

MILTON'S CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS

By

BYUNG-EUN LEE

Bachelor of Arts
Kyung Hee University
Seoul, Korea
1984

Master of Arts
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
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Thesis Approved:

William H. Pixton

Thesis Adviser

David S. Berkeley

Kenneth Cox

Michael Miller

Thomas C. Collins

Dean of the Graduate College

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Introduction

Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, England was governed by monarchs and great nobles.¹ Even though opposing nobles sometimes wanted to establish independent principalities for themselves, the feudal hierarchy was well established. Aristocratic titles were given to those who served kings faithfully and to their relatives and favorites in order to win their support. The aristocracy in England was divided legally into the peerage, who were in the House of Lords, and the gentry, who were styled knights, esquires, and gentlemen. But there was no exact distinction between the two socially and economically, because the source of their finances was landed estates, and both associated socially at court and in the counties. The eldest son of a peer inherited the father's title, and younger sons joined the ranks of the gentry. And the more fortunate members of the gentry could aspire to receiving a title from the king. The two groups of the aristocracy often intermarried.

In the early sixteenth century, however, economic revival and the impact of the discovery of new lands brought forth a new group of people who did not nominally belong to the aristocracy. They were lawyers and merchants of non-gentle birth, and yeomen, and others who were financially

successful and were socially adapted to cooperating with the feudal nobility. But the dominant social value system of the sixteenth century still remained in the hands of the landed aristocracy. As Laurence Stone mentions, none of the new class except the yeomen had acquired their fortunes from the profits of land, so the new class tried to buy lands whenever they had a chance (39). Thus, some of them became the "lesser nobility"² by buying noble estates and coats of arms³ and adopting the manners and mores of the gentlemen. Some of the new owners were accepted, but some were still regarded as upstarts.

Although nearly everyone accepted the hierarchical conception of society, the feudal lord-vassal relation declined slowly during the Renaissance. In the early Renaissance kings used the feudal levy in times of emergency and the great nobles summoned on their vassals for support when they revolted. Beside the lord-vassal relation there was a patron-client relation: a member of the lesser nobility, ambitious for advancement, often entered the service of a great lord. But the power of the lesser nobility gradually increased through representative assemblies, which they generally dominated. They made up the bulk of the House of Commons because most of the towns were persuaded to choose their deputies from the lesser nobility. Slowly the House of Commons grew in importance, and from the middle of the sixteenth century it was often

able to maintain its position when its opinion differed from that of the crown or the House of Lords. As Stone suggests, a main reason for the Revolution in 1640 was the crisis in the affairs of the hereditary aristocracy: for a time this noble group lost its hold upon the nation, and thus passed political and social initiative to the lesser nobility (13).

The English who did not belong to the aristocracy were technically villeins since there was no class like the "middle class" in Milton's time.⁴ They had all kinds of vocations, but no matter how wealthy they were, they were still villeins unless they possessed coats of arms. Since the seventeenth-century the English people still endorsed the social hierarchy, and the lesser nobility and villeins tried to climb to the aristocracy, which provided many social and political advantages. Consequently, class-consciousness preoccupied the minds of the seventeenth-century English, and Milton was no exception.

Milton, whose views on class structuring have never been studied, was born as a son of a scrivener, an occupation like that of a modern lawyer. The Miltons belonged to the gentle class since they had a coat of arms. But they were not a large-landed noble family; it could be said that they were the lesser nobility. The poet's father had to work like other merchants or lawyers who did not possess coats of arms, since the poet's Catholic grandfather drove the poet's Puritan father out of the family without

any riches. John Milton, Sr.'s business in London flourished enough to buy some estates and provide aristocratic schooling to his son. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries aristocrats sent their sons to such schools as Eton and Winchester and to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.⁵ Others studied at the Inns of Court, where English lawyers were trained. Like the sons of aristocrats, Milton, took private tutoring, was sent to St. Paul's School and Cambridge, and associated with a few aristocratic friends (he seemed to have had no villein friends in his life). After his schooling, he remained at his father's house, first in Hammersmith and then in Horton, in "studious retirement," as he called it in his letter to a unknown friend (I:319).⁶ Enjoying his peaceful surroundings and his writing, he educated himself. His study included Greek and Roman writings, Hebraic materials and scriptural commentaries, the Church Fathers, the church historians, rhetoricians, medieval and Renaissance authors, governmental and political thinkers and historians, theologians and philosophers, and creative literary artists. He read these volumes in original languages, for he knew Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish.⁷ He spent about six years in these pastoral retreats and then embarked with a servant on a Grand Tour, which was popular among the young aristocrats. After spending a year and a few months on the continent, he came

back to England to meet the Revolution. This brief description of Milton's early life may give hints about the source of his aristocratic views.

In Chapter I of this dissertation, I establish that his early writings are well matched with his early aristocratic life. Most of his early poems, except a few religious poems, are aristocratically oriented and reveal his social class-consciousness. In the erotic tones of a young Cavalier, he sang about love and ogling girls. He praised the peacefulness and idleness of pastoral scenery and life; even peasants in his poems enjoy country life and their work. In his poems on funereal occasions, his attitude towards death was very much dependent on the social status of the dead. He also wrote two masques, a genre created to celebrate the hierarchical aristocratic establishment. Further, his depiction of aristocratic characters came from the typical Renaissance English image of aristocrats and emphasized their noble heritage. And his base-born characters were usually childish and silly.

In Chapter II, I show how Milton's aristocratic class-consciousness changed with the Revolution. I do not believe that Milton suddenly changed his class-consciousness because of political changes, as some critics have suggested, implying that Milton was a hypocrite.⁸ Actually Milton had showed a strong abhorrence for the Anglican prelacy and intimated his dislike of the monarchy in Lycidas, written

much before the Revolution. But, as shown in his writings at least, his class-consciousness, especially his view of commoners, had changed by the time of the Revolution. In his middle years he showed his belief in popular sovereignty based on Christian egalitarianism. His Christian belief was certain. Since the poet's father was a sincere Puritan, it is probable that the young poet received a good Christian education at home, and, as William Riley Parker notes, at his parish church (I:9). His faith in Christ had always been a basis for his thoughts and writings. In his early years, he wrote a few religious poems, but they did not show his class-consciousness. From the beginning of the Revolution, his faith in Christian liberty was related to his view of social class. He denied any hierarchy in human society and believed in the worth of the humblest. Consequently he repudiated the hierarchical system of the Anglican Church and criticized bishops for their being in positions of wealth and power. He also claimed that everyone should be allowed to divorce freely because no person should chain another to a failed marriage. After the execution of Charles I, Milton defended Cromwell and his government on the premise that people have a right to depose kings because the king-subject relationship was merely a human contract which was therefore breakable. He denied that the king was anointed by God and that the social hierarchy was God-ordained. Milton in this period did not

endorse Shakespeare's "rich blood of kings."

His class-consciousness towards the commoners, however, changed again from the beginning of the 1650s. From the beginning of the Revolution, the Parliament and Cromwell could not get the full support of the people. After the execution of Charles I the revolutionaries felt their isolation from the people, who, they thought, wanted to be slaves again. Milton began to lose his confidence in the people and to have a low view of them again as he had had in his early years. He relied on a few aristocrats for the future of his country.

Unfortunately for Milton, the Restoration came and his social view of the aristocracy changed. He lost his sense of the special value of the aristocracy that he had maintained throughout his life and espoused Christian egalitarianism, a matter that I study in Chapter III. Almost every image of aristocrats appearing for praise in his early and middle years he now used to disparage them, and he denied every hereditary advantage of the aristocracy. His range of vision also changed from England to the world. His notion of people was not confined to the English any more since after the Restoration to him all believers became equal sons of God. The old, blind and tired Milton deeply depended upon his faith in God and an egalitarian idea.

Change is not unusual since people grow spiritually and intellectually all the time. Of course, there have been

many people who have never changed their philosophical or political thought, but Milton, to me, was not of their kind. Most Milton critics have a tendency to regard Milton as a consistent thinker.⁹ His belief in God never changed, but, to me, his idea of class-consciousness changed--sometimes according to his changing social views and sometimes according to his changing political views. He was surely one member of his changing age.

Notes

1. David S. Berkeley, Blood Will Tell in Shakespeare's Plays (Lubbock: Texas Tech UP, 1984), states that the term "gentle" first appeared in thirteenth-century English, indicating some ethical and moral virtue in personal description, such as "generosus" and "nobilis" (5). Later "gentleman" designated an armigerous squire and the right to be identified by a heraldic coat of arms.

2. This is a term of William Riley Parker, Milton: A Biography (2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), but he does not use this term for the Miltons. He uses it for substantial merchants, more than half of them dealers in cloth, in Bread Street. Parker says that at least eight families of the parish of the Miltons were "lesser gentry, able to boast coats of arms. These were the kind of thrifty, ambitious people who were beginning to send their sons to the universities" (I:7). One of them must have been the Miltons.

3. As David Castronovo says in his The English Gentleman: Images and Ideals in Literature and Society (New York: Ungar, 1987), there was the Herald's College, which sold certificates and coats of arms to families who were "known ultimately for prowess of arms and proximately for their landholdings and long time residence and maintenance

of a certain style of life" (5-6). According to Castronovo, between 1529 and 1686 the Herald's College set up a series of visitations to examine gentlemanly status, and every thirty years the "king of arms" traveled the countryside and confirmed those gentlemen who had the legal right to display their coats of arms (6).

4. Oxford English Dictionary indicates no term like "middle class" until the nineteenth century.

5. There were complaints that those studying for the clergy and the sons of the poor were being crowded out.

6. All quotations of Milton's prose are from Complete Prose Works of John Milton (Ed. Don M. Wolfe. 8 vols. New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-82).

7. In discussing Milton's education and writings from a class point of view, it must be remembered that education was then "high culture." Literature was upper-class, and no "people's writings" were studied.

8. S. B. Liljegren views Milton as a Machiavellian in his book Studies in Milton (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1918), p. xvi-xix.

9. For instance, Perez Zagorin, Milton: Aristocrat & Rebel: The Poet and His Politics (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1992), says that "In spite of all the changes he experienced over the year . . . Integrity was the principal note of his personal and intellectual history, and his development contained no severe discontinuities or ruptures"

(149). Christopher Hill tries to prove that in Milton's life he was constantly influenced by base-born radical sects throughout his book Milton and the English Revolution (New York: Viking P, 1977).

CHAPTER 1

The Early Years (1608-1639)

Milton was born in 1608 as a gentleman: his family had a coat of arms.¹ John Aubrey (1626-1697) made a rough sketch of it: "Crest an Arme dexter holding an Eagles head & Neck erased G." (French V:198). He also had two crests, with which he used to seal letters; according to Anthony à Wood (1632-1695), antiquarian and historian: one was "Argent a spread eagle with two heads gules, legg'd and beak'd sable," the other exhibiting "the same double-headed spread eagle of the shield, but with the addition of the surmounting crest,--a lion's claw, above a helmet, &c., grasping an eagle's head and neck" (Masson I:5). His family, however, were not large-landed aristocrats, but a kind of "lesser gentry." To my knowledge, no one has provided precise evidences for how and when the Miltons obtained the coat of arms. According to David Masson (I:8-16), the poet's great-grandparents belonged to the humble small-farming class, and his grandfather, Richard Milton (1559-1601), was a yeoman who had inherited a small property and was economically independent. Richard Milton married a widow, Haughton, and Ernest Brennecke, Jr., suggests that Richard may have married ambitiously, selecting his wife

from a family of higher social standing than his own (6). Brennecke also claims that he probably sent John Milton, Sr., while still very young, to some impoverished but at least literate man or woman in the parish to start educating his son (6). Richard Milton also secured his son's admission to Christ Church, Oxford,² as a chorister, probably for the social advancement of his son.³ But he disinherited his son John because he found him reading the English Bible as a Puritan would do. In London the poet's father then made his fortune by his own efforts as a scrivener, a job combining the functions of a notary, copyist, money lender, and contract lawyer. He was successful enough to find a house named the Spread Eagle in Bread Street, an area that, as John Stow the London annalist described it, was "now wholly inhabited by rich merchants" (309). His business was prosperous, and in 1627, according to David Harrison Stevens, father and son together bought a piece of property near Covent Garden from one Ann Westrawe, for £358, of which £250 was paid jointly and £108 by the father alone. Later in 1629, John Milton, Sr., purchased from the estate of Sir John Suckling a house on Ludgate Hill for £450.

Like his father, the poet's father gave the best education he could to his son. He imitated a fashion among the nobility by employing a private tutor, Thomas Young. He chose St. Paul's as his son's grammar school because,

William Riley Parker says, it was reputed as a "careful and godly institution" (I:13). Later, he sent his son to Cambridge University, as many nobles and prosperous merchants did, because he wanted his son to be a minister. The clergy were not much respected under Elizabeth, but, according to Stone, from the early seventeenth century "a handful of well-born and well-connected younger sons began to trickle back into the Church" (40).

Parker states that in 1625 John Milton, Jr., was admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge, in the status of "lesser-pensioner," socially below that of the "fellow-commoners" or "greater-pensioners," who paid more and enjoyed certain privileges in consequence, but socially superior to the status of the "sizars," the poorer students who paid least, performed various menial duties, and received inferior accommodation (I:23). Probably, Cambridge was the first place which made Milton intensely feel social discrimination, especially since his father, though a gentleman, was a scrivener, a profession unpopular in Jacobean and Caroline society because the scriveners were usually considered usurers. This social pressure might have been one of the reasons why Milton had an almost disastrous freshman year, in addition to his poor relationship with his tutor, William Chappell. In 1626 he was "rusticated" to his home in London. After the first year's difficulties, however, the precocious poet seemed to enjoy the remainder

of his Cambridge years.

"Elegia Prima" was written when he was in "exile" in London, and it showed that when he was a university student, Milton was aristocratic in temperament. He told his friend Charles Diodati that he enjoyed reading at home. He wrote about carefree walks in the suburbs and ogling pretty girls: "like stars that breathe out soft flames, you may see groups of maidens go dancing past. Ah, how many times have I been struck dumb by the miraculous grace of a form which might make decrepit Jove young again! Ah, how many times have I seen eyes which outshine jewels and all the stars that wheel about either pole, necks which excel the arms of Pelops the twice-living" (51-57).⁴ The poem could be considered as a foreshadowing of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" because it was full of the expression of the blithe aristocratic youth.

To understand the twin poems from the point of view of class distinctions, an understanding of the Renaissance medical tradition is necessary first. Milton's class-consciousness shown in the twin poems was based on the Renaissance medical concept of a hierarchy of humours, especially in the word "melancholy," which is a key word in the poems. The Renaissance assumed that the human body and the human mind were closely related and mutually influential. Renaissance medicine in the tradition of Empedocles and Hippocrates (5th-4th centuries B.C.), and the Greek medical philosopher Galen (A.D. 130-201?), believed

that nearly all of the fluid content of the body was compounded of the four humors⁵: blood (like air) was hot and moist, choler (like fire) was hot and dry, phlegm (like water) was cold and moist, melancholy (like earth) was cold and dry. Many Renaissance philosophers often linked the higher social class with blood, usually suggesting this connection as a humor of quality linking the generations rather than as a simple predominance of blood over the other humors. Among the four fluids, melancholic or black bile usually produced sluggish thought and movement, fear, and a fondness for darkness and solitude. From the Galenic conception of melancholy emerged diverse mental and physical phenomena. According to the medical literature in the tradition of Galen, melancholy was a degrading mental abnormality associated with fear and sorrow, which made low-quality blood, often associated with the lower classes. Melancholy men are wretched brutes who are usually led by the Devil. This is the melancholy that the banished persona of the "L'Allegro" curses.

Melancholy in "L'Allegro" is associated with hell and midnight, with "horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy" (4) and it is banished to an "uncouth cell" in a dark and forbidding desert (5). It is Galenic melancholy, a disease of villeins, as David S. Berkeley in Blood Will Tell in Shakespeare's Plays points out (10). Many undesirable qualities of villeins come from bodily coldness, either

phlegm or melancholy. Gentles have the heat of the higher elements, such as blood and choler, and their temperaments, while villeins have the coldness of the lower elements and their temperaments. From such bodies with phlegm or melancholy come cowardice, fear, barrenness, lack of honor, sickliness, decay, and other undesirable states and attitudes. Elizabethan and seventeenth-century philosophers and quasi-medical writers believed that villeins dominated by coldness in the forms of phlegm and melancholy could hardly be expected to be passionate, a state reserved in its many manifestations for the gentles, given heat of body by reason of blood and choler. As an example, in Shakespeare's King Lear Edmund's self-portrayal, "My cue is villainous melancholy" (1.2.135),⁶ represents Galenic melancholy as a disease of the non-gentles.

Melancholy in "Il Penseroso" comes from another conception, hot melancholy, which is related to gentle blood. The persona depicts melancholy as a "pensive Nun" of sober and stately beauty, a "Goddess, sage, holy," a personification of "divinest melancholy" (10-12). This melancholy is a condition which endows one with intellectual acumen and profundity, with artistic ability, and sometimes with divine inspiration. As Laurence Babb says, it is in the Aristotelian, or pseudo-Aristotelian tradition, and its popularity is largely due to Marsilio Ficino, Florentine humanist, philosopher and physician (60). Aristotle says

that melancholy may become very hot or very cold and therefore produces all the various traits of personality which arise from internal heat or cold. Cold melancholy causes torpidity and despondency, and hot melancholy sometimes causes madness, but atrabilious men whose melancholy is moderate are likely to be men of genius (xxx.i). Ficino, in his De Studiosorum Sanitate Tuenda, the first book of De Vita Libri,⁷ insists, as all Renaissance physicians do, that the scholar's sedentary life and arduous mental endeavor breed the melancholic humor (Babb 60). It is the melancholy which can be linked to the gentle characters Olivia, Orsino, and Viola in Twelfth Night and many royal characters like Hamlet. Jaques' melancholy "in a most humorous sadness" (As You Like It 4.1.19-20) also belongs to this kind.

Melancholy had been an important subject among gentlemen since the late sixteenth century. The vogue of melancholy was caused by the imitation of the Italian affectation of melancholy by English travelers returned from Italy. In Italy, especially in Florence, pseudo-Aristotelian melancholy had been esteemed since the fifteenth century. Especially since the travelers were mostly young gentlemen, melancholy had aristocratic connotations in Renaissance England, and this made the pose more attractive. Melancholic travelers were so numerous in Elizabethan and Jacobean London as to constitute a social

type, and even people who had never been to Italy wanted to be one of the type. It has been thought that Milton wrote the twin poems in the Horton period or around 1631 when he was in Cambridge, and both dates are obviously antecedent to his journey to Italy in 1638-39. Like other young intellectuals in his age, Milton favored the aristocratic taste.

Besides melancholy, there are some other elements in the twin poems in which we can see Milton's class-consciousness. In "L'Allegro" the persona wakes up and strolls in the country town where he wants to live with Mirth in "unreproved pleasures free" (40). Around him is the country scene, the sheep nibbling on the lawn, the clouded mountains, the daisied meadows, a scene detached from a castle where the gentle live (by locating the country scene beside a castle where gentles live, he emphasizes the life of non-gentles). Shepherds eat their meal near their cottage, bells ring (nobles would have fanfares instead of ringing bells) and rebecks (low-class instruments) sound, as youths and maidens dance until the daylight fails. Seeing this country scene, Milton says, "Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures" (69). The country scene gives him pleasure, but it is "new" because he does not belong to their class: Milton has been culturally slumming. In the evening they are drinking "Spicy Nut-brown Ale." Renaissance texts specify beers and ales as lower class

beverages, suggesting wine as the gentle beverage. Fynes Morison mentions that "clowns and vulgar men" could in Renaissance England hardly ever procure wine (Younger 292). Jack Cade in Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI says that when he is king of England, "[he] will make it felony to drink small beer" (4.2.67-68) and "of the city's cost, the pissing-conduit [shall] run nothing but claret wine this first year of our reign" (4.6.3-4).

Milton regarded the lower-class people's culture as childish and immature. In the evening the peasants tell tales suitable to children: the story of Queen Mab and Puck. The low or folk culture of the plebeians is once more emphasized when the persona goes to the city, leaving the country: "Tow' red Cities please us then, / And the busy hum of men, / Where throngs of Knights and Barons bold, / In weeds of Peace high triumphs hold" (117-20). Gentles, knights and barons are "men"; by contrast the country people have been regarded as children. We can see the same attitude toward peasants in Robert Herrick's poetry, especially in "The Hock-Cart, Or Harvest Home." The poem celebrates the bringing-in of the last cart at harvest, and includes addresses to the country folk and the lord of the Manor. It begins with a suggestion of warfare between peasants and Nature, using military-like terms: "By whose tough labors and rough hands / We rip up first . . . [italics mine]"⁸ Herrick implies that peasants are

infantry, and lords are generals. In the poem the lord and the speaker are sophisticated enough to see the beauty of the scene. The persona likes the countrymen but sees their Nature-worship as childish or primitive: "Some bless the cart; some kiss the sheaves; / Some prank them up with oaken leaves." The peasants drink beer, not wine, and eat mutton in the Manor house. The persona calls them "boys" and uses imagery suggesting that the peasants are not far removed from the animal level: the persona asks the peasants to "Feed and grow fat" themselves.

When the persona of "L'Allegro" goes to the city, Knights and Barons are watching plays, and the persona views ladies' eyes as stars shedding through their rays a beneficent effect upon beholders, an extravagant adulation of women in flowery, pseudo-poetic, almost *précieuse* language. This kind of metaphor was being much used by the seventeenth-century court coterie, Queen Maria Henrietta's court, and was later to be vented in Restoration society as well. The knights and barons contend to win the grace of the Queen of the Tournament.

Melancholy in "Il Penseroso," like Euphrosyne, has her companions who seem to belong to the upper class. For instance, Spare Fast, "that oft with gods doth diet, / And hears the Muses in a ring / Aye round about Jove's altar sing" (46-48); and Leisure, who takes his pleasure "in trim Gardens" (50)--which are English landscape gardens probably

influenced by Italian formal gardening. Later the persona also wanders on the smooth lawn to watch the moon and meditates in a "high lonely Tow'r," which may be a part of the formal garden, perhaps Blaise Castle near Bristol, as John Dixon Hunt suggests (89).

The persona, moreover, enjoys "gorgeous Tragedy," tales of Thebes (Eteocles, Polynices, for example) or of Pelops' line (Agamemnon, Orestes) or of ancient Troy (Hecuba)--all members of royal house, in contrast to Mab and Puck, beloved of the peasants in "L'Allegro." The persona "Il Penseroso" never mentions low class persons. He also reads the Squire's Tale, a serious chivalric romance from The Canterbury Tales.

A sense of social class as formed by rank and occupation also emerges in Milton's poems on Thomas Hobson, the old Cambridge carrier who died during the Christmas vacation on January 1, 1631. Like many other students, Milton must have used Hobson's coach between Cambridge and the Bull Tavern in London and must have waited for Hobson often in hopes of mail from home. Hobson drove his weekly coach from 1564 until his death: he must therefore have been well known to the students. Probably because he was a man of the lower-class and a minor university functionary, his death was taken as a subject for jokes among the university students,⁹ and Milton was no exception.

Milton begins his first Hobson poem with an unusual way

to describe a man's death:

Here lies old Hobson, Death hath broke his girt,
And here, alas, hath laid him in the dirt,
Or else the ways being foul, twenty to one,
He's here stuck in a slough, and overthrown. (1-4)

Throughout the two Hobson poems there is no funereal expression for Hobson; instead, there is joking on his low-class characteristics:

Here lieth one who did most truly prove
That he could never die while he could move,
So hung his destiny never to rot
While he might still jog on and kept his trot,
Merely to drive the time away he sick'n'd,
Fainted, and died, nor would him Ale be quick'n'd;
That even to his last breath (there be that say't)
As he were prest to death, he cry'd "more weight".
(1-4; 15-16; 25-26)

Especially when we compare the Hobson poems with "An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester," which was written in the same year as the Hobson poems, 1631, we can see how very differently Milton treats the death of a high-class person with whom the poet, as far as my research goes, had no personal acquaintance. It begins with her class identification, unlike epitaphs by his contemporaries, such as

Ben Jonson's "An Epitaph on S. P., A Child of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel," or Thomas Carew's "An Elegy upon the Death of Doctor Donne, Dean of Paul's." Milton writes,

This rich Marble doth inter
The honor'd Wife of Winchester,
A Viscount's daughter, an Earl's heir,
Besides what her virtues fair
Added to her noble birth,
More than she could own from Earth. (1-6)

Furthermore, in many places, Milton praises her noble class:

Her high birth, and her graces sweet,
Quickly found a lover meet;
.....
Gentle Lady, may thy grace
Peace and quiet ever have:
.....
Here, besides the sorrowing
That thy noble House doth bring.
(15-16; 47-48; 53-54)

At the end of the poem, the lady is called a saint, and the "new welcome Saint" has been exalted. A Marchioness on earth, in Heaven she has become Queen, a higher class position.

Two other Latin poems on the deaths of the Bishops of Winchester and Ely also reveal Milton's class-consciousness in his early years (bishops were main targets for his severe

criticism in his middle years). In a manner quite different from the Hobson poems, Milton begins the two funeral poems for the high-class persons with grief: "I was grief-stricken" ("Winchester" 1) and "My cheeks were still drenched and stained with tears" ("Ely" 1). Milton says that the saints in heaven greet Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester, as a new companion, promising him eternal rest. In honor of Nicholas Felton, Bishop of Ely, Milton calls him "the prince of the saints" (13).

"Arcades" is a masque which clearly shows Milton's class-consciousness when he was a college student. According to Milton's own note in the 1645 edition, "Arcades" was "part of an entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield by some noble persons of her family" (Hughes 77). "Entertainment" was frequently used as a term for a short masque intended either to greet a guest or to welcome a returning member of an aristocratic family. "Arcades" is not for public entertainment, as Shakespearean work was.

The father of Alice Spenser, the Countess, was Sir John Spenser, whose family had made its wealth from sheep farming.¹⁰ Her first husband, Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, who became Earl of Derby in 1593, had brought her into the highest circles at court. Her second husband, Lord Keeper Egerton, did not get along with the Countess probably because he was her social inferior.¹¹ Like most nobility of

her time, especially as a newer aristocrat, she cared much about family status and style. She was a vigorous manager of the well-being and honor of the family members. So, when Sir John Egerton, now Earl of Bridgewater, gave the entertainment in her honor in 1632,¹² he must have wanted to pay tribute to her as much as the Countess did to Queen Elizabeth at the same place in 1602.

