In this innovative study, Diane Purkiss illuminates the role of gender in the English Civil War by focusing on ideas of masculinity, rather than on the role of women, which has hitherto received more attention. Historians have tended to emphasise a model of human action in the Civil War based on the idea of the human self as rational animal. Purkiss reveals the irrational ideological forces governing the way seventeenth-century writers understood the state, the monarchy, the battlefield and the epic hero in relation to contested contemporary ideas of masculinity. She analyses representations of masculinity in the writings of Marvell, Waller, Herrick and the Caroline elegists, as well as in newsbooks and pamphlets, and pays particular attention to Milton’s complex responses to the dilemmas of male identity. This study will appeal to scholars of seventeenth-century literature as well as those working in intellectual history and the history of gender.

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LITERATURE, GENDER AND POLITICS DURING THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS


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Since parts of this book originated in my 1991 Oxford D. Phil. thesis, it seems appropriate to thank all the people connected with that, including the Commonwealth Universities Association and the British Council, the administrators of the Roger Lancelyn Green fund of Merton College, Oxford, and my two supervisors, John Carey and Julia Briggs. In the seemingly interminable gap between finishing the thesis and producing the book, I have acquired still more debts. The following people were helpful, or simply encouraging, at some point in the last ten years: my doctoral examiners Kate Belsey and David Norbrook, Sharon Achinstein, Sarah Barber, Clare Brant, as ever, Cedric Brown, Catherine Bates, Elizabeth Clarke, Jonathan Dollimore, Edith Hall, Elizabeth Heale, Ann Hughes, Lorna Hutson, Margaret Kean, Laura Knoppers, Kevin Sharpe, Quentin Skinner, Nigel Smith and Marina Warner. My colleagues at Keble College, Oxford, kindly gave me a term’s leave to finish this book. My students, especially Ramona Wray, Karen Britland, Becky Wildish, Katie Larson and Mary Phillips, have immeasurably added to my knowledge of the period and to my pleasure in it by their own labours. Josie Dixon and Ray Ryan at Cambridge University Press have been patient and helpful. Doubtless many kindnesses have been lost in the mists of time, but if I continue, I may end up thanking everyone I have ever met.

It seems appropriate that a book partly concerned with motherhood and the speaking subject should have been joyfully delayed by the birth of my daughter Hermione. In 1991 I wrote ‘my greatest debts are to my parents, who never lost faith in me, and to Ivan, who typed, cooked, cleaned, comforted, listened and saved’. It’s all still true, and this book is for Ivan, the only man I know who is equally at ease with both masculinity and femininity, and for my son Michael, in the hope that in his especial case, patrilinearity will prove true.
Introduction

The working title of this book was *Broken Men*, not only because it describes the figurative and sometimes literal breaking of individual men, not only because it shows ideals of masculinity fissuring under the extreme pressure of the political events of the 1640s and 1650s, but also because it suggests that masculinity is in any case always already broken.

What is masculinity? For the purposes of this study, masculinity is an aspect of identity, an aspect both psychically crucial and socially necessary. Whether the masculinities I discuss turn out to have a biological basis or not, they are nevertheless a complex, fractured and seamed system of signs and symbols. Even the term ‘system’ seems too regular, too structured and sensible for the wild and contradictory blizzard of images and texts hurled at the heads of men and women of the mid-seventeenth century. And yet ‘system’ does convey the idea of something that worked, and mid-century ideas of masculinity worked too. They worked on men, and they worked on women; they worked in and on political ideas; they were stories that could be told to understand or to construe events and give them meaning. They were also images and stories that could provide ventilation for rage, fear and anxiety, emotions understandably provoked reasonably often by the experiences of Civil War and political change. It is because ideas about masculinity worked on both men and women that this book is not altogether a book about men, for women, too, participate in – and sometimes police, intentionally or unintentionally – the borders of masculinity.

So there is no one masculinity, though any pocket of masculinity – a regiment, a republican group, a Cavalier drinking-party – will try to pretend that its ideology of masculinity is the only possible one, that to fall below it is to yield to the shame of femininity. It is part of all masculinities to deny this plurality of ideals, to wish to appear single, whole, unitary, and well armoured, but it is part of the aim of this book to
show that as soon as such masculine images are examined, the cracks in them become apparent.

In the Civil War, there are fuzzily different models of masculinity from the outset; the idea of the godly householder has less in common than one might imagine with the king’s idea of himself as paterfamilias to the nation, and still less in common with the abjection required of followers of the early radical sects. Yet these models could clumsily work alongside each other in the 1630s and 40s, though it is a central part of my thesis that it was in part the unacknowledged tension between them that added emotional and psychic impetus to what might appear superficially to be rational political choices. However, once the appearance of consensus had unravelled in the fierce violence of pamphlet wars, attitudes to masculinity became more deeply divided by their very use and reuse to enforce other ideas and positions. By 1653, positions had hardened; the Civil War divided the nation in many ways, and it also divided different ideals of masculinity from each other. In particular, the king’s death and the Royalist rhetoric which surrounded it created a new political idea of what masculinity might be, an idea which endorsed abjection, even feminisation (though emphatically not effeminacy) in the leader. Meanwhile, the monarch’s opponents had created an ideal of a republic consisting of heads of households and citizen-soldiers, roles which alike excluded any trace of femininity. This masculine republic was to be maintained by constant and repeated exclusion of the feminine through dragging disorderly women and their machinations into the cold hard light of print culture and public scrutiny. In Cromwell, this fantasy found its perfect exemplar, but Cromwell’s embodiment of the ideal came to seem excessive even to its proponents, so that extreme masculinity became associated for some with cruelty and tyranny, as effeminacy had been before. Above all, it became associated with the absence of sentiment and sensibility, two aspects of the death of Charles I emphasised by his propagandists. The eventual triumph of a feminised model of the masculine at the Restoration made it possible for Charles II to behave in ways that would have branded him an effeminate weakling to an earlier generation, who still occasionally voiced their disapproval of him.

In tracing this history, I am arguing that some of the texts produced by these psychic upheavals require the insights of psychoanalysis for their deciphering. This does not imply a lack of interest in history or a homogenisation of historical difference. The psyche, like the subject, is historically produced, because it is the outcome of language and experience, neither of which are immune to the fluctuations of historical
change. On the contrary, the best work in psychoanalysis today is deeply contextual. The overlap between history and psychoanalysis is the overlap between the psychic and the social. The body, for example, is a text jointly authored by society and by the psyche. For both Cixous and Kristeva, using Mary Douglas’ theory of anthropology, categories like dirt and disorder are both psychic and social, both culturally, linguistically and discursively constituted and registered as part of a series of psychic movements and investments. Similarly, for Klaus Theweleit, the body of the soldier is not merely social, but is the product of unstable, uneven interactions between desires and their social articulations. It is precisely that kind of interaction that I try to trace here. Where there are apparently transhistorical elements, these may also be historical artefacts. If masculinity constructs itself in all eras around (say) castration anxiety, then that is not an inevitable process, but something systematically replicated in culture. If both the English anti-monarchists and the French revolutionaries use the figure of Medusa to define their own ordered masculinity against the chaos of female protest, this is not proof of historical transcendence but proof of history’s operation on the psyche entangled in the event. It may also be proof of textual influence. The symbol of Medusa herself has to remain active and known, as do the texts in which states are founded by heroes who dispatch feminine monsters. The state has to remain understandable as a body, or as symbolised by a body. Only by the historical transmission of such stories does the male psyche find itself continually defined over against feminine monsters, and only thus does the state find itself constantly defined as male. Such outcomes are neither natural nor inevitable. Ultimately, the psyche is a collection of stories, broken stories told and heard in shards, but stories nevertheless. And stories are history.

This book is nevertheless relatively unusual in its field in allowing psychoanalysis. In work on witchcraft, psychoanalysis is justified by the vague notion that the people about whom the history of witchcraft is written were irrational (though of course not everyone accepts this proposition or psychoanalysis either). The Civil War, on the other hand, involves dealing with some of the finest political thinkers and canonical writers in Anglophone history, and also with some of the Civil War’s most prominent political actors. Suggesting that they are not immune to fear and fantasy and desire does not mean devaluing their ideas, but pointing out that beneath and alongside them lie complex fantasies and imaginings about aspects of the self with which the political discourses of the seventeenth century were not equipped to deal. There has been a
tendency on the part of political historians and the literary critics who follow in their wake to write of rational Cartesian subjects, self-identical and unitary, makers of equally self-identical texts. When writing, say, of the decision to execute Charles I, or Charles’s wish to negotiate with the Irish, historians routinely assume that the historical actor is making the best possible stab at rationality of which he is capable, even if he is conspicuously failing, and even where ‘rationality’ means something that a modern subject might consider irrational, such as a belief in providences. Similarly, the political criticism of Civil War texts which has flourished in recent years often understands the authors and the texts as active, if ambiguous political agents. Whether the outcome is Naseby or ‘Upon Appleton House’, the results involved are assumed to be part of the history of ideas: bright shiny surfaces, fissured only by the intractabilities of language, genre or the political situation itself.

Literary critics have fared little better. The standard method involved in analysing Civil War texts picks up a figure, examines all possible sources and positions available to the author, and then shows which he or she chose. It goes without saying that this is often dazzlingly illuminating. But it too assumes a rational liberal subject; indeed, literary critics who work on the Civil War frequently choose it as a topic because they are drawn to the notion of liberal subjectivity politically. The analyses provided by these methods are perfectly adequate on their own terms, but they evade a great deal about the conflict by ignoring the areas of excess and the gaps and silences where unreason flourishes. Is it, perhaps, our fantasy that the war was fought by rational actors consciously trying to make a difference to history? Like all fantasies, this one is grounded in truth, but there is a risk that this kind of investment leads us to overstress conscious decision-making at the expense of unconscious investments, rational choice at the expense of irrational fantasies. Then we may miss the phantasmagoria that were also active, also present, and that sometimes governed those choices, those moments of agency.

It is impossible to address masculinity comprehensively from within the framework of the history of ideas as that is usually understood; masculinity was not an early modern idea, which is not to say that there were no conscious seventeenth-century ideologies of the masculine. Whereas with femininity one can point to a series of texts with ‘women’ comfortably and overtly in the title, masculinity is not to be found in overt form on title pages. It was not often overtly a topic, though its absence was. One might also note the vexed critical and historiographical past of an idea which many would say is at the centre of virtually all
scholarly work, yet in an unacknowledged and therefore silent fashion. We are not used to noticing and naming masculinity – not in Civil War studies, anyway – in the way that we have become used to noticing and naming femininity. Nonetheless, it might not seem so very controversial to say that gender ideology was an unacknowledged textual unconscious even in overtly rational political polemics, polemics like Filmer’s Patriarcha and Milton’s Tenure of Kings and Magistrates. Those masculine fantasies are not or not altogether what early modern people thought they were saying, but they are there and their presence is demonstrable in a number of places; in, for example, the excess of rhetorical invention surrounding the death of Charles I, in the desperate absence at the centre of that invention, in the representation of the republic of letters in and around the opening of the king’s cabinet; even the terms ‘opening’ and ‘cabinet’ have evident gender connotations which cannot be ignored. Historically, too, masculinity expresses itself as the inverse of a much more visible, much more carefully examined femininity; one of the characteristics of the masculinities produced in Western culture is that they do not or cannot talk about themselves. Civil War masculinities are no exception. They are often to be found in the obliques of texts, not in their straight lines.

