

which they wish to mould and influence. Milton had been an active participant in the revolutionary movement which attempted to win friends amongst the various alienated factions to support the 'Good Old Cause'. His publications in the early months of 1660 adopted a simpler prose style than that of his previous works. He realised that he would need the support of the Levellers if the restoration was to be thwarted and this may account for his change in style. However, his audience was not prepared to accept his world vision and we sense his perception of a contrasting readership, fit but few, in his epic *Paradise Lost*. L'Estrange likewise attempted to cater for a varied audience. Throughout his career it is evident that the people represented a 'multitude' whose reading had to be carefully censored so that they would not meddle with government. *No Blinde Guides* followed a principle that pervades all of L'Estrange's writing:

The Common people are Poyson'd, and will run Stark Mad, if they be not Lur'd: Offer them Reason, without Fooling, and it will never Down with them: And give them Fooling, without Argument, they're never the Better for't. Let 'em Alone, and All's Lost. So that the Mixture is become as Necessary, as the office; And it has been My part, only to Season the one with the Other.<sup>28</sup>

We are aware that L'Estrange is humouring an undefined group of readers and boasting to a more learned elite. His polemical prose is endowed with various rhetorical devices but never laboured or fettered by his question and answer address. The language is brisk and forthright and lapses into moments of common speech in the hope of capturing the popular ear:

Is it possible to read your Proposals of the benefits of a Free-State, without Reflecting upon your Tutours—All this will I give thee if thou wilt fall down, and worship me? Come, come sir, lay the Devil aside; do not proceed with so much malice and against knowledge:—Act like a man;—that a good Christian may not be afraid to pray for you.<sup>29</sup>

The final paragraph of the pamphlet is pitched at the learned of his audience:

Once more; You say, That the Kings principall Oath was to maintein those Laws which the People SHOULD chuse. (Consuetudines quas Vulgus Elegerit) Reconcile Consuetudines (referring necessarily to what is Past) to Elegerit, in the Future Tense, and I have done.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, critical opinion towards *No Blinde Guides* has been largely negative. Following the Restoration, Milton embarked on his poetic ventures which were to assure him of future esteem: 'a life beyond life'. This respect, which is well deserved, has however clouded many of the assessments of *No Blinde Guides*. Sidney Lee