In "Arcades" Milton makes use of Cavalier *préciosité* to celebrate and entertain the Countess of Derby. *Préciosité* was at first a French and later an English fad of the seventeenth century and afterwards, especially in Queen Henrietta's court and in Restoration society, current in fashionable society and in the drama patronized by *précieus* and *précieuses*. Berkeley defines the term *préciosité* as "a form of ceremonious social intercourse which derived its attitudes, postures, and special vocabulary from the belief that beautiful and virtuous ladies have a semi-divine status, to which their male satellites (and, on occasion, inferior females) can be drawn by due worship of these ladies and the cultivation of refinement, honor, virtue, superficial learning, and a certain stereotyped wit" ("Préciosité" 110). The basic theme of *préciosité* must have descended from Chrétien de Troyes,¹³ Ulrich von Lichtenstein or others of the Middle Ages. In Frauendienst Ulrich von Lichtenstein, a thirteenth-century German, exaggerated chivalry towards women, relating the amazing tasks imposed

on him by his mistress. Also, in his Service of Ladies, he treats woman as a divine figure:

Woman are rich in charm and grace.

To match their lovely form and grace

is more than angels hope to do.

A woman, virtuous and true,

who has no faults of any kind,

must have an angel's heart and mind

and like an angel seems to glow.

You have my word that this is so.

(Stanza 6, p. 52)

The lady in *préciosité* has qualities of goddess-like "fineness of soul," which separates her from the vulgar mob and their coarseness, and her fineness attracts others. So salutation of the fair lady as saint, angel, or goddess is the most characteristic in *précieuse* manners. For example, Robert Gould's fop in The Play-House, a Restoration satire, addresses his mistress of the moment in the strained eloquence characteristic of *préciosité*:

Madam! by Heav'n You have an Air so Fine,

It renders the least thing you do - Divine!

We dare not say You were created here,

But dropt an Angel from th' Aethereal sphere.

Ten thousand Cupids on Your Fore-Head sit,

And shoot resistless Darts thro' all the Pit.

Before Your Feet, see! Your Adorers lie,

Live, if You smile; and if You Frown, they die!
 Usually, when not used satirically, this compound of
 attitude, gesture, and speech was meant to supply "tone"
 befitting ladies of rank and station.

The seventeenth-century audience from the 1630s onward
 was well acquainted with this type of characterization. In
 the beginning of "Arcades," some nobles dress up as "Nymphs"
 and shepherds and pretend they have come from Arcadia. They
 say that they should not dance any more there, but rather
 come and live at Harefield to serve the lady of Harefield.
 When they sing about the lady's divinity and her radiant
 beams, *préciosité* saturates their song:

What sudden blaze of majesty
 Is that which we from hence descry,
 Too divine to be mistook:

 Mark what radiant state she spreads,
 In circle round her shining throne,
 Shooting her beams like silver threads:
 This, this is she alone,
 Sitting like a Goddess bright,
 In the center of her light. (2-4; 14-19)

The Arcadians are drawn to the lady by her rayonnement, the
 familiar divinity of courtly compliment. And they even
 think her the mother of gods:

Might she the wise Latona be,

Or the tow' red Cybele,
 Mother of a hundred gods. (20-22)

Then, the Genius of the Wood appears and identifies the gentles, even though they are disguised as shepherds:

Stay gentle Swains, for though in this disguise,
 I see bright honor sparkle through your eyes.

(26-27)

The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English believed that the gentle have an air of distinction that would manifest itself even in unlikely circumstances because they have noble blood. Marina tells Leonine in Shakespeare's Pericles, "You are well-favored, and your looks foreshow / You have a gentle heart" (4.1.85-86). Leonine's look shows gentle birth and therefore gentle virtues. Pericles, though naked from shipwreck, is recognized as a gentle by the fishermen. In The Winter's Tale, a shepherd immediately recognizes the lost child Perdita to be gentle (3.3.71-73). Polixenes says of her that she is "too noble for this place" (4.4.158). The Third Gentleman says, "The majesty of the creature [Perdita] in resemblance of the mother; the affection of nobleness which Nature shows above her breeding; and many other evidences proclaim her, with all certainty, to be the King's daughter" (5.2.35-39). And the royal boys of Cymbeline, according to their adulator Belarius (4.2.169-181), are naturally distinguished.

The Genius in "Arcades" then alludes to the noble

children as gods and goddesses, and mentions that they are "the breathing Roses of the Wood" (32). In the Renaissance period, the gentle were depicted as beings of good body odor and sweet breath. In Shakespearean plays the gentle have fragrant breath or, much more usually, no smell either of breath or body: in Cymbeline, Arviragus says that the supposedly dead Fidele, the disguised Imogen, had good breath--"no, nor / The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander, / Outsweet'ned not thy breath" (4.2.222-24). On the other hand, the base usually have bad breath: Brutus, in Coriolanus, deprecates seeking approval of the base as begging "their stinking breaths" (2.1.252); Casca, in Julius Caesar, says that "such a deal of stinking breath" of the "rabblement" choked Caesar and made him swoon, and Casca "durst not laugh, for fear of opening [his] lips and receiving the bad air" (1.2.244-50).

Then the Genius mentions that at night he listens to the music of the spheres. As in the "Nativity Ode" and "At a Solemn Musick" the music is a "heavenly tune" which human ears can not hear (72). This "music" digression is linked to the main theme in this fashion: if the Genius could sing such music himself, he might praise his Lady as she should be praised. The remark could also be Milton's own wish to praise the noble lady adequately. The Genius then leads the "noble stem" forward to salute the Countess by "kiss[ing] her sacred vesture's hem" (84), which is an aristocratic way

of saluting the royal. "Arcades" ends with two songs praising "her deity."

Milton's other masque, Comus, has been read by many scholars as his puritanic protest against the luxurious and lascivious court masque. R. Scott Stevenson interprets Comus as reflecting the conflict between Royalist and Puritan views of the church. He sees Comus and his palace as representing Charles I and his court and the rout of Comus as that of the Royalists. The "true" church would be, like the Lady, "in stony fetters, fixt and motionless." Stevenson thinks that the significance of Comus lies in an appeal that Parliament supplant the King, and that "free religion" take the place of the established religion (828-30). Christopher Hill argues that Milton "used the occasion of Comus to try to bring order into what he saw as the moral chaos that court and papists were bringing upon England. As against the Inns of Court wits, who combined acceptance of sexual promiscuity with social sneers against the bourgeoisie, Milton aligned himself with the Puritan middle class, on aesthetic as well as moral grounds" (49). G. H. Sensabaugh suggests that Comus is in part a Puritan response to the specious Platonism of Henrietta Maria's circle which claimed that a "beautiful woman can do no wrong" (244). Michael Wilding claims that Milton, praising the Egertons, uses ambiguous signification to criticize them and to replace their hierarchy based on aristocracy with one based

on virtue (147). J. H. Hanford suggests that Comus may have been written as a reply to the libertine philosophy embodied in Thomas Randolph's The Muse's Looking Glass (24). Barbara Breasted and Rosemary Karmelich Mundhenk state that Comus may have been intended to help repair the reputation of the Bridgewater family damaged by the Castlehaven Scandal,¹⁴ pointing out their need to see their last unmarried daughter portray sexual virtue (201-24; 141-52).

We have to remember, however, that Comus was basically written to be "presented" as an noble entertainment, facing an upper-class audience intimately. It was "presented" at Ludlow Castle by the members of the Egerton family. The head of the family, the Earl of Bridgewater, had at that time recently been appointed President of Wales, as shown in Milton's subtitle: "On Michaelmas Night, Before the Right Honorable John, Earl of Bridgewater Viscount Brackley, Lord President of Wales, and one of His Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council" (Hughes 86). The producer Henry Lawes was the royal musician for the King's Men and had a close connection with the family. He taught music to the children of Bridgewater and produced "Arcades." Lawes was thirteen years older than Milton and had been dependent upon patronage from his youth. He could count himself a success professionally. According to Parker, he could sing a new poet's lyrics to Charles I at Whitehall and even accompanied the King on his journey to Scotland in 1633 (II:759-60).

Milton and Lawes knew each other well, as shown in Lawes' dedication to the 1637 masque text and Lawes' 1638 letter to Milton, helping him to get permission to go abroad (Patterson XII:325-26). Milton affectionately treats him in the masque --"Who with his soft Pipe and smooth-dittied Song / Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar" (86-87)--and later shows his admiration for Lawes in his Sonnet XIII, "To My Friend, Mr. Henry Lawes, On His Airs." Milton knew exactly what Lawes wanted him to do at Ludlow and must have followed his intention.

The masque is a form of literature designed primarily for public recitation and performance. As Enid Welsford explains, "A conscientious artist responsible for the planning of Court functions was confronted by two problems: he had to give unity to a production in which music, poetry, painting, and dancing all played a part: he had to give beauty to a performance which was chiefly appreciated as an advertisement of wealth and an opportunity for flattery and political propaganda" (247). There was no reason for Milton to hurt the feelings of the upper-class spectators at Ludlow by accusing them as the sexually promiscuous or as lavish bourgeoisie. There also is no necessary casual link between the Castlehaven Scandal and Milton's selection of the chastity theme. The best way to overcome the scandal was to ignore it. John Creaser maintains, "Pragmatically, it was better for the family to let those dogs lie which, though

probably not sleeping, were no longer in full cry; it could do the Egertons nothing but harm to insist on the corruption of their relatives" (311). It is inconceivable that Milton would have wished to remind his audience of the scandal, however indirectly.

Although scholars have insisted that Comus differed from other masques of the period, it should be regarded as an aristocratic work, as Milton titled it simply "A Mask." Comus leaves out all but a decent measure of compliment; it presents the triumph of an aristocratic family over vice. It is, however, an aristocratic work with Milton's own "propaganda": Milton in Comus seems to show his belief in the class hierarchy, showing the ideal of aristocracy. Further, the comparison between the Bridgewater manuscript and the 1637 printed version, which revised the Trinity manuscript, also shows the characteristics of Comus. The text of Comus exists in five versions: the Bridgewater manuscript, the Trinity manuscript, and the printed texts of 1637, 1645, and 1673. Among them, the Bridgewater manuscript and the 1637 printed version differ considerably, especially in the temptation scene and the epilogue. The Bridgewater manuscript is shorter (908 lines) than the published versions (1023 lines) mainly because of the cuts in the two scenes: the published version has extended the discussion of the Lady's chastity and an epilogue, a "public" speech which emphasizes the virtue of aristocrats.

The original acting version of Comus, C. S. Lewis and John Diekhoff argue, was more "dramatic," less "literary," and less heavily moralized than the revised 1637 text with which most readers are familiar. They insist that Milton, in his revisions in the Trinity manuscript, subordinates its language to the masque's conventions and to a corresponding harmony of tone ("Notes" 170-6; 749-64). Cedric C. Brown¹⁵ points out that in the "general shift of tone in the published text, towards sharper and more independent discrimination, there is the suggestion that the aristocratic and courtly world of the 1630s . . . is being more firmly placed" (151). Thus, it seems that the performance version is closer to R. H. Bowers' comments on the masque: "[the pastoral,¹⁶ the masque, and the fanciful prose or verse romance of damsels in distress and adolescent heroes on trial] are not burdened by such bourgeois activities as trade or struggle for place, or by the desperate proletarian struggle for existence, or by the rude intrusion of strained logomachias freighted with political and theological ideology" (74). This exclusion indicates that the primary purpose of Comus is the celebration of the political occasion, the inauguration of the President of Wales, while the published version includes more of Milton's "propaganda."¹⁷

The roles of the Lady, Elder Brother, and Younger Brother were taken by the Earl's three children: the Lady

Alice Egerton, Lord Brackley, and Mr. Thomas Egerton. One of the peculiarities of the masque is that the actor takes a role matching his or her social position. C. L. Barber argues that "A masque was presented, not performed. Its basic method was to extend actuality by fiction, fictions developed out of the circumstances of the occasion and pointing back to realities" (38). Henry Lawes took the part of the Attendant Spirit since he had been music tutor of the children; and, moreover, as Marjorie Nicolson points out, it would be easier to supervise his young pupils if he were among them rather than off-stage (68). In the role of Sabrina, Nicolson suggests that a "best friend" of Lady Alice or Lady Penelope, Lady Alice's older married sister, might have acted (69). The suggestion seems appropriate because Sabrina is a high-ranking deified figure who releases Lady Alice from the alabaster chair; she comes in a chariot glowing with various colors, "Thick set with Agate and the azure sheen / Of Turquoise blue and emerald green" (893-94). The role must have been taken by an aristocrat. Comus is an important part because the triumph of virtue over vice was the basic theme of the masque. He seems to be either a villain figure or a degenerated gentle since he has excellent speech. Nicolson also well suggests that a professional entertainer might have played the Comus role since professionals were proof against the obloquy inherent in the role of Comus (69). Also, there must be some country

men for the dancing of the peasants. The Spirit calls them "All the Swains that there abide" (951). "Swain" was a class term which may indicate a man of low degree or servant. As Spenser's The Shepheardes Calender shows, "The Shepheardes swayne you cannot well ken, But it be by his pryde, from other men" ("September" 42-43). Their dance "with Jigs and rural dance resort" is contrasted with the elegant dance of the gentle (952).

Brown mentions that the word "comus" comes from the words *komos* (revel) and *komazontes* (revellers), and "comus" is related to the tribe of Benjamin in the Book of Judges since Milton uses one source-word in his list of possible subjects for tragedy in the Trinity manuscript: "Comazontes or the Benjamins Jud.19.20 & c. or the Rioters" (Brown 66-67). The story in the Book of Judges is about a Levite who lost his concubine in the hands of the Benjamins. They tried to commit sodomy with the Levite and raped his concubine until daybreak, leaving her dead. The Levite divided her corpse into twelve pieces and sent them to the 12 tribes of Israel as a protest against the Benjamins. Brown suggests that the writer of Judges repeatedly comments about the lack of leadership and unity: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17.6; 21.25; cf 28.1; 29.1) and "there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing" (18.7). It seems that Brown's comment is

appropriate since there was no leadership in the wood of Comus, and the Lady and her brothers with the help of the divine power of the Attendant Spirit and Sabrina bring unity and peace in the wood. Furthermore, the masque at Ludlow was performed to celebrate the inauguration of the Lord President of Wales, who, it was hoped, would bring unity and peace to his new place.

Comus shows the ideal level of character and conduct Milton demanded of the gentle. In the beginning of the masque, the Attendant Spirit draws the difference between a calm, serene heaven and a smoky, dim earth, and there are some humans who seek to join the two realms "by due steps" (12). The Spirit's office is to help them, and they are, of course, the Egertons. In the next passage, this universe of Jove is extended through the image of Neptune. Milton here comments that the authority of the President is derived from the sovereignty of Neptune over seas and islands, chief of which is Britain. The President, who is "A Noble Peer of mickle trust and power," uses "temper'd awe to guide / An old and haughty Nation proud in Arms" (31-33). So his rule is made part of the working of the harmonious universal power. The President's children, who are called "fair offspring nurs't in Princely lore," are coming through a wood to "attend their Father's state / And new-entrusted Scepter" (34-36). The Spirit is dispatched by "Sovran Jove" to guard them: heaven protects the aristocrats.

In the next place, Milton creates a myth to produce Comus, an offspring of Bacchus and Circe. Bacchus and Circe are divine figures, but to Milton they are perverted figures. Bacchus extracted wine, which distracts people's minds, and Circe was a sorceress: "Bacchus that first from out the purple Grape / Crusht the sweet poison of misused Wine . . . [Circe's] charmed Cup / Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape, / And downward fell into a groveling Swine" (46-53). As a son of the perverted couple, Comus naturally becomes a degenerated figure. He even "Excels his Mother at her mighty art" with cup and wand (63). The travellers who drink Comus' "orient liquor" are transformed: their heads are changed into bestial heads. In the performance at Ludlow the "rout of monsters" probably wore papier-mâché heads, but the audience would understand that Milton meant that their physical change came from the degradation of their blood, chemically activated by the poisonous liquor.

The Renaissance believed that the high blood of aristocrats should be exhibited in good bodily contours; in Renaissance language, a gentle should be "well favored" and "well featured." In Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI the physical characteristics of base-born Cade are contrasted with those of gentle-born Alexander Iden. Iden says,

See if thou canst outface me with thy looks;

Set limb to limb, and thou art far the lesser;

Thy hand is but finger to my fist;

Thy leg a stick compared with this truncheon;
 My foot shall fight with all the strength thou hast,
 And if mine arm be heaved in the air,
 Thy grave is digg'd already in the earth.

(4.10.46-52)

Shakespeare stresses Cade's base blood through depicting him as a man of mean and even despicable appearance. Milton, like Shakespeare, follows the Neo-Platonic practice of associating a fine appearance with virtue and an ugly face and deformed body with vice. Another example from Shakespeare also shows that the handsome features and figures of gentry are thought to have an ethical dimension. Tarquin fears that his rape of Lucrece is "so vile, so base, / That it will live engraven in my face" (202-3), and Lucrece cannot believe Tarquin to be evil because his features are so good (1527-46). The "hard-favored," unshapely peasantry bear testimony not only to deprivation but also to the unrighteous and dishonorable way of life of ancestors who have so stamped their characters.

After their transformation, the creatures of Comus' rout forget their friends and native home for the pleasures of their sensual sty: they become bastards, forgetting their former status. The close connection between bastardy and baseness implicated non-gentles in sexual looseness. Villeins could hardly know their own fathers, to say nothing of a family tree. They were less observant of the marriage

contract than were gentry. In Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, Isabella, like many another Shakespearean character, confronted by what she regards as unworthy conduct, immediately thinks of bastardy and of the possible illegitimacy of her brother, Claudio. Claudio asks her to fornicate with Angelo to save his life: she replies, "What should I think? / Heaven shield my mother play'd my father fair! / For such a warped slip of wilderness / Ne'er issu'd from his blood" (3.1.139-42). The only time that Prince Hal ever takes drastic physical action upon Falstaff's person occurs, according to the Hostess, "when the Prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing-man of Windsor" (2 Henry IV 2.1.89-90): the prince can bear many insults from Falstaff, but he cannot endure the suggestion of his own bastardy.

In his opening speech, Comus welcomes the darkness of night and presents vice in festivity, in contrast to the Attendant Spirit's Hesperian gardens eternally bright and peaceful. Comus then shows the joys that are the consequence of carefree excess. Provocation begins with "Midnight shout and revelry, / Tipsy dance and Jollity" (103-4), and revelry becomes riot. In their feast dance is important.¹⁸ Comus celebrates dance by night, imitating (he says) the motions of the heavenly bodies and moon-drawn seas, fairies and nymphs. The difference between the harmonious dance and the heavy-moving, grotesque and noisy

rout is evident:

We that are of purer fire
 Imitate the Starry Choir,
 Who in their nightly watchful Spheres,
 Lead in swift round the Months and Years.
 The Sounds and Seas with all their finny drove
 Now to the Moon in wavering Morris move,
 And on the Tawny Sands and Shelves
 Trip the pert Fairies and the dapper Elves;
 By dimpled Brook and Fountain brim,
 The Wood-Nymphs deckt with Daisies trim,
 Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
 What hath night to do with sleep?¹⁹ (111-121)

Here non-gentles must have played the role of evil figures by dancing in a manner suggesting disorder; later, aristocrats representing virtue restore harmony to the theatrical world primarily through gesture and orderly dance. In other words, the antimasque figures by their ugliness and grotesqueness set off the courtly characters to advantage, obviously one advantage that gentles derived from the base. Another aristocratic assumption of hierarchy in the antimasque is shown when Comus abruptly ends the dance of his followers at the approach of the Lady. Barber points out that often in court masques, the antimasque was abruptly stopped by the arrival of some nobles, usually with moral superiority, who would dismiss the antics from the hall with

moral, aesthetic, and aristocratic contempt (56-57). We have more dismissals of the non-gentle in Comus: the two brothers dismiss Comus and his followers, and the peasants' dance at the end probably was dismissed to accommodate the dance of aristocrats, showing their social, aesthetic, and moral superiority.

Comus watches for the evening star Venus to waken love, but love here means obscenity in the orgies of the Thracian goddess Cotytto. Their dark world is Stygian:

Night hath better sweets to prove,
 Venus now wakes, and wak'ns Love.
 Come let us our rites begin,
 'Tis only daylight that makes Sin,
 Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
 Hail Goddess of Nocturnal sport,
 Dark veil'd Cotytto, at whom the secret flame
 Of midnight Torches burns; mysterious Dame,
 That ne'er art call'd but when the Dragon womb
 Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,
 And makes one blot of all the air,
 Stay thy cloudy Ebon chair
 Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat' and befriend
 Us thy vow'd Priests, till utmost end
 Of all thy dues be done, and none left out.

(123-37)

Their deluded feast associated with Cotytto and Hecate is a

devilish perversion in a "conceal'd Solemnity." The speech ends with lines alluding to the noisy and obscene rites of Cotytto: "Come, knit hands, and beat the ground, / In a light fantastic round" (143-44).

Comus now hears the Lady in the wood and resolves to seduce her. His method is Machiavellian like that of Shakespeare's Edmund and Iago who, as Franklin R. Baruch states, "achieve their nearest approach to joy when they are lost in admiration of their own evil" (294):

I under fair pretense of friendly ends
 And well-plac't words of glozing courtesy,
 Baited with reasons not unplaussible,
 Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
 And hug him into snares. (160-64)

The Lady enters, and in her speech she is clearly class-conscious: she strongly suggests aristocratic disgust when she first hears the sounds of the peasants' revelry:

This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
 My best guide now; methought it was the sound
 Of Riot and ill-manag'd Merriment,
 Such as the jocund Flute or gamesome Pipe
 Stirs up among the loose unletter'd Hinds.
 (170-74)

The peasants, like Comus' followers, are also accused of worshipping the gods with more license than reverence:

When for their teeming Flocks and granges full

In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. (175-77)

Then, she shows her fear and loathing of the coarse manners of drunken male peasants:

I should be loath
To meet the rudeness and swill'd insolence
Of such late Wassailers. (177-79)

Now she is in the darkness and surrounded with imminent dangers in "Sands and Shores and desert Wildernesses" (209). But she is to be an example of aristocratic youth not seduced by Comus because she has the virtuous mind governed by Faith, Hope and Chastity. "The Supreme Good" will send a guardian to protect her. Milton substitutes chastity for charity (cf. Corinthians 13:13) in the trinity of virtues, for chastity is here set forth as love of the supreme good, something disciplining all lower passions and providing a positive incentive to do good. In the autobiographical passages in the Apology for Smectymnuus Milton holds that Plato teaches that chastity and love are closely related "steps" conveying the soul to God (II:566).

The Echo song is a charming, sophisticated, aristocratic song. It is a song of one who is solitary and lost in a wild country place: it prays to a divine figure for an answer. The Lady calls Echo because Echo always gives an answer, and actually the Lady will have an answer. The Lady calls Echo "Sweet Queen of Parley" to give her

courtly rank while remembering her employment by Jove, to keep Juno talking while he entertained the nymphs. The Lady sings that Echo will be rewarded with an improvement of her hierarchical status, will "be translated to the skies, / And give resounding grace to all Heav'n's Harmonies" (242-43), if she let the Lady have her brothers back. Later in the conversation with Comus, by depicting Echo as "courteous" the Lady shows she is an aristocrat by presuming that she is in a world inhabited by a "courteous" figure: "my sever'd company, / Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo / To give me answer from her mossy Couch" (274-76).

Appellations which designate class status are important. In the Echo song the Lady calls her brothers a "noble pair." "Noble" is a class term meaning illustrious by rank, title, or birth. Later the Elder Brother calls Minerva's grace "noble grace" and the Spirit calls the President "Noble Lord." Of course, "lady" itself is a class term. When the Lady first meets Comus, who is disguised as a shepherd, she oxymoronically addresses him as "gentle shepherd" and "gentle villager" because his excellent speech marks him as being considerably above the common run of shepherds. "Gentle" also is a class term, meaning "well-born," belonging to a family of position. Originally it was used synonymously with "noble," but afterwards it was distinguished from it. "Gentle" became a more comprehensive term than "noble": it includes "noble." All gentles had

coats of arms, i.e., they were "armigerous." As he talks to the Lady, Comus further depicts the brothers, of course purposely to flatter her, as hierarchically higher people:

Their port was more than human, as they stood;
I took it for a faëry vision
Of some gay creatures of the element
That in the colors of the Rainbow live
And play i'th'plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And as I past, I worshipt; if those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to Heav'n
To help you find them. (297-303)

He also calls the place he takes the Lady to "a low / But loyal cottage, where you may be safe [italics mine]" (320-21), indicating his lower class. To Comus, who has been very kind, the Lady interestingly makes a speech against her class, saying courtesy is more commonly found among peasantry than among gentry: "Shepherd, I take thy word, / And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy, / Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds / With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry Halls / And Courts of Princes, where it first was nam'd, / And yet is most pretended" (322-26).

The distinction between the second person pronouns "you" and "thou" is also important as an indicator of social rank. G. L. Brook maintains that "you" was employed as "the usual pronoun used by upper-class speakers to one another," while "thou" was used by "lower-class characters in speaking

to other members of the same social class" (73). A master or an upper-class person can choose "thou" to address his servant or the low-class, but it is not for the servant to reciprocate. Hamlet addresses Horatio as "thou," and Horatio calls Hamlet "you." In intimate relations, however, "thou/thee/thy" could be used regardless of the ranks of the addresser and the addressee, as Kristin Linklater comments (112-17). In conversations between Comus and the Lady, even when they first meet each other, Comus uses "you" or "your" to her (277, 322, for example),²⁰ while she uses "thou" or "thy" (660, 663, for example). Between the Spirit and the two brothers the brothers use "thou" to the Spirit (497, 657, for example), and the Spirit also uses "thy" (611, 613, for example) to them probably because of the close relationship between Henry Lawes and the boys.

In her first confrontation with Comus, the Lady fails to see the true identity of Comus, not because she is not the ideal aristocrat, but because it is inevitable that she as a human being be deluded. Even the angel Uriel in Paradise Lost makes a mistake in believing Satan: "For neither Man nor Angel can discern / Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks / Invisible, except to God alone" (III:682-84). Only Jesus in Paradise Regained can see Satan's disguises.