Masculinity is often to be found in that realm of narrative and metaphor, the realm called ‘the imaginary’ by Michèle Le Doeuff, the realm which has been made visible in work on the French Revolution, work like that of Lynn Hunt and Sara Maza, work that shows that new visions of the world, new models of monarchy and government and parliament, are not always created via political theory, but through stories of family conflict, domestic melodramas of deceit, exploitation and oppression.³ The Civil War political imaginary, the space in which the men and women of the age thought about the events which took place around them, and determined what was and was not possible, what was and was not thinkable, was a space flowing with stories about masculinity. It is fair to say that diverse ideas about masculinity marked the boundaries of political possibility. Masculinity fenced off some possible courses, while enforcing others upon its votaries. Anxieties about it could cause political allegiances to form or break, as well as serving as a justification for choices already made.

If we look at a piece of Civil War teratology, or a pamphlet joking about the sexual absence left in the ladies of London after the departure of the Cavaliers, we might assume too easily that the content of such works can be summarised as rational ideas; as advertisements for one side or the other, for example. Yet this ignores much of their content: the point is
why such ideas seemed relevant to the concerns of propagandists, and what aspects of the stories they set in motion worked as propaganda. The war itself, similarly, has until recently been regarded as a fit object only for military history: for accounts of who placed which regiment where, what their colours were, when they charged, what damage they did. More recently, what has been called the new military history has taken a welcome new look at the experiences of the ordinary soldier. But those experiences include psychic experiences. The problem with military history of the Civil War is that it is apt to forget that this was a war, that people died bloody and screaming on fields full of other dying men. Contemporaries were less blind, though their response to these deaths was of course shaped by their choice of sides and also by the very ideologies revealed in their responses, ideologies of masculine militarism which date back to the Tudor era and beyond.

Republican – or, if that term has become too vexed, anti-monarchical Parliamentarian self-representation – is similarly understood in rational and intellectual terms. Yet I want to show here that some aspects of republicanism are crucially dependent on notions of masculinity put into circulation by the writers of godly conduct discourses. Similarly, the representation of both Charles I and Cromwell, which has received rather more attention, is nevertheless usually understood in terms of the rational uses of literature and history to present a case. But the cases presented in favour of and against each man are not as rational as this. Like us, early modern men and women carried about with them an irrational part, an unconscious they could never fully know, one that produced fantasies and desires.

A secondary theme in this book is to show how ideas about politics and ideas about gender came to be intertwined. Some cultural historians of the Restoration have recently drawn attention to the way sexual events are used to explain political events in that culture; Charles II, for example, was said to have signed the Treaty of Dover only after sex with his sister, the Duchess of Orleans, who persuaded him to act. In the Restoration, it is impossible to hive off pornographic writing as a separate genre; rather, writings about sex are writings about politics, and vice versa. Perhaps we have been too inclined to see this as a peculiar feature of Restoration culture, too willing to assume that it arises directly from the personal behaviour of the king. It is part of this book’s argument that the process of understanding politics through narratives about sex and gender and the instability of both begins well before 1660. It arises from the combination of the genres of court scandal, classical satire and the print culture of
news, a combination that perhaps became central to political thinking
during the ‘reign’ of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. Given that
the discursive staging of libertinage as an aspect of misrule and tyranny
received its greatest impetus from dispraise of Buckingham, it is not
surprising that masculinity remained central to the entire discourse, for
it goes without saying that Buckingham’s position as favourite of first
James and then Charles invited particular scrutiny of the masculinity of
all three. The result is a political imaginary so marked by concerns about
the body and sexuality and masculinity that these concerns spill over into
texts which are not overtly about these things at all, texts such as the
poems of John Milton and the elegies on the death of Charles I.

It is perhaps here that a foundational story might be in order, a story
that brings together some of the difficult issues raised above. When
women protested against the war, it was widely believed that their protests
were inspired by men, and men dressed as women, that: ‘some men of the
rabble in women’s clothes mixing among ’em had set them on’. Now, we
might read this story and its historical cognates in several different ways.
The commentator who makes the (exceedingly problematic) assumption
is engaged in an act of reading masculinity, reading it where it does not in
fact exist, or act. What kind of reading is taking place here? The moment
could be understood in Bakhtinian terms as the return of a form
of carnivalesque protest about hunger very common in early modern
England, a protest characteristically led by a quasi-mumming figure
wearing women’s clothes and often given a name that marked military
and feminine characteristics: ‘Captain Alice’, for example. Such figures of
disorder are arguably part of a kind of social unconscious which can
express itself on occasions of similar social stress in displaced but related
terms, as here. Finally, it would be possible to make a grand narrative,
connecting the image of food rioters as starving mothers nourishing their
children, with the men’s presentation of femininity through the idea of
hunger. It is the psychic as well as the social (and physical) burden of
hunger and poverty that drives the (mis)representation of the self as
feminised, even prostituted, turned into an object of consumption instead
of a producer. In other words, we might see cross-dressed male protestors
less in terms of a private trauma acted out in public hysteria, and more as
a historical hysteria, an enactment of a social and public gender transac-
tion from a past of protest in a public place of trauma. But for our early
modern source, the protestors are not (authentically) hysteric, but in-
authentically histrionic (in a manner which clearly compromises their
gender alignment).
I want to extend the possibilities suggested by this story to argue that the boyhood of the early modern child was itself governed by a psychic logic which eventually found utterance in a near-hysterical process of repetition or recapitulation. In doing so, I am suggesting strongly that the psyche, like all other aspects of the human, has a history, and that its development also has a history, a history recognised to some extent by early modern people themselves, and to some extent not understood. I want to begin that explanation by what might at first seem a detour through the challenging work of Hortense Spillers, one of the only psychoanalysts to propose a radically variable historical psyche.

Building on Frantz Fanon’s pioneering work in applying Freud’s theories to notions of racial difference, Spillers focuses on the difficulty of subject-formation under slavery. In her article ‘Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe’, Spillers sets out to explain the frequently noted difference of African-American family structures, one in which the father’s authority is somehow muted and language acquisition therefore somehow problematic. Spillers suggests, daringly, that this anomaly is a product of the inscription of slavery on African-American family structure, where the *nom du père*, the name of the father, is literally lost, even forcibly erased, by the process of enslavement, in the middle passage between Africa and the Americas, where bodies are treated with indifference, in the literal absence of a slave name. Instead, the *nom du père* is replaced by a name, a *nom*, that is extrinsic to the family, the name of the white father/owner, so that the connection between *nom* and *non* is severed.  

Spillers is not really proposing this as an historical argument; she is critiquing the ethnocentrism of Lacanian psychoanalysis. However, I want to suggest that we can creatively misread her to mean something that would have important implications for us as historians. Her argument could be suggesting that external circumstances can reshape the vital processes of infancy, that the psyche might truly have a history. If the entry into language is social, then it can be historically variable to some extent. One might, for instance, speculate on whether mirroring and the mirror stage might operate differently in a culture with few mirrors, in a culture which was much more aural and less visual than our own. One might even argue that this very aurality, this relative lack of engagement with the visual, is itself a result of a different narcissistic processing of the pre-Oedipal. The work Kaja Silverman has done on the significance of the maternal voice and the sounds of the mother’s body as formative in the pre-Oedipal might be especially relevant to a culture where it is more difficult for the infant to imagine itself through the misrecognition
of an image in the mirror. I give these simply as examples of what might be. What we need, and what we have not yet had, is a theory of early modern subjectivity.

In Lacan, what happens after the mirror stage, you will recall, is that the Oedipus phase pushes the child into the Symbolic, so the child is separated from its first love-object, the mother. It can now desire – because now there is absence – but its desire for union with the mother is now sexually driven. The nom/non du père forbids those desires, which are repressed by the child, and this forms the unconscious. The child thereby enters language and is constructed as a speaking subject. But this process is subject to change; it is not one single event, always the same, but can be inflected by culture and situation. Spillers, as we saw, argued that the nom du père was critically weakened in post-slave culture by the memory-trace of the erasure of names under slavery. And both Irigaray and Cixous long ago pointed out that the nom du père was less effectual for girls, because they believe themselves to be already castrated. So the female subject’s desires are always double, and her separation from the mother is less complete, so that her insertion into language remains more problematic.

Similarly, I want to suggest, early modern subjects have a particular relationship with the mother, one that is culturally mediated as well as psychically produced. I want to draw attention in particular to two aspects of early modern boyhood that seem to me striking in relation to the non du père and the separation of the son from the mother through his entry into language, because they seem like recapitulations of that separation, as if they acted as problematic supplements that pointed to some incompleteness or lack in the original separation. It is as if early modern boys had to be separated from their mothers not once, but many times. And I am not the first to point to an enormous amount of activity around masculinity in the early modern period as if – even by comparison with other anxious masculinities – it needed constant remarking, redrawing of the boundary between the mother and language in particular, as if masculinity itself were somehow difficult. If arguments about the early modern male psyche are apt to be repetitive, that is because that psyche is itself characterised by repetition. So I want to argue for a culturally mediated experience of what maternity is, and hence of the nom du père and of separation from the mother.

We might begin with childhood and education. For most middling and above male children in antebellum England, the early years were split in two by the onset of formal schooling around age seven. Before that,
they were at home under the care of parents and servants, much to the regret of educators like Erasmus and Thomas Elyot, who saw humanist instruction precisely as the way to suppress the faults of early childhood:

A noble mannes sonne, in his infancie, [shall] have with hym continually onely suche as may accus tome hym by litle and litle to speak pure and elegant latin. Semably the nourises and other women aboute hym, if it be possible, to do the same: or, at the leste way, that they speke none enlisse but that which [was] cleane, polite, perfectly and articulately pronounced, omitting no lettre or sillable, as folishe women ofte times do of a wantonnesse, wherby divers noble men and gentilmennes childryn, (as I do at this daye knowe) have attained corrupt and foule pronouciation.

Hence he urges that the child at seven ‘be taken from the company of women: sauinge that he may haue, one yere, or two at the most, an auncient and sad matrone, attending on hym in his chamber’.

Here, Elyot identifies femininity as the very arena from which education must remove the child. This is the theme I want to pursue. I want to suggest three interlinked ideas: first, that early modern masculinity was historically specific; second, that it was an hysterical, that is repetitive construction, something which had to be constantly remade to prevent its collapse into formlessness; and third, that this remaking consisted of the repetition, in cultural practices and in texts, of the separation from the mother, which was culturally perceived as the moment at which masculinity was conferred, and which was itself a repetition of the cultural universal of separation from the mother as the keystone of identity formation. Early modern culture turned this (normal) developmental moment into a pathology by insisting on its importance culturally, thus creating a male psyche constantly subject to destabilising fantasies of its loss. This, I shall argue, partially explains both certain oddities of Civil War representation, but also the spasms of violent misogyny that disfigure most seventeenth-century art and literature.

My first example of a remarking of the separation between son and mother to allow for a kind of re-entry into language is the practice of schooling. The experience of being ‘boarded out’ replicates and hence reiterates, reshap es and manages, expresses the non du père. But even the experience of ‘day-school’, going to a grammar, involved a similar separation. And what was actually learnt, at grammar, was that separation from the mother was essential. For educational theorists, grammar schools were an effort to replace one kind of masculinity by another. As Keith Thomas argues, their purpose was at least in part to keep the boys off the streets, to get them used to discipline, to train them in manners and religion. The
grammar school aimed to produce a disciplined masculinity to offset the undisciplined masculinity which was feared by many early modern observers. Boys at grammars were accordingly warned to avoid needless association with apprentices and other idle lads. Yet this substitution of a more disciplined masculinity for its more physical antecedent was not approved by everyone. John Bulwer worried that sitting stunted a boy’s growth, an anxiety that seems to point to a fear of decorum as feminisation or infantilisation, and Thomas Tryon complained that older boys would be better off working than sitting ‘in torment eight hours a day under the grum and unpleasing aspect of a harsh and ill-natured pedagogue’. This notion of an anterior masculinity, however, is I think an alibi, for it does not really predate attendance at grammars so much as lie alongside them as a kind of counterfactual. It is what will happen if there is no education. Already we get a sense that the non du père, or more generally the civilising process it represents, was somehow understood as weak. Apparently the father needed other father figures to support him in managing his sons. Conflict between the master and the parents was almost inevitable given the grammar’s function as a replacement for the home and for paternal authority. Although in theory the master taught respect for parental authority, with one master insisting his pupils bend down on one knee every morning before asking their fathers’ blessing, the system actually worked to create disputes between parental and educational authorities.

