

INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from "photographs" if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of "photographs" may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.
5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

Xerox University Microfilms

300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

76-8336

MAGLIOCCO, Maurine Marie Fisk, 1944-
THE FUNCTION OF HUMOR IN THE WORKS OF
JOHN MILTON.

The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1975
Literature, English

Xerox University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

© 1975

MAURINE MARIE FISK MAGLIOCCO

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED.

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE FUNCTION OF HUMOR IN THE WORKS OF JOHN MILTON


A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

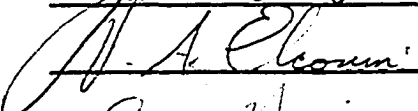
BY
MAURINE MAGLIOCCO

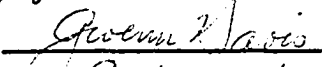
1975

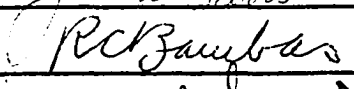
THE FUNCTION OF HUMOR IN THE WORKS OF JOHN MILTON

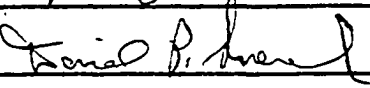
APPROVED BY











DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to thank the members of my committee for their understanding and thoughtful consideration, especially David P. French for his many helpful comments and suggestions, and most especially James H. Sims for his continuous encouragement and support.

Finally, I should like to acknowledge the great debt I owe to my husband, Hugo, for his patience and love throughout the writing of this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE.....	v
Chapter	
I. "GRIM LAUGHTER": THE STRATEGY OF PROSE.....	1
II. THE SATIRIC SPIRIT AND HEART-EASING MIRTH	115
III. JUST DERISION AND THE JOY OF LIFE.....	194
IV. CONCLUSION.....	287
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	290

PREFACE

Recent studies in phenomenology have verified what nonspecialists may have long suspected--that people perceive according to their expectations.¹ This perhaps explains why many readers of John Milton have perceived little or no humor in his works;² they have been taught to expect, and consequently they see, the sublime, the tragic, the lofty, the philosophical, and the theological, but they do not see the humor. Or, if they do, they suspect themselves of "reading into" serious passages a frivolity or gaiety that results from a perverse mood of theirs rather than from Milton's intention. And then there are readers who come to Milton for the first time with no previous expectations or pre-established value judgments who do see humor in his works and respond with pleasure to it. Are they seeing something that is not there? I think not; humor is present, and those who, because of educational training or cultural conditioning, do not see it simply miss the totality of experience Milton offers.

For humor is part of the complete experience of living, and humor in works of art alters our perceptions, making us see reality more fully. In fact, part of the

delight we experience in humor comes from our surprise in seeing a familiar object in a new way. In verbal humor, for example, we see language being made to carry meanings and associations we would not have believed possible; thus, we may groan at puns and even agree that they are the lowest form of wit, but we still enjoy them because they have given us insight into the multiple possibilities of words--and into the ideas and situations the words represent. In fact, such verbal humor is apparent in many comic skits popular in vaudeville acts and in movies. Sometimes that humor comes from puns and sometimes from acting out literally a phrase which is normally meant figuratively. Our sudden apprehension of both the power of language and its control by our own will evokes surprise which may result in laughter. When, for example, a man says to a crowd of noisy, talkative men, "Hold your tongues," and all the men respond by putting their hands in their mouths and grasping their tongues, we are surprised and some of us laugh.

The fact that not all of us laugh brings up the difficulty in determining what is humor and what is not and brings us back to the original problem of why some people see humor in Milton and some do not. I suspect that, if put to the test, any writer, even those almost universally considered humorous, will not elicit the same response from

everyone. But when we read certain writers we expect to be amused and we usually are--we perceive according to our expectations. Humor is allusive; it depends upon our acculturation, our surroundings, our sex, our age--even our mood of the moment--for its effect. I, for example, have laughed at a cartoon picturing a little girl holding a broom and shouting to her mother: "Mommy, I've finished all the nooks, now what's a cranny?" Some of my friends can never see this as funny, and even I am not always amused by it. Adding to the difficulty of defining humor is this fact that something we perceive as funny one day may not seem funny the next. Or something which seems hilarious when we are in a crowded movie theatre where everyone is laughing may not seem even slightly humorous the next evening when we go to see the movie again but only two or three people are present in the theatre with us. Our response, then, our designation of what is humorous, relates partly to such matters as what other people think is humorous, what our culture has taught us to perceive as humor, and what immediate context we happen to be in when the humor confronts us.

Complicating the already complicated situation, moreover, is the additional fact that even though we all usually respond to what our culture designates as humor we are still individuals who think and imagine differently from

each other. Humor is personal. Some of us enjoy puns and word play, some the satirical exposure of folly, while others react more to wit that stimulates pleasurable imagination. Milton offers the whole range of humor. Puns and mockery abound in his prose, in many of his satiric poems, and in his portraits of Satan and his cohorts; his imaginative wit is most apparent in his playful descriptions of nature and in the delightful urbanity of some of his dialogues. He constantly, then, appeals directly to the organizing faculty, to reason, and also, sometimes simultaneously, to the picture-making faculty, to the imagination.

We might enjoy these appeals to our sense of humor and yet not always laugh at them. Among those who have written about comedy, some disagreement exists as to the necessary relationship between comedy and laughter. In his essay on laughter, Henri Bergson almost totally identifies the two, seeming to argue that comedy does not exist unless it results in laughter.³ L. J. Potts agrees that "laughter has something to do with comedy" but he cautions, "it is very doubtful whether the end of comedy is to produce laughter."⁴ His position is that laughter is a physical response with its source not in drama or literature, but in what convention dictates as funny. When not laughing at the conventional, he says, we laugh when we are embarrassed, when we are terrified, or when we are under the influence

of sudden grief. Thus, according to Potts, the presence of laughter does not indicate that something is comic and comedy does not always produce laughter.⁵

If comedy does not always produce laughter, humor certainly does not. In general, the distinction I make between comedy and humor is simply that comedy is humor expanded and crystallised into art. Comedy is an art form, comprised of various parts, most of which are humorous. Humor is much lighter and much more delicate than comedy. It is not necessarily funny; it can simply be delightful, pleasant, and playful, evoking an occasional smile rather than hilarious laughter. At one point in Paradise Lost, Adam says to Eve that "smiles from Reason flow / To brute deni'd" (IX, 239-40).⁶ Unlike the laughter which Potts calls a physical response, smiles come from an engagement of the mind, our ability to smile setting us apart from animals.

One category of humor which is apparent in Milton's major and minor poetry is a category I have designated as "smiling urbanity." We may associate the word urbanity with Horace, the satirist whose work is not filled with savage indignation. Nevertheless, as a satirist Horace does mock, even though gently, at the vices of man and society.⁷

"Smiling" urbanity thus distinguishes Milton's urbanity from that of Horace and also from the type of urbanity which

might be associated with witty characters in Restoration comedy. Milton's urbanity is witty, but it is also gentle, playful, and charming. It is not condescending, never aloof from common humanity. Often, it is apparent in letters addressed to friends or acquaintances who know Milton and who will respond to his humor and appreciate it. While Milton's smiling urbanity occasionally manifests word play and verbal humor, more often, it is imaginative humor; it depends for its effect upon our ability to visualize and imagine the pictures he creates. Because of this, it is similar to the humor apparent in his descriptions of nature. Most of us may not often think of such descriptions as humorous, but Milton's are so exuberant, so filled with joy and delight, that they make us smile. Just as we often smile with people who are enjoying themselves, we smile with Milton as we respond to his invitation to put aside our daily affairs and to enjoy the beauties and delights of the natural world. His pictures of nature are often personified, and this adds to their delight. When Adam describes to Raphael his awakening after his creation, he explains that as he first looked around at the trees and hills and streams "all things smil'd" (VIII, 265); and Raphael concludes his narrative of the creation of the natural world with the words, "Earth in her rich attire / Consummate lovely smil'd" (VII, 501-12). Thus, Milton seems to invite us to smile with nature and to enjoy her bounty.

Of course, Milton is often satiric and his satirical works are much closer to Juvenal in tone than to Horace. This is especially apparent in his prose where Milton, in his persona as spokesman for liberty and Truth, directs his arguments toward a particular audience and uses humor in the context of those arguments as a device for teaching and confuting. Throughout his prose Milton is aware of a double audience. He often addresses his tracts to particular opponents with the intention of directly confuting their arguments; in this context, he uses humor, which he here calls "grim laughter," to make those opponents and their arguments look as ridiculous and foolish as possible. He is also aware, however, of a broader audience, one which is observing the encounter between him and his opponents and who can learn as a result not to engage in the kind of folly he is unveiling. Bergson believes that we laugh most when we see man portrayed as an animal or as a machine. In this laughter, he says, "we always find an unavowed intention to humiliate, and consequently to correct our neighbor."⁸ Milton reveals a similar motive in his prose and some of his satiric minor poetry. As Leonard Feinberg in his book on satire points out, the satirist must exaggerate and distort,⁹ and Milton does, in fact, reduce his opponents to animals and to things. But he does so for the purpose of correction. If his opponents will not correct themselves, perhaps his broader audience will.

Milton's poetry is less bitingly satiric than his prose, though some of the minor poems include satiric humor and a strong pattern of scorn is apparent in both Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained as God looks down from his heavenly perspective at the posturings of Satan and laughs. In the minor poetry, humor is more of an aesthetic device than a teaching device and works to alter our perceptions through the use of light satire, a smiling urbanity, and a playful delight in nature. Milton's major poetry both teaches and delights; it combines the three types of humor present in the prose as well as the minor poetry and includes another category which I have called domestic humor.

The problem of defining humor may never be resolved. I can say with confidence, however, that Milton's humor does not consist merely of learned pleasantries and that it is broad and varied, including many traditional comic devices. It ranges from the low humor of bawdry and scatological jokes to the sophisticated humor and wit of irony and satire. It includes burlesque, parody, caricature, and the kind of humor which leads to comedy in situations like the battle between the sexes and the plight of the hen-pecked husband. It also includes the very delightful kind of humor which is playful, and which demonstrates the truth of John Aubrey's assertion that Milton was a man "of a very cheerful humor."¹⁰

While some of these terms are defined very loosely in the context of the discussion in which they occur, I have not tried to pin down the differences between irony and satire, between parody and burlesque, or even to define humor very rigidly. I suggest only that humor need not produce laughter and it need not be funny; it is enough that it makes us smile. To try to define these terms in any great detail would be to make my study something it is not intended to be. I am interested in showing that humor does exist in Milton's works, and that it exists for a purpose, so that it is very much integrated into the totality of his art. Thus, my prime concern is to discuss Milton's works individually, examining the elements of humor which they contain, and showing how this humor relates to the work as a whole. No doubt some of what I call humor in Milton will not be perceived as humor by all readers all the time. If, however, they agree momentarily to share my response, they will perhaps enjoy Milton more fully as a result.

NOTES

¹See, for example, M. D. Vernon, The Psychology of Perception (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962).

²For a survey of this situation see Edward Le Comte, "Milton as Satirist and Wit," in Th'Upright Heart and Pure, ed. Amadeus P. Fiore, O. F. M. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 45-59.

³Henri Bergson, "Laughter," selections rpt. in Comedy: Meaning and Form, ed. Robert W. Corrigan (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 471-77.

⁴L. J. Potts, Comedy (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1949), p. 19.

⁵Potts, p. 19.

⁶All quotations from Paradise Lost are from John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957).

⁷For a discussion of the influence of Horace and Juvenal in the Renaissance see Alvin Kernan, The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959).

⁸Bergson, p. 477.

⁹Leonard Feinberg, Introduction to Satire (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State Univ. Press, 1967), p. 90.

¹⁰Quoted in James Holly Hanford and James G. Taaffe, A Milton Handbook (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), p. 46.

CHAPTER I

"GRIM LAUGHTER": THE STRATEGY OF PROSE

In her introduction to Milton's Prolusions in the Yale Edition of his prose, Kathryn A. McEuen comments that these youthful academic exercises show us "the future polemicist in the making."¹ Both the technical rhetorical devices and the style are derived from the classical orators and become an integral part of Milton's prose throughout his life. While pointing with approval at Milton's use of inventio, dispositio, elucutio, pronuntiatio, and memoria² as the structural basis of Milton's Prolusions, McEuen is less happy with the examples of Milton's humor which appear throughout these early works, describing it as "downright vulgar" and "coarse."³ Yet, Milton's use of humor, no less than his use of rhetorical devices, is based on classical precedent, and often on scriptural precedent as well. Consistently in his prose tracts, even his most biting and scurrilous ones, Milton carefully justifies and explains his usage. These explanatory passages show that Milton's use of humor is deliberate. At times, humor is merely one of a number of ways to make a point cleverly and effectively

while at other times, it becomes angry and scornful laughter, a weapon used by Milton to castigate fools and to teach others to avoid foolishness; in both cases, it ranges from the lightly comic to the biting satiric and is a tool used by the persona Milton adopts as he directs himself to a particular audience. The range of Milton's humor will become apparent as I proceed chronologically through his prose tracts, examining first his early academic exercises, the Prolusions. I will divide the discussion according to the three part plan Milton himself outlines in the Second Defence when describing his tracts as dealing with different kinds of liberty. His five Anti-Prelatical tracts are concerned with ecclesiastical liberty; his divorce tracts and Areopagitica with domestic or personal liberty; his The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Eikonoklastes, and three Defences with civil liberty. Of Milton's later tracts, A Treatise of Civil Power, Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings Out of the Church, and Of True Religion deal with ecclesiastical liberty while The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth is concerned with civil liberty; to maintain the chronological order, however, these later tracts will be discussed after The History of Britain, A Brief History of Moscovia, and Christian Doctrine.

The first indication of Milton's awareness of audience and of his own role in working within a classical

tradition comes in Prolusion VI, in which he was assigned the task of proving "That Sportive Exercises Are Occasionally Not Adverse to Philosophic Studies." The occasion demanded a light, comic touch and Milton supplies it in this three-part exercise. In Part I, "The Oration," he establishes the tone and gives the theoretical justification for the elements of comedy he will employ throughout:

Would you now, gentlemen, have me build up a structure of proof from instances upon this foundation of reason? I can indeed find plenty of such instances. First of all comes Homer, . . . He sometimes withdrew His divine mind from the councils of the gods and the doings in heaven and diverted it to comic subjects, such as that most amusing description of the battle of frogs and mice. Moreover Socrates, according to the Pythian Apollo the wisest of men, is said often to have bridled his wife's shrewish tongue with a jesting word. Besides, we read that the conversation of the ancient philosophers was always sprinkled with witty sayings and enlivened by a pleasant sparkle; and it was certainly this quality above all which conferred an immortal fame upon all the ancient writers of comedies and epigrams, whether Greek or Latin. Moreover we are told that Cicero's jokes and witticisms, collected by Tiro, filled three volumes. And we are all familiar with that sprightly encomium of Folly composed by an author of no small repute, while we have many other diverting essays on comic subjects by famous authors of our own times.⁴

Thus, Milton puts himself in the company of Homer, Socrates, Cicero, and Erasmus in his attempts at wit, humor, and other elements of comedy. Any uneasiness he may have at departing from his accustomed seriousness is alleviated by finding classical precedents for the propriety of such behavior. Finally, Milton concludes, only those who are serious and capable of thinking seriously "can be a master of a fine and clever wit" (I, 276; C. E. XII, 225).

Before Milton proceeds to the second part of this exercise, the proclusion proper, he prepares his audience for language which may seem indecorous when compared to his usual deportment, but which is justified and indeed demanded by the present occasion. Thus, he argues that the decorum of genre, of time, and of place has priority over the individual's sense of his own personal decorum. Occasionally, a speaker must play a role. In this case, Milton asks for the indulgence of the audience, adding "give me your laughter and applause" (I, 277; C. E. XII, 227).

In the second part of the exercise, then, laughter not only is the desired response to a joke but also becomes the subject of Milton's first extended joke. As with most people who are self-consciously and uncharacteristically trying to be funny in public, the joke is not very successful, but it does indicate what he thinks the occasion demands and it also explains his reason for preparing his audience in advance to accept the language he uses in his attempts at jest. The joke begins with an energetic appeal for laughter which becomes a series of mock complaints against those who may not be laughing. Typical of the scatological nature of these complaints and of Milton's language throughout is his opening rebuke:

For my part, if I see anyone not opening his mouth
as wide as he should to laugh, I shall say that he is
trying to hide teeth which are foul and decayed, and
yellow from neglect, or misplaced and projecting, or
else that at to-day's feast he has so crammed his

belly that he dares not put any extra strain upon it by laughing, for fear that not the Sphinx but his sphincter anus should sing a second part to his mouth's first and accidentally let out some enigmas, which I leave to the doctors instead of to Oedipus to explain. (I, 278; C. E. XII, 229)

While far from edifying, this type of humor is not unknown to literature, being similar to that of the medieval fabliaux and to some of Chaucer's tales, where jibes making fun of bodily functions abound. Of course, Milton's learning provides him with the reference to the Sphinx's riddle in the Oedipus story, and the puns built upon this reference are the basis of whatever humor the passage may have. Milton is simply trying to win applause and laughter from an audience likely to appreciate anatomical jokes.

The tone throughout is bantering and playful as Milton makes fun both of the occasion and of himself. He employs here as well the comic device of taking the names of well known persons, in this case college servants at Christ's, and making lengthy puns on their names. E. M. W. Tillyard points out, for example, that the college porter, Sparks, is the inspiration for several paragraphs of jokes about flames, embers, fires, and lights.⁵ The early use of this technique anticipates Milton's use of it throughout his career as a polemicist, culminating in the extended puns on the Greek and Latin meaning of Alexander More's name in the Second Defence.

The third part of Prolusion VI is a poem which, according to Tillyard, gives Milton an opportunity to "give

his audience a taste of what he could do."⁶ The poetry, in English rather than the Latin of the prose, is loftier and more serious than the prose, and it ends with an extremely clever and humorous conceit which in effect becomes a riddle. Milton appears as the Aristotelian principle of *Ens*, or Absolute Being, with his ten sons, the Predicaments. The Eldest of the sons is Substance, and the puns throughout the verse play on the relationship between substance and his nine brothers, the accidents by which substance is known. The conceit begins with *Ens* telling his Eldest son of the prediction of the Sibyl who at his birth peered into his future:

"Your son," said she, "(nor can you it prevent)
 Shall subject be to many an Accident.
 O'er all his Brethren he shall Reign as King,
 Yet every one shall make him underling,
 And those that cannot live from him asunder
 Ungratefully shall strive to keep him under;
 In worth and excellence he shall outgo them,
 Yet being above them, he shall be below them;
 From others he shall stand in need of nothing,
 Yet on his Brothers shall depend for Clothing.
 To find a Foe it shall not be his hap,
 And peace shall lull him in her flow'ry lap;
 Yet shall he live in strife, and at his door
 Devouring war shall never cease to roar:
 Yea it shall be his natural property
 To harbour those that are at enmity."

When the Sibyl's words have ended, Milton concludes:

What power, what force, what mighty spell, if not
 Your learned hands, can loose this Gordian knot?⁷

It is obvious that in these verses Milton delights in the paradoxes, puns, and word play which turn on the irony that substance, that which makes a thing what it is, can be

perceived, can be known, only through its often incompatible accidents. By personifying substance and accidents and their "brotherly" relationship, he creates an object of comedy and humor out of a topic taken very seriously at Cambridge. It is interesting that the Gordian knot appears again in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained as a symbol of Satan's verbal entanglements.⁸

Prolusion VI is important in a discussion of Milton's comic mode because, written in his nineteenth year, it shows his awareness of classical precedents for the use of comedy, humor, and wit as well as the decorum which accompanies their use. Milton builds on these precedents as becomes necessary throughout his prose works. Prolusion VI also gives examples of Milton's youthful attempts at humor and reveals his intense awareness of an audience and his role in speaking to that audience. Such awareness is also important in his later tracts.

The difference between the audience in Prolusion VI and that in Prolusion I is the difference between a sympathetic and hostile one. In the First Prolusion, Milton must argue "Whether Day or Night Is the More Excellent," and he complains of an unfriendly audience: "in all this great assembly I encounter none but hostile glances" (I, 219; C. E. XII, 119). While the audience may actually be unfriendly, it is also possible that Milton is here projecting a role upon his audience, just as he is aware of himself

playing a role, that of the orator who must please. The self-consciousness evidenced here is different from that in Prolusion VI. There Milton sees himself as being among friends; he claims his efforts at humor will be taken in a good natured way. Here, he sets himself against the majority of his audience, and his humor in addressing them has the bite which characterizes much of Milton's mature prose. In fact, in a general way, the targets of his satire here are similar to those attacked later. Throughout his life, Milton despises the ignorant who try to pass themselves off as learned, who "pride themselves on the ridiculous effer-vescing froth of their verbiage." "Stripped of their covering of patches," which Milton says they have stolen from others, "they will prove to have no more in them than a serpent's slough." He continues:

. . . once they have come to the end of their stock of phrases and platitudes you will find them unable to utter so much as a syllable, as dumb as the frogs of Seriphus. How difficult even Heraclitus would find it, were he still alive, to keep a straight face at the sight of these speechifiers (if I may call them so without offence), first grandly spouting their lines in the tragic part of Euripides' Orestes, or as the mad Hercules in his dying agony, and then, their slender stock of phrases exhausted and their glory all gone, drawing in their horns and crawling off like snails. (I, 220; C. E. XII, 121)

In this passage Milton makes comic figures of those who indulge in pretentiousness, and reveals again his awareness of classic precedent. As Merritt Hughes points out, the reference to the silent frogs of Seriphus occurs often in

Juvenal's satires.⁹ Milton thus uses images from classical writers who believe that such fools deserve to be the object of laughter. Those in the audience who fit the category of fools are therefore ridiculed. Others, who are not fools, will learn from the castigation to avoid behavior which may make them the object of such justifiable scorn.

To anyone who might be offended by such an unfriendly and antagonistic introduction, Milton replies, in good rhetorical fashion, that his beginning is deliberately dark to put more into light the body of his oration, just as the darkest dawn can prefigure the loveliest day. The tone changes at this point and the remainder of the oration is delightfully playful, as Milton does indeed debate the assigned subject of "Whether Day or Night Is the More Excellent." Here, Milton, as orator of the day, makes fun of his topic but at the same time treats it fully. His opening tone is bantering:

Did I say that Night had declared war on Day?
 What should this portend? What means this daring
 enterprise? Are the Titans waging anew their
 ancient war, and renewing the battle of Phlegra's
 plain? Has Earth brought forth new offspring of
 portentous stature to flout the gods of heaven?
 Or has Typhoeus forced his way from beneath the bulk
 of Etna piled upon him? Or last, has Briareus eluded
 Cerberus and escaped from his fetters of adamant?
 What can it possibly be that has now thrice roused the
 hopes of the gods of hell to rule the empire of the
 heavens? (I, 221-22; C. E. XII, 123-25)

This kind of extended questioning, with its mock horror at the implications of the questions, and its obvious exaggeration is a comic device used also by Milton in a Latin

poem, "That Nature Is Not Subject to Old Age," written as another academic exercise early in his career. In Prolusion I, the device allows Milton to continue the loosening up of his audience and to prepare it for his impending discussion of the genealogy of Night and Day. Tillyard has pointed out the similarities between this Prolusion and L'Allegro and Il Penseroso,¹⁰ and the genealogies presented in all three works is one of the most obvious similarities. These genealogies are a vehicle for humor, and Milton's discussion of Night, her birth, and her plight after birth makes fun of the long tradition of stories where worth and value are determined by birth and descent. In this case, Milton's treatment of Night, either the only child of Earth or along with Erebus a child of Chaos is done in jest. Night, pursued by Phanes, first her suitor and then, when rebuffed, her enemy, finally runs for solace and safety to "the incestuous embrace of her brother Erebus." As a result, Milton says, in pointed understatement, "she found at once a release from her pressing fears and a husband who was certainly very like herself" (I, 223; C. E. XII, 127). This kind of tongue-in-cheek humor abounds in other of the Prolusions.

In the earliest and still one of the best essays on Milton's satire, J. Milton French contends that the Prolusions show "a whimsical almost rollicking temper."¹¹ He especially enjoys the Second Prolusion in which Milton defends against Aristotle the concept of the music of the

spheres "on the decidedly original grounds that without it the Intelligences of the spheres would collapse of boredom."¹² French also mentions the joke in the Third Prolusion where Milton says he would rather clean out the Augean stables than have any more of the "folleries" and "petty subtleties" of scholastic philosophy forced upon him (I, 241; C. E. XII, 161).

French's delight in these and other examples of humor in Milton's work seems more appropriate than Kathryn McEuen's appraisal of the humor in the Sixth Prolusion as vulgar, coarse, and "not genuinely amusing."¹³ The bawdy is only one type of humor present in the Prolusions. Other types range from biting satire at the expense of fools to the light and playful humor found in descriptions of nature.

Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. in his essay on the orator in Milton's prose works also takes McEuen to task for her evaluation of Milton's humor. Wittreich points out that in Milton's Sixth Prolusion the bawdiness has a serious goal: it exposes what Milton considers to be the interests and intellectual level of his audience. Wittreich goes on to argue that the "dialectic of styles," the contrast between the low style of the Prolusion and the elevated style of the poem following the Prolusion, enables Milton to distinguish himself as the "true orator" in contrast to the group of "academic rhetoricians" he addresses. Ultimately, then, Milton's role as orator is the same in addressing the

"friendly" audience of Prolusion VI as it is in addressing the "hostile" one of Prolusion I. The contrast and the corresponding "contest of styles" Wittreich identifies in the Sixth Prolusion is central to much of Milton's prose especially in the attacks on Hall, Salmasius, and More, Milton's major opponents in later prose tracts. When discussing these later works, Wittreich concludes: "In these satires, Milton sets in fierce opposition the true and false orators--an opposition created and brilliantly sustained by the abusive rhetoric that dominates the refutatio and the sublime style of the personal digressions and perorations." Thus, in those prose works directed at a specific antagonist where the satiric humor that abounds becomes especially biting and nasty, Milton is introducing a persona who "matches the character of his opponent."¹⁴

Milton adopts his most strident persona when answering a particular opponent who has directed a polemical work against him personally. However, in tracts which Milton initiates or which are written as part of a general controversy his persona is more self-effacing. This pattern is similar throughout the three categories of tracts Milton wrote on liberty. In a broad sense, all of Milton's tracts deal with the theme of liberty, but when discussing his works in A Second Defence, Milton divides them into three groups: . . . "I observed that there are, in all three

varieties of liberty without which civilized life is scarcely possible, namely ecclesiastical liberty, domestic or personal liberty, and civil liberty. . ." (IV, 624). In each group some of the tracts, generally the earlier ones, are serious arguments following the principles of rhetoric as they plead the cause of truth and freedom. The arguments deal with the topic, not with personalities, and references to the foolishness or stupidity of those who argue the other side are minimal. For example, the ecclesiastical tracts, Of Reformation, Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and The Reason of Church Government consist of direct and serious treatments of the topic, with less irony and satire than those tracts directed specifically against Bishop Hall, Animadversions and An Apology Against a Pamphlet. In these two works Milton definitely adopts a persona who becomes the spokesman for truth. It is in these tracts that humor abounds, whether it be the merriment of comedy designed to put fools in their place, or whether it be the bite of satire modeled on Christ and the Old Testament prophets.¹⁵

As a group all five of these tracts, which were written in the 1640's at the peak of the controversy over Episcopacy, deal with topics viewed by Milton throughout his life as objects of satire: the Roman Catholic Church and everything associated with it, those Episcopal bishops who desire to model themselves and their Church on the Papists, and fools who betray Truth and abuse reason and language.

In his first tract, Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England: And the Causes that Hitherto Have Hindered It, published in 1641, Milton establishes an argumentative framework for his opposition to Episcopacy. He contends that Truth is clear and not ambiguous, and that Scripture is sufficiently plain to be understood and is all that is necessary for salvation. Milton makes the point often, but it is most effective when made humorously:

He that cannot understand the sober, plain, and unaffected stile of the Scriptures, will be ten times more puzzl'd with the knotty Africanisms, the pampers'd metaphors; the intricat, and involv'd sentences of the Fathers; besides the fantastick, and declamatory flashes; the crosse-jingling periods which cannot but disturb, and come thwart a setl'd devotion worse then the din of bells, and rattles.
(I, 568)

He believes that "custom" and the "superstition" of the Roman Church and of those in the Church of England trying to model themselves on the Roman Church can never be more powerful than the plain Truth of Scripture. He decries the close interrelationship of the Church and State, stemming from the time of the Constantine donation, and argues that the Church is not a Vine needing an Elm to support it. When discussing the effects of the Constantine donation, Milton is especially witty:

Thus flourish't the Church with Constantines wealth, and thereafter were the effects that follow'd; his Son Constantius prov'd a flat Arian, and his Nephew Julian an Apostate, and there his race ended; . . . (I, 557).

Milton concludes his reference to Constantine with a

humorous aphorism: Before Constantine the Church had "Woodden Chalices and golden Preists"; now it has "golden Chalices and wooden Preists" (I, 557). Throughout Of Reformation, Milton's attacks at contemporary Prelates, especially those who try to justify their beliefs with appeals to Antiquity, are humorous. He enjoys very much, for example, the prospects of a modern Bishop being treated like a primitive one:

But he that will mould a modern Bishop into a primitive, must yeeld him to be elected by the popular voyce, undiocest, unrevenu'd, unlorded, and leave him nothing but brotherly equality, matchles temperance, frequent fasting, incessant prayer, and preaching, continual watchings, and labours in his Ministry, which what a rich bootie it would be, what a plump endowment to the many-benefice-gaping mouth of a Prelate, what a relish it would give to his canary-sucking, and swan-eating palat, let old Bishop Mountain judge for me. (I, 548-49)

Prelacy is nothing more than an embellished and elaborate façade of "painted Battlements" and "gaudy rottennesse" which "want but one puffe of the Kings to blow them down like a past-bord House build of Court-Cards" (I, 583). It is an object of fun in all its outward manifestations: its painted and gilded churches, its elaborate hierarchy, its complicated rules and regulations, its ceremonies and sacraments, its liturgies, and most of all in its dress. The dress of the Prelates seems to epitomize Milton's view of them as supremely fit for laughter. He says:

they would request us to indure still the ruffling of their Silken Cassocks, and that we would burst our

midriffes rather than laugh to see them under Sayl
in all their Lawn, and Sarce-net, their shrouds, and
tackle, with a geometricall rhomboides upon their
heads: . . . (I, 611-12).

Milton's arguments in Of Reformation culminate in his belief that Episcopacy is not the only type of Church government compatible with a monarchy; in fact, it detracts from the glory of the State by exalting its own glory and it will eventually become an enemy of the State. This last point is best illustrated in the principal comic passage of the tract, in which Milton creates a small drama based on a fable originally appearing in North's Plutarch and familiar to the Renaissance.¹⁶ In Milton's story, the "Body" calls together "for the common good" all the members of the Guild. As is right and proper, the Head takes the first seat, but to the amazement of the other members of the group "a huge and monstrous Wen little lesse then the Head it selfe, growing to it by a narrower excrescency" takes the place next to the chief. At this point in the story Milton's phrasing is particularly playful: "Whereat the Wen, though unweildy, with much adoe gets up" and addresses the assembly. The Wen then points out to the Body that by both place and merit he is second only to the Head, and if the Head should fail he, as its ornament and its strength, should take its place. Also, "for the honour of the Body," he should be given the same dignities and riches that adorn the other members. Whereupon, the Body decides to consult a wise Philosopher who is familiar with its laws. The learned Philosopher soon

discerns that the Wen is nothing "but a bottle of vitious and harden'd excrements" and that he has no right to contend with the lawful members. "Not easily dash't," the Wen replies that he is the pure and quiet retreat for the soul when "she would retire out of the head from over the steaming vapours of the lower parts to Divine Contemplation."

The Philosopher's retort is masterful:

Lourdan, . . . thy folly is as great as thy filth; know that all the faculties of the Soule are confin'd of old to their severall vessels, and ventricles, from which they cannot part without dissolution of the whole Body; and that thou containst no good thing in thee, but a heape of hard, and loathsome uncleanes, and art to the head a foul disfigurment and burden, when I have cut thee off, and open'd thee, as by the help of these implements I will doe, all men shall see.
(I, 584)

This passage not only illustrates Milton's point that Episcopacy has become an encumbrance, or as he later calls it, a tumor, but it also demonstrates Milton's ability to take a conventional metaphor and turn it into dramatic comedy, complete with gestures and colloquial dialogue. Michael Lieb points out that unlike the account in Livy, which has no dramatic sense, Milton creates a full dramatic cast of characters in comic roles.¹⁷ In addition, the passage contains the humor which allegory often supplies, that present when we respond to two levels of meaning at the same. Thus, we laugh at the Wen because he is a comic character, full of stuffy pretensions, but we also laugh because the picture of a real wen or protuberance coming

alive and speaking is ludicrous. We know "the Body" in the fable is an allegorical representation but it is also a real body and its members are arms, legs, and other parts of a real body. Milton exploits for comic effect every aspect of humor inherent in the fable and at the same time seriously illustrates the overall theme of his tract.

In Milton's second Ecclesiastical tract, Of Prelatical Episcopacy, he continues the arguments established in Of Reformation but concentrates more specifically on proving that Episcopacy cannot be established from Apostolic times and on showing that arguments taken from the Church Fathers are often not credible. The humor in this tract is sparse and is usually ironic, centering on the foolishness of those who would go to "Antiquity" rather than to Scripture for the source of Church government. This type of humor is exemplified early in the tract when Milton contends that Scripture clearly shows no difference in the early Church between a bishop and a presbyter. But some men, motivated by their own interests, have begun to see a need to supplement Scripture and "cannot think any doubt resolv'd, and any doctrine confirm'd unless they run to that indigested heap, and frie of Authors, which they call Antiquity" (I, 626). Milton continues: "Whatsoever time, or the heedlesse hand of blind chance, hath drawne down from of old to this present, in her huge dragnet, whether Fish, or Seaweed, Shells, or Shrubbs, unpickt, unchosen, those are the Fathers" (I, 626).

This accusation may be biting and it may even be unfounded, but it is effective rhetoric and turns on the irony that some people might actually prefer the random garbage of time to the perfect inspired wholeness of divine Scripture. The humor comes in the disproportion between our mental picture of the Fathers as the staid and solid foundation of the Church and that which Milton forces on us of fish, seaweed, shells and shrubs.

The Reason of Church Government adds further dimensions to Milton's arguments against Church Fathers, Prelates, and Episcopacy in general. It also contains a personal digression upon himself, his own aims and ambitions. In that digression Milton demonstrates his firm belief that he has been given certain talents and abilities by God to be used in the service of Truth. He feels that the polemical controversies he is engaged in are part of that divine mission and they make demands upon him which he would not necessarily choose for himself. Therefore, while he would rather retire to "a calm and pleasing solitariness" away from the "troubl'd sea of noises and hoars disputes," he will do the best he can to fulfill the will of God. Milton concludes, not without humor, that he will come from the

quiet and still air of delightful studies into the dim reflexion of hollow antiquities sold by the seeming bulk, and there be fain to club quotations with men whose learning and beleif [sic] lies in marginal stuffings, who when they have like good sumpters laid ye down their hors load of citations and fathers at yore dore, with a rapsody of who and who were Bishops

here or there, ye may take off their packsaddles, their days work is done, and episcopacy, as they think, stoutly vindicated. (I, 822)

This passage forms a good transition from the serious, intense, and elevated tone of the personal digression to the more argumentative and less lofty tone of the remainder of the tract. Milton's point is obvious. True study, done for the honor and glory of God is contrasted with the false study of those who replace reason and inspired thinking with the mere trappings of learning, margins filled with documentation and elaborate appeals to "authority." Yet as it was in Of Prelatical Episcopacy, Milton's point is made with humor and wit.

While Animadversions Upon the Remonstrant's Defence Against Smectymnuus was published before The Reason of Church Government, it belongs in spirit and tone more to an Apology for Smectymnuus than it does to the other three Anti-Prelatical tracts. "Smectymnuus" is important in the history of the controversy over Episcopacy because its pamphlets against the arguments of Bishops Hall and Ussher supporting the divine right of Episcopacy brought Milton into the debate. "Smectymnuus" was a group of five English Puritan ministers who answered Hall and Ussher and were then attacked by them. When Milton defends Smectymnuus in Animadversions he attacks Hall with any weapon at hand. Since he has argued in a serious manner in two previous tracts, he seems to feel free here to be as outrageously witty as possible.

The tract is written in the form of a dialogue, really a debate, and Milton takes for himself the role of "Answerer" to the "Remonstrant." Milton does not yet fulfill Wittreich's idea of the true orator opposing himself to the false one, but it is clear throughout that he believes himself on the side of Truth and that he must vindicate Truth by revealing his opponent for the fool he is. The humor in this tract is diverse, ranging from mocking laughter to bludgeoning satire, with occasionally a more subtle irony in between.

The words Milton puts in the mouth of the Remonstrant are the words of Bishop Hall quoted out of context from his Defence Against Smectymnuus. This tactic gives Milton an immediate advantage, because naturally the words he selects are those which make Hall seem most foolish. In debating whether or not prayers should be formalized into a set liturgy, for example, Hall (in favor of liturgy) argues that, according to Justin Martyr, in ancient times "the instructor of the people prai'd according to his ability 'tis true, so do ours, and yet wee have a Liturgy, and so had they." Milton, picking up the fallacy here, retorts: "A quick come off. The ancients us'd Pikes, and Targets, and therefore Guns, and great Ordnance, because wee use both" (I, 683). Later the Remonstrant says, "Our Liturgie Symbolizeth not with Popish Masse, neither as Masse nor as Popish." To this double talk, Milton responds:

A pretty slip-skin conveyance to sift Masse into no Masse and Popish into not Popish; yet saving this

passing fine sophisitcall boultling hutch /"a sifter for grain or other materials"/, so long as she symbolizes in forme, and pranks her selfe in the weeds of Popish Masse, it may be justly fear'd shee provokes the jealousie of God, no otherwise then a wife affecting whorish attire kindles a disturbance in the eye of her discerning husband. (I, 687)¹⁸

At another point, Milton fastens upon a phrase which apparently Hall had used often in his Defence and begins to ridicule Hall in a paragraph replete with puns and nonsense:

Remon. If yet you can blush.

Answ. This is a more Edomitish conceit than the former, and must be silenc'd with a counter quip of the same country. So often and so unsavourily has it been repeated, that the Reader may well cry, Downe with it, downe with it for shame. A man would thinke you had eaten over liberally of Esau's red porrage, and from thence dreame continually of blushing; or, perhaps, to heighten your fancy in writing, are wont to sit in your Doctors scarlet, which through your eyes infecting your pregnant imaginative /sic/ with a red suffusion, begets a continuall thought of blushing. That you thus persecute ingenuous men over all your booke, with this one over-tir'd rubricall conceit still of blushing; but if you have no mercy upon them, yet spare your selfe, lest you bejade /"tire out"/ the good galloway /a breed of horse/, your owne opiniaster wit, and make the very conceit it selfe blush with spur-galling. (I, 725)

Milton's "answer" does not add much of substance to the argument, but it reveals a comic mode Milton uses often in later tracts directed against Salmasius and More. Taking a phrase from his opponents he begins to turn it in every possible direction, adding slowly every possible nuance of meaning that can be ascribed to it. Thus, the passage builds steadily, with single layers of meaning taking turns at dominating the reader's attention. Yet all of the meanings are present simultaneously. By the time Milton

finishes his retort, we are both entertained and astounded, wondering at how far this word has been pushed, at how many outrageous connotations it has been made to carry.

In addition to the puns, the skillful retorts, the exaggeration, Milton's description of Hall as the "courteous Remonstrant" who shows "rare subtlety" and "is the dear saint of the prelates" is ironic.¹⁹ Further zest is added to the attack with the reference to the stew pot being emptied on the heads of eavesdroppers as they walk the streets of London.²⁰ In addition there are several playful jests on the Bishop's foot and smelly socks. Apparently, these jests are based on a well known proverb that bishops spoil whatever they get involved in. For example, when the Remonstrant says "That scum may be worth taking off which followes," Milton replies: "Spare your Ladle Sir, it will be as bad as the Bishops foot in the broth; the scum will be found upon your own Remonstrance" (I, 671-72). The joke is continued sporadically throughout the tract and is not concluded until the last few pages:

For certaine your confutation hath atchiev'd nothing against it, and left nothing upon it, but a foule taste of your skillett foot, and a more perfect and distinguishable odour of your socks, then of your night-cap. And how the Bishop should confute a book with his foot, unlesse his braines were dropt into his great toe, I cannot meet with any man that can resolve me, onely they tell me that certainly such a confutation must need be goutie. So much for the Bishops foot. (I, 733)

Unfortunately for Hall, he had initiated this entire series

of jokes by trying to use the old proverb against Milton. Milton quotes the Remonstrant as saying: "I doubt not but they will say, the Bishops foot hath been in your booke, for I am sure it is quite spoil'd by this just confutation" (I, 732-33). Milton certainly is not going to pass up such a perfect opportunity to turn Hall's words against him.

The dialogue structure not only allows but also encourages this kind of repartee. M. T. Herrick points out in Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century that "the drama, comedy in particular, has always been a form of debate," and certainly the conflict which is central to drama is heightened by an adversary relationship between two or more characters. Animadversions, then, can be seen as a dialogue in which the Remonstrant "plays straight man to the interlocutor who gives the Answer."²¹ As he did in the Sixth Prolusion, Milton explains and justifies his reasons for choosing his method. In "The Preface" to Animadversions he comments:

Onely if it bee ask't why this close and succinct manner of coping with the Adversary was rather chosen, this was the reason, chiefly that the ingenuous Reader without further amusing himselfe in the labyrinth of controversall antiquity, may come the speediest way to see the truth vindicated, and Sophistry taken short at the first false bound. Next that the Remonstrant himselfe as oft as hee pleases to be frolick and brave it with others may find no gaine of money, and may learne not to insult in so bad a cause. (I, 664)

Thus, we see Milton reinforcing again the complaints he makes against the Scholastic philosophers in his Prolusions and

those he makes against the Church Fathers in the earlier Anti-Episcopal tracts. Truth can be revealed in clear and direct statements; it does not need complicated and entangled reasoning. This passage also reveals Milton's awareness that he is addressing a kind of double audience in many of these tracts. On the one hand, he is directing his barbs and jests to his adversary, in this case, Bishop Hall. On the other hand, he is aware of a wider audience, that of "the ingenuous Reader," witnessing his castigation of Hall and as a result learning that Truth will be vindicated. Milton knows that Hall is no fool, but if he can make him appear a fool he can discredit Hall's argumentative position.

To those who might object to this tactic and to the language Milton uses in Animadversions, Milton responds that he is being "transported with the zeale of truth to a well heated fervencie," and believes he has the authority of Scripture for handling his opponent roughly. He particularly cites the "morall precept of Salomon to answer him thereafter that prides him in his folly" and the example of Christ and his followers throughout the ages who in refuting those who deceived and corrupted the minds of men "wrought up their zealous souls into such vehemencies" (I, 663). Milton clearly sees himself in the tradition of those who defend God's truth against those who seek to obscure it through lies and dissimulation. His purpose is a serious one;

nevertheless, Milton believes that laughter is a weapon which can be well used in its service:

And although in the serious uncasing of a grand imposture . . . there be mixt here and there such a grim laughter, as may appeare at the same time in an austere visage, it cannot be taxt of levity or insolence: for even this veine of laughing (as I could produce out of grave Authors) hath oft-times a strong and sinewy force in teaching and confuting; nor can there be a more proper object of indignation and scorne together then a false Prophet taken in the greatest dearest and most dangerous cheat, the cheat of soules: in the disclosing whereof if it be harmfull to be angry, and withall to cast a lowring smile, when the properest object calls for both, it will be long enough ere any be able to say why those two most rationally faculties of humane intellect anger and laughter were first seated in the brest of man. (I, 663-64)

It is apparent from Milton's use of humor throughout his works, that he often enjoys jesting and the mirth of laughter merely for its own sake, but it is equally clear from this statement and others that he also thinks of laughter as a legitimate way to unmask liars and to teach Truth to others. This passage also supports Joel Morkan's thesis that Milton is his most bitingly satiric when he sees himself in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets. Like Jeremiah, Milton thought of himself as a minister of God, "the hot whip and flaming sword with which the Lord castigated his people."²² If this role demands ruff and biting satire, so be it. Scornful laughter is the most appropriate weapon in such circumstances.

Milton continues this type of defense in his last Anti-Prelatical tract, An Apology Against A Pamphlet, also

known as An Apology for Smectymnuus and published in 1642. For obvious reasons, Milton's Animadversions had not been enthusiastically received by his opponents and they responded with a pamphlet entitled A Modest Confutation of a Slanderous and Scurrilous Libell, Entituled, Animadversions etc. Filled with personal attacks, it was considered by Milton to be an overt slander and he replied to it in An Apology. Since he was not certain of the identity of the author, in his pamphlet he usually assumes it to be Bishop Hall and expands on many of the attacks initiated in Animadversions. The Bishop's socks, for example, appear again, this time even more sweaty and smelly. This tract debates the issue of prelacy even less than does Animadversions and is almost solely concerned with demonstrating the errors of the Confuter's thinking by pointing out his errors of grammar, style, diction, and syntax. Milton begins by analyzing the Confuter's title and proceeds to demolish completely every complaint made against Animadversions. Although the replies are humorous, they often remind us of the serious underlying issues. At one point, for example, he asserts: "For certainly this tormenter of semicolons is as good at dismembring and slitting sentences, as his grave Fathers the Prelates have bin at stigmatizing & slitting noses" (I, 894).

Milton not only calls attention to errors in

style, but he also criticizes Bishop Hall for confusing the various genres of literature. Milton enjoys pointing out the irony that Hall, who calls himself the first English satirist, does not even know what a satire is. Whereupon, Milton surveys the history of satire, commenting that Hall "might have learnt better among the Latin, and Italian Satyrists, and in our own tongue from the vision and creed of Peirce plowman" (I, 915-16). Anyone foolish enough to call himself the first English satirist and then to describe his satires as "toothless" deserves to be hoist with his own petard, and Milton does not pass up the opportunity:

But that such a Poem should be toothlesse I still
 affirme it to be a bull, taking away the essence of
 that which it calls it selfe. For if it bite neither
 the persons nor the vices, how is it a Satyr, and if
 it bite either, how is it toothlesse, so that tooth-
 lesse Satyrs are as much as if he had said toothlesse
 teeth. (I, 916)

By calling attention in a humorous way to the Bishop's false sense of decorum, Milton is undermining any charges of impropriety Hall might make against him, as well as adding yet another example of the foolish Bishop's inability to make accurate judgments.

