Renaissance. See *Shakespeare's Ovid Being Arthur Golding's Translation of the Metamorphoses*, ed. W. H. D. Rouse (London: De La More Press, 1904), p. 2: in describing Ovid's moral instruction, Golding interprets Daphne as a "myrror of virginitie" "yeelding neyther untoo feare, nor force, nor flatterye." The subject of rape or near-rape was quite common in Renaissance pastoral: see Tasso's *Aminta*, II, iii and III; and the would-be rapist the Sullen Shepherd in John Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*, acted at court in January, 1634.

28. I am following John Shawcross's general line of interpretation in "Two Comments," *MQ*, 7 (1973), 97–98. I am indebted to my friend and colleague Michael Lieb for suggesting the reading, and for encouraging me to expand my understanding of how the issue of rape may relate to the masque.

29. See the lively exchange of views in *MQ* beginning with J.W. Flosdorf, "'Gums of Glutinous Heat': A Query," *MQ*, 7 (1973), 5; continuing with Shawcross and Stanley Archer, "'Glutinous Heat': A Note on *Comus*, 1. 917," *MQ*, 7 (1973), 99; Edward Le Comte, "By Sex Obsessed," *MQ*, 8 (1974), 55-57; Shawcross's response, p. 57; and Jean-Francois Camé, "More about Milton's Use of the Word 'Gums,'" *MQ*, 9 (1975), 51-52.

30. See Milton's *History of Britain*, ed. George Philip Krapp, in *The Works of John Milton X* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1932) 15-16; Drayton, *Works*, ed. J. William Hebel, IV *Poly-Olbion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1933), 128, 137; and Jack B. Oruch, "Imitation and Invention in the Sabrina Myths of Drayton and Milton," *Anglia*, 90 (1972), 60-70.

31. Shawcross, "Two Comments," 97-98.

32. *Poly-Olbion*, pp. 98-99, 107, and 137. For the jurisdictional dispute see the sources in n. 15 above, especially Skeel, pp. 133-44.

33. Huntington Library EL 7462-65, 7969, 7973, and 7474-86.

34. However, some of those in attendance may have understood her in that way, noting, perhaps, similarity between the Earl's name Bridge-water and her function.

35. Stanely Fish, "Problem Solving in *Comus*," in *Illustrious Evidence: Approaches to English Literature of the Early Seventeenth Century*, ed. Earl Miner (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), pp. 115-31; the quotation is from p. 121.