One reason that the teacher was believed to resemble the father was that entry to the grammar constituted a kind of re-entry into language. Walter Ong argued in a celebrated essay that Latin language study was a Renaissance puberty rite. The study of rhetoric was also such a gender marker for ancient Romans themselves, as Maud Gleason has recently shown in a compelling study, and mastery of rhetoric as well as Latin was a way of being masculine for the Renaissance gentleman too. But for the boy, and especially for the boy at grammar school, it was grammar itself that marked and constituted him as a schoolboy. Though many humanist educators inveighed against the practice, Latin grammar was taught by itself, as a series of rules to be got by heart. These became so familiar that they could be the subject of jokes years later. As in praesenti perfectum format in –avi (as in the present forms its perfect in –avi) was often rendered as ars in praesenti, a joke about the way the rule was learned, and a joke which conflates the harshness of learning by rote with the harsh means by which it was enforced – and possibly with sodomy too, all points to which I shall return.
Commentaries on textbooks offer us an insight into what a grammar was thought to be and what its purposes were, for its purposes – that is, the purpose of teaching rules of Latin accidence to boys who were likely to leave within a year to work as tinkers – were indeed opaque to many intelligent observers. Commenting on the widespread use of ‘Cato’s’ Distichs as a first Latin reading text, Richard Mulcaster observed that it was ‘too serious for little ones, who mind nothing but their toys’. Mulcaster’s remark, while sympathetic to the boys, marks off an opposition between what went on inside the grammar and what went on outside – between the grammar and play, or toys. This marking of the boundaries of the grammar was relentlessly pursued in all areas. Most notably, boys had to speak Latin at school, during lessons of course, but also at meals, and at many schools, within the school grounds too, that is at break time. The ostensible purpose was to teach the children to be fluent in Latin conversation, but the practice had other effects. Obviously, it retarded rebellion and mischief; it is hard to conspire in an unfamiliar tongue. Equally obviously, it retarded play, which requires communication, and made break times a form of work. But it did something else too, something which is familiar to us from the grammar school ‘revolution’ last century. Like that later attempt to cure boys of ‘talking broad’, Latin speech divided the speech of a boy from the speech of his parents. It separated him from his home as a speaking subject.

This, as we shall see, is the symbolic clue to what the grammars were ‘for’ in terms of the development of the psyche. Another symbolic clue is the very long school day. Many schools began at six in the morning, went on until eleven, and then began again at one, going on until five in the evening. There were sometimes breaks – at nine for breakfast, and at three for exercise and ‘honest recreation’ – but the hours were enforced by beatings for lateness and for being absent without excuse. Even more than ‘boarding out’, this worked to separate boys from the home, to give them a life radically separate from it.

The same theme emerges in some key texts read by grammar schoolboys. Beginners studied grammars, but also had texts to read, and these texts, like modern reading schemes, sought to Make Reading Fun! by representing daily life, albeit (then as now) in sanitised, moralised form. Bearing in mind this sanitisation, texts like Pueriles Confabulatiunculae nonetheless do offer us a partial portrait of grammar schoolboys, at least as viewed by their masters. Brinsley’s translation of Pueriles Confabulatiunculae gives what appear to be vivid and relatively unmoralised insights into the lives of grammar schoolboys. The dialogues have many ongoing
themes acutely relevant to questions of how the grammars constructed masculinity, focusing in particular on the conflict between the rebellious and carnival lower body of the schoolboy and the demands of the strict and Apollonian grammar. Particularly helpful are the excuses to be learnt by boys who wished to leave the classroom. Masters complained constantly that boys were always seeking leave to go outside to urinate or defecate, and these longings were associated with indiscipline and a will to play, the antitheses of the product the grammar school was trying to create. They were also associated with the lower body and its infantile needs, for most of the excuses were linked to excrement:

I pray yow master give me leave
    That I may purge my belly
    That I may goe to the privie
    That I may goe to make water
    That I may lighten my bladder

Mastery of Latin is thus linked very firmly to bodily control, to the firm boundaries of the self that go with subjectivity and even with separation from the mother’s realm of infancy. The phrases also mark a re-entry into the social symbolic in that the boy is now to understand himself in relation to injunctions about his body couched in a language that is not the language of his home.

These conflicts between home and school and hence between the boy and the mother are dramatised particularly vividly in a series of dialogues which occur in more than one handbook between grammar boys and their mothers. Characteristically, these are stories of conflict between boys and mothers who make demands on them because they utterly fail to understand or appreciate the demands of the school and its master. They are stories that strongly mark two things: the conflict between masters and parents for authority over the child, a general theme, and the grammar as a place in which a boy is removed from his mother’s influence and authority. Take, for example, one of Brinsley’s colloquies:

_aemilia_ [mother] Bat my son, my son Bat.
_bat_ [son] What will you?
_ae_ It is time to rise.
_bat_ Suffer me, I pray [you], as yet to rest a little.
_ae_ Thou hast slept enough. Rise my sonne.
_bat_ How many hours have I slept?
_ae_ Almost ten, over-long.
_bat_ I would I might sleep my fill.
Onely open thy eyes.

In truth I cannot...

Where is my shirt?

Loe it lieth under the bolster.

Mother depart I will rise by and by.

Doe not sleep againe.

I will not, onely goe your way.

I goe.

This could be any mother, anytime – and yet it is also about school as the place to which the mother sends the son to master a body which she cannot herself master. In another dialogue, a boy wakes, asks the time, and is rebuked by his mother for not greeting her first. He then tries to leave without washing or combing himself. His mother rebukes him again, but lets him go so that he can try to avoid a whipping. Her values are not relevant to his life. In a third dialogue, a boy is forced to miss his dinner because his mother cannot seem to grasp the imperative to return promptly to school:

Mother, when shall we dine?

By and by, if so be that you wait a little.

I must go away forthwith.

Whither, O good sir, so quickly?

Whither it becommeth scholars to goe.

Forsooth, to play.

Certainly, to the very place of execution.

The mother, Vincentia, is so dim that she doesn’t appear to realise that grammar is not play, and that Thomas will be beaten for lateness. Thomas’ efforts to avoid a beating lead to the loss of dinner.

These books were of course not written by boys, still less by mothers, but by masters, and the portraits of masters are noticeably softer than the recollections of ex-pupils would suggest. Nonetheless, the boys are part of a culture of educational sternness that their mothers can hardly grasp. This is not a disinterested portrayal of mothers: rather, these texts set out to create an opposition between the (self) indulgence of the mother and the requirements of the master. Another dialogue makes the male–female opposition between them especially clear when the master has a starring role. A boy is late because his mother has been slow in preparing his pottage, commanding him to stay until it is ready. The boy stoutly ignores her and leaves for school without his midday dinner, earning praise for his choice. The male–female opposition in question here is laid bare when the woman who represents home is not a mother, to whom
some respect should be shown, but a sister. In another dialogue, it is a
sister who wakes a schoolboy, and like Aemilia the mother, struggles to
get him to rise. Her reward is savage gender invective:

D I answer in vain to a woman.
c Make haste to get yourself ready, unless you will be beaten.
D I pray thee get thee gone and care for thy kitchen.13

The boy’s final comment is remarkably close to what Parliament said to
female petitioners: ‘meddle with your huswifery’. It is almost as if the
response were a learned one, learned at school.

In Corderius’ Colloquiorum, a boy’s brother has been sent to Germany,
but returns ignobly, to the fury of his father, because non poterat ferre
desiderium matris (he could not bear the want of his mother). His mother
reinforces this by crying at his return and pleading for him against his
father’s rage. The two schoolboys, however, recall several helpful maxims
from Horace, which enable them to conclude:

Video quam ineptus iste affectus in nostras matres fit.
(See how foolish that affection towards our mothers is.)

Atque matres ipsae sunt in causa; nam cur amant nos adeo tenere?
(But the mothers themselves are in fault, for why do they love us so tenderly?)14

Latin teaching was itself a matter of exclusion. A text from Milton’s
schoolmaster John Colet makes the link between control of excrement,
Latin and repudiation of the mother clearer:

To purpose unto the true laten speech, all barbary all corrupcion all laten
adulterate which ignorant blynde folis brought into this worldse and with the
same hath distayned and poysend the olde laten speech and the varay Romayne
tong which in tyme of Tully and Salust and Virgill and Terence was used,
whiche also seint Jerome and seint Ambrose and seint Austen and many hooly
doctors and learnyd in theyr tymes. I say that ffylthynesse and all such abusyon
which the later blynde worlde brought in which more ratheyr may be callid
blotterature thenne litterature I utterly abbanysh and Exclude oute of this scole.15

The foe here is of course medieval Latin, tainted with Popery, but also
deemed bad style, ill-mannered. Colet is not troubled about the morals of
writers like Ovid, but about a degeneration of language itself. The
language he uses for this degeneration, however, is suggestive: for him it
is ‘ffylthynesse’, a word which might elsewhere be used for sexual immor-
ality, and he also compares the Latin he wants to exclude to blots, and
twice describes those who introduced it as blind. Taken together, these
metaphors are about the despoliation of something clean and white by
something both dark and darkening, a metaphoric architecture which is
common in the Renaissance as a way of talking about the inadequate
transmission of identity over time, and in particular the disruption of
paternal identity by the mother’s physical intervention in its biological
replication. Colet imagines a symbolic reversal of that process by remov-
ing the sons from the mother and placing them in a world where control –
his – is all masculine. This process is facilitated by and also mirrors the
secure reproduction of texts without adulteration. It was this very nexus of
images – the transmission of seed and the transmission of texts – that was
to preoccupy Colet’s pupil John Milton in later life. It is as if Milton had
to keep repeating Colet’s lesson – repetition was, after all, a central part of
grammar school education – just as his grammar school boyhood itself
involved repeated separations from the mother.

The grammar school colloquia imply that masculinity had to be coaxed
into formation; in childhood it was threatened by femininity in two ways.
First, children were fearful, which was unmasculine because irrational.
They feared the devil and other supernatural beings: ‘children hide their
faces within their bed-clothes, though they have seen nothing, when they
have affrighted themselves with the shapes of devils pourtray’d only in
their Phancies’. ¹⁶ Second, as well as being fearful, children were undisci-
plined. Undiscipline was more complex, but it could be explicitly con-
trasted with achieved masculinity in educational literature. In Vives’
Linguae Latinae Exercitatio, a father tells the schoolmaster that he brings
his son ‘to make of him a man from the beast’, ex belua hominem facias. ¹⁷
Though to adults a passion for play, and disruptive play in particular,
showed that a boy was not sufficiently socialised, there is evidence of an
alternative boy culture in which feats of more-or-less criminal derring-do
were the epitome of masculinity. This dichotomy is one of the most
important fissures in the ideology – or ideologies – of early modern
masculinity; it was possible for unruliness to be portrayed as a problem-
atic hypermasculinity, or as defective masculinity because it demonstrated
a lack of self-control. It was also possible for too much disciplinem, too
much control, to be portrayed as an effeminisation because it resembled
the stricter rules of conduct for girls. Milton was called the Lady of
Christ’s.