After the Lady is abducted by Comus, the two brothers appear and worry about their sister. The speeches of the two brothers prove that they are examples of the ideal

gentleman, especially the Elder Brother. The Elder Brother, revealing his nurture and education, shows his fortified belief in virtue, especially in chastity. He also declares his courage after listening to his sister's dangerous situation:

for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
 With all the grisly legions that troop
 Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
 Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
 'Twixt Africa and Inde, I'll find him out,
 And force him to restore his purchase back,
 Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
 Curs'd as his life. (602-9)

Courage was almost synonymous with gentility. In Shakespeare's Henry V the Bishop of Ely encourages Henry V: "The blood and courage that renoued them [your ancestors] / Runs in your veins" (1.2.118-19). Even though Cymbeline's sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, were raised as commoners in their Welsh cave, they show their valor in fighting for the British against the Romans. Orlando in As You Like It is willing to wrestle with the base-born giant wrestler Charles and beats him against the expectation of the spectators; later he bravely and virtually alone challenges the banished duke and his followers at their supper. The state of having no gentle blood was a physiological explanation of cowardice. And the base-born in the Shakespearean plays is

regarded as cowardly: "Let pale-faced fear keep with the mean-born man / And find no harbor in a royal heart" (2 Henry VI 3.1.35-36). The "hedge-born swain" (1 Henry IV 4.1.43) was congenitally possessed of "fear and cold heart" and may well have been "got in fear" (Coriolanus 1.3.36). Shakespeare's gentlewomen also possess courage which is proper to women. Portia in The Merchant of Venice courageously goes to Venice to rescue Antonio, and Rosalind and Celia in As You Like It travel into the forest to find Rosalind's father. When Polixenes insults Perdita for engaging in a presumptuous cross-class love with his royal son in The Winter's Tale, she assesses the situation courageously: "I was not much afeard" (4.4.452). She is also brave enough to travel to Sicilia with Florizel in the face of Polixenes' threat.

The Elder Brother also shows Cavalier *préciosité* to emphasize his sister's chastity as a sublime notion and high mystery:

She that has that [chastity], is clad in complete
 steel,
 And like a quiver'd Nymph with Arrows keen
 May trace huge Forests and unharbor'd Heaths,
 Infamous Hills and sandy perilous wilds,
 Where through the sacred rays of Chastity,
 No savage fierce, Bandit or mountaineer
 Will dare to soil her Virgin purity. (421-27)

He believes that the Lady's superior virtue can create awe in men, especially savages, bandits, and mountaineers, considered as being base.

Of the two brothers the Elder Brother is more philosophical, more courageous, and more virtuous. The Younger Brother lacks philosophy and understanding. When the Spirit first meets the two brothers, he distinguishes them--"O my lov'd master's heir and his next joy"--showing that the Elder brother is the main inheritor. In Milton's age the aristocratic family was primogenitural in that most of the real property and the family title went to the eldest son, but he was responsible for the family's financial well-being. In theory, primogeniture is based upon the idea that the eldest son, having been conceived in the father's youth, is more like his sire in all ways than the sons who follow. Violation of primogeniture causes the "long jars" of the houses of Lancaster and York. Orlando, despite his insistence upon being educated as a gentleman, does not deny the validity of primogeniture: "The courtesy of nations allows you my better, in that you are the firstborn" (As You Like It, 1.1.48-50).

While the two Brothers and the Spirit are coming to Comus' palace, the Lady shows her strong virtue, chastity, even though she fails to perceive the true Comus at the first meeting. The Lady, although a decided intellectual, is never really persuaded, never even slightly tempted by

the ingenious arguments of Comus. At first Comus rejoices in the power of his wand to effect his will upon a situation: "Nay Lady, sit; if I but wave this wand, / Your nerves are all chain'd up in Alabaster" (659-60). The Lady's response shows her courage and even a kind of aristocratic arrogance:

Fool, do not boast,
 Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
 With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
 Thou hast immanacl'd, while Heav'n sees good.
 (662-65).

She scorns his misunderstanding of her and his failure to discern the truth and spiritual value. Even his two great speeches, in which he evokes a natural world filled with pressing, demanding, burgeoning loveliness (666-90, 706-55), are part of the vision of one who must see the world in a particular way in order to control it. Interestingly his long speeches are multiples of five (666-690, 25 lines; 706-755, 50 lines). Five, in the Neoplatonic and Biblical view, is the number of sensuality and evil because man's knowledge gained through his five senses is always imperfect and deceptive. Since the Renaissance believed that gentle blood endued its possessors with a marked degree of rational control of the passions, the gentle could not be slaves of their senses. For instance, Prospero in Shakespeare's The Tempest desires not to punish his enemies but to bring them

to a sense of guilt and repentance because in Prospero reason triumphs over passion. He says, "Yet with my nobler reason, 'gainst my fury / Do I take part. The rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance" (5.1.26-28). Thus, Comus, whose passion overwhelms reason, must be a villain.

Comus is a character who represents sensual abandonment. He says that beauty is to be used and to be shared, listing delicate things: "April buds in Primrose-season," the "wing'd air dark't with plumes," the insinuating beauty of "Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the Morn?" (671; 730; 753). But there are no spiritual qualities. Milton, as Baruch points out, draws on the Spenserian mode in which evil at its worst is allied with physical beauty, so that both the temptation and the rejection of it may be meaningful. In her responses, the Lady uses a sharp tone and shows an absolute attitude. She dismisses the whole of Comus' elaborate picture of overfertility in a single line: "And she [Nature] no whit encumber'd with her store." She shows an ideal of aristocrats, the golden mean of classical-civilization²¹:

If every just man that now pines with want
 Had but a moderate and beseeming share
 Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury
 Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
 Nature's full blessings would be well dispens't
 In unsuperfluous even proportion. (768-73)

She not only blames the degenerate luxury of the rich, but also sees the aristocrats as responsible for the poor. The direct condemnation of riches is unique in the masque of the period, but sharing one's wealth with the poor was a Christian virtue with which everyone was very familiar. It could not be an offense to the aristocratic spectator. Later, she asks him imposingly, "Shall I go on? / Or have I said enough?" (779-80). There is something basic in this question: she is morally and socially superior to Comus.

In the next scene the Brothers and the Spirit rush into Comus' palace to break the glass, but fail to catch Comus and his wand, so the Spirit has to summon Sabrina to help the Lady. Sabrina was originally a human being but she was apotheosized by Nereus, a divine figure. The myth may help to justify the Renaissance' belief in the "God-ordained" hierarchy because it could be interpreted to mean that virtuous aristocrats are protected by God. Sabrina is a "Goddess dear," one with a "powerful hand" (902-3), for she can free the Lady from being pinioned to a chair by Comus. To clear the infections of Comus, she uses the pure water of the Severn. She sprinkles the water on the Lady's breast, symbolizing her chastity, and on her fingers and lips, tokening her unshaken behavior and glorious words. Then she sprinkles the water on the chair of vanity and lasciviousness to clear the image of Comus' temptation. Sabrina fights with evil, and in the very act of her

assistance, she also gives a lesson in hierarchical identity to those she helps. The gentle may have superior kinds of aid when they are faced with extraordinary troubles. This kind of divine aid can also be seen in Haemony, the medicinal drug which enables the Spirit to see through Comus's enchantments and disguises, and which he promises to give to the Brothers, the aristocrats. Cedric C. Brown suggests that Haemony symbolizes the word of God which, as ministered by the pastor, furnishes the education the Brothers most need to counter the militancy of evil. In poetic fiction, Haemony is the efficacy of spiritual instruction God gives to the noble children (104-10). The Sabrina episode is offered not only for the Lady, but also for the President and his new territory Wales, so that they will contemplate the goddess' blessings. For the President and Wales, the Spirit as a shepherd says that Sabrina heals the cattle:

[she] Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
 Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
 That the shrewd meddling Elf delights to make,
 Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals.
 (843-47).

The healing of the cattle symbolizes the goddess' consistent help of the President's family and his new land. The festival follows, celebrating Sabrina's goodness:

For which the Shepherds at their festivals
 Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
 And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
 Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy Daffodils. (848-51)

After Sabrina saves the Lady and leaves, the Spirit again sings blessings on the River Severn, personified by Sabrina (the Roman name for the Severn):

May thy brimmed waves for this
 Their full tribute never miss
 From a thousand petty rills,
 That tumble down the snowy hills:
 Summer drouth or singed air
 Never scorch thy tresses fair,
 Nor wet October's torrent flood
 Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
 May thy billows roll ashore
 The beryl and the golden ore,
 May thy lofty head be crown'd
 With many a tower and terrace round,
 And here and there thy banks upon
 With Groves of myrrh and cinnamon. (924-37)

This is a picture of a land blessed with great prosperity, including natural resources and towns and estates of men. It shows how providence would continue to bless the President's family and his new territory.

Finally, the noble children of the President are

presented by the Spirit. The main social purpose of the masque is the celebration of the inauguration, and the children's presentation is the high point. The Caroline aristocratic family was patriarchal and family value was very important:

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,
 I have brought ye new delight,
 Here behold so goodly grown
 Three fair branches of your own.
 Heav'n hath timely tri'd their youth,
 Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
 And sent them here through hard assays
 With a crown of deathless Praise,
 To triumph in victorious dance
 O'er sensual Folly and Intemperance. (966-75)

One of the peculiarities of the masque is that the actor's importance derives mainly from his social position and his integration with the social or political event which the courtly entertainment was devised to celebrate. The happy ending over "sensual Folly, and Intemperance" gives a conventionally happy tone to the social and political event. Furthermore, Milton claims that God has permitted Comus to have power over the workings of nature in order to further His desire for testing the noble children. Now they have passed the ordeals to become God's lovely ideal children.

The closing evocation of the Spirit touches upon the

new President. The Spirit says that the President's ordered government and virtuous strength would naturally seem linked to heavenly realms. He sees the close connection between the classical natural love (981-96) and the Welsh landscape (1013-17). The love affairs between Venus and Adonis, Cupid and Psyche might be misunderstood as part of Comus' lewdness. But they are not earthly lovers any more, for they are "far above in spangled sheen" (1003). Especially since the Lady with the help of Sabrina has prevailed over Comus' indecent and corrupt world, the mythological lovers seem to become more virtuous. Further, the lovers had physical griefs and now are resting in heaven just as the children who have overcome the ordeals are enjoying themselves in their father's castle: Adonis "Waxing well of his deep wound" and Psyche "sweet entranc't, / After her wand'ring labors long" (1000; 1005-6). Milton shows the ideal virtuous aristocrat who can lift the level of England to that of heaven. The Spirit ends the epilogue with a speech to the upper-class audience:

Mortals that would follow me,
 Love virtue, she alone is free,
 She can teach ye how to climb
 Higher than the Sphery chime;
 Or if Virtue feeble were,
 Heav'n itself would stoop to her. (1018-23)

As Perez Zagorin says, Comus shows Milton's mind in the

1630s amid the ostensible stability of England's polity before the Revolution (29). It reveals a look of the ideal aristocrat that is, Zagorin mentions, "generally consistent with the decorum demanded by the particular occasion of tribute to a nobleman for which it was written" (29). Milton suggests the values of a true, God-ordained aristocracy: abstention from luxury and lewdness, courage, self-discipline, and social responsibility. These values are descended from Christianity, with which the upper-class spectators were familiar; so they must not have been offended.

Like "Epitaphium Damonis," "Arcades," and Comus, Lycidas is a pastoral, an aristocratic genre. In the Renaissance, the pastoral was much used because, though only shepherds seem to make love and sing songs, readers did not mistake what the pastoral said on the surface for a transcription of reality. They realized its artificiality and its tenuous links to the real life of shepherds. As C. W. R. D. Moseley says, the Renaissance pastoral has two principal subjects: religion and politics (11). For Mantuan, called a second Virgil and a poet whom Milton knew, the pastoral world is an intimation of heaven, so his works are religiously didactic. In Elizabethan England political pastorals focused mainly on praising the Queen, but the panegyric was not always mere flattery of power. From the time of Virgil, the pastoral began to be used as satire.

Petrarch used the eclogue to attack the corruption of the papal court in Avignon, and Spenser attacked the Catholic clergy in a number of the eclogues of The Shepherdes Calendar, especially in "May." In the case of Lycidas, the pastoral is both religious and political. Milton in the poem denounces the blindness, laziness, gluttony, lack of understanding, and stupidity of corrupted clergy, who used the church for their own advantage and ignored the needs of the people under their care. As a religious pastoral, Lycidas indicates the uselessness of worldly fame and the importance of religious life. When Milton writes directly of Christian things,²² he does not show any indication of his class-consciousness.

Milton is not class-conscious in Lycidas except in a few places. In paragraph 2, like Theocritus in his lament for Daphnis, Milton invokes the muses to lament the loss of Lycidas. He thinks that if he laments the loss of Lycidas, "some gentle Muse" in time may lament his own death (19). "Gentle" here is a class term, and since he himself is a muse who mourns for Lycidas in this poem, he is identifying himself as a gentle poet. In the Cambridge passage Milton uses pejorative class references to describe his classmates as "Rough Satyrs . . . and Fauns with clov'n heel" (34), implicitly contrasting his delicate speech, abundant knowledge, and perhaps even his fine clothes and fine appearance free from the ravages of small pox, with those of

his classmates.

In the spring of 1638 Milton and his manservant started on their continental tour. Many young gentlemen regarded the Grand Tour as the climax of a liberal education: "not to learn principles but to enlarge experience, and make wise observation" (Of Education II:414). At Naples, Milton met Giovanni Battista Manso, Marquis of Villa and Lord of Bisaccio and Panca, who was a great patron of poets, including Tasso, the author of Jerusalem Delivered, and Marini, the author of Adone. For him Milton wrote a Latin poem, "Mansus." In the poem Milton praises Manso as a gentleman to whom the gods granted honors, and one whose "name and fame also shall constantly be in men's mouths" (51-52). Milton also praises Manso because he was a noble by birth, not by buying a coat of arms: "At your birth Jupiter must have been favorable, Phoebus and the grandson of Atlas must have shed their gentle light upon you, for no one, unless from his birth he were dear to the gods, could have befriended a great poet. Therefore your old age is green with lingering bloom and, still robust, enjoys the spindles of Aeson - preserving the honors of your brow unfallen, your spirit strong and the power of your mind at its height" (70-77). Of course this is a flattering note, but the idea that Manso, even though he is old, still has a strong spirit and powerful mind because of his noble birth is significant especially since, right after this praise,

Milton speaks openly of his desire to write an epic about the ideal English noble, King Arthur: "if ever I shall summon back our native kings into our songs, and Arthur, waging his wars beneath the earth, or if ever I shall proclaim the magnanimous heroes of the table which their mutual fidelity made invincible, and (if only the spirit be with me) shall shatter the Saxon phalanxes under the British Mars" (80-84). With his love for Britain shown in the middle of the poem, Milton indirectly shows his political idealism, which is closely related to the role of the ruling class.

In Italy, Milton heard that the Scottish Covenanters were rebelling against Episcopacy and that war was inevitable for the people's freedom. He thought that if his fellow citizens would soon be fighting against Charles I, it was ignoble for him to be travelling abroad at his ease. So he returned to England in August, 1639.

Notes

1. The coat of arms has disappeared. Parker, without any explanation, says that the coat of arms belonged to the poet's parents (I:584), and David Masson, The Life of John Milton (7 vols, New York: Peter Smith, 1946), based on Francis Peck's Memoirs of Milton, published in 1740, suggests that it belonged to the poet's grandparents. Peck describes the coat of arms as "a board a quarter of a yard square, some time since in the possession of his [the poet's] widow [Elizabeth Minshull]." The coat exhibited the arms of "Milton in Com. Oxon." in pale with those of "Haughton of Haughton Tower in Com. Lanc.," the names of the two families written so underneath the two divisions. (Masson 9). Masson states that Haughton was the poet's grandmother, so the coat of arms belonged to the poet's grandparents.

2. John Aubrey (1626-97) records that the poet's father had come to Christ Church in 1572, even though the university records, which were carelessly kept, record nothing of his presence (Brennecke 7). David Masson thinks that he was there between 1577 and 1582 (I:23).

3. Richard Milton probably thought of his son's association with famous doctors of the Church and of the university. For example, Thomas Cooper, who was a chorister of Magdalen College, advanced from being a Fellow to being a

celebrated lexicographer, and dean of Christ Church, and Bishop of Lincoln.

4. All quotations of Milton's poetry are from Merritt Y. Hughes' edition, John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957).

5. The four humors explained every disease by humoral abnormalities.

6. All quotations of Shakespeare are from The Riverside Shakespeare (Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

7. Laurence Babb, The Elizabethan Malady (East Lansing: Michigan State College, 1951), mentions that Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, Dürers 'Melencolia I': eine Quellen- und Typen-geschichtliche Untersuchung (Leipzig and Berlin, 1923), p. 32 ff., attribute the popularity of Aristotelian melancholy in Italy to Ficino (60).

8. Robert Herrick's poem quoted here is from Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry (Ed. Alexander M. Witherspoon and Frank J. Warnke, 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957), p. 815.

9. Parker provides a checklist of additional Hobson poems mostly by the Cambridge undergraduates (92-93, 764-66). Among these, the following is an example of the insulting poems:

Hobson (what's out of sight is out of mind!)
Is gone, and left his letters here behind;

He that with so much paper used to meet
Is now, alas, content to take one sheet.

10. For background information including genealogies of the noble characters in "Arcades" and Comus, see Cedric C. Brown's John Milton's Aristocratic Entertainments (1985, Cambridge UP) esp. pp. 12-40.

11. Her funereal monument in Harefield church did not mention her second marriage.

12. The exact date of the "Arcades" entertainment is not known. David Masson suggests that it was written in 1633 or possibly 1634 (I:599).

13. Chrétien de Troyes, a twelfth-century French poet, was the author of the Arthurian romances. Lancelot is an especially exaggerated and perhaps parodic treatment of the lover who is servilely obedient to the god of love and to his imperious mistress Guinevere, wife of Arthur.

14. Briefly, the scandal was this. The Countess of Derby's eldest daughter Anne remarried to Mervyn Touchet, Lord Audley, Earl of Castlehaven. Soon after his marriage Castlehaven insulted her sexually and had some of his servants assault her sexually while he was watching. He contrived a marriage between his elder son from his former marriage and the twelve-year-old Elizabeth, Anne's elder daughter from her former marriage. Then Castlehaven had his servants sleep with Elizabeth to beget a further heir and to disinherit his own son. He was tried by his peers for his

hideous crimes and beheaded in 1631.

15. For the text comparison, see especially Chapter 6. Brown gives an insightful study in his book, particularly for my Chapter I. In this paper, I cite only the 1637 printed version.

16. R. H. Bowers, "The Accent on Youth in Comus" in SAMLA Studies in Milton, Gainesville: U of Florida P, 1953, pp. 72-79, notes that "the pastoral, of course, played host at times to elements of ecclesiastical satire, as in Lycidas, or, better still, Quarles's Shepherds' Oracles (1646)" (74). Even with this note, his comment is still exaggerated.

17. For a comparative study between the Bridgewater manuscript and the 1637 printed text of Comus, see George William Smith, Jr., "Milton's Revisions and the Design of Comus," ELH 46 (1979): 56-80.

18. Milton of course condemned the extremely sensual, idolatrous orgy of Comus, but he was not a strict Protestant or Puritan who denounced music and dance. Like most Renaissance authors, Milton not only was in love with music as we see in many places in his works, but also liked dance. In Paradise Lost dancing is one of the joys of the saints and angels in Heaven:

So spake th'Omnipotent, and with his words
 All seem'd well pleas'd, all seem'd, but were not all.
 That day, as other solemn days, they spent

In song and dance about the sacred Hill,
 Mystical dance, which yonder starry sphere
 Of Planets and of fixt in all her wheels
 Resembles nearest, mazes intricate,
 Eccentric, intervolv'd, yet regular
 Then most, when most irregular they seem:
 And in thir motions harmony divine
 So smooths her charming tones, that God's own ear
 Listens delighted. (V:616-27)

19. This quotation from Hughes' book comes from the 1637 printed version.

20. This might be one evidence that the role of Comus was played by a professional entertainer. While Henry Lawes with a shepherd disguise like Comus uses "thy" to the noble boys, Comus uses only "you" to the Lady.

21. She shows moderation, one of the fruits of the spirits in Galatians 5. "Temperance" in KJV.

22. David S. Berkeley says, throughout his Inwrought with Figures Dim (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), that the structure of Lycidas is based on Christian typology, which unites the Old and New Testaments. Figures and forces indicating Jesus and heaven are opposed to those of Satan and hell. There are figures of judgment to heaven or hell, and Cambridge University is depicted as a type of the heavenly paradise and Britain as an Eden. The sunken bark is the divinely presaged wreck of the Episcopal church.

CHAPTER 2

The Middle Years (1640-1659)

In order to better understand Milton's idea of English social class system in the seventeenth-century, it is necessary to briefly notice the class-oriented aspects of the Puritan Revolution. Charles I ascended the throne in 1625. To the Cavaliers, he was a handsome and imperious ruler, but to the Puritans he was a weak and willful man. Parliament compelled the king to accept the Petition of Right in 1628, giving Parliament power in taxation, forbidding unlawful seizure of subjects, and preventing martial law in peacetime. In the next year Charles dissolved Parliament and conducted an eleven-year personal autocracy, thereby alienating a large part of the country's traditional ruling class, who found themselves denied the role in national affairs to which they felt entitled. In 1639 the First Bishops' War broke out and in 1640 the Second Bishops' war broke out, these opposing Charles' attempt to impose episcopacy upon Scotland's Presbyterians. Seeking funds, the king summoned the Short Parliament, but it lasted only three weeks. The Long Parliament convened late in 1640 and continued until 1660. The Parliament presented Charles with the Grand Remonstrance in 1641, summarizing all the

grievances against his reign, and finally Parliament passed a Militia Ordinance in March of 1642, placing command of the army in its own hands. The action was necessary for the Parliament because the army, which was supposed to be used against the Catholic rebellion in Ireland, could be used to quell the rebellious subjects in Parliament. It was the beginning of a Parliamentary revolution instead of a legitimate check to the abuses of the royal prerogative. The war was inevitable. The king tried to capture the leaders of Parliament, but the citizens of London defied him. Fleeing north, Charles raised the royal standard in 1642 to open the Civil War. Broadly, the conservative and feudalistic north sided with the king, while the more populous and mercantiled south favored Parliament. In social structure, broadly again, the gentry, the Anglican clergy, and the peasantry were royalists, while the "middle class" (the term was then unknown) and merchants were parliamentarians. At first, the royal military won battles, but Oliver Cromwell and his "Ironsides" began winning the war. In 1645 the king and royalists surrendered to the Scots. Parliament asked the king to accept rules against episcopacy and for parliamentary supremacy over the ruler. The king refused and was sentenced to die. On January 30, 1649, the king was beheaded, and the nation declared itself a commonwealth.

The argument of revolutionists including Milton against

the feudal hierarchy was mainly based on Christianity, which emphasized the worth of the humblest and taught the brotherhood of man. The hierarchy's distinguishing between gentle and base in Medieval and Renaissance England tended to elicit opposition based upon the idea that in the origin of the human race there were no classes, "a notion that has again and again proved a levelling force to which no other can be compared," as G. L. Scherger cogently says (23). A saying in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 was well known: "When Adam delved, and Eve span, / Who was then the gentleman?"¹ Sir Thomas Aston in 1641 referred to "the old seditious argument, that we are all the sons of Adam, born free; some of them say, the Gospel hath made them free. . . . They will plead Scripture for it, that we should all live by the sweat of our brows" (Sig. I 4v).² Thus in 2 Henry VI, 4.2.140ff., Sir Humphrey Stafford says to Jack Cade, "Villain, thy father was a plasterer," and Cade responds, "And Adam was a gardener." In Hamlet the First and Second Clowns in the gravediggers' scene speak of Adam as having no coat of arms and therefore no gentle status. They know that Ophelia, who committed suicide, is given a Christian burial only because she is a gentlewoman. So Christian origins militated against social inequality.

Christian egalitarianism was seen first in the teachings of the early Christians in the face of severe persecution in the Roman empire until the fourth century.

Even after the acquisition of temporal power by the Church, Catholic theologians like Thomas Aquinas insisted upon the power of the people to depose a king. Egalitarianism and communism were also found in the medieval world among the Beghards, Fraticelli, and Lollards, and in the sixteenth century among the Zwickau Prophets in 1525, the Anabaptists at Münster in 1534, and the Family of Love in 1580.³ Thomas More's Utopia was full of egalitarian speculations. Like the Quakers, who refused "hat-honour," the Anabaptists, a powerful group with levelling ideas, refused to bow to their social superiors, insisting that such a courtesy is due to God only. When the Church insisted that it was the church's office rather than the individual's to interpret the truth and justice of God because the individual's idea of justice should yield to society's idea of justice, reformers like Luther and Calvin challenged this relation between the church and its members: Luther declared that "It belongs to each and every Christian to know and judge of doctrine" (Carter 63). John Knox in his The Admonition of John Knox to the Commonality of Scotland (1558), praising the capabilities of the church's common people, stressed the fact that in God's eyes they are equal to the nobles. Samuel Rutherford's Lex, Rex: the Law and the Prince (1644), attempting to justify the wars of the Scottish Presbyterians against Charles I, argued against the royalist affirmation of the divine right of kings. Rutherford favored a limited

monarchy based on the premise that the people collectively are sovereign over their king. Therefore, they may, at times, conduct lawful wars against him.⁴

The doctrine of the social contract was also closely related with the sovereignty of the people. The notion of a social contract can be found in Plato's Republic. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, two forms of the social contract were well noted.⁵ The first was the Biblical and medieval form. It was seemingly based on the Hebrew idea of a covenant between God and man, supplemented by the Roman idea of contract. The second form was related to the institution of a political society by means of a compact among individuals, and is set forth in the works of Hooker, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. Milton of course was familiar with the doctrine, its forms and some of its philosophers as shown in his political pamphlets including The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.