Thus, An Apology is a vehicle by which Milton defends himself against false charges and continues his own attack against Hall, but it also provides him the opportunity to develop more fully his theory of laughter as a teaching device. While such laughter is no longer described as "grim," Milton's purpose is still clearly serious and religious:

Now that the confutant may also know as he desires, what force of teaching there is sometimes in laughter, I shall returne him in short, that laughter being one way of answering A Foole according to his folly, teaches two sorts of persons, first the Foole himselfe not to be wise in his own conceit; as Salomon affirms, which is certainly a great document, to make an unwise man know himselfe. Next, it teaches the hearers, in as much as scorne is one of those punishments which belong to men carnally wise, which is oft in Scripture declar'd; for when such are punisht the simple are thereby made wise, if Salomons rule be true. (I, 903)

This passage illustrates again Milton's awareness of a double audience. Laughter should be directed toward the fool who is being unmasked by comedy or satire, thereby revealing and humbling him. But laughter is also a weapon of scorn, a punishment by which those observing may learn a lesson. In this context, Milton quotes Horace's first Satire, to add classical support to Scriptural:

--Jesting decides great things
Stronglier, and better oft then earnest can. (I, 904)

He adds that Cicero and Seneca also verify the point. From the time of his early academic exercises onward, Milton consciously works within an established tradition. Yet, as he does consistently throughout his career, he takes traditional forms and reworks them for his own purposes. Here, he combines the technique of the Roman satirists with the practice of the Old Testament prophets and the example of the English Piers Plowman in a tract in which he clearly identifies himself with those who stand for truth and religious liberty.²³

In the battle between the true and false prophets,

the true must not hesitate, they must use every weapon at their command. Often this weapon includes words and references which some people might consider shocking or even obscene, but Milton believes such expressions are justified. If the Confuter complains of Milton's language and his ridicule, Milton replies that "Christ himselfe speaking of unsavory traditions, scruples not to name the Dunghill and the Jakes" (I, 895). Then, to emphasize his point even more strongly he proceeds to discuss several passages from Scripture where language usually considered offensive is used. For example, in the first of Kings God himself, "who is the author both of purity and eloquence" says: "I will cut off from Iereboam him that pisseth against the wall." Milton believes God is acting with decorum here because he "chose this phrase as fittest in that vehement character wherein he spake" (I, 902). Thus, Milton believes that righteous anger justifies, indeed demands, a language which would not ordinarily be used. Milton himself observes this decorum as he discusses the concept. He quotes God's words verbatim, but when paraphrasing one example he will not use the word God used because it is a "terme immodest to be utter'd in coole blood" (I, 902). When he is writing as a servant of God, in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, he feels he has the right to use language which would otherwise be inappropriate. This view helps to explain the abusive and occasionally obscene language of these Anti-Prelatical

tracts as well as the much more abusive and much more obscene language of his later Latin Defences. An Apology Against a Pamphlet provides us with the theory explaining Milton's use of language as well as his view of the curative and pedagogical power of laughter.

When Milton completes his Anti-Prelatical tracts, he moves to the second area of liberty which concerns him, domestic or personal liberty. The general method of the Anti-Prelatical pamphlets is repeated in the divorce tracts. Milton begins with essays seriously discussing the issue of divorce, but gradually becomes more humorous as the tracts become directed more against opponents. In The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, published in 1644, Parliament is a metonymy for the people of England as a whole, and Milton adopts the persona of an orator addressing it for the public good. His persona is disinterested, as he argues the cause of reason against error and custom. In The Judgment of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce, Milton's persona is less disinterested. He is specifically addressing a Reformed Parliament in a preface to a translation of passages from a work by an established and respected Protestant writer. He hopes that the passages from Bucer's De Regno Christi, which was written in 1557 for King Edward VI, will lend authority to his earlier tract. By the time Milton writes Tetrachordon, several attacks have been made against The

Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, and Milton adopts the role of apologist in his address to Parliament. Because of the attacks, his reputation is at stake and he is quite forceful in answering his opponents, identifying himself again as he had in the Anti-Prelatical tracts with the true orator justified in ridiculing the opinions of those arguing against Truth and liberty. Colasterion is the last of the divorce tracts, the only one not addressed to Parliament. It is a direct answer to a written attack against The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, and it is filled with raillery and scornful laughter as Milton becomes the fiery prophet scourging his enemies. In Tetrachordon, Milton uses irony, paradox, word play, and arguments to the absurd against the ideas and interpretive practices of his opponents. Through these devices he is able to reinforce with humor all of his major points in the tract. In Colasterian, the humor is more satiric and deals more with personalities as Milton strips his opponent of all intellectual pretensions, revealing him as a fool to the larger audience witnessing the attack.

In Tetrachordon Milton amplifies the Scriptural exegesis he had begun in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce. As he points out in the preface to Martin Bucer, his method in the first tract had been to formulate an argument from Scripture and then to supplement it with respected Protestant authorities like Fagius and Grotius

and later, in the second tract, Bucer. Now, in Tetrachordon, he examines in much greater detail the four main passages in Scripture dealing with divorce to prove that divorce is sanctioned by Scripture. The title, meaning "four-stringed," was the term used for the primitive Greek scale of four tones. Thus, Milton wants to indicate that the four parts of Scripture dealing with the topic can be brought together in harmony.²⁴

The harmony of Milton's overall argument is heightened by the passages of humor which touch on all of the major points Milton makes throughout his divorce tracts. In Tetrachordon Milton pits himself against the common expositors, who he believes not only distort logic and reason but also violate charity in their efforts to force Biblical texts into the letter but not the spirit of the law. His impatience is expressed in a satiric passage which ridicules their method:

What shall we make of this? what rather the common interpreter can make of it, for they be his own markets, let him now trie; let him trie which way he can wind in his Vertumnian distinctions and evasions, if his canonical gabardine of text and letter do not now sit too close about him, and pinch his activity; which if I erre not, hath heer hamper'd it selfe in a springe fitt for those who put their confidence in Alphabets. (II, 675)

Instead of concerning themselves with the effect of their exegesis on the lives of human beings, they become obsessed by the arrangement of letters of the Alphabet. Milton's

language illustrates with humor the irony that what should be a liberating activity has become an imprisoning one.

Elsewhere in the tract, Milton gives an example of the more open kind of Biblical interpretation he favors. He wants to show that Christ's words should be considered in the context of whom he is addressing, because often Christ will answer a particular group in a way which applies only to it. For example, Christ, when "stirr'd up in spirit against these tempting Pharises, answer'd them in a certaine forme of indignation usual among good authors; whereby the question, or the truth is not directly answer'd, but something which is fitter for them, who aske, to heare" (II, 663). Milton lists several examples of such indignation from ecclesiastical stories, and the stories he chooses are humorous. In the first, a curious questioner asks how God had employed himself before the world was made; he is answered that God "was making hel for curious questioners." In another story a Christian was asked "in derision" what "the Carpenter" was doing "now that Julian so prevail'd." He "had it return'd him, that the Carpenter was making a coffin for the Apostat" (II, 663-64). Milton concludes from these stories that Christ's replies to the foolish questions of the Pharisees reveal the same kind of humorous indignation, and his answers are not to be taken literally. The passage shows Milton's appreciation of a good retort as well as his belief that humor can teach; it shows also his continued identifi-

cation with Christ and the Old Testament prophets in using such "grim laughter."

Humor is also apparent in one of Milton's favorite rhetorical devices, exaggeration. He often exaggerates the views opposing his own by listing the various extremes to which those views can be carried. For example, in discussing the meaning of the Biblical passage "what God has joined together let no man put asunder," Milton begins by stating calmly that in order to understand the passage Christian prudence demands that we consider what it is that God has joined. Then his argumentum ad absurdum begins:

. . . shall wee say that God hath joyn'd error, fraud, unfitnessse, wrath, contention, perpetuall lonelinesse, perpetuall discord; what ever lust, or wine, or witchery, threate, or inticement, avarice or ambition hath joyn'd together, faithfull with unfaithfull, christian with antichristian, hate with hate, or hate with love, shall we say this is Gods joyning? (II, 650)

Milton's point is effectively made. God certainly must hate the kind of "abominable confusion" which results from joining such unmatched things. Making full use of the advantage gained by his argumentum ad absurdum Milton concludes with wit: "In a word, if it be unlawful for man to put asunder that which God joyn'd, let man take heede it be not detestable to joyne that by compulsion which God hath put assunder" (II, 651).

Another passage which shows the wit of which Milton is capable occurs in a discussion of the circumstances which allow a marriage to be dissolved. Feeling as he does that

it is the union of minds and souls more than the union of bodies which makes a marriage, Milton rejects the idea that divorce should be allowed for adultery, frigidity, or impotence but not for mutual incompatibility. The illogic of this situation appalls him; consequently, he gives vent to his feelings in a satiric passage:

This I amaze me at, that though all the superior and nobler ends both of marriage and of the married persons be absolutely frustrated, the matrimony stirs not, looses no hold, remains as rooted as the center: but if the body bring but in a complaint of frigidity, by that cold application only, this adamant Alpe of wedlock has leav to dissolve; which els all the machinations of religious or civill reason at the suit of a distressed mind, either for divine worship or humane conversation violated, cannot unfasten. What courts of concupiscence are these, wherein fleshly appetite is heard before right reason, lust before love or devotion? (II, 599)

The humor here comes from the puns on cold and frigidity and on the paradox that only coldness dissolves the cold mountain of wedlock. The courts of concupiscence reign.

Implicit in the passage is a suggestion that those who cannot see the logic of Milton's argument are suffering from frigidity of the brain, and Milton makes the charge explicit in his last divorce tract, Colasterion. While answering an opponent directly Milton says:

Against the last point of the position, to prove that contrariety of minde is not a greater cause of divorce, then corporal frigidity, hee enters into such a tedious and drawling tale of burning, and burning, and lust and burning, that the dull argument it self burnes to, for want of stirring; and yet all this burning is not able to expell the frigidity of his brain. (II, 740)

The humor turns on the polarities of hot and cold. Milton

makes fun of his adversary but also reminds us again of the kind of ridiculous thinking that allows divorce only for bodily extremes of temperature, the "heat" of lust leading to adultery and the "cold" of frigidity and impotence.

Colasterion was published on the same day as Tetrachordon, and its function in the divorce tracts is similar to the function of Animadversions and An Apology Against a Pamphlet in the Anti-Ecclesiastical tracts. It is, as its subtitle indicates, "A Reply to a Nameless Answer Against The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce." Milton's method throughout the tract is to answer his opponent's arguments one at a time. His tone throughout is abusive; he clearly sees the Answer as "a Brute Libel" which he is obligated to refute. He does not enjoy the task but feels that his cause will suffer if he allows any attack to go unanswered. The title, Colasterion, comes from a Greek word meaning "a place or an instrument of punishment."²⁵ Thus, Milton often refers to the tract as a "scourge"; he will "punish" his opponent and destroy him with language so that those observing can learn not to make the same foolish errors.

Milton's adversary does look like a fool, and is castigated, like the fools in the Anti-Prelatical tracts, for his lack of style and his inability to use English well. He also makes the mistake of pretending to a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew when, as Milton points out, he is not able to spell either. Because of his poor writing and his attempts

to pass off as his own knowledge from a popular legal text, he becomes the object of a fiction which Milton creates to explain his identity. Upset by having to reply to an anonymous antagonist, Milton invents a story that he is a serving man who "transplanted himself" and "turn'd Solliciter" (II, 726-27). From this point on the joke appears sporadically throughout the work. When his opponent argues that, under freer divorce laws, men would constantly leave their wives once they were pregnant, Milton replies:

As for those weak supposes of Infants that would be left in their mothers belly, (which must needs bee good news for Chamber-maids, to hear a Serving-man grown so provident for great bellies) and portions, and joyntures likely to incurr imbezlement heerby, the ancient civil Law instructs us plentifully how to award, which our profound opposite knew not, for it was not in his Tenures. (II, 734-35)

Milton not only answers the objection but shows us that the serving man turned solicitor knows nothing about law. With each successive reference to the serving man, the jest builds until it culminates in an elaborate metaphor:

Finally, hee windes up his Text with much doubt and trepidation; for it may bee his trenchers were not scrap't, and that which never yet afforded corn of savour to his noodle, the Salt-seller was not rubb'd: and therefore in this hast easily granting, that his answers fall foule upon each other, and praying, you would not think hee writes as a profet, but as a man, hee runns to the black jack, fills his flagon, spreads the table, and servs up dinner.

After waiting and voiding, hee thinks to void my second Argument. . . (II, 746)

Occasionally Milton adds variety to his name calling, and at one point the servingman gives way, and Milton's opponent becomes a Boar in a Vineyard:

Hee passes to the third Argument, like a Boar in a Vinyard, doing nought els, but still as hee goes, champing and chewing over, what I could mean by this Chimera of a fit conversing Soul, notions and words never made for those chopps; but like a generous Wine, only by overworking the settl'd mudd of his fancy, to make him drunk, and disgorge his vileness the more openly. All persons of gentle breeding (I say gentle, though this Barrow grunt at the word) I know will apprehend and bee satisfy'd in what I spake, how unpleasing and discontenting the society of body must needs be between those whose mindes cannot bee sociable. But what should a man say more to a snout in this pickle, what language can be low and degenerat enough? (II, 747)

Milton is being especially biting here, but the brunt of his satire seems to be deserving. This boorish and insensitive fool who thinks he can answer Milton's arguments when he does not even understand the language Milton is using demands harsh treatment. Of course, it serves Milton's purposes to make this serving man look as foolish as possible, unworthy of serious consideration or lofty language. Comparing him to a routing swine is clever and effective. As he did in the Prolusions and some of the Anti-Prelatical tracts, Milton is projecting a double audience here. He is specifically directing himself to a single opponent who must be revealed as a fool by the weapon of laughter. At the same time, a wider audience is witnessing the castigation and learning from it.

Not all of the humor in Colasterion depends upon invective, however. The tract also contains a type of argumentative humor at which Milton is an expert. He takes the argument of his opponent, as he had in the later Anti-Prelatical

tracts, and using his opponent's own words turns or twists that argument upon him, making him look like a fool. This technique is exemplified in an exchange where Milton quotes and then refutes his adversary's fifth argument:

Your fifth Argument, If the husband ought love his Wife, as Christ his Church, then ought shee not to be put away for contrariety of minde.

Answer, This similitude turnes against him. For if the husband must bee as Christ to the Wife, then must the wife bee as the Church to her husband. If ther bee a perpetual contrariety of minde in the Church toward Christ, Christ himselfe threat'ns to divorce such a Spouse, and hath often don it. If they urge, this was no true Church, I urge again, that was no true Wife. (II, 732)

This is more than just a clever retort. The use of logical constructions, the anticipation of a counter argument and the answer to it, and the manipulation of language are all masterful. A certain delight exists in seeing someone so roundly refuted, and Milton uses this technique repeatedly throughout the tract.

As part of the persona he adopts in Colasterion, Milton professes often that he does not enjoy arguing with clowns and he wishes that the "Servingman both by nature and by function," the "Solliciter by presumption," had not "cast the gracious eye of his duncery upon the small deserts of a pamphlet, whose every line meddl'd with, uncases him to scorn and laughter" (II, 741). As part of his role, Milton insists that he would rather dispute with equals; he would rather argue against a challenging and worthy opponent. But if he must treat with clowns, he can do so effectively and with

humor. Milton concludes this himself in the tract when he says, "my fate extorts from mee a talent of sport" (I, 757).

More than a talent of sport is needed in Areopagitica, however. Here, in a work identified on the title page as a speech, Milton puts himself even more directly in front of Parliament than he had in the divorce tracts. He casts himself into a role similar to that of the Athenian, Isocrates, when he wrote as though addressing the Areopagus. Milton must be especially skillful in his attempts to convince Parliament that it should repeal its licensing act, since he himself was named in the act. His basic tactic is to praise Parliament and at the same time convince it that it has betrayed its own principles. He is very aware of his audience, both those in Parliament to whom he is specifically directing his arguments as well as the wider audience reading his tract who, if convinced by his arguments, may bring pressure to bear on Parliament. Milton's excessive praise of Parliament achieves a double purpose. Since he denies that it is flattery, he allows Parliament to retain its vision of itself as a champion of Truth; but at the same time, his praise is a kind of tongue-in-cheek flattery with which the wider audience can measure Parliament's actual performance against the ideal. Milton does not want to project Parliament as an opponent, yet he does want to show that it has not fulfilled its noble goals.

Unlike the divorce tracts, where Milton limits his

comments to Parliament to a preface or a brief introduction, in Areopagitica Parliament is addressed throughout by Milton in his role as orator, the defender of Truth and liberty against evil and repression. More basic than civil liberty, freedom of the press is so fundamental to man that Milton classifies it in his Second Defence with his essays on personal and domestic liberty. Areopagitica does not abound with humor, but that which is present is directed against those who foster censorship and those who are so much in bondage to the baser elements of their natures that they are incapable of handling freedom. Thus, the humor reinforces many of the principal points Milton makes in the tract.

One way of undermining a position is to identify it with a similar position held by a group disapproved of by the majority of people. Consequently, when Milton addresses his "oration" to the Parliament of England, he presents a survey of governments in history which practiced censorship and licensing as well as those which did not. While some of those governments looked upon with favor in seventeenth century England had allowed censorship for libel, slander and sedition, none of them had engaged in licensing, a practice invented in modern times by the Inquisition. Milton argues that only the Roman Catholics, a group hated by nearly everyone, can be clearly identified with the practice. The sign of their licensing is the imprimatur appearing on every book approved by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and Milton takes

every opportunity available of exploiting the humor inherent in this Catholic practice. Milton considers the imprimaturs as bad as the "expurging Indexes that rake through the entrails of many an old good Author, with a violation worse than any could be offer'd to his tomb" (II, 503). To render this practice as ridiculous as possible, Milton begins by giving examples of imprimaturs, six in a row. Very few perfectly serious and legitimate formulas can withstand this kind of repetition, and after reading six imprimaturs in a row we do begin to perceive them as being rather foolish. Not content with slightly altering our perception, however, Milton pushes one step further and makes the imprimaturs come alive and achieve identities, in an absurd personification:

Sometimes 5 Imprimaturs are seen together dialogue-wise in the Piatza of one Title page, complementing and ducking each to other with their shav'n reverences, whether the Author, who stands by in perplexity at the foot of his Epistle, shall to the Presse or to the sponge. (II, 504)

Our perception now is totally changed; the imprimaturs are no longer words on a page but have become little tonsured monks, bowing and nodding to each other. The picture is humorous and we smile, yet we also see that these little comic figures control the destiny of the author who stands nearby, a victim of their every whim. The issue is a serious one, and Milton concludes that Anglican prelates who practice licensing are mocking themselves, their language, and their Church in continuing such "apish Romanizing."

Milton also points out in Areopagitica the difficulty of deciding what should be licensed. Once licensing begins, the arguments which initiated the practice could theoretically lead anywhere. Therefore, a government must decide what to license and what to approve. It must have a consistent basis for judgment. It must know how far it wants to go. The problems are endless and could go to ridiculous lengths. How ridiculous, Milton shows us in a masterful argumentum ad absurdum:

If we think to regulat Printing, thereby to rectifie manners, we must regulat all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightfull to man. No musick must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave and Dorick. There must be licencing dancers, that no gesture, motion, or deportment be taught our youth but what by their allowance shall be thought honest; for such Plato was provided of; It will ask more then the work of twenty licencers to examin all the lutes, the violins, and the ghittarrs in every house; they must not be suffer'd to prattle as they doe, but must be licenc'd what they may say. And who shall silence all the airs and madrigalls, that whisper softnes in chambers? The Windows also, and the Balcone's must be thought on, there are shrewd books, with dangerous Frontispices set to sale; who shall prohibit them, shall twenty licencers? The villages also must have their visitors to enquire what lectures the bagpipe and the rebbeck reads ev'n to the ballatry, and the gammuth of every municipal fidler, for these are the Countrymans Arcadia's and his Monte Mayors. Next, what more Nationall corruption, for which England hears ill abroad, then household gluttony; who shall be the rectors of our daily rioting? and what shall be done to inhibit the multitudes that frequent those houses where drunk'nes is sold and harbour'd? Our garments also should be referr'd to the licencing of some more sober work-masters to see them cut into a lesse wanton garb. Who shall regulat all the mixt conversation of our youth, male and female together, as is the fashion of this Country, who shall still appoint what shall be discours'd, what presum'd, and no furdur? Lastly,

who shall forbid and separat all idle resort, all evill company? (II, 523-26)

The outrageous exaggeration, the lengthy list, and the playfulness here are humorous, but they illustrate forcefully the impossibility as well as the undesirability of licensing everything that might be considered harmful. As Milton says, /licensing/ "will make us all both ridiculous and weary, and yet frustrat" (II, 526). His argument that licensing will not work is summed up brilliantly in a brief passage which anticipates the argumentum ad absurdum: "And he who were pleasantly dispos'd, could not well avoid to lik'n it to the exploit of that gallant man who thought to pound up the crows by shutting his Parkgate" (II, 520).

No one can ever be protected from all that might harm him, and to overprotect him is to weaken his own native resistance to error. Fallen man must and will encounter evil; taking battle against it is the only way he can ensure moral strength and growth. Those who want to be protected, those who want to live cloistered lives will never discover Truth. They will always depend upon someone else to determine their beliefs and to live their lives for them. Such an existence is really no existence; it is slavery to another. Milton illustrates this point by describing a man who turns to a divine of note and entrusts him with his religious affairs. Soon the divine becomes, in the man's mind, religion itself:

So that a man may say his religion is now no more within himself, but is become a dividuall movable, and goes and comes neer him, according as that good man frequents the house. He entertains him, gives him gifts, feasts him, lodges him; his religion comes home at night, praies, is liberally supt, and sumptuously laid to sleep, rises, is saluted, and after the malmsey, or some well spic't bruage, and better breakfasted then he whose morning appetite would have gladly fed on green figs between Bethany and Jerusalem, his Religion walks abroad at eight, and leavs his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without his religion. (II. 544-45)

This parody of true religion satirizes the type of person who thinks he can buy anything, including an easy conscience. It also satirizes those divines who "feed" on the flock, and it contrasts their greed with the humility of Christ in whose name they should be ministering true religion. We want religion to be a living thing, but that does not mean a walking, talking, eating Divine. By identifying the two, by literally "personifying" religion, Milton creates a comic device which entertains but at the same time makes a serious point.

Laziness keeps people from pursuing Truth on their own and laziness also keeps some clergy from doing their own thinking and preparing their own sermons. These clergy are easily threatened by any new works which might challenge their old and established ideas. Even more damning, these clergy fear any new books which may contradict the "interlinearies, breviaries, synopses, and other loitering gear" upon which they base their Sunday sermons. Milton describes their attempts to protect their "store" of knowledge humorously by means of a

military metaphor:

But if his rear and flanks be not impal'd, if his back dore be not secur'd by the rigid licencer, but that a bold book may now and then issue forth, and give the assault to some of his old collections in their trenches, it will concern him then to keep walking, to stand in watch, to set good guards and sentinells about his receiv'd opinions, to walk the round and counter-round with his fellow inspectors, fearing lest any of his flock be seduc't, who also then would be better instructed, better exercis'd and disciplin'd. (II, 547)

The metaphor illustrates the irony that so much time and energy should be spent, not in efforts to discover Truth in order better to instruct the flock, but in protecting devices that are actually impediments to the Truth.

As always, Milton has a vision based on an ideal. In this case, he believes that Truth can be achieved if the State imposes no impediments to the search. If England has been sleeping, it is not too late for her to rise, shake herself, and be reborn. In projecting this vision into an image, Milton sees England as a strong and vital Eagle looking full into the midday sun, "purging and unscaling her long abused sight at the fountain it self of heav'nly radiance." In contrast is Milton's humorous picture of those who are afraid to search for the Truth, who use their time to think up excuses to avoid confronting the Truth. The Eagle stands straight and free, "while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amaz'd at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms" (II, 558). In

comparison with the Eagle, these birds are comic; if we behave like them, we too are comic figures. In this address to Parliament, Milton is truly a prophetic figure, sharing his vision of what England might be under courageous leadership to both audiences, Parliament itself and the people of England whom Parliament represents.

Milton's tracts on religious and domestic liberty were published early in the 1640's; five years elapsed before his first tract on civil liberty, The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, was published in 1649. It was followed in the next few years by The Articles of Peace, Eikonoklastes, and the three Defences. The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates is a serious argument, with humor limited to brief satiric attacks against Prelates and those Protestant Divines who betray their calling. A similar type of humor dominates The Articles of Peace where "grim laughter" is used as a weapon against Irish Catholics and Presbyterian Divines who behave like Roman Catholic priests. In Eikonoklastes, written in response to a work attempting to exalt King Charles, Milton's humor is primarily argumentative and rhetorical, usually consisting of a clever turning of the King's words against him. In all of these works Milton sees himself as spokesman for his country, but that identification is most complete in the three Defences, where Milton's name appears on the title page followed by "Englishman." In the Defences, "John Milton,

Englishman" uses every weapon at his disposal to defend his countrymen against the scurrilous charges of their opponents. The humor in these tracts ranges widely and includes the name calling, raillery, and invective of "grim laughter" as well as irony, word play, bawdiness, and argumentative wit.

Like The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates begins with an attack on custom as an obstacle to liberty. Written during the imprisonment of Charles I but before his beheading, the tract places the contemporary situation in a historical context, and seeks to show that the killing of tyrants has been sanctioned throughout the ages. Milton argues that it is "custom" which has allowed tyranny to exist. It is primarily custom which now keeps men from facing the implications of the actions they have already taken against the King. To turn back now would be to undo the strong stand against tyranny to which the people have thus far committed themselves. Since the power of Kings comes originally from the people, they have the right and indeed the obligation to depose any King who abuses that power. This is primarily a serious work, with most of the humor coming near the end when Milton advises the Protestant divines not to emulate the Prelates. They should study harder and be mindful of their duties to the flock, duties "not performed by mounting twice into the chair with a formal preachment huddl'd up at the odd hours of a whole lazy week" (III. 241). They should "assemble in Con-

sistory," according to ancient ecclesiastical rule, to preserve church discipline and be "not a pack of Clergiemen by themselves to belly-cheare in their presumptuous Sion" (III, 241). If they fulfill their duties and wait with patience, Milton assures them things will go well; "and the Printed letters, which they send subscrib'd with the ostentation of great Characters and little moment would be more considerable than now they are" (III, 242). Milton describes as a "pack of hungrie Church-wolves" any Protestant Divines who may try to dredge up Biblical passages and Biblical authorities to refute his position. He is convinced that such men can be motivated only by self-interest not by public good, and his attack on their need to be "fed" by "double Livings and Pluralities" is sarcastic. Instead of feeding the flock, they, like the Divine in Areopagitica, are feeding on the flock, and Milton feels they deserve any satire directed at them.

Satire is also a principal vehicle for humor in The Articles of Peace and Eikonoklastes, both written after Milton was appointed Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Council of State in March, 1649. As one of the first duties of his post, Milton was asked to attack the peace between England and the Catholics of Ireland which had been established by the Duke of Ormond, Charles's representative, in 1648. Not a major work, Milton's Observations Upon the Articles of Peace, consists primarily of raillery against the "barbarous"

customs of the Irish, a people Milton portrays as definitely needing to be civilized by the superior English. Much of the humor here is name calling, one of the most pointed examples being Milton's description of Ormond as a "Windy Railer" (III, 316). The various attacks against Roman superstition are not generally as clever as those in the Anti-Prelatical tracts. Catholics are not the only group criticized, however; Milton reserves some of his most witty language for those Presbyterian Divines who are presently disassociating themselves from the killing of the King: since "their heaving out the Prelats to heave in themselves," they sit on their "Presbyteriall stooles" and "are now grown such busie Bodies" (III, 319). He adds later: "they themselves like irregular Friers walking contrary to the rule of thir own foundation, deserv for so grosse an ignorance and transgression to be disciplin'd upon thir own stools" (III, 329). Since "stool" had the same connotation in the seventeenth century as it has today, Milton is making very clear what he thinks of these "dissenters."

Following his completion of The Articles of Peace Milton was asked to reply to a work entitled Eikon Basilike or King's Book, which had appeared shortly after the King's death in February and which purported to be a private record of Charles's sufferings through the last days of his life. Naturally, many people were moved by the poignancy of such a work, and its popularity was a threat to the Commonwealth.

Milton countered Eikon Basilike with Eikonoklastes, and structured his reply as a chapter by chapter refutation, a practice in seventeenth-century polemics which Milton had used to humorous effect in earlier tracts. Milton's rebuttals in Eikonoklastes are very succinct, not far removed from the dialogue of Animadversions and similar to his approach in Colasterion. Milton ignores the strong possibility that Eikon Basilike may not have been written by Charles at all, so that he can more effectively refute "the King" with his own words and phrases. As a result, he can use the kind of rhetorical or verbal humor at which he is so adept. When "Charles" says for example, "He had rather not rule then that his people should be ruin'd," Milton replies "and yet above these twenty yeres hath bin ruining the people about the niceties of his ruling" (III, 498). This reversal of the meaning of the King's words has an epigrammatic wit. Another example depends for its effect on a different kind of word play: Charles "bids his Son Keep to the true principles of piety, vertue, and honour, and he shall never want a Kingdom. And I say, People of England, keep ye to those principles, and ye shall never want a King" (III. 581). The pun depends upon the two meanings of the word "want": in Charles' sentence the word means "lack"; in Milton's sentence it means "need." In still another example, Milton uses the King's language to point out the ridiculousness of his continuous talk about "tumults." Milton quickly grows impatient with

Charles's using his fear of a popular uprising as an excuse for his various tyrannies. He retaliates in a witty retort, where he picks up and turns against the King a metaphor which the King had initiated. Milton begins by quoting Charles: "But, saith he, as Swine are to gardens, so are Tumults to Parlements." Milton replies: "This the Parliament, had they found it so, could best have told us. In the meane while, who knows not that one great Hogg may doe as much mischief in a Garden, as many little Swine" (III, 396). Occasionally the puns are extended and instead of quick and witty retorts they become the basic element in a serious argumentative point Milton is making. When Charles contends that "the cause of forbearing to convene Parlements, was the sparkes which some men's distempers there studied to kindle," Milton replies:

They were indeed not temper'd to his temper; for it neither was the Law, nor the rule by which all other tempers were to bee try'd; but they were esteem'd and chos'n for the fittest men in thir several Counties, to allay and quench those distempers which his own inordinate doings had inflam'd. And if that were his refusing to convene, till those men had been qualify'd to his temper, that is to say, his will, we may easily conjecture what hope ther was of Parlements, had not fear and his insatiate poverty in the midst of his excessive wealth constrain'd him. (III, 356)

The pun turns on the various meanings of the word "temper," as verb and noun, as well as the exchange between temper and distemper. But the passage is also a clever and witty way for Milton to make a serious point about the "humour" of a king who refuses to convene Parliament.

It is Charles's relationship with Parliament which

forms the central issue of Eikonoklastes. Milton considers the King's refusal to call Parliament the most blatant example of his violation of English law and of his abuse of power. When Charles takes a group of armed men and personally breaks into the House of Commons to arrest five of its members, he not only breaks the law, but loses all royal dignity. Milton's language reveals him to be a comic figure and an object of ridicule as he "sallied out from White Hall, with those trusty Myrmidons, to block up, or give assault to the House of Commons" (III, 387).

It is to Milton's advantage to make Charles a comic figure because the Eikon Basilike tries to make him a tragic one. The view of Charles which Milton tries particularly hard to discredit is that of a pious and religious monarch, deeply concerned about the welfare of his people. The frontispiece to Eikon Basilike shows Charles at his prayers before his death. His jeweled crown is on the floor, while a crown of thorns is in his right hand, his left hand over his breast. Naturally, Milton was furious at this attempt to identify Charles as a martyr or as the Redeemer. He tries to discredit this image by attacking the prayers supposedly uttered by Charles and scattered throughout the Eikon Basilike. The most notorious of these has come to be called the Pamela prayer because, as Milton gleefully points out, it was plagiarized from Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia, and in that work was a prayer to a pagan god uttered by Pamela, a peasant

girl.²⁶ Milton makes good use of this prayer to ridicule Charles and to shatter the image of the frontispiece:

Thus much be said in generall to his prayers, and in speciall to that Arcadian prayer us'd in his Captivity, enough to undeceive us what esteeme wee are to set upon the rest. / For he certainly whose mind could serve him to seek a Christian prayer out of a Pagan Legend, and assume it for his own, might gather up the rest God knows from whence; one perhaps out of the French Astraea, another out of the Spanish Diana; Amadis and Palmerin could hardly scape him. Such a person we may be sure had it not in him to make a prayer of his own, or at least would excuse himself the paines and cost of his invention, so long as such sweet rapsodies of Heathenism and Knighterrantry could yeild him prayers. . . 7. (III, 366-67)

Milton makes Charles into a comic figure who indiscriminately goes anywhere in looking for prayers. Both the King and his prayers are a fraud.

A man who would turn to such sources for prayers would obviously not be much better in his choice of clergy. Milton applies to Charles's clergy the adjective which Charles in his Cabinet letter had originally applied to Parliament, "mungrill" (III, 434).²⁷ This term creates a pattern of verbal humor running throughout Eikonoklastes. When Charles used it to describe the legally elected body which represents the people, he was in effect insulting the people of his country and showing again his contempt for those who, according to Milton, were the source of his power. When Milton takes Charles's word and uses it against those groups Charles praises, the word becomes more and more closely identified with Charles until he himself seems to be a "mungrill." Thus, Milton finds a subtle and clever way of poking

fun at Charles as well as his clergy.

King Charles, of course, is not without defenders, and the controversy between them and Milton is broadened within the next two years from England to the Continent. When Charles's son in exile in France engaged a French scholar living in Holland to write a tract in Latin reviling the English regicides, Milton was ordered to answer it. In replying to Salmasius's Defensio Regia pro Carolo I, Milton also writes in Latin, and in the work he sees himself as the defender of English people representing them before a large, educated European audience. In A Defence of the People of England, Milton again follows the practice of answering book by book the arguments of his opponent. In the preface to his work, for example, Milton responds to Salmasius's preface, indicating his awareness of the general issues of the controversy and explaining to his Continental audience what method he will use in approaching the subject and in handling his adversary. With his first words, he casts aspersions upon Salmasius but does not address him specifically until he has completed his preface. From that point on his attack is merciless. To defend his countrymen, Milton discredits their enemy. He gives no quarter in making a fool of Salmasius; righteous anger allows it. The laughter in this tract is primarily "grim," relieved occasionally by argumentative wit and bawdiness.

Since Milton knows Salmasius's identity, he is not

required to create one for him as he had for his adversary in Colasterion. Instead, he takes two facts of Salmasius's life and makes them an object of ridicule throughout the tract. The most obvious fact is that Salmasius is a foreigner, and Milton believes that a foreigner has no right to intrude in English affairs. By the end of Milton's Defence, the term "foreigner" conveys nothing but contempt. "Grammarians" is the second term used contemptuously by Milton to describe Salmasius. Salmasius was one of the most famous and widely respected scholars in Europe at the time, but Milton turns the fact that he had edited several Roman historians into a vehicle for ridicule.²⁸ The opening sentence of the tract initiates the bantering tone which is not only maintained but builds throughout:

I am afraid that it would seem as if I deserve the title of a verbose as well as an inept defender of the people of England, if I were to be as full of words and as lacking in substance as Salmasius appeared to many in his defense of the king.

(IV-1, 301-02; C. E. VII, 3)

A few paragraphs later, Milton begins his favorite motif:

Though Salmasius is a foreigner and--deny it as often as he will--a grammarian, he is yet not content with the rewards of his trade and would prefer to be a great busybody; he dares to meddle with government, and that not his own, although to so great an undertaking he brings neither moderation nor understanding nor any other suitable talent, but only arrogance and his grammarian's lore. (IV-1, 306; C. E., VII, 9)

This "grammarian" is such a "busy body" that his writing is without wit and without substance. It is unscholarly and often contradictory. Milton gleefully points out each

failure. Milton's accusations are not unfounded, however. He does catch Salmasius in contradictions which cast doubt on the thoroughness of his scholarship. According to Milton, Salmasius states at one point that for all governments, East and West alike, the king is above the law, and then says elsewhere that the kings of Egypt were bound by the law. In another example, Milton rephrases Salmasius's argument to indicate the kind of wrong thinking in which his opponent indulges. Milton begins by accusing Salmasius of descending to the "hair-splitting of the rabbis":

He denies that a king is bound by the laws, but proves on their authority, that a king is guilty of treason if he suffers his rights to be restricted: and so a king is bound and not bound, guilty and not guilty: so often is Salmasius in contradiction to himself that to such a fellow opposition seems like a twin sister. (IV-1, 387; C. E. VII, 179)

Milton repeats such indictments continuously throughout his first Defence; each example makes Salmasius seem even more of a fool. Early in the tract, when his attacks first begin, Milton anticipates Salmasius's objections to his rough treatment and replies that it is no more than Salmasius deserves:

Who are you to yelp thus? A scholar, I suppose, who till old age has spent his time thumbing anthologies and dictionaries and glossaries, instead of reading through good authors with judgment and profit; and so all your talk is of manuscripts and variant readings, of displaced or corrupt passages: you reveal that you have never tasted a drop of honest scholarship.

(IV-1, 338; C. E., VII, 67)

We see here the same kind of statement Milton made early in his career as a polemicist against the Scholastics and

Church Fathers. He continues to see pedants as parodies of true scholars and as enemies of Truth. In this tract, recurrent references to the "grammarians" and the "thunder of dictionaries" humorously remind us of Milton's point.

In addition to his specific attacks against Salmasius, Milton continues his practice of taking his opponent's words and twisting them back against him. One example puns playfully on Salmasius's language, pointing out again errors in his thinking:

"Kings," you say "are coeval with the sun's creation." May the gods and goddesses grant you a warm day, Damasippus, to sun yourself, for your own inspiration lacks fire; and one might otherwise think you a shady sort of teacher. Indeed, you are wholly in the dark in failing to distinguish the rights of a father from those of a king; by calling kings fathers of their country, you think this metaphor has forced me to apply right off to kings whatever I might admit of fathers. Fathers and kings are very different things: Our fathers begot us, but our kings did not, and it is we, rather, who created the king. (IV-1, 326-27; C. E., VII, 45)

The puns on light and dark are entertaining, but more clever is Milton's rejection of Salmasius's comparison of kings to fathers. The argument is swiftly and deftly turned. By casting Salmasius in the role of Damasippus, Milton by implication casts himself in the role of Horace writing a satire,²⁹ and he continues to satirize Salmasius's various metaphors throughout the tract. At one point in the Defensio Regia Salmasius apparently tries to be "clever and flowery" by comparing the five kinds of monarchy to the world's five zones. Milton immediately takes advantage of the comparison

to reply in kind: "You clever man, what fine comparisons you always try to arrange for us! Be off apace to that frigid zone to which you banish governments with absolute power; on your arrival it will be twice as cold!" (IV-1, 478; C. E., VII, 407). Apparently, Salmasius is another one of Milton's adversaries who suffers from frigidity of the brain.

Milton continues this type of attack throughout his Defence. Time after time, he quotes Salmasius's inappropriate metaphors, his misapplication of scholarship, his contradictions. Not all of Milton's replies are funny, but their overall impact is. It becomes more and more difficult to take Salmasius seriously. The final insult, however, is Milton's relentless portrayal of Salmasius as a hen-pecked husband. It is low humor indeed, but a traditional and effective comic device. Milton enjoys the joke as he turns his famous adversary into a stock comic figure.

One of Milton's numerous variations on this theme is inspired by another of Salmasius's unfortunate metaphors. In his attempt to find parallels for a king's natural right to rule, Salmasius makes the mistake of saying that "the cock of the roost commands males as well as females." Milton swiftly turns this phrase against Salmasius personally:

"The cock of the roost commands males as well as females." Indeed this is your concern, not ours! How can this be? For you are yourself a Gallic cock and said to be rather cocky, but instead of commanding your mate, she commands and hen-pecks you; and if the cock is king of many hens while you are the slave of yours, you must be no cock of the roost but a mere dung-hill Frenchman! As far as books go,

certainly no one has heaped up more dung than you, whose crowing over your heap deafens everyone; this is the one characteristic of the cock which you possess. . . . (IV-1, 428; C. E., VII, 281)

Milton's words do not answer Salmasius's argument, but we tend to forget that as we follow all the puns on chickens and cocks. The passage is a good comic retort with Milton implying that Salmasius should enjoy it since his own work is such a "dunghill."

Milton elaborates on the theme of the hen-pecked husband by carrying it to its obvious extreme in having Salmasius and his wife exchange sexual roles. He leads up to the role-reversal gradually, each passage adding more details to the others scattered throughout the text. Again, Milton uses Salmasius's words to initiate the series, this time by attacking Salmasius's reference to Milton's countrymen as "the mad dogs of England." Naturally irate, Milton lashes out in return, in a passage filled with references to wolves, mongrels, and bitches:

. . . You have at home a barking bitch who rules your wretched wolf-mastership, rails at your rank, and contradicts you shrilly; so naturally you want to force royal tyranny on others after being used to suffer so slavishly a woman's tyranny at home. Whether then you are wolf-master or your wolf-bitch masters you, whether you are wolf or were-wolf, you will surely be sport for the English hounds: but there is no time now for a wolf-hunt, and so let us leave the woods and return to the king's highway.
(IV-1, 380; C. E., VII, 161)

In this passage, Salmasius's wife is the "barking bitch," who rules her husband, the wolf. Since in nature the bitch could never dominate the wolf, Milton suggests that Salmasius

has forfeited his position on the scale of being. Instead of a rational creature made in the image of God, he has become lower even than the animals, who at least maintain their sexual ranking.

Later, Milton goes even further with this role-reversal when he describes Salmasius giving birth. Milton drops the animal metaphor but makes Salmasius a mountain, to argue the same point he had earlier:

To the rescue, goddess Midwife, Mount Salmasius is in labor! There was reason in his being his wife's wife; watch out, ye mortals, for some monstrous birth! . . . The mountain has really labored to bring forth this ridiculous mouse! Come all grammarians to help this grammarian in labor: all is over--not with the law of God or nature, but with the phrase-book! (IV-1, 454; C. E., VII, 349)

Milton combines a number of comic devices in this passage. He continues the indictment against Salmasius's masculinity, he puns with Horace's well-known statement, and he reminds us that Salmasius is a "grammarian."

In a third passage, Milton exploits the comic elements of the two earlier passages as fully as possible by uniting the major images of each, so that the wolf is impregnated by the bitch and then gives birth:

I see now why you are so eager to overthrow the papacy! You bear in your belly, as we put it, another papacy, for, as your wife's wife, a wolf impregnated by a bitch, what else could you bring forth but a monstrosity or some new papacy? (IV-1, 483; C. E., VII, 421)

Earlier Salmasius had given birth to a mouse; now he gives birth to a new papacy. This passage retains the comic theme

of the domesticated husband, but it also reminds us of Milton's oft repeated complaint against those Protestants who overthrew Roman Catholicism only for their personal aggrandisement. They are "wolves" just as surely as were the Roman Catholic and Anglican prelates described in Milton's Anti-Prelatical tracts.

These passages from Milton's Defence demonstrate Milton's ability to take a comic idea or device and add to it until it carries several meanings at once. Every time Milton calls Salmasius a grammarian, for example, the word contains the old nuances but it also picks up new ones from the present context. In this way, Milton keeps the name calling from getting boring and he can work with various levels of ideas at the same time. He applies this technique not only to individual tracts but also to the combined body of his prose works as well. A good example is his use of the word, "wolf." Milton never uses the word in a complimentary way; until the First Defence, it almost always refers to clergymen who have betrayed their roles as ministers to God's flock. Here, it retains that meaning but it has the added meaning of one who betrays his role on the scale of being. It refers to one who is "perverted." The two meanings are complementary and both become so closely identified with "wolf," that no matter where we subsequently see that word in Milton's works we will look at it with suspicion. It certainly is a key word in the Defence where, because St. Loup is the name of Salmasius's

estate in Burgundy, references to "the master of St. Loup, the sainted Wolf himself" abound (IV-1, 380; C. E., VII, 159).

Near the end of his tract, Milton refers to Salmasius ironically as "my fine orator" (IV-1, 527; C. E., VII, 531). As he had in earlier tracts, Milton clearly envisions his role as that of the true orator opposing the false. In this case, the opposition is apparent from Milton's principal complaints against Salmasius. While Milton is an Englishman who has been asked to defend his countrymen as part of his duties to the State, Salmasius is a foreigner, whose services are paid for by one whose own private interests are involved. Milton is the disinterested champion of Truth; Salmasius is an opportunist, vying for a position at Court after the "English dogs" repent their mistakes and return to monarchy with Charles II as king. The raillery, the invective, the name calling are directed at Salmasius to ridicule him with grim laughter and to show Milton's European audience that the famous Salmasius is a comic figure who does not deserve to be taken seriously.

Milton applies many of these same devices in A Second Defence of the English People. On the one hand, the scathing denunciation of the Defence is repeated and intensified here. On the other hand, the autobiographical passages dealing with Milton's goals and his love of liberty are noble and lofty. They reveal the devotion with which he has dedicated his life to the public rather than to his own private desires. Milton

lost his sight completely while writing The First Defence, and now counters the charge that his blindness was a punishment of God with his conviction that his physical blindness has given him a compensating spiritual illumination, setting him apart as one particularly chosen by God. The loftiness of these autobiographical sections is in sharp relief to the vehement tone and the scurrilous diatribes of the remainder of A Second Defence, and this contrast of styles again illustrates Wittreich's thesis. In the lofty passages, Milton shows, as he had in the poem at the end of the Sixth Prolusion, that he is capable of transcending the abuse required by controversy. At the same time, however, his opponents, who will not recognize or respect the truly noble, must be answered with the best weapon available, that of laughter. Milton indicates in A Second Defence that he is not writing these tracts hoping to change anyone's mind about the issues. Those who believe the arguments of his opponents cannot, in fact, be expected to understand the arguments of reason. Milton states specifically that his goal in writing is to show his larger audience what kind of person his opponent is.