Glimpses of a world outside and beyond school are in these texts
defined in opposition to school itself, and so are just as much part of
the engendering of boys as systematic education. In Brinsley’s dialogues,
one boy describes the kind of play he enjoys: ‘to runne in the fields,
to leap in the meadows, to fill the empty heaven with our great cries’
Not surprisingly after this lyrical, near-romantic evocation of the child in nature, he adds: ‘I would not eate no not hony or sugar in comparison of this pleasure.’ But another boy tries hard to coax him into more disciplined pastimes – handball, wrestling, hunting, riding – but to no avail. He is perhaps too poor for these more sophisticated pleasures, or simply not interested. But this wild, unsupervised play seems as remote as possible from his sister’s world as demarcated by her brother, a world of kitchen and fireside.

As well as the masculinity of the schoolboys, there was also the invariably masculine and absolute authority of the masters. This absolute authority was perceived to be in conflict with the home, not only with the mother, but also with the father. For Erasmus, it was the father who had to make a supreme effort. ‘To be a true father’, he wrote, ‘you must take absolute control of your son’s entire being’. This meant denying the mother her part in his upbringing. The fathers’ and sons’ struggle to assert this paternal right in the face of the very frequent dissent of the masters led to some political reflections which are strikingly proleptic of the major conflict of the Civil War itself: the conflict between masculine monarchy and masculinity as headship of a household. Just as the king (or Parliament, or Cromwell later) could either reinforce the authority of the father and husband or undermine it, so the master could either act as a symbol of paternal authority or come into conflict with it. Fathers of working families, in particular, were often at war with the authority of the master in that they saw their sons as still belonging to them, with their time available for labour on the farm. Such conflicts led to reflections on the master’s authority which were also politically suggestive. The master was compared to an ‘absolute monarch’, ‘a little despotic emperor’. So vital was this authority, and so inalienable, that Dr Busby of Westminster arranged to keep his hat on when Charles II visited the school, lest his position in the eyes of the boys be undermined. If turn-of-the-century Eton made George Orwell a socialist, as he averred, it may be that many grammar schools bred suspicion of absolutism, and particular suspicion of its impact on the authority of the father; indeed, it could even be argued that the implicit rebellion against such passionate autarchy implicit in many humanist texts acted as a model for the formation of rebellions on far larger subjects. Rebellion was, however, uncommon; Keith Thomas points to the ritual rebellion of barring-out, or denying the master access to the schoolroom, as a way of defying his absolute authority. Other, lesser, protests were modestly subversive rather than flagrantly oppositional: pupils carved their names in their desks, endlessly asked to be
excused, and sometimes broke windows and damaged school property. Like slaves on a great plantation, the boys were mostly too subordinate to rebel.

What reinforced feelings of suspicion and dislike were the beatings. It is hard for us to imagine what these were like, or to understand the fear and horror they generated while also appreciating their acceptance as a kind of initiation into masculinity. Both John Aubrey and Samuel Hartlib still dreamed of school beatings twenty years after leaving. Bulstrode White-locke, who hated them, understood them as ‘a severe discipline’, that would lead boys to ‘a greater courage and constancy’.19 However, others felt that anyone who made a fuss was simply not quite-quite: ‘in some places, a master is apt to be molested with the reproachful clamours of the meaner sort of people, that cannot (for the most part) endure to have their children corrected, be the fault never so heinous, but presently they must come to school to brave it out with him’.20 Here again uncontrolled (and hence lower class) masculinity is contrasted with the controlled masculinity produced by beatings at the grammar. Others, however, felt that beatings made for slavishness and servility rather than proper manhood, and still others felt that it was an improper inversion of the social order for a commoner to have such power over the bodies of noble and gentle-born youths. This was a particular problem for the education of a prince, as both Rebecca Bushnell and Alan Stewart demonstrate; yet beatings were so central to boys’ education that not even the young princes Edward and James were exempt.21

One particularly demanding contemporary text obliquely addresses the way issues of masculine identity and in particular masculine sexuality were caught up in the question of beating. The so-called Childrens Petition of 1669 was allegedly presented by a schoolboy to the House of Commons; it is on the face of it a passionate and angry denunciation of beatings on the grounds that those administering the punishment were motivated by sexual desire rather than a love of justice and good order.22 However, its sexualised language is so evident that Keith Thomas suspected it was more an invocation of paedophilia than a genuine attempt to repress it.23 For Richard Halpern, beatings and their sexualisation are an essential part of early modern socialisation, and he cites Richard Mulcaster, for example, who thought that making schoolboys obedient was the best way to make them subservient to a monarch.24 School, for Halpern, did not only make boys into men, as I have been arguing; it also made them both masculine and subservient, normally a problematic equation, and not just for the grammars. This was the problem for early modern masculinities of
many kinds, and in this equation the additional problem of the homoerotic is produced from within the very matrix designed to exclude it; that is, the moment when beating becomes subordination is the moment when it becomes entangled with classes and hierarchies, and this is also the moment when it becomes entangled, too, with the homoerotic.

In fact, this contradiction was partially naturalised through the contradictions in the role of the schoolmaster himself. The schoolmaster competed problematically with the father’s authority, a matter recorded in the Latin dialogue books and in other sources through quarrels centring on access to the child’s economic power. Fathers would annoy teachers by removing their children from school to work on the family farm or in the family business. While schoolmasters represented a kind of absolute or even divine authority in the classroom, this contrasted with their relative poverty and powerlessness in the wider world. Both absolute tyrant in the classroom and powerless servant outside it, the schoolmaster embodied the contradictions that confronted the early modern boy and man, and hence, ultimately, the whole of early modern society. How was it possible to be a man without power? More narrowly, how was it possible to be a man when manhood was defined not only against women, but also against those boys who remained animals, who would never receive the education required for this model of manhood? In practice, the system of sending boys to apprenticeships replicated fairly precisely the repeated acts of separation from the mother endured by better-off boys, with the master, like the schoolteacher, substituting for the father. This suggests that the formation of male subjectivity through not one but many overt and culturally marked breaches with the mother and repression of the relationship with her and of her authority was more-or-less culture-wide. If so, what may be peculiar to early modern masculinity is precisely the need neurotically or even hysterically to repeat those acts of separation and distancing from the mother, while seeking solace and a measure of alterity in homoeroticism or in devotion to alternative father-figures, with the latter attracting the social approval denied to the former. Such a psychic pattern has a certain prima facie purchase on the known events of Charles I’s early life.

Speaking of Charles, however, reminds us that a classical education was not only itself a possible signifier of and induction into masculinity. It also provided other signifiers of masculinity in the form of Greek and Roman gods and heroes. Those in receipt of such an education were exposed to a panoply of images of masculinity in classical texts, from the exploits of heroes like Hercules to historical warriors like Alexander and Julius Caesar.
Renaissance writers understood such men as what we should nowadays call role-models, and what they would have called exempla. It was possible for an educated man to understand himself and the events surrounding him in terms of such figures, to look to them for moral instruction and also for examples of what to do and what not to do. Both kinds of reading were inflected by a series of notions of what it meant that these figures were male, what was male about them, and what was not. These were alternative cultural fathers (or perhaps more accurately, stepfathers). However, such figures were problematic as objects of identification.

This is evident in the play of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare, himself the son of a would-be gentleman and the recipient of at least some classical education. To talk of plays and theatre is also to remind ourselves that not all reading and learning of cultural materials happens in school. In Shakespeare’s play there is a perpetual tension between Caesar’s heroic statements about himself as a type of perfect masculinity and what we read as an undercurrent of the fallibility of the feminine inscribed in his body – his falling sickness, which renders his body feminine in its unpredictability, imperfection and uncontrollability, his failure to perform the masculine test of swimming the Tiber, his death itself and the mouth-like wounds and rivers and lakes of blood which pour from him in disorder. Such a figure is neither an exemplum of order nor of disorder, but both and neither, and it is not clear how the masculine can be defined in relation to such an unstable figure.25

Classical figures like Caesar were supposed iconically to represent the world of masculinity, a world self-defined as one from which the mother is absent. But somehow the mother cannot be altogether kept at bay, not only because classical myth often describes maternal conflict, but also because the representational wounds that signify both the mother and the boy’s separation from her keep reappearing, just as they do on Caesar’s own body, and on the body of any child (which means every child) whose masculinity can be judged imperfect because still capable of softness, tears at a beating, a moment of cowardice: any and all of these could be understood as the reappearence of the mother, a reappearence which required that she be banished once more, ceremonially, or violently, or in language. The dialogues understand that departing from the mother is not one single event, but something that has to be re-enacted countless times. Each time, too, the relation to the identity of crucial father-figures had to be renegotiated. For masculinity was about acceptance of authority, yet it was also about its embodiment, a paradox negotiated in many different kinds of story.
Early modern literature invokes a surprisingly large number of wicked stepfathers, bad fathers who are the enemies of the son and also of the good father, and who are (we note) given access to the child by the weakness of the mother. We might think first of Hamlet, but to illustrate how such figures traversed genre and class boundaries I would like you to think instead of Bevis of Hampton, a book that so fascinated the young John Bunyan that he later thought it sinful:

Give me a Ballad, a News-Book, George on Horseback or Bevis of Southampton, give me some book that teaches curious Arts, that tells of Old Fables; but for the Holy Scriptures I cared not. And as it was with me then, so it is with my brethren now.  

Bevis of Southampton was a verse romance of the early fourteenth century. Nicholas Orme has done some excellent work on a manuscript of Bevis in the Bodleian Library, which began as a book for adults and was eventually handed down to two boys, who left many marginal marks on it to show the passages they found interesting. Bunyan, of course, would not have had access to the long tailrhyme poem, but only to the chapbook versions, but the plot is the same in both cases. The Bevis chapbooks are rather like the Harry Potter books; they offer spectacular and magical narratives without making any demands on the reader. Bevis himself is a kind of comic-book adventure-hero, a cross between Prince Hamlet and Dennis the Menace. Though of noble blood, he is as an infant sold into slavery in the East. Like most heroes of working-class adventure tales, he is also cheeky, defiant, willing to see off the baddy bully boys of his culture, and perpetually spoiling for a brawl; in other words, he retains healthy elements of the animal-male. He is also a regional, national and Christian hero, relentlessly successful.

Bevis is initially caught up in a family drama; like all heroes, he must become a floating signifier, cut off from family and home, in order to achieve heroism. Bevis’s father is a Hyperion indeed: a crusader king, who ‘conquered all his Opposers with his unmaster’d strength, and victorious Hand, fighting under the banner of Christ’. A great knight, Sir Guy makes only one mistake: he marries the wrong woman, ‘for she loved Sir Murdere more than she loved Sir Guy, but the king her father knowing Sir Guy to be a most noble peer of England, he gave his daughter to him in marriage’. It hardly needs saying that this is a plot and language laden with gendered images: Sir Guy is ‘unmaster’d’, spends all his time fighting, and is described in a glow of hero-worship. His very name recalls that other popular Crusader hero, Guy of Warwick. On the
other hand, Bevis’s mother is simply ‘his deceitful lady’, who ‘(like Janus) bore a double face’. She arranges the murder of Sir Guy by Sir Murdere by sending Guy to the forest to hunt for an animal to stay her unnatural hunger, and Guy is killed by Murdere’s followers after righteously beating Murdere; it would not be at all the thing for Bevis’s father to lose a fair fight. Bevis immediately and without any Hamletish haverings rushes to his mother and announces his intention of avenging his father. She boxes his ears, a gesture condemned as unnatural, and he is taken into hiding by his father’s friend who later lies to his mother, claiming to have killed him at her request (as in the fairytale of Snow White). This allows Bevis to begin on his adventures.  