A number of prominent scholars in Milton's time like John Selden, in Englands Epinomis (1610), and Sir Edward Coke, in The First Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England (1656), studied the political history of the Anglo-Saxons to defend Parliamentary right against the absolutism of the Stuart kings. They believed that, before the fall of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom with the defeat of Harold II at Hastings in 1066, the Anglo-Saxons had a democratic political system. According to Samuel Kliger, the scholars,

especially the parliamentary scholars, found that the original forebears of the English were the Germanic invaders of Rome, whom they called not Germans but Goths, substituting the name of only one of the Germanic tribes to denote all the barbarians collectively (1-2). They thought, Kliger says, that the Goths, with their psychological strengths, such as vigor, hardiness, and zeal for liberty, founded the institutions of public assemblies which, in its English parliamentary form, the Stuarts were seeking to destroy (2-4). The Parliament had a continuous existence in England dating from the Saxon parliament, the witenagemot, despite the subsequent Danish and Norman conquests and the occasional efforts of power-hungry kings to displace it, even William the Conqueror failing in this dastardly ambition. In The History of Britain, Milton tended to regard both Britons and Saxons as little more than sinful barbarians: "the Britans never more plainly manifested themselves to be right Barbarians; no rule, no foresight, no forecast, experience or estimation, either of themselves or of thir Enemies" (V:80); "The Saxons were a barbarous and heathen Nation, famous for nothing else but robberies and cruelties done to all thir Neighbours both by Sea and Land" (V:142). Milton in Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio, however, upheld the same doctrine of Gothic freedom, which was asserted by many parliamentarians on the basis of arguments drawn from England's traditional political inheritances from

the past.

There were some literary works that show belief in human egalitarianism and perhaps a radically different social order. In the popular romance Guy of Warwick (ca. 1300-1350), the base hero, son of a steward, by martial powers wins the hand of a noble lady, daughter of the Earl of Warwick. In Chaucer's Clerk's Tale, the protagonist, Grisilde, who derives her extraordinary virtues from divine grace, is a peasant girl married to the noble Walter. Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great, I & II and Doctor Faustus show plebeian heroes who are respectively a Scythian shepherd and one "born of parents base of stock." Tamburlaine and Faustus exemplify aristocratic grandeur in spite of their pride. William Cornwallis in his Essays speaks of nobility purely in terms of virtue: "nobility and honesty meane alone; and thus may a painefull Artisan be noble, if he follows his vocation painefully and constantly, he is honest, and so noble" (198). In Robert Greene's George a Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield, a plebeian hero, a mere pound-keeper, strikes an earl for the nobleman's misbehavior. Moreover, the base-born hero refuses knighthood from the king, preferring a simple yeoman's life.

On the other hand, there was a tendency to think of all kinds of beings, including Christians, in terms of hierarchical criteria, as Theodore Spencer, E. M. W. Tillyard and David S. Berkeley mention (1-20; 34-75; Blood

81-93). In the translations of the Bible, there were some suggestions that with much pressing might be used to justify a gentle and base distinction: for example, Leviticus 17:14 declares, "For the life of the flesh is in his blood." In the Old Testament there is some evidence of hierarchy based upon blood in that Judah, for example, was designated as the royal tribe from which the Messiah was to come. Deuteronomy 23:2 states, "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord," a command that gave lowly status in Renaissance eyes to the tribe of Dan, Jacob's son by the concubine Bilha, a point that bears on interpretation of the Danite hero Samson in Milton's Samson Agonistes. Some English and European Bible commentators were given to transforming Biblical characters by words which indicated social class, such as "gentleman," "clowns" and "base." For example, as Berkeley suggests, the Geneva Bible and the King James Version at I Kings 13:33 states that King Jereboam I made priests "of the lowest of the people," although a truer translation of the Hebrew reads "out of all the people": thus was implanted hierarchical social conceptions upon a text that resists these notions (Blood 81-85). Calvin in his A Commentarie upon the First Booke of Moses, Called Genesis admitted, despite the giants' rejoicing in wickedness, that "there is not doubt that they were somewhat more excellent than the

common sort of people by which excellencies they got them favour and renowne" (ch. 13, v. 33). Calvin depicted giants as "gentlemen" and the "first nobilitie of the world." Shakespeare had the Christian view on human classes: Christ was "that dread King, that took our state upon him / To free us from his Father's wrathful curse" (2 Henry VI 3.2.154-55). But he used class terms in describing human sinfulness: for example, "There's nothing level in our cursed natures / But direct villainy" (Timon of Athens 4.3.19-20). The Shakespearean plays imply that in a well-framed kingdom order was the happy result of observance of "degree," and that the natural, God-ordained hierarchy required a ranking of individual human beings.

Milton's writings in his middle years were mainly based on his belief in Christian egalitarianism. He thought that each Christian was endowed with a special liberty that was his new birthright through his redemption by Christ. Liberty, almost a magical word for him, was a powerful force that could set a man free from a lower-class status by making him obedient to a higher will. Milton's early pamphlets between May 1641 and April 1642, mainly advocating the abolition of episcopacy, manifested confidence in the native intelligence and moral worth of his countrymen. In the strict hierarchical society, the base had been treated as people of deficiencies in reasoning ability: they were "fools." But in The Reason of Church Government Milton

described Englishmen as religious, and he affirmed in An Apology against a Pamphlet that there was nothing in church government beyond the understanding of the meanest of his countrymen. From this confidence in the people, he first sided with the Presbyterians, whose church polity originated from Calvin's Geneva in the mid-sixteenth century. Even though the Presbyterians were not successful in reforming the church under Elizabeth, they continued to increase sympathy for their antiprelatical cause, so that by 1640 there was wide-spread support for Presbyterian reform. Their main practice was to allow the people to select their own ministers, parish by parish, with a national organization of elders to coordinate and hear appeals from those parishes. In favor of the popular election of ministers, Milton said that "the meanest Christians" reared on the Bible were as capable as any bishop of judging Christ's doctrine and discerning a good from a bad minister. He insisted that the prelates had been "confiscating from us all the right we have to our owne bodies, goods and liberties" (Of Reformation I:593). By establishing a "Church-tyranny" the prelates had also thwarted the end of liberty, devout worship of God.

Milton in the early 1640s preferred the structure of the Presbyterian church to that of the Church of England, which had a centralized hierarchy. In the Anglican Church the king appointed the primate and the Archbishop of York.

In theory he also appointed the twenty-four diocesan bishops, though the Archbishop of Canterbury really made the choices. The bishops ordained the priests and deacons of their respective dioceses. Even though the owner of the land supporting the living could select a priest, most priests took office with Episcopal ordination by the diocesan bishop. Against this hierarchical church structure, "an insolent preferring of yourselves above your brethren" (The Reason of Church-Government I:792), Milton revolted.

The system of the Church of England to Milton was antagonistic both to the Gospel and to the primitive church government. The Church aimed at only the establishment of its own supremacy, seeking to undermine the liberties of the subjects and to seize the prerogatives of the king. In Of Prelatical Episcopacy Milton states that "the Gospel makes them [bishop and presbyter] one and the same thing" (I:648), meaning that they have the same spiritual authority. Originally, one of the apostles appointed a worthy man bishop or presbyter as head of a particular church, and the name "bishop" in Greek signified one of the more famous presbyters, not one with any more authority in the church government. Prelaty did not come from any divine origin to build the church: after at least four hundreds years from the time of the apostles "bishop" was used differently from "presbyter." Such a distinction was, from Milton's point of

view, against the practices of Christ: "First therefore, if to doe the work of the Gospel Christ our Lord took upon him the form of a servant, how can his servant in this ministry take upon him the form of a Lord?" (Reason of Church-Government I:825). He also asserted that appointment of the minister by a bishop was insulting to a redeemed people, however plain and uneducated, because the act suggested that they were unworthy and incapable of choosing their spiritual leaders. So all prelates higher than the parish minister should be removed. Milton also accused the bishops, whose stately palaces and rich foods were contrasted with the humility and poverty of Jesus and the bishops of the primitive church: "when hee steps up into the Chayre of Pontificall Pride, and changes a moderate and exemplary House, for a mis-govern'd and haughty Palace, spirituall Dignity for carnall Precedence, and secular high Office and employment for the high Negotiations of his Heavenly Embassage, Then he degrades, then hee un-bishops himselfe; hee that makes him Bishop makes him no Bishop" (Of Reformation I:537-38).

Milton was on the side of the five Puritan ministers who under the joint name Smectymnus were struggling against Bishop Joseph Hall, endorsing the Presbyterian-like church government whose main idea lay in human equality. His ideal church government in The Reason of Church-Government was similar to the Presbyterian organization with ministers or

presbyters and elders in parish consistories and provincial and national assemblies. He insisted that church government derived from the divinely intended and scripturally revealed form of church discipline, showing his belief that all God's children are equal: "should not he [God] rather now by his owne prescribed discipline have cast his line and levell upon the soule of man which is his rationall temple, and by the divine square and compasse thereof forme and regenerate in us the lovely shapes of vertues and graces, the sooner to edifie and accomplish that immortall stature of Christs body which is his Church, in all her glorious lineaments and proportions" (I:757-58). He denounced the bishops as instruments of tyranny pernicious to people: they were enemies of the liberty of the subjects.

Milton, however, was not completely consistent in endorsing the people's side only. Parliamentarians, especially radicals, saw that the quests for religious and social freedom were closely linked to opposition to the king. Milton in his early pamphlets, however, was rather slow to make this connection: in his antiprelatical tracts he showed no trace of hostility to monarchy or aristocracy. He believed that the best-founded commonwealths needed the king and the aristocrats. In Of Reformation in England he thought that England properly combined the powers of monarchy, aristocracy, and commons before its perversion by the corruptions of episcopacy:

The best-founded Common-wealths, and least barbarous have aym'd at a certain mixture and temperament, partaking the severall vertues of each other State, that each part drawing to it selfe may keep up a stedly, and eev'n uprightnesse in common. . . . There is no Civill Government that hath been known, no not the Spartan, not the Roman, though both for this respect so much prais'd by the wise Polybius, more divinely and harmoniously tun'd, more equally balanc'd as it were by hand and scale of Justice, then is the Common-wealth of England: where under a free, and untutor'd Monarch, the noblest, worthiest, and most prudent men, with full approbation and suffrage of the People, have in their power the supream, and final determination of highest Affairs. (Of Reformation I:599)

He saw the monarchial element as represented by the king, and the democratic element as consisting of the "full approbation and suffrage of the People." He also saw that the nobility would have "all the Dignities and Offices of temporall honour to themselves, sole Lords without the improper mixture of Scholastic and pusillanimous upstarts" (Of Reformation I:601).⁶ As Z. S. Fink suggests, Milton might accept the idea of mixed government, in which monarchial, aristocratic, and democratic elements are not

only present and shared in the power, but also exist in a perfect equilibrium or balance (705-36).

The idea was first advanced by the Greek historian Polybius, who saw the mixed political organization in Rome and Sparta, and it has been seen in Cicero's De Republica, Machiavelli's Discourses, Sir Thomas Smith's De Republica Anglorum,⁷ and Milton's contemporary Sir Walter Raleigh's Maxims of State.⁸ Algernon Sidney's Discourses concerning Government focused more on the preponderance of power held by the aristocracy. Sidney said that England was formerly a mixed state in which a large and able nobility restrained both the power of the king and the license of the people and cemented them together in a single smooth-working government. In Sidney's view, men are truly ennobled only by virtue, and noblemen have been ennobled by the virtues of their ancestors, manifested in services done to their country. Noblemen, to Sidney, are those who are gentlemen by birth and education, and their descendants, who will presumably resemble their ancestors, are to be considered as noblemen until the contrary is proved by their actions. Such a nobility Sidney saw as supported by hereditary wealth and position.

Milton's notion of nobility in his middle years was different from that of Sidney. Milton found the origin of nobility in godliness, virtue, goodness, and patriotic and disinterested service for the happiness and glory of the

state; the ideas of hereditary wealth and position⁹ were less emphasized. In his Commonplace Book Milton wrote,

From the spirit of God it [nobility] must be derived, not from forefathers or man-made laws, as the high-born Roman martyr in Prudentius is of noble spirit . . . our English herald Guillim, though his office consist chiefly about titular dignity, and gentry by birth, yet confesses, speaking of those whose first ancestors were raised for thire worth, that if they "vant of thire linage or titular dignity, and want thire vertues, they are but like base serving men who carry on thire sleeves the badge of some noble family, yet are themselves but ignoble persons." Dukes, counts, Marquises &c. were not hereditary at first, but only places of government, & office in the time of Charles the great. (I:471-73)¹⁰

Milton in his middle years, however, did not deny wholly the conception that nobility is conferred by distinguished descent. He thought that the descendants of those whose virtue had ennobled them were to be considered noble until their actions proved them otherwise. He vindicates most members of Parliament, who were "either of ancient and high Nobility, or at least of knowne and well reputed ancestry" (An Apology Against a Pamphlet I:923). Aristocrats were an assembly of the "noblest, worthiest, and

most prudent men" in the Commons, so they represented the whole people¹¹ by the manner of their selection and also represented aristocrats by the class from which they were sprung. Furthermore, Milton said that they "have in their power the supreme and finall determination of highest Affaires" (Of Reformation I:599). Thus the aristocratic Parliamentarians could be the aristocratic element which dominate in the mixed state Milton conceived England to be.

Moreover, his notion of the aristocracy may be observed in Sonnet X, "To the Lady Margaret Ley."¹² Even though the poem was intended to praise Margaret, as the title indicates, more was said about her father, who was Lord Chief Justice, Lord High Treasurer, and Lord President of the Council, and who became Earl of Marlborough by Charles I. Milton introduced her as a daughter of the "good Earl" and spent two quatrains praising the Earl as an ideal aristocrat:

Daughter to that good Earl, once President
Of England's Council and her Treasury,
Who liv'd in both, unstained with gold or fee,
And left them both, more in himself content,
Till the sad breaking of that Parliament
Broke him, as that dishonest victory
At Chaeronéa, fatal to liberty,
Kill'd with report that Old man eloquent. (1-8)

Even in the sestet he honored her because she possessed her

father's virtues: she was praised because she was a noble descendant.¹³

Milton showed no hostility to monarchy in the early antiepiscopal pamphlets. Milton accused the prelates because he thought they had weakened the monarch's prestige: "Monarchy is made up of two parts, the Liberty of the subject, and the supremacie of the King. I begin at the root. See what gentle, and benigne fathers they have beene to our liberty. . . . These devout prelates . . . have not ceas'd . . . to trample under foot all the most sacred and lifeblood Laws, Statutes, and Acts of Parliament, that are the holy Cov'nant of Union and Marriage between the King and his Realm" (Of Reformation I:592-93). In The Reason of Church-Government he compared the king to Samson and the prelates to the Philistines: "laying down his [Samson's] head among the strumpet flatteries of Prelats, while he sleeps and thinks no harme, they wickedly shaving off all those bright and waighty tresses of his laws, and just prerogatives which were his ornament and strength, deliver him over to indirect and violent counsels" (I:859) of the prelates. His view of monarchy, as Wolfe says, was similar to that of Luther and Calvin (Milton 10-11). Even though Luther and Calvin were democratic in theology, insisting upon the right of the individual to interpret the Bible and arguing for the equality of commoners as priests of God, they were not violent against kings. Luther told the Danish

nobles and citizens not to rebel against Christian II at the time of their rebellion even if the king were wrong, and he declared it the duty of the Christian citizen to obey the constituted ruler, even a tyrannical one. Calvin said that unjust rulers were the instruments of God to punish sinners; so Christians must not rebel against kings. He prohibited the circulation of Knox's books, which were full of anti-Elizabethan politics. In the Fourth Book of Institutes of the Christian Religion (1559), he had little use for the common people, depriving them of all but a theoretical power in electing the ministers of their churches: he allowed no right to revolt against even unjust rulers.

Milton's aristocratic attitude toward the king and the Presbyterian ecclesiastical system changed after his unsuccessful marriage and the civil war. He was not directly concerned with social class in his divorce tracts, but through his belief in liberty based on Christianity, his writings show a more egalitarian outlook. A political compromise between the king and parliament failed and the civil war broke out in 1642. Just before the war Milton married Mary Powell, the eldest daughter of Richard Powell, a royalist gentleman. Mary did not seem to like her studious and strict husband or Milton's frugal house, so she went back to Oxfordshire, deserting Milton just after their honeymoon. Milton must have felt anger and humiliation. His conception of marriage was very high-minded: to him

marriage was an ideal relationship and a union of spirits. He did not attach importance to sex: to him that was the animal side of man because he certainly had a hierarchical notion that the mind is a higher faculty than the body. He characterized the physical side of marriage as "a bestial necessity" and "sublunary and bestial burning," or "the promiscuous draining of a carnall rage" (Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce II:259; 269; 355).

In Milton's time divorce was very hard to gain: a man proposing divorce had to get the permission of the parliament, and, according to Stone, the cost was very high even for the nobility (655).¹⁴ Viewing marriage as a sacrament, English law permitted divorce on the ground of adultery or granted annulment for such reasons as prior entrance of one party into holy orders or impotence. Even though the law was based on Christ's injunction against divorce save for fornication--Matthew 5:32 ("But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery)--the real reason for not allowing divorce except in cases of adultery probably lay in the blood-consciousness of Milton's aristocratic contemporaries. They worried that their gentle blood in their posterity might be polluted by adultery. But Milton was not blood-conscious in the matter of adultery. Of the common grounds for divorce, Milton said that he could scarcely condone adultery, but he asserted that it might be

a mere "accident" and hence excusable (Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce II:332). Furthermore, he argued that an adulterous woman takes nothing from her husband, especially if he is ignorant of her trespass. To Milton to allow divorce for this momentary and forgivable transgression but not for the permanent and unpardonable one of incompatibility is manifestly illogical and unjust (Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce Ch. IX).

Between August 1643 and March 1645 he published four divorce pamphlets¹⁵ defending his view that no one should fetter another's liberty to be freed from a failed marriage. He asserted, "That indisposition, unfitness, or contrariety of mind, arising from a cause in nature unchangable, hindring and ever likely to hinder the main benefits of conjugall society, which are solace and peace, is a greater reason of divorce than naturall frigidity, especially if there be no children, and that there be mutuall consent" (Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce II:242). Later in the same tract he mentioned that "mutuall consent" really is the man's decision because "the absolute and final hindring of divorce cannot belong to any civil or earthly power, against the will of both parties, or of the husband alone" (344). He also compared the man in an unhappy marriage to the people of an "ill Government." He meant here that as people or their parliament can revolt against the ruler if the ruler is inadequate, man can divorce his wife if she is

inadequate: "He who marries, intends as little to conspire his own ruine, as he that swears Allegiance: and as a whole people is in proportion to an ill Government, so is one man to an ill marriage. If they against any authority, Covnant, or Statute, may by the sovereign edict of charity, save not only their lives, but honest liberties from unworthy bondage, as well may he against any private Covnant, which hee never enter'd to his mischief, redeem himself from unsupportable disturbances to honest peace, and just contentment" (The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce II:229). In Tetrachordon Milton maintained that, like the contract between king and people, a covenant of marriage does not have any power if the covenant brings only harm and misery to the couple: "no ordinance human or from heav'n can binde against the good of man; so that to keep them strictly against that end, is all one with to breake them" (II:588). He declared that "the great and almost only commandment of the Gospel, is to command nothing against the good of man, and much more no civil command, against his civil good" (II:638-39). Additionally, he believed that marital bondage demeans man by depressing his "high and Heaven-born spirit" (Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce II:223).

He tried to universalize from his own experience the right to divorce on the basis of Christian liberty. Milton asserted that God "intended to prove me whether I durst alone take up a rightful cause against a world of disesteem,

& found I durst" (The Judgement of Martin Bucer II:434). He was "no other then a passive instrument under some power and counsel higher and better than can be human," receiving "no light, or leading . . . from any man" (II:433). Christian liberty was a gift given by the Lord that emancipated people from the burdensome observances and literalism of the law and made charity their rule. He wondered "why in this age many are so opposite both to human and to Christian liberty . . . contenting . . . themselves in a specious humility and strictnesse bred out of low ignorance that never yet conceiv'd the freedom of the Gospel" (Tetrachordon II:587).

The Presbyterian clergy's response to his divorce tracts,¹⁶ however, was disappointing to Milton, and this could be one of reasons why he began to criticize them as the embodiment of a new ecclesiastical tyranny. Areopagitica, published in 1644, was Milton's first main tract against Parliament's ordinance that required the licensing of all writings prior to their publication. In this tract, Milton showed no class-consciousness. Even before Areopagitica, Milton in Martin Bucer, which was censored, appealed to wise men "whether truth be suffer'd to be truth, or liberty now among us, and be not again in danger of new fetters and captivity after all our hopes and labours lost," and warned against an "ecclesiastical thralldom, which under new shapes and disguises begins afresh to grow upon us" (II:479). The freedom of the press was a

secular freedom that the oppressed, such as the Levellers and the Diggers, claimed for a long time because printing had become increasingly important as a propaganda weapon. But before Milton, as Wolfe and Hill mention, no one of the lower class, and no aristocratic lover of liberty, had freedom to print his views (Milton 120; 69). In Areopagitica Milton wanted to promote his country's liberty. At the beginning of the Parliament, the Presbyterians disregarded prelatical censorship, and then they became licensors themselves: they became a second tyrant. Those who wished to suppress books pretended that their purpose was to protect people from the contamination of evil. But Milton stated that God had entrusted man with the gift of reason, which meant "freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing" (II:527).

Milton also opposed licensing because it obstructed reformation, and Milton's sympathy was with all of his countrymen. He believed that people had to be free to publish their thoughts and to let them be heard in order to distinguish right and wrong. He claimed, "give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties" (II:560). He thought his countrymen had become a community of truth-seekers. He reminded the Parliament that England was "a Nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discours, not beneath

the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to" (II:551). He exulted that his country had cast off the old skin of corruption and become young again. He described his countrymen as "noble," those who arise like a strong man after sleep. He warned the Lords and Commons that they "cannot make us now lesse capable, lesse knowing, lesse eagerly pursuing of the truth, unlesse ye first make your selves, that made us so, lesse the lovers, lesse the founders of our true liberty" (II:559).

He even showed sympathy with the lower-class radical sects. His endorsement of toleration rested on an understanding of liberty that allowed for the coexistence of many religious societies. As Arthur E. Barker remarks, to Milton Christianity left many things indifferent in religion in which individuals should be free to believe or not as reason and conscience direct (96-97). Milton stated that "if all cannot be of one mind, as who looks they should? this doubtles is more wholsome, more prudent, and more Christian that many be tolerated, rather then all compell'd" (II:565). But Milton did not tolerate "Popery, and open superstition, which as it exterpats all religions and civill supremacies, so it self should be extirpat" (II:565).¹⁷ He regarded Catholicism as an oppressing superstition whose papal supremacy and hierarchical structure made it an enemy of the civil power. And one reason for his intolerance of Catholicism was beginning to be connected with the

Presbyterian church: "Bishops and Presbyters are the same to us both name and thing" (II:539).

Beside his pamphlets, three poems of 1646¹⁸ showed his dismissal of the Presbyterianism which stood, among other things, for the rigid hierarchical structure of the church. Sonnet XI, "On the Detraction Which Followed Upon My Writing Certain Treatises," was essentially a satire on the Presbyterian majority in the Westminster Assembly of Divines, who wished to impose Presbyterian church government upon England, especially with no allowance for freedom of the press and liberty of conscience. Sonnet XII, "On The Same," was a prompt response to attacks on Milton's divorce tracts. In this poem Milton described his opponents as hierarchically lower beings. They were depicted as animals, which are (of course) placed in the lower end of the Great Chain of being: "a barbarous noise . . . Of Owls and Cuckoos, Asses, Apes and Dogs" (3-4). They were also pictured as "Hinds" who were even transformed to frogs. On the other hand, people who love liberty "must first be wise and good" (12). In the poem, "On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament," Milton condemned the Presbyterians for urging the use of the "Civil Sword / To force our Consciences the Christ set free, / And ride us with a classic Hierarchy" (5-7) and for returning to the corruptions of episcopacy or the holding of multiple posts. Instead Milton invokes the Independents, such as Thomas

Goodwin, Philip Nye, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Bridge: "Men whose Life, Learning, Faith and pure intent / Would have been held in high esteem with Paul" (9-10). These men, branded heretics by the Scotch, will "find out" the Presbyterian "plots and packing worse than those of" the Catholics at the Council of Trent (11-14). Milton harshly concludes that "New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ Large" (20).

Just before these poems, Milton published Of Education in 1644. Unlike his divorce tracts, Areopagitica, and the poems of 1646, he in this short treatise was very class-conscious. The education he pictured in Of Education was not for the common people nor for "any yeoman or tradesman," but for "noble and gentle youth" between the ages of twelve and twenty-one.¹⁹ Women were not among Milton's projected students, and technical and professional schools were entirely separated from his academy of "general studies." St. John writes that Milton's object was "to create, from among the youth of ampler leisure and fortune, able and accomplished senators, judges, and generals" (Wolfe, Milton 357). The purpose of this tract was also revealed in his conception of education: "I call therefore a compleate and *generous* Education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and *magnanimously* all the offices both private and publike of peace and war" (II:377-79). The words "generous," derived from Latin "*generosus*," meaning "of good

or noble birth," and "magnanimous," from Latin "*magnus animus*," meaning "great soul," signify good birth and breeding, and highmindedness. He also said that with his education students would be able "to delight in manly, and liberall exercises." Here the word "liberall" is also a class term, originally meaning "worthy of a free man," as opposed to "servile" or "mechanical," and by Milton's time applied to pursuits or occupations becoming to a gentleman, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Thus Milton's ideal education was to make the government officers of aristocratic character. They will be stronger "pillars of the State" than many recent great counsellors (II:398); parliamentarians with "honour and attention" (II:406); army commanders who have some knowledge of physics (II:412); travellers who "will by that time be such as shall deserve the regard and honour of all men where they passe, and the society and friendship of those in all places who are best and most eminent" (II:414). Milton's theories of education showed similarities with classic educational ideas for the aristocrats. He mentioned the similarities of his program to "those ancient and famous Schools of Pythagoras, Plato, Isocrates, Aristotle and such others, out of which were bred up such a number of renowned Philosophers, Orators, Historians, Poets and Princes all over Greece, Italy, and Asia, besides the flourishing studies of Cyrene and Alexandria" (II:407-8). He emphasized the importance of

languages and of progressing from simple and concrete matters toward the complex and abstract, and stressed the need to rid education of useless knowledge destructive of the human desire to learn. He also stressed the study of arithmetic and geometry. Geometry was recommended by Henry Peacham because it could be used for gentlemen not only for management of their lands, but also for fortification and tactics in war as commanders (72-78). Further, Milton emphasized military excellence, especially as developed in Spartan schools, insisting that his academy "shall be equally good for Peace and War." Mastery of military weapons must be acquired for its self-evident military value, but Milton expands upon the skill: "this will keep them healthy, nimble, strong, and well in breath, is also the likeliest meanes to make them grow large, and tall, and to inspire them with a gallant and fearlesse courage, which being temper'd with seasonable lectures and precepts to them of true fortitude, and patience, and will turn into a native and heroick valour, and make them hate the cowardice of doing wrong" (II:409). Here Milton emphasized characteristics of aristocrats that Elizabethans believed aristocrats should have: large and tall bodies, good breath, heroic courage, and hatred of cowardise. Milton's students were also asked to learn wrestling, which was considered, as Henry Peacham states, "not so well beseeming Nobility, but rather soldiers in a Campe" (215). But here Milton limited

the purpose of it in education to its military utility: "[wrestling] perhaps will be enough, wherein to prove and heat their single strength" (II:409). He also emphasized the Englishness of wrestling. Late each afternoon, students are called out for military drill, "as their age permits, on horse back, to all the art of cavalry" (II:411) to develop men as successful military commanders.