Milton may know the kind of person he is answering in A Second Defence, but he is not certain of his identity. He is replying to an anonymous tract entitled The Cry of the Royal Blood to Heaven Against the English Parricides, published at The Hague in 1652 at the press of Adrian Vlacq. During the

Restoration, an Anglican Divine named Peter du Moulin admitted to writing The Cry, but at the time of his writing Milton knows only the publisher and the fact that Alexander More had written a dedicatory letter to the work. Since More was known throughout Europe to be a friend of Salmasius, it was widely accepted that he was also the author of The Cry. For the purposes of argument, Milton too accepts More as the author. Unlike the first Defence, which Milton structures as a point by point reply to Defensio Regia, the Second Defence is structured like a classical oration, and Milton refers to it as a speech. Like Areopagitica, it is a defense of liberty. Those who oppose liberty must be exposed by Milton in his persona as true orator. Milton begins the Second Defence by continuing the attack against Salmasius he had initiated in his first Defence. Salmasius is again the hen-pecked husband, who, Milton suggests, might more appropriately be addressed as "Salmasia." Having finished with Salmasius, he moves on to Vlacq, whose printing practices Milton ridicules with zest. Finally, he comes to More, his chief opponent. Throughout his work, Milton refers to these men as a "cast of characters":

Observe then, at the beginning, as is customary, the cast of characters: the "Cry," as prologue; Vlacq, the buffoon (or if you prefer, Salmasius disguised in the mask and cloak of Vlacq the buffoon); two poetasters, tipsy with stale beer; More the adulterer and seducer. What splendid actors for a tragedy! (IV-1, 573-74; C. E., VIII, 43)

These men would like to think they are acting in a great

tragedy, but Milton reduces them to stock comic figures. He believes that such "a troupe of actors" does not deserve to be taken seriously; decorum requires a frivolous treatment. Milton defends his light tone specifically: "So long as the nature of my Defence had to be suited to them, I thought that I ought to aim, not always at what would have been more decorous, but at what they deserved" (IV-1, 574; C. E., VIII, 45). Milton reminds us throughout his Second Defence that he is dealing with insubstantial "characters."

One of the major errors these "actors" make is choosing to play in a "tragedy" entitled The Cry of the Royal Blood to Heaven against the English Parricides. Milton loses no time in ridiculing the pretentiousness of this title, and "The Crier" becomes a motif throughout Milton's Second Defence as Milton continues his efforts to identify his opponents. At one point, he speculates with wit upon the reasons for the Crier's anonymity:

Why he cries so loudly in this tyrannous cause will soon be clear enough from what has been said and what will be said, and also why he is anonymous, for either he has been basely hired and, after the fashion of Salmasius, has sold this Cry of his to the royal blood, or, being shamefully aware of his disreputable doctrine, or profligate and dissolute in his life, it is no strange thing that he seeks to hide.

(IV-1, 563; C. E., VIII, 29)

Milton puns on the title of his opponent's tract to suggest that the cry of the royal blood of the father has been sold to the royal blood of the son, reminding us that Charles II hired Salmasius to write the Defensio Regia.

Milton's jokes on the Crier and his cries become even more explicit when they are directed specifically against More. Milton ridicules More by stating that More could not possibly have heard the cry of the royal blood as he claims, because other than God only the just and upright can hear cries to heaven. Instead of worrying about cries he cannot hear, he should listen to those cries sent up to heaven as complaints against him, for they are numerous. Milton then proceeds to list all of the criers against More:

Against you cries out (in case you do not know)
that harlot of yours in the garden, who complained
that she had been led astray chiefly by the example
of you, her pastor. Against you cries out the husband
whose bed you dishonored. Pontia cries out, whom you
promised to marry and betrayed. If anyone cries out,
it is the tiny baby whom you begot in shame and then
abandoned. If you do not hear the cries of all these
to Heaven against you, neither could you hear the Cry
of the King's Blood. (IV-1, 575; C. E., VIII, 47)

This passage summarizes the charges Milton makes against More, "the adulter and seducer," throughout the Second Defence.

The gossip about More was current knowledge throughout the European academic community, and it provides Milton with material for some of the most humorous passages in the Second Defence. Since Milton thinks More is the author of The Cry, he feels justified in using anything against him that will show others what kind of person he is. We might think of this as an argumentum ad hominem and therefore logically fallacious, but Milton believed firmly that the

work and the man are synonymous. He says: "Nothing is of greater moment in the judgment of a cause than the quality of the life and manners of him who defends that cause most keenly" (IV-2, 736-37). Therefore, he does not hesitate to make abundant use of the scandal associated with More; in fact, most of his attacks against More center around his identity as an adulterer and seducer. To discredit More's behavior is to discredit More's point of view.

In making More a comic figure, Milton's jokes are funny and often bawdy. They are quite numerous and appear at regular intervals throughout the tract. More than just allusions, they form a complete story of More's various sexual affairs. The first extended passage on the subject is subtle and witty:

He happened to have conceived a passion for a certain maidservant of his host, and although she not long afterwards married another, he did not cease to pursue her. The neighbors had often noticed that they entered all by themselves a certain summerhouse in the garden. Not quite adultery, you say. He could have done anything else in the world. Certainly. He might have talked to her, no doubt about matters horticultural, or he might have drawn from the subject of gardens (say those of Alcinous or Adonis) certain of his lectures for this woman, who had perhaps a smattering of knowledge and a willing ear. He might now have praised the flower beds, might have wished only for some shade, were it possible merely to graft the mulberry on the fig, whence might come forth, with utmost speed, a grove of sycamores--a very pleasant place to tread. He might then have demonstrated to this woman the method of grafting. These things and much else he could have done; who denies it? But he could not deter the Elders from branding him with censure as an adulterer and forthwith judging him unworthy of the office of pastor.

(IV-1, 565-67; C. E., VIII, 31-33)

The statements here suggesting that perhaps nothing sinful happened in the summerhouse are uttered tongue-in-cheek and are belied by the puns on More's name which indicate that adultery did occur. The puns are all based on the Latin meaning of several words in the passage. In Latin, "morus" means mulberry and figus means both fig and vagina. The "matters horticultural" probably imply a macaronic pun on hortus and "whore," therefore referring to sexual matters. "Sycamores" are "little Mores" which result from the grafting of the mulberry on the fig.³⁰

After his affair with this girl, More meets "Pontia," a maid to Salmasius's wife;³¹ and soon More begins to "cultivate," as Milton says, both Salmasius and Pontia. As Milton explains it, More undertook the writing of The Cry so that he could be near Pontia when he came to the house to consult with Salmasius. Referring again to his pun on More's name, Milton continues wittily: "And as Pyramus was once changed into a mulberry, so now the mulberry suddenly fancied himself turned into Pyramus, the Genevan into the Babylonian" (IV-1, 569, VIII, 35). With Pyramus so near his Thisbe, he soon deceives her with a promise of marriage and then ruins her. From this union issues forth a double birth; Pontia has "a little More" while More conceives an "empty wind-egg, from which burst forth the swollen Cry of the King's Blood" (IV-1, 569-70; C. E., VIII, 37). As had Salmasius before him, More also gives birth to a ridiculous work. Milton

continues here the joke about the male giving birth which he had used to comic effect in the first Defence. In this case, however, things are more complex; Milton explains that More is actually a "hermaphrodite, as fit to give birth as to beget." In the meantime, Salmasius, the unfortunate and unknowing host, acts as "midwife" to More's "child," hurrying to find it a printer (IV-1, 571; C. E., VIII, 39). At this point, Vlacq enters the drama and Milton shifts his attention to the printer, or "the buffoon" in his cast of characters.

Milton cannot long ignore Pontia, however, and he begins to take on his own role in this domestic drama; he plays the part of the observer, sympathetic to the poor serving girl and indignant at the treatment she has received. By continuing Pontia's story, Milton can continue his own indictment of More. One of his most clever attacks against More is in part a reply to a slur in The Cry against Milton's divorce tracts. Milton turns the reference to divorce back on his opponent immediately:

But do you, vilest of men, protest about divorce, you who procured the most brutal of all divorces from Pontia, the maidservant engaged to you, after you seduced her under cover of that engagement? More-over, she was a servant of Salmasius, an English woman it is said, warmly devoted to the royalist cause. It is beyond question that you wickedly courted her as royal property and left her as public property. Take care lest you yourself prove to have been the author of the very conversion which you profess to find so distasteful. Take care, I repeat, lest with the rule of Salmasius utterly overthrown you may yourself have converted Pontia into a "republic."

(IV-1, 610; C. E., VIII, 115-117)

By the time Milton finishes his jokes on More's turning Pontia into a "republic," we forget that the original question dealt with divorce.

Milton's references to More's sexual affairs continue throughout the Second Defence and occasionally become quite bawdy. At one point, for example, Milton is ridiculing More's flattering of Salmasius:

These witticisms we owe, I suppose, to the accommodating Pontia. From her your Cry has learned to prattle and even to chirp. Because of her also, full of threats, you say, "you will some day find out, foul beasts, what the pen can do." Is it you that we shall find out, you lover of servant girls, you adulterer, or your pen, which only maidservants need fear? If anyone should so much as show you a radish-root or a mullet, you would think that you had got off very easily, by Hercules, if you could escape with your rump intact and that vile pen of yours unharmed. (IV-1, 630; C. E., VIII, 143)

An earlier remark addressed to Salmasius is equally bawdy. It also begins as a response to words from The Cry, and in quoting the phrase in which Salmasius is described in complimentary terms as "thaumasius" Salmasius blowing on "his terrible trumpet," Milton sees great opportunity for fun. His reply works on two levels of meaning at the same time:

It is good health that you predict and a new kind of musical harmony, for no more fitting accompaniment can be imagined for that "terrible trumpet" when it is blown, than a repeated crepitation. But I advise Salmasius not to puff out his cheeks too far, for the more swollen they are, the more tempting will he make them to buffets, which, as both cheeks resound, will echo in time to the rhythmic noise of the "thaumasious" Salmasius, which gives you so much pleasure.

(IV-1, 578-79; C. E., VIII, 53)

As he had in the Sixth Prolusion, Milton uses bawdiness

here to indicate the level of his opponents' intellect and taste. In this tract, the comic roles he has projected for Salmasius, More, and Vlacq elicit this kind of humor. As always, the fools should be revealed so that the wider audience can be edified.

Despite the bawdiness and the continuous references to More's sexual appetites, A Second Defence achieves a nobility because of the serious and elevated tone of the autobiographical passages and the panegyrics on Cromwell and other heroes of the Civil War. The loftiness of these passages contrasts so forcefully with the raillery and invective of the others that this tract is an especially good example of Joseph Wittreich's comments about the "dialectic of styles." The synthesis, then, is the tract itself in which each contrasting style, in totally opposite ways, is a vehicle for defending liberty and Truth.

Milton often complains in his various polemical works of being forced to answer the same arguments over and over again. Having written The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Eikonoklastes, A Defence of the English People, and A Second Defence of the English People, he understandably makes his final tract in this series, his Defence of Himself against Alexander More, almost totally a battle of personalities. Naturally, Alexander More was unhappy with Milton's Second Defence, especially since he had not written The Cry of the Royal Blood. In retaliation he wrote two tracts,

The Public Faith and a Supplement to the Public Faith. By the time Milton writes his Defence of Himself, he too knows that More was not the author of The Cry.³² Yet he continues his attack, aiming it against the two works More has recently written and at the same time admitting his earlier mistake in such a way that it becomes part of his new attack. It is masterfully done.

Many of the motifs established in Milton's Second Defence reappear in his Defence of Himself. The "cast of characters" all return: Salmasius, the hen-pecked husband; More, the seducer and adulterer; and Vlacq, the unscrupulous printer. Milton begins his attack against Vlacq because the printer has bound More's Public Faith in the same volume as Milton's Second Defence. Milton points out the irony with wit: "Thus I find those whom I thought to have been banished and removed farthest from me to be most closely joined with me, against my will, even under the very same covers" (IV-2, 719; C. E., IX, 45). Vlacq has prefixed a letter to The Public Faith succinctly defending his own position and charging that Milton had known before writing the Second Defence that More was not the author of The Cry. When replying to Vlacq, Milton turns Vlacq's work in mathematics against him, in a passage replete with mathematical terms:

Vlacq, you are a sly fellow, say I. I am a good "arithmetician," says he. And yet those who have given you credit complain that you count very badly. I examine you according to the rule of honesty. Here is a "rule of logarithms" for you,

says he. This is sophistry, Vlacq, not logic. This makes it appear that you learned arithmetic only because you had heard that there you might learn the rule of the false. You conceal your name, I say, and fled because of debt. You prattle to me of "tables of sines" and "tangents," and "secants." But with tables you do have some concern: men prod you with tables of debt. And this they do because they complain that you are too sinuous, too eagerly tangent and wickedly secant of others' goods. (IV-2, 729-30; C. E., IX, 71)

The humor here does not contribute much of substance to the overall argument, but it is entertaining and it demonstrates again Milton's ability to exploit the several possibilities of language to humorous effect. Vlacq, the printer/mathematician appears throughout the tract.

Milton's attack against More begins as it had in The Second Defence, with sarcastic comments about the title of the work; The Public Faith is almost as pretentious as The Cry of the Royal Blood to Heaven against the English Parricides. With tongue-in-cheek, Milton tries to guess what the title might mean:

Well then! Since it is necessary to buy Alexander More's Public Faith, however small, along with the Defence of the English People, at whatever waste of money, we long to learn from you what this Public Faith of More's may be. Do you present to us a public confession of your faith, or something in the form of a creed? For this your faith is public, I think; whether you have a private faith let those men say who charge that you do not believe in the Holy Ghost. But what is it? Shall we say that your faith is public, or that the public faith is yours? It is not difficult for us to believe that your faith is as public as your chastity. For why should you, who wish the wives of other men and their maidservants to be public, not wish all your affairs, even your chastity and your faith, to be public? Or indeed is this what you mean: that the public faith is yours? But how can this be? Do you think that you have

seduced the public faith for a strumpet, so that it is yours and public at the same time? This title is either sophistical or senseless. If this is your faith, how is it public; if the public faith, how is it yours? (IV-2, 721; C. E., IX, 49-51)

The passage continues this same kind of banter for another fifteen lines, with Milton's definitions of "public faith" serving to remind us of More's various sexual affairs and with his reference to the Holy Ghost calling attention to More's religious anomalies. At the same time, Milton implies that this type of extended pseudo-logic which actually goes nowhere is appropriate to his opponent.

The puns on More's name as well as the references to Pontia are continued in Milton's Defence of Himself, with some details added and others amplified. In his Second Defence, Milton points out the Greek meaning of More's name as well as the Latin, and now he again recalls both. While Milton uses the Latin pun on "mulberry" primarily in the garden passage, he refers often to the Greek meaning of Morus, "fool." What could be more appropriate than a fool named fool; naturally, Milton fully exploits the joke. In one of the most humorous passages in Milton's Defence of Himself, Milton paradoxically uses the joke to disclaim having earlier used the joke:

Yet I would deny what you complain of: that as often as I call you by your name of More, "I mean to draw down ill-will from your name" and to charge you with foolishness; for that scarcely entered my mind. But as a professor of the Greek language, you are wont so perpetually to have the Greek etymon morus jump through your brain that no one can greet you, More, lest you

morosely suspect that he is calling you a fool. These are the trifles and their like which you have prated about in scarcely less than twenty pages, when you ought to have proved that you are not the author of the Royal Cry. If I should choose to idle about on each particular trifle and to play the fool any longer with you, I would be a Morus myself.

(IV-2, 739; C. E., IX, 97)

The last sentence in this passage is superb; Milton undermines everything he has just said and still manages to make a fool of More. These puns on the Greek meaning of More's name follow immediately a passage recalling those on the Latin meaning of More's name and referring to the garden scene in the Second Defence. Milton says it does More no good to object to Milton's "Floralian tropes"; the fig tree, and the mulberry, and the sycamore have been exposed with laughter as well as with "clarity and scorn." Milton concludes: "From your gardenish and suburban cultivation, not from my urbanity, has flowered forth all this pleasantness" (IV-2, 738; C. E., IX, 97). Milton need not explain what has flowered forth.

Pontia, too, is still part of the cast of characters in Milton's Defence of Himself, and it is her story which is the most expanded. Early in this tract, Milton adds two more items to the series associated with More. One is the epithet, "Phrygian," referring to Paris as philanderer;³³ the other is an allusion to a statement made by the great Protestant theologian, Diodati, that More had nails for his defense. Milton respected Diodati and had no wish to impugn

him, but at the same time he wants to discredit the testimonial Diodati has written for More. Consequently, he takes the words from Diodati's testimonial and uses them in so many humorous contexts that we tend to forget their origin and think of them only as a clever comic device, especially since they are so often associated with Pontia. If More has nails for his protection he had better use them against the nails of Pontia. Milton describes the great battle between the two in mock-heroic terms:

Juno Salmasia stands by as the umpire of the contest. Salmasius himself, lying ill with the gout in an adjoining chamber, as he heard the battle begin, nearly dies with laughter. But O dreadful! our warlike Alexander, unequal to a battle with an Amazon, falls down. She, having already met with the lower parts, now sins for the first time with the upper parts of the man,--the forehead and the eyebrows and the nose. With strange arabesques and Phrygian workmanship she passes over the whole face of the prostrate man. Never, More, were the designs of Pontia less pleasing to you. (IV-2, 748; C. E., IX, 119-21)

The battle continues, and the fighting gets more fierce until "Vlacq's tables of tangents and secants" are "forged" on More's skin "to a radius" of "many mournful ciphurs." All More can do is go home as quickly as possible, besmear his face with ointments, and "unlearn the Pontian letters" (IV-2, 749-50; C. E., IX, 121). From this point on, references to Pontia include her fingernails.

Most of the humor in Milton's Defence of Himself centers on More's relationship with Claudia, the girl in the garden, or with Pontia. The several extended passages often

alternate with briefer retorts to More's statements in Public Faith or the Supplement. At one point, for example, More made the mistake of quoting words Salmasius had used to defend him against Milton's charges. Salmasius had said: "If More sinned at all against Pontia, I am a pander and my wife a bawd." Milton immediately points out to More that these words are no defense, and then he begins a long metaphoric passage in which Madame Salmasius is Juno, trying to catch a fish, More, as a husband for her serving maid:

A man of maidenly modesty, it seems, entangled in a woman's net. But now, a fish does not struggle unless it is caught. That woman, you may be sure, had she not seen that you were a tunny, had she not detected that you were an easy catch, suitable for her maid-servant and submissive to her, would never have so perfected those traps for you; never would your Juno so easily have fitted those nets of Vulcan upon you; (IV-2, 804; C. E., IX, 245)

In another passage, Milton quotes More's words and turns them against him in a masterful tour de force:

"To this mushroom," you say, "lately sprung from the earth, what man or men have I opposed?" You err, More, and know not me. To me it was always preferable to grow slowly, and as if by the silent lapse of time. You are that mushroom who, going to Geneva just out of your youth, suddenly came forth as a professor of Greek; and, as you tell in a manner sufficiently spongy and fungous, you bore away the "palm by that virtue of your genius then first bursting into flower," from so many men who were "of a more advanced age, preachers, jurists, physicians." Soon among the mushrooms, and the cabbage, and the kitchen vegetables, the mushroom being newly tumescent, you did not indeed destroy Claudius, but you laid Claudia on her back.

(IV-2, 819; C. E., IX, 281)

While in several passages like this, Milton seems to enjoy making More as comic an object as possible, in other

passages he is openly hostile and angry, especially when replying to More's attempts to project himself as pious and God-fearing, or as one shocked by the language Milton uses. When More suggests, for example, that an attack on him is an attack on the reformed Church, Milton strikes back vehemently. He begins by quoting More's words: "If my case were only properly dealt with, I had been able to buckle my lips and remain silent after the example of my Lord; but our whole order and the church of God is attacked through my side." Furious with such self-exaltation, Milton uses these words to remind us of More's sexual escapades: "Vile, prostituted man, high priest of the stews. There is as much need for a buckle on your private parts as there is for one on your lips" (IV-2, 759-60; C. E., IX, 143). This quick and witty retort, bawdy though it is, reminds us of the disproportion between the man More thinks he is and the man Milton thinks he really is, one steeped in lust.

For a person like More, whose life is filled with foul deeds, to complain about someone else's words is hypocritical folly. More's complaints about his language, however, motivate Milton to defend himself, as he had ten years earlier in the Anti-Prelatical tracts, according to classical and Scriptural precedent. He begins with the argument from decorum: "He who describes you and your villainies must speak obscenely" (IV-2, 744; C. E., IX, 109). Of course, Milton thinks he has not been obscene, but if he were, he

could defend himself from "the gravest authors," who "have always thought that words unchaste and plain thrust out with indignation signify not obscenity, but the vehemence of gravest censure" (IV-2, 744; C. E., IX, 109). Milton then gives a series of examples to prove his point. The technique is not only effective argument but it is also comic, because in citing the examples Milton is forced to use "obscene" words which in fact he has not used in any of his personal attacks against More. His first example indicates his method:

Whoever turned it to the shame of Piso, writer of the Annals, who, because of his virtue and chaste habits, was called Frugi, because in his Annals he complained--
 "Youths are addicted to the penis"?
 (IV-2, 744; C. E., IX, 109)

Milton's charge throughout is that More is similar to most hypocrites, "severe in words, obscene in deeds" (IV-2, 744; C. E., IX, 109).³⁴

In further defense of his practice in the Second Defence, Milton points out that students in school learn that "rhetorical force lies in invective no less than in praise," and they spend hours imitating the invective of great writers. Thus, at their desks they "bravely strike down" the names of ancient tyrants, they "kill Mezentius over and over again in stale antitheta" (IV-2, 795; C. E., 225). Ironically, however, they do this only as an exercise. When the time comes to fight real tyrants, they hold back, afraid to use the invective they have learned in school. Milton

concludes by saying that the vituperation he has used against More is just, since More is not only a personal adversary but "the common enemy of almost all mankind." More is "an execrable man" and a "disgrace to the reformed religion" (IV-2, 796; C. E., IX, 227). As he does in several of his tracts, Milton is addressing a double audience here. On the one hand, he speaks directly to More, answering many of his statements and attacks with wit and humor while refuting him with his own language. On the other hand, he is aware of a larger audience, the one to be reached by the "rhetorical force that lies in invective." By revealing More to this audience as the fool he is, Milton hopes that he has "discharged an office neither displeasing to God, unsalutary to the church, nor unuseful to the state" (IV-2, 796; C. E., IX, 227). Milton continues to see himself as the true orator.

The love of Truth and liberty which caused Milton to write many of his polemical tracts is apparent also in his work on English history entitled The History of Britain and in his treatise, Christian Doctrine. These two works, along with A Briefe History of Moscovia, comprise a miscellaneous group of Milton's prose which does not fit into the three-part division. However, both The History of Britain and Christian Doctrine are wide ranging and deal directly or indirectly with all three types of liberty, religious, per-

sonal or domestic, and civil. The work on Moscovia is slight, belonging to no clearly defined genre. The humor in the three works varies, depending on Milton's overall goal. In Moscovia, it is limited to brief sarcastic asides directed at Monks. In The History of Britain, these asides are present but are supplemented by brief stories dealing with characters and events in England's past. Nevertheless, ecclesiastical history and Monks are the main object of comic satire in this work also. In Christian Doctrine, the laughter is more "grim," directed against the Schoolmen and contemporary expositors who model themselves on the Schoolmen by turning the plain Truth of Scripture into a verbal labyrinth.

Early in The History of Britain, Milton states that he "shall endeavor that which hitherto hath been needed most, with plain, and lightsom brevity, to relate well and orderly things worth the noting, so as may best instruct and benefit them that read" (V-1, 4). Thus, he sees history as instructive; the present can learn from the lessons of the past. He also sees a need for a history in which Truth is presented clearly and succinctly. If he repeats tales from old chroniclers, he will do so only because they provide source material for English poets. Milton does not like the old chronicles, and his complaints against their barbarism are humorous, although they were written in irritation and probably not intended to be funny. Other, more

intentional, humor appears in parenthetical asides and is usually directed at a character or at a pattern of behavior. In these comments the humor often reinforces a point. Most of the humor in The History of Britain, however, is satiric and directed against Monks. Some of it is sarcastic, some of it is witty, but all of it seems intended as a weapon of ridicule used by the true historian to show his audience of readers that Monks have been less than a positive force throughout the History of Britain.

Milton indicates his awareness of an audience as he discusses those old legends which are a part of British history. Milton does not accept them as true; he is not enamored of them. He only grudgingly allows some into his History, and argues that

he who can accept of Legends for good story, may quickly swell a volume with trash, and had need be furnish'd with two only necessaries, leasure, and beleif, whether it be the writer, or he that shall read. (V-1, 166)

Milton implies in this statement that just as he, the writer, does not want to waste time on untrue stories so also the reader will not want to do so. He assumes that he and the reader share similar values and concepts.

Stories which are legitimate, however, are those with a good possibility of veracity, especially if they contain a lesson. Many of them also reveal something about Milton's sense of humor. In one story, for example, King Edgar goes to Chester and summons all the regional kings

and all the court to pay homage to him. He is in awe of the other kings but he orders a Galley and has each king row an oar in it while he himself sits regally at the stern. Milton responds in two ways to Edgar's action. One is consistent with the view many people have of Milton as a stern Puritan: he says that if this action is performed seriously it reveals haughtiness and vainglory rather than "moderation of mind." Milton's first response, however, shows us that he can appreciate and approve of things done in fun; he says that the King's action "might be done in meriment and easily obei'd" (V-1, 324).

Elsewhere, Milton obviously enjoys recounting a humorous tale about King Canute. This remarkable King wanted to show the "Court-Parasites" how small is the power of kings compared to the power of God. To demonstrate, he had his "Royal Seat" set on the shore while the tide was coming in. Then, "with all the state that Royalty could put into countenance," charged the sea to come no further upon the land nor to "presume to wet the Feet" of its "Sovran Lord." Milton concludes tongue-in-cheek: "But the Sea, as before, came rowling on, and without reverence both wet and dash'd him." Milton thinks the point is a serious but obvious one; if the court Flatterers had not been so stubborn Canute would "needed not to have gone wet-shod home" (V-1, 365-66). The point may be obvious and it may be serious, but Milton's language makes it with humor.

Other elements of humor appear in many of the parenthetical comments and asides made throughout The History of Britain. In one passage, Milton is describing the destruction of the Northumbrian Kingdom:

. . . thir Kings one after another so oft'n slain
by the people, no man dareing, though never so
ambitious, to take up the Scepter which many had
found so hot, (the only effectual cure of ambition
that I have read) (V-1, 255)

The parenthetical remark allows Milton to comment succinctly and with wit on the dangers of ambition. In other passages, he inserts personal comments on some of the historical characters who appear throughout his narrative. When, for example, Milton is following Huntingdon as a source he apparently feels that Huntingdon is devoting too much attention to Anlaf because he says: "Huntingdon still haunts us with this Anlaf (of whom we gladly would have been ridd)" . . . (V-1, 318). In a passage on Harold, Milton indicates his disapproval of Harold's constant hurrying into battle in a parenthesis: "Thence not tarrying for supplies which were on their way towards him, hurries into Sussex (for he was always in hast since the day of his Coronation)" . . . (V-1, 399). Since Harold's haste in going to Sussex leads to his death in the Battle of Hastings, Milton could be adding a pun to his parenthetical intrusion. Not all of Milton's witty asides are set off in parentheses, however. In describing Hardecanut's insufferable behavior after he had been called to the throne by the English, Milton

mentions the tax he soon levied on his people. The situation is serious but Milton says with humor: "they who were so forward to call him over, had enough of him; for he, as they thought, had too much of theirs" (V-1, 370).

In addition to the playfulness found in these asides and in some of the tales Milton tells is the satiric humor found in the stories and comments about Monks woven throughout The History of Britain. Making a point similar to stories about the limited power of kings is the story Milton repeats from Malmsbury about the Monk, Elmer. Like Icarus, Elmer "soars too high." As a youth, Elmer, "strangely aspiring," had made wings for his hands and feet and flown from a tower for more than a furlong, but the wind was too high and he "came fluttering down," thus maiming his arms and legs. "Yet," Milton says, he was "so conceited of his Art, that he attributed the cause of his fall to the want of a Tail, as Birds have, which he forgot to make to his hinder parts" (V-1, 394-95). Ironically, this Monk who is too blind to see the real reason for his fall and to learn from it, thinks he can see into the future and prognosticate future events from natural occurrences. Malmsbury tells the tale without humor, while Milton makes wry comments on it.³⁵ Milton cannot seem to pass up any opportunity to make a serious point with humor. He almost apologizes for including this story because it is "too light in the midst of a sad narration." He obviously thinks of it as humorous, but

justifies recounting it because of its "strangness" and because his source includes it in his narration (V-1, 395). Generally, Milton will not repeat stories from his sources dealing with ecclesiastical history. He seems to make exceptions, however, when those stories show how foolish clerics can be.

Milton initiates his humorous attacks against Monks at the end of Book II. From that point on, he has to depend on the records of the Monks as sources for much of his history, and he resents that dependence. Naturally, he is convinced that the Monks have distorted Truth to serve their own interests. He clearly assumes an audience of Englishmen who will share his view of Monks as he warns his readers of what to anticipate from such sources:

. . . this we must expect; in civil matters to find them /Monks/ dubious Relaters, and still to the best advantage of what they term holy Church, meaning indeed themselves: in most other matters of Religion, blind, astonish'd, and strook with superstition as with a Planet; in one word, Monks. (V-1, 127-28)

Milton even resents having to use Bede as an authority, and suspects Bede of ulterior motives when so many of the kings he writes about become Monks. Milton phrases his complaint humorously through word play and wit:

. . . Kings one after another leaving thir Kingly Charge, to run thir heads fondly into a Monks Cowle: which leaves us uncertain, whether Beda was wanting to his matter, or his matter to him.
(V-1, 230)

Milton becomes a little more explicit when describing one of

Bede's kings who became a Monk and then "brought those Monks from milk and water, to Wine and Ale; in which doctrine no doubt but they were soon docile" (V-1, 231). Milton explains his real objection to these Monks as he continues this story; they gain great treasure and land revenues yet they still pretend to be following the example of Christ by taking vows of poverty. It is the hypocrisy and the perversion of their ministry that Milton satirizes. Occasionally, the corrupt clergy do receive the punishment they deserve, and Milton forgets his dislike of ecclesiastical history long enough to include some good examples of God's wrath. In one case, Milton relates the story with such pointed understatement that it has the effect of humor:

Mean while Elfsin Bishop of that place after the Death of Odo, ascending by Simony to the Chair of Canterbury, and going to Rome the same year for his Pall, was froz'n to Death in the Alps. (V-1, 321)

This is the only kind of story Milton will retell from ecclesiastical history. While it is clear that he does not trust the sources and that he does not want to give credence to Roman superstition, he himself provides his reading audience with a reason for omitting ecclesiastical history which they should enjoy: if we get tired of hearing the names of so many kings, one after another,

what would it be to have inserted the long Bead-roll of Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Abbesses, and their doings, neither to Religion profitable nor to morality. (V-1, 239)

Certainly, Milton is concerned that his History be

"profitable." In addition to reinforcing their view of Monks, another lesson his countrymen could learn from it is the important one that Britain prospers most during periods of ethical and moral awareness. Milton's contemporaries suffer often in comparison to the ancient Britains. The ancient Britons, for example, could hold a small morsel of food in their mouths for several days in order to stave off hunger; "but," Milton says, "that receipt, and the temperance it taught, is long since unknown among us" (V-1, 59). In some situations, however, the ancients were no better than contemporary Britons; both are too vain: the ancient Britons painted their skins "with severall Portratures of Beast, Bird, or Flower, a Vanitie which hath not yet left us, remov'd only from the skin to the skirt behung now with as many colour'd Ribands and gewgawes" (V-1, 59-60). And in some periods of history, the Britons allowed their vanity to become a softness, which often led to their defeat in battle and a consequent servitude. At times, Milton uses humor to heighten this major point; as he does in describing the relationship between the Britons and the Danes:

The King and his Courtiers wearied out with thir
 last Summers jaunt after the nimble Danes to no
 purpose, which by proof they found too toilsome
 for thir soft Bones, more us'd to Beds and Couches,
 had recourse to thir last and only remedy, thir
 Cofers; and send now the fourth time to buy a
 dishonorable peace, (V-1, 342)

Milton's language is satiric, as he makes fun of warriors who prefer couches to battlefields.

Satire also dominates the humor that appears in the Digression in Milton's History of Britain. Published separately as a pamphlet in 1681, this Digression was entitled Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament and Assembly of Divines. What this title does not indicate is Milton's original intention of drawing historical parallels between contemporary events in Milton's England and events which had occurred 1200 years earlier, especially those dealing with liberty. Following the departure of the Romans from Britain early in its history, Britons had an opportunity to be free, but they soon enslaved themselves again. Now, following the death of Charles I, the British again have an opportunity to be free. The Digression sounds like many of Milton's more vehement tracts, and the little humor it contains is bitingly satiric and directed against leaders who have betrayed the people, especially the clergy. These clergy preach only their own bellies; they "who had bin kept warme a while by the affected zele of their pulpits, after a false heat became more cold, & obdurate then before" (V-1, 449). These clergy who are "regulated" only by extremes of body temperature, not by a concern for Truth stand in sharp contrast to Milton in his role as historian and orator who points out the lessons of history.

Milton's A Brief History of Moscovia is never as vehement as the Digression nor as serious a work as The History of Britain proper. It is similar to Renaissance

travel literature; Milton describes sketchily some of the geography of the country and recounts stories from travelers who supposedly had been to Russia. Some of the stories are humorous but quite difficult to believe. Milton states in his Preface that he intends to include that which is useful and worth observation, and not, "Stories of absurd Superstitutions, ceremonies, quaint Habits, and other petty Circumstances" (C. E., X, 327). Yet many of the stories and anecdotes Milton relates sound like tall tales. Some suit his personal convictions and prejudices and he seems to enjoy telling them. At the Bay of St. Nicholas, for example, is an Abby where twenty Monks live, "unlearned" and "great Drunkards: their Church is fair, full of Images, and Tapers" (C. E., X, 332). Later, in describing the religion of the Russians, he says in a very matter-of-fact way:

they observe 4 Lents, have Service in their Churches daily, from two hours before dawn to Evening; yet for Whordom, Drunkenness and Extortion none worse than the Clergy. (C. E., X, 339-40)

These comments are consistent with Milton's usual type of humor, and are probably the only deliberately humorous passages in the work. To twentieth century readers, stories about huge whales, about coronations where the imperial staff is a "Unicorn's Horn three foot and a half long" (C. E., X, 354); and about a beast named "Rossomakka, whose Female bringeth forth by passing through some narrow place, as between two Stakes; and so presseth her Womb to a dis-

burthening" (C. E., X. 333) seem quaintly humorous, but Milton reports them as fact.³⁶

Like his Brief History of Moscovia, Milton's Christian Doctrine was not published until after his death. In fact, it had been thought lost until its discovery in 1823.³⁷ A comprehensive treatise on the beliefs inherent in the Christian faith, the work draws all of its arguments from Scripture, and Milton stresses again, as he has throughout his life, its plainness and its sufficiency in leading to salvation. The work contains the same kind of humor, used for the same purposes, as many of Milton's polemical tracts. The laughter is "grim," most often directed against those who over-complicate Scripture.

As he does in the Anti-Prelatical tracts, Milton attacks those pedants who pore over Scripture, more interested in the articles and prepositions than in the Truths they should be discovering. The Schoolmen are notorious offenders, and Milton's verbal assaults upon them are similar to those in Of Reformation castigating their "crosse-jungling periods" and "knotty Africanisms." One extended paragraph summarizes the attitude and indicates the tone Milton takes throughout Christian Doctrine:

. . . But it is amazing what nauseating subtlety, not to say trickery, some people have employed in their attempts to evade the plain meaning of these scriptural texts. They have left no stone unturned; they have followed every red herring they could find; they have tried everything. Indeed they have made it apparent that, instead of preaching the plain, straight-

forward truth of the gospel to poor and simple men, they are engaged in maintaining an extremely absurd paradox with the maximum of obstinacy and argumentativeness. To save this paradox from utter collapse they have availed themselves of the specious assistance of certain strange terms and sophistries borrowed from the stupidity of the schools. (VI, 218; C. E., XIV, 209)³⁸

Early in the treatise Milton is discussing the Israelites' view of God as simple and clear and then adds: "The Schoolmen, to be sure, had not yet appeared on the scene" with their "utterly contradictory arguments" (VI 147-48 ; C. E., XIV, 51). Truth is clearly revealed in Scripture; it is not something that has "to be lured out from among articles and particles by some sort of verbal bird-catcher, or which has to be dug out from a mass of ambiguities and obscurities like the answers of an oracle" (VI, 246; C. E., XIV, 269). Milton's variations on this theme are many, and the humorous phrasing contrasts effectively with the dominant pedagogic tone of the work. Yet these phrases also teach.

Milton is especially concerned that this disease of the Schoolmen and the pedants is infecting even members of the Reformed Church. Milton's goal in satirizing the "verbal bird-catchers" seems to be directed toward stopping the spread of the disease. In a long series of questions, Milton asks why the Reformed Church also discusses Scripture as though it were obscure:

Why do they shroud them in the thick darkness of metaphysics? Why do they employ all their useless technicalities and meaningless distinctions and barbarous jargon in their attempt to make the

scriptures plainer and easier to understand, when they themselves are continually claiming how supremely clear they are already?

(VI, 580; C. E., XVI, 261)

Milton points out the irony that a church founded on a belief in the supremacy of Scripture should have fallen prey to the darkness of the metaphysicians.

He makes this point often throughout Christian Doctrine and his illustration of it in doctrinal discussions is often humorous. In trying to prove polygamy lawful, for example, Milton upbraids those who get so involved in petty arguments over single and plural words that they fail to consider the larger context. They argue against polygamy because of the Biblical phrases saying a man and woman shall be one flesh, not two. Milton responds by carrying their argument to its absurd extreme:

Brilliant! Let me add also Exod. xx. 17: you shall not covet your neighbor's house nor his manservant nor his maidservant nor his ox nor his ass: therefore no one has more than one house, manservant, maidservant, ox or ass! How ridiculous it would be to argue like this--it says house not houses, servant not servants and even neighbor's not neighbors'--and not to realize that in nearly all the commandments the singular of the noun signifies not the number but the species of each thing mentioned. (VI, 357; C. E., XV, 125)

The humor here reinforces Milton's position. After being caught like this, it would be difficult for anyone to repeat this mistake without feeling that he is a fool. In another passage on polygamy, Milton argues that David had several wives, and the children born from all his marriages

were considered honorable. Milton adds, tongue-in-cheek, that he will not use Solomon in his argument:

I will omit Solomon, although he was very wise, because he seems to have exceeded the limit: he is not blamed, however, for marrying many wives but for marrying foreign ones. (VI, 367; C. E., 151)

The praetermissio is clever; Milton makes his point without seeming to do so. Following the discussion on polygamy, Milton moves to divorce and shows, as he had in Tetrachordon, that God does not intend for unlike things to be joined.

Here he says:

The institution of marriage itself shows clearly what it is that God has joined together. He has joined together things compatible, fit, good and honorable: he has not joined chalk and cheese: he has not joined things base, wretched, ill-omened and disastrous. (VI, 371-72; C. E., 125).

In this passage, Milton uses the same kind of humor he had in the divorce tracts to make the same point. Similarly, he describes "hirelings" in terms used throughout his prose tracts to describe clergy who betray their ministerial duties; instead of good shepherds they are wolves:

Nowadays there are a great many who answer to this description John x. 12, 13. They run away and jump about from flock to flock on the slightest pretext, not so much because they are afraid of wolves as because they themselves become wolves whenever the prey of a more lucrative living in some other parish appears. Unlike real shepherds, they are continually chasing after richer pastures not for their flock but for themselves. (VI, 599; C. E., XVI, 303)

The personification in this passage renders these men comic. Perhaps it will hinder others from behaving in a similar fashion. Throughout Christian Doctrine Milton is addressing

himself to Protestants, and he wants to show his reading audience that these modern Protestant "wolves" are no better than the Roman Catholic and Anglican "wolves" of old.

These "wolves" represent a danger, but the greatest enemy of all Protestants is still Roman Catholicism. Milton can assume that his readers share his hostility toward Catholics, who, as he shows in a later work, are the only true heretics. In Christian Doctrine some of Milton's wittiest attacks are reserved for the Roman Catholic Mass. Generally, it is described in terms of "a cannibal feast" (VI, 554; C. E., XVI, 197). Milton's comic device in every reference to the Mass is to follow to its logical extreme the Catholic position that in the Mass bread and wine are completely changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. Milton thinks a belief in transubstantiation is "utterly alien to reason, common sense, and human behavior" (VI, 554; C. E., XVI, 199). He believes that Christ is speaking metaphorically when he refers to "the living flesh: and means that this spiritual food will sustain and remain with us only in the spirit." If we interpret Christ's words literally, Milton argues, the "food" will not remain with us, but "after being digested in the stomach, it will be at length exuded" (VI, 554; C. E., XVI, 195). He returns to this point a few paragraphs later in a long enumeration, showing that "the papist Mass is not at all the same as the Lord's Supper." His first point is that "one was instituted by the Lord, the

other by the Pope" (VI, 559; C. E., XVI, 211). His last point, however, brings to culmination the image of the cannibal feast:

Finally the Mass brings down Christ's holy body from its supreme exaltation at the right hand of God. It drags it back to the earth, though it has suffered every pain and hardship already, to a state of humiliation even more wretched and degrading than before: to be broken once more and crushed and ground, even by the fangs of brutes. Then, when it has been driven through all the stomach's filthy channels, it shoots it out--one shudders even to mention it--into the latrine. (VI, 560; C. E., XVI, 213)

Milton is very serious about this issue, but his graphic description of what is implied in Catholic belief is scatological, humorously satiric, and worthy of Jonathan Swift.

The humor of satire is the dominant kind in Christian Doctrine, but at one point Milton tells what can almost be described as a joke as he discusses the exact location of Hell. Milton argues that Hell is a place situated outside the world: it is probably not located in the bowels of the earth because it was created as a place of punishment for the devil, and his fall occurred before that of man, before the earth was cursed. Milton concludes his argument with great zest and humor:

Besides, if the whole world must eventually be destroyed by fire, as I have already demonstrated from various passages in the New Testament, what will become of hell if it is situated in the centre of the earth? Obviously it will have to be destroyed as well, along with the earth. If this were to happen it would be very nice for the damned, no doubt! (VI, 630; C. E., XVI, 213).

Christian Doctrine is not a polemical tract, yet Milton is still very aware of his reading audience. He is writing for Protestants and is attempting to discern from "Sacred Scripture alone" what is inherently a part of Christian belief. Even though some of his doctrinal positions are now defined as heretical, Milton clearly does not think of himself as a heretic. He himself says in his opening remarks to the work that he is not teaching anything new; he is merely fulfilling the obligation of every Protestant to search Scripture carefully, according to his own conscience, for the Truths that are there revealed.

The humor present in Milton's later polemical tracts closely resembles that in his earlier tracts, and is directed primarily against Roman Catholics, Protestants who have betrayed the Civil War, and Protestant clergy who have betrayed their ministerial role. A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes and Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings Out of the Church were both published in 1659. Of Civil Power argues that universal toleration should exist among Protestants and that religion should not be regulated by physical force. The small amount of humor in the tract is primarily argumentative. When advocates of the opposing view argue, for example, that without physical force "profane and licentious" persons might omit the performance of their religious duties, Milton turns

their argument against them by showing the contradiction inherent in the idea that such people can even perform holy duties. At best the civil authorities can force them to perform only an outward show, and such a show is itself profane and displeasing to God. Thus, Milton entangles his opponents in their own language and concludes: "To compell, therefore, the prophane to things holy in his prophaneness, is all one under the gospel, as to have compelld the unclean to sacrificise in his uncleanness under the law" (C. E., VI, 35).

The Means to Remove Hirelings contains many more overtly humorous passages than does its companion tract, Of Civil Power. One passage which shows the close thematic relationship between the two, however, is a humorous description in Means to Remove Hirelings of the "beast" that results when the civil authority is allowed to dominate religion:

. . . and upon her /the Church/, whose only head is in heaven, yea upon him, who is her only head, sets another in effect, and, which is most monstrous, a human on a heavenly, a carnal on a spiritual, a political head on an ecclesiastical bodie; which at length by such heterogeneal, such incestuous conjunction, transformes her oft-times into a beast of many heads and many horns.

(C. E., VI, 83)

The humor is heightened in this passage by the allusion to the beast in the Book of Revelation (XVII. 3,7) upon which rode the Whore of Babylon. Most of the other humorous passages in this tract are reminiscent of those in the Anti-Prelatical tracts. This work was written to convince

Parliament that tithing should be abolished and that the civil government should not be responsible for paying the wages of the clergy. Paid clergymen are "hirelings," wolves who came into the flock as a result of the Constantine donation. The passage in this tract about Constantine's poisoning of the Church is a fit extension for that in Of Reformation:

What harme the excess thereof brought to the church, perhaps was not found by experience till the days of Constantine: who out of his zeal thinking he could be never too liberally a nursing father of the church, might be not unfitly said to have either overlaid it or choakd it in the nursing. (C. E., VI, 48)

Milton goes on to say that events following the donation verify the "ancient observation, That religion brought forth wealth, and the daughter devourd the mother" (C. E., VI, 49).

Those clergymen who now think they deserve tithes are no better, Milton says, than priests. He reveals their true natures with ridicule: "I see them still so loath to unlearn thir decimal arithmetic, and still grasp thir tithes as inseparable from a priest" (C. E., VI, 88). If they try to argue that the Levites were given tithes, Milton can counter that argument also:

No Protestant, I suppose, will liken one of our ministers to a high priest, but rather to a common Levite. Unless then, to keep their tithes, they mean to bring back again bishops, archbishops and the whole gang of prelacy, to whom will they themselves pay tythes, as by that law it was a sin to them, if they did not, v. 32. (C. E., VI, 53)

Throughout the tract Milton points out that no justification

for tithing is adequate. Those who try to support it are reduced to quoting "Ambrose, Augustin, and som other ceremonial doctors of the same leaven" (C. E., VI, 65). Even some spokesmen for the Reformed Church have made this error, and one in particular is castigated for it:

And yet a late hot Quaerist for tithes, whom ye may know by his wits lying ever beside him in the margent, to be ever beside his wits in the text, a fierce reformer once, now ranckl'd with a contrary heat, would send us back, very reformedly indeed to learn reformation from Tyndarus and Rebuffus, two canonical Promoters. (C. E., VI, 65-66)³⁹

Thus, Milton satirizes, as he had in earlier tracts, Church Fathers and those reformed ministers who betray the Reformation. Like the Fathers, they distort Truth; excessive documentation and appeals to authority in margins merely obscure the larger issues.