The effect of all this is to make Bevis almost exclusively his dead father’s son and embodiment, and to separate him radically from his mother. It works like breeching and grammar school. The liberated masculinity that results is instructive too. Though sold into slavery by the ‘paynims’, Bevis remains obdurate, refusing to worship their god Apoline, and as a result becomes a general and wins the love of a princess. Though betrayed and thrown into a dungeon equipped with two dragons, he quickly dispatches them, kills two lions, defeats a 30-foot giant and makes the giant serve him as a page. Unsurprisingly, revenge is equally simple. He arrives back in England, dispatches Sir Murdere in a fair fight, and as a result Bevis’s mother, described simply as Sir Murdere’s lady in one chapbook version, throws herself off the castle tower.

By reading backwards through Bevis, we can see some antecedents of Bunyan’s ecclesiastical ideas – and not Bunyan’s alone. Bevis’s role is to defeat a masculinity made improper by sensuous indulgence, false religion and tyranny – the very attributes which made the Caroline regime seem so suspect to its critics. Bevis’s hypermasculine heroism is like a fictional version of the disruptive schoolboy masculinity that the grammars existed to cure. But he does share with those disciplined schoolboys the repetitious separation from the mother. Like the boys of the sententiae, too, Bevis has to be understood as separate from his mother, who is made cruel and transgressive to erase Bevis’s ties with her, just as the grammar school mothers are made stupid and ignorant. By divesting himself of women, he was able to enter the world and make himself famous. This simple lesson is nonetheless central to the grammar school project to which Bevis’s boisterous violence might otherwise appear opposed. After all, even Bunyan might have got through enough of Sententiae Pueriles to have learnt what to think of women: ‘An evill woman is more fierce, then all wilde beastes’; ‘a woman is the health [or safety] or calamitie of the house’.  

30
Bevis is not atypical. Other chapbook heroes appeared not to have mothers at all; both the prose and the verse versions of *Guy of Warwick* neglect to give him any parents, but some negative father-figures do emerge, notably Duke Otto, and a benign one, King Athelstane. The *Pinder of Wakefield* is an even more obviously hypermasculine figure than either; he represents the untamed masculinity that the grammars sought to discipline, but he represents it in a socially useful form, for this second St George, as he is called, is a kind of walking sign of the rougher forms of masculinity: brawling, hospitality, hanging out with one’s pals – and lashings of ale. This was (roughly) the persona cultivated by John Crouch in his satirical Royalist newsbook *The Man in the Moon*: staunch, loyal, brave and intolerant of dissent. This tough maleness is opposed to those who would undermine it: aggressive, shrewish wives, social upstarts with fancy manners, Puritans, and the litigious; the same targets assailed by the Pinder. The entire Cavalier image – bibulousness and all – owes a little to such heroes.

Yet all these figures exist through a violent repudiation of both the wrong father and of the maternal. The first St George, as described in *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, has a far more troubled entry into the world:

When his mother was conceived of him, she dreamed she was with child of a dragon, which should be the cause of her death: which dream she concealed till her painful burthen grew so heavy, her womb was not able to bear it; so that at length she revealed it to her husband, who was then Lord Steward of England. This doleful dream struck such terror into her husband’s heart that he was speechless; but recovering, he assured her that he would try the utmost that nature and art could do.

The father seeks out another mother, Calyb, the wise Lady of the Woods, and taking a lamb to offer as a sacrifice to this enchantress, he embarks on a strange journey:

They came to an iron gate, on which hung the brazen horn for them to wind, that would speak with the enchantress: they first offered the lamb with great devotion before the iron gate, and then without any fear they blew the brazen horn, the sound whereof made the earth to tremble, after which they heard a terrible voice out of the earth.

The terrible voice of the enchantress announces that ‘within the lady’s womb doth dwell / A son, who like a dragon fierce / His mother’s tender womb shall pierce’. Immediately after she adds ‘A valiant champion he shall be, / In noble acts and chivalry.’ George’s masculinity is such that it
is too much even for the womb. His gestation undoes the opposition between George and the dragon that he will eventually conquer; he is an animal-boy, his masculinity fierce and untamed, rather like the Pinder of Wakefield. Such hypermasculinity cannot be born at all, for that would imply a subjection to the mother that is intolerable. In order for George to exist, his mother renounces her son voluntarily to masculinity. Because George is a national hero, George’s mother – like Lucretia – builds a nation by sacrificing herself. ‘She for the good of her country, was content her tender womb should be opened, that the child might be taken out alive; so being cast into a dead sleep, the operation was made.’ This entire episode may represent an earlier tradition; there was a link between some early St George plays and the feast of St Margaret, the patroness of childbirth, who was swallowed by a dragon and had to be released or reborn from his scaly side. If so, we might read the chapbook version as the violent appropriation of a feminine saint, a protectress of women, for a cult of violent masculinity.\textsuperscript{33}

But this is not enough. George must be attached to a new mother – the enchantress Calyb – so that he can again be detached from her by violence. Calyb keeps George imprisoned in a cave for fourteen years, a cave that replicates the mother’s womb in its power to hold him suspended from the masculine activity he craves. At his insistence, Calyb unites him with the other champions and offers him a horse, armour and a spear, but ‘being blinded by her own lust’, she puts a silver wand in his hand that gives him power over the wood. He uses it to strike a rock, which opens, and significantly reveals ‘a number of little infants which shee had murdered by her inchantment’. This is a nightmare vision of the fate that awaits George too if he cannot escape from the strangling confines of feminine enclosure: perpetual infancy, equated explicitly with utter passivity and hence with death. It is also a warning for the reader, of course. George gets away, however, by encouraging Calyb to enter her own rocky tomb and trapping her there.\textsuperscript{34} What is distinctive and especially significant about George’s story is that masculinity must be deliberately \textit{conferred} by both the mother-figures even though it requires their own destruction. The motive assigned to her for this paradoxical act is lust: Calyb wants George to grow up, to have his desire, because of her desire. Only by desiring the son as a man can he be freed to be one, and yet, like homoeroticism, such desires are taboo and therefore must be embodied in an evil sorceress and not in the body of the birth mother.

And yet St George was not only the champion of Christendom, but also a ladies’ knight; a charm recorded by Reginald Scot is addressed to ‘St
George, St George, our ladies knight’. Is this simply a representation of George’s worrying proximity to femininity; does it signify his link with early boyhood spent under maternal care? It is worth remembering that unlike sententiae and colloquia, St George’s story was not read exclusively by boys. We know that a woman named Frances Wolfreston, a member of the Staffordshire gentry, owned a copy of The Life and Death of the Famous Champion of England, St George, as well as other chapbooks. Read by a woman, George’s story might become a tale of maternal agency in the making of heroes and men; cities too, perhaps, since St George could be a symbol of civic and national as well as individual masculinity. His birth could become a female nightmare of the danger and harm of travail.

Or is Scot’s phrase ‘the ladies knight’ an invocation of the Virgin Mary? The latter points to the fact that St George was not culturally sanctioned, but controversial. His ‘ridings’ were abolished under Edward VI, and in some places only the dragon-procession remained. The Norwich dragon survived to see in the Restoration, with a special ceremony in which he was, significantly, beaten by six naked boys with the flats of their swords, a rite which recalls the beatings of schoolboys and may provide a symbolic key to them, since beating of bounds was a mark of ownership. The dragon was by then affectionately nicknamed Old Snap, but perhaps the name carries a faint hint of maternal menace amidst the play.

So there is a similar though not identical narrative of masculinity available in the schoolboy Latin of the colloquia and the sententiae, and in the chapbooks read more widely by early modern boys, a narrative about release from and displacement of the mother, negotiation of rights with the father, and the consequent emergence of a masculinity ready to serve society. The almost ceaseless repetition of these motifs even within individual narratives points to a kind of hysteria. However, there are also important social differences between these masculinities on offer. The chapbook heroes represent to some extent what the humanist educators sought to alter, a rough-hewn masculinity linked with the pleasures of the male group, pleasures which might include drinking and fighting. The same boy might, however, read Bevis’s adventures and the sententiae – especially if his name happened to be William Shakespeare – and might be further imprinted by the overlaying of one narrative of maternal repudiation with another. Or the dual narratives might open up gaps and fissures in masculinity which would allow for play and invention.
Nonetheless, what both kinds of narrative said was that at school or at leisure, the early modern boy had to keep working on a masculinity that was constantly presented as lacking or tottery. Might this possibly point to a lack of the kind Spillers identifies for African-American males? The early modern social practice of consigning boys to women’s care, and then suddenly removing them from it may reflect and hence produce an unusually strong anxiety about the role of the mother in masculine identity-formation – alongside feelings of rage and helplessness at being abandoned by the mother, perhaps? The lack of mother may come either from insufficient closeness to the mother (wetnurses, servants) or an insufficient separation from her, a weakened non du père that is the outcome of the social hierarchy or household arrangements. In the following pages, I try to trace some possibilities arising from these ideas and their impact on the Civil War itself. It may be, I suggest, that early modern culture is especially rich in masculine fantasies about the mother because of the narratives of early modern boyhood and the counter-narratives produced within them; it may be, too, that in times of crisis, when masculinity is under pressure from external forces, that particular fantasies of the mother will be produced to manage anxiety and to give it relief in expression.

We might conclude by examining a few examples of such fantasies. The fantasies with which I deal here are both psychic and social, both produced by culture and drawn up and manipulated by interested individuals. To analyse them I want to bring together what I have said about early modern boyhood with some remarks by Slavoj Žižek. Unlike the first and second waves of Lacanians, Žižek’s theories are embedded in analyses of cultural practices, and so are much more useful to the cultural historian. Žižek is interested in fantasy, and his theory of fantasy is especially helpful for thinking about early modern masculinity: he writes about fantasy as that which gives us hope. For Žižek, fantasy is a set of often but not always subliminal beliefs that individuals hold that makes them feel that their lives have purpose, that they have meaningful futures. Hope, in this sense, can overcome any actual inequalities. Fantasy can in this way override material circumstances. Thatcher’s proffered hope was that you could (through inborn British virtue) clamber off the bottom rung of society to the top, so that the pleasures offered at the top were only deferred and not unavailable. Jacqueline Rose, in a further analysis of Thatcher’s appeal, points to her impossible conjunction of femininity with the resolute and calculating male attitude of control; the
identity itself, says Žižek, summarising Rose’s argument, consists in an ‘impossible’ coincidence of caring law-and-order woman with tough criminality. So, says Žižek, when Thatcher’s critics attempted to draw attention to her darker side, her vengefulness and bloodthirstiness, they were in fact consolidating her identity.

Žižek’s formulation encourages us to see contradictions in ideology not as mistakes that allow it to be subverted, but as central to its function. The contradictions implicit in the ideology of the formation of masculine identity that I have been discussing are not problematic but essential to it, and arguably explain what might otherwise seem irrational choices by Civil War actors. For instance, Charles I’s identity was a similarly ‘impossible’ conjunction of a depriving father, one who took away pleasure, and a worryingly feminised man, one who indulged himself in pleasure. Charles could not act as or signify the ideology of a masculinity that had left femininity behind; rather his apparent subservience to his Catholic wife was to arouse powerful and powerfully gendered fears of a reversion to an infantile past which precluded both national and personal heroism. However, Charles was ultimately able to act as a redistributor of hope (and an object of fantasy and desire) when his death made the combination of fatherhood and motherhood no longer impossible but satisfying; from then on his opponents’ attempts to blacken him through critiques of his feminisation operated to sustain rather than to undermine his image. This mode of analysis allows us to understand Charles as both an active political agent and an icon of the nation and of father- and motherhood at the same time.