Milton approved travel abroad, as did many aristocrats, for his young students, "not to learn Principles but to enlarge Experience, and make wise observation" (II:414) and he also recommended it as an exercise. Moreover, he would have students listen to and participate in music after hard exercise and after meals as a means, respectively, of "recreating and composing their travail'd spirits with the solemn and divine harmonies of Musick" and of assisting "Nature in her first concoction" (II:411). He believed that music had power "over dispositions and manners, to smooth and make them gentle from rustick harshnesse and distemper'd passions" (II:411).

His notion of the Great Chain was applied even to educational theory; B. Rajan notes that the stage of studies is "clearly based on prevalent interpretations of the Great Chain" (291). A student moves from the study of matter to plants, living creatures. Milton asked students to have the "helpfull experiences of Hunters, Fowlers, Fishermen, Shepherds, Gardeners, Apothecaries" (II:394) but they only

would contribute practical knowledge of plants, fishes, birds, and animals--the lower levels in the Great Chain. Then students were asked to study about man. Man himself is studied by the orderly investigation first of the individual, then the individual in society, the individual as a citizen of a nation, and finally the individual as a creation of God. At the end of this educational chain, Milton's student becomes sufficiently mature, knowledgeable, and insightful to be himself a creator and interpreter of the highest forms of human discourse.

After Of Education and the divorce tracts, Milton did not publish any more pamphlets until he once again became involved in controversy in 1649, when Cromwell and the House of Commons beheaded Charles I. After Charles I's execution, Cromwell's government did not have wide support from the English. The Presbyterians accused the Regicides and their supporters of carrying out an illegal trial and execution of the king, and the Levellers also blamed them for being a self-appointed government without authority. Of course, the Royalists and most peasants were hostile to Cromwell and his government from the beginning of the revolution. In this political situation, Milton published the so-called regicide pamphlets based on the people's sovereignty. But to Milton not everyone had sovereignty; only people who could exercise a mature and morally responsible independence of thought and action could maintain their rights. This rather casuistic

idea was evident throughout the second half of the prose period, showing his class-consciousness of the mind and spirit, not simply of blood.

Milton published The Tenure of Kings and Magistrate in February 1649 just after the regicide, claiming a justification of the regicide and the people's right to revolt and remove their rulers who became tyrants. Its basic argument was presented in the subtitle: "Proving, that it is Lawful, and hath been held so through all Ages, for any, who have the Power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked King, and after due conviction, to depose, and put him to death; if the ordinary Magistrate have neglected, or deny'd to doe it. And that they, who of late, so much blame Depositing, are the Men that did it themselves" (III:189). Milton's criticism against the king could be found earlier in Of Reformation, even though the overall tone of that pamphlet was not harsh--the criticism might be regarded as a kind of warning. Milton there described the king, who was "anointed" of the Lord, but "the Lashes . . . washt off the holy Unction with his blood drawn by the polluted hands of Bishops, Abbots, and Monks" (I:581). Milton here was saying that the king's royal blood had been depleted of its hereditary richness. Interestingly, Milton's saying was similar to that of Bolingbroke in Shakespeare's Richard II when he condemns Bushy and Green:

"You have misled a prince, a royal king,

A happy gentleman in blood and lineaments

By you unhappied and disfigured clean. (3.1.9-11)

Bolingbroke is saying that Richard is a "most degenerate king," as Northumberland describes him in 2.1.262 and Bushy and Green are causers of the change. Since his physiology determines his politics for his people, the king becomes more and more inappropriate. Shakespeare here means that Richard's blood is literally debased as many Elizabethans would have thought, whereas Milton was emphasizing Charles' degeneracy figuratively. To Milton in Of Reformation, Charles' "holy Unction" was impaired by "Bishops, Abbots, and Monks," so they should be removed to protect the king.

In The Tenure Milton accused the king severely, demanding his deposition. His claim for the deposition of the king began with his belief in man's natural rights as a creature of God²⁰: "all men naturally were born free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey" (III:198). He then set forth how kings came into being and what their responsibilities toward the people were. Milton said that after Adam's fall, because of disorder and violence, men created kings and magistrates to maintain peace and order subject to covenants and limitations that precluded arbitrary power. Kings and magistrates were appointed not as "thir Lords and Maisters (though afterward those names in som places were giv'n

voluntarily to such as had been Authors of inestimable good to the people) but, to be thir Deputies and Commissioners, to execute, by vertue of thir intrusted power" (III:199). This was why "among free Persons, one man by civil right should beare authority and jurisdiction over another, no other end or reason can be imaginable" (III:199). So, with these propositions Milton concluded as follows. First, the power of kings and magistrates was "derivative, transferr'd and committed to them in trust from the People, to the common good of them all, and cannot be tak'n from them, without a violation of thir natural birthright" (III:202). Second, a king guilty of crimes against his people justly forfeits his power because he must serve for the common good. Third, to say kings are accountable only to God is the overturning of all law and government, and the rendering all their oaths and covenants vain, and the leading to the "worst sort of Tyranny" not to be "endur'd by free born men" (III:204). Finally, since the king or magistrate holds his authority over the people "originally and naturally for their good," the people "as oft as they judge it for the best" may either retain or depose him even if not a tyrant, "meerly by the liberty and right of free born Men, to be governed as seems to them best" (III:206). Moreover, Milton said that if the citizens of England did not have "the power to remove or to abolish any governour supreme or subordinat," they were in "thir fancy with a ridiculous and painted freedom

fit to coz'n babies; but are indeed under tyranny and servitude; as wanting that power, which is the root and source of all liberty, to dispose and oeconomize in the Land which God hath giv'n them, as Maisters of Family in thir own house and free inheritance" (III:236-37). He denied the king as the head of a God-ordained hierarchy. Milton asserted that "They [the people] anointed them Kings" (221). Thus it was lawful to Milton that the king had been placed on trial by his subjects and sentenced to death for tyranny, which meant breaking the contract between the king and his people. Milton accused the king of having treated all laws and parliaments with contempt, of holding himself unaccountable, and of destroying many thousands of his Christian subjects in a civil war.

Milton employed Scripture extensively against tyranny. For example, he cited Luke 4:6: "All this power will I [Satan] give thee and the glory of them, for it is deliver'd to me, & to whomsoever I will, I give it," adding "neither did he ly, or Christ gainsay what he affirm'd" (III:210) but alluding to Luke 4:8, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." He also interpreted Revelation 13 and Romans 13 to prove that people did not need to obey tyrants. Later he arraigned Charles I for being the antichrist: "Let them [Presbyterians] beware an old and perfet enemy [Charles], who though he hope by

sowing discord to make them his instruments, yet cannot forbear a minute the op'n threatning of his destined revenge upon them, when they have servd his purposes" (III:239). He attacked the Presbyterian clergy because they once accused the king as a tyrant, and now called him "a lawfull Magistrate, a Sovran Lord, the Lord's anointed, not to be touch'd" (III:197). Milton disparaged them for their avarice and their pride and ambition for power over the "simple Laity" (III:241).

After publication of The Tenure, Milton was appointed as the Council of State's Secretary for Foreign Tongues. His main job was to translate the Council's communications to foreign governments into Latin and to write on occasion in behalf of the commonwealth against its enemies. As a government officer, in May 1649, Milton published Observations upon The Articles of Peace, Made and Concluded with the Irish Rebels to respond to the articles of the Earl of Ormond's peace with the Irish rebels.²¹ Answering the various accusations made by the Presbyterians against the republicans, Milton again reminded them that the kingship came from "free Persons," so they could depose the king if he were wrong for his people. Interestingly, however, Milton in this tract revealed his class-consciousness. The real root of Ormond's hostility to Parliament was shown, as Hughes points out, when Ormond said that "the venerable laws and fundamental constitution of our ancestors," were

"trodden under impious, and for the most part mechanic feet" ("The Historical Setting" 1066).²² In answer to Ormond's articles, Milton also described the Irish as the lower class²³: they were a barbarous people, "not onely sottish but indocible and averse from all Civility and amendment [and] preferre their own absurd and savage Customes" (III:304). To Milton the Irish were not qualified to have true liberty because they were slaves to vice, to Catholicism, holding themselves in bondage. Further, he emphasized Cromwell's aristocratic references: "[Cromwell] hath done in a few yeares more eminent and remarkable Deeds to found Nobility in his house, though it were lacking, then Ormond and all his Auncestors put together can shew from any record of thir Irish exploits, the widest scene of thir glory" (III:312). As he extolled some Presbyterian aristocrats as the "noblest, worthiest, and most prudent men" (Of Reformation I:599), Milton praised Cromwell as an aristocrat who had proved himself superior in courage and in magnanimity. Cromwell, like most Puritan gentlemen, belonged to the traditional landed governing class.²⁴ He and the Commonwealth leaders wanted parliamentary supremacy over the king in the name of the people. As shown in his early anti-prelatical pamphlets, Milton wanted the government to be run by a few heroic and virtuous aristocrats. Cromwell's heroic military achievements proved that he enjoyed God's special favor. Don M. Wolfe remarks that Milton's political

philosophy was that "the more virtuous should govern the less virtuous" ("Ruler" 266). But it seems that in his middle years Milton's notion of the qualities of rulers included not only virtue but also gentle blood.

About 1652 Milton wrote three sonnets dedicated to the new government's leaders, showing his attitude toward the aristocrats. Cromwell was praised in Milton's Sonnet XVI, "To the Lord General Cromwell," as "our chief of men" to whom God gives special favor, a man

... who through a cloud

Not of war only, but detractions rude,

Guided by faith and matchless Fortitude,

To peace and truth thy glorious way hath plough'd,

And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud

Hath rear'd God's trophies and his work pursu'd.

(ll. 1-6)

Milton, after praising Cromwell, offered admonition and warning that since enemies who threaten our souls are still there, Cromwell should save the free conscience of true religion from the wolves' "paw" and "maw"--contemptible, animal-like words for base objects. Milton also wrote two other sonnets to applaud leading republican aristocrats: "On the Lord General Fairfax at the siege of Colchester" and "To Sir Henry Vane the Younger." Milton praised Fairfax's "firm unshaken virtue," a word used in both its moral sense and its more literal meaning of manly strength, courage, and

civic leadership. In Sonnet XVII, Milton commended Sir Henry Vane, Jr. for having the righteous firmness of the Roman Senate, which, even more than the valor of soldiers, defeated Pyrrhus and Hannibal. Vane was praised for knowing the distinction between civil and ecclesiastical authority and for making a sharp division between "the bounds of either sword." Milton said that Sir Henry Vane will protect the state and will uphold the true religion.

Milton again denied the kingship as head of a hierarchical society in the next commission given to him by the Council of State. Eikonoklastes was to counteract the menacing effect on public opinion of the famous Eikon Basilike, which had appeared almost immediately after the king's execution and was circulating widely despite the government's efforts to suppress it. The Eikon, as its subtitle shows, The True Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings, purported to be a private record of the prayerful devotions of Charles through the last hours of his life, revealing him as a model of conscientiousness and religious piety, tender toward his family, and solicitous for the good for his people. Milton in Eikonoklastes demonstrated the worthlessness of Charles' defense of his conduct at every point. Instancing Shakespeare's Richard III as an example of a tyrant who masked his evil purposes with religious cant, Milton attacked the pious passages, which constituted the most

popular feature of the Eikon, as mere hypocrisy. Milton's assault against the kingship was again based on the freedom of the people: "Kings . . . were at first chos'n and install'd onely by consent and suffrage of the People, to govern them as Freemen by Laws of thir own framing, and to be, in consideration of that dignity and riches bestow'd upon them, the entrusted Servants of the Common-wealth" (III:485-86). Kings did not excel any one and usually were less wise and worthy than some of their subjects. It was not God's nor nature's intent, "never of any People not wholly barbarous" (III:486), to exalt one person and his lineage for no merit but the mere chance of heredity "into an absolute and unaccountable dominion over them and thir posterity" (III:487). Milton did not believe the welfare and happiness of a nation depended on one man or one family.

To Milton, however, not everyone was equal. If one rejects the good, thereby becoming a slave to his vices and passions, he loses his freedom and has no right to choose his own ruler, making himself a lower-class person. After the revolution, Milton thought the English people had been passing through true reformation, but many of them might not have freed themselves from tyranny. In the beginning of The Tenure Milton stated his distrust of some people: "If men within themselves would be govern'd by reason, and not generally give up thir understanding to a double tyrannie, of Custom from without, and blind affections within, they

would discern better, what it is to favour and uphold the Tyrant of a Nation. But being slaves within doors, no wonder that they strive so much to have the public State conformably govern'd to the inward vitious rule, by which they govern themselves" (III:190). In Eikonoklastes, seeing the great popularity of the king's book, Milton showed his contempt for the English populace, who sympathized with Charles. He knew that "the blockish vulgar" would admire anything ascribed to the king, even if it contained little but "the common grounds of tyranny and popery, drest up, the better to deceive, in a new Protestant guise" (III:339). He also recognized that "it might have seem'd in vaine to write at all; considering the envy and almost infinite prejudice likely to be stirr'd up among the Common sort, against whatever can be writt'n or gainsay to the Kings book" (III:339). He harshly denounced the ignorant multitude's failure to look upon the tyrannicide as an act of justice whereby they were released from the bondage of tyranny. Milton viewed them as low-class people:

the People, exorbitant and excessive in all thir motions, are prone ofttimes not to a religious onely, but to a civil kinde of Idolatry in idolizing thir Kings; though never mistak'n in the object of thir worship. . . . now, with a besotted and degenerate baseness of spirit, except some few, who yet retain in them the old English

fortitude and love of Freedom, and have testifi'd
 it by thir matchless deeds, the rest,
 imbastardiz'd from the ancient nobleness of thir
 Ancestors, are ready to fall flatt and give
 adoration to the Image and Memory of this Man, who
 hath offer'd at more cunning fetches to undermine
 our Liberties, and putt Tyranny into an Art, then
 any British King before him. (III:343-44)

Milton stated that, like Charles whose blood was
 degenerated, many English people became the lower-class,
 "imbastardized" in spirit and blood, because, first, the
 prelates "hath bin the Doctrin and perpetual infusion of
 servility and wretchedness to all thir hearers," and,
 second, they were divided according to the factious tendency
 by several ends and "humors of thir own" (III:344). Milton
 was saying here that, like Othello of Shakespeare who was
 degenerated by Iago's toxic sayings, the English people were
 debased by the prelates' poisonous words, changing their
 humours. So Milton asserted that not only their minds were
 debased but also their physical constitutions were
 degenerated into servility. Milton ended Eikonoklastes by
 mentioning the hopelessness of the totally degenerated
 people and recoverability of the slightly debased people:
 an inconstant, irrational, and Image-doting
 rabble; (that like a credulous and hapless herd,
 begott'n to servility, and enchanted with these

popular institutes of Tyranny, subscrib'd with a new device of the Kings Picture at his praiera, hold out both thir eares with such delight and ravishment to be stigmatiz'd and board through in witness of thir own voluntary and beloved baseness.) The rest, whom perhaps ignorance without malice, or some error, less then fatal, hath for the time misledd, on this side Sorcery or obduration, may find the grace and good guidance to bethink themselves, and recover. (III:601)

Milton's contemptuous treatment of the Britons and Saxons in The History of Britain might be also related to his disappointment with the populace. Samuel Kliger suggests that the real theme of the first few chapters of The History of Britain, which dealt with the Britons and Saxons, was not so much their barbarism and intractability as it was their racial psychology: "their barbarism . . . is a result not a cause" (149). Milton showed his love for the British, a people with a special love for liberty, but he was discouraged with the defect of their racial quality which made their liberty degenerate into license:

For although at first greedy of change, and to be thought the leading Nation to freeddom from the Empire, they seem'd a while to bestirr them with a shew of diligence in thir new affairs, some secretly aspiring to rule, others adoring the name

of liberty, yet so soon as they felt by proof the weight of what it was to govern well themselves, and what was wanting within them, not stomach or the love of licence, but the wisdom, the virtue, the labor, to use and maintain true libertie, they soon remitted thir heat, and shrunk more wretchedly under the burden of thir own libertie, than before under a foren yoke. (V:131)

Milton was disappointed with the inability of the people to rule themselves; so he asserted that only the godly should rule over the "mob." The first four books of The History of Britain were completed by 1649,²⁵ when Milton had already begun losing his confidence in the people. If he had completed the work in very early 1640s, he might have written differently about the Anglo-Saxons and Britons.

Approximately one year later, Milton showed a different idea of the Anglo-Saxons. In early 1650, the Council of State ordered Milton to write something in answer to the Defensio Regia Pro Carolo I, written by the French scholar Claudius Salmasius. Salmasius accused the English republicans not only of the murder of Charles I but also of overthrowing all law in setting up an oppressive government of tyrants that bore little resemblance to a republic. Milton tried to vindicate the English revolutionists from the charge of regicide and to justify the new government of the Commonwealth in Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio. In this

tract, Milton's description of the Saxon witenagemot assimilated the German tribal assembly to English political history in the manner of all the Gothic propaganda for Parliament's privileges: "Saxons were sprung from the Germans, who did not grant their kings unlimited and absolute power and were accustomed to take counsel together over matters of consequence; from this we learn that, in all but name, it was Parliament which had the supreme authority even with the ancestors of the Saxons. Now and then the Council of Wise Men is mentioned by them . . . who is said by Bede 'to have established his edicts on the Roman pattern with the aid of the Council of Wise Men'" (IV:490).

The main purpose of this tract was to claim that the regicide was a noble and heroic deed, a view based on his belief that all subjects had a right to choose and change their ruler. Milton assumed that by the execution of Charles I the English people recovered their liberty, since the king "in all his power, ruling according to his lust after he had overthrown our laws and oppressed our religion; at length [was] overcome in battle by his own people which had served a long term of slavery" (IV:303). Milton rebuffed Salmasius' thought that kings were like fathers, arguing that while nature gave the fathers their children, kings were created by people (IV:428). The source of kingship lay in the people when they appointed rulers for their mutual protection against injury. Many of the

Royalists who defended Charles insisted that kingship was a natural power of dominion. To them a king's power to rule was same as the rule of God over his creatures or the rule of a father over his family: kingship was natural and instituted by God. But Milton argued against the Royalist theory: human nature is free and free men have a natural power to govern themselves. He asserted that unlimited monarchy is not a form of government supported by historical precedent, that ancient rulers (except perverse despots) generally recognized the sovereignty of the people, and that most ancient historians, including Cornelius Tacitus, an early Roman historian, realized the deleterious effect of tyranny on political liberty. Both Milton and Salmasius agreed on the proposition that the law of nature "is that reason innate in all men's minds which considers the welfare of every people where men enjoy mutual association" (IV:424). But Milton, recognizing the problem between the king and his subjects, insisted that this very natural law indicated that the people were more important than the king and therefore above him. So they could depose kings "if through sloth, folly, wickedness or treachery they misgovern the state" (IV:425).

Milton's conviction about popular sovereignty was rooted in Christianity: God had created men free, and the Bible declared political freedom as well as religious freedom. He wrote that "If any person should gaze upon a

man's face and features and inquire whose likeness was found there, would it not be easy for anyone to reply, the likeness of God? Since therefore we are God's own, and indeed his children, we are for this reason his property alone, and accordingly cannot without wickedness and extreme sacrilege deliver ourselves as slaves to Caesar, that is to a man, and a man who is unjust, unrighteous, and a tyrant" (IV:377). He stated that the zeal and unity of the English people in the revolution were the result of God's inspiration: God had overthrown the king. Milton maintained that God in the Bible always allows political changes and He always approves of bad rulers being judged by their people. Since Christ came to liberate people, people are free to establish what is right in the political realm.

To prove the responsibilities of the rulers to the people of Greece and Rome, Milton quoted from Plato, Aristotle, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Cicero, Tacitus, Livy, and others in Chapter V. In the history of England, Milton contended, the kings have ruled only by the authority and consent of the people. If a king is wrong for his people, they may not only depose him, but also punish him. If, in England, "any man of the people may sue the crown for damages in the various lower courts, it is all the more just and necessary that, should the king do wrong to the whole people, he ought to have someone not merely to bridle and restrain him but to judge and punish him as well " (IV:494).

Milton viewed the new Commonwealth as a true republic, which governed England through the newly purged Parliament that now, he thought, represented the people. Milton declared that Parliament was "the supreme council of the nation, established and endowed with full powers by an absolutely free people for the purpose of consulting together on the most vital issues" (IV:497). The power of the new Parliament was therefore natural and it also had divine sanction: Milton asserted that "by God's testimony popular assemblies, elections, campaigns, votes and enactments are equally of God, and therefore on God's authority too it is equally forbidden for a king to resist the people" (IV:405-6). He insisted that even the Norman Conquest had not extinguished English liberty because William the Conqueror had sworn to respect the rights and laws of his subjects (IV:480). The Parliament as the people's representative had been superior to the king from the beginning.

Milton, however, needed to justify the Commonwealth because Charles was tried and executed by a small, purged parliament supported by the army. He praised the court of sixty judges who, he thought, represented the nation: "they are joined by the larger or more able part of the people, I need not hesitate to state that they are equivalent to the whole people" (IV:470). Wolfe says that Milton "not only justified an illegal action but renounced the democratic

principle" (Milton 230), but to Milton only a few cared for liberty and could enjoy it. He was losing his belief in the good judgment of the people because, Milton thought, they wanted to be slaves again. It was the uncorrupted part of the House of Commons that had cooperated in the purge of Parliament and joined Cromwell's new government to save England: "If a Majority in Parliament prefer enslavement . . . is it not right for a minority to prevent it if they can and preserve their freedom?" (IV:457). So they "deserve to rule the rest, as men rule women" (IV:336). To Milton the rest were slaves by nature, who obstructed the valorous and liberty-loving from enjoying their freedom: "On that side were most of the London hucksters and artisans together with the most partisan ministers, while, on our side, was an army famous for its loyalty, moderation, and courage. With the help of the army, it was possible for us to keep our freedom and save the state; do you believe we should have betrayed everything through cowardice and folly?" (IV:511).

Milton showed that his view of social class was related to his notion of virtue. As shown in An Apology Against a Pamphlet, the aristocrats in the Parliament could represent the nation by their selection from their communities and their class. Milton said that some of the Puritan leaders came from noble ancestry equal to any in the land, and that others "are self-made men who follow the course of true nobility through toil and rectitude, and bear comparison

with the noblest of men" (IV:319). He repeatedly pointed out that in ancient times the commons were comprehended in the terms "peers" and "barons." He also mentioned a new social class, "middle class,"²⁶ which produced the greatest number of prudent men most knowledgeable in affairs (IV:471). He said that the remainder were diverted either by excessive wealth and luxury or by want and poverty from an understanding of law and government (IV:471). Milton related this notion of social class to Christian liberty or virtue. His notion of "free men," which to the Levellers meant citizens without restriction, was restricted by a conception of inner freedom maintained by Christian liberty. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski describes it as "the liberty which flows from virtue and faith, and is dependent upon regeneration through grace" (198-99). This application of Christian liberty to social class was displayed in Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda:

to be free is precisely the same as to be pious, wise, just and temperate, careful of one's property, aloof from another's, and thus finally to be magnanimous and brave, so to be the opposite of these qualities is the same as to be a slave.

. . . a nation which cannot rule and govern itself, but has delivered itself in slavery to its own lusts, is enslaved also to other masters whom it does not choose, and serves not only

voluntarily but also against its will. Such is the decree of law and nature herself, that he who cannot control himself, who through poverty of intellect or madness cannot properly administer his own affairs, should not be his own master, but like a ward be given over to the power of another.

. . . . If to be a slave is hard, and you do not wish it, learn to obey right reason, to master yourselves. (IV:684)

So, to Milton, the Cromwell government and the House of Commons, which included the nobles both by birth and merit, were true representatives for the debased people who could not govern themselves.²⁷

Here is the distinction between Milton's idea of gentility and that of most of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English writers and thinkers. To Shakespeare, the gentle, except the degenerated ones like Macbeth, were always more virtuous and more worthy than the base and were always in control of the latter when society was rightly ordered. And the base were almost always, though in varying degrees, notably less human than the gentle because the ranking or typing of human beings according to their birth was the natural, God-ordained hierarchy that must not be violated. Milton's idea of social class, however, was different. He basically believed in human equality, but, contradictorily, especially in his

middle age, he did not deny the whole notion of the aristocracy by birth. It seems that to him real Christian liberty or virtue of individuals was more important than their class status.

In the Defensio Secunda, written in 1654, Milton had two contradictory notions which he tried to merge into one. First he affirmed the people's right to depose the king who became a tyrant. But his notion of the populace had greatly narrowed: since the people were debased, parliament had to represent them. He knew that if his people were free to choose, they were likely to bring back monarchy and reject religious tolerance. So he had to depend on the virtuous few: parliament thus constituted was becoming the whole people to Milton. He praised some aristocrats of the republic for their virtue. John Bradshaw, who tried the king, was applauded as a man of "noble line," of lofty spirit and pure morals, and of noble deeds for the republic (IV:638-39). He also praised Thomas Fairfax, who was extolled in Sonnet XV for saving England from the corruption and extortion of which Milton believed the Parliament to be guilty, for demonstrating his supreme courage as a field commander, and for displaying his modesty and holiness (IV:669). Cromwell received the most extreme applause. He was "sprung of renowned and illustrious stock" and a man of devotion to religion and an upright life, firmness in council, and superb leadership in war: he was drawn as an

ideal aristocrat. Milton said England was safe as long as Cromwell lived because God was always on his side. He called him "the liberator of your country, the author of liberty" (IV:672), even though he dissolved parliament and became the Lord Protector, a king-like position,²⁸ by force: to Milton the fittest man should rule.

