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*Milton*  
& THE PEOPLE



PAUL HAMMOND

## Milton and the People



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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To  
The Master and Fellows  
of  
Trinity College Cambridge



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# NOTE ON TEXTS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Milton's poetry and prose are from the Columbia edition of *The Works of John Milton*, edited by Frank Allen Patterson et al., 18 vols (New York, 1931–8); this is abbreviated as *Works*. In some cases I have altered the Columbia translation of Milton's Latin writings where the translation is inaccurate or antiquated, and for *De Doctrina Christiana* I have preferred the text and translation in the new Oxford edition of *The Complete Works of John Milton: Volume VIII: De Doctrina Christiana*, edited by John Hale et al., (Oxford, 2012). The Bible is normally quoted from the Authorized or King James Version (1611) in the quatercentenary reprint of the original edition (Oxford, [2011]). The Geneva Bible is quoted from *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Peabody, 2007). Classical texts are cited from the editions in the Loeb Library.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND SHORT TITLES FOR MILTON'S WORKS

<i>Apology</i>	<i>An Apology against a Pamphlet.</i>
Carey and Fowler	The Longman Annotated English Poets edition of <i>The Poems of Milton</i> , edited by John Carey and Alastair Fowler (Harlow, 1968); revised second edition issued in two volumes as <i>Paradise Lost</i> , edited by Alastair Fowler (London, 1998) and <i>Complete Shorter Poems</i> , edited by John Carey (London, 1997). References are to the second edition unless otherwise stated.

CPW	<i>The Complete Prose Works of John Milton</i> , edited by Don M. Wolfe et al., 8 vols (New Haven, 1953–82).
<i>De Doctrina</i>	<i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> .
<i>Defensio Prima</i>	<i>Joannis Miltoni Angli Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio</i> .
<i>Defensio Secunda</i>	<i>Joannis Miltoni Angli Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda</i> .
<i>Doctrine</i>	<i>The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce</i> .
<i>Maske</i>	<i>A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle</i> , commonly referred to as <i>Comus</i> .
OCW	<i>The Complete Works of John Milton</i> , edited by Thomas N. Corns and Gordon Campbell et al., 11 vols (Oxford, 2008–).
PL	<i>Paradise Lost</i> .
PR	<i>Paradise Regain'd</i> .
<i>Readie &amp; Easie Way</i>	<i>The Ready &amp; Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth</i> .
<i>Reason</i>	<i>The Reason of Church-governement</i> .
SA	<i>Samson Agonistes</i> .
<i>Tenure</i>	<i>The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates</i> .
<i>Treatise</i>	<i>A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes</i> .

## OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

- Bauer        Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, translated by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, second edition (Chicago, 1979).
- Chantraine   Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1999).
- LSJ            Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, revised by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, with a revised supplement (Oxford, 1999).
- ODNB        *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition.
- OED           *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition (1989); online version. (The online OED is subject to a continuous process of revision, so some of the information cited from it, e.g. the numbering of different senses within an entry, may differ from the version consulted by subsequent readers.)
- OLD           *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, edited by P. G. W. Glare (Oxford, 1982).
- Tremellius   *Biblia Sacra, sive, Testamentum Vetum ab Im. Tremellio et Fran. Iunio ex Hebraeo Latinè redditum; et Testamentum Novum à Theod. Beza è Graeco in Latinum versum* (London, 1640).
- Vulgate      *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (Stuttgart, 1994).

I did but prompt the age to quit their cloggs  
By the known rules of antient libertie,  
When strait a barbarous noise environs me  
Of Owles and Cuckoes, Asses, Apes and Doggs.  
As when those Hinds that were transform'd to Froggs  
Raild at *Latona's* twin-born progenie  
Which after held the Sun and Moon in fee.  
But this is got by casting Pearl to Hoggs;  
That bawle for freedom in their senceless mood,  
And still revolt when truth would set them free.  
Licence they mean when they cry libertie;  
For who loves that, must first be wise and good;  
But from that mark how far they roave we see  
For all this wast of wealth, and loss of blood.