At the same time that he discredits those who try to justify a clergy paid by tithes, Milton attacks the paid clergy. His tone is bantering as he contrasts the present clergy with the ancient Waldenses, who taught themselves trades so they would not be a burden on the Church:

But our ministers think scorn to use a trade, and count it the reproach of this age, that tradesmen preach the gospel. It were to be wished they were all tradesmen; they would not then so many of them, for want of another trade, make a trade of thir preaching: and yet they clamor that tradesmen preach; and yet they preach, while they themselves are the worst tradesmen of all. (C. E., VI, 81)

The humorous word play here on trade and tradesmen helps to reinforce the point. Not only do contemporary ministers

not want to learn a trade, but they do not want to do any work at all; they look only at the wages, and "by that lure or loubel may be toald from parish to parish all the town over" (C. E., VI, 93). Milton responds with equal wit to those who quote in their defense Romans x, 15, "How shall they preach, unless they be sent?". He says: "by whom sent? by the universitie, or the magistrate, or thir belly? no surely; but sent from God only, and that God who is not thir belly" (C. E., VI, 93). In another passage, Milton describes the "lollard" Divine who "lolls" over his elbow cushion teaching nothing to either the sheep at his feet or those in their pews at Smithfield (C. E., VI, 75-76). Milton summarizes his views in a passage near the end of the tract. In sketching the history of the clergy, he argues that ministers in the early Church were distinguished from other Church members only by their sanctity. Not until they began to think of themselves as "clergy" did they become corrupt:

When once they affected to be calld a clergie, and became as it were a peculiar tribe of levites, a partie, a distinct order in the commonwealth, bred up for divines in babling schooles and fed at the publick cost, good for nothing els but what was good for nothing, they soone grew idle: that idlenes with fulnes of bread begat pride and perpetual contention with thir feeders the despis'd laitie, through all ages ever since; to the perverting of religion, and the disturbance of all Christendom. (C. E., VI, 98-99)

Thus, Milton directs wit, humor, and word play toward those who pervert their ministerial roles and duties.

Along with A Treatise of Civil Power and Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings Out of the Church, The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth is one of Milton's last attempts before the Restoration to influence Parliament. In this work Milton retraces the various steps England has taken toward securing her own freedom, and pleads with her not to surrender herself to the tyranny of another monarchy. As an alternative to such tyranny and to the chaos of the Republic after the death of Oliver Cromwell, Milton presents his plan for establishing a Commonwealth, which will maintain the liberty of the people as well as a sense of stability. Less exuberant than his early polemical tracts, these later works use humor sparingly, but continue to direct it toward the major issues under discussion. In The Ready and Easy Way, for example, the "royalized presbyterians" are the objects of Milton's satire. They "have not so much true spirit and understanding in them as a pismire" (C. E., VI, 122). Quoting Solomon, Milton argues that ants can work efficiently together without a king, but these Presbyterians are so foolish they think human beings cannot. In a bitingly satiric passage, Milton warns the advocates of monarchy that their past actions will not be forgotten and that they will be enslaved by the return of monarchy:

Let our zealous backsliders forethink now with themselves, how thir necks yok'd with these tigers of Bacchus, these new fanatics of not the preaching

but the sweating-tub, inspir'd with nothing holier
 then the Venereal pox, can draw one way under
 monarchie to the establishing of church discipline with
 these new-disgorg'd atheismes: yet shall they not
 have the honor to yoke with these, but shall be
 yok'd under them; these shall plow on their backs.

(C. E., VI, 139)

Milton knows as he writes the tract that it will probably have very little impact on the current situation. If the people want a king, they will have a king. All Milton can do is show them that they are behaving like the Hebrews in the desert who, after all the wonderful things God had done for them, wanted to return to "the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick" of Egypt (Numbers, xi, 5). Milton hopes that his tract will enable some people to see more clearly the unavoidable consequences of their actions; he hopes to reclaim a few even "though they seem now chusing them a captain back for Egypt" (C. E., VI, 149). The parallel between the desire of the Hebrews to rush back to Egypt and the desire of the English to rush back to monarchy is both comic and tragic.

Of True Religion, Heresie, Schism, and Toleration

was published after the Restoration in 1673. It was written, along with a number of tracts by others, against King Charles II's Act of Indulgence. The tract repeats some of the arguments made in Of Civil Power and defines heresy in such a way that allows vast religious toleration among the various Protestant sects. The Act of Indulgence, however, was intended to lessen discrimination against Roman Catholics

and this Milton completely disapproves. He feels he must join with others who are exhorting the people "to beware the growth of this Romish Weed" (C. E., VI, 165). In this, his last public tract, Milton continues charges he has made throughout his career. He will not, he says, enter into "the Labyrinth of Councils and Fathers, an intangl'd wood which the Papist loves to fight in" (C. E., VI, 165), because he wants his work to be plain and clear.

Roman Catholics are not to be tolerated because they are a political power as well as a religious one, and as such they threaten the peace of England. Also, theirs is the only true heresy. Protestant religions may err in their interpretations of Scripture, but they at least base their faith on Scripture. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, turn to the traditions of men as the foundation of their faith. From this heresy comes their numerous "superstitions." If a person with a troubled soul searches for help, the Roman Church "opens wide her Office, with all her faculties to receive him; easy Confession, easy Absolution, Pardons, Indulgences, Masses for him both quick and dead, Agnus Dei's, Reliques, and the like" (C. E., VI, 179). Consequently, instead of working out his salvation for himself, the person thinks he can bribe God. It is especially unfortunate that this lost soul turns to the Roman Catholic Church for aid, because he is putting his faith in a Church which is no more than a contradiction, like "one of the Popes Bulls." Milton

explains that the words "Roman Catholic" are inherently contradictory, like saying "universal particular" or "Catholic Schismatic," because "Catholic in Greek signifies universal" (C. E., VI, 167). Milton continues to use humor, as he has in the past, to make a serious point more effectively.⁴⁰

In these last tracts, as in those written throughout his life, Milton is intensely aware of the audience he is addressing and of the persona he adopts in addressing it. Many of his polemical works are addressed to Parliament and some are specifically described by Milton himself as orations. Milton characteristically casts himself in the role of the public orator addressing his countrymen in the name of liberty and Truth. Yet Parliament is more than just a legislative body; it is the people of England. And Milton is more than just an orator; he is a man chosen by God to perform a mission. In order to fulfill that mission he must sacrifice his own private desires and goals.

As both public orator and as a servant of God, Milton must present Truth clearly and effectively and do battle against those who are its enemies. From the time of his Prolusions onward, Milton is aware that fools exist in every audience; they are not open to reason and they can be dangerous to the cause of Truth. They must be revealed for what they are, and one of the most effective ways to strip a fool of his stuffy pretensions, his hypocrisy, his sham

is through humor. To make a fool the object of comedy is to deflate him and to reveal his true nature to others. When Milton ridicules, or satirizes, or makes comic one of his opponents he makes it easier for members of the audience to recognize fools in their midst. He shows them how to penetrate the sham. Of course, not all of Milton's opponents are fools, but it is to Milton's advantage to make them seem so. It is difficult for any audience to accept the argumentative position of a person revealed as a fool.

Thus, Milton is often aware of a double audience as he writes. He directs his arguments to a particular opponent, but he is really concerned with the larger audience and their response. Comic devices like a talking Wen and a mock heroic battle between a morus and his Pontia are entertaining and effective ways to make a serious point or to ridicule an opponent. A humorous argumentum ad absurdum is a good rhetorical device, as is a classic retort. Milton consistently takes an opponent's words and turns them back upon him with such wit and humor that it cannot fail to impress an audience. Word play and puns abound in all of his tracts, and the name calling is clever and varied. Parody, exaggeration, and bawdiness are also utilized by Milton for comic effect. Naturally, Milton's opponents fail to see the humor. Milton's larger audience, however, can see that in each case the humorous remark or the comic device illustrates a serious argumentative point Milton

is making. They see too that sometimes the comedy becomes biting satire, a scourge, like that used by Christ and the Old Testament prophets, against the enemies of Truth. No matter what device Milton uses, he sees himself within a tradition and can justify his usage in terms of that tradition, be it classical or Scriptural.

NOTES

¹Kathryn McEuen, "Introduction" to the Prolusions, Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Don M. Wolfe, gen. ed., I (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953), 212.

²McEuen, p. 217.

³For example, the note to Prolusion VI, p. 265.

⁴Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Don M. Wolfe, gen. ed., I (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953), 272-74. All subsequent quotations from Milton's prose will be from this edition. In Latin works and in works not yet in the Yale Edition page references to the Columbia Edition (C.E.) will follow those to the Yale: The Works of John Milton, ed. Frank Allen Patterson, et al., 18 vols. in 21 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931-38). (In this note, XII, 219-21)

⁵E. M. W. Tillyard, "Introduction and Commentary," and Phyllis B. Tillyard, trans., Milton: Private Correspondence and Academic Exercises (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), p. xxxii & p. 140.

⁶Tillyard, p. xxxii.

⁷John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 32.

⁸Cf. P. L., IV, 348. The actual expression is used only in this passage; however, its close association in the passage with the serpent's subtlety and guile make it a good descriptive term for the temptation scenes in both P. L. and P. R. Eve cannot untie the "Gordian knot" of Satan's verbal entanglements. Christ does not even try to untie the knot; like Alexander, he cuts through it. Alexander uses a sword while Christ uses his faith and humble obedience.

⁹Hughes, p. 596.

¹⁰E. M. W. Tillyard, The Miltonic Setting (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1938), pp. 1-28.

¹¹J. Milton French, "Milton as Satirist," PMLA, 51 (1936), 418.

¹²French, p. 418.

¹³McEuen, p. 265.

¹⁴Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., "'The Crown of Eloquence,' The Figure of the Orator in Milton's Prose Works," Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1974), pp. 21-23.

¹⁵In her article, "Milton on Comedy and Satire," The Huntington Library Quarterly, 35, No. 2 (February, 1972), 107-130, Irene Samuel argues from various statements in his prose tracts that Milton made a distinction between comedy and satire. She feels that Milton made comic fools of Hall, and later of Salmasius and More, but did not make them objects of satire because to do so would have given them too much importance; satire, because of its kinship to tragedy, was aimed only at high targets. Perhaps Professor Samuel takes too literally statements made by Milton in the heat of controversy and not necessarily intended to be established definitions of satire and comedy.

Taking a position different from Samuel's is Joel Morkan in "Wrath and Laughter: Milton's Ideas on Satire," Studies in Philology, 69 (1972), 475-95. Morkan quotes many of the same passages as Professor Samuel to support his view that Milton is working as a traditional satirist, using ridicule as a weapon against error and evil. Milton enlarges the tradition, however, by giving it a definite religious thrust when he identifies himself as satirist with the Old Testament prophets. This view seems more in accord with the seriousness of Milton's purpose when he defends and explains his method. Milton seems to be using comic elements for the purposes of satire.

¹⁶Michael Lieb, "Milton's Of Reformation and the Dynamics of Controversy," Achievements of the Left Hand, p. 65.

¹⁷Lieb, p. 67.

¹⁸All glosses will be from the Yale Edition.

¹⁹French, p. 240.

²⁰Allen Gilbert, "Milton's Defense of Bawdry," SAMLA Studies in Milton (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1953), p. 55.

²¹Samuel, p. 113. Samuel quotes Herrick in footnote no. 10 on the same page.

²²Morkan, p. 484.

²³Again, both Samuel and Morkan refer to these same precedents. Samuel uses them to show that Milton's awareness of the tradition of satire will not let him aim it at such a low target as Hall; comedy is reserved for him. Morkan, in contrast, uses them to show that the classical, Medieval, and Renaissance view of the satirist come together in Milton's view. The statement in my text follows Morkan.

²⁴Yale Ed., II, p. 571.

²⁵Yale Ed., II, p. 722.

²⁶A certain amount of controversy exists over whether or not Milton himself inserted this prayer in some editions. Cf. James Holly Hanford and James G. Taaffe, A Milton Handbook, 5th ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), p. 87. No matter how the controversy comes out, my point remains; Milton humorously and effectively ridicules Charles.

²⁷This "Cabinet Letter" was a private letter written by Charles to his wife and found later on the battlefield of Naseby. It was published by Parliament in a small volume entitled The Kings Cabinet Opened. Cf. Yale Ed., III, footnote no. 47, p. 397.

²⁸Yale Ed., IV-1, footnote no. 8, p. 306.

²⁹Yale Ed., IV-1, footnote no. 7, p. 326.

³⁰Yale Ed., IV-1, footnote no. 83, p. 566.

³¹Milton changes the name of the real girl, Bontia, to the more literary "Pontia." The change lends itself better to various puns. Cf. Yale Ed., IV-1, footnote no. 90, p. 568.

³²Cf. Kester Svendsen's discussion, Yale Ed., IV-2, p. 687.

³³Yale Ed., IV-2, footnote no. 54, p. 722.

³⁴James Holly Hanford and James G. Taaffe argue that Milton's "defense of the use of gross language" is "curious" and "shows how little at ease Milton really was about his own controversial practices" (p. 92). I find these comments curious because Milton's defense here is exactly the same as the position he takes early in his career as a polemicist, especially in An Apology Against a Pamphlet. He defends himself when called upon to do so, but not to the point of "protesting too much."

³⁵Yale Ed., V-1, footnote no. 2, p. 395.

³⁶It is difficult to determine anything definite about A Brief History of Moscovia because of the incomplete nature of the work. Cf. John B. Gleason, "The Nature of Milton's 'Moscovia,'" SP, 61 (1964), 640-49 for a discussion of various theories about the work.

³⁷Yale Ed., VI, p. vii. Christian Doctrine is written in Latin to reach as wide an audience as possible. The new translation in the Yale Ed. is much more lively than the old Sumner version and seems to be closer to Milton's original tone.

³⁸The paradox refers to Milton's statements that "the Father alone is a self-existent God" and "that a being who is not self-existent cannot be a God" (Yale Ed., VI, 218).

³⁹Identified by Merritt Hughes in footnote no. 22, p. 865. Milton alludes to Prynne's large margins in other tracts. He also refers to Prynne's margins in a line later deleted from his poem, "On the New Forcers of Conscience Under the Long Parliament." The line read "Clip ye as close as marginal P_____ 's ears." Cf. Hughes, footnote no. 17, p. 145.

⁴⁰Another work which illustrates this point is Of Education. In addition to a few attacks on "Scholastic grosnesse" (II, 374), Milton uses humor to reinforce his concepts of education. He talks, for example, about students who are forced to leave "Grammatick flats & shallows" before they are ready and are then suddenly transported to a new climate "to be tost and turmoild with their unballasted wits in fadomles and unquiet deeps of controversie." They

grow to hate learning because they are "mockt and deluded all this while with ragged notions and babblements" (II, 375). In describing the charms of his own system of education, Milton says: "I doubt not but ye shall have more adoe to drive our dullest and laziest youth, our stocks and stubbs from the infinite desire of such a happy nurture, then we have now to hale and drag our choisest and hopefullest wits to that asinine feast of sowthistles and brambles" . . . (II, 376-77).

CHAPTER II

THE SATIRIC SPIRIT AND HEART- EASING MIRTH

While no clearly defined formula fits Milton's use of humor in all the prose works, some patterns do emerge. Often, as in Areopagitica and the divorce tracts, humorous passages reinforce most or all of the major points Milton is making. Sometimes, as in Animadversions and the three Defences, humor is so closely woven into the fabric of the tract that it is a major vehicle for meaning. At other times, as in The History of Britain, humor consists only of a few brief asides scattered at random throughout the text. Milton consciously and deliberately employs humor, generally with a serious intent, seldom just for comic relief. Nevertheless, the zeal and "talent for sport" Milton manifests in the humorous passages and asides indicate that he enjoys the humor for its own sake as well as for its rhetorical value. Since he is so intensely aware of his audience, he tends to tailor the humor to fit that audience and the occasion in which it is being used. In his poetry, both major and minor, Milton is still aware

of audience and decorum--that "grand masterpiece to observe"--but he is less concerned with rhetorical function. Consequently, he can use humor in a way more consonant with the goals of poetry, to alter our perception. No matter how it is used, humor has the effect of changing the way we see things. In his minor poetry, Milton generally uses humor in one of three ways. The first is very similar to his predominant usage in the prose; it is satiric, and often directed to a particular audience. The second type might be described as a smiling urbanity; it is gentle and playful yet sophisticated. The third type of humor is that found in Milton's descriptions of nature. These passages teem with life, with a kind of pagan animism that makes us smile. But regardless of which type of humor occurs in a particular poem, it enlarges the vision of reality the poem imparts by forcing us to see another facet of that reality.

If we proceed chronologically within each grouping, the first poems employing satiric humor are five of Milton's six poems dealing with the Gunpowder Plot. Four of the five epigrams are humorous as is the epyllion or mock epyllion entitled "On the Fifth of November." All are written in Latin as part of the annual university observance of Guy Fawkes Day.¹ The four epigrams are variations on the same theme and employ the same comic device. Milton takes our conventional idea of what would happen in a gunpowder

explosion and inverts it. Instead of destruction and death, the explosion would lead to triumph and life. It is Milton's tone that makes these epigrams satiric, as he points out this irony to Fawkes. In his first epigram, "On the Gunpowder Plot," Milton taunts "perfidious Fawkes" by deliberately misinterpreting his motive for using gunpowder as a weapon against the King and the English nobles. He says: "do I misjudge, or did you wish to seem merciful in one way and to atone for your crime with a kind of wicked Pity?" Of course Milton misjudges; Fawkes obviously had no intention of sending his victims "to the courts of high heaven in a sulphurous chariot with wheels of whirling fire" (p. 13). Thus, Milton's intentional and ironic misjudging allows him to draw a parallel between Fawkes's victims and Elijah, pointing out to Fawkes that even had he succeeded he would, paradoxically, have failed. The King and the nobles would live on spiritually in heaven, and they would live on in the memory of the people as martyrs. They could not have been destroyed; they could only triumph through his action. But all of this turns on the humor inherent in taking literally the idea that gunpowder can blow a person to heaven.

In his next epigram on the subject, entitled "On the Same," Milton adds Fawkes's association with the Roman Catholic Church to further the humor of his original conception. In this rendering, King James achieves heaven

without the aid of Fawkes's gunpowder. Instead, Milton suggests that Fawkes should use the gunpowder to blow to heaven those "detestable cowls" and "all the idol gods that profane Rome contains" (pp. 13-14). Without the help of the gunpowder, all those connected with the Roman Catholic Church will find it extremely difficult ever to achieve the path to heaven. Again, Milton twists or inverts Fawkes's intention and uses it humorously as a weapon against him.²

In the third epigram, "On the Same," Milton asserts tongue-in-cheek that had Fawkes succeeded he would have proved true a prophecy made by the Roman Church. Portrayed comically as a "Latin monster," the Church "gnashed its teeth and wagged its ten horns with menace horrid" in response to James's jesting about the fires of purgatory (p. 14). It promised James he would never get to heaven without suffering first the punishment of fire. Of course, the Church referred to Purgatory, but Milton shows that it is the fire of Fawkes's gunpowder that would have sent James to heaven had Fawkes's plot succeeded. Thus, Milton suggests, the Gunpowder Plot was an attempt by the Church to prove the validity of her own prophecy. The Plot failed, however, and so will the prophecy.

The fourth epigram, also entitled "On the Same," adds a slightly different dimension to the irony underlying all of these poems. Rome had assigned James to Hell with curses but then had taken action to see that he was blown

to the starry sphere of heaven. The verse is brief and succinct:

Him whom impious Rome had consigned to her
 curses and condemned to the Styx and the Taenar-
 ian gulf, him--quite contrarily--she sets about
 to lift to the stars and wishes to hoist among
 the celestial gods. (p. 14, 1-4)

The jest turns again on Milton's persistent interpretation of the Gunpowder Plot as a triumph for James and the nobles, not because it was discovered, but because it would have blown them to heaven had it succeeded. In either case, the purpose of Fawkes and the Roman Catholic Church would have been thwarted. The joke may not be worth four epigrams, but it does force us to see the Gunpowder Plot in a new and humorous way.

In his small epic on the theme, Milton continues his attempt to alter our perception of the Plot. This time, however, he creates a story complete with characters and dialogue to explain its history. As the story begins, James has united Scotland and England and rules the island in peace and tranquility. Satan, flying through mid-air, surveys his conquests throughout the world and finds only England enjoying wealth and peace. Satan is a comic figure as he looks down at England and breaks into sighs "redolent of lurid sulphur and the fires of Tartarus" (p. 16). Satan is comic because he is incongruous. He sighs at happiness, wealth, and peace, those qualities which are universally admired and appreciated. We cannot sympathize with him at

this point, we can only laugh at his misguided sense of value. Determined to punish those in England who dare to be content, Satan begins his epic flight to Italy to find the appropriate instrument to use against England, the Pope.

As he does in many of his prose works, Milton takes advantage of every opportunity to ridicule through satire the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church. When Satan arrives at Rome, the "wearer of the Triple Crown" is at the head of a procession, "carrying with him his gods made of bread." Those following the Pope in the procession are carrying wax candles, which is ironic since these men do not lead their lives in the light but in "Cimmerian darkness" (p. 17). The chants which fill the church as the procession enters it Milton compares to the shrieks of Bacchus and his followers. After the rites have been completed, Night arrives and Satan searches for the Pope, "the secret adulterer" who "passes no barren nights without a gentle concubine" (p. 17). Milton's caricature of the Pope, even though he may have taken seriously such charges, is clearly comic exaggeration in line with his hyperbolized Satan.

Satan appears to the Pope disguised as an old man, but in such a disguise that we can only see Satan as the comic figure of a hypocritical friar. When Milton says that "to make his wiles complete" Satan's lustful loins are bound with a hempen rope and his slow feet are thrust

into laced sandals," he calls attention to the disproportion between what Satan seems to be and what he is and appeals to the stock humorous device of portraying an ostensibly holy friar as a scoundrel.³ But Satan addresses one, who in Milton's view, is cut from the same cloth; consequently, Satan's first words to the Pope are a wonderful comic reversal of language usually associated with the Pope as he addresses his followers. Satan says: "Do you sleep, my son?" (p. 17). This line is also comic if, as the narrator of the poem has led us to believe, the Pope is in bed with a concubine. Satan, no doubt, approves and by calling the Pope his son, he indicates a direct line of kinship between the two of them which may be a parody of the relationship between the first two Persons of the Holy Trinity. His next words to the Pope are also ironic as Satan chides his "son" for being heedless of the faith and neglectful of his flocks by allowing England to remain outside the fold. Satan's solicitude here is ludicrous. Nothing should be further from his desires than to see the spread of religion, so his concern implies that he wants the whole world to be Roman Catholic and then the whole world will be subservient to him. Naturally, he has a suggestion for improving the situation in England and he urges the Pope to imitate his own treachery and guile by exploding nitrous powder under the halls where the English king and nobles assemble. He assures the Pope that all

will go well, that "the gods and goddesses are favorable, as many deities as are honored in your feast days" (p. 19). Satan is caricaturing the saints in the Roman Catholic calendar by calling them gods and goddesses. Since the Church taught that saints were merely intermediaries between God and man and were never to be worshipped as gods themselves, the Pope should have challenged Satan's statement. The fact that he does not adds to the portrait of him established throughout the passage as a servant of Satan. Thus, the passage ends with comic irony maintained throughout.

We see the kinship between Satan and the Pope even more pointedly when "the Babylonian high priest" responds to Satan's visit by calling from their cave the traditional defenders of Rome, Treason and Murder. Meanwhile, the Lord has witnessed Satan's machinations and those of his tool, his "son," the Pope, and He laughs at their plot:

Meanwhile the Lord, who turns the heavens in their wide revolution and hurls the lightning from his skyey citadel, laughs at the vain undertakings of the degenerate mob and is willing to take upon himself the defence of his people's cause. (p. 20; 2-5)

The instrument the Lord chooses for effecting His purpose is Fame, and Milton's description of this many-eared Titan is humorous. While the details of the description come primarily from Ovid and Virgil,⁴ Milton obviously enjoys repeating them. Fame lives in a lofty

"noise-haunted tower" which has at least a thousand doors and windows and quite "unsubstantial walls." From this tower a "crush of people start various whispers," and Milton compares these people and their whispers to the "swarms of flies" that "buzz and hum about the milk-pails or in the wattled sheepfolds" in the summertime (p. 20). Here Milton takes what in a different context might be simply a pleasant pastoral image and makes it humorous by using it to describe people whose lives are focused on gossip. These people "swarm" together, "buzzing" and whispering constantly to each other like flies, the difference being that the flies get nourishment in milkpails and sheepfolds, while the people get only hot air from the gossip, though they value it as if it were real nourishment. The comparison turns them into comic figures who are ridiculed for their false values. Fame is a fit ruler for these people as she sits high above them and listens intently with all of her ears, more ears than Argus has eyes, so that she may catch the lightest murmur or sound from the farthest reaches of the world. Fame has tongues equal in number to her ears or, as Milton puts it, "With a thousand tongues the blab recklessly pours out what she has heard and seen to any auditor" (p. 20). With this description, Milton invites us to picture Fame as a ridiculous creature, covered with ears, all of them straining to catch even the smallest sound, and covered with an equal

number of tongues, all of them "blabbing" constantly and rapidly. She is a creature of orifices, thousands of ears pulling in sound, and thousands of tongues pushing out sound. And she is indiscriminate; she listens and speaks to anyone.

Fame often distorts the truth by enlarging it or paring it down, but in this situation she deserves praise, because at the command of the Lord she acts swiftly to warn the English of the plot. Before she leaves on her mission, however, she dresses herself appropriately: "she assumes strident wings and covers her slender body with parti-colored feathers." She carries with her, in her right hand, "a trumpet of Temesan brass" (p. 21). Even though she is acting now as a servant of the Lord, she must still proceed in her accustomed manner. She moves swiftly, but she is not immediately direct; she begins by scattering "ambiguous rumors and uncertain whispers through the English cities." Only after this warm-up exercise is completed, does she publish with "garrulity" the details of the plot (p. 21). Her work is successful, and because the Father has taken pity on his people, the plotting Papists are seized and punished and the country rejoices. Henceforth, the fifth of November shall be celebrated more than any other day of the year.

This work is a mock-epic,⁵ turning some of the machinery of epic against Roman Catholics. These Catholics

and their plots are objects of satire. They can be defeated easily by something as insubstantial as Fame, which in this work is more closely related to rumor than to "that last infirmity of Noble mind" which in "Lycidas" motivates true poets. Here, no heroic figure and no heroic battle is needed to thwart Satan and his son, the Pope. Just as God laughs, so we laugh. We too are afforded a lofty perspective and can see the hollowness of Satan. His words to the Pope, and the Pope's words to his henchmen, Murder and Treason, are easily overcome by the words of the many-tongued Titan. Just as he does in his epigrams on the subject, Milton satirizes those Roman Catholic enemies of England who are foolish enough to think they can destroy the country through plots. They fail to realize that God will protect his Englishmen. Milton refused to accord them the status of epic villains and instead makes them comic figures. God's Englishmen are also satirized, however. Instead of being on the alert to such plots and instead of discovering this one through skillful counter-espionage, they stumble onto it. In using such a comic figure as Fame, with all her ears and tongues and wings and feathers, as his tool, Milton shows us that Providence protects his people, even when they do not deserve it.

Like "On the Fifth of November," Milton's Latin work "That Nature Is Not Subject to Old Age" grew out of his academic life at Cambridge. In the course of the

exercise, Milton must show that nature is not subject to decay as is man, and he begins by pointing out how "insane" it is for man to think that all creation is bound by the same laws that bind him. Milton's first "proof" of this position is a long argumentum ad absurdum, exploring with humorous exaggeration and a series of questions the implications of suggesting that Nature will suffer decay similar to that of man:

Shall the face of Nature, then, be over-
spread with wrinkles and shall the common
mother contract her all-generating womb and
become sterile? Shall she confess herself old
and move with uncertain steps, her starry head
a-trembling? Shall the stars be vexed by foul
old age and the undying hunger of the years,
and by squalor and mold? Shall insatiable Time
devour the heavens and gorge the vitals of his
own father? (p. 33; 8-15)

The picture of Nature with wrinkles and of stars suffering from squalor and mold is humorously effective because it contrasts vividly with our conception of cosmic Nature as being so large and so removed from us that it could not possibly suffer from something as mundane as common mold on a piece of bread. Milton's argument is based on the absurdity of such a comparison. When his series of questions is completed, Milton shifts to a series of statements describing what will happen to the gods when decay is imminent, and the picture is even more chaotic. The first example is the most telling:

Some day, then, it will come to pass that the
vaulted floor of heaven, collapsing with a

mighty uproar, will fall and both poles will rattle with the impact, while Olympian Jove drops down from his celestial hall, and with him Pallas Athene, spreading horror from her exposed Gorgon shield. (p. 33; 19-22)

Milton continues his projection of the destruction of the gods, until he forces us to reject his picture because it is so ludicrous. Not until the argumentum ad absurdum has been exhausted does he begin a straight forward argument, asserting with conviction that the Father "has fixed the scales of fate with sure balance and commanded every individual thing in the cosmos to hold its course forever" (p. 34). He supports this assertion by creating now a picture of beauty, harmony, and order to contrast with that earlier one of chaos. The picture of harmony is not comic; the picture of chaos is. Thus, humor is used here as it is in many of the prose tracts, to add another dimension to a serious argumentative point. In the abstract, we might be indifferent to Nature's possible decay. Through humorous exaggeration, however, Milton creates pictures which are so outrageous they shatter our complacent assumptions that Nature is somehow detached from us and incapable of suffering from such things as wrinkles and mold. Thus, the humor of the argumentum ad absurdum encourages us to see in a concrete way the chaotic implications of what is otherwise just an abstract speculation.

In another college exercise in Latin, "On the Platonic Idea as Understood by Aristotle," Milton adopts

the persona of a student of Aristotle attacking Plato's idea of an archetypal man made in the image of the Divine. His objections to the concept are two-fold. First, he cannot imagine who the archetypal man could have been. Second, he can find no record of anyone who knew of the archetypal man. Neither objection is very convincing or clever, but the first is a better vehicle for humor, since candidates for the archetypal man are numerous. The key question becomes, "Who or what is he?," and the humor builds as various possibilities are named. Perhaps he is one limited by his own bounds in space. Or perhaps he is "a comrade of the eternal stars who wanders through the spheres of heaven" or may even inhabit the moon. Then again, he might be one who simply sits beside the river of Lethe "among the spirits waiting to reenter the body." The final suggestion is the most grandiose: "Or perhaps the human archetype is a huge giant, a tremendous figure in some remote region of the earth who lifts his head higher than the star-bearer, Atlas, to terrify the gods" (p. 57). Milton's parody of an unimaginative human mind trying to speculate on the existence of something it cannot possibly understand is very effective.

As with many people who have exhausted their limited imaginations, this person turns to authorities to justify his own lack of insight. For if Tiresias did not see the human archetype, and if the prophets and "the Assyrian

priest" did not know of the human archetype, and if "thrice-great Hermes" left no tradition of the human archetype then there cannot possibly be a human archetype. The work ends with the Aristotelian being convinced of his own triumph over Plato. Since Plato brought such "absurdities" into the schools, he is the supreme fabler who must now either call back the poets from exile or go into exile himself. The ironic and semi-burlesque quality is maintained throughout as Milton voices the stereotyped objections to Plato's idea. The technique is clever because it makes a comic fool of the defender of Aristotle and consequently makes us want to ally ourselves with Plato.

Much less sophisticated are Milton's two poems on the University carrier, which are characterized by a rollicking good humor even though the ostensible subject is death. These poems were included in a group of several others written by students at Cambridge following the death of Thomas Hobson, who drove a coach once a week between London and Cambridge from 1564 almost until his death in January, 1631. Milton's stance in both of these poems on Hobson is detached and witty; the poems are replete with puns, paradoxes, conceits, and ironic inversions.

The key to the dominant irony is given in the subtitle of Milton's first poem on Hobson, entitled "On the University Carrier." The descriptive subtitle reads: "Who Sicken'd in the Time of His Vacancy, Being Forbid to

Go to London, by Reason of the Plague." This subtitle is nicely ambiguous. It could indicate that Hobson was ill from the plague and died from having caught it, or it could indicate that Hobson died as a result of the inactivity forced upon him when he could no longer travel to London because it was filled with plague. The content of both poems supports the last reading. Therefore, the cause of Hobson's death is inactivity. Hobson had driven the coach weekly for sixty-six years and his health had been fine; not until his enforced vacation did he sicken and die. As Milton puts it, half-way through the poem:

And surely, Death could never have prevail'd,
Had not his weekly course of carriage fail'd. (p. 64, 9-10)

From this point on in the poem, Death becomes personified as a kindly and considerate Chamberlain, a man-servant who shows Hobson to his room in the Inn and removes his boots for Him:

But lately finding him so long at home,
And thinking now his journey's end was come,
And that he had ta'en up his latest Inn,
In the kind office of a Chamberlain
Show'd him his room where he must lodge that night,
Pull'd off his Boots, and took away the light:
If any ask for him, it shall be said,
"Hobson has supt, and's newly gone to bed." (12-16)

Even though the subject is death, the poem ends on a lightly humorous note as we watch the solicitous Chamberlain caring for Hobson.

The gentle tone of the last half of the poem contrasts sharply with that of the first half, where the banter is coarse and rough. Instead of a man-servant, Death is a powerful physical force attacking Hobson as if in a wrestling match:

Here lies old Hobson, Death hath broke his girt,
And here, alas, hath laid him in the dirt. (1-2)

The colloquial "laid him in the dirt" and the reference to Hobson's "girt," a pun indicating both the measurement around a human body as well as a band or strap around a horse, tend to reduce the death to a nonhuman level, almost as if only a beast of burden had died. The next reference is more humanizing, however, as Hobson is described as "a shifter," a dodger who has evaded the grasp of Death for years as he continued on his course. Since Death has long been "dodging" with this "shifter," he is happy to get him down at last. The puns are playful yet they illustrate the contrast between Hobson's once active struggle and the inactivity which finally causes his death.

The second poem on the death of Hobson, also written in 1631, plays even more extensively on the irony that a vacation, something most men anticipate as a way of lengthening their lives, actually shortens and ends Hobson's life. This poem seems to exist only for the sake of the many variations on the major theme with their concomitant puns and witty phrases. No struggle and no personal

battle occurs between Hobson and death here; Hobson is simply the victim of irony--he has rested to death. The first six lines of the poem indicate the prevalent method and attitude of the whole.

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 keep his trot,
Made of sphere-metal, never to decay
Until his revolution was at stay. (1-6)

The rhyme, especially "rot" and "trot" plus the perfect ten-syllable scheme give the first four lines a kind of jogging feeling that again makes Hobson seem more like a horse than a human being. Then, the quick movement from the ridiculous to the sublime which occurs in the fifth and sixth lines transports him to the heavenly plane. The humor of much of the poem is based on this parallel between the quick movement of the verse and the movement which was central to Hobson's way of life. The various puns and paradoxes move quickly, carrying us through several layers of meaning. Thus, "Rest that gives all men life, gave him his death, / And too much breathing put him out of breath" (11-12). In the next two lines, the same idea is repeated with a pun on "term" added to the paradox: "Nor were it contradiction to affirm / Too long vacation hast'ned on his term" (13-14). "Term" here is both his "terminal" illness and the completion of his life, his "term" being compared to that on an academic calendar.

The various puns on carrying and bearing a heavy load add to the jests:

"Nay," quoth he, on his swooning bed outstretch'd,
 "If I may not carry, sure I'll ne'er be fetch'd,
 But vow, though the cross Doctors all stood hearers,
 For one Carrier put down to make six bearers.
 Ease was his chief disease, and to judge right,
 He died for heaviness that his Cart went light.
 His leisure told him that his time was come,
 And lack of load made his life burdensome,
 That even to his last breath (there be that say't)
 As he were prest to death, he cry'd "more weight";
 (17-26)

Finally, after a few more puns on various aspects of Hobson's life's work, the poem ends succinctly: "His letters are deliver'd all and gone, / Only remains this superscription" (33-34). These verses are playful and humorous, better than those written by Milton's peers for the same occasion.⁶

That they were popular is verified by the fact that they were reprinted with verses set to song⁷ and were included in contemporary anthologies of witty verse. The second was printed in the 1640 edition of A Banquet of Jests, and both were published in the 1658 edition of Wit Restor'd.⁸

While the Hobson poems illustrate the exuberance and comedy often apparent in Milton's prose works like Colasterion and the three Defences, the lines in Greek entitled "On the Engraver of His Likeness" illustrate the satire. Written in 1645, these lines represent Milton's reaction to a very poor engraving which served as the frontispiece for the first edition of his poetry. The verse reads:

Looking at the form of its original, you might say, mayhap, that this likeness had been drawn by a tyro's hand; but, friends, since you do not recognize what is modelled here, have a laugh at a caricature by a good-for-nothing artist. (p. 142)

The joke on the engraver was complete when he, not knowing Greek, assumed the verse was complimentary and had it placed below the engraving. Critics from Dr. Burney onward have suggested, however, that the final joke may be on Milton himself because some question exists about the accuracy of Milton's Greek.⁹ Nevertheless, Milton was piqued and must have intended the verse to be humorous since he asks us to laugh at the artist.

Also intentionally humorous are Milton's two sonnets on the public reaction to his divorce tracts. In Sonnet XI, "On the Detraction Which Followed Upon My Writing Certain Treatises,"¹⁰ Milton satirizes those who stumble, gasp, and stare because they cannot understand or read the title of Milton's divorce tract Tetrachordon. The tone of the sonnet is very similar to that in many of Milton's satiric prose tracts; Milton makes comic figures out of those fools who cannot even spell, pronounce, or understand his title yet will still make a value judgment upon it. The sonnet masterfully portrays human nature. When Tetrachordon first appears, it is controversial and quite the rage. Its subject is new, and many people, including those with intelligence, are reading it. But the book-stall reader, the man on the street, does not care that the book is "wov'n close, both

Matter, form and style" (p. 143, 2). Instead, he reacts only to the title, which he cannot understand, and cries "Bless us! what a word on / A title page is this!" (5-6). Milton responds with an ironic question: "Why is it harder, Sirs, than Gordon, / Colkitto, or Macdonnel, or Galasp?" (8-9). These Scottish names would have made Quintilian "stand and stare." Milton suggests through satiric dialogue that learning is not valued very much in a country which can easily pronounce rugged Scottish names but cannot begin to pronounce, read, or understand smooth Greek ones. He ends by comparing the present age where learning is hated "worse than Toad or Asp" with the age of King Edward and Sir John Cheke when learning was respected. Thus, the cries from the stall reader are humorous because they are so typical of the reactions of most human beings when encountering something new. Yet, they are also symptomatic of a serious problem, the lack of respect for learning.

The issue is even more serious In Sonnet XII, "On the Same," and the tone intensifies. In this sonnet, people are not only rejecting learning but they are rejecting liberty as well, failing to see the difference between it and license. The humor in this sonnet is more biting and satiric than that in the previous one. The cries of the book-stall reader have become a "barbarous noise":

I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs
 By the known rules of ancient liberty,
 When straight a barbarous noise environs me
 Of Owls and Cuckoos, Asses, Apes, and Dogs.
 (pp. 143-44, 1-4)

All of these animals have strident and ugly voices, and their combined sound would be horrendous. Adding to our picture of this animal menagerie are the meanings from the bestiaries traditionally associated with these animals. The Owl symbolizes ignorance; the Cuckoo represents ingratitude and vanity; the Ass signifies stupidity and obstinancy; the Ape represents mockery, while the Dog indicates quarrelsomeness.¹¹ When we put these animals with their significations and their noises together, we have a humorous although unflattering view of humankind. Of course, not everyone allows his animal nature to dominate him, and like the prose tracts this sonnet and the previous one are directed to a double audience. The fools are ridiculed while others look on and learn.

People who behave like animals do not deserve and cannot appreciate the true liberty Milton describes for them in his divorce tracts. Milton continues his animal image by alluding to Scripture in line eight of the sonnet: "But this is got by casting Pearl to Hogs." In Matthew vii.6, Christ in his sermon on the mount is quoted as saying "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." This passage from the Bible has become so much a part of our language that few people immediately perceive it as humorous. Yet, when we think about it literally and picture a man in a

muddy pigsty throwing out pearls to hogs who think they are going to get good field corn, it becomes humorous because it is so ludicrous. By implication, the man who throws out the pearls deserves to have them trampled because he is acting foolishly in misjudging the nature of hogs. When Milton alludes to the Biblical passage, he is drawing an obvious parallel between it and his own situation. He has given his works to the public, and with "barbarous noise" they are trampling it. The reference to the hogs also reminds us of the serving man/solicitor in Colasterion who chews over Milton's works like "a Boar in a Vineyard." As well as ridiculing the public, Milton's sonnet includes some self-deprecation; like the man who casts pearls to swine, he too has been foolish in his total misjudgment of the populace.

A third reference to animals occurs in the classical allusion to Latona and her "twin-born progeny." When Latona was nursing Apollo and Diana, she was irritated by peasants, described by Milton as "Hinds." At the request of Latona, these "Hinds" were turned into Frogs by Jove, the father of her children. These ignorant peasants railed at Latona and her offspring and Jove turned them into Frogs; the ignorant populace rails at Milton and his "offspring," his divorce tracts, and he turns them into Owls, Cuckoos, Asses, Apes, and Dogs.¹² The magic of language is as potent as the magic of Jove. Milton uses a traditional comic device when he

turns into animals those people who betray the best part of their natures by acting like animals. They are comic because the artist puts us at a distance from them and exaggerates their oinking, and their braying, and their barking. We see that their behavior is foolish and ridiculous and consequently we do not want to behave similarly.

In his tailed sonnet entitled "On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament," Milton shifts from animal imagery to puns and word play as his primary vehicle for humor. That Milton intended this sonnet to be satiric is indicated by its form. The twenty line sonnet, a sonnet with two tails, was traditionally used in Italy for satiric purposes, the tails or code providing an extra opportunity for attack.¹³ The satire of this sonnet is directed against those Presbyterian members of Parliament who abolished episcopacy only to seize for themselves that which they had criticized in the prelates. Taking full advantage of the concentrated language of poetry, Milton points out the irony:

Because you have thrown off your Prelate Lord,
 And with stiff Vows renounc'd his Liturgy
 To seize the widow'd whore Plurality
 From them whose sin ye envied, not abhorr'd,
(pp. 144-45, 1-4)

The contrast between the eagerness to renounce one element of episcopacy and the unwillingness to renounce another is effective. Milton implies that it is easy to reject liturgy, an abstraction with no concrete personal gain attached.

Plurality, however, is an entirely different issue; multiple livings bring multiple earnings as well as power and prestige. Plurality results in personal gain. Yet it is also a "widow'd whore." The alliteration emphasizes Milton's view that the Presbyter's desire for the easy reward of plurality is akin to sexual lust. He is consumed by an illicit desire. The object of his desire, plurality, is a widow because her husband, episcopacy, has recently been killed. The Presbyterians killed the husband to possess the wife. The wife, however, is a whore; she will sell herself to anyone who pays. Both those who buy and those who are bought are betraying all that is noble in the human spirit. Milton's pun on "whore" in the word "abhor'd" points out with verbal wit the true nature of both.

The verbal wit is continued throughout the remainder of the sonnet as Milton satirizes those who attempt to force the consciences Christ set free:

Dare ye for this abjure the Civil Sword
 To force our Consciences that Christ set free,
 And ride us with a classic Hierarchy
 Taught ye by mere A.S. and Rotherford? (5-8)

"Mere A. S. and Rotherford" want to impose a new hierarchy that will benefit themselves. All values have been inverted, as Milton continues to point out in the next four lines:

Men whose Life, Learning, Faith and pure intent
 Would have been held in high esteem with Paul,
 Must now be nam'd and printed Heretics
 By shallow Edwards and Scotch what d'ye call: (9-12)

"Mere" A.S., "shallow" Edwards, Scotch "what d'ye call" indicate humorously Milton's view of the worthlessness of these men, yet they have power and are filled with "plots and packing worse than those of Trent" (14). Since the Roman Catholic Council of Trent was notorious for excess verbiage as well as the buying and selling which went into its doctrinal compromises, Milton continues to suggest that these Presbyters are fit company for the Roman Catholic Church, the "Whore of Babylon" all Protestants theoretically denounce. But Milton's poem is stripping them of pretense and revealing their true natures, just as Parliament will cut through their hypocrisies:

That so the Parliament
 May with their wholesome and preventive Shears
 Clip your Phylacteries, though baulk your Ears,
 And succor our just Fears,
 (15-18)

Unlike the old regime which cut off the ears of Prynne and others who opposed it, Parliament will content itself with revealing these men for what they are. Its charge will read: "New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ Large" (20). The alliteration and word play of this last line epitomize with wit Milton's serious charge throughout.¹⁴

Much of the humor in these poems functions in a manner similar to that found in some of the prose tracts. Generally, Milton addresses himself to a sympathetic audience, one who shares many of his values and ideals. By the time he wrote his poems for the Guy Fawkes Day celebration,

the Gunpowder Plot was twenty years in the past. With celebrations and serious poems written yearly since the event, England was ready for an epigrammatic and mock-epic treatment of the event, which would allow it to laugh at the conspiracy while recognizing still its seriousness. These poems and Milton's two philosophical works are directed to an academic audience, one which could appreciate the clever turn Milton's humor gives to the traditional topics. The argumentum ad absurdum in "That Nature Is Not Subject to Decay" and the semi-burlesque approach to the Latin poem "On the Platonic Idea As Understood by Aristotle" add a comic dimension to these works. Milton's brief Greek verse is merely intended to be a satiric joke "on the engraver," one again that would be appreciated by an educated audience. His sonnets, the two on the divorce tracts, and the one on the forcers of conscience are much more satiric, similar in tone to those prose tracts directed against specific opponents but with the awareness of a larger audience observing the attack.