The Defensio Secunda was a response to Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Coelum adversus Parricidas Anglicanos in which the author viciously attacked Milton. Milton needed to defend himself from misrepresentation, so he spoke of himself, an account eloquently setting forth his aristocratic associations. He wanted to tell his readers that he was "incapable of ever disgracing honorable speech by dishonorable conduct, or free utterances by slavish deeds" (IV:611). He began introducing himself by disclosing his family: "I was born . . . of an honorable family. My father was a man of supreme integrity, my mother a woman of purest reputation, celebrated throughout the neighborhood for her acts of charity" (IV:612). He held his education in high regard: St. Paul's, private masters, and Cambridge University. He also delineated his Grand Tour and the marks of esteem he had received from many aristocrats: for example, "Henry Wotton, a most distinguished gentleman," "the noble Thomas Scudamore," Giovanni Baptista Manso "Marquis of Villa, a man of high rank," and "many gentlemen eminent in rank and learning" (IV:614-18). He later spoke

about his writings which were devoted to liberty-- ecclesiastical, domestic or personal, and civil. He asserted that "true and substantial liberty" was an inward possession, achieved not by sword "but by a life rightly undertaken and rightly conducted" (IV:624). He never mentioned the poor or commoners. Wolfe asserts that "Milton, by nature a social and spiritual aristocrat, had never mingled with the people. How little he knew of carpenters, inn keepers, millers, or country squires! His life-long isolation from the masses served only to increase his distrust of their ignorant clamorings, his distaste for their sinful manners" (Milton 261). Wolfe may exaggerate here, but it seems that he rightly points out Milton's basic characteristics and his view of social class in his early life and much of his middle age.

Milton's view of social class based on Christianity alone can be found in De Doctrina Christiana, which was probably written between 1658 and 1660. It was not published until long after his death, perhaps because it was full of heresies that basically call for individual freedom for man. In the prefatory epistle, he felt "universal brotherhood" for all churches and Christians everywhere. He said that every Christian had authority because God gave believers the Holy Spirit, who had "the pre-eminent and supreme authority" (VI:587). However, to Milton not everyone was completely equal to everyone else in earthly

matters. In Defensio Secunda he had distinguished the privileged and unprivileged: he said it was not right for "the teachable and unteachable, the diligent and the slothful, to be maintained side by side at the public expense. Rather should you keep the rewards of the learned for those who have already acquired learning, those who already deserve the reward" (IV:679). Here he put emphasis on the idea of selectivity in higher education. In De Doctrina Christiana Milton seemed to prefer an aristocracy of birth and merit: "geometrical or comparative (rather than strictly arithmetical) equality is to be observed. Thus each person should be cared for according to his rank and eminence; and his way of life and level of education should be taken into consideration. In this way we shall avoid the absurdity of equalizing the unequal" (VI:790). Even though Milton spoke somewhat favorably of the yeoman class in Areopagitica, he often did not seem to have any sympathy for the class of laborers, although they "are much better off than slaves, who used to be bought and sold" (VI:706). Christopher Hill's comment may be right: "Milton is not necessarily the worse for his class limitations; but he lacks the Digger emphasis on human love" (266).²⁹

Milton's aristocratic characteristic was also revealed in some of his sonnets written in the 1650s, especially Sonnets X. In the sonnet, the blind poet invited an aristocrat youth to a convivial evening. Milton identified

his guest with his family background: "Lawrence of virtuous Father virtuous son," indicating Edward Lawrence, son of the Lord President of Cromwell's Council. He also did the same in Sonnet XXI: "Cyriack, whose Grandsire [sat] on the Royal Bench / Of British Themis," indicating Cyriack Skinner, grandson of the Chief Justice of the King's Bench. In Sonnet XX, Milton invited the youth to an aristocratic dinner:

What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with Wine, whence we may rise
To hear the Lute³⁰ well toucht, or artful voice
Warble immortal Notes and Tuscan Air? (9-12)

He wanted to enjoy the pleasant idleness with aristocratic light³¹ food and wine, and believed that "He who of those delights can judge and spare / To interpose them oft, is not unwise" (13-14). In his middle forties, Milton could enjoy aristocratic pleasures, as also shown in Sonnet XXI.

After Cromwell's death in 1658, Milton published two pamphlets which centered on religious liberty. In A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes Milton expressed his disapproval of Oliver Cromwell's monarchy and his religious policies that oppressed people's liberty. Milton assumed that everyone should be left free and protected from any force. In Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church, Milton also assumed that the people had liberty, which

should be protected from the hirelings who entered the ministry for mercenary reasons. Milton suggested that churches should be disendowed, and with the money from churches--tithes and ministerial salaries--schools and libraries should be erected throughout the land to "civilize" the people: "they . . . continue there thankful for what they receid freely, bestowing it as freely on thir countrey, without soaring above the meannes wherin they were born" (VII:305). In the schools and libraries they should learn languages and arts, and the youth "may be at once brought up to competence of learning and to an honest trade; and the hours of teaching so ordered, as thir studie may be no hindrance to thir labor or other calling" (VII:306). He said it was "the breeding of S. Paul, though born of no mean parents" (VII:306). This popular education was once more emphasized in The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth³²:

They [the populace] should have heer also schools and academies at thir own choice, wherin thir children may be bred up in thir own sight to all learning and noble education not in grammar only, but in all liberal arts and exercises. This would soon spread much more knowledge and civilitie, yea religion through all parts of the land, by communicating the natural heat of government and culture more distributively to all extreme parts,

which now lie numm and neglected, would soon make the whole nation more industrious, more ingenuous at home, more potent, more honorable abroad. To this a free Commonwealth will easily assent; (nay the Parliament hath had alreadie som such thing in designe) for of all governments a Commonwealth aims most to make the people flourishing, vertuous, noble and high spirited. (VII:460)

This projected education was not for the children of the gentry, but for the children of the lower class. Milton wanted to give them not only elementary schools but also secondary schools and municipal universities, offering training "in all the liberal arts and exercises." It seems that Milton's educational system here, unlike the one in Of Education, was for lower-class people in the sense that it would have permitted children of the lower-class, had their intelligence warranted it, to receive advanced education at the public cost.

The Readie and Easie Way was published in 1660 just before the Protectorate's collapse, proposing a new form of government that would forbid the king's return. To Milton going back to kingship was losing freedom: "to fall back or rather to creep back so poorly as it seems the multitude would to thir once abjur'd and detested thraldom of Kingship" (VII:422). He acclaimed a free commonwealth as the form of government nearer to the precept of Christ.

Milton accused the monarch: "they who are greatest, are perpetual servants and drudges to the public at thir own cost and charges, neglect thir own affairs; yet are not elevated above thir brothren . . . Wheras a king must be ador'd like a Demigod, with a dissolute and haughtie court about him, of vast expence and luxurie, masks and revels, to the debaushing of our prime gentry both male and female; not in thir pasetimes only, but in earnest, by the loos imploiments of court service, which will be then thought honorable" (VII:425). He could not understand why people wanted to be slaves to tyranny; Milton assumed that they would deserve to be slaves.

Milton, trying not to despair, suggested the establishment of a new commonwealth composed of an elected Grand Council, to which the citizens would delegate control of the armed forces, of taxation, of civil laws, and of commerce. But his way of electing the council's members was not democratic, showing his class-consciousness: his "wel-qualifie[d] and refine[d] election" was "not committing all to the noise and shouting of a rude multitude, but permitting only those of them who are rightly qualifi'd, to nominat as many as they will; and out of that number others of a *better breeding*, to chuse a less number more judiciously, till after a third or fourth sifting and refining of exactest choice, they only be left chosen who are the due number, and seem by most voices the worthiest

[italics mine]" (VII:442-43). The aim of this election was "to make the people fittest to chuse and the chosen fittest to governe" and to inspire virtue and justice: they would be "the true keepers of our libertie" (VII:443). Milton evidently distrusted the populace because of their monarchist propensities.

Milton endorsed the ideal commonwealth, where no distinction would exist between lords and commoners of a kind that could divide the public interest. Every county should become a subordinate commonwealth which would have its own local assembly to make laws and deliver its views to the Grand Council. These counties should have schools and academies, as mentioned above, to give youths an education. The aim of the commonwealth was to make people "flourishing, vertuous, noble and high spirited," while monarchs made them "softest, basest, vitioussest, servilest, easiest to be kept under" (VII:460). The commonwealth would consist of many commonwealths united into one entrusted sovereignty. It would have a faithful army, its public accounts would be open to inspection, its laws and taxes determined by vote, and its council members could be changed periodically. It was a place where "nothing can be more essential [than freedom] to the freedom of a people" (VII:460). However, even in this commonwealth, Milton was class-conscious: "the nobilitie and chief gentry" were to be leaders in this community. He did not trust the populace because they did

not have the capacity to use their liberty. His aim was to have the worthiest rule for the happiness of the debased.

Milton was not completely consistent in his idea of social class in his middle years, but he was not illogical, or Machiavellian or crassly hypocritical.³³ As a Christian, he believed in human equality. He denied the Episcopal Church's hierarchical system because he believed that the meanest Christians were as capable as any bishop of judging Christ's doctrine and discerning a good from a bad minister; he denied the kingship, arguing that the king's authority was derived from the contract with the people. But he considered the populace as becoming debased because of the bad influence of the prelates and the king. In order to save them from servitude, persons of "better breeding," members of the aristocracy, would guide them. Here Milton was clearly class-conscious, but his social bias was for the benefit of the commoners: as Zagorin phrases it, "to preserve liberty, Milton was willing to suppress it" (119). It sounds sophistic, but to Milton there was no alternative.

Notes

1. John Ball took this couplet, quoted in Carl Van Doren's The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (London: Oxford UP, 1941) 527, as the text of his revolutionary sermon at Blackheath in 1381.

2. Christopher Hill says that Milton had read Aston's pamphlet.

3. Brents Stirling in his The Populace in Shakespeare (New York: Columbia UP, 1949) has surveyed extensively antiaristocratic and antipopular propaganda in sermons, treatises, plays, incidents, and other expressions in Shakespeare's lifetime with particular attention to the Elizabethan reputations of the Anabaptists, Jack Straw, Jack Cade, and other traditional popular rebels (97-150).

4. Even though he did not name Rutherford, Milton seemed to echo and to extend some of his views in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrate and Eikonoklastes. In these tracts Milton satirically observed that the Presbyterians, who had warred against the king, were inconsistent, indeed hypocritical, when they allied themselves in 1648 with the Royalists in order to combat the New Model Army, which was comprised of Independents, Leftist sectaries, and Levellers.

5. For the explanation of the two forms of the social contract in this paragraph, I owe a debt to Jesse F. Mack,

"The Evolution of Milton's Political Thinking" in The Sewanee Review 30 (1922): 193-205.

6. This phrase could almost have come from Shakespeare.

7. Milton cites Sir Thomas Smith in his Commonplace Book.

8. I borrow this idea of mixed government, including Algernon Sidney's idea, from Z. S. Fink, "The Theory of the Mixed State and the Development of Milton's Political Thought" in PMLA 57 (1942): 705-36.

9. In The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates Milton argues that, according to the ancient books of Law, the peers and barons of England had a legal right to judge the king and thus were called the king's peers. Later in Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio, Milton shows his notion of the government position: in Chapter VIII, he cites Matthew Paris' account of the Earl of Chester's power as mayor of the palace, and argues that in the French tradition the twelve peers of Charlemagne are the emperor's equals in law.

10. Many scholars agree that this note was probably written between 1640 and 1644.

11. Milton said that they were saluted as "Fathers of their countrey" and that they "sit as gods among daily Petitions and publick thanks flowing in upon them" (Apology I:926). They also received the complaints of "the meanest artizans and labourers, at other times also women, and often

the younger sort of servants" (Apology I:926) with courtesy.

12. The date of the poem is uncertain. It was probably written in 1643-5 because it was numbered ten and was placed last in the 1645 Poems. Parker insisted that it was composed before the end of 1641, or not later than 1642. In any case, the poem shows the poet's class-consciousness at the time of the war.

13. E. A. J. Honigmann, Milton's Sonnets (London: Macmillan, 1966), suggests that the sonnet may well have been intended as a commendatory poem to the posthumously published A Learned Treatise concerning Wards and Liveries (1641, 1642) by the Earl (49).

14. Stone states that since full divorce was almost impossible to get, a formal separation *a mensa et thoro*, which condemned the wife to lonely isolation on a modest allowance and left the husband free to do anything but marry again, was not unusual (661).

15. Chilton Latham Powell, English Domestic Relations: 1487-1653 (New York: Columbia UP, 1917), suggests that the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce "had no connection whatever with his own domestic life" (230), while many scholars think that Mary Powell was the inspiration of the tract. For example, Arthur Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641-1660 (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1942), asserts, "the divorce pamphlets . . . were a direct result of his unfortunate union with Mary Powell" (63).

16. The Parliament's response to Milton's divorce tracts includes a sermon of Herbert Palmer of the Westminster Assembly before both Houses of Parliament. Palmer condemned the "impudent" man who had authored a "wicked book" on divorce as "deserving to be burnt." See Parker, especially vol. 1, pp. 263-64, for details of the reaction.

17. Milton was anti-Catholic from early youth. See In Quintum Novembris.

18. For the sonnet numbering, I follow Hughes' John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose. Hughes thinks that the three poems probably were written in 1646, but John T. Shawcross in his The Complete Poetry of John Milton (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1971) numbers the sonnet "I did but proompt the age to quit thir clogs" eleven and dates it at 1645, and he numbers the sonnet "A book was writt of late call'd Tetrachordon" twelve and dates it at 1647. Shawcross also dates "On the Forcers of Conscience" at 1647.

19. Milton's aristocratic educational plan seemed to appeal to contemporary gentlemen: Parker notes that within the next few years after Of Education a few parents wanted to send their gentle or noble progeny to Milton's care. French includes a letter of one of these parents. On November 12, 1645 Sir Cheney Culpepper wrote to Samuel Hartlib: "I pray (as you shall have opportunity) inform yourself of the charge on which a scholar may be with Mr.

Milton, that (if I have occasion) I may satisfy such with whom (till he be more known) that consideration is like to weigh. There are some good sprinklings in his (as I conceive it to be) letter of Education, but (under favour I conceive) there is not descending enough into particulars, but rather a general notion of what experience only can perfect" (II:132).

20. According to Christopher Hill, Antinomianism, Socinianism, the theology of Ranters, Diggers, and early Quakers stressed the perfectibility of man on earth, the possibility of all men becoming Sons of God. But Milton did not emphasize Christ's humanity at the cost of denying his divinity. Hill points out that Milton stressed the possibility of the unity of believers with Christ in sonship (302).

21. The background of Observations is this. "The Articles of Peace" was published in January 1649 by James Butler, Earl of Ormond and Charles I's general in Ireland, to attempt to strengthen the Royalist cause by offering political independence to Ireland and religious freedom for Irish Catholics in exchange for military help against the Parliamentary forces. On February 1649 the Scottish Presbyterians of Ulster, horrified by Charles's execution, issued Representation of the Present Evils, aligning themselves with Ormond. On March 1649 Ormond wrote to Colonel Michael Jones, Parliamentary governor of Dublin,

urging him to declare for Charles II, but Jones refused. The Council ordered Milton to write observations upon "The Articles of Peace," the Presbyterians of Ulster, and Ormond's letter.

22. Hughes here quotes from Thomas Carter's The Life of James, Duke of Ormond (Oxford, 1851).

23. Spenser, one of Milton's favorites, had the same attitude toward the Irish in Veue of the Present State of Ireland (1633).

24. Cromwell was descended from Margaret Cromwell, sister of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex and chief minister of Henry VIII during the destruction of the religious houses. For his biography, see Wilbur C. Abbott's A Bibliography of Oliver Cromwell (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1929).

25. Parker places the composition of The History of Britain in 1648 after the composition of A Brief History of Moscovia (I:325). Kliger suggests that the first four books were written by 1649 (146).

26. Milton used the Latin word "media" (Patterson 392). The Columbia and the Bohn editions translate it as "the middle sort" (VII:393; I:155), and the Yale edition uses "the middle class" (IV:471).

27. Some scholars point out that his virtue was closely related with his politics. Perez Zagorin says that Milton "did not abandon the doctrine of popular sovereignty,

but gave it an aristocratic meaning to adapt it to the political reality of the government's position" (86). It is not easy to deny this opinion.

28. He even was offered the crown by Parliament in 1657, which he refused.

29. The Diggers were agrarian communists who flourished in 1649-50. They held that the Civil War had been fought against the king and the great landowners; now that Charles I had been executed, land should be made available for the very poor to cultivate.

30. The lute was an aristocratic instrument.

31. The "light" food did not mean simple or frugal food. As Berkeley suggests in "'Light' in Milton's Sonnet XX" Philological Quarterly 61.2 (1982): 208-11, the "light" food excludes "foods rich in stercor, possessed of excrement which the body after selecting its nutriment could not eliminate with the unhappy result of leaving the blood semi-excremental with the lees of melancholy" ("Light" 209). Milton gave an aristocratic dinner "whose model (e.g., white bread, partridges, soft eggs), if regularly consumed, would produce fine children, ward off insanity and the intellectual grossness of the peasantry, and prolong life" ("Light" 209).

32. The Readie and Easie Way came out in two editions. In this paper I use only the second edition.

33. S. B. Liljegren considers Milton a Machiavellian, a crass hypocrite, or at best a timeserver (xvi-xix), as I mentioned in the Introduction, and Arthur E. Barker thinks that Milton was inept politically and guilty of "illogicality rather than insincerity" (xx).

CHAPTER 3

The Later Years (1660-1674)

After the Restoration, Milton's class-consciousness, as shown in his later writings, changed once more. Milton was fatigued politically and physically with the Restoration and consequently became a more devoted Christian and asserted egalitarianism. Already blind from 1652, he was arrested and held in prison for several weeks. He suffered substantial financial losses, even though he possessed some means to maintain his independence. Politically he encountered the event he had dreaded, a return to the hierarchical system. In 1660 Charles II, seeing the collapse of the Protectorate, issued in Holland a declaration of his policies, including an amnesty to all rebels except those whom the Parliament should designate.¹ The House voted that the government is and ought to be controlled by a king, lords, and commons, according to the ancient and fundamental laws. Charles II was proclaimed king, and he entered London in May, 1660. Charles II's reign was officially reckoned as beginning on 30 January 1649, the day of his father's execution. All parliamentary enactments passed since 1641 without the assent of the king became invalidated. The confiscated lands of the king, the

church, and the Royalists were ordered restored. The army was paid and disbanded, except 5,000 troops that were retained as a standing army. Parliament also abolished feudal dues and purveyance and imposed permanent taxes.

The Restoration also brought back religious persecution, depriving the people of the freedom Milton regarded as essential for the realm. The Cavalier Parliament was elected in the spring of 1661, and its radical Anglicanism led it to enact legislation that made the established church narrowly Anglican and thoroughly intolerant. The Municipal Corporations Act required members of the governing bodies of municipalities to submit to the king's authority, to accept the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and to take communion in the Church of England. Few Dissenters could conscientiously fulfill all these tests. The Anglicans secured control of the Municipal Corporations, which returned many members to the House of Commons. The Act of Uniformity required all incumbents of livings in the church, the universities, and the schools to subscribe to the Prayer Book. Toleration within the church ceased. Some other acts imposed stringent penalties and disabilities on all Protestant dissenters from the Anglican church.

This series of events, which were disastrous to Milton, made him wonder why the revolution had failed and what God had wanted through the revolution. Before the Revolution,

Milton, a gentleman, was class-conscious. He undoubtedly showed his aristocratic bias in his early works as a young Cavalier-like poet. After the Revolution, he tried not to be class-conscious, claiming popular sovereignty. As the Revolution actualized his nightmares, he no longer had the high hopes for England that he had cherished in the 1640s, nor the belief that a few aristocrats could act on behalf of the country, a view which he had held in the 1650s. His hope was finally shattered by the Restoration. He might have asked himself about his religious belief and his social philosophy. What is man? Why did God make man? Does God really exist? His answers are shown in his great later poems: Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes. The three poems deal with fundamental human characteristics and show his ideas of why God made the revolution a failure. Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes treat human weakness to temptations, God's punishment and salvation, and Paradise Regained deals with the temptations of one perfect human being and his conquest over evil. In these poems Milton shows what man is and God's providential direction to humankind. He became a true defender of Christian egalitarianism and an opponent of hierarchical society.

Paradise Lost is an epic, a genre which usually sings the great achievement of kings and nobles. In his early and middle years, Milton, like many poets of the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries for whom the aristocrats were leaders of their countries, dreamed of doing for his country what Homer, Virgil, and others had done for theirs. When he was a Cambridge undergraduate, in "At a Vacation Exercise," he confided to his college audience his desire to write heroic poetry that would embrace both the physical universe and "Kings and Queens and Hero's old." In "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," which suggests epic range, Milton's Christ is the mighty King, not the suffering Savior: an infant Hercules who "can in swaddling bands control the damned crew" of Satan. In the Latin "Mansus," written during his Grand Tour, and more explicitly, in "Epitaphium Damonis" (1639-40), the elegy on Diodati, Milton mentioned his plan for a heroic poem on King Arthur and his knights. This early choice of the noble man of primitive national history was in accord with classical precedents and with Renaissance theory and practice. Spenser, Milton's preceptor,² had treated Arthur and his knights under the religious and moral headings of his six completed books of The Faerie Queene (Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, Courtesy), all embraced in his general effort to create gentlemen in virtuous and gentle discipline. But Milton did not write about nobles. As the revolution was turning out to be a failure, he was losing his belief in the few aristocrats on whom he depended for his country, probably including Cromwell. He turned instead

to a vast religious theme, revealing his egalitarianism, in order to "assert eternal providence, / And justify the ways of God to men" (I:25-26), as he said in his invocation at the beginning of Paradise Lost. He focused on human beings themselves, an act based on his Christian conception of human freedom and responsibility, and an act denying any social classes.

In Paradise Lost, Milton shows the hostility by which he felt himself encompassed during the Restoration: "though fallen on evil days, / On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues; / In darkness, and with dangers compassed round" (VII:25-26). His hostility to the degenerated aristocrats is well shown in his description of Satan. Milton's Satan is an interesting figure. He has exceptional qualities of leadership, courage, determination, and creativity; so the Romantic poets, like Blake and Shelley, considered Satan the real hero of Paradise Lost.³ In Books I and II, Satan is depicted as an august aristocrat, even though he is a defeated angel on the lake of Hell. He has the appearance of the great leader and the attractiveness of an epic adventurer. Satan says as a defeated warrior:

What though the field be lost?

All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,

And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield:

And what is else not to be overcome?

That Glory never shall his wrath or might
 Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
 With suppliant knee, and deify his power
 Who from the terror of this Arm so late
 Doubted his Empire, that were low indeed,
 That were an ignominy and shame beneath
 This downfall. (I:105-16)

Satan was established from the first as a mighty antagonist with courage and fortitude, which were almost synonymous with gentility. He calls Almighty God "the Tyranny of Heav'n" and shows hostility against Him. Satan's aristocratic characteristics are underlined not only by his own assertion and self-aggrandizement, but also by his followers. Beelzebub praises Satan thus:

Leader of those Armies bright,
 Which but th' Omnipotent none could have foiled,
 If once they hear that voice, thir liveliest pledge
 Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft
 In worst extremes, and on the perilous edge
 Of battle when it rag'd, in all assaults
 Thir surest signal, they will soon resume
 New courage and revive, though now they lie
 Groveling and prostrate on yon Lake of Fire,
 As we erewhile, astounded and amaz'd.
 (I:272-281)

Satan is a great leader to his followers. His fallen angels

are also depicted as high ranking: "Godlike shapes and forms / Excelling human, Princely Dignities, / And Powers that erst in Heaven sat on Thrones" (I:358-60); "These were the prime in order and in might" (I:506). Milton also describes Satan as a giant in order to intimate the aristocratic nature of Satan in the mind of his seventeenth-century audience, who pictured the general appearance of the aristocrats as possessing height and imposing musculature. Satan is depicted as being as grand as "Leviathan, which God of all his works / Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream" (I:201-2).

Milton, however, even in the opening books, is undercutting Satan's magnificence by linking him repeatedly to tyranny, evil, and destruction. Milton is not making Satan the hero of his epic, although Satan could represent the life-style of aristocrats, especially Royalists, attractive to seventeenth-century people but also the root cause in Milton's view of much human evil and misery. Milton says,

That with reiterated crimes he might
 Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
 Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
 How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
 Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
 On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
 Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.

(I:214-220)

Satan deliberately continues to choose evil rather than good, destroying himself more and more.

Milton had dedicated two decades of his life and creativity to a political cause and had proclaimed that "poets truly so called," from Homer to Buchanan, were "the sworn foes of tyrants." We should hardly expect this Milton to have suddenly lost his political interests entirely. To Milton, Satan and his fallen angels might be Charles II and the nobles who figured importantly in the Restoration. Or, as Blair Worden has suggested, Milton might have had in mind Cromwell and the Puritan government of the Protectorate (241-2).⁴ In the preface to Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings from the Church (1659) Milton criticized the Cromwellian regime as "a short but scandalous night of interruption." G. Wilson Knight also regards Satan as "a Cromwell casting an 'experienced eye' over his ironside warriors," his mode of government, and Parliament (127). In any case, most of the people whom Milton's Satan might refer to were the armigerous or the equivalents. Through Satan, who is in the upper position and wants to climb higher in order to rule, Milton is probably disparaging the noble class in the world. The fallen Satan momentarily wishes that he had been a lower rank: "O had his powerful Destiny ordain'd / Me some inferior Angel, I had stood / Then happy; no unbounded hope

had rais'd / Ambition. Yet why not? some other Power / As great might have aspir'd, and me though mean / Drawn to his part" (IV:58-63). If Satan had been a lower-ranked angel, he would not have wished to be the ruler of Heaven. Milton in his early and middle years had never condemned the gentle class, to which he himself belonged, even though he reprimanded the king; of course, he had praised a few aristocrats who were in the Parliament. In his later years the established social hierarchy was in Milton's mind becoming meaningless. Satan curses his higher rank which was degraded by himself: "With Diadem and Sceptre high advanced / The lower still I fall; only Supreme / In misery; such joy Ambition finds" (IV:90-92).