Milton, *Sonnet XII*

## WHO ARE ‘THE PEOPLE’?

Who are ‘the people’ in Milton’s writing?<sup>1</sup> They figure prominently in his texts from early youth to late maturity, in his poetry and in his prose works; they are invoked as the sovereign power in the state and therefore as the origin of political legitimacy for any ruler or government, and they have the right—perhaps the duty—to overthrow tyrants; they are also, as God’s chosen people, the guardians of the true Protestant path against those—notably dictatorial bishops, lazy ministers, and dangerous papists—who would corrupt or destroy the Reformation. They are entrusted with the preservation of liberty in both the secular and the spiritual spheres. Milton’s rhetoric soars as he envisages their role. And yet Milton is uncomfortably aware that the people are rarely sufficiently pure, intelligent, or energetic to discharge those responsibilities which his political theory and his theology would place upon them. Indeed, while Milton defends ‘the people’ and the revolution which Parliament has brought about in their name, he also refers to ‘the vulgar’, as well as ‘the rude multitude’, and ‘the rabble’, even characterizing some people as ‘scum’.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, at a time of civil strife when the nation is

<sup>1</sup> For the bibliographical note to this chapter see p. 13 below.

<sup>2</sup> For ‘scum’: (i) ‘And albeit Lawyers write that some politicall edicts, though not approv’d, are yet allow’d to the scum of the people and the necessity of the times; these excuses have but a weak pulse: for first, we read, not that the scoundrel people, but the choicest, the wisest, the holiest of that nation have frequently us’d these lawes’ (*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce: Works*, iii 431). While the argument is attributed



torn apart into warring parties, the very concept of 'the people' may become illusory or tendentious, as it is when the Levellers optimistically, or coercively, entitle their manifesto *The Agreement of the People* when it is only a proposal emanating from certain army regiments and their allies among London craftsmen and congregations.<sup>3</sup> In such circumstances the rhetorical power of the term 'the people' is ripe for exploitation, and for dispute. It is the purpose of this book to trace the twists and turns of Milton's terminology and rhetoric as he grapples with the problem that the people hold the keys to the kingdom, and yet, as St Paul says, 'we haue this treasure in earthen vessels'.<sup>4</sup>

In Milton's writing the terms 'the people', 'the vulgar', and their cognates slide between different meanings, gathering or shedding diverse connotations. Milton was not a systematic philosopher, and did not, like Hobbes, define his terms closely; in his writings he is often polemical and opportunistic, inspired by principles, certainly, but responding to what he saw as the needs of the moment.<sup>5</sup> His terms gain their signification partly from their immediate context, but they also carry with them accumulated connotations from Milton's literary and philosophical heritage.<sup>6</sup> Since Milton's use of English was influenced by his etymological knowledge—his awareness of the Greek and Latin roots of the language which could be activated to add nuances to the semantic field of a English word—we might appropriately begin by mapping the meanings of some Greek and

to unnamed lawyers, the word 'scum' is Milton's own choice. (ii) 'Usually they allege the Epistle of *Cicero* to *Atticus*; wherein *Cato* is blam'd for giving sentence to the scumme of *Romulus*, as if he were in *Plato*'s common wealth' (*Tetrachordon: Works*, iv 157–8). Cp. the use of *faex* in the debate with Salmasius, pp. 165–6 below.

<sup>3</sup> See Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1963; first published 1941), pp. 268–72 for the varying concept of 'the people' in different sects and parties.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians iv 7.

<sup>5</sup> Sometimes, as with his treatment of Alexander More, he seems to have believed that his cause permitted departures from truth and honesty: see pp. 171–2 below.

<sup>6</sup> One context is sketched by C. A. Patrides in '"The Beast with Many Heads": Renaissance Views on the Multitude', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 16 (1965) 241–6.

