

an author of public repute than allow it anonymity. The polemicists forged a web of seditious odium around the Republican authors and their works both real and imaginary. In April 1660 L'Estrange wrote *Treason Arraigned* in answer to the virulent pamphlet *Plain English* and *The Readie & Easie Way*. *Plain English* abused the Royalist party for encouraging the people back to their 'old bondage'. L'Estrange either conveniently or mistakenly attributed the work to Milton:

It is a piece, drawn by no Fool, and it deserves a serious answer.—By the Design;—the subject,—Malice, and stile; I should suspect it for a Blot of the same pen that wrote *ICONOCLASTES*. It runs foule; tends to Tumult—and, not content, Barely to Applaud the Murder of the king, the execrable Author of it vomits upon his Ashes; with a Pedantique, and Envenom'd scorn, pursuing still his sacred Memory.<sup>12</sup>

He believed that the pamphlet had been written 'to Tumultuate the Army, and the People' and he exposes, in a proleptic manner, the way in which he would 'suppresse it, were no more copies of it extant: but 'tis too late for that. The Countries are already Furnish'd; and the Town yet full of them . . . so that it rests now, only to lay open the vile Interests of this bloody Faction, and Antidote the people against the danger'.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, these were to be the two major roles L'Estrange was actively to play in the following twenty years: suppressing works which threatened the State, Crown and Church as Surveyor and Licenser of the press and offering an 'antidote' through his numerous writings when either out of office or when licensing was no longer effective.

*Treason Arraigned* contains a host of ideas, attitudes and examples which L'Estrange would use with varying skill and success during his lengthy career. He used the history of the civil war and the intervening interregnum to support his belief that only the Restoration would bring back order, economic prosperity and stability. His distrust of the press would be long standing: 'But 'tis to Shew the World, how much our Pamphlet Merchand is steer'd by interest, and passion, and how little by Reason, and Truth.'<sup>14</sup> He would openly confront his rivals in the press condemning their attempts to alarm the public and their appeals to the 'phanatiques in England'. Milton was singled out for special treatment not only by the printer's use of italics in full capitals: '*MILTON*' but also by L'Estrange's continued attack on the author's writings over a long period of time.

*Eikonoklastes* was continually selected by L'Estrange as the epitome of seditious pamphlets. Milton had been commissioned by the Council of State to write the pamphlet following the unprecedented success of the secretly published *Eikon Basilike*.