Charles’s career also exemplifies another of Žižek’s topics, the notion of a nation-state as a substitute mother or father, a fantasy that we can see at work both in humanist education and in the St George chapbook narrative. Giving up the literal mother is what allows consolatory access to this fantasy. However, for Žižek, the images of the nation as motherland or fatherland are not satisfying fantasies, but fantasies destined never to be realised. The perfection of the motherliness or fatherliness of the nation is precisely the goal nationalists set themselves to achieve – in so doing, they are struggling to give meaning to their lives. In the nationalist imaginary there is always already an Other in the form of persons (papists, sturdy beggars, rioting apprentices, Puritans, Charles I, Oliver Cromwell) or practices (nobles abandoning their estates, stage plays, church ales) which makes the achievement of the nationalist state as perfect mother or father-figure temporarily difficult. This gratifying fountain of sweets is forever
deferred, barred off, by these others. Such national threats are always at hand – can we trust our youth, our peers, our king? And they also come from outside – the Pope, the Spanish, the Irish, the French. Sometimes figures manage to combine both inside and outside threat, the fate of Henrietta Maria, who also added the particular threat of femininity at the heart of government. What characterises a nation in crisis is the moment when the defensive functions are overwhelming. The good father nation is supposed to protect and secure the availability (for the national subject) of the good breast of the motherland without undermining its goodness. When its goodness becomes not good enough, when the defensive function starts to take over from the enjoyment function, then there is a collapse.  

A sign of such collapse is the symbolisation of attack upon the goodness of the nation as an attack upon the mother, when and if that can be read as an attack upon the masculinity that should order and control the household. When Richard Overton wished to dramatise the abrogation of what he saw as his rights as a citizen, he chose to do so using a vivid portrayal of an attack on his wife, Mary.

...under the colour of another arbitrary order from the House of Lords, your Petitioner, with her Tender Infant in her armes of halfe a yeares age, was most inhumanely and barbarously dragged headlong upon the stones through all the dirt and the mire in the streets, and on the way was most unjustly reproached and vilified by their officers with the scandalous, infamous names of wicked whore, Strumpet and c, and in that contemptible and Barbarous manner was cast into the most reproachful gaol of Bridewell.

Garthine Walker has recently pointed out that attacks on pregnant women were always seen as especially heinous, because it was widely believed that shock could bring on miscarriage and because pregnant women were supposed to be incapable of fighting back. Such violence was especially likely to be seen as corrupting hitherto healthy bodies and household economies, and in a deeper sense it threatened the very underpinning of masculine identity in self-replication. An attack on a pregnant woman could thus become an apt metaphor for anxieties about attacks on the head of the household and through him the state. Mary Overton’s symbolic motherhood is much to the fore. For Overton, a violation of privacy and of his wife’s good name is a violation of his masculinity, and hence a sign of tyranny – a tyrant is, precisely, that which cannot allow privacy and the right to privacy to ordinary men. A wife and children are markers and guarantors of that private male identity. The publicisation of Mary Overton – being dragged through the streets, the
shouts of ‘whore’, her literal circulation in the street, the mud and mire – are violations of Richard’s identity as well as hers. As well, and equally importantly, the violation of Mary’s motherhood symbolises the violation of Richard’s household and hence manhood, which in turn symbolise the tyranny of his opponents and the threat they pose to both rights and masculinities. The nurturing nation should protect both Mary Overton’s baby and through it Overton’s masculinity. Its attack on both brands the state as inappropriately masculine, as an agent of masculine violence.

Richard’s response is to defend his family in print, since previous injustices mean that he cannot do so in person. This also means that Mary and her vulnerable baby enter the realms of print culture and as such become symbols of the very nurturance which the nation cannot provide for them. Behind the relatively transparent social and strategic meanings which lie behind the image of Mary being called whore with her tiny baby in her arms is the masculine fantasy of the longed-for mother as at one with an infant, and as capable of sheltering that infant from the very masculine strife conjured and extended by the father’s own political battles, by the father’s own aggression. It is Richard Overton’s politics that have thrust Mary and her baby into the turbulent currents of public signification, even as they ought to be a refuge from it. Ironically, Overton’s masculinity seeks authentication – and refuge – in the very infancy which the man must renounce. So like the martyred Charles then, Richard Overton is reliant upon the fissures and breaks in the ideology of early modern masculinity created by its peculiar genesis. His story also illustrates – as this book hopes to do – the way that such fantasies were both provoked and modified by the ferocious assaults on men and masculinities during the Civil War itself.

The story of Richard and Mary Overton encapsulates many of the themes of this study. In the first chapter I begin with a very basic question: how did the experience of the ‘shooting war’, the battlefields and skirmishes of the actual conflict, inflect and put pressure on gender categories? And how (if at all) was this ‘shooting war’ reflected in literary texts that depicted war in apparently more abstract terms, texts such as Book VI of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Cowley’s *Civil War*? I suggest that the war itself was peculiarly traumatic for the early modern male in ways that have scarcely been appreciated. I then move on to a second foundational discursive moment, and examine the gender politics of the rhetoric of the English Republic in two linked studies. I first examine certain pamphlet representations of the *res publica* and its opponents. Secondly, I look at the implications of the publication of the king’s letters in the
significantly titled *The Kings Cabinet Opened*, and their circulation as story and trope in other texts, notably the *Eikon* controversy and certain important literary texts, including Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*. A central theme of both chapters is the notion of legitimation as an issue for masculinity because masculinity is defined as household governance, so that the devolution of authority can be perceived as a threat to it. This is followed by an examination of the two central male figures of the war, the king himself, and his chief foe, Oliver Cromwell. In Charles’s case, a variety of literary and non-literary texts are examined, and I argue that all attest to a crisis in the legitimating relations between power and masculinity, provoked by Charles’s persona and image. That crisis was paradoxically resolved by Charles’s own death and the creation of the image of Charles the Martyr, whose abject body was able to mobilise a problematic femininity in a way that created difficulties for Charles’s foes. These difficulties were especially acute for Oliver Cromwell, who exemplified a certain kind of ideal masculinity and, paradoxically, managed to make it troublesome too. Charles threatened heads of households by arrogating their authority to himself, while failing to represent a convincing masculine icon. Cromwell was so convincing a *representation* of the republican ideal that he became a menacing father-figure, reducing other masculinities to the problematics of infancy. Both those who would praise him and his huge body of pre- and post-Restoration satirists wrestled with his masculine potency; his admirers were menaced and his detractors were uncomfortably respectful. Both strands of thought are woven into Andrew Marvell’s poems on the subject, and the tension helps to explicate the instability of Marvell’s representations. I then move on to an analysis of a particular trope that seems especially rich in meanings and significances connected with gender: the early modern monster. Pamphlets about monstrous births were not only an important part of popular print culture, but also became a way of symbolising the acute gender anxieties that print culture aroused. Just as the republican male was defined by household headship, so masculinity was also defined through patrilinearity, the ability to reproduce oneself in sons. Because the monster symbolised the appropriation of this power by the mother, the monster became a potent symbol in political and religious debates about power and identity, a metaphoric subtext which can be read to untangle how gender anxieties inflected politics. This is especially clear in the writings of John Milton, for whom monsters and monster stories become central to the development of an autotelic masculinity that utterly renounces the mother. The book concludes with a third case-study, an examination of the East
Anglian witchcraft trials and the highly problematic and troubling masculinity of one of their perpetrators, the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins. I suggest that these trials were not an adjunct to the war, but a means of expressing and managing some of the issues it raised for early modern masculinity, and for its engagements with femininity and with print culture. In doing so, I am of course implying that other contemporary events might be worth investigating from a similar perspective. Finally, I offer a conclusion pointing towards further work which might be done on the questions which this book seeks to open to view.
The battle of Edgehill, the first major battle of the English Civil War, was fought in the bitter cold of October 1642. By the Christmas season of that year, this first battle was being re-membered and re-enacted in a new and strange manner. The London diary of John Greene reports that

There are now divers reports of strange sights seen, and strange noyses heard at Edgehill where our last battle was fought; in the place wher the Kings army stood terrible outcries; wher the Parliaments [stood] music and singing.  

Another account described the apparitions in terms of the horror of the battle:

Edgehill: ‘whose troubles peese of earth plastred with English goare and turned into a Golgotha of bones is now become the plot of feare and horrour, whose earth now groaning with the weight of lives whose lest beds there were maid to sleepe oupon, rests in [ellipsis in text] Whose dying grones a second time revive breking the cauernes of the courng earth, and sends both feare and horour round about to terifie the living with dead soules, which first amazing wonder began.’

while a pamphlet recorded that

portentious apparitions of two jarring and contrary armies where the battell was strucken, were seen at Edge Hill, where are still many unburied karkassess, at between twelve and one of the clock in the morning . . . These infernal soldierns appeared on Christmas night, and again on two Saturdays after, bearing the kings and Parliaments colours. Pell mell to it they went, where the corporeall armes had shed so much blood, the clathering of armes, noyse of cannons, cries of soldiers, sounds of petronels, and the alarum was struck up, creating great terour and amazement.

The pamphlet explains the phenomenon in relation to the still-unburied corpses of Edgehill. Ghosts signify the dead who have been denied, ignored, slighted. The ghost comes to avenge a wrong, to point out a miscarriage of justice, to make demands for itself. The ghost is the advocate of the dead who are buried without rites, not given their due.
The Edgehill ghosts connect the English Civil War with classical texts in which ghosts haunt the battlefield, from the ghost of Patroclus at Troy and Caesar at Philippi, to Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, where the battlefield is ravaged by scavenging hags intent on carrying off bodily parts. What does the appearance of these ghosts tell us about the way early modern society saw battle and mutilation and death?

Perhaps these war dead remain a force to be reckoned with, haunting not just the locale but the memory of survivors, because the night after the battle of Edgehill was itself haunted by the consciousness of the unseen dead and wounded. The aftermath of this first major battle confronted both armies not with the spectacle of their prowess, but with their helplessness. The exhausted armies sat silently about the field, listening to the groans of wounded and dying comrades, unable to help or even to find friends in the darkness. Edmund Ludlow, a Parliamentarian, described the unnaturalness of that night:

The night after the battle our army quartered on the same ground that the enemy fought on the day before. Nor men nor horse got any meat that night, and I had touched none since the Saturday before, neither could I find my servant who had my cloak, so that having nothing to keep me warm but a suit of iron, I was obliged to walk about all night, which proved very cold by reason of a sharp frost . . . when I got meat I could scarcely eat it my jaws for want of use having almost lost their natural faculty.⁴

Ludlow cannot eat; he cannot sleep; he cannot keep warm; he cannot separate himself from the enemy. This loss of the domestic comforts and quotidian abilities represent not just hardship, against which Ludlow can and does steel himself as a proper soldier should, but also a frightening breakdown of the ordered and known into chaos and darkness. For the wounded, the experience was even more unsettling. William Harvey told John Aubrey the story of Sir Adrian Scrope, ‘dangerously wounded and left for dead amongst the dead men, stripped, which happened to be the saving of his life. It was cold, clear weather, and a frost that night, which staunched his bleeding, and about midnight, or some hours after his hurt, he awaked, and was fain to draw a dead body upon him for warmth’s sake.’⁵ Scrope’s condition precluded his reaching the safety of his friends. In order to survive, he denies the social and cultural boundaries rigidly separating the living and the dead. Ignoring the carefully prescribed rules for how a dead body may be seen, touched, moved, he treats it as a cloak, an inanimate possession. This is figured as resourceful, but also as shocking. Yet what sanctions the act is that Scrope himself seems to be outside society at that moment. His act is forced upon him by the loss of
living social supports: he had to succour himself with the dead because the living had neglected both him and the adjacent corpse. The ghosts remind the living of obligations towards the wounded and dying, obligations in which they may have failed: ‘why the dolfull and the hydious groanes of dying men were heard crying revenge and some againe to ease them of their paine by freindly killing them, this waked many in the towne, and sent they trembling again in their beds’.6

In this context, it is not surprising that the wounded themselves featured prominently in at least one account of the apparitions: ‘about Edge-hill and Keinton, there are men seene walking with one legge, and but one arme, and the like, passing to and fro in the night’.7 These ghosts signify the wounded, who have not just been literally neglected, abandoned, in some cases to death, on the frosty field by the exhausted armies. They also signify the absence of the spectacle of the wounded from accounts of the battle. For although accounts of Civil War battles mention the dead by name, frequently performing a short eulogy as well, most are far less outspoken about the wounded, the mutilated, the spectacle of dead bodies. What these battle ghosts signify is that aspect of battle itself which is and must be repressed and silenced in traditional, sanctioned, authoritative accounts. The ghosts of the dead signify not merely death itself, but the dislocation and loss of the laboriously established social, military and gender identity at the very moment when it is called upon to display itself. All battlefields and all textual accounts of them are haunted by the chaos, dissolution of boundaries, filth, loss of sight, loss of control, loss of self, which the soldier must always strive to repel both physically and psychically. These aspects of war constantly return, like the Edgehill ghosts, to haunt the military identities from which they are banished.