Latin terms in classical and biblical usage which provided Milton with English words that would be key elements in his thinking about the people: these are the classical roots from which we derive our words 'democracy', 'laity', 'popular', 'vulgar', and 'plebeian'.<sup>7</sup>

To begin with δῆμος ('dēmos'). Its primary meaning is 'district, country, or land'; then the people of such a district; and thence, since the common people tended to live in the countryside, and the wealthier ones in the city, it meant 'the commons, the common people'. It is found as the antithesis of βασιλεύς ('king') and ἑξοχος ἀνὴρ ('eminent man') when Odysseus in the *Iliad* takes different approaches to improving morale in the disgruntled Greek army according to whether he is addressing the leaders or the common soldiers.<sup>8</sup> In a political sense, particularly with reference to the democratic system of Athens, it meant the sovereign people, the free citizens (as opposed to the slaves); also the democratic system itself, as distinct from oligarchy (rule by a group) or tyranny (rule by one person, but this is not necessarily a pejorative term in classical Greek); and the popular assembly through which democratic government was conducted. In New Testament Greek it can mean an assembly which transacts business, but it also means a crowd, an unruly and dangerous one, as when 'the Lewes . . . tooke vnto them certaine lewd fellowes of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the citie on an vprere, and assaulted the house of Iason, and sought to bring them out to the people [δῆμον]'.<sup>9</sup> The word δῆμος, then, may denote a respectable assembly or political group in contexts where the writer approves of democratic decision-making, but as its radical meaning is 'the common people' as distinct from their social superiors, it is susceptible to pejorative use when it is the lower social class of the people which is the focus of attention. It is therefore not surprising that its English derivative 'democracy' should be linked to a disparaging image when Dryden writes that the power of 'the crowd' would

<sup>7</sup> The following lexical information about these Greek and Latin words draws upon *LSJ*, *OLD*, Chantaine, and Bauer.

<sup>8</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, ii 188, 198.

<sup>9</sup> Acts xvii 5.

force kingly authority to ebb away, 'Drawn to the dregs of a democracy'.<sup>10</sup> Or that Satan in *Paradise Regain'd* speaks of the 'fierce Democratie' of classical Athens.<sup>11</sup> Or that Milton himself in 1641 should warn: 'What more banefull to *Monarchy* then a Popular Commotion, for the dissolution of *Monarchy* slides aptest into a *Democracy*',<sup>12</sup> where 'Democracy' is almost synonymous with 'anarchy'.

The next word is *λαός* ('laos'). Whereas a *δῆμος* is fundamentally defined by its association with a place, a *λαός* is defined by its association with a leader.<sup>13</sup> In the *Iliad* it denotes the common soldiers as distinct from their commanders,<sup>14</sup> and in the *Odyssey* the people as subjects of a prince.<sup>15</sup> It designates country people, workers, and sailors. It can also refer to 'a people', such as 'the people of Cadmus' or 'the people of the Achaeans'.<sup>16</sup> In the New Testament *λαός* takes on a range of meanings that are replicated in the semantic field which Milton himself deploys for both 'laity' and 'people'. *λαός* can designate the people generally, in a mass or crowd; or the people in contrast to their leaders, to the Pharisees, the priests, and the legal experts. In the latter cases, the emphasis is on what the *λαός* is not—it is not endowed with power, learning, and expertise. But *λαός* is also 'the people' as a nation, and particularly the people of God. Plentiful biblical examples establish this vision of the people of Israel as a *λαός* chosen by God as distinct from the Gentiles (*ἔθνα*<sup>17</sup>). It also denotes

<sup>10</sup> John Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, l. 227, in *The Poems of John Dryden*, edited by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, 5 vols (London, 1995–2005), q.v. at i 475 for annotation on the meaning of 'democracy' in the mid-seventeenth century.

<sup>11</sup> *PR* iv 269. Satan says that Athenian orators 'Wielded at will that fierce Democratie', which points to the ease with which a popular form of government may be manipulated by skilful rhetoricians.

<sup>12</sup> *Of Reformation: Works*, iii 57.

<sup>13</sup> For the distinction between *λαός* and *δῆμος*, and the semantic fields of associated words, see Émile Benveniste, *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, 2 vols (Paris, 1969), ii 89–95.

<sup>14</sup> e.g. *Iliad*, ii 365.