In Paradise Lost, there is a hierarchy in the universe, which was the ancient orthodox tradition the Renaissance was familiar with.⁵ According to the tradition, everything except God has some natural superior and everything has some natural inferior, as the Great Chain showed. It is natural that the inferiors obey the superiors and that the superiors rule their natural inferiors. In Heaven of Paradise Lost, there is a hierarchy mainly based on the fact that God created everything: "I [God] made him [man] . . . I created all th' Ethereal Powers / And Spirits, both them who stood and them who fall'd" (III:98-101). There is a hierarchical relationship even between God and the Son, one based on "Filial obedience" (III:269). Especially, in the scene of

God's appointment of the Son, we can see kingship and the hierarchy in Heaven:

th' Empyrean Host

Of Angels by Imperial summons call'd
 Innumerable before th' Almighty's Throne
 Forthwith from all the ends of Heav'n appear'd
 Under thir Hierarchs in orders bright;
 Ten thousand thousand Ensigns high advanc'd,
 Standards and Gonfalons, twixt Van and Rear
 Stream in the Air, and for distinction serve
 Of Hierarchies, of Orders, and Degrees.

(V:583-591)

To the host God proclaims His Son His Heir: "your [angels'] Head I him appoint; / And by my Self have sworn to him shall bow / All knees in Heav'n, and shall confess him Lord".

(V:606-8). Mary Ann Radzinowicz suggests that here Milton rejects the Son's hereditary right to be a vicegerent Son for a political reason (209). Using God's saying in Book III that the Son's merit is the grounds God recognized when the offer to die for mankind is made--"[thou] hast been found / By Merit more then Birthright Son of God, / Found worthiest to be so by being Good, / Far more than Great or High" (308-11)--Radzinowicz stresses the importance of great merit rather than hereditary right in God's exaltation of the Son (209-11).⁶ She says that "the kingship of Heaven is so far from presenting a model of absolutism or of the

divine right of earthly kings that what one is to learn is the politics of delegated power and the sharing of power not through hereditary but through meritocratic claims" (211). I think that Radzinowicz's suggestion is appropriate in the matter of Milton's idea of the hierarchy on earth, but we have to remember Satan's error is that he does not make himself an angel of Heavenly hierarchy, but of worldly politics. Satan has presumed to apply earthly powers to heavenly ones. He denies God's natural sovereignty over him. Further, God appoints the Son as head of the angels chronologically before the Son shows his merits.

Satan's misunderstanding over the hierarchy between God and his angels is well shown in the debate between Satan and Abdiel in Book V. He asserts that God is one who "Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heav'n" (I:123) and repeatedly emphasizes the monarchical qualities of "Heav'n's King," of "Heav'n's matchless King" (II:751; IV:41). Satan also maintains that the Son is a tyrant:

Another [the Son] now hath to himself ingross't
 All Power, and us eclips'd under the name
 Of King anointed, . . .
 . . . if not equal all, yet free,
 Equally free; for Orders and Degrees
 Jar not with liberty, but well consist:
 Who can in reason then or right assume
 Monarchy over such as live by right

His equals, if in power and splendor less,
 In freedom equal? (V:775-77, 791-97)

Satan, who pretends to have Aristotelian notions of hierarchy, denies the validity of a hierarchical society in Heaven because, he thinks, everyone is equal, and a ruler is a tyrant if he rules over his equals, even if he rules well. Against Satan, Abdiel states that the hierarchy in Heaven is natural because God is the creator--Abdiel even denies Satan's right to criticize God's actions at all--and the Son is not of the same nature as the angels and He is the instrument by whom they were made:

Thyself though great and glorious dost thou count,
 Or all Angelic Nature join'd in one,
 Equal to him begotten Son, by whom
 As by his Word the mighty Father made
 All things, ev'n thee, and all the Spirits of Heav'n
 By him created in thir bright degrees,
 Crown'd them with Glory, and to thir Glory nam'd
 Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
 Essential Powers. (V:833-41)

As another Aristotelian, Abdiel claims that the Son's ruling over the angels is natural because the superiors should rule the inferiors. Milton even mentions in Book I that Satan could not have even risen in Hell if God had not allowed him to do so:

nor ever thence

Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
 And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
 Left him at large to his own dark designs.

(I:210-13)

So the inferior Satan should obey his superiors, God and the Son. During the angels' war in Heaven, Satan's falsity is revealed by Abdiel again. Against Satan, who derides the loyal angels as exhibiting servility, he affirms God's natural and divine right to rule:

Unjustly thou deprav'st it with the name
 Of Servitude to serve whom God ordains,
 Or nature; God and nature bid the same,
 When he who rules is worthiest, and excels
 Them whom he governs. This is servitude,
 To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebell'd
 Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,
 Thyself not free, but to thyself enthrall'd.

(VI:174-81)

Milton in De Doctrina Christiana said that Christ's kingdom has "preeminent excellence over all others" because He rules "chiefly by an inward law and spiritual power" (VI:213). In Of Reformation he contrasted "earthly tyrannies" with the "mild monarchy" of Heaven (I:616).

It is Satan who really is a tyrant: he wants to be a ruler over everyone, even his superiors. He begins revolting against God and his Son with talk about liberty,

but very soon proceeds to aspiration: "[Satan and the fallen angels] Found worthy not of Liberty alone, / Too mean pretense, but what we more affect, / Honor, Dominion, Glory, and renown" (VI:420-22). Milton reprimandingly likens Satan to a sultan, whom seventeenth-century Englishmen regarded as the most abominable tyrant. Thus his fall comes because he refuses to accept his created status, but attempts to usurp the divine position. As a being created by God, like all angels, however, he can distort his own being but can not exalt himself to godhead. His goal is only "to equal God in power" (V:343). As he mentioned in Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio that Christ alone "is worthy of holding on earth power like that of God" (IV:427-28), Milton stresses the natural hierarchy between God and the angels probably in order to criticize the earthly hierarchical pretensions among human equals. God in Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes is at once differentiated from the kings of the earth, and the Son in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained is also dissociated from the symbolic royalism restricted to the corrupt kings of the earth. In his later years, Milton, who had lost his last hope of government by a few aristocrats, became a true Christian egalitarian.⁷

Milton's idea of the hierarchy in the earthly world was different from that of many Renaissance poets like Spenser and Shakespeare. To them, the ranking of human beings according to their birth was the natural hierarchy. In

Spenser's The Faerie Queene, Artegall rebukes the levelling giant by telling him that all things were created "in goodly measure" and "doe know their certaine bound," so that hills do not "disdaine" vallies nor vallies "envy" hills. It was natural to Spenser that kings and nobles should rule over commoners. Shakespeare also emphasized the absolute importance of maintaining the established blood order in society: Ulysses declares in Troilus and Cressida that "When degree is shak'd / Which is the ladder of all high designs, / The enterprise is sick" (1.3.101-3).

But in his later years Milton denied the validity of hierarchy in human society. The hierarchy in Heaven is natural because God created angels differently, but all human beings were created equally. As far as the hierarchy in Heaven is concerned, Milton was a firm believer in the vertical structuring of the universe. Raphael explains the hierarchy of the universe to Adam:

... from the root
 Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the
 leaves
 More aery, last the bright consummate flow'r
 Spirits odorous breathes: flow'rs and thir fruit
 Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublim'd
 To vital spirits aspire, to animal,
 To intellectual, give both life and sense,
 Fancy and understanding, whence the Soul

Reason receives, and reason is her being,
 Discursive, or Intuitive; discourse
 Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours.
 (V:479-489)

Adam recognizes the hierarchy of the universe: God is the creator and the highest--"Parent of good, / Almighty, thine this universal Frame" (V:153-54)--and angels are superior to him--"Nearer his [Raphael's] presence Adam though not aw'd, / Yet with submiss approach and reverence meek, / As to a superior Nature, bowing low" (V:358-60). And Adam has his inferiors, for God says of men, "let them rule / Over the Fish and Fowl of Sea and Air, / Beast of the Field, and over all the Earth, / And every creeping thing that creeps the ground" (VII:520-23). But God created humans free and equal, even though later they used their freedom wrongly. Adam deplores the false notion of his posterity, declaring humans' freedom and equality:

He gave us only over Beast, Fish, Fowl
 Dominion absolute; that right we hold
 By his donation; but Man over men
 He made not Lord; such title to himself
 Reserving, human left from human free.
 (XII:67-71)

Furthermore, Milton's depiction of Adam might predict his idea of social classes in later society. Just as he stresses his Christian egalitarianism by describing Samson

in Samson Agonistes as a base-born who defeats a noble Harapha,⁸ Milton pictures the first human being as an aristocrat probably in order to give his contemporaries the impression that all humans were derived from a perfect human being. Milton might be sneering at the aristocrats who thought that only they had hereditary noble blood. Milton states that Adam was made in God's image (IV:289-91; VII:519; VII:526-27, etc), so he must be a noble in seventeenth-century thought. Adam is tall and beautiful. The Renaissance thought that noble blood was supposed to invest its human container with an air of distinction. They believed that sin made man short and unattractive. The character Sin in Paradise Lost, who used to be fair, became monstrous "In bold conspiracy against Heavn's King" (II:751), and Satan repeatedly recognizes that the fall made his and the fallen angels' appearances grotesque (IV:114-22; IV:835-40, etc). Death, which is the result of sin, is also described as abominable in appearance. Adam also intuitively has notable language skill, even though he obviously has no education; indeed, Raphael is struck by his remarkable language (VIII:218-23). Gentlemen with exceptional language can be seen in the works of Renaissance poets. Guiderius and Arviragus in Shakespeare's Cymbeline have no courtly training or good education, but they demonstrate ability to use both good rhetoric and verse, which was expected of their royal blood. Also, in The

Winter's Tale Perdita, who has been raised by a shepherd for sixteen years, uses refined language which, among other things, causes Polixenes and Camillo to infer the nobility of her blood.

Milton might be also criticizing the aristocratic class through Adam and Eve's labor. Milton might have depicted Adam and Eve as merely enjoying life in Eden without laboring. But in Paradise, Adam and Eve are occupied with gardening all day long, and Adam reproaches "other Creatures" who do not work:

other Creatures all day long
 Rove idle unemploy'd, and less need rest;
 Man hath his daily work of body or mind
 Appointed, which declares his Dignity,
 And the regard of Heav'n on all his ways.
 (IV:616-620)

Milton as a Christian, especially a Puritan, values labor as a prerogative of man and probably scoffed at the aristocrats who did not work. After the fall, labor was part of the punishment imposed upon Adam by the Son: "In the sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread" (X:205). But Adam willingly accepted the punishment as a kind of blessing: "On mee the Curse aslope / Glanc'd on the ground, with labor I must earn / My bread; what harm? Idleness had been worse; / My labor will sustain me" (X:1053-56).

Further, Milton also criticizes the upper class with

Adam and Eve's sound marital life. After work they go to bed to appreciate their "Perpetual Fountain of Domestic sweets, / Whose bed is undefil'd and chaste pronounc't, / Present, or past, as Saints and Patriarchs us'd" (IV:760-62). Their connubial love was not like aristocratic licentiousness,

not in the bought smile
Of Harlots, loveless, joyless, unindear'd,
Casual fruition, nor in Court Amours,
Mixt Dance, or wanton Mask, or Midnight Ball.
(IV:765-68)

In his early years Milton was a blithe aristocrat who liked jubilating with pretty girls, as "Elegia Prima" and "Elegia Sexta" show. In "L'Allegro" the persona enjoys the aristocratic entertainments of the city,

Where throngs of Knights and Barons bold,
In weeds of Peace high triumphs hold,
With store of Ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of Wits, or Arms, while both contend
To win her Grace, whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In Saffron robe, with Taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask, and antique Pageantry. (ll. 119-28)

Milton even wrote two masques in his early years: "Arcades"

and Comus for the aristocrats. But in his Paradise Lost Milton censures aristocratic entertainment as lascivious merriment. Milton in Paradise Lost also derides the vogue of *préciosité*, very much alive especially in Restoration society: "Serenate, which the starv'd Lover sings / To his proud fair, best quitted with disdain" (IV:769-70). Milton once more sneers at the "whining" lover of *précieuse* gallantry when he describes Satan as he pays Eve a rhapsodical compliment in the "whining" manner (IX:538-48). Here Satan even portrays Eve as a female angel, even though he knows that there are no female angels in Heaven or in Hell. Milton affects a kind of comic mood, jeering at the aristocrats. Milton in his early years, however, was comfortable with seventeenth-century English society as a fashionable gentleman, as seen, for example, in "L'Allegro" and the two masques.

Moreover, the degeneration of Satan, who wants to rule, is well executed in the epic. Instead of being in the highest position, he falls down to the lowest, Hell, and on earth he passes through the even lower forms of vulture, cormorant, lion, tiger, toad, and serpent. When he enters into the serpent--"with bestial slime, / This essence to incarnate and imbrute" (IX:165-66)--he grovels at the farthest remove from his pretensions. After his success on earth, he reenters Hell and reports triumphantly about his great accomplishment. He and his fallen angels were

expected to go "up and enter now into full bliss" (X:503), but instead of ascending, they descend. They are converted into hissing serpents, monstrously formed, an annual humbling they henceforth endure from the Almighty.

The reason for the fall of Eve is almost the same as for Satan's. Milton seems to be equating aristocratic desire to rule and human folly. Satan's approach to Eve is to urge her to be as gods are. He says that he ate the forbidden fruit and consequently was advanced hierarchically to a being capable of reason and speech; so the serpent seduces Eve, promising that she and Adam "shall be as Gods, / Knowing both Good and Evil as they know. / That ye should be as Gods, since I as Man, / Internal Man, is but a lower proportion meet, / I of brute human, yee of human Gods" (IX:708-12). After eating the fruit, Eve first wants to be a superior to Adam:

keep the odds of Knowledge in my power
Without Copartner? so to add what wants
In Female Sex, the more to draw his Love,
And render me more equal, and perhaps,
A thing not undesirable, sometime
Superior: for inferior who is free?

This may be well. . . (IX:820-26)

In the toad-inspired dream, Satan had already implanted the suggestion that Eve may "be henceforth among the Gods . . . a Goddess" (V:77-78). She can not in fact ascend to a

higher status, but she believes she can at the time of the Fall and thus becomes a silly child.

Milton's belief in human egalitarianism was based on free will. Since all men equally have free will (in Milton's view), all men should be equal from the perspective of earthly law. Milton stressed that free will is "true authority in men" (IV:295), and because of it, man should be responsible for his fall. God says, "whose fault? / Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of mee / All he could have; I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (III:96-99). In his middle years, however, Milton did not fully affirm belief in free will. Even though in The Reason of Church Government Milton strongly proclaimed the capacity of the ordinary man, especially the uneducated, to grasp the fundamentals of Christianity, in the same tract, he contradictorily suggested that some Christians are as "new-born babes comparatively to some that are stronger" (I:828). In De Doctrina Christiana, he mentioned his concept of spiritual aristocracy: "For . . . some traces of the divine image remain in man, and when they combine in an individual he becomes more suitable, and as it were, more properly disposed for the kingdom of God than another" (VI:185-86). In Paradise Lost, however, Milton asserts that man's innate nobility is established by having his own free will. If man accepts Christ to regenerate his mind and soul, he should be free from all earthly law.

Milton's dislike of the human hierarchy is also shown well in Book XI and XII, where Michael displays for and explains to Adam the results of his sin. The first group of visions Michael presents, which may be called the upper class, is the giants, who probably are the sons of Seth.⁹ They are "men of high renown" because of their "Valor and Heroic Virtue," and are called "great Conquerors, / Patrons of Mankind, Gods, and Sons of Gods" (XI:688-96). But Milton regards them as "Destroyers rightlier call'd and Plagues of men" (XI:697). Milton also condemns another group of those who "triumph [in wars] and luxurious wealth" and who "achiev'd thereby / Fame in the World, high titles, and rich prey" because they "Shall change thir course to pleasure, ease, and sloth, / Surfeit, and lust, till wantonness and pride / Raise out of friendship hostile deeds in Peace" (XI:788-96). Moreover, the first monarch, Nimrod, is depicted as evil:

one shall rise
 Of proud ambitious heart, who not content
 With fair equality, fraternal state,
 Will arrogate Dominion undeserv'd
 Over his brethren, and quite dispossess
 Concord and law of Nature from the Earth;
 Hunting (and Men not Beasts shall be his game)
 With War and hostile snare such as refuse
 Subjection to his Empire tyrannous. . . (XII:24-32)

Nimrod also tries to build a tower that would reach to Heaven in order to be famous forever. Adam is quite disgusted to hear that one of his sons would claim dominion over men, who are his equals and who should be free (XII:64-78).

Milton, however, shows his discontent with humanity as he showed in his middle years because man became enslaved by letting his lower faculties usurp the place of reason. In Defensio Secunda he stated, "However loudly they shout and boast about liberty, slaves they are at home and abroad, although they know it not. When at last they do perceive it and like wild horses fretting at the bit try to shake off the yoke, driven not by the love of true liberty (to which the good man alone can rightly aspire), but by pride and base desire, even though they take arms in repeated attempts, they will accomplish naught" (IV:683). So, he reaffirms in Paradise Lost, man becomes prey to external tyrants, losing his true liberty,

which always with right Reason dwells
 Twinn'd, and from her hath no dividual being:
 Reason in man obscur'd, or not obey'd,
 Immediately inordinate desires
 And upstart Passions catch the Government
 From Reason, and to servitude reduce
 Man till then free. (XII:84-90)

Milton advocated Cromwell and his government because without

their help his countrymen easily would become slaves. In his middle years, Milton saw the nation turning against the republic and hailing the return of the Stuarts; so he denounced those who preferred "bondage with ease" to "strenuous liberty," and proposed especially in The Readie and Easie Way what amounts to an aristocratic oligarchy.

In Paradise Lost, however, Milton's notion of government is not the same as the notion in his middle years. He calls the governments, probably including the Cromwellian government that once he justified, as "unworthy Powers," "violent Lords," or "tyranny." He asserts that even though the tyrant rules the nations which "decline so low / From virtue, which is reason, that no wrong, / But justice, and some fatal curse annex / Deprives them of their outward liberty / Their inward lost," tyranny still can not be excused (XII:96-101). Milton also mentions the kings of Israel. To Milton most of them were bad mainly because they did not lead their people well: they fell into idolatry, so God permitted them to be taken captive by foreign countries. Milton, however, does not condemn King David because God promised that his house should reign for all eternity since the promised Messiah will be born from it.

Milton's idea of liberty was similar to that of the low-class radicals like the Ranters, the Diggers, and the Levellers.¹⁰ In seventeenth-century England, among these

lower-class sectarians the doctrine of the Fall of man was believed to be the origin of private property and social inequality: if Adam had not fallen, men would have been equal and property would have been held in common. There had been a golden age, now lost; only in heaven man could receive his compensation. To the upper class, man's inherited sinfulness could explain and justify the social inequality and class oppression. This doctrine of original sin had been used as a reason for rejecting demands for equality, as Spenser did in The Faerie Queene, Book V, canto ii, probably with the Anabaptists of Münster in mind.

Denying this concept of original sin, radicals like John Lilburne, leader of the Levellers, believed that man could regain his liberty by studying political principles because fundamentally man was created perfect. Milton also believed that man could gain his liberty back, not through politics but through belief in Christ; to Milton religious virtue could bring not only inner liberty but also political freedom. Milton seemed to believe that the revolution failed because the revolutionaries too much relied upon the politicians who turned out to be ambitious and hypocritical.

Throughout Paradise Lost Milton stresses human virtue, denying human hierarchy. God, foreseeing the fall of Adam and Eve, promises that humanity should nevertheless find grace and that his "mercy first and last shall brightest shine" (III:131-34). God also promises that human beings

will be innumerable,

till by degrees of merit rais'd

They open to themselves at length the way

Up hither, under long obedience tri'd,

And Earth be chang'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,

One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end.

(VII:157-61)

After the fall, Michael gives Adam some knowledge, and the highest wisdom Adam gains is Christian virtue:

Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,

And love with fear the only God, to walk

As in his presence, ever to observe

His providence, and on him sole depend,

Merciful over all his works, with good

Still overcoming evil, and by small

Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak

Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise

By simply meek; that suffering for Truth's sake

Is fortitude to highest victory. (XII:561-70)

Michael advises Adam that to his newly won knowledge he should add faith, virtue, patience, temperance, and love. So Adam and Eve could leave Paradise with hope for their own and their posterity's future. This spiritual culmination of Paradise Lost might be Milton's consolation for the disappointment of the Restoration.

The hopeful future for man comes basically from the

Son's hierarchical descent, which is opposed to Satan's and humans' desire to ascend over other equals, presumably to Milton like the ruling class of his age has done. In Book III God foresees the fall of man through his own fault. Since human beings sin and try to be like God, some expiation must be made; man would have been doomed to eternal death had not the Son made Himself man's intercessor and redeemer. He hierarchically descends to be "Man among men on Earth, / Made flesh . . . of Virgin seed" (III:283-84). The Son for man's sake abandons the glory next to God and wills to die as a man after suffering. By descending from his status, the Son became the "Head Supreme" of the earthly "Thrones, Princedoms, Powers, Dominions" (III:319-20).

The Son's descent could be said to be the main theme of Paradise Regained. Throughout the poem, Milton repeatedly emphasizes the Son's human nature, even though He is the Son of God. From the invocation, Milton says that the poem will tell how Paradise, which was lost by "one man's disobedience," is to be recovered by "one man's firm obedience fully tried / Through all temptation, and the Tempter foil'd / In all his wiles, defeated and repuls't" (I:2-6). Satan tries to entice Jesus, stressing that Jesus is a human being, especially that Jesus is a commoner. Satan thinks commoners might be more vulnerable to the temptation of wealth: "Thou art unknown, unfriended, low of

birth, / A Carpenter thy Father known, thyself / Bred up in poverty and straits at home" (II:413-15). Satan sees Him "firm; / To the utmost of mere man, both wise and good, / Not more" (IV:534-36).¹¹ Satan at the end collapses like the Sphinx, which self-destructed "for grief and spite" once her riddle was solved. The answer to the Sphinx's riddle was "man." Thus, it could be said that Satan is defeated at last by a "mere man."¹² Christ descended hierarchically to save mankind, and to Milton this religious theme, which was related to the social situation of England, was probably the only way to save his country. To him all human beings should be equal and free and should possess Christian virtue.

Paradise Regained has several episodes that provide Milton's idea of social class. The first temptation of Satan is based on hunger. Jesus has not eaten anything for forty days; He, as a human being, even dreams of food. Satan shows Him a beautiful banquet "in regal mode," flattering Him; the banquet will be served by "gentle Ministers, who come to pay / Thee homage, and acknowledge thee thir Lord" (II:375-76). The foods are upper class; they are not what Jesus was (presumably) accustomed to eating.¹³ The rich food Satan offers is a part of the wealth with which Satan tempts Jesus to accept worldly greatness and power. Then Satan offers to help Him get all the riches of the world. Jesus needs riches, Satan says with a

memorable colloquialism in line 427, if He is really to fulfill His destiny as king of the Jews:

Money brings Honor, Friends, Conquest, and Realms;
 What rais'd Antipater the Edomite,
 And his Son Herod plac'd on Judah's Throne
 (Thy throne) but gold that got him puissant friends?
 Therefore, if at great things thou wouldst arrive,
 Get Riches first, get Wealth, and Treasure heap.
 (II:422-27)

Jesus can have wealth, Satan says, if He will follow him. This kind of earthly temptation becomes very subtle when Satan recognizes that Jesus is a potential political leader for the Israelites:

If Kingdom move thee not, let move thee Zeal
 And Duty; Zeal and Duty are not slow,
 But on Occasion's forelock watchful wait.
 They themselves rather are occasion best,
 Zeal of thy Father's house, Duty to free
 Thy Country from her Heathen servitude;
 So shalt thou best fullfil, best verify
 Thy Prophets old (III:171-78)

Actually this kind of military action once occurred in His mind:

... victorious deeds
 Flam'd in my heart, heroic acts; one while
 To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,

Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth
 Brute violence and proud Tyrannic pow'r,
 Till truth were free'd, and equity restor'd.

(I:215-20)

This Jesus is the leader his disciples in the Third Book wanted. The disciples chose one of the two strands of the Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament--the idea that the Messiah is to be a royal king, the successor to David, who will drive oppressors from the land and make Israel glorious. The Jews took to this form of Messianic prophecy much more than they did to the idea of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, so they rejected the unroyal messiah, Jesus. Milton himself in his middle years wanted this kind of heroic leader. In Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio, he noted that "Christ did not prevent, but rather made all the more possible either our endurance of slavery, when that must be, without dismay, or our worthy struggle for freedom. . . . It is then vain for you to urge us to slavery from Christ's example, for, at the cost of his own slavery, he put our political freedom on a firm foundation. In our place he assumed the form of a slave, but never failed to preserve the heart of a liberator" (IV:374-75). In Paradise Regained, however, the Son rejects the violent way of getting the country back, as Michael scornfully dismisses "great conquerors" in Paradise Lost (XI:689-99; XII:386-95). Jesus does not deny His duty to free His country from

servitude, but He says that "All things are best fulfill'd in their own time, / And time there is for all things, Truth hath said" (III:182-83). To Him truth was God: "He in whose hand all times and seasons roll" (III:187). Jesus declares that "political maxims, or that cumbersome / Luggage of war" to be "argument / Of human weakness rather than of strength" (III:400-2). Thus, Milton's notion of kingship becomes closely related with Christianity:

...to guide Nations in the way of truth
By saving Doctrine, and from error lead
To know, and knowing worship God aright,
Is yet more Kingly. (II:473-76)

Milton believed that God would provide for the Israelites: "To his due time and providence I leave them" (III:440).

With this strong Christian sense, Milton denies the heroic courage of the aristocrats he used to praise in his early and middle years: the Elder Brother in Comus, Sir Thomas Fairfax, Cromwell, Sir Henry Vane, and some others (Milton never mentioned the courage of the commoners). After the Restoration, aristocratic courage becomes meaningless to Milton: battles and leagues are "plausible to the world, to mee worth naught" (III:392-93). Milton declares,

That people victor once, now vile and base,
Deservedly made vassal, who once just,
Frugal, and mild, and temperate, conquer'd well,

But govern ill the Nations under yoke,
 Peeling thir Provinces, exhausted all
 By lust and rapine. (IV:132-37)

Milton emphasizes moral strength based on Christianity: "Virtue, Valor, Wisdom" (II:431). Jesus says that earthly wealth and position without these virtues is meaningless, and that it is better to give up a kingdom than to seize one in the way Satan urges: "To gain a Scepter, ofttest better miss't" (II:486). He shows his criticism of worldly rulers:

he who reigns within himself, and rules
 Passions, Desires, and Fears, is more a King;
 Which every wise and virtuous man attains:
 And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
 Cities of men, or headstrong Multitudes,
 Subject himself to Anarchy within,
 Or lawless passions in him, which he serves.
 (II:466-72)

To Milton those who are personally anarchic deserve slavery, regardless of their social classes, and those who are self-controlled are more than kings. Anarchy in the individual is matched by anarchy in the state.