And yet the ‘realistic’ narratives that I have just been citing are more ontologically problematic than they themselves wish to admit, and more like the ghosts of Edgehill than historians acknowledge. Accounts of battles are generally taken from soldiers’ letters, or from the memoirs of soldiers (often written very much in retrospect), or from newsbooks purporting to be reports from the front to those at home. All three genres have in common a will to conjure up a series of events and persons absent from the destination of the narrative, whether that destination is imagined as posterity or as the civilian families and friends of the soldiers involved. These are attempts to call up and reanimate lost scenes. As such they call attention to the way in which those scenes cannot in absence be grasped unmediated by discourse, by cliche, by the blurring hands of time and
ideology. In this sense, our usual apprehension that the past is beyond our grasp because its pastness has reduced it to a series of textual traces is a lament early modern people might also have voiced about the very same texts. As textualised pieces of the past, they too reanimate the dead, giving spectral life to those whose voices have long been silenced. And just as Charles’s observers scanned the Edgehill apparitions for familiar faces, so readers of letters, newsbooks and memoirs hunted through the names and places for those that were familiar, loved and temporarily or permanently lost. In this sense, the ghost story is one of the master narratives of war, and we should not be surprised to see it haunting other wars, other narratives.\(^8\) Discourses of war share in the ambiguities of the Edgehill ghosts, so that narratives which most seek truth and objectivity are most unable to deliver it.

War creates a number of anxieties about gender and masculinity. Drill, training and above all the corporate imperative to stand firm, not to give way or retreat because the greatest slaughter happens in a rout, genders the correctly military and male body as closed, hard, tight and, paradoxically, at one with the similarly disposed bodies of other men.\(^9\) Yet war also arouses the desire to escape the self, to avoid literal death by the figurative death of flight. The tension between these two powerful impulses shakes assumptions that the masculine self is natural and inevitable, unseating notions of the naturalness of the hard male body. To put this in psychoanalytic terms, war unleashes the death drive in a series of aggressive and repetitious acts which menace the identity of the perpetrator, who can always envisage himself as victim. The death drive, in Freud, is the desire not to be, to dissolve, to disappear, but it is also the desire to thwart the desire. The ego responds to the phenomena of fragmentation, destruction, decay by assuring itself that life can be preserved.\(^10\) Death is always implicated in attempts at pleasure. Whenever the subject constructs a fantasy of wholeness and security gained by an appropriation of the beloved, modelled along the lines of the infant–mother dyad, he also risks a return to a pre-birth stasis or inanition, a loss of self – that is, a form of death. The masculinity of the warrior is therefore not a simple or visible construct, but always precarious, discontinuous, partaking of the dual aspects of the death drive itself, where the effort to stay alive involves and implicates the subject in fantasies of dissolution. The male identity of the soldier is thus always haunted by what it strives to banish, just as Edgehill is haunted by the mangled dead neglected by the survivors.

The fissures in the ideal of masculinity at war are obvious even to those most eager to see war as a space where masculinity reaches its apotheosis.
These include both Abraham Cowley and John Milton, with Milton here as elsewhere a victim of the discontinuity between his sharp psychic longings and his even sharper intelligence. Like the battlefield of Edgehill, Milton’s representation of war in *Paradise Lost* and elsewhere is haunted by the spectres of the war, by what ideology could not suppress as well as by what it could. Just as the ghosts of Edgehill are not as evidently saturated with ideological investment as the Angels of Mons of the First World War, so Milton’s reinvention of the Civil War is not an obvious attempt simply to memorialise it, nor to memorialise it simply. Instead, both the acceptable and the unacceptable faces of battle are on display: the war in heaven struggles to confront the aspects of war usually relegated to the subtext, in part because Milton had the perspicacity to see that those irruptions of violence, anality, atrocity and irony are intrinsically connected to what the epic tradition usually valorises. That perspicacity in part derived from careful readings of Homer and Lucan alongside Civil War newspapers, but in part it constitutes a response to pressures from within Milton’s own masculine identity and its fractures and fragmentations. I want to use certain aspects of the Civil War, some of which are transhistorical, less as sources for the war in heaven than as a kind of structural parable to explain the way war and masculinity intersect with but also trouble each other.

Complex discursive currents mingled in defining war as the ultimate site on which masculinity could be asserted and fulfilled. Those who, like Milton, approached war through a humanist education were used to seeing war as a metaphor for various characteristically masculine virtues, not least the virtues pertaining to good citizenship and statesmanship. This notion was expressed most clearly in Machiavelli’s notorious dislike of mercenaries (or professional soldiers) as signs of tyranny, and his consequent valorisation of the citizen-soldier as the acme of *virtù*:

For of whom should the commonwealth require greater faith than of him who must promise to die for her? In whom should there be more love of peace than in him who may be attacked only in war? In whom should there be more fear of God than in him who, having to submit himself to infinite dangers, has greatest need of him?11

Humanist writings also constantly used the metaphor of war to signify political acumen and firmness; the fondness of humanist writers and patrons for hunting manuals kept such metaphors in circulation thanks to Xenophon’s equation of hunting with war.12 Lodovick Lloyd wrote that
hunting is a military exercise, which made Sartorius to use hunting, and to travaile the hard rocks of Africa: and that he and his soldiers thereby might better induce labour and payne against the Romanes, hee acquainted them so much with hunting, that they were able to sustain any hardnesse.13

Even the writers of romances routinely complained of the softness and effeminacy of the court in relation to the hardness and virtue of war: Barnaby Rich, for instance, himself a sword for hire, wrote that

I see now . . . nothing so daungerous to be wounded with the lurying looke of our beloved Mistres: as with the crewell shotte of our hatefull enemie, the one possesst of a pitifull harte, to helpe where she hath hurte: the other with a deadly hate, to kill where thei might save.14

Rich's rhetoric represents the soldier as masculine, in opposition to the lover, who is wounded by and involved with woman.

Combining with these notions was the godly metaphorisation of spiritual struggle as military struggle. John Hale points to the particular role of godly ministers in inverting this metaphor by justifying actual war as spiritual war, a theme prominent in late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century literature influenced by the Leicester faction.15 Such rhetoric, like Rich's, depended on a conflation of virtue with hardness, aggression, and readiness, and hence with masculinity, and thus also depended on an often covert degradation of the feminine by comparison. And yet these ideologies were always in conflict with the fear that war was not a space of control, but a terrible sign of its loss. Alongside incitements to war from the pulpit came anxious sermons against the terrors of civil unrest; humanists noted the disorders and inversion of the social structure brought about by war. Similarly, a battle was the site of the supreme order of marching ranks, orders obeyed, and armoured bodies, but it was also the site where all this order might be violated and turned to disorder. Both the praise of the hardened warrior and the disruption of that identity brought about in the moment when it is most visible are apparent in Oliver Cromwell's letter to his brother-in-law on the death of his son:

Sir, God has taken away your eldest son by a cannon-shot. It brake his leg. We were necessitate to have it cut off, whereof he died. Sir, you know my own trials in this way, but the Lord supported me with this, that the Lord took him into the happiness we all pant for and live for, never to know sin or sorrow anymore. He was a gallant young man, exceedingly gracious. God give you his comfort. Before his death he was as full of comfort that to Frank Russell and myself he could not express it, it was so great above his pain.
A little while after he said one thing lay upon his spirit. I asked him what that was? he told me it was that God had not suffered him to be any more the executioner of his enemies. At his fall, his horse being killed with the bullet . . . I am told he bid them open to the right and left that he might see the rogues run. Truly he was exceedingly beloved in the army by all that knew him.  

The jerky inarticulacy of this letter is matched by Waller’s remark that Cromwell ‘was cautious of his own words, not putting forth too many lest they should betray his thoughts’. Yet its taciturnity is also a sign, of being lost for words, yes, but also of Cromwell’s own hardness, his ability to withstand the assault of the spectacle of mutilation and death. Most importantly, this same hardness is attributed to the broken and mutilated body of the dead man; though his leg has been removed, and though he is dying, his one desire is to continue to act as a soldier, to continue to turn his violence outwards towards the enemy. The dichotomy between this desire and the broken body no longer capable of acting on it is intended to be both tragic and affirmatory; the man’s violent desires, at least, transcend his flesh, signifying his immortality and acting as his last monument. And yet the desire to go on fighting beyond death is what constitutes, perhaps even what motivates the uncanny dead of Edgehill, who act as a reproach rather than a confirmation of the living. Like the one-legged ghost of Edgehill, Cromwell’s dead soldier represents both the ideal of military masculinity and its dissolution.

The same ghostliness haunts the apparently prosaic text of Elton’s *The Complete Body of the Art Military*, a drill manual and training handbook published after the Civil War. This shows the soldier’s body likewise overwhelmed by the tireless will. The body is here utterly subject to the demands placed upon it by orders. Imperative verbs work on the body, rendering it hard, able to withstand attack even as it is utterly possessed by the single longing to be capable of such resistance. The body is utterly dominated by another, the order, even as it is utterly hard, closed, ruthless. And yet in the preface Elton constantly compares the book itself to the vulnerable body of a baby boy: already called a body, the book is not a soldier’s body, but the undisciplined, unhearing body of a baby. Elton calls it his ‘eldest son and first-born’, who has ‘broken from the wombe of my seven years endeavours’, and he urges the dedicatee Fairfax to keep it alive ‘if your Excellencies goodnesse shall vouchsafe to foster it, and must not die, except your displeasure please to wound it’.  

The last sentence shows how military masculinity and its vulnerability had come to permeate every part of the ideology of masculinity, so that even the old familiar book-as-son trope becomes a sign of the desperate
vulnerability always detectable by any musket-ball under the hard façade of discipline.

What exacerbated all these tensions in the Civil War was the use of cannon, muskets and gunpowder. Milton was by no means alone in thinking that gunpowder was the product of the devil. As Langer notes, the process of discovering and excavating gunpowder involves a perpetual figuration of a return to and violation of mother earth; as William Clarke writes:

the manner of the generation of minerals, vegetables and animals are as obscure, and hid, as the dark subterraneous mines, the impervious earthly vegetable, and female animal matrix, being the places of their formation . . . No less obscure is nitre in its birth. Clarke’s observations irresistibly recall the mining angels of Paradise Lost, who likewise invade the bowels of the earth, tearing open her organs of generation and excretion, in order to disclose the secrets of nature. As Evelyn Fox Keller and Jonathan Sawday, have recently shown, this metaphor was always central to evolving proto-Enlightenment science. The Gunpowder Plot, too, which preoccupied the young Milton, gave gunpowder magical, diabolical and popish connotations, as well as connotations of secrecy and darkness. It became associated not just with the secrets of nature, but with disorder in the state and hence with supernatural disorder and evil. During the war, it threatened masculinity and its power of self-determination by representing an often quasi-comical and frequently violent loss of control. Literally, gunpowder was still new, and both armies were short of experts. Richard Atkyns’ account of an accidental explosion in a powder wagon illustrates its transformative and diabolical energy:

the Prisoners taken, some of which, were carried upon a Cart (wherein was our Ammunition; and as I heard,) had Match to light their Tobacco . . . the Ammunition was blown up, and the Prisoners in the cart with it . . . It made a very great noise, and darkened the Air for a time, and the Hurt men made lamentable Screeches . . . Thomas Cheldon, from as long a head of flaxen hair as ever I saw, in the twinkling of an eye, his head was like a Black-moor.