<sup>15</sup> *Odyssey*, i 214, 304.

<sup>16</sup> Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, l. 144; *Philoctetes*, l. 1243.

<sup>17</sup> e.g. Acts xxvi 17, 23.

the Christians as a people made by God or made ready for God, 'an holy nation, a peculiar people' (ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν<sup>18</sup>), and Christians as opposed to pagans. So in Acts we are told that 'God at the first did visite the Gentiles to take out of them a people [λαὸν] for his Name'.<sup>19</sup> It seems, then, that λαός is generally defined over against another group: it is the people of Cadmus, not any other Greeks; the unlearned people, not the Pharisees; the chosen people of Israel, not the Gentiles; Christians, not pagans.

There is also another Greek term whose descendants in English are now archaic, ὄχλος ('ochlos'), which means 'crowd, mob'.<sup>20</sup> It was a benign ὄχλος which Jesus sought to avoid by climbing a mountain to deliver the Beatitudes,<sup>21</sup> but a hostile ὄχλος which was created when the Jews assembled 'lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company [ὄχλοποιήσαντες], and set all the citie on an vprere'.<sup>22</sup> But perhaps more pertinent to Milton's thinking is the use which Plato makes of ὄχλος, for it is one of the words which he employs to designate the multitude which cannot be allowed to govern itself but must be guided by the guardians of his ideal city. In the *Gorgias* Socrates—as part of his argument about the ease with which rhetoric may lead its hearers astray—says that the speeches in tragic drama 'are addressed to a huge mob of people [πρὸς πολλὸν ὄχλον καὶ δῆμον]...composed alike of children and women and men, slaves and free—a form which we cannot much admire, for we describe it as a kind of flattery'.<sup>23</sup> It is not only theatrical rhetoric which is suspect, for Sophists teach only the opinions of the multitude (τὰ τῶν πολλῶν

<sup>18</sup> 1 Peter ii 9.

<sup>19</sup> Acts xv 14.

<sup>20</sup> See *OED* s.vv. ochlocracy and its cognates; most of the illustrative quotations are strongly pejorative. One pamphlet defending Milton's opponent Salmasius offers this definition: 'Ochilocracy or a Common-wealth is the corruption and deprivation of Democracy, where the rascal Rabble or viler sort of the people govern by reason of their multitude' (Cimelgus Bonde, *Salmasius his Buckler: or, A Royal Apology for King Charles the Martyr* (London, 1662), p. 205).

<sup>21</sup> Matthew v 1.

<sup>22</sup> Acts xvii 5.

<sup>23</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 502c–d; translation from *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, 1961), p. 285.

δόγματα), and the multitude is a great beast (θρέμματος μεγάλου).<sup>24</sup> Philosophy, which Plato insists should be understood in its etymological sense as the love of wisdom, is impossible for the multitude, the crowd (πλήθος).<sup>25</sup> Plato's answer to the inaptitude of the great beast for government or self-government, or for the pursuit of wisdom, is to institute a cadre of guardians who are to be trained in the love of wisdom, and who are to be persuaded to set aside their pursuit of the contemplation of the true and the beautiful for a while in order to confer on their less philosophical fellow citizens the benefits of enlightened rule. (There is, however, a danger that these trainee guardians may be swayed by the multitude.<sup>26</sup>) This is clearly a model for the direction of the state which has its attractions for Milton,<sup>27</sup> but it is one which he allows himself to evoke only occasionally and in passing, rather than systematically, at those points when the people are turning away from the true path which the godly few have identified.

Turning to Latin terms, the word *populus*—whose semantic field in Latin influences the range of inflections with which Milton uses 'people' and 'popular' in his English writings—encompasses a variety of meanings, from the political entity to the threatening crowd. At one level *populus* means 'a human community, a people, a nation' (OLD 1); then the people in an explicitly political sense (OLD 2), so 'the state', and at Rome the people as a political unit, as seen in the motto SPQR which was emblazoned on legionary standards: *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, the Senate and the Roman People. (Milton added the heading *Senatus Populusque Anglicanus* to a draft letter to the Senate of Hamburg in 1649, making a brief attempt to represent the new English state as a quasi-Roman republic.<sup>28</sup>)

<sup>24</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 493a.