In all of these works, we find patterns of humor similar to those in the prose. Because poetry is concentrated, however, the humor is more closely pinpointed to the major issue of each poem. Poetic devices such as alliteration, like that found in "widow'd whore," and rhyme, like that found in "Dogs," "Frogs," and "Hogs," highlights the humor. In all of these poems, no matter what the purpose or the

audience, the humor forces us to see a serious issue from a slightly different perspective and to feel, at least momentarily, that we have seen it more clearly.

While the perspective of this first group of minor poems is predominantly satiric, that of the second group may be characterized as a smiling urbanity. Urbanity is usually identified with the elegance, wit, and sophistication of polished conversation. Often it is part of the social behavior of a group of people who share the same basic values and lifestyles. The word itself has a neutral connotation, but may be associated by some people with the snobbishly clever way members of an elite social class ridicule those outside that class. While Milton's urbanity is most apparent in works addressed to friends or acquaintances who will appreciate it, its purpose is not to ridicule; its purpose is to please and delight. We know from Christian Doctrine¹⁵ that Milton thinks of urbanity as a morally desirable virtue which gives delight and pleasure to others; in fact, he lists it among the second class of special duties towards our neighbor. As it appears in Milton's minor poetry, then, urbanity is not necessarily funny or laugh provoking, but it is engaging, pleasurable, charming, and witty. It consists of a gentle humor which aims at delight and often brings a smile. This smiling urbanity is present in many of Milton's minor poems, be they elegies, sonnets, verse letters, or poems written for an academic occasion.

The earliest example of this kind of humor occurs in *Elegy I*, addressed to Charles Diodati and written during Milton's rustication from Cambridge in 1626. Milton begins by describing the pleasures he is enjoying in London away from the "sedgy Cam" and the bare fields surrounding it. His exile from the university is imposed, but Milton takes full advantage of the opportunities to enjoy London life, contrasting them with the harsh restrictions of Cambridge. Ironically, Milton can devote more time to the Muses while in exile than he could while in school, and he states with clarity his view of the university: "How wretchedly suited that place is to the worshippers of Phoebus!" (p. 8). At the moment London offers him time for his books as well as pleasant diversions like the theatre.

In describing his visits to the theatre, Milton automatically divides his discussion into two separate sections, one dealing with comedy and one with tragedy. Both genres are identified by the types of characters usually appearing in each separate genre. Milton's listing of the character types he has seen in the comedies he has attended is especially humorous and entertaining:

Sometimes the speaker is a shrewd old man, sometimes he is the wastrel heir, and sometimes the wooer. Or the soldier lays aside his helmet and appears, or the barrister who has fattened on a ten-year suit volleys his barbarous verbiage at an illiterate court-room. Often a wily slave comes to the rescue of a love-struck son and seems ubiquitous as he dupes the stiff-necked father under his very nose. And often the virgin, who

is surprised by the strange fire within her and
and has no idea what love is, falls in love
without knowing what she does. (p. 8; 29-36)

These brief lines sketch a fairly complete picture not only of character types prevalent on the comic stage but also of the basic plots of many comedies. Milton's language suggests the quality of caricature so dominant in comedy, and his portrayal of the fattened barrister volleying his verbiage and the virgin not comprehending what is happening to her are especially effective descriptions because they portray comic excess.

Not wanting to give the impression that he is always indoors, whether reading or at the theatre, Milton comments on his visits to the parks near the city and on his consequent enjoyment in watching the groups of young maidens who go dancing past. His praise of these English maidens is exuberant:

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, and the
Way that flows tinctured with pure nectar, and a
brow of surpassing loveliness, and waving tresses
which were golden nets flung by Cupid, the
deceiver! How often have I seen seductive cheeks
besides which the purple of the hyacinth and even the
blush of your flower, Adonis, turn pale. (p. 9; 53-62)

All other women must give way before the beauty of
"the virgins of England":

Give way, ye Heroïdes so much praised in olden times,
and every mistress who made inconstant Jove her
captive. Give way, you Achaemenian damsels with the

turrets on your brows, and you, whose home is Susa or Mimnonian Nineveh, and you Greek maidens also, and you women of Troy and of Rome, make your submission. Let not the Tarpeian Muse boast of Pompey's colonnade or of the theaters crowded with Italian robes. The prime honor is due to the virgins of Britain; be content, foreign woman, to follow after. (p. 9; 63-72)

This section of the elegy ends with an apostrophe to London, celebrating in impetuous and animated language the city's good fortune in being adorned by such beauty. As if fearing entrapment by the beauty, Milton suddenly shifts his tone and decides to leave the city of pleasure before he succumbs to "the infamous halls of the deceiver, Circe." He will escape with the help of the divine herb, moly, and is prepared to return again to the Cam and "the hub of the noisy school." He closes his letter to his friend by asking him to accept as a tribute "these few words that have been forced into alternating measures" (p. 10).

Thus, we see Milton at the age of eighteen aware of himself as a poet, deliberately writing a Latin elegy in "the alternating hexameters and pentameters of the elegiac couplet."¹⁶ He is consciously dedicating his free hours to study and to the "quiet Muses," yet he is also very aware of the beauties of the female form. Whether he is truly enchanted or simply playing a role expected of every young man, he indicates in the exuberance and wit of his panegyric that he is enjoying his momentary indulgence in the extravagant language he uses to celebrate the beauty of the English maidens. Extravagant language is not necessarily comic but

in this case the descriptions and the comparisons are so exaggerated and so prolonged that they have the effect of humor. No real English ladies, no matter how lovely, could possibly measure up to these idealized beauties. Thus, additional humor is manifested in what the descriptions tell us about the persona himself. He has created an elaborate ideal and then he runs from it.

Elegy IV, written a year later in the same verse form, is much different in subject matter and tone from Elegy I. Addressed to his former tutor, Thomas Young, now residing as a pastor in Hamburg, Milton's letter is the means of communication as well as the object addressed in the elegy. It is this address to the letter that becomes the primary structural device of the elegy as well as the main vehicle for urbane wit and humor. The elegy begins with the letter writer urging his letter to proceed on its way with all haste:

Swiftly, my letter, dart across the boundless
ocean; go, and over the smooth sea seek Teutonic lands,
Shake off slothful delays and let nothing, I implore,
stand in the way of your dispatch or interfere with
the speed of your journey. (p. 16; 1-4).

As a result of this address, the letter comes alive in our imaginations and we can picture it flying speedily on its way. In the course of addressing his letter, Milton must justify the need for haste by explaining how important Young is to him: he calls Young the other half of his soul. The tactic of speaking to the letter is effective because it

allows Milton to praise Young without seeming to flatter him directly and it makes us feel as if we are overhearing a conversation not directed toward us yet somehow meant for us nevertheless.

Having informed his letter of the need for haste and of his feeling for Young, Milton projects for the letter the scene it might find upon arriving at Young's residence:

Perhaps you will find him sitting with his sweet wife, fondling the dear pledges of their love on his lap, or perhaps turning over the mighty volumes of the old Fathers or the Holy Scriptures of the true God, or watering tender souls with the dew of heaven--which is the grand affair of healing religion. (p. 27; 41-46)

No matter what Young is doing, the letter must be careful to greet him courteously. Milton's directions are specific: "remember to fix your eyes for a little while modestly upon the ground and to speak these words with reverent lips" (p. 27). The conceit continues as Milton tells his letter what to say to Young when it stands in front of him. Thus, Milton encourages us to imagine him facing his letter and coaching it and to imagine his letter arriving in front of Young, facing him and speaking. When the letter speaks to Young, it must talk about Milton in third person, but since Milton has written the letter he is really talking about himself. In essence, Milton has the letter apologize for his tardiness in writing. The letter will say of Milton: "He has long felt the impulse to write to you and now Love would not endure any further delay" (p. 28). Milton can brook no

delay because Young is surrounded by war and in danger. His letter is his attempt to comfort his former tutor, to encourage him, and to urge him to "remember to hope." The intention of Elegy IV is serious, but the method is sophisticated and pleasantly witty. The imaginative scenes evoked are humorous because of the incongruity involved; we do not often picture a letter writer lecturing his letter, giving it directions, and sending it on its way.

The urbanity in Elegy VI, addressed like Elegy I to Milton's friend, Charles Diodati, begins with the joyful exuberance of that first elegy but ends on the more serious tone of the fourth elegy. Milton's first statement is playful: "On an empty stomach I send you a wish for the good health of which you, with a full one, may perhaps feel the lack" (p. 50). He then begins a humorous complaint about Diodati's request that he answer in verse; he argues that the "narrow meters" are too restrictive to express his profound affection for his friend and repeats Ovid's playful complaints about "the lame feet of elegy" (p. 50).¹⁷

This introductory section leads next to what will become the principal subject of the elegy, various types of poetry and what is demanded by each. Judging from Milton's reply, Diodati had apparently apologized for his own verse, explaining that it had been written during Christmas festivities while his stomach was filled with wine and feasting. Milton, responding with an empty stomach, playfully teases

his friend by arguing that wine and food are not incompatible with poetry:

But why do you complain that poetry is a fugitive
from wine and feasting? Song loves Bacchus and
Bacchus loves songs. (pp. 50-51; 13-14)

Milton supports this statement with a long list of poets whose inspiration came from "wine and roses." Even Ovid wrote bad verses when in countries without banquets and where the vine had not yet been planted. Milton concludes his list of examples with an extravagant compliment to his friend who, like the poets previously named, receives strength and fire from a well provisioned table. The exaggeration reaches humorous proportion when he says, "Your Campanian cups foam with creative impulse and you decant the store of your verses out of the wine-jar itself" (p. 51). Milton concludes this highly elaborate praise by adding: "In your single self the favor of Bacchus, Apollo, and Ceres is united." (p. 51). He assures his friend that dissipation can be conquered, even in tapestried halls, if he opens himself to "the silent approach of Phoebus" who will permeate his breast with sudden heat. At the same time, Thalia, the Muse of Comedy, will also glide into full possession of his breast. Milton ends his teasing of his friend by pointing out that "many of the gods patronize the gay elegy" (p. 51): "Liber and Erato, Ceres and Venus are at hand to help her, and beside his rosy mother is the stripling Cupid" (p. 52). For poets like these, banquets and wine are necessary and

desirable. It is at this point, however, that the tone begins to shift. Wine and roses are fine for certain poets, but, Milton adds, not for those who want to sing of wars and heaven and gods and heroes. Once the shift away from the discussion of Ovidian and elegiac poetry has occurred, the elegy becomes a serious statement of Milton's view that the poet is similar to the priest and sacred to the gods. He ends Elegy VI by telling Diodati of writing his "Nativity Ode," his gift for the birthday of Christ.

While Milton initiates and directs the banter toward his friend in Elegy VI, he (or his persona) is the recipient of it in several of his Italian poems. In the Canzone and his Italian sonnets, he is that traditional object of comedy, one caught in the snares of love. The beautiful English maidens he ran from in London are now replaced by a foreign beauty. In Sonnet IV, the poet himself seems surprised:

No tresses of gold nor vermeil cheeks have dazzled
me so, but an alien beauty under a new pattern,
which rejoices my heart--a manner nobly decorous,
and in her eyes that quiet radiance of lovely black,
speech that is adorned with more than one language,
and a gift of song which might draw the laboring
moon from its course in mid-sky. And so potent a
fire flashes from her eyes that it would be of little
avail to me to seal up my ears. (p. 55)

Nè treccie d' oro nè guancia vermiglia
M' abbaglian sì, ma sotto nuova idea
Pellegrina bellezza che 'l cuor bea,
Portamenti alti onesti, e nelle ciglia
Quel sereno fulgor d' amabil nero,
Parole adorne di lingua più d' una,
E 'l cantar che di mezzo l' emisfero

Traviar ben può la faticosa Luna:
 E degli occhi suoi avventa so gran fuoco
 Che l'incerar gli orecchi mi fia poco.⁷

The poet is surprised not simply because he has been dazzled by a foreign lady but because he has been dazzled at all. Like so many foolish young men he had laughed at love and at others who became ensnared, but now he can laugh only at himself.

In the Canzone, he is well aware that he who formerly laughed at others is now the object of sport himself. He is being taunted not just for falling in love, however, but for trying to write in a language alien to him as well. With self-irony, he repeats their words of jest:

Amorous young men and maidens press about me, jesting: "Why write--why do you write in a language unknown and strange, versifying of love, and how do you dare? Speak, if your hope is ever to prove not vain and if the best of your desires is to come to pass." (pp. 54-55)

⁄Ridonsi donne e giovani amorosi,
 M' accostandosi attorno, e, "Perchè scrivi,
 Perchè tu scrivi in lingua ignota e strana
 Verseggiando d'amor, e come t' osi?
 Dinne, se la tua speme sia mai vanna,
 E de' pensieri lo miglior t' arrivi."⁷

"And thus," he says, "they make sport of me." His answer to them is brief and directed, in accord with the poetic convention,¹⁸ to the canzone itself:

Canzone, I will tell you, and you shall answer for me. My lady, whose words are my very heart, says, "This is the language of which Love makes his boast." (p. 55).

⁄Canzon, dirotti, e tu per me rispondi:
 Dice mia Donna, e'l suo dir è il mio cuore,
 "Questa è lingua di cui si vanta Amore."⁷

While these poems are written within the Petrarchan convention, the playfulness and self-mockery make them more witty and more interesting than the extreme artificiality of Sonnet V where the lover sighs in pain, taking himself very seriously.

Milton combines the serious lover with the ironic one even more completely in Elegy VII where the poet recounts in a full narrative his fall to the snares of Cupid. In the traditional manner, he had been foolish enough to scoff at the power of Cupid, ridiculing his "contemptible weapons" for having no power against mankind. In response, the "Vengeful boy burn^s with double heat" (p. 58) and appears to the poet at his bedside one May night. The poet recognizes him immediately because of his "painted wings" and his anger is apparent: "'Wretch,' he says, 'you might more safely have learned wisdom from the experience of others; but no you yourself shall be a witness to the power of my right hand'" (p. 59). Cupid continues by reciting a long list of conquests, indicating more strongly with every name his ability to carry out his threat against the poet. If Cupid can tame Phoebus, and the Cydonian hunter, if he can tame Orion and Hercules, and if he can pierce the side of even Jove himself, little hope exists for the poet, who nevertheless maintains his calm demeanor, as he describes the end of the interview:

Thus he spoke, and, shaking the arrow with the
point of gold, he flew away to the warm breast of

Cypris. But I was inclined to laugh at the threats that the angry fellow thundered at me and I had not the least fear of the boy. (p. 59; 47-50)

With such a statement we are prepared for the poet's immediate fall, and neither we nor he has long to wait. Like the Milton of Elegy I, the poet of Elegy VII goes walking in the "suburban fields" and discovers groups of radiantly lovely girls. But this poet "does not turn puritanically away from the pleasant sights." Instead, he is "carried where the impulse of youth led." He loses all control and soon fixes his eyes on one "who was supreme above all the rest." Although the poet knows that his response to her beauty will lead to disaster, he cannot control himself. His description of Cupid's conquest is consciously humorous and ironic:

She was thrown in my way by the grudge harboring rascal, Cupid; he alone has woven these snares in my path. Not far away the rogue was hiding with his store of arrows and his mighty torch burdening his back. Without delay he fixed himself now on the maiden's eyelids, now on her mouth; then sped away between her lips or perched on her cheek; and wherever the agile dart-thrower strayed--alas for me--he struck my defenseless breast in a thousand places. In an instant unfamiliar passions assailed my heart. Inwardly I was consumed by love and was all on fire. (p. 60; 65-74)

This speech is his last attempt to struggle against Cupid. All humor ceases for the persona the moment he capitulates. He is thrown into the agony of pain as his loved one is swept away. No one has ever suffered so much misery in the fire of love. The poem ends with a prayer to Cupid. As we witness the Ovidian convention work itself out, we are more

aware than ever of its humorous potential because Milton seems to be enjoying so much his manipulation of it. Unlike *Elegy I*, to Charles Diodati, where Milton speaks in a voice closer to his own, in *Elegy VII* he adopts a definite persona, the love-stricken poet, and plays the role admirably.

Milton's Latin poem to Salzilli, written at least eight years later than *Elegy VII*, reveals the polish Milton had acquired in those years. Milton's trip to Italy had broadened him in many ways and enabled him to meet many European writers. This work is addressed to a Roman poet who wrote commendatory verses about Milton, ranking him above Homer, Virgil, and Tasso. Therefore, it must be as refined and civilized as possible. Milton begins with an address to his Muse in which he compares the Muse's preferred poetic scheme to various "steps" and "gaits":

O my Muse--fond as you are of moving with a halting step and pleased as you are with a gait like Vulcan's, which seems to you, when it is in the right place, no less charming than the graceful ankles of blond Deiope dancing before the golden couch of Juno--come, if you please, and carry these few words to Salzilli, (p. 125-26; 1-7)

Milton not only describes his verse form but also puns cleverly when he uses "halting," a literal translation of the scazontic or "limping" meter, as the descriptive term.¹⁹ When addressing Salzilli directly, Milton continues his refined and pleasant humor by identifying himself in exaggerated terms as one coming from a cold northern climate:

For you, then, Salzilli, these are the wishes of that London-bred Milton who recently left his nest and his own quarter of the sky--where the worst of the winds in its headlong flight, with its lungs uncontrollable raging, rolls its panting gusts beneath the heavens--and came to the genial soil of Italy to see its cities, (p. 126; 9-15)

In speaking of leaving his nest Milton draws attention to his youth and his worldly inexperience, yet he also fulfills the role of the admiring younger poet praising the older one. Milton adopts this stance throughout, as he pleads to the gods, in very elaborate language for the good health of the Roman poet. He suggests that with the return of health to Salzilli all nature will rejoice. He concludes:

The swelling Tiber himself, calmed by the song, will bless the annual hopes of the farmers. He will not run wild and uncontrolled, with his left rein lax, to overwhelm kings in their sepulchers, but he will more effectively control his waves as far as the salt realms of curving Portumnus. (pp. 126-27; 36-41).

Rome may have a better climate than London, but nature has been upset and out of control in sympathy with Salzilli's illness. Milton's picture of the Tiber checking himself adds the kind of pleasant, civilized humor which characterizes smiling urbanity.

A more playful urbanity is manifested in Milton's sonnet of 1642, entitled "When the Assault Was Intended to the City." The title as well as the allusions to the fall of Thebes and Athens indicate that this sonnet was intended to be a parody of a classical inscription.²⁰ The poem is addressed to whoever might come to the poet's door at the time of the attack upon the city:

Captain or Colonel, or Knight in Arms,
 Whose chance on these defenseless doors may seize,
 If ever deed of honor did thee please,
 Guard them, and him within protect from harms;
 (p. 140; 1-4)

In his persona of the besieged poet, Milton pleads well for protection, arguing that a poet "knows the charms"; a poet can spread a man's name as far as the Sun's bright circle, assuring him fame and immortality. Consequently, Milton says, to the Captain, the Colonel, or the Knight: "Lift not thy spear against the Muses' Bow'r" (9). By ending with examples from literature describing the rescue of poets, Milton lends classical weight to his argument. At the same time, however, he engages in a kind of self-deprecation. In 1642, Milton had published very little poetry, yet in this sonnet he associates himself with Pindar and Euripides as a poet who can give fame and should therefore be saved. No Captain, Colonel, or Knight in arms, even if he read poetry, would yet have heard of John Milton, and would not, therefore, have been convinced by his argument. What seems to be a subtle form of bribery in the sonnet is actually ironic with the sonnet becoming instead a subtle way to praise poetry. All of Sonnet VIII is a subtle form of bribery whereby the poet tries to save himself and at the same time exalt the power of poetry.

A similar kind of light humor exists in Milton's Latin ode, "To John Rouse." John Rouse was the librarian of Oxford University when Milton wrote this ode in 1647. Rouse

had written Milton, asking him to replace a volume of his works which had been lost from the library. When Milton sent the replacement volume of Latin and English Poems to Rouse, he added this ode between the two groups of poems. Just as he speaks to his letter in the elegy to Thomas Young, so here Milton speaks to his book, the work containing the ode. In the opening strophe, Milton describes himself early in his career as a poet when he spent as much time enjoying his visit to Italy as he did writing poetry. His description is characterized by humorous self-awareness:

Twin-membered book rejoicing in a single
cover, yet with a double leaf, and shining with
unlabored elegance which a hand once young
imparted--a careful hand, but hardly that of one who
was too much a poet--while he played, footloose,
now in the forest-shades of Ausonia and now on the
lawns of England, and, following his own devious ways
aloof from the people, he trifled with his native
lute or chanted some exotic strain with a Daunian
quill to his neighbors--his foot scarcely touching
the ground. (p. 146; 1-12)

In the antistrophe, Milton shifts from the past and the writing of the poems to the present, as Milton questions the book: "Who was it, little book, who furtively purloined you from your remaining brothers. . .?" (p. 147). He continues by describing the book's original journey from the town to "the nursery of the Thames," Oxford. Speaking of the Thames reminds Milton of its fame and consequently of England's fame throughout the world. The greatness which the river represents is threatened now by the upheavals of the Civil War, and Milton's tone changes momentarily from

the lightly humorous one of the opening. The original tone resumes quickly, however, and the poem continues as it began, with Milton explaining to his book that even though it might be in the "dirty, calloused hand of an illiterate dealer" hope still exists that it may "be carried on oaring wing to the courts of Jupiter on high" (p. 147). His book should rejoice because it is coveted as part of Rouse's treasure; it will be placed in "sacred sanctuaries" where Rouse himself is the protector of immortal works and "a custodian of wealth" greater than any material riches. His book shall go to "the delightful groves of the Muses," "the divine home of Phoebus," and "the riven peak of Parnassus" (p. 148).

The poem ends with a more serious statement in the epode. Milton says, "You then, my labors--whatever my sterile brain has produced--have hardly been in vain." With this humble yet assertive statement, Milton is addressing not his poetry but his controversial prose tracts which he had sent to Rouse in a volume accompanying the poems. His words are similar to those in the sonnets on Tetrachordon. As he does there, Milton here refers to "the insolent noise of the crowd." There they were Owls, Cuckoos, Asses, Apes, and Dogs; here they are "the vulgar mob of readers." But these readers will be excluded from the quiet retreat guarded by Rouse. Milton can only hope that a distant and "more sensitive age" will bury envy and "perhaps render a more

nearly just judgment of things out of its unprejudiced heart" (p. 148). Thus, the conception of the ode is genial, a tribute to John Rouse written between the pages of a requested book; and the manner of the work is humorous, an address to his works themselves; but, as is usual with Milton, the ideas which dominate the work are serious.

The last two works which fit into this category of smiling urbanity are two of Milton's sonnets written in the mid 1650's. Consistent with the type of humor identified throughout this section, these sonnets are not boisterously funny. Instead, they are witty and refined, and their arguments reinforce the picture of Milton which emerges from a study of his minor poetry--a picture of one who appreciates and enjoys the lighter things in life. In both works, Milton is suggesting to a young man that it is important to save some time for relaxation and pleasure. In Sonnet XX, Milton asks "Lawrence of virtuous Father virtuous Son" where they could meet and find a fire to pass some pleasant time together during a "sullen day" when "the Fields are dank and ways are mire." Milton does not suggest over-indulgence, but he does gently admonish those who think it wrong to allow any light pleasures into their lives; moderate pleasure and relaxation is essential. The sestet of the sonnet sums up his attitude:

What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with Wine, whence we may rise
To hear the Lute well toucht, or artful voice

Warble immortal Notes and Tuscan Air?

He who of those delights can judge and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

(p. 169; 9-14)

Both this sonnet and the one which follows is in the tradition of the Horation invitation to pleasure.²¹

In Sonnet XXI, addressed to his friend Cyriack, Milton pleas with his friend to momentarily forget his serious concerns and enjoy himself. He phrases his request with cheerful humor:

Today deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth, that after no repenting draws;
Let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intend, and what the French.
(5-8)

In case his friend fails to comply with his request, Milton is prepared with a more convincing reason enjoying a cheerful hour or two. He suggests that often those who protest that they are too busy or too burdened to take a rest are actually displeasing God and may be acting hypocritically. God does not demand constant labor; in fact, He "disapproves that care, though wise in show, / That with superfluous burden loads the day" (13-14). Therefore, Milton concludes, "God sends a cheerful hour" for us to rest and enjoy. Milton not only makes the point with wit but he reveals a side of his personality that many readers tend to overlook, that of the man who enjoys good food, good wine, pleasant conversation, and good company. These things supplement the smiling urbanity which characterizes much of his minor poetry, much of which was written at the same time as his

prose tracts but which reveals a quite different kind of humor--a delight in playful though sophisticated wit.

Another attractive aspect of Milton's personality which some readers overlook is that which shows itself in a great enjoyment of nature. Milton is very responsive to the beauties of nature, and many of his descriptive passages teem with the movement and life of flowers, plants, and animals. Descriptions of nature, no matter how lively, are seldom considered humorous, certainly not comic or funny, but often when extolling the joys and delights of nature, Milton's tone is so exuberant, his praise so elaborate, that the passages have the effect of a very gentle, playful humor.

As we might expect, most of these passages occur in his poetry. However, the first evidence we have of this kind of humor appears in two of Milton's very early prose works, both written in Latin. The first, "Theme on Early Rising," Milton wrote as an advanced grammar school exercise when he was around fifteen or sixteen years old; according to Maurice Kelley and Donald C. Mackenzie, it is "our earliest preserved example of Milton's Latin prose."²² Milton's theme is centered around a proverb, "To arise betime in the morning is the most wholesome thing in the world," and this topic gives him the opportunity to practice the principles of imitation learned in school by combining references and allusions to Cicero, Virgil, Quintilian, Ovid, Homer and Theocritus into an essay which is a new artistic creation.

Milton pursues his argument by enumerating the delights of Dawn which one misses if he is in bed in the early morning. He begins, "Up then, up, you sluggard, and let not soft sheets keep you forever," and continues:

You know not the number of Dawn's delights. Would you feast your eyes? Behold the purple hue of the rising sun, the clear brisk sky, the green growth of the fields, the diversity of all the flowers. Would you give pleasure to your ears? Listen to the melodious harmony of the birds and the soft humming of the bees. Would you satisfy your sense of smell? You will never tire of the sweet odors flowing from the flowers. (I, 1037)

These are the delights; Milton's description is not humorous, but the contrast he sets up between it and the sleepy sluggard is. It is the juxtaposition of statements, descriptions, and accusations throughout this theme which makes it light and playful. The humor builds as Milton piles up one reason after another for rising early. We are reminded, for example, that rising early is essential for bodily health as well as for study, since our "faculties are readiest" at daybreak. Also, we are told it is important for rulers not "to grow fat in endless slumber," and Milton quotes Theocritus and Homer to this effect. Having introduced these Greek writers, Milton soon shifts to mythological characters for support of his argument and asks playfully, "Why do the poets represent Tithonus and Cephalus as lovers of Aurora?" The answer is, "surely because they were light sleepers."

Milton ends his theme by pointing out with exaggeration the "countless evils" which sleep brings to all: "It dulls and blunts the active mind and is the greatest hindrance to good memory: and what can be more shameful than to snore late into the day and to devote the greatest part of your life to a sort of death?" (I, 1038-39). Of course, he can think of at least a thousand more such examples, but to imitate "the overflowing style of the Asiatic school" would be to bore his audience to death. This early work is interesting because it sets a pattern for many of Milton's later descriptions of nature. The listing of nature's sensuous delights and the tendency to see nature's activities in mythological terms are part of the Renaissance lyric tradition,²³ but more particularly Miltonic is the combination of these various elements within one poem and the jocular tone apparent throughout in the ridicule of those "sluggards" who snore through all the beauty of the dawning day.

Milton repeats some of the arguments of this grammar school exercise in another academic exercise, Prolusion I, written while at Cambridge. Like the earlier work, this university Prolusion argues that practical reasons as well as aesthetic ones exist for rising early in the morning. Since both works are addressed to fellow students, both stress that morning is a good time for study or, as Milton puts it in Prolusion I, for returning to the cultured Muses.

Still, the beauties of nature cannot be overlooked, and in this Prologue debating the relative merits of Night and Day, Milton embarks on a long passage praising, even more fully and elaborately than he had in his theme on rising early, the joys of the dawn:

In the first place, there is assuredly no need to describe to you how welcome and how desirable Day is to every living thing. Even the birds cannot hide their delight, but leave their nests at peep of dawn and noise it abroad from the tree-tops in sweetest song, or darting upwards as near as they may to the sun, take their flight to welcome the returning day. First of all these the wakeful cock acclaims the sun's coming, and like a herald bids mankind shake off the bonds of sleep, and rise and run with joy to greet the new-born day. The kids skip in the meadows, and beasts of every kind leap and gambol in delight. The sad heliotrope, who all night long has gazed toward the east, awaiting her beloved Sun, now smiles and beams at her lover's approach. The marigold too and rose, to add their share to the joy of all, open their petals and shed abroad their perfume, which they have kept for the Sun alone, and would not give to Night, shutting themselves up within their little leaves at fall of evening. And all the other flowers raise their heads, drooping and weighed down with dew, and offer themselves to the Sun, mutely begging him to kiss away the tear-drops which his absence brought. The Earth too decks herself in lovelier robes to honour the Sun's coming, and the clouds, arrayed in garb of every hue, attend the rising god in festive train and long procession.

(I, 228; C.E., XII, 137)

In this aubade, or morning song, Milton warms to his topic in a way merely suggested in his earlier prose work. The sensuous appeal is still present, but is much more detailed. The earlier work told us what we would see, hear, and smell if we were awake to nature; this work makes us see for ourselves the delights of nature in the early morning. In the earlier work, the dawn comes alive in the mythological

personage Aurora; here dawn comes alive because it is filled with activity, movement, and life, with each element contributing to the life of the whole. We see all of nature interact in the personification with each animal, plant, and flower celebrating the arrival of day. The picture is humorous because it is not simply a landscape description: it is a picture of a sunflower longing for her lover and smiling because he approaches; it is a picture of flowers begging the sun for a kiss; it is a picture of the earth and the clouds dressing themselves. Each of these pictures is playful, but when combined their copiousness is overwhelming. Not one example will do, not two, not three; Milton seems to include every example from every descriptive poem he has ever read and to elaborate on it.

The conception is consistent with the Renaissance lyric tradition of Mantuan and Sannazaro, but the copiousness is euphuistic. The result is something different from what had been done before. When Petrarch, for example, describes nature, he does so as a contrast to the turmoil of his own inner state. Nature is joyous and happy; he is sad. When Spenser celebrates nature in the "Epithalamion," he does so because it accords with his own joy and bliss. In both cases, the controlling narrator does not describe nature solely for its own sake, but because it contrasts or corresponds with his feelings. In other poems, like Surrey's sonnet, "The Soote Season," where nature is enjoyed in its

own right, the poet's description is still not as lively and extensive as Milton's. Thus, it is the personified pictures Milton creates of a nature which weeps and laughs and loves, as well as the compression and the exuberant and playful tone, which make us smile. Even if we are early risers and generally think of dawn as a pleasant time of day, we are not allowed to be complacent, for this is no ordinary picture of a sunrise. More in the tradition of the epic simile where the rosy-fingered dawn peeks out coquettishly at the world, the description forces us to alter our perception and to feel the life which animates the world.

The personification of the nature descriptions in Prologue I appears also in one of the earliest works of poetry Milton wrote, his paraphrase on Psalm 114. Written when he was fifteen years old, Milton's paraphrase takes full advantage of the personification in the original Hebrew: the entire version is very elaborate, but the descriptions of nature's response to the Lord's deliverance of His people from Egypt is especially so. Where the King James Version of the psalm reads "The sea saw it and fled," Milton has:

That saw the troubl'd Sea, and shivering fled,
And sought to hide his froth-becurled head
Low in the earth (p. 3, 7-9)

Where the Authorized Version has "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs," Milton's lines read:

The high, huge-bellied Mountains skip like Rams
Amongst their Ewes, the little Hills like Lambs.
(11-12)

Milton's added details extend the personification already present in the psalm so that nature is even more alive in its response to the happy events. To say that mountains are skipping like Rams among Ewes is to create a lively picture in the mind's eye, but to make these mountains "huge-bellied" is to remind us of the magnificence of the event which would cause them even to want to attempt to skip. The psalm is a delightful one, and ten years later Milton translates it again, this time into Greek. Merritt Hughes's translation into English of Milton's Greek version²⁴ reveals even further playfulness in the descriptions of nature's response to God's manifestation of His power and glory. In this Greek version, the sea reverently rolls back its roaring waves and gives comfort to the fugitive. The mountains and hills are more lively than ever:

The huge mountains flung themselves about with
mighty leaps like lusty rams in a flourishing garden.
All the little hills skipped like lambs dancing to
the music of the syrinx about their dear mother.
(p. 114)

The picture is lightly humorous because of the contrast in size between huge mountains and small hills and the fact that regardless of size they are jumping, and dancing, and skipping, and leaping around. Because of our usual mental picture of mountains as strong and solid and huge, we smile at the incongruity of seeing them portrayed as active lusty rams. The fact that Milton chose Psalm 114 of all the psalms as the first one to paraphrase and then to translate

later into Greek would indicate a special fondness for it, perhaps because of its personifications of nature.

Written one year after his first paraphrase of Psalm 114 are the "Elegiac Verses" from Milton's *Commonplace Book*. Similar to his grammar school theme on early rising, these verses are a call to the sluggard to arise and enjoy the delights of early morning. Again, all the senses are appealed to with a liveliness which becomes humorous only in the context of the argument of the poem: the "sentinel cock" is alerting every man to his task, "flaming Titan" "scatters his shining radiance over the happy fields," the "Daulian" and the lark pour out their songs, the wild rose and the violets are breathing their perfumes, the corn is flourishing, and "the bounteous daughter of Zephyr is clothing the fields with new verdure" (p. 6). While these descriptions of the delights of early morning are pleasant, they lack the exuberant and humorous picture-creating qualities of the aubade in *Prolusion I*. The principal element of humor here comes, as it does in the grammar school exercise, from the contrast between the lively animation of nature and the lazy person weighed down in his bed, sleeping a dull sleep, where "the seeds of a consuming illness are bred." While nature is fertile, germinating seeds of life, the one in bed is germinating death. Milton exaggerates, of course, but the exaggeration prepares for his final humorous rebuff: "What strength can a sluggard enjoy?" (p. 6).

In Elegy V, the kind of pagan animism which dominates most of these descriptions reaches its apotheosis. Throughout these passages, Milton is urging us to wake up to the world around us; to be asleep to the beauties of nature is to be dead. Elegy V, "On the Coming of Spring," celebrates nature totally and completely. Spring is to be enjoyed for its manifold delights, for its fecundity, and for the inspiration it breathes into the heart of the poet, who must respond in song. The song is joyous and elaborate; with 140 lines it is Milton's longest elegy. Milton omits nothing in his praise of spring, the season in which life returns to earth, a season filled with sexual activity. As William Riley Parker puts it, "there are several references to beds in the poem, together with a good amount of breasts, perfume and heavy breathing."²⁵ Sensuality is not necessarily humorous, but in Elegy V the extravagantly voluptuous passages are because they are so incongruous; we usually think of spring as simply one of the four seasons, not as a time when the earth and the sun are reveling in sensuous passion.

Mythological allusions dominate this poem, and it is nature in mythological guise that engages in the love-making. For example, Phoebus cries to Aurora to "leave the couch of an old man" because "what pleasure is there in the bed of impotence?" (p.39). Aurora responds "with blushing face," not because she is embarrassed but because she is guilty of violating the natural demands of the season. In recompense,

she "acknowledges her guilt" and urges her horses to greater speed, presumably to join her youthful lover, Aeolides. Meanwhile, the reviving earth craves the embraces of Phoebus "as she voluptuously bares her fertile breast." She "breathes the perfume of Arabian harvests," and "twines, her dewy hair" with blossoms, crying to Phoebus to lie with her in the cool grass. She pleads: "Come hither and lay your glories in my lap" (pp. 39-40).

As the "wanton earth breathes out her passion," Cupid "kindles his dying torch in the flame of the sun" and Venus makes her annual renewal, springing afresh out of the warm sea. Hymen is dressed for the occasion, with his fragrant vestment diffusing the perfume of the purple crocus as he awaits the success of the young virgins, each of whom prays "that Cytherea will give her the man of her desire" (pp. 40-41). In Olympus "Jove himself sports with his spouse and invites even the gods that serve in his household to his feast." Back on earth, the satyrs dart through the flowery fields at night. Even Pan joins in, described by Milton, wittily echoing Sannazaro, as "the god who is half goat and the goat who is half god" (p. 41).²⁶ Most memorable of all the pictures Milton creates, however, is the delightful one of the little nymph who "takes to her trembling heels for safety":

And now she hides but as she does so her hope is
to be seen in her poor covert. She darts away, but,
though she runs, she hopes to be overtaken.

(p. 41; 129-130)

She must be caught, indeed she wants to be caught, because all of nature, all of life, must participate in this celebration of spring. The humor here is sportive and light, but it makes us smile as we watch the scenes of spring unfold.

The joyous tone dominating Elegy V is also present in Milton's brief Song, "On May Morning." In the first four lines of this Song, Milton relies again on personification as his chief poetic device:

Now the bright morning Star, Day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
The Flow'ry May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow Cowslip, and the pale Primrose.

(pp. 41-42, 1-4)

The remainder of the poem is a salute to May for inspiring "Mirth and youth and warm desire!" (p. 42, 5). Personification seems to be the key to the humor in many of these descriptions of nature; however, they are humorous only if we see simultaneously the double representation which occurs. In this case, we are encouraged to picture the morning star as a person who leads by the hand across the horizon of this world May, who is also a person dressed in green, perhaps wearing a green apron which is filled with flowers. To some extent, each of us will create his own picture, but we all must see May as a person and that is much different from seeing May merely as a month in which green grass and flowers grow. To ascribe to nature human motives, feelings, and reactions is to make us see it from an unusual

perspective. Consequently, it becomes impossible for us to dismiss nature as just a scenic backdrop to our own lives; personification encourages us to interact with nature's bounty. Yet we know that nature does not really think, and feel, and love so we smile at the picture of May throwing flowers from her lap because we know months do not have laps, but we also smile at ourselves because we are reacting to that picture.

In addition to creating lively and playful pictures, however, personification of nature can also be used more broadly to illuminate the theme of works dealing with profound subjects. Milton's poem "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" illustrates such a usage. This poem, written as Milton's birthday gift to Christ, celebrates through its pervasive images of music and light the triumph of the infant Christ over the gods of paganism. Nature is central to the poem as it responds in sympathy to the event taking place. The most gently humorous descriptions, however, are those which personify nature. Nature must act in accord with the season of the year; since Milton's poem describes the birth of Christ it is set in "the Winter wild," not the appropriate time for the kind of voluptuous activity of Elegy V. But nature reacts not only to the season but also to the event of Christ's birth. Thus,

Nature in awe to him
Had doff't her gaudy trim,
 With her great Master so to sympathize:

It was no season then for her
 To wanton with the Sun, her lusty Paramour.
 (pp. 43-44, 32-36)

Instead of frolicking with the Sun, Nature requests the Air to send a shower of snow to cover her modestly from the eyes of her Maker:

Only with speeches fair
 She woos the gentle Air
 To hide her guilty front with innocent Snow,
 And on her naked shame,
 Pollute with sinful blame,
 The Saintly Veil of Maiden white to throw,
 Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
 Should look so near upon her foul deformities.
 (p. 44, 37-44)

We can smile at Nature's concern because we know that the Maker already has perfect knowledge of all of His creatures, and yet we see also that her feelings are appropriate to the event. When Christ, the sum of all power and love, comes down to earth Nature knows that her gaudiness and her fertility are insufficient in comparison. Her wantonness causes discord in the human family; thus, not a mere snowfall but human peace must be sent to alleviate her fears.²⁷

Throughout the poem, various elements in nature respond to the coming of Christ. For example,

The Winds, with wonder whist,
 Smoothly the waters kiss't,
 Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean, (64-66)

The stars also react; they "Stand fixt in steadfast gaze" (69) and "will not take their flight" (71). The Sun behaves similarly, hiding his head for shame because he sees "a greater Sun appear" (80-83). Thus, nature rejoices as a

person would rejoice. From this day forward, the power of the "old Dragon" will be straitened, the Oracles silenced, and the pagan gods forced to flee, all through the might of a Babe in swaddling bands. In the next to the last stanza of the poem, the infant Son of God is compared to the young Sun at dawn; both disperse the darkness:

So when the Sun in bed,
Curtain'd with cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an Orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to th' infernal jail;
Each fetter'd Ghost slips to his several grave,
And the yellow-skirted Fays
Fly after the Night-steeds, leaving their Moon-lov'd
maze. (229-236)

The picture of the Sun with its chin pillowed upon a wave is gently humorous and delightful because we seldom think of the sun as having a chin, yet we see that the image is appropriate. The sun is in bed and either the bed is curtained with clouds of red or the sun is blushing, knowing he is not worthy of rising since the "greater Sun" has appeared. All of these imaginative details add to the gaiety, and gaiety is fitting here; this is a time for joy; the beginning of the reign of light.

The intricate way in which nature reflects theme in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" does not occur often in Milton's minor poetry. Generally, the descriptions of nature exist for their own beauty and delight. In two of Milton's poems, however, nature specifically reflects the concerns of the persona. In the sonnet, "O Nightingale,"

Milton adopts the persona of the love-stricken poet, and humor results from his playing on the Medieval idea of the contrast between the cuckoo and the nightingale.²⁸ The nightingale warbles in the evening, infusing hope into the Lover's heart as the personified "jolly hours lead on propitious May" (p. 53, 4). This particular lover prays that the nightingale's notes will sound before "the shallow Cuckoo's bill" because that will "portend success" for him in love. He pleads with the nightingale to sing "ere the rude Bird of Hate" foretells his doom. The humor of the persona's situation is heightened by his exaggerated perception of himself as one who has suffered for years. He complains to the nightingale: "thou from year to year hast sung too late / For my relief" (11-12). From his point of view, he is a perennially unsuccessful lover.

In "Arcades," we have a different approach to nature as we see the Genius of the Wood caring for the plants and flowers under his protection. In Elegy V Milton creates his own origin for the Genius of the Wood when he comments that in springtime the world is so attractive the gods descend to it and settle in various areas, with each grove possessing its own deities. This idea of a local deity is associated with practices in Roman religion, and Milton seems to enjoy it since it appears also in "Il Penseroso" and "Lycidas."²⁹ The passage in "Arcades" is unique, however, because it does not merely allude to the Genius of the

Wood; it describes him at work:

For know by lot from Jove I am the pow'r
 Of this fair Wood, and live in Oak'n bow'r.
 To nurse the Saplings tall, and curl the grove
 With Ringlets quaint, and wanton windings wove.
 And all my Plants I save from nightly ill,
 Of noisome winds, and blasting vapors chill;
 And from the Boughs brush off the evil dew,
 And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,
 Or what the cross dire-looking Planet smites,
 Or hurtful Worm with canker'd venom bites.
 When Ev'ning gray doth rise, I fetch my round
 Over the mount, and all this hallow'd ground,
 And early ere the odorous breath of morn
 Awakes the slumb'ring leaves, or tassell'd horn
 Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,
 Number my ranks, and visit every sprout
 With puissant words and murmurs make to bless:
 (p. 78, 44-60)

The flowers and plants are not personified in this passage, but as living things they need attention and care nonetheless. The passage tells us as much about the Genius as it does about nature, and he is the focus of our picture as we visualize him propping up plants, nursing saplings, fighting off the baneful worm, and making his rounds at night. The description of his excessive concern and his tenderness toward nature's vegetation is light and charming.

This passage, like others in this category, is not boisterous or rollickingly funny. Yet all of these passages are playful, sportive, and delightful pictures of nature teeming with life. They encourage us to shake off our complacency, our slumber, and open our eyes and our imaginations. Whether personifying nature, mythologizing it,

or describing it as something that needs tending, Milton is lightly humorous, perhaps suggesting all along that we "arise, haste, arise!":

As might be expected, not all of Milton's minor poetry fits conveniently into a category. Significantly, it is his better works which defy easy schematization. Milton's two laments, "Lycidas" and "Damon's Epitaph," for example, are definitely not humorous works but they both contain a phrase, a line, an allusion which corresponds to the patterns of humor identified in the minor poetry.

In "Lycidas," the words of St. Peter directed against the false shepherds are heavily satiric, in the manner of many of Milton's prose tracts. The false ministers are concerned only with feeding their own stomachs; instead of feeding the flock, they feed on the flock. They are castigated with the weapon of scorn, "grim laughter," as St. Peter describes them creeping, intruding, climbing, and scrambling. His biting ridicule is summed up in the marvelously appropriate epithet, "Blind mouths." These evil and perverted ministers are completely blind to anything but their own desires and hungers as they gobble up voraciously whatever comes in their way; they do not discriminate as they feed on others.³⁰ The sheep, consequently, are not fed and must go hungry. Instead of solid and nourishing food, they have been given only the hot air of the ministers' words; as a result, they are "swoln with wind." The entire passage is

brilliantly metaphoric, ending with the self-serving ministers, the bad shepherds, standing by while the "grim Wolf" "daily devours apace." Thus, our awareness of the evil of these men intensifies as the satiric metaphors progress and build.

In this passage, the persona laments the death of his friend because the Church needs the kind of shepherd/priest he would have become. Earlier in the poem he laments the death on a more personal level because he and Lycidas were "nurst upon the self-same hill," friends and shepherds who fed their flocks together. The poet's memories of their days of happiness together are memories of the good humor which characterizes pleasures:

the Rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to th' Oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danc'd, and Fauns with clov'n heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long,
And old Damaetas lov'd to hear our song. (32-36)

Nature is present throughout "Lycidas," offering various but partial consolations to the one who laments. The flower passage is especially lovely, with the gentle playfulness of the descriptions found in other works by Milton faintly suggested. The flowers weep now, the wan cowslip hangs her "pensive head," but the Vale from which they come is still described in terms "Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks" (137). We know that the Vale will continue to produce lovely flowers. This partial consolation, with the

others in the poem, helps to prepare for the final consolation, one symbolized by the joys of nature: "Tomorrow to fresh Woods and Pastures new" (193).