Milton not only condemns the aristocrats who become degenerate, but also disparages the people who want to be slaves. When Satan tempts Jesus with the promise of glory and fame in the world, Jesus criticizes the people's praise:

For what is glory but the blaze of fame,

The people's praise, if always praise unmixt?
 And what the people but a herd confus'd,
 A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
 Things vulgar, and well weigh'd, scarce worth the
 praise?

They praise and they admire they know not what;
 And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
 And what delight to be by such extoll'd,
 To live upon thir tongues and be thir talk,
 Of whom to be disprais'd were no small praise?

(III:47-56)

This passage could be interpreted as Milton's aristocratic attitude toward common people.¹⁴ But if we recall that Jesus was no aristocrat but a carpenter who worked among the poor and lowly, who condemned those who abused their rank, and who died for mankind,¹⁵ the passage should be understood as Jesus's reprimand of the people who were degenerate (of course, most of the commoners welcomed the restoration of Charles II and to Milton all of them were degenerate). Milton asks, "What wise and valiant man would seek to free / These thus degenerate, by themselves enslav'd, / Or could of inward slaves make outward free?" (IV:143-45). Or, as Elizabeth M. Pope suggests, "Jesus's condemnation of the people could be explainable on the grounds that Christ as the incarnation of Mercy is striving to hide His true nature from Satan (39-40). It is of course true that Jesus'

sentiments in this passage have no basis in the Gospels.

Milton's attitude toward learning shown in the Fourth Book also discloses his notion of social classes. Milton was a learned man whose reading range was enormous, including the full breadth of Greek and Roman writing. He graduated from Cambridge, which, along with Oxford and such other places as the Inns of Court, was regarded as a training center for aristocrats. He usually seemed to enjoy his Cambridge life. In Ad Patrem he appreciated his father for the support of his education: "It was at your expense, dear father, after I had got the mastery of the language of Romulus and the graces of Latin, and acquired the lofty speech of the magniloquent Greeks, which is fit for the lips of Jove himself . . ." (84-85). In Of Education he had hoped that learning would counteract the effects of the Fall. Needless to say, education was "high culture" in Milton's age, and literature was for the upper-class. Rejection of human learning was then to be found in some low-class radical sects like the Familists. In his prose period Milton attacked the educational system of Oxford and Cambridge, which depended financially on the church and supported the university-trained priesthood and tithes, but he did not blame learning itself. In Paradise Regained, however, Jesus shows his hostility to pagan Greek learning in his response to Satan, who offered learning as a source of pleasure and as a way to wealth, rank and fame. Satan

describes Athens as "the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence," with its "sweet recess," its "studious walks and shades," and the nostalgic charm of "the olive-grove of Academe" (IV:240-44). He also gives a great tribute to Greek philosophy and literature. Jesus, in answer to Satan's praise of Greek thought, dismisses the Greek philosophers. Socrates' wisdom lay in his profession "To know that only, that he nothing knew"; Plato "to fabling fell, and smooth conceits"; the Sceptics "doubted all things, though plain sense"; Aristotle joined "virtues . . . with riches and long life"; the Epicureans found the end of life in bodily pleasure and "careless ease"; the "philosophic pride" of the Stoics did not fear "God nor man" (IV:292-321). Whoever seeks true wisdom in any of these schools would not find it.¹⁶ Jesus also denounces Greek literature:

Ill imitated, while they loudest sing
 The vices of thir Deities, and thir own
 In Fable, Hymn, or Song, so personating
 Thir Gods ridiculous, and themselves past shame.
 Remove their swelling Epithets thick laid
 As varnish on a Harlot's cheek, the rest,
 Thin sown with aught of profit or delight
 (IV:339-45)

These passages of rejection of Greek philosophy and literature,¹⁷ which Milton loved throughout his entire life,

must have been painful. Milton rejected them, nevertheless, in order to more fully emphasize Christian belief and the morality based on it. Jesus says to Satan,

Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling,
Where God is prais'd aright, and Godlike men,
The Holiest of Holies, and his Saints;
Such are from God inspir'd, not such from thee;
Unless where moral virtue is express'd
By light of Nature, not in all quite lost.

(IV:347-52)

Learning may be dangerous because it seems to make man wise when in fact human reason is as liable to be distorted by "avarice and ambition" as it is to be disinterested. God's truth is different from human knowledge (Satan seems to be confused about the words "knowledge" and "wisdom"): it overrides and sometimes contradicts human learning. To Milton the learning of the educated is worth nothing unless it is used to further God's cause. By denying his own education, Milton might have wanted not to be called "learned," which implied aristocracy, but a "son of God."

To Milton victory over the political or ethical enemy finally could come with perfect morality based on Christianity and possessed by all men, not by one or another class of men. When all people are truly kings (II:466-80), "Godlike men, / The Holiest of Holies, and his Saints" (IV:348-49), then "All Monarchies . . . throughout the

world" shall be overthrown (IV:132-50). The end of Paradise Regained is optimistic: the angels come to minister to Christ and to proclaim His glory. Then He returns to His mother's home as a man.

The purpose of Samson Agonistes is also to justify the ways of God to men, as in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. The ways of God to men are beyond men's knowledge and wisdom; thus, men must stand and wait to see His intention. In Samson Agonistes Samson is in the lowest situation, but his spirituality is not suppressed: he is ready to be used as an instrument of God. Milton emphasizes Samson's low-class social status before and after his fall and his final triumph over his enemies, Dalila, Harapha, and Philistine nobles, all aristocratic in general contemporary thought. This emphasis reveals Milton's notion of social classes.

Even though the ancient Hebrew society of Samson was not strictly divided into gentles and base-borns, Milton seems to have imposed the class hierarchy of his own times upon the work. According to David S. Berkeley and Salwa Khoddam, Samson's tribe, Dan, was the most despicable of the thirteen tribes of Israel, and Samson himself was of average height and mediocre musculature; therefore, according to period thought he lacked the distinction of gentility (1-2). Milton in Samson Agonistes repeatedly stresses that Samson has deteriorated in Philistine confinement. He is "put to

the labor of a Beast, debas't / Lower than bondslave" (37-38); he is "Eyeless in Gaza at the Mill with slaves, / Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke" (41-42); and he has descended (says the chorus) "to lowest pitch of abject fortune" (169). In his middle years Milton's idea of Samson was different from his idea in Samson Agonistes. To the young Milton Samson was mighty and did not suffer from his faults. In The Reason of Church-Government, as I mentioned, Milton compared Samson to a sober and temperate king: Samson is "disciplin'd from his birth in the precepts and the practice of Temperance and Sobriety . . . grows up to a noble strength and perfection with those his illustrious and sunny locks the laws waving and curling about his godlike shoulders" and when he recovers his strength, he can only "thunder . . . ruin upon the heads of those his evil counsellors . . . not without great affliction to himself" (I:858-9). In Areopagitica Milton pictured England as Samson, who shook "his invincible locks" (II:558), and in Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Samson was depicted as a rebel who fought against tyrants for his country even though most of his countrymen wanted to be slaves (IV:402). But Samson in Milton's later years was a slave throughout the drama to highlight God's mysterious way to men and to show Milton's idea against social hierarchy.

In Samson Agonistes not only Samson himself but also his country is in a state of servitude. The chorus reminds

Samson that "Israel still serves with all his Sons" (240)
and that God has thrown Samson and his countrymen

lower than thou didst exalt them high,
Unseemly falls in human eye,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission,
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword . . .
Or to th' unjust tribunals, under change of times,
And condemnation of th'ingrateful multitude.

(689-96)

Samson was elected by God "With gifts and graces eminently
adorn'd / To some great work, thy glory, / And people's
safety" (678-81), but his disobedience to God--his betrayal
of the secret of his strength to Dalila--made him fall to
the lowest state. And the nation is in servitude because of
the people's irrationality:

by thir vices brought to servitude,
. . . to love Bondage more than Liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;
And to despise, or envy, or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favor rais'd
As thir Deliverer; if he aught begin,
How frequent to desert him, and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds? (269-76)

Samson, however, is still sturdy in faith and morality
as a son of God. He at first defied God: "Why am I thus
bereav'd thy prime decree?" (85). But he comes to blame

himself exclusively after he hears his father questioning God's ways to men. Samson says to his father,

Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father,
 Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
 But justly; I myself have brought them on,
 Sole Author I, sole cause. (373-76)

He repents what he was, even though the chorus and his father praise his heroic acts before he fell into "foul effeminacy":

These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base
 As was my former servitude, ignoble,
 Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
 True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,
 That saw not how degenerately I serv'd. (415-19)

He confesses that he did not fulfill his responsibility, intimating his false attempt to be higher than his equals as if he were a hero and, as a consequent act, his disregard of God's warning not to reveal the secret of his hair. When Manoa says that the Philistines are holding a great feast, honoring their god Dagon, Samson notices that his fall brought even the dishonoring of the true God: "God . . . Disglorified, blasphemed, and had in scorn / By the idolatrous amidst their wine" (440-43).

Milton also uses Dalila to show his dislike of the aristocrats. She, attired in all possible finery, appears "like a stately ship / Of Tarsus," which was an Old

Testament symbol of pride and an object of God's anger:

With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
Court'd by all the winds that hold them play,
An Amber scent of odorous perfume

Her harbinger, a damsel train behind. (717-21)

The comely ship imagery had usually been used to indicate the aristocracy.¹⁸ Furthermore, she smells sweet, which is remarkably different from Samson, who probably smells bad because of his bad food, clothing and even his melancholy. As I mentioned earlier, in the Renaissance and seventeenth century a good smell was regarded as one of the unique characteristics of the gentle due to their noble blood. Villein odor was believed to be constitutionally caused by Galenic melancholy; no amount of washing, fresh clothing, perfumery, or other palliatives would eradicate it. Sweat, dirt and diet were, of themselves alone, mere secondary causes. Milton depicts Samson as a victim of common melancholy (as distinguished from the intellectual melancholy of "Il Penseroso"). Samson thinks of himself as suffering from common melancholy when he speaks of his "black mortification" (622), and Manoa says Samson has "humors black," (601) which causes his ailment. Contrasting to this subdued Samson, Dalila also has beauty, another advantage noble blood bestowed, according to Renaissance thought. Her beauty is conveyed not only by the chorus'

description of her when she enters but in their daydreaming after she leaves. In spite of Samson's curses, they say:

Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
After offense returning, to regain
Love once possess, nor can be easily
Repuls't, without much inward passion felt
And secret sting of amorous remorse. (1003-7)

Milton in his early years described the aristocrats as people with good smell and beauty, like the Lady in Comus (he never depicted the commoners as beautiful). But in Samson Agonistes he adorns Dalila as an image which Milton's contemporaries would have thought to be aristocratic, and he condemns her. Samson turns aside all her arguments and rejects her offers of wealth and sensuality with contempt: he shouts, "Out, out Hyaena" (748), and says, "This Gaol I count the house of Liberty / To thine whose doors my feet shall never enter" (949-50). When she tries to attract Samson physically, he roars--"Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake / My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint" (952-53).

The Harapha scene also well reveals Milton's class-consciousness of his later years. Harapha boasts of being descended from a "stock renown'd / As Og or Anak and the Emims old / That Kiriathaim held" (1079-81).¹⁹ He is a descendant of giant warriors and has five²⁰ sons "All of Gigantic size, Goliah chief" (1249). On the other hand,

Samson's descent is from Manoa, who is anything but a warrior, and ultimately from Jacob and Bilha, the latter not a wife. This is a contrast for which Milton invented Harapha, his ancestry and his posterity. Harapha also has feudal notions of honor, and when Samson challenges him to single combat, he refuses because, he says, to fight a blind slave would bring dishonor. He repeatedly uses the social gap between the two as an excuse for not fighting:

With those thy boist'rous locks, no worthy match
For valor to assail, nor by the sword
Of noble Warrior, so to stain his honor,
But by the Barber's razor best subdu'd. (1164-67)

Harapha in Milton's mind might be the aristocrat who mocked Milton after the Restoration. Milton notes that Samson is "blind among enemies":

I dark in light expos'd
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong;
Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
(75-79)

Harapha calls Samson a "murderer, a revolter, and a robber" because Samson killed many Philistines even though his nation was subject to their lords. In his reply Samson strongly rejects the oppressed state by conquerors, revealing his egalitarianism:

It was the force of Conquest; force with force
Is well ejected when the Conquer'd can.

But I a private person . . . presum'd

Single Rebellion and did Hostile Acts. (1206-10)

Samson makes a fool of Harapha, using his aristocracy:

put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy Helmet
And Brigandine of brass, thy broad Habergeon,
Vant-brace and Greaves, and Gauntlet, add thy Spear
A Weaver's beam, and seven-times-folded shield.

(1119-22)

Samson did not fight with these kinds of fancy aristocratic weapons: his weapon was "an Ass's Jaw," and for Harapha the weapon would be "an Oak'n staff." By Samson's bravery Harapha seems to be dispirited (he might be a taunting braggart as many critics have suggested). When Samson again challenges him to combat, he skulks off. The chorus remarks: "His Giantship is gone somewhat crestfallen" (1247).

Samson's strength comes back fully after he confronts Dalila and Harapha. His courage and presence of mind in responding to his enemies testify to his revival from despair. When Harapha says that Samson has done what he has not done by his own strength, but by black magic (1130-35), Samson answers, "I know no spells, use no forbidden Arts; / My trust is in the living God who gave me / At my Nativity this strength" (1139-41). His strength did not come from

his locks. His locks were a mere symbol of God's blessing upon him with strength: "I preserv'd these locks unshorn, / The pledge of my unviolated vow" (1143-44). Not because his locks were shorn, but because he violated God's law, he lost his power. Dalila and Harapha's contempt of God especially stimulate Samson to regain his full power. Even though he is a base and is in the lowest situation, he is ready to be used as God's instrument to do His mighty and glorious work.

God's use of the base Samson to destroy the enemies comes when the Philistines order Samson to appear at the feast to Dagon, officially to show his feats of strength, but actually to give the Philistines a chance to exult publicly over the ignominy of Samson, once their most dangerous foe. At first, Samson absolutely refuses to participate in a scene of blasphemy. Then impelled by a sudden inspiration, he agrees to go. He does not know yet what he would do when he gets there, but the "rousing motions" he experiences make him feel that this day might lead to "something extraordinary." He goes there simply with his faith, saying to his friends:

Happ'n what may, of me expect to hear
 Nothing dishonorable, impure, unworthy
 Our God, our Law, my Nation, or myself;
 The last of me or no I cannot warrant. (1423-26)

We hear the last reports of the chorus, which also indicate Milton's notion of social class clearly. The chorus

explains that during the feast Samson pulls down Dagon's temple upon the heads of

Lords, Ladies, Captains, Counsellors, or Priests,
Thir choice nobility and flower . . .

The vulgar only scap'd who stood without.

(1652-59)

Samson's massacring of the "nobility" is not entirely Biblical. It seems that Milton expressed his hostility not only against the Philistines but also against the aristocrats of his age who ruled over the equal sons of God, sympathizing with the commoners. The chorus hails the act: "O dearly bought revenge, yet glorious!" (1660). He, who "Despis'd and thought extinguish't quite, / With inward eyes illuminated / His fiery virtue rous'd / From under ashes into sudden flame" (1688-91), destroyed the aristocrats in their frenzy, drunk with idolatry and wine. Manoa also praises Samson for his giving Israel honor and the chance to regain its freedom. Even if the Israelites fail to take it, God avenges Himself on their foe through Samson, and "his memory [will] inflame thir [the valiant youth's] breasts / To matchless valor, and adventures high" (1739-40). Manoa says:

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.

(1721-24)

The chorus concludes:

All is best, though we oft doubt,
 What th' unsearchable dispose
 Of highest wisdom brings about,
 And ever best found in the close.
 Oft he seems to hide his face,
 But unexpectedly returns
 And to his faithful Champion hath in place
 Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns
 And all that band them to resist
 His uncontrollable intent;
 His servants he with new acquist
 Of true experience from this great event
 With peace and consolation hath dismiss,
 And calm of mind, all passion spent. (1745-58)

Like Jesus in Paradise Regained, who had been "in humble state, and things adverse, / By tribulations, injuries, insults, / Contempts, and scorns, and snares, and violence, / Suffering, abstaining, quietly expecting / Without distrust or doubt" (III:189-93); like Abdiel who "pass'd / Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustain'd / Superior, nor of violence fear'd aught; / And with retorted scorn his back" (V:903-6); like Adam who recognized that "suffering for Truth's sake / Is fortitude to highest victory" (XII:569-70)--Samson had been suffering as a base,

waiting for God's instruction for the final victory. The ways of God to men had been justified.

The story of Samson might be a lesson Milton gave to his countrymen who, Milton thought, violated God's law and had to suffer until God saves them again. He did not suggest any form of government in his later years; he might have thought that they simply needed to wait for God's inspiration. By describing Samson as a base, and Dalila, Harapha, and the Philistine leaders as aristocrats, Milton showed whom God would punish and why. Milton was not what he had been before the Restoration: his class-consciousness had been changed entirely. The old Milton might have regarded his political and physical sufferings as God's punishment for his old earthly aristocratic thought. Then the last three poems could be his clandestine trial, like Samson's, to abolish the social hierarchy by the inspiration given by God.

Notes

1. Charles II issued this declaration at Breda, his place of exile. He offered to pardon most rebels; to leave to Parliament the question of the restoration of the lands of the Royalists; to pay the wages of the army; and to allow Parliament to make the religious settlement, with the proviso that no religious belief should be persecuted unless it should disturb the peace of the realm.

2. In Areopagitica Milton spoke of Spenser as "a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas," citing in particular the temptations Guyon met in the Cave of Mammon and the Bower of Bliss.

3. James Thorpe provides selections from the most significant studies of Milton from 1674 to 1947 in Milton Criticism: Selections from Four Centuries (New York: Rinehart, 1950). Among many commentators, Blake says in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1793) that "the original Archangel, or possessor of the command of the heavenly host, is call'd the Devil or Satan, and his children are call'd Sin & Death. . . . Milton's Messiah is call'd Satan. . . . The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it" (Thorpe 352-53). Shelley in A Defence of Poetry (1821)

mentions that "Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in Paradise Lost. It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. . . . Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. Milton has so far violated the popular creed (if this shall be judged to be a violation) as to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his god over his devil" (Thorpe 358).

4. Blair Worden, in his "Milton's Republicanism and the Tyranny of Heaven" (in Machiavelli and Republicanism ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990]), states that Milton returned to poetry from prose, apparently around 1657, because of his disenchantment with the Protectorate, which had failed to achieve the reformation and which had become increasingly monarchical in style (241). Perez Zagorin, in Milton: Aristocrat & Rebel, responds that despite the likelihood of Milton's disappointment with the Protectorate, Milton did not reverse his opinion of Cromwell as a great

and virtuous leader (128).

5. C. S. Lewis in Chapter XI, "Hierarchy," of A Preface to "Paradise Lost" (London: Oxford UP, 1942) well explains the hierarchical conception and Milton's use of it.

6. Perez Zagorin agrees with Radzinowicz's idea: "Within the hierarchy of heaven . . . superior merit founded on virtue holds the highest place" (129). Their view is based on the belief that Milton's hierarchy was nonbiblical or based on Gospel rather than the Old Testament. But Milton's Heaven was obviously based on the Old Testament. Milton must have kept in mind that his seventeenth-century contemporaries were very familiar with the natural hierarchy in the universe shown in the Old Testament. Abdiel said that it is natural "That to his only Son by right endu'd / With Regal Sceptre, every Soul in Heav'n / Shall bend the knee, and in that honor due / Confess him rightful King" (V:815-18).

7. Blair Worden in his "Milton's Republicanism and the Tyranny of Heaven" suggests that "Milton does not merely return to his right hand, from prose to poetry: he withdraws from politics into faith" (244).

8. David S. Berkeley and Salwa Khoddam deal with this theme in their "Samson the Base Versus Harapha the Gentle" in Milton Quarterly 17.1 (1983): 1-7.

9. The giants passage is treated in Gen. 6, 2--"That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were

fair." The "sons of God" has been interpreted variously: sons of the might, sons of princes, angels or demons, or the sons of Seth. See D. C. Allen's "Milton and the Sons of God" in Modern Language Notes 61 (1946): 73-79.

10. In his Milton and the English Revolution, Christopher Hill states that Milton engaged in a dialogue with Levellers, Diggers, Ranters, and Muggletonians and embraced some of their unorthodox positions, such as anti-clericalism, millenarianism, antinomianism, anti-Trinitarianism, and mortalism. In chapters 1 and 12 of Milton in the Puritan Revolution, Don M. Wolfe compares Milton's political ideas with those of the Levellers.

11. The word "mere" in the seventeenth century could mean "essential."

12. This idea was set forth by Stanley Fish in his Surprised by Sin: the Reader in "Paradise Lost" (London: Macmillan, 1967).

13. One food (oysters) would break the Mosaic law.

14. Perez Zagorin in his Milton: Aristocrat & Rebel notes that "it seems strange that the future savior of mankind should hold such a low opinion of the common people" (138).

15. As Satan says, Jesus was going to suffer:

Sorrows, and labors, opposition, hate,
Attends thee, scorns, reproaches, injuries,
Violence and stripes, and lastly cruel death.

(IV:386-88).

16. The basic Biblical text for the rejection of Greek wisdom is Colossians 2:3 (in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge") and 2:8 ("Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ").

17. To conveniently see various commentators on these passages, refer to Merritt Hughes's John Milton, headnotes 12-14, pp. 475-76.

18. John Taylor noted that "The Ship-Lady was a very comely ship, set out with most excellent and superfluous cost, and she was richly adorned and beautified with flags, streamers, pennons and waistcloths" (81) in his An Armado or Navy of Ships (1630).

19. Og, king of Bashan, was a remainder "of the remnant of the giants" (Deut. 3:11). Anak is a giant in Genesis, and the Emims were "a people great, and many and tall, as the Anakims; which also were accounted giants" (Deut. 2:10-11). The people in Kiriathaim had crushed the Emims in Gen. 14:5. As a son of Anak, Harapha would be a descendant of the giants of Genesis, whom Milton regarded as wicked men who won a falsely based fame on military exploits.

20. Five was the number of evil as I mentioned in Chapter I.

CONCLUSION

In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the idea of hereditary hierarchy opposed the idea of egalitarianism. Blood-consciousness as the basis of social ranking was espoused by many medieval and Renaissance writers. King Horn (ca. 1250) and Havelok the Dane (ca. 1285), for example, present stories of kings' sons who distinguish themselves in a sordid environment from the commoners; thus, they eventually regain their royal positions. Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur (1485) is a story of a king, a queen, knights, ladies, and hermits of noble origin. In Count Baldassare Castiglione's The Book of the Courtier, gentlemen were believed not only to derive virtues from heredity but also to guard the reputations of their own families. Even some Christian authors approved the hierarchy in human society. Richard Hooker in Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity states that the king is not only the civil leader but also legal head of the Church. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury under Henry VIII, advocated the divine rights of kings: "All Christian princes have committed unto them immediately of God the whole care of all their subjects, as well concerning the ministration of things political, civil and governance" (quoted by Morison 47-48). James Cleland shows the naturalness of hierarchical structuring in

Elizabeth society: "wee are ouver-runne by our betters, and of necessitie must needes confesse that some excell & are more noble then others" (3). Shakespeare was a conservative, whose plays show no sympathy for any egalitarian sentiments. On the other hand, some medieval and Renaissance writers expressed their belief in human egalitarianism. Chaucer held the idea that *gentillesse* is a gift of God, which both gentles and villains could have. Also, Christopher Marlowe, William Cornwallis and Robert Greene showed the egalitarian spirit in describing base-born protagonists.

Milton's class-consciousness changed with the major seventeenth-century English political events--the Revolution and the Restoration. In his early works he showed his strong aristocratic bias. Most of his works were about the aristocrats, praising their faith, virtue, courage, chastity and patriotism. And he usually disregarded the base-born. Nevertheless, his early writings are almost always informed by Christianity. His Christianity and deference to the gentle coexist without any evidence of ideological strain or conflict.

Milton's aristocratic class-consciousness changed with the Revolution. He criticized the hierarchical system of Episcopacy and asserted the freedom of the people. In his middle years, however, he seemed to straddle the two opposing ideas, the idea of blood-based hierarchy and the

idea of egalitarianism. He claimed popular sovereignty and at the same time he depended on a few aristocrats to rule his country. He showed an upper-class bias, endorsing aristocratic education and publishing in 1645 many aristocratic poems composed mainly in his early years; and at the same time he continued to show interest in the ideas of low-class radical sects, which advocated egalitarianism. But he was not a timeserver; he was trying to find the best way for the people of England.

In his later years he became an egalitarian. He condemned the aristocrats, who desired to be deferred to by persons of lower blood quality. To Milton all Christians became sons of God. Milton finally realized that for the age of confusion and turmoil, politics could not provide a solution. God, who created men equal, is the only answer for mankind. Throughout his life Milton had a persisting consciousness of his gift as a divinely inspired poet to sing for God and human beings. As his life unfolded, he gradually sloughed his aristocratic bias under an inspiration and a compulsion to sing the themes of classless, essential Christianity.

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His Politics. New York: D. S. Brewer, 1992.

VITA

Byung-Eun Lee

Candidate for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: MILTON'S CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Seoul, Korea, October 14, 1959,
the son of Jong-Won Lee and Anna Park.

Education: Graduated from Han Young High School,
Seoul, Korea, in February, 1978; received Bachelor
of Arts Degree in English from Kyung Hee
University at Seoul in February, 1984; received
Master of Arts Degree in English from Oklahoma
State University in December, 1988; completed
requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
at Oklahoma State University in May, 1994.

Experience: Managing Director, Kumi Carpet Co.,
LTD., Kumi, Korea, October, 1989 to July, 1990;
Teaching Associate, Department of English,
Oklahoma State University, August, 1990 to
December, 1993.