<sup>25</sup> *Republic*, 494a.

<sup>26</sup> *Republic*, 492.

<sup>27</sup> For Milton's reading of Plato see Irene Samuel, *Plato and Milton* (Ithaca, NY, 1947), which focuses on *PL*, *PR*, and *SA*.

<sup>28</sup> Leeds University Library, Brotherton Collection MS Marten and Loder, 3rd series, 11, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>; CPW, v 478, corrected by Gordon Campbell, *A Milton Chronology* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 98–9.

*Populus* also designates the common people as distinct from the upper classes or patricians, so the multitude, the masses (OLD 3), and this leads into the use of the word to denote a crowd (OLD 4). The related verb *populor* means to ravage, devastate, plunder, despoil.

*Plebs* designated the majority of the Roman population who were citizens but not patricians; sometimes when they acted in a legislative or judicial capacity a distinction was drawn between *plebs* and *populus* (OLD 1). Viewed socially, the *plebs* were the common people, the masses, the mob (OLD 2), and the adjective *plebeius* described not only the plebeian class but anything common in the depreciatory sense.

The word *vulgus* is sometimes, but not necessarily, pejorative: in the sense 'the common people, general public' (OLD 1) it is neutral, but in the sense 'multitude, crowd' (OLD 2) it is often pejorative. The neutral usage is illustrated by Virgil's compassionate picture of the Trojan refugees as a *miserabile vulgus*,<sup>29</sup> and the pejorative one by his description of the Trojan crowd uncertain how to treat the wooden horse: *scinditur incertum studia in contraria vulgus* ('the wavering crowd is torn into opposing factions'),<sup>30</sup> so this is a *vulgus* whose division and lack of clear insight is about to lead it to make a fatal error. The related verb *vulgo*, meaning 'to make available to the mass of the population' (OLD 1), and hence 'to publish a literary work' (OLD 3), may be neutral but also has pejorative uses: 'to cheapen, to prostitute'. This too can be illustrated from Virgil, where rumour is *vulgata* ('spread, propagated'), and Juno is furious that her hidden sorrow has been made public in words, *verbis vulgare*.<sup>31</sup> The adverb *vulgo*, 'in a way which is common to all', is frequently used in reference to prostitution.

If we now trace the fortunes of *vulgus* as it passes into English, we find that in early modern England 'vulgar' as a noun could mean,

<sup>29</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, ii 798.

<sup>30</sup> *Aeneid*, ii 39; Loeb translation. Similarly, Ulysses manipulates the *vulgum* by sowing rumours about Sinon (*Aeneid*, ii 99).

<sup>31</sup> *Aeneid*, viii 554, x 64.

neutrally, 'the common people' (*OED* 3). But the *OED* shows that the word frequently referred specifically to the uneducated or ignorant (*OED* 2), with overtones of 'the easily manipulated'. This is illustrated from Spenser, who says, 'All places they with follie haue possest, | And with vaine toyes the vulgare entertaïne':<sup>32</sup> the vulgar here are being kept happy with 'vaine toyes', empty and frivolous entertainments. And in the *OED*'s citation from the 1614 translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* by Sir Arthur Gorges—"The vulgar do more affect Pompey then Caesar"<sup>33</sup>—there seems in the verb 'affect' to be a suggestion that the common people base their political allegiances on emotion rather than on reason or principle. Such implications to the word 'vulgar' are borne out if we turn to Dryden, who in *Astraea Redux* (1660) says that in the Civil War 'The vulgar, gulled into rebellion, armed; | Their blood to action by the prize was warmed'.<sup>34</sup> Here the vulgar are gullible and mercenary, and engage themselves in armed rebellion for motives other than political principle. Translating Virgil's account of the Trojan crowd discussing how to treat the wooden horse, Dryden writes:

The giddy Vulgar, as their Fancies guide,  
With Noise say nothing, and in parts divide.<sup>35</sup>

The *OED* even creates the unique shade of meaning, 'a common sort or class of persons', to gloss Milton's reference in *Tetrachordon* to there being 'a vulgar also of teachers, who are as blindly by whom

<sup>32</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Teares of the Muses*, ll. 193–4, in *Spenser's Minor Poems*, edited by Ernest de Sélincourt (Oxford, 1910), p. 159.