In both "Lycidas" and "Damon's Epitaph," the poet laments the death of his friend, his fellow shepherd. Both poems also lament the loss of pleasures and joys which were once shared. In Milton's Latin poem, the poet's memories, like those in "Lycidas," are gently humorous. In fact, one of the qualities Thyrsis misses most is Damon's sense of humor. He says:

Or in summer, when the day is at the turn of high noon, and Pan is asleep and out of sight in the shade of the oak, and the nymphs go back to their familiar haunts beneath the waters, and the shepherds hide themselves, and the ploughman snores under the hedge, who then will bring back to me your mirth and Attic salt, your culture and humor? (p. 134; 51-56)

His reference to the snoring ploughman is humorous and one that Damon surely would appreciate. At the same time that Thyrsis laments, he is also aware of how he appears to others in his persistent grief: his sheep mope around and look disgustedly at him; friends call to him to enjoy the pleasures of nature; and Mopsis ridicules him, thinking he is stricken with love. Unaware of the real situation, Mopsis chides him in humorous fashion: "What now, Thyrsis?" "What excess of bile ails you?" (p. 134). Later he reminds Thyrsis that "youth's lawful pursuits are dances and frivolous sports and love always" (p. 135). Thus, Thyrsis repeats with ironic

awareness the comments of his tormentor. Finally, Thyrsis begins to work himself toward a consolation, with both poetry and nature being a part of that consolation. Thyrsis banishes his tears and pictures Damon among the gods. That picture is filled with good humor: "Among the souls of heroes and the immortal gods he drinks the draughts of heaven and quaffs its joys with his sacred lips" (p. 139). In this conclusion, Thyrsis restores to Damon the pleasures whose loss he has been lamenting and expands the meaning of those pleasures as they assume a spirituality.

Milton's companion poems, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," are more overtly humorous. Each contains many delightful scenes, yet the most humorous pictures again seem to be those with personification or myth. "Wreathed smiles, / Such as hang on Hebe's cheek, / And love to live in dimple sleek" (28-30) is playfully humorous, as is the picture of "Laughter holding both his sides" (32) and that of the Cock scattering the darkness and "stoutly" strutting before his Dames (49-52). The humor in these descriptions results again from the personification, from the small, delicate picture of smiles living in a dimple, from the larger picture of laughter as a person holding both his sides. A delight comes also in the way the image makes us see a familiar expression in a new way. We might often have heard of smiles playing on someone's face and not thought of it as humorous, but when we see smiles as little persons running and skipping over a

cheek it is humorous. We may have said at one time that an acquaintance struts like a cock, but when the comparison is reversed and we see the cock actually doing the strutting, before his hens no less, that reversal is comic. Another delightfully humorous passage is the result of the Nut-brown Ale and the stories told under its influence about Fairy Mab and the Goblin. The story of the lumbering Goblin is especially fun:

And he, by Friar's Lantern led,
Tells how the drudging Goblin sweat
To earn his Cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy Flail hath thresh'd the Corn
That ten day-laborers could not end;
Then lies him down the Lubber Fiend,
And, stretch'd out all the Chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And Crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first Cock his Matin rings. (104-114)

The rhyme in this and other passages adds to the humor by placing emphasis on particular actions or descriptions. The rhyme of length and strength, for example, stresses the Goblin's size and makes the picture of him stretched out in front of the fire even more delightful.

This poem, like "Il Penseroso" begins with an exorcism of the excesses of the quality praised in the companion poem.³¹ In each poem these opening lines are satiric as they exaggerate that which should be purged. In "L'Allegro" Melancholy is described with foreboding, born as it is of Cerberus and "blackest" midnight. It lives in Stygian Cave filled with horrid sights and sounds and "brooding darkness." Even

worse, she is entombed under "low-brow'd Rocks" "as ragged" as her locks (1-10). Melancholy may not have a noble parentage but at least she has a father, unlike "vain deluding joys" described in "Il Penseroso" as "The brood of folly without father bred." These joys live in "some idle brain," are associated with fancies, gaudy shapes, and dreams, "the fickle Pensioners of Morpheus' train" (p. 72, 1-10). Thus, in each poem the opening lines are similar in satirizing the birth, dwelling place and companions of the state of mind celebrated in the other.

Despite the fact that "Il Penseroso" is celebrating the pleasures of Melancholy, it is not without humor. Instead of the moon going down, we have the charming description of Cynthia checking "her Dragon yoke, / Gently o'er th' accustomed Oak" (59-60). In contrast to the exuberant aubades we have seen elsewhere in Milton's poetry, in "Il Penseroso" Day arrives much more sedately, but the description is playful nevertheless:

Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not trickt and frounc't as she was wont
With the Attic Boy to hunt,
But kerchieft in a comely Cloud. (122-125)

The humor of this passage resides in the picture of morning dressed in a very subdued manner (perhaps in a tailored suit), her hair covered by a kerchief of clouds, and also in the incongruity between the classical phrasing of "Attic Boy" and the homely and trivial "kerchieft." The Morn is "kerchieft" in a cloud, but soon that cloud and others bring

rain, a welcome pleasure to the pensive man. This man dislikes it when the shower ceases and "the Sun begins to fling / His flaring beams" (131-32). The word "fling" is perfect here, revealing as it does the resentment felt toward the sun by the contemplative person. Humor is present, however, in our awareness of the disproportion between his view of the sun flaunting itself and our view that the sun is merely doing what it is supposed to do; it is shining. That the persona is nonetheless responsive to the pleasures of many aspects of nature is apparent in his reference to "the Bee with Honied thigh" (142). These brief moments of humor do not detract from the argument of "Il Penseroso"; they simply demonstrate that a thoughtful man responds more to the quiet pleasures of nature and of life.

In Milton's Masque, "Comus," Comus wants the Lady to do more than just respond to the quiet pleasures of nature; he wants her to join him and his noisy followers in exploiting all of its delights. Arguing that it is irreverent not to use and enjoy nature's gifts, Comus tempts the Lady with the carpe diem view of life. She must not allow time to slip past, she must seize its pleasures while she is young and beautiful. When the Lady replies to the temptation, she does not disparage nature but she does condemn "swinish gluttony" (776). Nature's gifts must be used wisely and shared equally so that her "full blessings would be well dispens't" (772). Nature is, in fact, a dominant presence

in Comus, a threatening one as the labyrinth of the dark woods in which the Lady is lost but a more friendly one as the place where Echo is invoked by the Lady's voice, where beneficial herbs grow, and where Sabrina and the nymphs rise from the water. Even though Comus argues from nature for immoral purposes, his representation of its life and activity is delightful:

/Nature/ set to work millions of spinning Worms
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk
To deck her Sons; and that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutch't th'all-worshipt ore and precious gems
To store her children with. (715-720)

The Attendant Spirit, in his guise as Thyrsis, also presents a lightly humorous picture of nature when he describes his flocks to the Lady's brothers:

This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savory Herb
Of knotgrass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With Ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting Honeysuckle. (540-545)

Of course, Thyrsis is the good shepherd who contrasts with Comus the bad shepherd. Both are in disguise, one for the purposes of good; one for the purposes of evil. Comus is evil, but he is also a comic figure when we first see him appear in the masque. Like many of those whom Milton makes comic characters in his prose, Comus is surrounded by disorder and chaos. Milton's stage directions make this clear:

Comus enters with a Charming Rod in one hand, his Glass in the other; with him a rout of Monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild Beasts, but otherwise like Men and Women, their Apparel glistering. They come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with Torches in their hands. (p. 92)

The first speech Comus makes to his followers is also comic. Written in rhymed couplets, it encourages exploitation of nature for the purposes of "revelry / Topsy dance and Jollity" (103-04). Night is the appropriate time for such pleasures:

What hath night to do with sleep?
 Night hath better sweets to prove (122-23)

 Come let us our rites begin,
 'Tis only daylight that makes Sin.(125-26)

The speech ends with Comus and his crew breaking into frenetic dance. The sharp contrast between them and the Lady is indicated humorously in Comus's immediate recognition of that difference as he shouts urgently to his followers: "Break off, break off, I feel the different pace / Of some chaste footing near about this ground" (145-46). Forthwith he begins his "charms" and "wily trains" learned from his mother Circe.

Comus's great affection for his mother is another element of comic humor in the masque because it is a travesty, a parody of real love which should be directed toward the good of others. When the Attendant Spirit first describes the birth of Comus, that description is comic. The offspring of Bacchus and Circe, Comus is "Much like his Father, but his Mother more" (57). Learning from his mother all her

arts, Comus left her island and came to the woods to use his magic on those with "fond intemperate thirst" (67). As a result, these men and women lost "their human count'nance, / Th' express resemblance of the gods" (68-69). and had it changed "into some brutish form of Wolf, or Bear, / Or Ounce, or Tiger, Hog, or bearded Goat" (70-71). Ironically, they are unable to perceive "their foul disfigurement, / But boast themselves more comely than before" (74-75). We, however, can perceive the change since we are given insight by the Attendant Spirit. Later, it is these perverted human beings who appear on stage with Comus. Like Salmasius and More, who become comic characters when they lose their positions on the scale of being, like the people in the Tetrachordon sonnets who become owls, asses, and dogs as thy babble noisily, these people are comic. Anyone who deliberately chooses to forfeit his humanity, his close relationship to the divine, in order to follow his baser drives and thus join league with the beasts perverts himself and the noble ends of his creation. He thus deserves to be ridiculed, laughed at, and scorned.

Such laughter is only possible, however, when we are observing these creatures from a distance. When they are confronting us and tempting us, they are not comic. They represent evil and are a real threat. This difference is apparent in the masque when Comus and his followers are described in two different situations. At the beginning,

we are detached from the action; we have not yet met or gotten involved with any of the characters so are not threatened when the Attendant Spirit describes Comus and when Comus himself appears on stage. At this point, Comus and his crew are comic. Later, however, after we have met the Lady and her brothers and have identified with their plight, the Attendant Spirit again describes Comus, in terms almost exactly the same as his initial description (520-530). This time we are apprehensive for the Lady and consequently feel threatened ourselves. Comus is no longer a comic figure but an evil one. Thus, our perception of comedy and humor often depend upon context.

Another kind of comedy occurs in the interchange between the brothers of the Lady. From the moment that the Lady is lost, the Second Brother is worried about her welfare and the dangers which exist in the labyrinth of the woods. His elder brother, however, scoffs at those fears, proclaiming that the shining glory of their sister's virtue will protect her from harm. The Second Brother agrees in principle, but feels nonetheless that the other is a bit too optimistic, overlooking too much the physical helplessness of their sister. But after an extended discussion, he is finally convinced by the arguments of the Elder Brother and proclaims: "How charming is divine Philosophy" (476). Philosophy may be a very satisfying way of life, but not necessarily adequate to a person in real danger. That the Second Brother's

capitulation is not the result of profound conviction is apparent when Thyrsis tells both brothers what has befallen their sister. The Second Brother immediately reverts to his original position, saying: "Is this the confidence / You gave me, Brother?" (582-83). The Elder Brother is as firmly convinced as ever of the truth of his position, asserting in answer: "Virtue may be assail'd but never hurt" (589). He calls his sister's trial a "happy" one, because it will defeat evil and enable her to prove her virtue. Each brother has only a partial view of the Truth, and this is apparent as events unfold. They go to rescue their sister, and rush in, smashing Comus's glass, but forgetting to seize his magic wand. Consequently, neither their virtue nor their sister's can free her from the spell; the supernatural help of Sabrina is necessary. The dialogue between the brothers as well as their impulsive and incomplete rescue reveals with wit the innocence and inexperience of both.

The entire context of the masque situation lends itself to possibilities for humor which twentieth-century readers may sometimes miss. In exploiting the humor inherent in the masque tradition, Milton reveals again the smiling urbanity seen elsewhere in his minor poetry. "Comus" was written in collaboration with Henry Lawes, Milton's friend and music tutor to the Egerton children. Lawes plays the part of the Attendant Spirit, disguised as Thyrsis, and consequently all the allusions to the shepherd's songs

refer both to the character and the person playing the character. Since the Egerton children play the roles of the Lady and the brothers, humor also exists in the distance between their real lives and the conflicts they face, the speeches on chastity and virtue they must give, as characters in the masque. In the second song at the end of the entertainment, the Attendant Spirit brings this double awareness to the fore when he says to the Lord and Lady:

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. (67-71)

Both as characters and as actors, these children have been educated by the masque. The interplay between the brothers and finally their forgetting to seize Comus's wand shows humorously what they need to learn--and do: dependence on grace and not simply human virtue and merit. Because of the two-fold awareness throughout, the work abounds in double entendres. One of the most amusing is the Lady's criticism of "tap'stry Halls / And courts of Princes" (324-25), supposedly the source of courtesy but in reality less courteous than "lowly sheds." A nice irony is added here, however, by the fact that the Lady makes the statement on the basis of incorrect information. She thinks Comus lives in a cottage and that she will find courtesy there. In fact, he lives in a palace, but she would have found no real courtesy from him no matter where he lived. In these examples of

smiling urbanity, in the delightful treatment of nature, and in the satiric descriptions of Comus, Milton's masque contains all three patterns of humor which emerge from a study of his minor poetry.

NOTES

¹All quotations from the poetry, including translations from the Italian and Latin verse, will be from John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odessey Press, 1957). For the Latin poems, line references will be to the Latin, not to the translations.

²In this case, the reference to the "detestable cowls" is doubly humorous for readers of Milton because it reminds them of the comic description of the Paradise of Fools in Paradise Lost (III, 476-97) where the "Cowls, Hoods and Habits" of the Roman Catholic clergy are tossed about as they are caught in a cross wind.

³Such a portrayal occurs elsewhere in English literature. The friar in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, for example, is a real scoundrel, giving "sweet absolution" to women who bestow their favors upon him and to men who offer him money. In Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, Mephistopheles first appears to Faustus as Satan does here to the Pope, in the guise of a friar.

⁴Hughes, footnote no. 172, p. 20.

⁵For a much different reading of this poem, see Macon Cheek, "Milton's 'In Quintum Novembris': An Epic Foreshadowing," SP, 54(1957), 172-84. Since Cheek is concerned with showing Milton's debt to Virgil, he reads the poem as an epic in miniature, not as mock-epic. To do this, Cheek not only overlooks all possibilities of humor and disregards tone, but he also distorts the allegorical passage in which the Pope calls his henchmen Murder and Treason from their cave and orders them to proceed with the plot. In order to support his thesis that this passage is one of the four Virgilian movements in the poem, Cheek describes it as a summoning of the College of Cardinals in open meeting whereby they and the Pope together hatch "the Gunpowder Plot." While Cheek might be able to argue that by implication Murder and Treason are really the College of Cardinals, he fails to do so. The scene as he describes it simply does not exist in the poem.

⁶Several of these are collected by G. Blakemore Evans in "Milton and the Hobson Poems," MLQ 4 (1943), 281-90. In his commentary, Evans mentions the "wire-drawn conceits," harsh metrics, and word play of Milton's poems. He adds that they combine elements of Latin satire, similar to the epigram, with elements of metaphysical wit.

⁷See Willa Evans, "Hobson in Comic Song," PQ, 36(1947), 321-27.

⁸Douglas Bush, ed., The Complete Poetical Works of John Milton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 83.

⁹For a complete discussion see Douglas Bush, A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton, gen ed., Merritt Hughes, I (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 261.

¹⁰Some question exists about the chronological order of Sonnets XI and XII in both the Trinity manuscript and in various editions of Milton's poems. Cf. the discussion by E.A.J. Honigmann, ed., Milton's Sonnets (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), p. 117. I am following the order used by Merritt Hughes.

¹¹Honigmann, p. 118.

¹²Cf. Honigmann's discussion of William Riley Parker's idea that the twins of Latona refer specifically to Milton's "twins," Tetrachordon and Colasterion, which were "born" (published), on the same day, p. 119.

¹³Hughes, footnote no. 15, p. 145.

¹⁴The obvious word play comes in the parallelism between "New Presbyter" and "Old Priest." A more subtle word play exists in the fact that both presbyter and priest derive from the same Greek word, presbyteros. Cf. Hughes, footnote no. 20, p. 145 and John T. Shawcross, ed., The Complete Poetry of John Milton, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963 Anchor Books), footnote no. 11, p. 202.

¹⁵Yale Prose, VI, 760-70. Milton says that urbanity entails "not only elegance and wit (of a decent kind) in conversation, but also the ability to discourse and to reply in an acute and apposite way."

¹⁶Hughes, footnote no. 92, p. 10.

¹⁷Hughes, footnote no. 8, p. 50.

¹⁸Hughes, footnote no. 13, p. 55.

¹⁹Hughes, footnote no. 1, p. 125.

²⁰Hughes, footnote no. 1, p. 140.

²¹Hughes, footnote no. 6, p. 169. For the allusion to Horace in Sonnet XXI see footnote no. 8, p. 169.

²²Maurice Kelley and Donald C. Mackenzie, Appendix H, Yale Prose, I, p. 1035.

²³Cf. for example Surrey's "The Soote Season" and Spenser's "Epithalamion." See also The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic, A. Bartlett Giamatti (Princeton: Univ. Press, 1966).

²⁴Hughes, p. 114.

²⁵William Riley Parker, Milton: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), I, 56.

²⁶Hughes, footnote no. 121, p. 41.

²⁷Cf. Rosemund Tuve, Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), p. 50.

²⁸Hughes, footnote no. 6, p. 53.

²⁹Hughes, footnote no. 26, p. 78.

³⁰For a recent interpretation of the "Blind mouthes" metaphor see W. K. Thomas, "Mouths and Eyes in 'Lycidas'," Milton Quarterly, 9, No. 2 (May, 1975), 30-52. Mr. Thomas is unintentionally humorous in his too literal reading of the passage.

³¹For a discussion of these opening passages see Tuve, p. 24.

CHAPTER III

..JUST DERISION AND THE JOY OF LIFE

As might be expected, Milton's major poetry contains all the types of humor found in both his prose and his minor poetry. This is especially true of Paradise Lost, which, like the prose, indicates an awareness of audience on the part of the persona and has something to teach. Its stated purpose--to justify the ways of God to men--could not be more serious, yet even the most serious idea can be illuminated through the perspective of humor. Humor adds another facet, another dimension, to any subject; because of this, it has the benefit of simultaneously teaching and delighting. In Paradise Lost, humor teaches much as it does in Milton's prose, through satire and "grim laughter." It pleases much as it does in Milton's poetry, through the three categories of humor identified there--a light satire, a smiling urbanity, and a delight in nature. Because Paradise Lost is so vast, however, these categories must be extended and be made more inclusive, especially since God's presence throughout the poem adds a dimension to each category of humor which does not exist in the minor poetry. In Paradise Lost also, as

in Samson Agonistes, a fourth category emerges which can be described as domestic humor, depending as it does upon conversation and interplay between people who are intimately related. While Samson Agonistes also contains this fourth type of humor, it has no examples of smiling urbanity nor of Milton's delight in nature. On the other hand, Paradise Regained does exemplify Milton's delight in nature, but contains no domestic humor. Thus, as a group, the major poetry reveals the same types of humor present in the prose and minor poetry, but individually only Paradise Lost contains all three as well as domestic humor.

While the humor in Paradise Lost is varied, much of the laughter is scornful and this scornful laughter includes the laughter of God. Throughout the poem we become more and more aware of God's perspective, through the hints of the epic voice and the narrative dialogue and through having these hints confirmed when we see God's perspective ourselves in Book III. Then we see that God sits on high viewing the panorama of space, time, and existence. To Him, past, present, and future are one so that events which may seem tragic and momentous to us can be seen by Him as simply one small part of an immense but total scheme. Therefore, God can laugh at events which from His broadly based view are humorous but which to our limited views may not seem humorous. Like the laughter associated with Christ and the Old Testament prophets in Milton's prose, God's laughter is predominantly

"grim," especially when directed toward Satan and the fallen angels. Yet as the epic voice in Paradise Lost reflects God's scorn and joins in His laughter, he provides a perspective for us, the readers, that enables us to join in as well. Although a pattern of scornful laughter is manifested throughout Paradise Lost, it is most apparent in the early books upon rereading the entire poem after having grasped the totality of the celestial cycle which begins and ends in an eternity always under God's control.

When Satan and Beelzebub first awake on the fiery lake, their immediate questions relate to the state of their present existence and to God's purpose in leaving them their "strength entire" (I, 146).¹ In replying to Beelzebub's speculations about God's "business," Satan reveals his decision that no matter what God's purpose he will do all he can to pervert it; if God wants to bring forth good, he and the fallen angels will attempt to pervert that good to evil. He says: "To do aught good never will be our task" (I, 159). Yet even Satan, for all his show of assurance and conviction, is, like Beelzebub, unsure of why God has ceased his thunder and lightning and allowed the fallen angels some calm. He continues to speculate about God's motives:

Let us not slip th'occasion, whether scorn,
Or satiate fury yield it from our Foe. (I, 178-79)

Satan may not know whether it is scorn or satisfied fury that motivates God, but as the poem continues, we see that

it is scorn. While we do not yet see God's laughter at Satan's pretensions, we assume that it is reflected in the scorn the epic voice projects upon Satan. In his descriptions of Satan and the fallen angels throughout the first two books of Paradise Lost, the epic voice creates a picture of their immense size and strength yet at the same time includes details and comparisons which tend to qualify or even undermine that picture. When, for example, Satan first flies from the burning lake, the admiration we feel for his courage and strength in heaving himself up and flying to dry land is undercut by the suggestion of the narrator that what he calls "dry land" (I, 227) is hardly different from the burning lake; the epic voice questions: "if it were Land that ever burn'd / With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire" (I, 228-29). Again, after describing through a metaphor the singed bottom, the stench and smoke, he says with humorous scorn: "Such resting found the sole / Of unblest feet" (I, 237-38). Earlier Satan himself had manifested doubtful hope when he said to Beelzebub:

Whither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,
There rest, if any rest can harbor there. (I, 183-85)

Now, any indication that Satan may have found rest is wryly taken away by the words of the epic voice.

A similar kind of qualification exists in the various similes used throughout these early books to describe Satan and his followers. Seldom are they clearly unambiguous.

The comparison between Satan and the Leviathan exemplifies the point. The comparison is made to indicate Satan's huge size when he is chained to the burning lake. His bulk is as "monstrous" as that of the monsters in the fables to whom he is compared in addition to the Leviathan. The Leviathan simile is the most extended, however:

Leviathan, which God of all his works
 Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream:
 Him haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam
 The Pilot of some small night-founder'd Skiff,
 Deeming some Island, oft, as Seamen tell,
 With fixed Anchor in his scaly rind
 Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night
 Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delays:
 So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay
 Chain'd on the burning Lake. (I, 203-210)

A definite ambiguity is present in this description.² It does convey effectively the mammoth size of Satan, but it encourages us to speculate on the chill the seamen will experience when they awaken and discover what they have done, thus diverting our attention to the simile itself and undermining our wonder and amazement at Satan's huge size. A similar duality exists in the descriptions of the fallen angels as they lie on the fiery lake. The epic voice wants to indicate the vastness of their number; his descriptions do that, but they also render the fallen angels less significant by comparing them to fallen autumn leaves, "scatter'd sedge afloat," and carcasses:

 /the angel forms/ lay intrans't
 Thick as Autumnal Leaves, that strow the Brooks
 In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
 High overarch't imbow's; or scatter'd sedge

Afloat, when with fierce Winds Orion arm'd
 Hath vex't the Red-Sea Coast, whose waves o'erthrew
Busiris and his Memphian Chivalry,
 While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
 The Sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
 From the safe shore thir floating Carcasses
 An broken Chariot Wheels; so thick bestrown
 Abject and lost lay these, covering the Flood,
 Under amazement of thir hideous change. (I, 301-313)

This passage does convey effectively the large numbers of fallen angels, but it also leaves an overall impression of their insignificance. To remind us of the "Sojourners of Goshen" is to remind us that God protected his chosen people and that He is ultimately in control. The similes in this passage reduce the importance of the fallen angels and suggest scorn rather than awe on the part of the epic voice.

Most often we see God's scorn reflected through the comments of the narrator. Occasionally, however Satan himself unconsciously echoes that scorn. This is first apparent in Satan's words to his followers who still grovel on the burning lake. He rebukes them:

. . . have ye chos'n this place
 After the toil of Battle to repose
 Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find
 To slumber here, as in the Vales of Heav'n?
 Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
 To adore the Conqueror? who now beholds
 Cherub and Seraph rolling in the Flood
 With scatter'd Arms and Ensigns. (I, 318-25)

Stung by their leader's sarcasm cherub and seraph cease to roll in the flood, and Satan soon has the fallen legions in control again, setting them the task, under Mammon, of building a large hall for the council he calls. As the epic voice describes their labors, he is again ambiguous. He causes us

to admire the ingenuity and alacrity with which the devils adapt to their environment, but at the same time he makes them look slightly ridiculous as they dig with their spades and pickaxes and work at their assembly line: one group prepares the "liquid fire / Sluiced from the Lake" (I, 701-02), another group separates the dross from the "massy Ore," while the third group

as soon had form'd within the ground
A various mould, and from the boiling cells
By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook.
(I, 705-07)

Mammon is directing all this feverish activity and he is a comic figure as he walks around with his eyes always on the ground:

ev'n in Heav'n his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heav'n's pavement, trodd'n Gold,
Than aught divine. (I, 680-82)

Mammon's avarice foreshadows that of man; as the epic voice indicates:

by him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught,
Ransack'd the Center, and with impious hands
Rifl'd the bowels of thir mother Earth
For Treasures better hid. (I, 684-88)

Just as man will dig for treasures on earth, so the devils are now digging in hell and Mammon leads the way. As a result of his excellent leadership and the incessant toil of his workers, Pandemonium is soon completed. It rises like a breath of wind out of the earth--"Anon out of the earth a Fabric huge / Rose like an Exhalation" (I, 710-11)--

to the accompaniment of music. Thus, the magnificent structure, "Th' ascending pile" (I, 722), is completed, and the epic voice describes tongue-in-cheek its excessive grandeur.

The scornful laughter of the epic voice, apparent in his descriptions of the fallen legions, continues as he describes them entering Pandemonium. They swarm to its doors, "both on the ground and in the air, / Brusht with the hiss of rustling wings" (767-68). This description and the comparison to bees which immediately follows, prepares for the sudden reduction in size of the vast legions which occurs a few lines later:

So thick the aery crowd
Swarm'd and were strait'nd; till the Signal giv'n,
Behold a wonder! they but now who seem'd
In bigness to surpass Earth's Giant Sons
Now less then smallest Dwarfs, in narrow rooms
Throng numberless. (I, 775-80)

The shrinkage is humorous as the fallen angels are compared to dwarfs, to pigmies, and to fairy elves who revel at midnight in the forest while the moon wheels nearer and lights the scene for a belated peasant. Just as the amazed peasant reacts "with joy and fear" (788), we respond with the contradictory emotions of scorn, delight, and awe as these small forms now move "at large, though without number still" throughout the hall. The pun adds sardonic humor to the picture evoked by the unexpectedly sudden shrinking of the "shapes immense."

Only the masses are reduced in size, however; the great leaders prepare for the consult "in thir own dimensions like themselves" (I, 793). As the consult begins, we witness the debate knowing that Satan has already decided upon a plan and that consequently all the words are futile. Thus, we are detached from what the speakers take seriously; our perspective is different from theirs as we watch them enter the fray, arguing their positions fervently and attacking each other with scorn. Thus, we can witness the scorn of devil for devil and see that it ironically mirrors the scorn the epic voice has indicated God has for them and which we will see verified by God Himself in Book III. While Satan in his opening speech tells them to decide on "open War or covert guile" (II, 41), as a method of revenge, he had earlier advised them "To work in close design, by fraud or guile / What force effected not" (I, 646-47). Since all the fallen angels were present at that earlier speech and had heard Satan's advice, any of them who now proposes another plan is in effect rejecting that proposed by Satan. Moloch, the first speaker, is especially scornful, rejecting totally Satan's plan of fraud and guile:

My sentence is for open War: Of Wiles,
 More unexpert, I boast not: them let those
 Contrive who need, or when they need, not now.
 For while they sit contriving, shall the rest,
 Millions that stand in Arms, and longing wait
 The Signal to ascend, sit ling'ring here
 Heav'n's fugitives [?] (II, 51-57)

Following Moloch, Belial rises to speak. He also rejects Satan's plan, but at the same time he ridicules Moloch and those who urge open war. The epic voice prepares us for Belial's argument through his initial description: no one is fairer or more graceful, but all is false; though Belial's "Tongue / Dropt Manna" (II, 112-113), "his thoughts were low" (II, 115). Belial's true nature is apparent in his words, spoken with a pleasing and "persuasive accent" (II, 118) yet revealing cowardice and sloth. He laughs at Moloch for thinking that they could scorn the Almighty's power and suffer no worse than at present (II, 204-208). Belial verbalizes what they all must know and what Satan had suggested in his earlier speech to Beelzebub--God sits on high and laughs at their vain plans:

War therefore, open or conceal'd, alike
 My voice dissuades; for what can force or guile
 With him, or who deceive his mind, whose eye
 Views all things at one view? he from Heav'n's highth
 All these our motions vain, sees and derides.
(II, 187-191)

Belial's words allude to those of Psalm ii, 4: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." They remind us of God's cosmic perspective and anticipate further references to God's laughter throughout Paradise Lost. God laughs because He can "view all things at one view." As readers, we too can laugh because the epic voice gives us a godlike knowledge of the whole. In this scene, we share God's perspective and can laugh at the devils who are heaping scorn upon each other.

Belial says that he laughs at "those who at the Spear are bold" (II, 204) but become frightened when having to endure the pain that follows. Like Belial, Mammon too rejects all thought of war, whether open or covert, yet his reasons are different from Belial's, and in the process of explaining them he scoffs at Belial's words as well as those of any who might think the fallen angels can regain their place in heaven. His vision of the role they would have to play if they were readmitted to heaven is humorous:

Suppose he should relent
 And publish Grace to all, on promise made
 Of new Subjection; with what eyes could we
 Stand in his presence humble, and receive
 Strict Laws impos'd, to celebrate his Throne
 With warbl'd Hymns, and to his Godhead sing
 Forc't Halleluiahs; while he Lordly sits
 Our Envied Sovran. (II, 237-244)

Mammon's language is responsible for the humor here; "warbl'd Hymns" and "Forc't Halleluiahs" are especially effective as is the pun involved in God's sitting "Lordly." It is this language which distinguishes Mammon's picture from others in the poem where the good angels join in the heavenly choir and sing their praise to God. Because of his nature, Mammon will always see praise of God as hypocritical and false, deserving of ridicule. He refuses to understand that the songs of the good angels are appropriate since they indicate love freely given and received. When Mammon, the great materialist, urges the fallen angels to remain in hell and to develop their surroundings to the full, he gains wide-spread approval. The assembly indicates this approval with

loud voice and applause, which the epic voice describes in language implying contempt for speakers and audience:

He scarce had finisht, when such murmur fill'd
Th' Assembly, as when hollow Rocks retain
The sound of blust'ring winds, which all night long
Had rous'd the Sea. (II, 284-87)

The suggestion of "windiness" inside the great hall is appropriate, especially since we have witnessed the scorn with which the fallen angels treat the speeches of each other and especially since we know that all the "wind" has been futile. The "Consult" is in fact ironic--no consultation takes place; Satan simply waits patiently until his stage manager, Beelzebub, arranges the situation to coincide with Satan's plan. When Beelzebub speaks, he laughs at all the earlier speakers but he also points out to them that no matter what they say or how many speeches they give, God is still in control:

For he, be sure,
In highth or depth, still first and last will Reign
Sole King, and of his Kingdom lose no part
By our revolt, but over Hell extend
His Empire, and with Iron Sceptre rule
Us here, as with his Golden those in Heav'n.
What sit we then projecting peace and war?
War hath determin'd us. (II, 323-31)

After the assembly votes to support Beelzebub's counsel, "first devis'd / By Satan, and in part propos'd" (II, 379-80), and after Satan volunteers dramatically to search alone for the new creation, we are left with a picture of the fallen angels which encourages further laughter. As they wait for Satan to return, the fallen

angels pursue various activities to "entertain / The irksome hours" (II, 526-27). Some play games, trying to perfect the skills of war which apparently had been deficient during the war in heaven:

Part curb thir fiery Steeds, or shun the Goal
 With rapid wheels, or fronted Brigads form.

 Others with vast Typhoean rage more fell
 Rend up both Rocks and Hills, and ride the Air
 In whirlwind; Hell scarce holds the wild uproar.
 (II, 531-32; 539-41)

Not all the fallen angels are so physically active, however. Some enjoy music while others engage in oratory and philosophy, but neither activity is completely fulfilling. Those who sing do so about their own heroic deeds, deeds which ended in naught. Those who philosophize find no answers, "in wan'ring mazes lost" (II, 561). Other groups try to explore but their searches too are futile as they rove on, condemned to move restlessly through "Rocks, Caves, Lakes, Fens, Bogs, Dens, and shades of death" (II, 621). Witnessing the futility of all these activities, we laugh at the fallen angels who think they can outwit time and God's law of moral retribution; yet when we realize that their activities preview those of fallen man and that from God's perspective we too may appear as foolish, the laughter is painful.

God's perspective is kept persistently before us in Paradise Lost even by his enemies. Satan suggests to Beelzebub that God may be leaving the fallen angels alone

out of scorn, Belial tells the multitude of fallen angels that God sits on high, sees and derides their actions, and Beelzebub says that though God will always be in control, the devil can work indirectly that He "may least rejoice" over their defeat (II, 339). This awareness on the part of the fallen angels that God laughs at them in scorn is shared by Satan's daughter / lover, Sin. The scene in which Satan meets his offspring Sin and Death is comic, with the infernal Trinity parodying the Holy Trinity in heaven.³ More particularly comic, however, is the interplay among the three characters. At the moment of their meeting, Satan has not known of the existence of Sin and Death and has no idea of how intimately related to him they are. He sees only two grotesque shapes, one sitting on each side of the gates of hell; neither is identifiable. The one seems to be a woman, and is both fair and foul--fair above the waist but foul below, ending "in many a scaly fold / Voluminous and vast" (II, 651-52). This serpentine quality of the lower half of her body immediately associates her with Satan, since the epic voice informs us at the beginning of the poem that it is "Th' infernal Serpent" whose guile seduces our "grand Parents" to revolt (I, 28-36) and since we know that Satan is now beginning his journey to effect that seduction and revolt. Thus, as we watch the meeting between Satan and Sin, we know more than Satan knows and can see the irony in their encounter. The grotesqueness of Sin's appearance is

multiplied by the hell hounds around her middle, and their continuous barking adds a grotesque sound to the sight. Their noise persists even as they creep into her womb and kennel there. This first shape Satan sees is grotesque because of all the details which are vividly described; the second shape is grotesque because it lacks identifying details, being only a black shadow shaking a "dreadful Dart" and appearing to wear a crown.

Satan does not react in fear to these horrible figures, not even when the black monster strides toward him. The initial words between Satan and the monstrous shape indicate the scorn and contempt each holds for the other. Rather ironically, Satan, who has recently made a very high-sounding speech to the fallen angels about the glory of reigning in hell, now ridicules the "hell-born" spirit for daring to contend with a spirit of heaven. Satan forgets that he is no longer a spirit of heaven and has chosen to be an inmate of hell. The "Goblin," however, quickly turns Satan's words back upon him:

And reck'n'st thou thyself with Spirits of Heav'n,
Hell-doom'd, and breath'st defiance here and scorn,
Where I reign King, and to enrage thee more,
Thy King and Lord? Back to thy punishment,
False fugitive. (II, 696-700)

Satan, of course, reacts in proper heroic fashion; unafraid, he prepares to fight. However, as the two ferocious opponents face each other, frowning darkly, the epic voice comments tongue-in-cheek: "and now great deeds / Had been achiev'd,

whereof all Hell had rung" (II, 722-23). A ferocious battle between two such foes could never result in truly great or heroic needs, only in chaos and furor. The comment of the epic voice shows how the concept of greatness is perverted in hell. The battle does not take place, however. Rushing in "with hideous outcry" to stop it, "the Snaky Sorceress" with her first words immediately deflates the heroic pretensions of the combatants by identifying them as father and son. She urges them to cease their hostility toward each other, since it only pleases God "who sits above and laughs the while / At thee ordain'd his drudge." She knows that no matter what they do, no matter how free they appear to be, God is still in control, and she reminds them of "His wrath which one day will destroy ye both" (II, 730-34). Thus, God from His perspective can laugh at them, and we from the perspective the epic voice provides can laugh at them. Since this scene is self-contained and apart from us, dealing only with the unholy family in hell, we are not yet threatened directly. In later scenes in Paradise Lost when Sin and Death have built their bridge to the world and begin to feed on its inhabitants, as part of the fallen race we are immediately threatened and therefore perceive Sin and Death as evil and terrifying. Then, even though we know that God is still in control and that it is only because He allows Sin and Death to exist that they can wreak havoc on the world, our involvement in the world they corrupt prevents

a completely objective view. From God's perspective, they and their posturings are always comic, but from our perspective, Sin and Death are comic only when they are detached from us and our world, as when they are interacting with each other and with Satan.

The principal comedy of the scene in Book II resides in the disproportion between the heroic posturings of Satan and Death and the reality which Sin articulates, that it is only through the will of God that they are even allowed to exist. Additional humor is present in the descriptions throughout the passage and in the dialogue. After Sin's outcry the "Goblin," now described by the epic voice as "the hellish Pest," ceases his aggression. Satan too pauses, asking for the meaning of her words and protesting,

I know thee not, nor ever saw till now
Sight more detestable than him and thee. (II, 744-45)

Satan's words are certainly ironic in the light of Sin's long narration and of his reversal of attitude after his necessary recognition of its truth. She describes to Satan her birth out of his head, how everyone at the assembly of rebellious angels first recoiled from her in horror, calling her Sin, but then she soon grew familiar and pleased all. She grew most familiar, however, with Satan himself who found her more attractive the more he saw in her of himself. They quickly became lovers, and she conceived "a growing burden," a descriptive phrase with a nice ambiguity which becomes ironic only after we see the real "burden" that comes from

her womb. Because of the war in heaven, however, the war which even Sin admits could have given victory only to the Almighty, she is separated from Satan and gives birth alone in hell. Her offspring is Death, who breaks from her womb full-grown. The humor intensifies here if we imagine what Satan's shock must be when he hears Sin's words:

At last this odious offspring whom thou seest
Thine own begotten, breaking violent way
Tore through my entrails. (II, 781-83)

To learn suddenly of the existence of a previously unknown offspring is bad enough, but to have just designated that offspring a detestable sight is worse. The words of Sin must startle Satan, but he says nothing and allows her to finish her story. After Death is born he immediately rapes his mother, and she consequently begets the yelling monsters who continuously howl and gnaw at her. She concludes her story by pointing out the intimate relationship among the three of them and by cautioning Satan that not even he can resist the arrow of Death; none can, "Save he who reigns above" (II, 814). It is Sin's attitude toward the events she describes which provides much of the comedy here. She tells her grotesque story with verve and aplomb, never hesitating or pausing over even the most gruesome details. She makes the entire experience seem almost matter of fact. When, for example, she relates the story of her birth, she reports that all present were amazed, yet she herself shows no sign of amazement; she simply continues with her story,

making it seem perfectly natural that she soon pleased everyone with her attractive graces, Satan most of all, and that she grew pregnant by him:

A Goddess arm'd
 Out of thy head I sprung : amazement seiz'd
 All th' Host of Heaven; back they recoil'd afraid
 At first, and call'd me Sin, and for a Sign
 Portentous held me; but familiar grown,
 I pleas'd, and with attractive graces won
 The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft
 Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing
 Becam'st enamor'd, and such joy thou took'st
 With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd
 A growing burden. (II, 757-767)

Sin does not discriminate very much among events. Instead of subordinating one detail to another, she runs together the stream of events as they occur. This pattern continues when she tells Satan about the birth of his offspring. The experience must have been horrifying, yet she describes it in the same tone she uses to describe her own birth:

At last this odious offspring whom thou seest
 Thine own begotten, breaking violent way
 Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain
 Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
 Transform'd: but he my inbred enemy
 Forth issu'd, brandishing his fatal Dart
 Made to destroy. (II, 781-87)

Her narrative proceeds so quickly that when she says, "Thine own begotten," to Satan she does not seem to be sarcastic or ironic, she is merely stating a fact. Neither does she pause when describing the distortion of the lower part of her body; she gives the impression of one who knows she has an interesting story to tell and wants to get on with it, so she can astound the listener with more grisly details. It is the

incongruity between her words, her tone, her attitude, on the one hand, and the events she describes on the other hand, which is comic.⁴

Satan's reaction is equally comic. Instead of the detestable creatures he had called them earlier, he suddenly becomes a loving father, addressing Sin and Death now as "Dear Daughter" and "fair Son." Totally ignoring Sin's description of their odious offspring, Satan cleverly pretends that his journey had been motivated all along by a concern for their welfare as well as for his and that of the other fallen angels. As the epic voice says, Satan "answer'd smooth":

Dear Daughter, since thou claim'st me for thy Sire,
And my fair Son here shows't me, the dear pledge
Of dalliance had with thee in Heav'n, and joys
Befall'n us unforeseen, unthought of, know
I come no enemy, but to set free
From out this dark and dismal house of pain,
Both him and thee. (II, 817-24)

Satan, who moments earlier was eagerly anticipating battle with Death, now says he comes not as an enemy but as a saviour. Sin and Death fail to see the irony and accept happily Satan's words. Death even grins "horrible a ghastly smile" (II, 846). The episode ends with Sin's breaking God's command and agreeing to open the gates of Hell to Satan. She creates a humorous picture as she moves toward the Gate "rolling her bestial train" (II, 873), and then turns her key in the massive lock; but the gates fly open of their own accord and she is unable to close them; so she is not

even a very good Portress. Just as Bin's power is incomplete and depends upon God for its continuance, so also is that of her son, Death, and of her father, Satan. She reminds them and us continuously throughout the episode that God is in control and is no doubt laughing at them. Her story defuses the heroic pretensions which open the scene, and the entire episode exposes the false heroism of Satan by putting him into the humorous position of the father of an unwanted bastard child forced to pose as happy to confirm his paternity. We are prepared for this because the epic voice has periodically tempered with scorn his descriptions of Satan and the fallen angels and because he has implied and various speakers have attributed to God a scornful attitude toward evil.

When the gates of Hell fly open, Satan and his family peer out into chaos and what they see is intimidating. As Satan discovers in the course of his journey through Chaos, the noise, the constant war and confusion, and the winds are ruled over by a senile dodderer. This senility is apparent when Satan meets Chaos, and the "Anarch old" addresses him with confusion: "I know thee, stranger, who thou art" (II, 990). The humorous picture of Chaos continues as he complains to Satan about the encroachment upon his realm. He wants the size of his territory to remain the same, but with Satan's fall, Hell, "stretching far and wide beneath," reduced his frontiers and now "another World" hangs over his realm, "link'd in a golden Chain" (II, 1003-05). Satan

easily manipulates Chaos by telling him the same thing he had told Sin and Death--that the journey will benefit him as well as Satan. Chaos will not reject any opportunity to regain his lost territory and allows Satan to speed on his way.

Before his personal meeting with the Anarch, however, Satan had been having a difficult time traveling in Chaos. Beginning his journey with great audacity, he soon encountered difficulties. The epic voice points out humorously and concisely the contrast as the journey progressed:

At last his Sail-broad Vans
 He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke
 Uplifted spurns the ground, thence many a League
 As in a cloudy Chair ascending rides
 Audacious, but that seat soon failing, meets
 A vast vacuity: all unawares
 Flutt'ring his pennons vain plumb down he drops
 Ten thousand fadom deep, and to this hour
 Down had been falling, had not by ill chance
 The strong rebuff of some tumultuous cloud
 Instinct with Fire and Nitre hurried him
 As many miles aloft. (II, 927-38)

Satan has had, one might say, the wind knocked out of his sails. He is no longer in control but at the mercy here of an arbitrary wind and ultimately at the mercy of God. This passage illustrates again the shallowness of Satan's heroism; he might have been able to fly from the burning lake but he can fly through Chaos only if the elements are favorable and God is willing. When the epic voice says "ill chance" hurried Satan many miles aloft, he foreshadows the sarcasm of God in Book III when He comments to His Son that

Satan has broken through "all restraint" (80-84) as well as that in Book V when God ironically tells His Son they had better prepare their defense lest they lose their high place (729-31).

The passage also prepares us for the description in Book III of the Paradise of Fools. There, those who in later times choose to follow Satan and his offspring Sin will suffer a fate similar to that of their leader as he now gets caught in the winds of Chaos. Sin points out to her sire that it was his vanity, his conceit, which caused him to love her and it is his vanity, his pride, which allows him to think he can escape from God's scorn; Satan's future followers will also be guilty of excessive pride and consequently they will reside in the place set aside for them, the Limbo of Vanity. Those destined for this place are those who in their time on earth stake all on the things of earth. They put their hope in vain and transient words and deeds as they seek fame and glory.

One of the first groups the epic voice describes as belonging in this Limbo are the builders of Babel who "with vain design" desired to build new Babels. We remember from Scripture that their designs ended in chaos, as the windy words of the builders made noise but communicated nothing since all were speaking in different languages. Later in Paradise Lost, Michael describes God's laughter at these fools, in a passage which renders them ridiculous:

/God/ comes down to see thir City, ere the Tower
 Obstruct Heavn's Tow'rs, and in derision sets
 Upon thir Tongues a various Spirit to rase
 Quite out thir Native Language, and instead
 To sow a jangling noise of words unknown:
 Forthwith a hideous gabble rises loud
 Among the Builders; each to other calls
 Not understood, till hoarse, and all in rage,
 As mockt they storm; great laughter was in Heav'n
 And looking down, to see the hubbub strange
 And hear the din; thus was the building left
 Ridiculous, and the work Confusion nam'd.

(XII, 51-62)

The picture of the gabble, the hubbub, and confusion is funny, but not as subtle or as ironic as the statement that God came down to earth to see the Tower before it began to obstruct the towers of heaven. We too laugh at these people who think they can fool God, and we can see that the windy Paradise of Fools is an appropriate place for them. In addition to babblers, it holds also those who dedicate their lives to the false worship of earthly gods, but then attempt to purchase salvation by putting on the "trumpery" of the various religious orders, many of them waiting until their dying hour to do so. God will not be deceived, however, and they are fools if they think the guise will work. The epic voice invites us to imagine their surprise as they are whisked away from heaven, caught in the crosswind of the Paradise of Fools:

They pass the Planets seven, and pass the fixt,
 And that Crystalline Sphere whose balance weighs
 The Trepidation talkt, and that first mov'd;
 And now Saint Peter at Heav'n's Wicket seems
 To wait them with his Keys, and now at foot
 Of Heav'n's ascent they lift thir Feet, when lo
 A violent cross wind from either Coast

Blows them transverse ten thousand Leagues awry
 Into the devious Air; then might ye see
 Cowls, Hoods and Habits with thir wearers tost
 And flutter'd into Rags, then Reliques, Beads,
 Indulgences, Dispenses, Pardons, Bulls,
 The sport of Winds: all these upwhirl'd aloft
 Fly o'er the backside of the World far off
 Into a Limbo large and broad, since call'd
 The Paradise of Fools. (III, 481-496)

The epic voice makes us see the picture he creates so vividly for us, and to see it is to laugh. We can be certain that God is laughing, just as he laughs at the babblers who try to fool him and who so appropriately end up in the winds at the world's backside. The humor functions here as it does in Milton's prose. We are the audience witnessing the ridicule of fools; as we laugh at them we learn not to duplicate their folly and their vanity. We learn also the result of following the path of Satan.