<sup>33</sup> *Lucans Pharsalia*, translated by Sir Arthur Gorges (London, 1614), p. 66, marginal note.

<sup>34</sup> Dryden, *Astraea Redux*, ll. 33–4, in *The Poems of John Dryden*, i 39.

<sup>35</sup> Dryden, 'The Second Book of the *Æneis*', ll. 50–1, in *The Works of Virgil: Containing His Pastorals, Georgics, and Æneis. Translated into English Verse; By Mr. Dryden* (London, 1697), p. 235. Later, Aeneas is told that the golden bough 'from the vulgar Branches must be torn' ('The Sixth Book of the *Æneis*', l. 212; *Works of Virgil*, p. 368).

they fancy led, as they lead the people.'<sup>36</sup> The noun 'vulgar' then, could be a disinterested description of a section of the population, but it could also be strongly pejorative from a religious, political, or cultural perspective.<sup>37</sup>

And who are 'the people'? In pertinent senses which were in use in Milton's day, the word 'people' designates:

3a Those without special rank or position in society; the mass of the community as distinguished from the nobility or the ruling classes;

3b In the Christian Church, the lay people, as distinguished from the clergy;

3c Politically, the whole body of citizens, regarded as the source of political power; the electorate;

4b The subjects of a king or any other ruler;

4c Those with whom one belongs; the members of one's family, tribe or community;

5a The individuals belonging to a particular place; inhabitants of a city, region, country;

5b A body of persons, multitude, crowd;

6 A nation.<sup>38</sup>

The semantic field of the word 'people' shows that although at first glance 'people' might seem a broadly inclusive term, it is subject to processes of definition which make it, in various respects, exclusive. It designates those who are not the nobility, not the clergy, not the ruler, not outsiders. It evokes belonging, but it also permits such an idea of belonging to be defined from a particular perspective: 'my people' to whom I belong, or 'those people' who threaten me.

<sup>36</sup> *Works*, iv 206. For Milton's use of 'vulgar' across his work see the entry in Frank Allen Patterson and French Rowe Fogle, *An Index to the Columbia Edition of the Works of John Milton*, 2 vols (New York, 1940), ii 2052–3. The *Index*, which is a fairly scarce book, is an invaluable resource for any study of Milton's language and thought.

<sup>37</sup> For the interesting uses of 'vulgar' in Lucy Hutchinson's translation of Lucretius see *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson: Volume I: The Translation of Lucretius*, edited by Reid Barbour and David Norbrook (Oxford, 2012), p. 465, and cp. pp. 727–8 for her use of 'multitude'.

<sup>38</sup> Summarized from *OED*, s.v. people.



The term 'the people' has a special semantic field in its biblical applications. Thomas Wilson's *A Complete Christian Dictionary* (1661) offers these senses, among others:

*People*] The Elect given to Christ...

4. A multitude or company of men and women, of one City, Commonwealth, Monarchy, joyned together by law, right, and communion, of benefits each to other, and good turns one from another, and governed by a certain Magistrate. Hence *not to be a people*, signifieth, *to have no Republick*... and Subjects are called *the people of the King who ruleth them*...

8. A multitude...

11. The Nation of the *Jews*...

13. The people of God... *A people whose God is the Lord*... *A peculiar people*...

Heb. 8.10. *And they shall be to me a people*, that is, worship me, depend on me by a lively faith, live in obedience to me, serve me, and no other...

*His people*] A people which shall willingly submit to be governed of God, who shall for ever protect them according to his Covenant...

*No people*] Either to be strangers from God, without a calling by the Gospel; or to want a Kingdom and policy of their own, being led captive.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to its civic meanings, in its stronger sense 'the people' designates God's people—either a nation or a smaller group who serve God alone, and who in return are nourished and protected by him. If they lack or desert this calling, they are 'no people'. It is also worth noting Wilson's understanding of the biblical uses of 'multitude':

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Wilson, *A Complete Christian Dictionary: Wherein the Significations and several Acceptations of All the Words mentioned in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are fully Opened, Expressed, Explained*, seventh edition (London, 1661), p. 475. For a modern summary see *The Vocabulary of the Bible*, edited by J.-J. von Allmen (London, 1958), pp. 321–3, and for an extended scholarly analysis of the concept of the people in the OT see Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, translated by Mark E. Biddle, 3 vols (Peabody, 1997), ii 896–919.

*Multitude*] The greatest and mightiest men, which by might bear down right, oppressing the poor by fraud or force. Exod. 23. 2 *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to doe evill.*

2. The common people or vulgar sort of men, because they are the greatest number...

11. Tumult...

*Multitude of people*] ...multitude of people is no note and mark of a true Church, for somuch as many walk in the broad way, whereas few walk in the straight way.<sup>40</sup>

There is no virtue in mere numbers, quite the opposite.

Milton's uses of 'the people' move between a vision of the people of England as a nation defined by God for great things, and, in tension with that, a series of distrusting, disappointed senses which define the people *per contra* as a mass which has insufficient aptitude for spiritual and political choices. So what is 'popular' may be a dangerous distraction from the true path for anyone who listens to the 'popular noise'.<sup>41</sup> One might expect Dryden, with his aversion to the crowd politics of Restoration London, to use 'popular' in a pejorative way, as he does when describing the ambitious demagogue as 'Drunk with the fumes of popular applause'.<sup>42</sup> But Milton too is wary of what is 'popular', and Satan, preparing to tempt the Son of God, knows that 'popular praise' is one of the 'Rocks whereon greatest men have ofttest wreck'd'.<sup>43</sup> In subsequent chapters we shall consider in more detail some of the ways in which Milton's contemporaries contested the labile signification of 'people' and 'popular'.<sup>44</sup>



This book seeks to trace Milton's struggle with the contradiction between his vision of an ideal people summoned by God to fulfil

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, p. 427.

<sup>41</sup> SA, l. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Dryden, 'Lucretius: Against the Fear of Death', l. 203; cp. *The Hind and the Panther*, iii 1092. For the political significance of the crowd in the Restoration see Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>43</sup> PR, ii 227–8.

<sup>44</sup> Justus Lipsius has a remarkable and extensive list of the characteristics of 'the common people', who are 'vnstable... They are geuen to change, and do suddainly alter their determinations like vnto tempests... Neyther is any thing more easy then to

their historic vocation, and his recognition that many, perhaps most, are incapable of responding to that calling. Why do they fall away from that summons? What internal passions and external seductions might lead the sovereign people, God's chosen ones, to act as a vulgar rabble? In *Areopagitica* Milton argued that licensing is a reproach to 'the common people',<sup>45</sup> who should be trusted to read all manner of works; and yet he also believes that the 'vulgar' cannot be trusted and need firm guidance. Why is this? Is it their political allegiance, religious bigotry or irreligion, laziness, gullibility, poor education, lack of rational judgement or good taste, their sensual indulgence, or simply their class status? What prevents the people from being the ideal community which Milton invokes, and which his texts seek to create in the imaginary space between himself and his readers?

As the upheavals of the period generated forms of government and religion which Milton increasingly found alien to his own ideals, his rhetoric came to imagine that liberty or salvation might lie not with the people at large but in the hands of a small group or even an individual. Analysis of Milton's conception of the people necessarily entails a recognition of the ways in which his ideals become entrusted to a smaller and smaller group, until after the Restoration his hopes seem directed towards lone individuals rather than communities. And so one thread which runs through the following discussion is Milton's own self-image: as he takes responsibility for defining the vocation of the people and for analysing the causes of their defection from that high calling, his own conception of himself emerges in his texts and becomes remodelled in the writings of his opponents.<sup>46</sup> It is with his early self-image and his need to separate himself from the vulgar that we begin.