Throughout the first two books we, as well as the fallen angels, are aware of God's omnipotent presence. In Book III, we see God on high, looking down and viewing His creation:

Now had th' Almighty Father from above,
 From the pure Emphyrean where he sits
 High Thron'd above all highth, bent down his eye,
 His own works and their works at once to view.
 (III, 56-59)

God looks at earth and at Adam and Eve and He sees Satan winging his way toward them, as He beholds past, present, and future. His first words to His Son, sitting at His right hand, are tinged with ironic humor and reveal again the scornful laughter God habitually directs toward Satan:

Only begotten Son, seest thou what rage
 Transports our adversary, whom no bounds
 Prescrib'd, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains
 Heapt on him there, nor yet the main Abyss
 Wide interrupt can hold; so bent he seems
 On desperate revenge, that shall redound
 Upon his own rebellious head. And now
 Through all restraint broke loose he wings his way
 Not far off Heav'n. (III, 80-88)

We know that God could have held Satan in hell had He so desired, and that Satan did not break through "all restraint" because all restraint was not used against him. God is similarly ironic in Book V, where Raphael describes to Adam God's words to His Son concerning Satan's impending rebellion. While Satan thinks that he and his followers are plotting in secret, God who sees all, laughs at their blindness and their pretensions. Smiling, He urges His Son to prepare for the fight lest they lose their high place in heaven:

Son, thou in whom my glory I behold
 In full resplendence, Heir of all my might,
 Nearly it now concerns us to be sure
 Of our Omnipotence, and with what Arms
 We mean to hold what anciently we claim
 Of Deity or Empire, such a foe
 Is rising, who intends to erect his Throne
 Equal to ours, throughout the spacious North;
 Nor so content, hath in his thought to try
 In battle, what our Power is, or our right.
 Let us advise, and to this hazard draw
 With speed what force is left, and all employ
 In our defense, lest unawares we lose
 This our high place, our Sanctuary, our Hill.
 (V, 719-32)

Since by definition God is omnipotent and cannot be defeated, He is obviously joking here. The Son immediately recognizes the humor:

Mighty Father, thou thy foes
 Justly hast in derision, and secure
 Laugh'st at thir vain designs and tumults vain.
 (V, 735-37)

Thus, we see again God's scornful laughter at the vanity which blinds Satan to the fact that he can never defeat God. From God's perspective, Satan's posturings are comic.

These posturings are revealed further as Satan continues his search for the new creation and stops on the sun to ask directions of Uriel. Since Uriel might recognize him if he appeared in his own person, Satan disguises himself as a "stripling Cherub." His motives may be pragmatic and the change may be necessary to accomplish his purpose, but the disguise reduces his stature, both literally and figuratively. According to the playful description of the epic voice, he looks similar to an angel carved in marble on a baroque staircase:

And now a stripling Cherub he appears,
 Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
 Youth smil'd Celestial, and to every Limb
 Suitable grace diffus'd, so well he feign'd;
 Under a Coronet his flowing hair
 In curls on either cheek play'd, wings he wore
 Of many a color'd plume sprinkl'd with Gold,
 His habit fit for speed succinct, and held
 Before his decent steps a Silver wand. (III, 636-44)

The dialogue between him and Uriel is equally humorous, replete with dramatic irony. Satan's disguise works as he approaches Uriel, pretending a desire to see God's new creation so that he can worship God more completely. Of course, we see the vast disproportion here between Satan's stated motive and his real motive, but Uriel does not. The

irony builds as Uriel treats Satan with respect, praising the motive which, as he says to Satan, "led thee hither / From thy Empyrean Mansion" (III, 698-99). To the reader, the pun on "empyrean" is masterful; Satan has come directly from a fiery habitat, but not from the one Uriel has in mind. The scene ends with two types of humor. The first is playful as Uriel directs Satan with a poetic equivalent of words every traveler looking for directions has heard more than once; as he and Satan look down from their vantage point on the sun at all of the vast universe, the earth, the moon, Uriel points to a tiny dot, Paradise, and says; "Thy way thou canst not miss" (III, 735). The humor becomes more ironic and less playful as Satan bows in response, "As to superior Spirits is wont in Heav'n" (III, 737). Had Satan not revolted, had he remained in heaven, Uriel would be bowing to him. Now, however, he must bow to Uriel. The irony is intensified when we recall the stirring words of his speech to Beelzebub in Book I: "To bow and sue for grace / With suppliant knee, . . . That were an ignominy and shame beneath / This downfall" (I, 111-12, 116)). Although he has said that he will not bow to God, his Creator, in order to effect his evil purposes he will bow to a lesser angel. Any admiration we may have felt for him during his earlier speeches, lessens swiftly as we witness his hypocrisy and his fall down the scale of being.

This fall continues in Book IV when Satan arrives in Paradise, has his first sight of Adam and Eve, and begins to set his plan in operation. The scorn the epic voice has for Satan is present throughout the Book, but is first apparent in the satiric description of Satan leaping the wall of Paradise. First he is compared to a prowling, hungry wolf who leaps with ease into the fold. Next, he is compared to a thief climbing into the window of the house of some rich burgher. Satan is thus the "first grand Thief" climbing into God's fold. These comparisons do not come as a surprise to anyone who has read Milton's prose, where he often compares ministers consumed with self-interest to wolves who are feeding on the flock. Just as Satan enters Paradise to pervert God's good, "so since into his Church lewd Hirelings climb" (IV, 193). The hirelings emulate the behavior of their progenitor, Satan, in their perversion of the Church God has given His flock for its well-being. Like much of that in the prose, the laughter here is "grim" as both Satan and the "lewd Hirelings" are scorned in their comparison with each other.

We have seen that Satan will bow to Uriel in order to achieve his ends, and in Book IV he stoops even lower as he decides to assume an animal shape as a vehicle for his seduction of Adam and Eve. His perversion of the Tree of Life as he sits on it in the shape of a cormorant and his attempted perversion of Eve as he squats at her ear like a

toad are mildly humorous descriptions, but the picture of Satan trying out various animal shapes is more deliberately so to reveal Satan's lack of perception. He has witnessed the animals frisking and gamboling playfully around Adam and Eve; he has seen "Bears, Tigers, Ounces, Pardes" and even the huge elephant making mirth, yet because of his perverted nature he has not really seen that they are at peace with each other. Instead, he projects upon them the state of war he continuously embodies. When he alights, for example, among the herd of fourfooted animals, he fails to see that they are "sportive." In trying to find the animal most appropriate to his needs, he becomes one and then another, but the description of his behavior first as a lion then as a tiger reveals the way he perverts the sportiveness of the herd:

. . .about them round
 A Lion now he stalks with fiery glare,
 Then as a Tiger, who by chance hath spi'd
 In some Purlieu two gentle Fawns at play,
 Straight couches close, then rising changes oft
 His couchant watch, as one who chose his ground
 Whence rushing he might surest seize them both
 Gript in each paw. (IV, 401-08)

From one perspective, the picture of Satan as a lion or a tiger stalking his prey is humorous because it is so foolish, pointless, and incongruous in a pre-lapsarian setting. From another perspective, however, it is quite serious because we know that in a post-lapsarian setting animals will behave like this and we know that we will become Satan's prey.⁵

The passage, like many others, works on more than one level simultaneously, showing Milton's ability to combine humorous and serious effects within the rich texture of his epic.

While Book IV contains some lovely descriptions of nature as well as the delightfully humorous portrayal of the animals at play, with the "unwieldy Elephant" attempting to please by wreathing "His Lithe Proboscis," and the charming picture of Uriel, "gliding through the Even / On a Sun-beam, swift as a shooting Star" (IV, 555-56), most of its humor is scornfully satiric and directed against Satan. The scorn culminates in the confrontation between Satan and Gabriel at the end of the book. Just as God laughs at Satan from His vantage point in heaven, so the good angels scorn Satan in the scene which follows their discovery of him squatting like a toad at the ear of Eve. Satan initiates the scorn; indignant that they do not recognize him, he tries to ridicule them by suggesting that they belong to the lowest orders of angels in heaven. One of them, Zephon, "answering scorn with scorn," points out to Satan that he is deceiving himself if he thinks he retains the glorious shape or brightness he had in heaven. Zephon articulates the change we have observed: "thou resembl'st now / Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul" (IV, 839-40). Undeterred, Satan persists in his pride and his scorn, showing even more contempt for Gabriel when he appears before him. These two heap a great deal of scorn upon each other, with Gabriel

undermining all of Satan's proud boasts by commenting on the irony of Satan's proclaiming himself the champion of liberty:

And thou sly hypocrite, who now wouldst seem
 Patron of liberty, who more than thou
 Once fawn'd, and cring'd, and servilely ador'd
 Heav'n's awful Monarch? wherefore but in hope
 To dispossess him, and thyself to reign? (IV, 957-61)

Since we have already seen Satan bowing low to Uriel, we know that Gabriel speaks the truth, that Satan bows to whatever will promote his selfish interests. Instead of being free, he is enslaved; as God has foreseen, his evil redounds upon his own rebellious head. After God's scales appear in the sky, the confrontation between Gabriel and Satan ceases and Satan departs, thus acknowledging the truth of Gabriel's final words. Gabriel agrees that both he and Satan have great strength, but adds:

what folly then
 To boast what Arms can do, since thine no more
 Than Heav'n permits, nor mine. (IV, 1007-09)

That there is a definite limit to what arms, weapons, and war can accomplish is very apparent in the description of the war in heaven. As we have seen, even before the battle begins, God and His Son laugh scornfully at Satan's plan to conquer them and to rule heaven himself. That God thinks lightly of the prospects for success of Satan's revolt is indicated also by his deliberately limiting the strength of the faithful angels to match that of Satan's army. The scorn that God has for Satan is echoed even

before the battle begins by Abdiel, the one faithful servant in the multitude addressed by Satan. Later, Abdiel is praised by God for defending the cause of Truth, "in word mightier than they in Arms" (VI, 32). God thus points out that the power of arms is limited, knowing that Satan will depend upon arms and material strength and power in the ensuing war.

In the first day's battle in that war, Satan is wounded and feels pain for the first time, he endures the scornful taunts of Abdiel and Michael, and his forces are routed. In describing the defeat of "two potent thrones," Raphael himself shows scorn as he points out to Adam the irony that these thrones, and by implication all the rebellious angels, though they had disdained to be less than Gods, "meaner thoughts learn'd in thir flight, / Mangl'd with ghastly wounds through Plate and Mail" (VI, 367-68). The fallen angels, however, do not wish to admit their disappointment and fear and are eager to accept the excuse Satan offers them when they meet together at the end of the day. Satan, an even greater materialist than Mammon, suggests to his followers that God has the advantage over them because of His superior weapons. This "consult" parallels that in hell, with Nisroch playing the role Beelzebub had played in the earlier scene. Nisroch picks up Satan's words and elaborates on them. Pain, he says, is "perfect misery" even if the wounds do heal quickly; anyone who can invent better weapons

so they can inflict such pain on the enemy instead of suffering it themselves will be their deliverer. Satan, rising to the occasion, replies:

Not uninvented that, which thou aright
Believ'st so main to our success, I bring. (VI, 470-71)

Satan then demonstrates his ability, even in heaven, to pervert God's good and make the mind its own place. The floor of heaven is adorned with plants, flowers, and precious gems, but Satan has penetrated the beauty and seen "the materials dark and crude" far underneath. Ironically, he describes his insidious invention of cannon in terms of birth imagery: the crude matter, "in thir dark Nativity the Deep," will yield them, "pregnant with infernal flame," great instruments of mischief. Thus, Satan attempts to turn heaven into hell, and reverses the earlier scene where Mammon had led the fallen angels in trying to turn hell into heaven. Here, Satan's invention is a perverse creation which is overcome only by the intervention of the Son of God, the true Creator.

The Father and His Son know that better weapons will not win the battle for Satan and the fallen angels. They are never really threatened, so the war in heaven is, as Arnold Stein points out, a comic metaphor which illustrates dramatically Satan's fall as he looks down the scale of being and puts his trust and hope in matter rather than looking up the scale to the spiritual essence of God.⁶ The entire war

between the angels is chaotic, throwing into an upheaval the order of heaven. Occasions for scorn abound. Even though we lament the invention of gunpowder and cannon, we can laugh, for example, at the fallen angels as they respond to Satan's announcement of his invention. They are pleased, of course, but also envious, each wondering why he had not been the inventor:

Th' invention all admir'd, and each, how hee
To be th' inventor miss'd, so easy it seem'd
Once found. (VI, 498-500)

They may not have invented the new weapons, but they all participate in building them. Just as they will later in time (though the reader has already observed the scene) when building Pandemonium in hell, they set up their assembly line and begin to dig, and mine, and mingle, and concoct.

The next day they proudly take their weapons to the battlefield, concealing them and scoffing at the enemy in "ambiguous words." The havoc they create with their new arms inspires them further to taunt the enemy. Satan begins with words he obviously perceives as humorous:

O Friends, why come not on these Victors proud?
Erewhile they fierce were coming, and when wee,
To entertain them fair with open Front
And Breast, (what could we more?) propounded terms
Of composition, straight they chang'd thir minds,
Flew off, and into strange vagaries fell,
As they would dance, yet for a dance they seem'd
Somewhat extravagant and wild, perhaps
For joy of offer'd peace: but I suppose
If our proposals once again were heard
We should compel them to a quick result.
(VI, 609-19)

Belial quickly picks up Satan's tone and joins in the fun; in "like gamesome mood" he extends Satan's puns even further:

Leader, the terms we sent were terms of weight,
Of hard contents, and full of force urg'd home,
Such as we might perceive amus'd them all,
And stumbl'd many: who receives them right,
Had need from head to foot well understand;
Not understood, this gift they have besides,
They show us when our foes walk not upright.
(VI, 621-27)

Thus, the epic voice adds, "they among themselves in pleasant vein / Stood scoffing" (VI, 628-29). They laugh because they think they have defeated the "Thunderer" and His host. But soon the good angels retaliate and all heaven breaks loose, as both sides toss hills, rocks, woods, mountains, and trees at each other as weapons. The descriptions are a burlesque of epic battle heroics, which the account implies, have no effect except to bring chaos. Armor, for instance, which protects in all epic scenes is here a hindrance, injuring the angels as it crushes in upon their substance and bruises them. Hills encounter hills in mid-air, being "Hurl'd to and fro with jaculation dire" (IV, 665). In comparison to all this confusion, Raphael says, war seems "a civil Game." Such a war can accomplish nothing; it can only generate scorn. As God says to his Son: "War wearied hath perform'd what War can do" (VI, 695).

The third day of the battle belongs to God and His Son. Satan had arrived at the beginning of the war in a "Sun-bright Chariot" where he sat exalted like a god. Now the true God, the Son, rides forth in his chariot, showing

that Satan's arrival was only a travesty of real power and might. Where Satan had brought chaos, the Son brings order to the landscape of heaven: "Heav'n his wonted face renew'd, / And with fresh Flow'rets Hill and Valley smil'd" (VI, 783-84). Changing his countenance to reveal wrath, the Son next rides against the apostate angels, filling them with fear. But the Son does not want to destroy; He checks His power, wanting only to drive the fallen angels from heaven. His easy victory shows that God's laughter and scorn has been justified. Raphael joins in that scorn as he describes the rout from heaven: the fallen angels are comic figures as they are caught between the Thunder of God from behind and the gap of the deep which opens out in front of them. The epic voice compares them to "a Herd / Of Goats or timorous flock" as they throng together (VI, 857). Finally, they throw themselves from Heaven into the pit of Hell. Hell is not happy about receiving them, and Raphael's description of its response is comic:

Hell heard th' unsufferable noise, Hell saw
 Heav'n ruining from Heav'n, and would have fled
 Affrighted; but strict Fate had cast too deep
 Her dark foundations, and too fast had bound.
(VI, 867-70)

By the time the fallen angels arrive, however, Hell is prepared and, yawning, receives them whole. The entire rout confounds Chaos terribly, and he roars as Satan and his followers fall headlong through his realm. Thus, the battle ends with the burlesque maintained throughout. Some of

these scenes are comic, some parody traditional heroics, but the overall effect is satiric. Through Raphael's description of the war, Milton can satirize Satan's pretensions as a great hero, a great inventor, and a great leader. By ridiculing Satan, by directing "grim laughter" against him, Raphael hopes to teach Adam, just as Milton hopes to teach his audience both here and in the prose, not to be deceived by appearance and not to aspire too high.

The view that the chaos and confusion of the war in heaven is comic satire is reinforced by Milton's more direct satire against the trappings of traditional epic poems in Book IX. He contrasts his poem with epics of the past, contending that his argument is more heroic than theirs because it deals with a different and superior kind of heroism. We have seen in the war in heaven, in an exaggerated manner, that there are limits to what the heroics of war can accomplish. Now, we see that the same is true of even the most heroic battles on earth. The satire is most apparent as Milton contrasts his epic with those of the past:

Since first this Subject for Heroic Song
 Pleas's me long choosing, and beginning late;
 Not sedulous by Nature to indite
 Wars, hitherto the only Argument
 Heroic deem'd, chief maistry to dissect
 With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights
 In Battles feign'd; the better fortitude
 Of Patience and Heroic Martrydom
 Unsung; or to describe Races and Games,
 Or tilting Furniture, emblazon'd Shields,
 Impreses quaint, Caparisons and Steeds;
 Bases and tinsel Trappings, gorgeous Knights
 At Joust and Tournament; then marshall'd Feast

Serv'd up in Hall with Sewers, and Seneschals;
 The skill of Artifice or Office mean,
 Not that which justly gives Heroic name
 To Person or to Poem. (IX, 25-41)

In hell, we have seen the devils practicing war games, in heaven war is a civil game in comparison with the chaotic confusion, and here again war is associated with games. The "tilting furniture," the "Impreses quaint," the "tinsel Trappings," and the "gorgeous Knights" are wonderfully humorous descriptions, forcing us to see the accouterments in a new and more realistic light.⁷

The scorn directed here against heroic posturing and the excesses of war is part of the larger pattern of scorn apparent throughout Paradise Lost. From the beginning of the poem through comments of the narrator and through statements of various characters, we have been aware of God's perspective as He laughs at Satan and the fallen angels. Often, we can join in the laughter, especially when we are detached from the events being described. We can laugh at the fallen angels heaping scorn upon each other in Pandaemonium; we can laugh at Satan, Sin, and Death enjoying their family reunion; we can even laugh at the fallen angels heaving themselves out of heaven. After the fall of Adam and Eve it is much more difficult for us to laugh because we identify with them; in their fall is our fall and Satan seems to have triumphed. Yet, even then, God is still in control, and He will not allow Satan to have a total victory. As

Satan's followers at the Tower of Babel discover later, God will not be mocked; He will turn all laughter back against the one who laughs at Him.

Satan does attempt to laugh at God upon his return to hell following the fall of Adam and Eve. His return itself is humorous, revealing his desire for public acclaim. Wanting to surprise his fallen legions, Satan reenters hell disguised as a "Plebian Angel" of the lowest order and passes unnoticed amongst them; ascending his throne invisibly, he sits and observes for a time before he suddenly reveals himself in all his bright glory. He receives the desired response from his surprised followers as they flock to him with joy and congratulations. In elaborating the details of his conquest on behalf of the fallen angels, Satan foolishly ridicules Adam and Eve, as well as God, encouraging the laughter of his audience:

Him by fraud I have seduc'd
From his Creator, and the more to increase
Your wonder, with an Apple; he thereat
Offended, worth your laughter, hath giv'n up
Both his beloved Man and all his World,
To Sin and Death a prey, and so to us. (X, 485-90)

As a result of the Fall, God does allow Satan and his followers to roam throughout the world, but that He has certainly not given up either Man or His new creation has been made clear in Book III. Satan knows that he will be punished for his deeds, but he interprets the Son's judgment upon him much too literally and, therefore, narrowly. Thinking he will merely be bruised, Satan scoffs

at the judgment: "A World who would not purchase with a bruise, / Or much more grievous pain?" (X, 500-501). Satan either fails to see or is too proud to admit that he sees that the psychological and spiritual wounds he will have to suffer will be much more painful than any physical wound.

God is in control, and from His perspective, Satan's words are hollow, mere wind to be turned back upon him. Thus, it is fitting that Satan and his followers are turned into hissing, crawling serpents. The transformation reminds Satan that God does scorn him and that he cannot escape God's laughter or His power. By effecting the transformation in Satan's own realm of hell, God shows Satan that he can never truly reign in any place; that he is in hell, that he goes anywhere, only through God's permission. The scene is filled with comedy as Satan and his court are revealed as being a mere travesty of real power and might. Satan expects applause and receives scorn instead:

So having said, a while he stood, expecting
Thir universal shout and high applause
To fill his ear, when contrary he hears
On all sides, from innumerable tongues
A dismal universal hiss, the sound
Of public scorn. (X, 504-09)

He wonders at the sight, but is himself soon turned into "A monstrous Serpent on his Belly prone" and becomes aware that he is no longer in control:

a greater power
Now rul'd him, punisht in the shape he sinn'd,
According to his doom: he would have spoke,
But hiss for hiss return'd with forked tongue
To forked tongue, for now were all transform'd

Alike, to Serpents all as accessories
 To his bold Riot; dreadful was the din
 Of hissing through the Hall, thick swarming now
 With complicated monsters, head and tail.
 (X, 515-23)

His words have become a hiss addressed to swarming, intertwined monsters. This sign of God's scorn spreads as Satan, now the size of a dragon, leads those in Pandaemonium out to meet the remainder of the devils in an open field. The epic voice invites us to imagine the surprise of the waiting hosts at the transformation of Satan and his prime cohorts. As the troops outside stood:

Sublime with expectation when to see
 In Triumph issuing forth thir glorious Chief;
 They saw, but other sight instead, a crowd
 Of ugly Serpents; horror on them fell. (X, 536-39)

God demonstrates His power appropriately by making them objects of laughter as they too begin to change into serpents. Intending to praise their leader, they can only hiss at him:

Thus was th' applause they meant,
 Turn'd to exploding hiss, triumph to shame
 Cast on themselves form thir own mouths. (X 545-47)

The punishment is even more fitting and the description more comic as they hasten to the fruit-laden tree which suddenly springs up in their midst:

Yet parcht with scalding thirst and hunger fierce,
 Though to delude them sent, could not abstain,
 But on they roll'd in heaps, and up the Trees
 Climbing, sat thicker than the snaky locks
 That curl'd Megaera: greedily they pluck'd
 The Fruitage fair to sight, like that which grew
 Near that bituminous Lake where Sodom flam'd;
 This more delusive, not the touch, but taste
 Deceiv'd; they fondly thinking to allay
 Thir appetite with gust, instead of Fruit
 Chew'd bitter Ashes, which th' offended taste

With spattering noise rejected: oft they assay'd,
 Hunger and thirst constraining, drugg'd as oft
 With hatefullest disrelish writh'd thir jaws
 With soot and cinders fill'd; so oft they fell
 Into the same illusion, not as Man
 Whom they triumph'd, once lapst. (X, 556-72)

The clear, straight-forward language of "on they roll'd in heaps" makes this line an especially effective comic description, and from this point on the comedy builds progressively with the piling up of the descriptive phrases which follow. The verbs are especially effective as they contribute graphically to the overall picture of motion--the serpents roll in heaps, they climb, they sit, next they pluck, they chew, with spattering noise they reject what they chew, then they writhe their jaws which are filled with soot and cinders. Moreover, we know that the chewing, spitting, and writhing is repeated over and over again as the serpent/devils return continuously to the fruit. Satan had begun his speech to his followers by laughing at Adam and Eve for being seduced by an apple, now the joke is on him. He and his followers are likewise seduced, only they are even more foolish than Man as they continue to eat the fruit and as it continues to turn to ashes in their mouths. The scene is comic so that we can share in God's triumph as He turns their scorn and laughter against them.

While Satan and his crew are being humiliated in hell, Sin and Death arrive in Paradise and begin to take up actual residence there. They gloat over the great damage they will soon inflict, but again we are aware, as we are

in the scene in hell, of God's more complete power. Here, we see God looking down at Sin and Death, and from His perspective they are no more significant than dogs in heat. In His words to His Son, He points out that the "Dogs of Hell" as well as Satan and his "Adherents" have misunderstood His purpose all along:

that with so much ease
 I suffer them to enter and possess
 A place so heav'nly, and conniving seem
 To gratify my scornful Enemies,
 That laugh, as if transported with some fit
 Of Passion, I to them had quitted all,
 At random yielded up to their misrule;
 And know not that I call'd and drew them thither
 My Hell-hounds, to lick up the draff and flith
 Which man's polluting Sin with taint hath shed
 On what was pure, till cramm'd and gorg'd, nigh burst
 With suckt and glutted offal, at one sling
 Of thy victorious Arm, well-pleasing Son,
 Both Sin, and Death, and yawning Grave at last
 Through Chaos hurl'd, obstruct the mouth of Hell
 For ever, and seal up his ravenous Jaws.

(X, 622-64)

God's description of Sin and Death stuffing and cramming themselves and then nearly bursting with offal is grotesque, but it is the same kind of "grim laughter" Milton uses in his prose against those who pervert God's Truth. These "Hell-hounds" are perverting God's creation and deserve to be ridiculed because they think they are acting through their own power and might, unaware that it is God's power which allows them to exist and unaware that God scorns them.

Thus, scorn is a dominant pattern throughout Paradise Lost, seen often in God's laughter and in the derisive comments of the epic voice. Most often the scorn is

directed against Satan, the other fallen angels, and Sin and Death. In Book XII, it is directed also against the earthly followers of Satan, the builders of the Tower of Babel. Individually, not all of the scenes depicting God's laughter are humorous, but together they create a pattern of laughter which encourages us to see that from God's perspective many things which seem grotesque and terrifying to us deserve scorn. In the overall context of the poem, the laughter reminds us that we should never lose sight of God's larger plan. The celestial cycle projected in Paradise Lost shows us that through the prevenient grace of the Father and through the sacrifice of the Son, and through our right choice, we too will one day be able to laugh at Satan and his comic pretensions.

Not all of God's laughter is heavily scornful, however. Occasionally He laughs, not because man is sinful, but because he presumes too much. Adam illustrates such presumption when he begins to ask Raphael scientific questions about the mechanical workings of the world. Raphael replies that some secrets "the great Architect" wisely conceals from both angels and men so that they can more readily admire God's works. Or, he speculates, perhaps God keeps such secrets deliberately so that He can watch man exercise his ingenuity in trying to understand them:

he his Fabric of the Heav'ns
Hath left to thir disputes, perhaps to move
His laughter at thir quaint Opinions wide
Hereafter, when they come to model Heav'n

And calculate the Stars, how they will wield
 The mighty frame, how build, unbuild, contrive
 To save appearances, how gird the Sphere
 With Centric and Eccentric scribbl'd o'er,
 Cycle and Epicycle, Orb in Orb. (VIII, 76-84)

This description of man projecting various theories upon God's creation is humorous because it reveals so well man's supreme confidence that he can explain the phenomena, he can define and control anything he desires. The language in this passage shows how ridiculous that assumption is when it reduces all of God's creation to a sphere covered with scribbles of lines and circles. God will no doubt be amused by man's attempt at explaining His creation, and Raphael too finds it humorous. Gently teasing Adam, Raphael suggests that he is setting the pattern for his race: "Already by thy reasoning this I guess / Who are to lead thy offspring" (VIII, 85-86).

This exchange between Raphael and Adam is playful and most of the conversation between the angel and the first man is representative of the humor of smiling urbanity. Naturally, Adam is awed by the arrival of the angel, and we too have been awed by the change from God and his angel's swift flight through the universe. But God sends Raphael to Adam, to converse with him in his bower, "as friend with friend" (V, 229); Raphael is thus a mediator between the world of the supernatural, the spiritual, and the world of the natural, the human.⁸ Much of the humor in the scenes between the angel and man is a result of the meeting between

two such disparate worlds. When Raphael first arrives in Paradise, he pauses for a moment to adjust himself to the world he has entered; discarding the bird-like appearance of his flight from Heaven, he returns to his proper shape, that of a bright seraph with six wings:

Like Maia's son he stood,
And shook his Plumes, that Heav'nly fragrance fill'd
The circuit wide. Straight knew him all the Bands
Of Angels under watch. (V, 284-87)

This lightly humorous description juxtaposes the anthropomorphic image of Mercury, the cloud of fragrance from heaven and the feather pluming usually associated with creatures of earth. The suggestion that the angels guarding Paradise were immediately aware of his presence because of the fragrance he was exuding adds further delight to the picture.

Raphael, the gracious and "sociable" angel is more than willing to join Adam and Eve in food and conversation, and it is Adam who is most humorous in the meeting between angel and man. Adam tries to be the perfect host, sending his wife to gather food quickly and to prepare the bower for their angel guest. Domestic humor and smiling urbanity intermix throughout these passages, the first revealed in the preparations Adam and Eve make for their unexpected guest, the second in Adam's various attempts at conversational urbanity. Because of the human comedy portrayed here, we can readily identify with Adam as he strives to entertain his angel guest.

Domestic humor is apparent early in the passage as Adam sends Eve off to prepare for the occasion. Both husband and wife are grateful that there is no lack of food and they are pleased at the opportunity to share their gifts. The description of the care Eve exhibits in choosing and gathering the food is delightfully humorous because it is so typical of the housewife's concern, and as such is mildly incongruous behavior for the first lady, our "Grand" parent:

. . . with dispatchful looks in haste
 She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent
 What choice to choose for delicacy best,
 What order, so contriv'd as not to mix
 Tastes, not well join'd, inelegant, but bring
 Taste after taste upheld with kindest change.
 (V, 331-36)

Her preparations of the food and of her bower also reveal her eagerness to be the perfect and proper hostess:

. . . fruit of all kinds, in coat,
 Rough, or smooth-rin'd, or bearded husk, or shell
 She gathers, Tribute large, and on the board
 Heaps with unsparing hand; for drink the Grape
 She crushes, inoffensive must, and meaths
 From many a berry, and from sweet kernels prest
 She tempers dulcet creams, nor these to hold
 Wants her fit vessels pure, then strews the ground
 With Rose and Odors from the shrub unfum'd.
 (V, 341-49)

Much of the comedy here resides in our surprise at seeing Adam and Eve behave as we would behave in such circumstances.

Adam and Eve receive Raphael graciously and lead him to their table, a table "rais'd of grassy turf" with "mossy seats" around it (V, 391-92). After being seated, they begin to hold discourse, "No fear lest Dinner cool."

We have seen Eve's preparation of the food; we know what the group will have to eat and know it will not cool. We have also seen Adam's desire to be the perfect host and the haste he has urged on Eve to prepare the food. But Raphael is no ordinary guest; he has been sent from God to nourish them with food for their spiritual needs and they can be fed only through discourse. Thus, the food they have for Raphael will not cool, but Raphael's food for them must be eaten and digested now, while he is present. The line is comic because it seems an irrelevant allusion to the fallen world, but it is appropriate to the scene because it pinpoints one of the differences between the two worlds which Adam and Raphael represent. Those two worlds are also different from our world where dinner does cool, and that fact can cause fruitful discussion to cease or be sidetracked.

For Adam as host, it is important that food be offered and that he knows it will not cool if not eaten immediately. This is the kind of detail which fills daily life. We discover with Adam that Raphael can enjoy the food but that it is also for him a metaphor for describing the similarities between the needs of angels and the needs of Man, and for describing the order which governs all. Thus, the world of Raphael, the world of Adam, and our world join as the three eat together, falling "to thir viands," even Raphael with "keen dispatch / Of real hunger" (V, 434, 436-37).

Many delightfully playful scenes occur as Adam and Eve entertain their heavenly guest, but one pattern which is humorous throughout is Adam's curiosity. He is eager to please Raphael, but more than anything else, he wants to find out all he can from the Angel during his visit. Adam asks about the angels, he asks about the Creator, he asks about the Creation. Except for the time when Adam probes too deeply, Raphael is happy to comply with Adam's requests for information, accommodating his stories of events to Adam's ability to understand. As the epic voice points out with some amusement, Adam responds with such delight that he is transfixed by Raphael's words and by his voice:

The Angel ended, and in Adam's Ear
 So Charming left his voice, that he a while
 Thought him still speaking, still stood fixt to hear;
 Then as new wak't thus gratefully repli'd.
 (VIII, 1-4)

We laugh sympathetically at Adam's sudden jerk back to reality because his reaction to Raphael's stories of the war in heaven and of Creation is so natural and so human; we, too, have been charmed, often to the point of forgetting that we are not listening directly to the epic voice until his asides to Adam have reminded us (VI, 297-301, 73-76, VII, 524, 560-62). Natural also is his desire to keep the angel with him as long as possible. Adam urges Raphael to remain, promising in return to tell the story of his own creation. Adam is aware of his tactic and acknowledges it with a beguiling self-deprecation:

. . . now hear mee relate
 My Story, which perhaps thou hast not heard;
 And Day is yet not spent; till then thou seest
 How subtly to detain thee I devise,
 Inviting thee to hear while I relate,
 Fond, were it not in hope of thy reply:
 For while I sit with thee, I seem in Heav'n.
 (VIII, 204-10)

Again we smile because Adam's words are so spontaneous and so natural. But they have their desired effect; Raphael agrees to stay. Adam, however, does not know how to begin his story:

For Man to tell how human Life began
 Is hard; for who himself beginning knew?
 Desire with thee still longer to converse
 Induc'd me. (VIII, 250-53)

Of course, Adam soon recovers and tells the story of his creation, omitting nothing. He reveals his own smiling urbanity as he describes his initial awakening, his discovery of self, his response to God, God's commandment, and his naming of the animals. The most humorous part of his story, however, occurs in the exchange between him and God over the subject of a mate. The intelligence which allows Adam to classify and name the animals also indicates to him that he alone is not provided with an appropriate mate. He broaches the subject cautiously to God, a "vision bright," who replies "as with a smile" (VIII, 368). God first tells him to enjoy the animals, who have a form of rationality. But Adam is not satisfied; he answers that since "the brute / Cannot be human consort" (VIII, 391-92) he needs a companion of his own kind. God's reply is filled

with kindly humor:

A nice and subtle happiness I see
 Thou to thyself proposest, in the choice
 Of thy Associates, Adam. (VIII, 399-401)

God knows what Adam wants but deliberately evades the issue by pointing out that He is alone and needs no companion. Adam pleases God when he replies that God does not need to propagate, since he is already infinite. Because He is pleased, God acknowledges that He has been trying Adam to see how well he can "judge of fit and meet," and promises to grant his request:

What next I bring shall please thee, be assur'd,
 Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,
 Thy wish, exactly to thy heart's desire.
 (VIII, 449-51)

Adam tells his story well, in a way that is engaging and witty.

As God has promised, Adam is delighted with Eve, and he praises her in such glowing terms that Raphael frowns, warning Adam not to confuse passion with love. Adam, only "half-abash'd," replies that it is the harmony of his mind and soul with Eve's that he values most. Then he turns the tables on Raphael by asking him how heavenly spirits express their love. Raphael reacts physically to the question: he glows "celestial rosy red, Love's proper hue" (VIII, 618-20). Whether Raphael is blushing because he is embarrassed at Adam's question or whether he is glowing with the thought of God's heavenly love, this description is amusing because it contrasts so vividly with the stateliness of his arrival,

making Raphael seem quite human for a moment as he appears relieved that the sun is setting, to cut short his discussion of angelic love. Raphael's brief comment, however, supports again the truth of his message that angel and man share the same substance, only in different degrees.

Eve's role throughout Raphael's visit demonstrates much of the domestic humor in the scene. She is consistently the perfect housewife, gathering and arranging the food, tidying the bower. She is also the perfect hostess as she listens attentively but says nothing, simply gracing the scene with her beauty. Even Raphael admires her beauty, and as she leaves the bower, he joins Adam in admiring her:

And from about her shot Darts of desire
 Into all Eyes to wish her still in sight.
 (VIII, 62-63)

Just as Adam and Eve can walk naked and enjoy love-making and still be innocent, so can Adam and Raphael look at Eve with desire and still be innocent. In pre-lapsarian Eden, pleasures are untainted and physical responses can be described with humor because they can be fully enjoyed. Eve's reason for leaving the bower is especially delightful. Adam has just begun asking Raphael some highly complex questions about the motions of the planets. Eve leaves, not because she does not understand the discussion but because she prefers to hear it related by Adam:

. . . such pleasure she reserv'd,
Adam relating, she sole Auditress;
 Her Husband the Relater she preferr'd
 Before the Angel, and of him to ask

Chose rather: hee, she knew, would intermix
 Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute
 With conjugal Caresses, from his Lip
 Not Words alone pleas'd her. (VIII, 50-57)

We smile as we read this passage because it is so disarming. Most of us would probably enjoy learning in such a way, but because we are post-lapsarian creatures we cannot admit it with such charming and innocent simplicity.

Of course, smiles and caresses can be distracting, even in pre-lapsarian Eden, and Eve points this out to Adam in what becomes the closest thing to a lovers' quarrel we have in Paradise before the Fall. The "quarrel" begins humorously, with Eve lamenting the rapid growth of their garden:

Adam, well may we labor still to dress
 This Garden, still to tend Plant, Herb and Flow'r,
 Our pleasant task enjoin'd, but till more hands
 Aid us, the work under our labor grows,
 Luxurious by restraint; what we by day
 Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,
 One night or two with wanton growth derides
 Tending to wild. Thou therefore now advise
 Or hear what to my mind first thoughts present.
 (IX, 205-13)

We smile here at Eve's description of lopping, and pruning, and propping, and binding and also at the quickness of her suggestion for alleviating the situation. The lack of a comma between "advise" and "Or hear" indicates that she does not slow down or pause; she does not let Adam say a word until she has told him her opinion. Since she knows it will be some time before the extra hands will be there to help them, she suggests that they divide their labors. Her

argument humorously though innocently reveals much about her, her relationship with Adam, and her wish to feel deserving of God's gifts:

For while so near each other thus all day
 Our task we choose, what wonder if so near
 Looks intervene and smiles, or object new
 Casual discourse draw on, which intermits
 Our day's work brought to little, though begun
 Early, and th' hour of Supper comes unearn'd.
 (IX, 220-25)

After Adam points out that God did not intend their work to be so hard as to debar them from their "sweet intercourse / Of looks and smiles" (IX, 238-39), the difference of opinion becomes more serious, yet remains humorous in its portrayal of the behavior of people who disagree, particularly two who love each other. Adam thinks his position is correct, Eve thinks hers is correct; neither wants to attack or hurt the feelings of the other, each will give way a little, yet each wants the other to give in. A slight edginess begins to betray the strain in Eve's "I expected not to hear" (281) and Adam's "Trial will come unsought" (366). As we witness the "quarrel," we can see both sides simultaneously and can recognize our own foolish behavior in theirs: her over-sensitive reaction to his concern lest she be tried alone and his haste in conceding the issue in her favor.

No one really wins in such a situation and in this case because "domestic Adam" (IX, 318) yields both suffer. Eve goes off to work alone, she is seduced by Satan, and she falls. Adam looks down the scale of being to her instead

of upward to God and falls also. The results of their fall are immediately apparent in the change in Adam's sense of humor. Before the Fall, Adam's humor was characterized by a smiling urbanity; in his conversations with Raphael, he is charming and witty, ready to laugh at himself. Immediately after the Fall, ensnared in lust and passion, Adam attempts a leering and suggestive joke:

Eve, now I see thou are exact of taste,
And elegant, of Sapience no small part,
.....
Much pleasure we have lost, while we abstain'd
From this delightful Fruit, nor known till now
True relish, tasting; if such pleasure be
In things to us forbidden, it might be wish'd,
For this one Tree had been forbidden ten.
But come, so well refresh't, now let us play,
As meet is, after such delicious Fare.

(IX, 1017-18, 1022-28)

These words show how far Adam has fallen. Soon, the lust will burn out, recriminations will begin, and Adam will be reduced to making venomous jibes at Eve and at women in general. Thus is lost the gentle playfulness of the humor apparent in the exchanges between Adam and Eve, between Man and angel, between Man and God before the Fall.

The gentle playfulness of nature is also lost to Man after the Fall. Now the roses have thorns and nature is an environment hostile to Man. Previous to the Fall, however, nature was one with Man, totally in sympathy with him, and it was through nature that Man came to know and praise God. The kind of playful and joyous delight found in descriptions of nature in some of Milton's prose and in much of his minor

poetry abounds in Paradise Lost. It is present throughout the various descriptions of the Garden, but it culminates in Book VII, as Raphael tells Adam the story of Creation. As with such descriptions in the minor poetry, the humor here is very light, characterized by playful exuberance, not leading to laughter but to an occasional smile.

Adam is aware of nature even before he is aware of himself. When he first awakens after his creation, he looks upward toward heaven, gazing for a time at "the ample sky," then he springs up off the ground and looks around at the bounties of nature:

about me round I saw
 Hill, Dale, and shady Woods, and sunny Plains,
 And liquid Lapse of murmuring Streams; by these,
 Creatures that liv'd, and mov'd, and walk'd, or flew,
 Birds on the branches warbling; all things smiled,
 With fragrance and with joy my heart o'erflow'd.
 (VIII, 261-66)

Adam's delight in nature is expressed perfectly in his phrase, "all things smiled." He feels happy and he feels at peace. Only after he knows that he is in accord with his environment does he begin to peruse himself in an attempt to discover his own identity. When he discovers that he can speak, he speaks first to nature, sensing that somehow it can tell him who he is:

Thou Sun, said I, fair Light,
 And thou enlight'n'd Earth, so fresh and gay,
 Ye Hills and Dales, ye Rivers, Woods, and Plains
 And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,
 Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?
 (VIII, 273-277)

It is in the middle of nature that God first comes to Adam, takes him by the hand, and leads him through nature to "the Garden of bliss." There God gives Adam His commandment but also gives to him the bounties of the earth to enjoy and to rule. Adam begins his rule by naming the animals which approach in pairs before him. God explains to Adam that the fish too will pay him fealty but that they cannot appear before him:

understand the same
Of Fish within thir wat'ry residence,
Not hither summon'd, since they cannot change
Thir Element to draw the thinner Air.

(VIII, 345-48)

We smile at God's explanation because it seems so obvious to us, but then we remember that it was not obvious to newly-created Adam. After Eve is created, she and Adam together will enjoy the pleasures of nature which God now presents to Adam.

In Book IV of Paradise Lost, we first see Adam and Eve in Paradise and we realize at once that they are totally in accord with nature. They live in her midst, surrounded by plants, trees, streams, and animals. When they have finished their day's work among the trees and plants, they sit down near a stream to sup, with nature supplying all that is needed for their meal:

More grateful, to thir Supper Fruits they fell,
Nectarine Fruits which the compliant boughs
Yielded them, side-long as they sat recline
On the soft downy Bank damaskt with flow'rs:
The savory pulp they chew, and in the rind
Still as they thirsted scoop the brimming stream.

(IV, 331-36)

While "to thir Supper Fruits they fell" is an ominous prophetic pun, it is nature which dominates this scene. The setting and the delight of Adam and Eve in each other's company evokes smiles from them and from us. Nor are the animals left out of the scene, supplying entertainment for Adam and Eve as they frisk and play about the couple:

Sporting the Lion ramp'd, and in his paw
Dandl'd the Kid; Bears, Tigers, Ounces, Pard
Gamboll'd before them, th' unwieldy Elephant
To make them mirth us'd all his might, and wreath'd
His Lithe Proboscis. (IV, 343-47)

The scene is humorous because it contrasts so vividly with our knowledge of the behavior of these animals since the Fall. For us it is incongruous to describe wild animals as sporting, and romping, and gambolling; such words connote the behavior of domesticated puppies. But for prelapsarian Paradise, the language is appropriate. Thus, again the humor partly aims at making us see the disparity between worlds.

That Adam and Eve appreciate and respond to the joys of nature which surround them is apparent in the way they tend and care for their Garden. They also associate nature with the glory of God and find it fitting in their morning prayers to call upon nature to help them praise their mutual Creator. They call upon the fairest star, upon the sun, "of this great World both Eye and Soul" (V, 171), upon the moon, upon the air and the elements, "the eldest birth of Nature's Womb" (V, 181). Thus, the prayers

build, giving a sense of their total integration into nature.