*carry the multitude which way a mā list. They are voyd of reason... They encline alwayes to the greater part... rather by custome, then by sound iudgement... They are light of beliefe... They cannot moderate and refraine their speech... light headed, seditious, and quarrelsome* (*Sixe Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine*, translated by William Jones (London, 1594), pp. 68–9).

<sup>45</sup> *Areopagitica: Works*, iv 328.

<sup>46</sup> For Milton's self-definition through his work see Stephen M. Fallon's excellent study, *Milton's Peculiar Grace: Self-Representation and Authority* (Ithaca, NY, 2007).

*Bibliographical Note to Chapter 1*

For a brief account of Milton's concept of 'the people' see Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1963; first published 1941), pp. 249–72.

Books which provide a context for the present study through interpretations of Milton's political thought across his career include two major biographies, Barbara K. Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, 2000); and Gordon Campbell and Thomas N. Corns, *John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought* (Oxford, 2008). Focussed more specifically on Milton's thought are Arthur E. Barker, *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma 1641–1660* (Toronto, 1942); Michael Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdoms of God* (London, 1964); Perez Zagorin, *Milton: Aristocrat and Rebel: The Poet and his Politics* (Rochester, NY, 1992); and Robert Thomas Fallon, *Divided Empire: Milton's Political Imagery* (University Park, 1995). The substantial introductions to the respective volumes of CPW are also valuable resources.

Tensions between Milton's intellectual ideals and the exigencies of political debate were sketched by Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Elitist Politics of Milton', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 3717 (1 June 1973), pp. 601–3, and presented more fully in 'Milton in Politics' in his *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth Century Essays* (London, 1987), pp. 231–82. An important reassessment of Milton's political thought in relation to some principal contemporaries is provided by Blair Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England: John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Marchamont Nedham* (Oxford, 2007).

A substantial account of Milton's sympathies with radical ideas was offered by Christopher Hill in his *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977); see esp. pp. 160–2 and 185–6 on Milton and the people. Hill also explored the world of radical ideas within which he located Milton in his seminal study *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London, 1972) and again in *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (London, 1984). However, while Hill demonstrates that Milton and the various 'radicals' shared some ideas and concerns, he is less convincing in his attempts to establish that Milton actually engaged with these writers to any significant extent. On Milton's almost complete silence about the radical sects and parties see David Lowenstein, 'Milton among the Religious Radicals and Sects: Polemical Engagements and Silences', *Milton Studies*, 40 (2001) 222–47. Milton is also considered briefly in James Holstun's overtly Marxist *Ehud's Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (London, 2000). Thomas N. Corns has a useful essay on 'Milton and Class' in *Running Wild: Essays, Fictions and*

*Memoirs Presented to Michael Wilding*, edited by David Brooks and Brian Kiernan (New Delhi, 2004), pp. 55–68.

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The valuable chapter on 'The Classical Republicanism of John Milton' in Paul A. Rahe, *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory under the English Republic* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 104–38, includes some discussion of Milton's changing attitudes to the people. Sharon Achinstein in *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton, 1994) explores Milton's relationships with his imagined readers, emphasizing the importance in his writing not only of his engagement with historical circumstances but also of 'the element of the ideal, the rhetorical, or the imaginary' (p. 16); but her claim that 'Milton never gave up on the people of England' (p. 14) is open to question, as is her central concept of 'the revolutionary reader' in a period when parties and programmes were fluid, and the most revolutionary of the political and religious changes came about piecemeal rather than as the result of long-term endeavours. (One might also note the historiographical problems and the interpretative presuppositions inherent in using the term 'revolution' for the political changes in this period, particularly when it is inflected by Marxist theory; see Ilan Rachum, 'The Meaning of "Revolution" in the English Revolution (1648–1660)', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1995) 195–215.)

For the related topic of Milton's notions of England and of national identity see *Early Modern Nationalism and Milton's England*, edited by David Loewenstein and Paul Stevens (Toronto, 2008).