One of the most delightful sections is the apostrophe of

Adam and Eve to the mist:

Ye Mists and Exhalations that now rise
 From Hill or steaming Lake, dusky or grey,
 Till the Sun paint your fleecy skirts with Gold,
 In honor to the World's great Author rise,
 Whether to deck with Clouds th' uncolor'd sky,
 Or wet the thirsty Earth with falling showers,
 Rising or falling still advance his praise.
 (V, 185-91)

All nature responds to God; when the winds blow, the pines wave their tops, and the plants too wave in sign of worship; the fountains that warble as they flow, "warbling tune his praise." The birds, the waters, and everything on earth hails the universal Lord. It is the complete innocence and joy of this picture as well as the suggestion that all of nature behaves as it does simply to praise God which delights us and makes us smile.⁹

The complete response to nature which Adam and Eve manifest in their morning prayers may seem naive to us, as post-lapsarian creatures, yet even for us it is difficult not to respond similarly to the great creation scenes described in Book VII of Paradise Lost. Chaos is ordered and the world comes alive, teeming with movement, and beauty, and life. From the first day until the last, the miracle of the Creation is celebrated with gaiety and joy. Since humor broadens our perception, allowing us to see another dimension of reality, it is only fitting that it be included in Milton's great hymn to life. God's creation of light on

the first day sets the pattern maintained throughout:

Let there be Light, said God, and forthwith Light
Ethereal, first of things quintessence pure
Sprung from the Deep, and from her Native East
To journey through the airy gloom began,
Spher'd in a radiant Cloud, for yet the Sun
Was not; shee in a cloudy Tabernacle
Sojourn'd the while. (VII, 243-49)

Later, on the fourth day of creation, the sun is described as "jocund to run / His longitude through Heav'n's high road" (VII, 372-73). Personification is apparent throughout, especially at God's words, when the thing created springs up and takes on life, a life of its own. When the earth is formed, it is "Mother Earth," conceiving in its womb and giving birth to further life, mountains, hills, rivers. Even more delightfully, the earth brings forth grass, herbs, plants, and trees:

He scarce had said, when the bare Earth, till then
Desert and bare, unsightly, unadorn'd,
Brought forth the tender Grass, whose verdure clad
Her Universal Face with pleasant green,
Then Herbs of every leaf, that sudden flow'r'd
Op'ning thir various colors, and made gay
Her bosom smelling sweet: and these scarce blown,
Forth flourish'd thick the clust'ring Vine, forth crept
The smelling Gourd, up stood the corny Reed
Embattl'd in her field: and th' humble Shrub,
And Bush with frizzl'd hair implicit: last
Rose as in Dance the stately Trees, and spread
Thir branches hung with copious Fruit: or gemm'd
Thir Blossoms: with high Woods the Hills were crown'd,
With tufts the valleys and each fountain side,
With borders long the Rivers. (VII, 313-28)

Again, it is the personification which contributes to the humor in this description. Gourd vines do creep along the ground, but not visibly as that verb suggests; corn stalks

may look like "ported spears"¹⁰ but to describe them as "embattled" is to make us think of armies of people; "humble shrubs" and bushes with "frizzled hair" also adds to the humor involved in comparing plants to people. Buds swelling open before our eyes as in time-lapse photography adds further to the movement pervading the scene. All of these descriptions enable us to see more fully the miracle of life which God is creating.

On the sixth day of Creation, God speaks again and the earth brings forth anew:

The Earth obey'd, and straight
 Op'ning her fertile Womb teem'd at a Birth
 Innumerable living Creatures, perfect forms,
 Limb'd and full grown: out of the ground up rose
 As from his Lair the wild Beast where he wons
 In Forest wild, in Thicket, Brake, or Den;
 Among the Trees in Pairs they rose, they walk'd:
 The Cattle in the Fields and Meadows green:
 Those rare and solitary, these in flocks
 Pasturing at once, and in broad Herds upsprung.
 The grassy Clods now Calv'd, now half appear'd
 The Tawny Lion, pawing to get free
 His hinder parts, then springs as broke from Bonds,
 And Rampant shakes his Brinded mane; the Ounce,
 The Libbard, and the Tiger, as the Mole
 Rising, the crumbl'd Earth above them threw
 In Hillocks; the swift Stag from under ground
 Bore up his branching head: scarce from his mould
Behemoth biggest born of Earth upheav'd
 His vastness: Fleec't the Flocks and bleating rose,
 As Plants: ambiguous between Sea and Land
 The River Horse and scaly Crocodile.

(VII, 453-74)

The mental picture which this description evokes is one filled with joy in the animation of life. The animals break out of the earth; some come out with one leap, some struggle out slowly, a part at a time, some come out in pairs, and

some come out in herds and flocks. To watch swift and various emergence of animal life is to smile. All types of animals come forth from the womb of the earth; all are delightful, but one of Milton's most engaging descriptions is reserved for the "Parsimonious Emmet"; it is "provident / Of future, in small room large heart enclos'd," (VII, 485-86). While the emmet creeps out of the womb, the "Female Bee" appropriately swarms out, as she appears with her "Husband Drone" whom she feeds "deliciously" (VII, 490-01). Milton is obviously being playful throughout these descriptions of Creation, and playfulness is very much a part of humor. We are invited to smile as we witness the gaiety of Creation. When the Creation of the natural world is completed, all earth smiles in response: "Earth in her rich attire / Consume lovely smil'd" (VII, 501-02). The passage concludes with a series of threes, so that verbal and syntactic humor sums up the Creation which occurred before that of Man:

Air, Water, Earth,
By Fowl, Fish, Beast, was flown, was swum, was walkt.
(VII, 502-03)

After the Creation of Man, a similar three-fold passage points to Man's relationship with the earth, the sea, the air, and ultimately with God:

Thrice happy men,
And sons of men, whom God hath thus advanc't,
Created in his Image, there to dwell
And worship him, and in reward to rule
Over his Works, on Earth, in Sea, or Air,
And multiply a Race of Worshippers
Holy and just: thrice happy if they know
Thir happiness, and persevere upright. (VII, 625-632)

Like Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained contains the types of humor found in Milton's minor poetry, although descriptions of nature are minimal and most of the humor is a satiric reversal of smiling urbanity. Since the poem completes the cycle of salvation projected in Paradise Lost, the principal source of its dramatic action is in the confrontation between Satan and Christ, and most of the humor is manifested as Satan attempts his own version of smiling urbanity; he tries to be polite, clever, and witty in his effort to convince Christ that he only wants what is best for him. But Satan fails; Christ recognizes Satan's pose, again and again cutting through his words by turning them back on Satan and satirizing them. Thus, the Satan of Paradise Regained becomes almost a caricature of the Satan of Paradise Lost; the one continuing trait which clearly stands out in the brief epic is his loquaciousness.

In Paradise Regained, the epic voice directs our response to Satan much as he does in Paradise Lost. Early in Paradise Regained, he describes Satan's presence at Christ's baptism and mentions that he was "nigh Thunderstruck" by what he saw. Thus, the epic voice reminds us subtly of Satan's early speeches in Paradise Lost where he persistently excused his defeat and that of the fallen angels by complaining that God had better weapons during the battle and had tempted their fall by keeping his powerful thunder a secret. Often in Paradise Lost, Satan speaks to

his followers scornfully of "the Thunderer" (I, 92-93; I, 58; II, 52). Now the epic voice puns on that word and turns it against Satan; Satan is nearly "thunderstruck" with amazement as he watches the Dove descend upon Christ and listens to the Father's voice pronounce Christ His beloved Son. Satan recovers quickly, of course, but he will be almost "thunderstruck" often throughout his conversations with the Son.

When Satan reports on what he has seen to the council of devils, meeting in their conquered realm of the air, Satan shows no sign of his recent amazement. Instead, he ridicules the entire event, describing John the Baptist as a prophet who "pretends to wash off sin" in the "consecrated stream," and concluding his narrative of the Dove's descent with a casual "what'er it meant" (I, 70-83). Concluding from the words of the voice from Heaven that God is the Father of Jesus, at least in some sense, Satan comments ironically:

And what will he not do to advance his Son?
His first-begot we know, and sore have felt,
When his fierce thunder drove us to the deep.
(I, 88-90)

Without any pretense of debate, Satan quickly decides what action to take, relying upon his familiar weapons of fraud and "snaky wiles" to try the Son. Unknown to Satan, however, he is fulfilling God's plan who, as in Paradise Lost, shows nothing but scorn for him and his lofty pretensions. The epic voice explains:

But contrary unweeting he /Satan/ fulfill'd
 The purpos'd Counsel pre-ordain'd and fixt
 Of the most High, who, in full frequence bright
 Of Angels, thus to Gabriel smiling spake.

(I, 126-29)

God explains to Gabriel that Satan's boasts are very empty, and that only through His will does he roam about the world. With God's permission, Satan tempted Job and was defeated; now God will allow him to try His Son, so that the Son can prove himself before he attempts to conquer Sin and Death and "earn Salvation for the Sons of men." Christ will therefore engage in "his great duel," but as the chorus of angels indicates, he must vanquish hellish evils not through the power of weapons and arms but through virtue exercised in "humiliation and strong sufferance" (I, 160).

Christ's merit as "perfect man" is first tried by Satan after he has been in the desert for forty days and forty nights. Satan appears before Christ in the guise of "an aged man in Rural weeds," seeming to search for a stray ewe or for some dry firewood. In his disguise, Satan addresses Christ very sociably, asking what chance had brought him to the wilderness and commenting that he had been present at Christ's baptism in the Jordan River. Christ responds to Satan's stream of words with a brief and concise statement: "Who brought me hither / Will bring me hence, no other Guide I seek" (I, 335-36). Thus, the pattern is set for all further encounters between Satan and Christ. Satan begins with a long, wordy speech and Christ answers immediately,

putting his trust in his Guide. In this case, Christ penetrates Satan's disguise and refuses his temptation to turn stones into bread. Satan recovers quickly when Christ unmasks him and tries a new tactic; admitting that he is the "Spirit unfortunate" who revolted in heaven, he hopes to ingratiate himself with Christ. He attempts a smiling urbanity but succeeds only in being ironic as he pretends he is really a friend of Man:

Men generally think me much a foe
 To all mankind: why should I? they to me
 Never did wrong or violence; by them
 I lost not what I lost, rather by them
 I gain'd what I have gain'd. (I, 387-91);

We can laugh at Satan's audacity here because we recognize that his words contain some truth but that they also distort truth. Satan's manipulation of language cannot deceive Christ, however, who replies sternly to his words. Even though Satan is "stung with anger and disdain" at Christ's rebuke, he dissembles and returns an "answer smooth," telling Christ how pleasing his words are to the ear, as "tunable as Silvan Pipe or Song" (I, 480). Thus, the first temptation concludes with Satan bowing low to Christ, maintaining a behavior that he perceives as pleasant and urbane and that we perceive as absurd and hypocritical.

In Paradise Lost when Satan answers smooth (II, 816) to Sin and Death he convinces them that his mission was originally undertaken for them as well as for him. Now, however, since his smooth words do not convince Christ

of his good intentions, Satan realizes that Christ is unlike anyone he has ever met before, and he goes to the council of devils with a real need for advice. Belial, who speaks first, is described with humor by the epic voice. The pleasure-loving Belial of Paradise Lost has perfected his sensuality since the Fall of Man and is more dissolute than ever. His advice to Satan is totally in character:

Set women in his eye and in his walk,
Among daughters of men the fairest found.
(II, 153-54)

Belial, "after Asmodai / The fleshliest incubus," is convinced that women, who entangle men in their "Amorous Nets" and lead at will even the most rugged of them, will effect the downfall of Christ. Reacting immediately to the foolishness of Belial's advice, Satan points out to the sensualist that he judges all others by his own weakness:

Belial, in much uneven scale thou weigh'st
All others by thyself; because of old
Thou thyself dot'st on womankind, admiring
Thir shape, thir color, and attractive grace,
None are, thou think'st, but taken with such toys.
(II, 173-77)

Satan continues making fun of Belial and his "lusty Crew," who before the Flood roamed the earth, casting wanton eyes on the daughters of men, coupled with them, and begot a race. Even now, Satan says, he has heard stories of Belial lurking around the woods, and valleys, and groves "to waylay / Some beauty rare" (II, 185-86). Satan knows that Christ, being more wise even than Solomon, will not be tempted by women. He concludes with a final insult to Belial as he says,

"Beauty stands / In th'admiration only of weak minds / Led captive" (II, 220-22). Disgusted with Belial's advice, Satan dismisses the "consult," deciding on his own to try Christ with "more show / Of worth, of honor, glory, and popular praise" (II, 226-27), blithely unaware that the phrase "more show" indexes his own miscalculations: the man he is to contend with is not to be taken in by mere "show." The situation throughout this scene is similar to the pattern apparent in Book II of Paradise Lost--the contempt Satan shows for Belial's poor judgment of his foe mirrors (unconsciously on Satan's part) the attitude of God and of Jesus toward Satan. Satan's offers in Paradise Regained show that he consistently weighs Christ by his own scale, grows more and more baffled by the rebuffs he meets, and is increasingly desperate.

After leaving the other devils, Satan proceeds with his second temptation, again addressing Christ with "fair speech," but this time, clad as one bred in "City, or Court, or Palace." He tries to be courteous, witty, and charming, but instead of demonstrating smiling urbanity he is merely officious. Pretending to please and pretending a desire to alleviate Christ's hunger, Satan brings before him a large banquet table, spread sumptuously with vast quantities of food and drink. It is amusing that "Nymphs of Diana's train, and Naiades / . . . / And ladies of the Hesperides" (II, 355, 57) are among those who are present to serve.

Despite his ridicule of Belial, Satan includes women as part of this temptation, confirming our suspicion that his self-righteous speech on the vanity of beauty is intended by Milton to cast him, as well as Belial, in a comic light. Christ rejects the entire temptation, however, and turns it back against Satan, defining for him the true nature of wealth and bounty. Christ speaks with patience, stressing the importance of self-knowledge and the ability to rule the self, making us even more aware of Satan's lack of the same qualities he chides Belial for failure to maintain.

Satan does not know how to reply, and the contrast between his usual loquaciousness and his sudden inability to speak is humorous. The epic voice illustrates this contrast at the beginning of Book III:

So spake the Son of God, and Satan stood
 A while as mute confounded what to say,
 What to reply, confuted and convinc't
 Of his weak arguing and fallacious drift.
(III, 1-4)

But Satan soon recovers himself and with "soothing words" accosts Christ anew. The opening speech of Book III is so excessively flattering that it shows him as foolishly overstating--he can't possibly know that Christ is all that he says, especially as regards deeds. Then he undercuts his own flattery with sneers. Earlier he had commented on Christ's low birth, and in Book III he stresses that point again. Satan's attempts at smiling urbanity lessen as he is rebuked more and more often by Christ. He next offers Christ power,

glory, and fame in battle. By his rejection Christ exemplifies the true hero, one of patience and wisdom, praised in Paradise Lost (IX, 31-33), and exemplified also by Job, so often alluded to in Paradise Regained. He also ridicules war and the power of arms, saying to Satan:

Much ostentation vain of fleshly arm
 And fragile arms, much instrument of war
 Long in preparing, soon to nothing brought,
 Before mine eyes thou hast set. (III, 387-90)

Christ rejects the kingdom of Parthia which Satan offers him because he knows his time has not yet come. He waits with patience and temperance upon the will of the Father, and can say with conviction to Satan that the "cumbersome luggage of war" indicates human weakness rather than strength. By referring to war as "ostentation vain of fleshy arm" and "cumbersome luggage," Christ satirizes what Satan values.

After each of his temptations is rejected Satan is briefly immobilized, "nigh thunderstruck," not knowing what to say. The epic voice points this out not only at the beginning of Book III but later in that Book when Christ rejects Satan's offer of glory:

So spake the Son of God; and here again
 Satan had not to answer, but stood struck
 With guilt of his own sin, for he himself
 Insatiable of glory had lost all,
 Yet of another Plea bethought him soon. (III, 145-149)

When Satan then takes Christ up to the high mountain to show him the panorama of cities and kingdoms, he is not at a loss for words. In fact, the epic voice describes Satan's

verbosity in comic terms when he says that Satan upon placing Christ on the high mountain a "new train of words began" (III, 266). Satan is never able to use pregnant silence--he must be speaking. The descriptions preceding and following his speeches are more effective than his words, but he can not quiet himself. The vision of Parthia's forces, for instance, is not allowed to gain its full effect; at the sight,

the Fiend yet more presum'd,
And to our Savior thus his words renew'd.
(III, 345-91)

Thus, the structural movement of Paradise Regained is humorous as Satan continuously encounters Christ, assaults him with a stream of words, is answered, is "thunderstruck" with amazement, then recovers and begins a new stream of words. This pattern is apparent throughout and is intensified where visual scenes are provided by his art because Satan clearly is depending too much on the power of his words and not enough on the scenes themselves. Then when his words are rejected he is momentarily stunned and the effect is to make him appear ludicrous. Book IV, for example, begins in the same way as Book III--Satan can think of nothing to say:

Perplex'd and troubl'd at his bad success
The Tempter stood, nor had what to reply,
Discover'd in his fraud, thrown from his hope,
So oft, and the persuasive Rhetoric
That sleek't his tongue, and won so much on Eve,
So little here, nay lost. (IV, 1-6)

Satan defeated Eve by entangling her thought processes in his verbal labyrinth, by putting a false face on things with

his train of smooth words; but he not only cannot defeat Christ by such means, he even makes his case less persuasive the more he persuades. But Satan will not give up or even slacken his attack. He offers Christ one temptation after another, trying to make each new temptation more enticing than the previous one. The epic voice's comments on this Satanic tenacity make it seem comic through various similes:

But as a man who had been matchless held
 In cunning, overreach't where least he thought,
 To salve his credit, and for very spite
 Still will be tempting him who foils him still,
 And never cease, though to his same the more;
 Or as a swarm of flies in vintage time,
 About the wine-press where sweet must is pour'd,
 Beat off, returns as oft with humming sound;
 Or surging waves against a solid rock,
 Though all to shivers dash't, th' assault renew,
 Vain batt'ry, and in froth or bubbles end. (IV, 10-20)

In his poem "On the Fifth of November," Milton compares people who whisper and pass on gossip to flies buzzing about milkpails; now he compares Satan's continuous stream of words to flies swarming to the must from the wine-press. The froth image further implies that Satan's words are empty wind as well as annoying and fruitless sounds. Satan's words result only "in froth and bubbles" because they vainly dash against the Rock, Christ.

With each rejection of his temptations, Satan gets more desperate; dropping his attempts at smiling urbanity, he becomes sarcastic and impudent. Christ never wavers, however, and seems to be stronger and more self-assured with each temptation that he rejects. As the epic voice has shown

Satan has made an increasingly comic figure of himself with his persistence and his verbosity, until even Christ seems to be amused at him when he tells him what he could have added to a temptation to make it more complete. Satan has offered Christ Rome, showing a panorama of its power, wealth, art, and gardens. But he cannot wait for the effect to take hold; he breaks his silence to chatter away like a tour guide. In reply, Christ says that Rome allures neither his eye nor his mind and adds (perhaps with an emphasis on "tell"):

though thou should'st add to tell
 Their sumptuous gluttonies, and gorgeous feasts
 On Citron tables or Atlantic stone,
 (For I have also heard, perhaps have read)
 Their wines of Setia, Cales, and Falerne,
Chios and Crete, and how they quaff in Gold,
 Crystal and Murrhine cups emboss'd with Gems
 And studs of Pearl, to me should'st tell who thirst
 And hunger still. (IV, 113-21)

These lines are amusing because Christ has out-Satened Satan, adding more words to his already torrential stream. The pattern of rebuke for wordiness continues as Christ comments further on Satan's temptation, scorning the embassies Satan has praised by calling them a "tedious waste of time," full of "hollow compliments and lies" (IV, 123-24). When Satan offers to help Christ expel the licentious Tiberius from Rome, Christ replies with a line whose effect can only be comic, exploding Satan's pretensions of moral indignation and exposing the truth as it does:

I shall, thou say'st, expel
 A brutish monster; what if I withal
 Expel a Devil who first made him such?
 (IV, 127-29)

We see in these passages the comic satire of Milton's prose and of God's scorn in Paradise Lost. Christ's scorn for Satan and his temptations build throughout, but it is especially vehement when Satan tempts him with the learning of ancient Greece. All of Satan's offers must be rejected absolutely: thus, Christ says to Satan in reference to Greek literature, "Remove their swelling Epithets thick laid / As varnish on a Harlot's cheek" (IV, 344-45) and what is left will be far unworthy to compare with the poetry of the Bible. With this last temptation to learning, Satan's ingenuity has been exhausted. As the epic voice comments, "all his darts" are spent (IV, 366).

Only violence remains and Satan foreshadows his physical assault against Christ in the wild storm and ugly dreams he visits upon him. With a cheerful demeanor, however, Satan renews his attempts at smiling urbanity when he greets Christ the next morning:

Fair morning yet betides thee, Son of God,
 After a dismal night; I heard the rack
 As Earth and Sky would mingle, but myself
 Was distant; and these flaws, though mortals fear them
 As dangerous to the pillar'd frame of Heaven,
 Or to the Earth's dark basis underneath,
 Are to the main as inconsiderable
 And harmless, if not wholesome, as a sneeze
 To man's less universe, and soon are gone.

(IV, 451-59)

Again, Christ penetrates the appearance, telling Satan that his pleasant words and his temptations are all in vain.

Satan, "now swoln with rage," can take no more. Sweeping Christ up to the pinnacle of the Temple, he says in scorn:

"There stand, if thou wilt stand" (IV, 551). Christ stands and Satan, "smitten with amazement," falls. Since "thunder-struck" meant "stricken with amazement" even in the seventeenth century, the comic pattern established throughout the poem culminates here when Satan falls. He has been defeated again, but in both Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained he is defeated not by thunder but by the Truth which the Son of God embodies. The epic voice points out the paradox that the Tempter "fell whence he stood to see his Victor fall" (IV, 571). Thus, Satan is defeated, ironically in the realm of air which he has claimed for himself since the Fall of Adam and Eve. Now he too falls, a comic figure.

The satire is apparent throughout Paradise Regained in the comments of the epic voice about Satan's unending train of words and in Christ's turning of those words against Satan. Smiling urbanity is present in an ironic sense, as Satan tries and fails to make witty conversation to counterfeit a friendly, ingratiating tone. Milton's delight in nature, though rarely evident in Paradise Regained, is apparent in his description of the morning after the storm:

Thus pass'd the night so foul till morning fair
 Came forth with Pilgrim steps in amice gray;
 Who with her radiant finger still'd the roar
 Of thunder, chas'd the clouds, and laid the winds,
 And grisly Specters, which the Fiend had rais'd.
 (IV, 426-30)

The scene contains a light humor if we picture morning as a person, controlling nature with her finger. She calms the elements and brings order to the chaos Satan has

raised. But the radiant joy in nature so prominent in the early poems and in Paradise Lost is only dimly seen in Paradise Regained.

In Samson Agonistes Samson has brought about the chaos of his own situation and only he can restore order. The drama, then, is a working out of such a restoration, as Samson must confront himself, accept responsibility for his own actions and for the choices he has freely made, and overcome further temptations which are offered him. These further temptations comprise the main episodes of the drama, as Samson is visited by Manoa, Dalila, Harapna, and the Philistine officer. With each encounter Samson's spiritual and moral awareness is developed, leading him toward a greater understanding of himself and an eventual reconciliation with God. These are weighty matters, ones not usually associated with comedy, and Milton himself, in the preface to his work, speaks against "the Poet's error of intermixing Comic stuff with Tragic sadness and gravity" (p. 550). Milton's affinities with classical drama would lead him to reject any farce in a tragedy, and it is the farce of comic interludes which he seems to have in mind in this statement, rather than the kind of humor usually found in serious satire.¹¹ While rejecting "Comic stuff" in tragedy, Milton also speaks against "introducing trivial and vulgar persons" who are "brought in without discretion,

corruptly to gratify the people." Thus, in the context of the entire statement, Milton seems to be not so much against the existence of comic elements in a tragedy as against the exploitation of those elements to the point where they exist independently of the tragedy and become a separate entertainment in themselves. Humor and even comedy can exist in a serious work without being comic relief and without detracting from the overall seriousness of purpose which the work projects. In fact, humor can expand our perception of the seriousness of a drama by making more inclusive the action being imitated.

In Samson Agonistes, such is the case. Domestic humor functions in the encounter between Samson and his father, Manoa, and between Samson and his wife, Dalila, to deepen our realization of the nature of their relationships. The humor in both encounters depends upon the intimate relationship between the two people involved, the knowledge which each person has of the other as a result of that relationship and the response the chorus and we, the readers, make to details of the encounter. Any attempts at smiling urbanity Dalila may make in her efforts to appease Samson are here subsumed by domestic humor. In the encounter between Samson and Harapha, the giant from Gath is satirized as a comic braggart.

When Samson is first visited by Manoa he has reached the depth of his suffering. His physical blindness is

nothing compared to his great spiritual blindness as he suffers his dark night of the soul. In this opening section Samson vacillates between blaming himself for his fallen condition and blaming God for not giving him wisdom proportionate to his physical strength. Samson can only lament the irony that he who was born to deliver his people from bondage is now the one enslaved. It will take Samson some time to understand fully that he has been enslaved more by himself than by any outside force. The Chorus tries to comfort Samson and in the full scope of the play it does help cure him, but in the present situation it only makes him feel the pain more intensely as it too tries to understand what is happening to Samson. Manoa's arrival, then, comes at a very difficult time for Samson, but in the course of their conversation, Samson comes to a greater understanding of his situation.

Manoa loves his son, and like any loving father wants what is best for him. In this case, Manoa's concept of what is best for Samson is a very limited one, and Manoa never understands fully the nature of his son's mission. It is in his conversations with Samson, that we see his lack of understanding and his limited imagination. He is humorous as he illustrates these aspects of his character. When Samson needs encouragement and moral strength, Manoa questions God's ways and laments Samson's birth saying, "Who would be now a Father in my stead?" (355). But Manoa's questions

encourage Samson to come closer to an understanding of his situation as he tries to respond to his father. Samson tells Manoa that he himself is the sole author and cause of all the evils that have befallen him, explaining that he is at fault for his weakness in giving in to the desires of his two wives. Manoa's response is humorous because of its vast understatement. Instead of disagreeing with his son's evaluation of the situation, Manoa says, "I cannot praise thy marriage-choices, Son" (420). He continues in a tone which verges on "I told you so," reminding Samson that he had justified his marriages by saying he had been divinely prompted. Manoa is incapable of dealing with divine promptings; he knows only that Samson soon became a captive and that it is the present situation which must be dealt with. His suggested solution to Samson's present enslavement again reveals his misunderstanding of his son's mental and spiritual plight. He has made advances to Philistian lords in an attempt to ransom Samson; he does not realize that his offer is a temptation to Samson, one that would make his son totally dependent upon him, removing from him his own responsibility and free choice. Manoa is tempting Samson to capitulate when he urges him to let himself be ransomed. He is unconsciously ironic when he tells Samson that he hopes the Philistines will see that he "now no more canst do them harm" (486). Manoa is the source of dramatic irony throughout Samson Agonistes as he continuously reveals his

inability to understand Samson's situation and the true nature of his suffering. He is humorous because he represents so well the father who tries his best, but does not really know what is good for his son and never appreciates his true greatness.

More domestic humor is apparent in Samson's relationship with his wife, Dalila. When the drama opens, Samson's capitulation and Dalila's betrayal are in the past, and the husband and wife have not seen each other for some time. That Samson feels very bitter toward Dalila is apparent in his comments about her to Manoa. In rebuking his father for blaming his misfortune upon God, Samson points out with self-deprecation that he has been foolish and had been "warned by oft experience" (380) not to trust women, having been betrayed by his first wife before he was betrayed by Dalila. When speaking of Dalila, however, Samson becomes his most scornful and his most satiric. Even though her betrayal was not sexual, Samson describes it as a monstrous sexual perversion, with Dalila copulating with the smell of money, conceiving, and bringing forth her first-born child, Treason. His description comes in a rhetorical question to his father:

In this other was there found
More Faith? who also in her prime of love,
Spousal embraces, vitiated with Gold,
Though offer'd only, by the scent conceiv'd
Her spurious first-born; Treason against me?
(387-91)

Earlier, in a discussion with the chorus, Samson also described his marriages and there called Dalila a "specious

monster" (230), so his view of her is consistent as he satirizes her betrayal as a perversion of her womanhood and her role as a wife.

In his discussion with the chorus, Samson had also described his capitulation to Dalila in terms of a mock battle, with his silence as a fort and her words as weapons. Thus, he was "vanquisht with a peal of words" and gave up his "fort of silence to a Woman" (235-36). Now, in his discussion with Manoa, he again explains his relationship with his wife in terms of a battle. Before becoming a battle, however, Dalila's attempt to learn Samson's secret was more of a domestic game, with both husband and wife equal players. Samson's description indicates that at first he enjoyed the game:

Thrice she assay'd with flattering prayers and sighs,
And amorous reproaches to win from me
My capital secret, in what part my strength
Lay stor'd, in what part summ'd, that she might know:
Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport
Her importunity. (392-97)

At this point, Samson and Dalila seem to be almost a caricature of the "typical" married couple, with each playfully attempting to master the other. Of course, something more serious is at stake here, but overtones of humor are present in the descriptions of their relationship throughout the drama because on one level that relationship does represent the traditional comic theme of the battle between the sexes. Samson's descriptions show, however, that the play which is part of every husband-wife relationship can easily become a real

battle when something more serious and more extensive than just that couple is involved. Consequently, every time Samson describes his "battle" with Dalila, it has both comic and serious overtones. This doubleness is apparent as Samson continues his discussion with Manoa; again, his "fort of silence" is being assaulted and again Dalila's weapons are words, this time described humorously as "tongue batteries":

Yet the fourth time, when must'ring all her wiles
 With blandisht parleys, feminine assaults,
 Tongue batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
 To storm me over-watch't, and wearied out.
 (402-405)

Samson's battle imagery here is a reversal of that usually used by men to describe their sexual relationship with women. Traditionally, the woman is described as the fort being "assaulted" by the man. In this case, Samson's language reveals his awareness of the role reversal which took place when he gave in to Dalila's desires. He admits to his father: "foul effeminacy held me yok't / Her bond-slave" changes the comic overtones to tragic ones, and indeed we are never allowed to forget the tragic consequences of Samson's behavior in having allowed himself to play the comic husband.

It is Samson's anger at himself which makes him even more hostile toward Dalila when she arrives to visit him. Her initial appearance is described in humorous terms by the chorus:

But who is this, what thing of Sea or Land?
 Female of sex it seems,
 That so bedeckt, ornate, and gay,
 Comes this way sailing
 Like a stately Ship
 Of Tarsus, bound for th' Isles
 Of Javan or Gadire
 With all her bravery on, and tackle trim
 Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
 Courted by all the winds that hold them play,
 An Amber scent of odorous perfume
 Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;
 Some rich Philistian Matron she may seem,
 And now at nearer view, no other certain
 Than Dalila thy wife. (710-724)

Dalila is described here in comic terms as first she is a "who," then a "thing," and finally an "it." While the chorus proclaims not to know if she is a thing of land or sea, it soon decides on the sea, and Dalila becomes a ship with sails and colors flying. She is not timid or hesitant but sends out boldly as her "harbinger" a strong waft of perfume. Since the chorus does not at first know who is approaching, it can indulge in such an amusing description of Dalila, but its judgment of her as a "rich Philistian matron" reminds the reader of Samson's words that she had betrayed him for money. It is this money which no doubt has paid for the elaborate clothes and perfume she is wearing. Thus, while the chorus may intend to amuse Samson and lift his spirits with its description of her approach, it can only be making the pain deeper when it must tell him of her identity. This incident repeats a pattern apparent throughout. Like Manoa, the chorus often blunders. Here, it witnesses Samson's encounter with Dalila and after she leaves it can only

indulge in anti-feminist generalizations, not realizing what Samson does, that something more complex is involved in their relationship.

Of course, Dalila's behavior throughout her meeting with Samson encourages their later comments, because she does try to use traditional feminine wiles to placate him-- she weeps, she pleads, and she offers to care for him, including in the last offer the sensuous pleasures which he had previously enjoyed with her. She also tries to excuse her betrayal on grounds of a woman's weakness, describing her capitulation in the same kind of battle imagery Samson had used to describe his. She says to Samson:

Since thou determin'st weakness for no plea
In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,
What sieges girt me round, ere I consented;
Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd of men,
The constantest to have yielded without blame.
(843-48)

Samson is not impervious, even yet, to Dalila's pleas and he knows that the parallel she draws between his weakness and hers is valid. Throughout the scene, he fights against himself and her, and can reject her temptation only by convincing himself that her feminine wiles are insincere:

I know thy trains
Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils;
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms
No more on me have power, thir force is null'd.
(932-35)

It is apparent, however, that Samson is still attracted by Dalila because he protests too much. When she says, "Let

me approach at least, and touch thy hand" (951), he overreacts with passion: "Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake ./ My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint" (952-53). She has been repulsed and she reacts by trying to justify herself even further. She is more hostile to Samson in this final speech, but her words in themselves do not warrant the judgment of the chorus that she is a stinging serpent nor Samson's that she is a viper. Throughout this scene, it is difficult to determine Dalila's sincerity because she can approach her husband and express herself only through feminine wiles. Thus, she is easily satirized by the chorus as a femme fatale. Such satire is humorous because it demonstrates that comic generalizations can be the basis of tragedy.

But this time Samson overcomes the temptation that Dalila represents for him. As a result, his spiritual and moral awareness has deepened when he encounters Harapha, the giant of Gath. That Dalila and Harapha represent two sides of Samson's nature is apparent in the chorus's juxtaposition of the two as they announce Harapha's arrival:

Look now for no enchanting voice, nor fear
 The bait of honied words; a rougher tongue
 Draws hitherward, I know him by his stride,
 The Giant Harapha of Gath, his look
 Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.
 Comes he in peace? what wind hath blown him hither
 I less conjecture than when first I saw
 The sumptuous Dalila floating this way:
 His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.
 (1065-73)

Just as Dalila is for the chorus the stock comic figure of

the femme fatale so Harapha represents to them the stereotype bully with his "pile high-built." He immediately manifests great pride in his birth and physical feats and is surprised when Samson is prepared to challenge him. Harapha's braggadocio is amusing as he responds:

O that fortune
Had brought me to the field where thou art fam'd
To have wrought such wonders with an Ass's Jaw;
I should have forc'd thee soon wish other arms,
Or left thy carcass where the Ass lay thrown:
So had the glory of Prowess been recover'd
To Palestine, won by a Philistine
From the unforeskin'd race, of whom thou bear'st
The highest name for valiant Acts. (1093-1101)

As Samson presses him, however, Harapha becomes less eager to fight, and his various excuses are humorous. The first is a marvelous combination of the sublime and the ridiculous:

To combat with a blind man I disdain,
And thou hast need much washing to be toucht. (1106-07)

Although blind, Samson will not hesitate to fight Harapha, and he will do so only with a staff, satirizing the use of arms and weapons:

Then 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,
I only with an Oak'n staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd Iron
Which long shall not withhold me from thy head.
(1119-25)

Thus, Milton again ridicules the accouterments of heroic battle as he had also in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Here, Harapha tries to defend them on traditional heroic grounds, saying that Samson would not disparage them had he

not been charmed by some magic spell. Thus, Harapha continues to fulfill the comic stereotype of the bully with the strong body and the weak mind when he so narrowly and incorrectly explains Samson's strength. He is too literal when he ascribes Samson's strength to his hair:

some Magician's Art
 Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou from Heaven
 Feign'd'st at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy hair,
 Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs
 Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back
 Of chaf't wild Boars, or ruffl'd Porcupines.
 (1133-38)

In reply, Samson points out that it is not his hair which defeats his enemies but the strength which God has given him diffused throughout his body. Samson grows in confidence as he continues to challenge the giant, and Harapha reveals himself more and more as a coward, trying now to run from the fight on the grounds that it would be unheroic for him, a man of arms, to fight with a slave, a man condemned. Thus, traditional heroics are again satirized, whether these be the heroics of epic warriors, of the Cavaliers,¹² or of chivalric duelers.¹³ The satire is complete when Harapha, the "baffled coward," is taunted by Samson as "bulk without spirit vast" (1238) and put to rout. His departure is equally amusing as it is described by the chorus:

His Giantship is gone somewhat crestfall'n,
 Stalking with less unconsci'nable strides,
 And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe. (1244-46)

With the use of the word "Giantship" the chorus maintains the comic satire present throughout the scenes appropriate

because it is directed toward a serious goal. As Samson confronts the giant he gains a new level of confidence; by participating with the chorus in satirizing the brute strength of Harapha, Samson discovers the source of true strength and begins to have a clearer understanding of himself and his mission.

After his encounters with Dalila and Harapha, Samson begins to understand himself more clearly, and his mental and spiritual awareness deepens. In his earlier discussion with Manoa, he had scorned the behavior which led to his downfall and exaggerated it to deliberately make himself an object of ridicule:

Full of divine instinct, after some proof
 Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
 The Sons of Anak, famous now and blaz'd,
 Fearless of danger, like a petty God
 I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded
 On hostile ground, none daring my affront.
 Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell
 Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,
 Sof'n'd with pleasure and voluptuous life;
 At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge
 Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
 Of a deceitful Concubine who shore me
 Like a tame Wether, all my precious fleece,
 Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,
 Shav'n, and disarm'd among my enemies. (526-40)

Thus, Samson had seen himself as a comic figure, deserving of laughter. Now, however, he has met Dalila and Harapha and overcome the temptations which they represent; he has transcended those traits which had made him a comic figure and he has advanced in spiritual strength and wisdom. The persons and comic elements in Samson Agonistes are not

"brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people"; they are brought in as an integral part of the drama, used as they are used in Milton's prose, to teach us to avoid folly.

NOTES

¹All references to Milton's major poetry will be from John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957).

²T. S. Eliot, Milton, A Lecture at the Henreiette Hertz Trust of the British Academy Annual Lecture on a Master Mind, London, 1947, Proceedings of the British Academy, 33 (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege Amen House, E. C. 4, and Oxford Univ. Press, 1947). Eliot says he finds in this and similar images by Milton "a kind of inspired frivolity" (p. 16).

³See Hughes, footnote no. 869, p. 252.

⁴In an excellent essay on the Satan, Sin, and Death episode in Paradise Lost, Joseph H. Summers comments that throughout this scene, "Sin's tone never falters; it is always appallingly noble" (p. 49). My emphasis is somewhat different, but I agree with Summers when he says "Burlesque, parody, and comedy were as essential as the heroic, the divine, and the tragic for Milton's poem" (p. 41). See "Satan, Sin, and Death," The Muse's Method (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 32-70.

While not mentioning Summers specifically, Irene Samuel seems to disagree with his reading of the episode. She believes that horror and laughter are mutually exclusive and that horror is the appropriate response to Satan, Sin and Death. She says: "What shall we regard as terrifying if incest, violence, schemes to destroy mankind, pain and death-dealing are matters for jest?" (p. 128). In the abstract, of course, she is right; but this statement overlooks the general tone and the overall handling of the family reunion in hell. See "Milton on Comedy and Satire," The Huntington Library Quarterly, 35, No. 2 (February, 1972), 107-30.

⁵Readers who know the Bible will recognize in this passage an allusion to I Peter v, 8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

⁶See Arnold Stein, "The War in Heaven," Answerable Style: Essays on Paradise Lost (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1953), pp. 17-37.

⁷In Orlando Furioso, Ariosto has set the pattern for seeing heriocs through a lens of comic irony. Milton, however, goes further to suggest a better alternative.

⁸See Thomas Kranidas, The Fierce Equation: A Study of Milton's Decorum (London: Mouton & Co., 1965), pp. 142-154. With his "poetic" reading of this passage, Kranidas sees it as a comic one and argues that our difficulties with it stem from our "thin decorum" which is "nervous about admitting the comic to proximity with the official sublime" (p. 143). I believe Kranidas has here focused on the reason many critics fail to see any comedy in Paradise Lost. As Kranidas shows, Milton's decorum is not so narrow, and Milton adds to the richness of his work by admitting into it the humorous but very natural aspects of human comedy.

⁹The entire passage is very similar to Psalm 148, which has the same kind of devotional and natural joy:

Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour: stormy wind fulfilling his word: Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

¹⁰Hughes, footnote no. 322, p. 354.

¹¹In her article "Milton on Comedy and Satire," Irene Samuel rejects the possibility of any comedy in Samson Agonistes, but she adds that "the drama itself tempers the matter drawn from comedy to fit the context of tragedy" (p. 129). Therefore, comic elements exist, not to evoke laughter, but to satirize.

¹²See the discussion by Merritt Hughes, p. 535.

¹³Daniel C. Boughner, in "Milton's Harapha and Renaissance Comedy," ELH, 11 (1944), 297-306, argues that Milton is satirizing more than just the miles gloriosus of classical drama; instead, he has infused "the traditional role of the classical blusterer with the newer spirit of mockery of chivalric pretensions and the duelling code" (p. 306).

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Milton's major poetry is a culmination of the patterns of humor which are apparent in his prose and in his minor poetry. Throughout all of his works, Milton observes the principle of decorum and his use of humor is never intrusive--even when humor is incorporated into a work merely as a series of asides, those asides are pertinent to the subject under discussion and add the further dimension of pungency and wit to that subject. We see in the Hobson poems that Milton can write a humorous work merely for the sake of its wit and we see in several sections of the prose that Milton does have a "talent for sport." Predominantly, however, the humor is used purposively as an alternate vehicle for imparting serious meaning.

As Milton indicates in his Sixth Prologue, only those who are serious can use humor effectively because only they perceive the complexities of life fully. They perceive also that humor can give us a further insight into those complexities by showing us the disproportion between the ideal and the real as well as the various incongruities of life. Because of the breadth of Milton's humor, he can

exploit these incongruities well to teach us to avoid folly but to continue our search for Truth, no matter how difficult it is to attain. In many of his prose works, Milton's humorous passages reinforce most or all of the serious points he is making. In Paradise Lost, the humor is often scornful and satiric, encouraging us to remember God's perspective as he looks at Satan, Sin, and Death: the humor alters our perception so that we can see as God sees and thus confront life with more insight and a broader awareness.

The humor of satire is present in Milton's prose, his minor poetry, and his major poetry; it is central to Milton because it is a means of teaching and confuting. Not all of Milton's laughter is "grim," however, as his smiling urbanity and descriptions of nature testify. In a few of his early prose works, in much of his minor poetry, and much of his major poetry, Milton's use of humor reveals his delight in life, in the beauties of nature, in the pleasure of good company and of witty conversation.

Because of the persona he adopts in his prose, identifying himself with the Old Testament prophets who scourge with language those who distort Truth, we tend to overlook the other side of Milton which emerges from his poetry. We ought to remember that Milton has also adopted the persona of the love-stricken poet, and after spending several lines in one poem describing the beauty of English maidens in exuberant terms, he can laugh at himself in another

poem for falling in love with a dark, foreign beauty. He also talks playfully to his letter as he sends it on its way to his friend, and invites other friends to forget their worldly affairs and spend some time in pleasure. In Paradise Lost, his most important work dealing with the most serious of subjects, Milton has Raphael gently teasing Adam about his curiosity, and has Eve leave a conversation with an angel so she can hear it repeated more sweetly from her husband. And Milton consistently praises the beauties of nature in the most exuberant and joyful of terms, creating humorous imaginative pictures which make nature come alive. Milton did have a sense of humor. Often it was directed toward very serious issues, but the fact that it existed and was used effectively to expand our awareness of the totality of life cannot be denied. For, as Milton says in his sonnet to Cyriack, if "deep thoughts" are drenched in mirth we learn "to measure life . . . betimes" and "know / Toward solid good what leads the nearest way." After all, it is God who sends cheerful hours!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bergson, Henri. "Laughter." Selections rpt. in Comedy: Meaning and Form. Ed. Robert W. Corrigan. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1965, pp. 471-77.
- Boughner, Daniel C. "Milton's Harapha and Renaissance Comedy." A Journal of English Literary History. 11 (1944), 297-306.
- Bush, Douglas. A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton. Gen ed. Merritt Hughes. Vol.1. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.
- _____, ed. The Complete Poetical Works of John Milton. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965.
- Cheek, Macon. "Milton's 'In Quintum Novembris': An Epic Foreshadowing." Studies in Philology. 54 (1957) 172-84.
- Eliot, T. S. Milton. A Lecture at the Henriette Hertz Trust of the British Academy Annual Lecture on a Master Mind, London, 1947. Proceedings of the British Academy. 33. London: Geoffrey Cumberlege Amen House, E. C. 4, and Oxford University Press, 1947.
- Evans, G. Blakemore. "Milton and the Hobson Poems." Modern Language Quarterly. 4 (1943), 281-90.
- Evans, Willa. "Hobson in Comic Song." Philological Quarterly. 36 (1947), 321-27.
- Feinberg, Leonard. Introduction to Satire. Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State Univ. Press, 1967.
- French, J. Milton. "Milton as Satirist." Publications of the Modern Language Association of America. 51 (1936), 414-29.
- Giamatti, A. Bartlett. The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966.
- Gilbert, Allen. "Milton's Defense of Bawdry." SAMLA Studies in Milton. Ed. J. Max Patrick. Publication of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association. Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1953, pp. 54-71.

- Hanford, James Holly, and James G. Taaffe. A Milton Handbook. 5th ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970.
- Honigmann, E. A. J., ed. Milton's Sonnets. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966.
- Hughes, Merritt Y., ed. John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose. New York: Odyssey Press, 1957.
- Kernan, Alvin. The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959.
- Kranidas, Thomas. The Fierce Equation: A Study of Milton's Decorum. London: Mouton & Co., 1965.
- Le Comte, Edward. "Milton as Satirist and Wit." Th'Upright Heart and Pure. Ed. Amadeus P. Fiore, O. F. M. Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1967, pp. 45-59.
- Lieb, Michael. "Milton's Of Reformation and the Dynamics of Controversy." Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton. Ed. Michael Lieb and John T. Shawcross. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1974, pp. 55-83.
- McEuen, Kathryn. Preface to the Prolusions. Complete Prose Works of John Milton. Gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe. 7 vols. in 9. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953-I, 211-13.
- Morkan, Joel. "Wrath and Laughter: Milton's Ideas on Satire." Studies in Philology. 69 (1972), 475-95.
- Parker, William Riley. Milton: A Biography. Vol. I. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.
- Patterson, Frank Allen, gen. ed. The Works of John Milton. 18 vols. in 21. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931-38.
- Potts, L. J. Comedy. London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1949.
- Samuel, Irene. "Milton on Comedy and Satire." The Huntington Library Quarterly. 35, No. 2 (February 1972), 107-30.
- Shawcross, John T., ed. The Complete Poetry of John Milton. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., Anchor Books, 1963.

- Stein, Arnold. "The War in Heaven." Answerable Style: Essays on Paradise Lost. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1953, pp. 17-27.
- Summers, Joseph H. "Satan, Sin, and Death." The Muse's Method. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962, pp. 32-70.
- Thomas, W. K. "Mouths and Eyes in 'Lycidas'." Milton Quarterly. 9, No. 2 (May, 1975), 30-52.
- Tillyard, E. M. W. The Miltonic Setting. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1938.
- Tillyard, Phyllis B., trans. Milton: Private Correspondence and Academic Exercises Translated from the Latin . . . with an Introduction and Commentary by E. M. W. Tillyard. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932.
- Tuve, Rosemund. Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967.
- Vernon, M. D. The Psychology of Perception. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penquin Books, 1962.
- Wittreich, Joseph Anthony, Jr. "'The Crown of Eloquence,' The Figure of the Orator in Milton's Prose Works." Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton. Ed Michael Lieb and John T. Shawcross. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1974, pp. 3-54.
- Wolfe, Don. M., gen. ed. Complete Prose Works of John Milton. 7 vols. in 9 published to date. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953-