The phrase ‘twinkling of an eye’ emphasises the legerdemain and unexpectedness, and hence the unpreparedness of the troops. Cheldon, who died of his injuries, is quite literally disfigured by the explosion, turned from gentleman-cavalier into blackamoor, hence savage; the explosion strips him of his chosen, manicured identity, replacing it with its antithesis. Cannon-fire and musket-balls did dreadful damage, to houses
and apparently impregnable defences, but also to bodies. The experience we associate with the American Civil War, and with the First World War, the experience of seeing dismembered bodies torn apart and thrown about by gunfire, was shared by Civil War troops, including the London trained bands who fought at Newbury. The account of Sergeant Henry Foster, a member of the bands, illustrates that gunpowder had in action the power to replicate its origins; to destroy masculine order and replace it with dismemberment and chaos. Yet Foster also stresses the men’s resistance to the spectacle of dismemberment, their steadfastness and hardness in the face of the ordeal:

The enemie’s cannon did play most against the red regiment of trained bands, they did some execution amongst us at the first, and were somewhat dreadful when men’s bowels and brains flew in our faces: But blessed bee God that gave us courage, so that we kept our ground, and after a while feared them not; our ordinance did very good execution upon them: for we stood at so near a distance upon a plain field, that we could not lightly misse one another.24

The reason Foster’s men had to stand close was the cannon smoke, the cannonade and musketeer’s initial blow against identity. Arthur Trevor described the disconcerting aspects of this at Marston Moor:

In the fire, smoke and confusion of that day I knew not for my soul whither to incline . . . The runaways on both sides were so many, so breathless, so speechless, and so full of fears, that I should not have taken them for men.

while Richard Atkyns wrote that

the Air was so darkned by the smoak of the Powder, that for a quarter of an Hour together (I dare say) there was no light seen, but what the fire of the Volleys of shot gave, and ’twas the greatest storm that ever I saw, in which though I knew not whether to go, nor what to do.25

Unlike Foster under fire, both Trevor and Atkyns equate being under fire with confusion, and hence with disorder; to be unable to see is to be unable to decide which way to go, to be unable to find one’s way. This loss of direction is also a loss of identity, for identity involves not only a resolute hardness, a subordination of the body to the will, but also an ability to relate oneself to surroundings. Both men are threatened with dissolving into their chaotic surroundings, as others have already done in Trevor’s description. The Civil War surgeon Richard Wiseman describes a soldier literally defaced, reduced to lack of identity by shot: ‘shot in the face by Case-shot . . . and . . . without Eye, Face, Nose or Mouth’.26

Traditional weapons could also be lethal. The spectacle of battle wounds,
too, offered a raw display of the images of castration and dissolution. Wiseman gave a graphic description of the kind of wound inflicted by cavalry on infantry:

These kind of wounds are not so often seen in time of Peace, but in the War they are frequent, especially when the Horse-men fall amongst the Infantry, and cruelly hack them; the poor soldiers the while sheltering their Heads with their Arms, sometime with the one, then the other, untill they be both most cruelly mangled.27

Such spectacles of the damage the war’s weapons could do brought to a head both anxiety and the need to transcend it by standing firm as the drill manuals demanded. When this became impossible, the line broke – and with it, the men in it. Breaking men become broken men, sabred by the enemy, reviled by their own side and by themselves.

It was precisely these threats – of dismemberment, dissolution and hence loss of firmness, resolution, control – which resulted in violence. The feared Other could only be expelled from the self by a violent rite. This rite could simply be battle, or could on occasion involve atrocity. Donald Pennington correctly notes the unreliability of atrocity reports; the Belgian kitten on church door syndrome is well known, but sometimes then as now, the wolf was real. As Pennington reasonably concludes, at least such stories show what constitutes an atrocity.28 The early modern moral economy of violence saw the execution and punishment of criminals and the punishment of the guilty as entirely legitimate. Beatings in the family, too, were supposed to be a response to a specific event, not a general outburst of uncontrolled rage. The wish to disguise atrocities as just punishment can be seen in the number of Civil War stories of mock hangings to extract information.29 Hence both sides in the Civil War made every effort to persuade the world that they too were merely rounding up the usual suspects.30 Partly as a result, and rather paradoxically, atrocity stories multiplied in order to justify the war. But they also represented the war’s dark underside. Atrocities such as those of the Thirty Years’ War and the Ulster rising were presented as relapses into animality or barbarism, declines from civility and order into chaos. Woodcuts printed in pamphlets describing the events of the Thirty Years’ War display the mutilated bodies of the victims as signifiers of barbarity, chaos and disorder, but also pandeer to quasi-scientific curiosity about the body and its inside. The woodcuts graphically illustrate the violent castration imagery and investment in the unclean which characterises these stories. These events in Germany and Ireland came to act as templates for understanding
and reporting Civil War atrocities, thus doubly estranging the atrocious by connecting it with the foreign Other.\textsuperscript{31} Atrocities were not seen as sadistically exciting, but as a threatening lapse into originary barbarity or animality, a loss of civility and hence of masculine identity, a loss of manners in savagery, like the transformation of cavalier into ‘black-moor’. Violence only reinforces male identity when it could be seen as controlled, rational or just punishment. Outside those parameters, it was not masculine, but paradoxically a failure of masculinity. So it is too with the rebel angels, as we shall see.

Abstract figures of death-dealing and violent soldiers described in many early pamphlets were tinged with class anxiety, and hence with the rhetoric of carnival, the world upside down, the fable of the belly. This was particularly true where the soldiers were recruited from the dregs of society, or were supposed to have been: it was said that local communities had rid themselves of undesirables by making them soldiers.\textsuperscript{32} What was horrifying about these figures was the unleashing of their unjust appetites: the figure of the Plundering Soldier was in any case almost all belly. ‘The Plunderer’ fed on the entrails of the kingdom; the ‘English-Irish soldier’ ‘had rather eate than fight’, and was composed of all the goods he had plundered, a figure from someone without an identity who had deprived others of theirs in order to manufacture a specious one of his own.\textsuperscript{33} Violence is often figured as going with drunkenness and lust, bad manners, insulting behaviour, ‘hot blood’ (in itself a kind of medical signifier for masculinity). Contrasting with the well-mannered or well-regulated body of the soldier the body of a murderer might be seen as awash with uncontrolled forces. So as well as fearing the feminine, the rhetoric of atrocity exacerbated fear of more masculine disorders, or rather both fears turned on anxieties about the loss of the clean, hard, visible surface of masculine identity.

One possible response was to return obsessively to the spectacle of what had previously terrified. It was routine to establish masculine identity in war in relation to a displaced femininity. Poems on abandoning wives and mistresses for the battlefield proliferated, and (forged) letters from London women who had found Cavaliers to comfort their loneliness in the absence of their partners sought to persuade the London trained bands to give up the struggle for Parliament.\textsuperscript{34} The finding of a love-object is always a finding of the lost maternal body. Hence another connection between the death drive and femininity emerges: the return to a prior state involves the maternal body as the real material body lost at birth, the fictional phallic mother whose body represents a lost unity, as a figure of
the dust to which the human being must return; hence a female figure alone offers ways of representing and also appearing – at least in fantasy – to manage the death drive and to control and satisfy it. Paradoxically, then, the lost mother is actually the model for the tight, hard body assumed to be the acme of masculinity by the discourses of war. Yet that same maternal body can also be understood as engulfing and formless, and hence threatening, when it seems to be on the point of swallowing up the ego, now itself understood as the locus of tight integrity. Consequently, it is not surprising that murdering and dismembering a woman, or reading and writing about such acts, were possible fantasy resolutions of the intolerable pressures placed on the death drive by the war.

In its complex relation to the body of the mother and hence to femininity, the workings of the death drive recall Kristeva’s notion of abjection. Kristeva understands abjection as a response to the constant threat of the mother’s return and reabsorption of the ego, a return represented through chaos, pollution, dirt and disorder. War is a prolific producer of all, and in particular the spectacle of dismembered and disordered bodies, living and dead, creates acute anxieties, and not only because the corpse represents death. In representing the end of life, it must also represent the beginning, the mother. Most of all, however, the very disruptive effects of war itself on the life of the individual and the nation impact on the ego to generate fears of further engulfment and chaos, setting abjection in motion. Both aggressive actions and violent repudiations are produced by these psychic pressures. Thus the rhetorical display of dismembered, dead femininity figured as both motivation for and other of the men in arms. A contemporary newspaper expressed this as follows:

the divided pieces of a woman abused to death, needed not the Eloquence or voyce of an orator; they spake themselves, and they spake so loud, that they were heard by a whole Nation, and drew forth this Answer; there was no such deed done nor seen, from the day that the children of Israel came out of Aegypt. Neither did they fetch onely an answer of words, but of deeds.

Such rhetoric was reassuring because it assigned passivity, disorder and dismemberment to the feminine corpse, releasing the male identity of the soldier for military action on her behalf and reassuring him that his own being was different. An atrocity story from the 1641 uprising in Ulster repeats these ideas, while uncannily duplicating the image both of the feared maternal body and the dissected and known anatomical specimen. Both arousing and neutralising tensions in male identities, this female
figure also replicates the logic of violation of the mother which helped to make gunpowder appear diabolical:

they [Irish rebels] being blood-thirsty salvages . . . not deserving the title of humanity without any more words beate out his braines, then they layd hold on his wife being big with child, & ravisht her, then ript open her wombe, and like so many Neros undantedly viewed natures bed of conception, afterward tooke her and her Infant and sacrifiz’d in fire their wounded bodies to appease their Immaculate Soules, which being done, they pillaged the house, taking what they thought good, and when they had done, they set the house on fire. 39

Here the soldiers’ violence lays bare the mysterious site of generation. The account stresses the quasi-scientific result of their violence; they view ‘natures bed of conception’, just as the miners for the minerals of gunpowder do. As such, they assert masculinity, but in a manner which calls such scientific investigation into question. For the spectacle of the exposed and opened womb is also apotropaic; it requires that the eye flee, rather than lingering and observing, because it also signifies the mutilating punishment which awaits those who look upon the mother’s body. This ambiguity is repeated in the English Civil War stories which also focus on the violation and destruction of the mother: at Lostwithiel, a woman three days out of childbed was stripped to her smock, seized by the hair and thrown in the river; she died within hours, while another pamphlet reported that troops had ‘killed Ewes great with lambe, and one Ewe that was great with two lambes’. 40 These rites of filth paradoxically offer to recreate the hardness lost or threatened with loss in the war by their very apotropaic nature. The rigidity imparted by the spectacle of castrating wounds reassures because the viewer is able to respond with reassuring rigidity, keeping a set face when confronted with the spectacle of the opened body. In precisely the same way, Civil War banners sometimes reflected the mentality that had led to the atrocities in the first place; one Royalist banner portrayed a naked soldier with an unsheathed sword and an erect penis. The motto was In utrumque paratus, or ‘Ready to use both’. Still other banners portrayed atrocities themselves, much as pamphlets did, illustrating the logic of repetition always implicit in such spectacles; the apotropaic effect promotes a phallic hardening in response. Scottish major John Niarne showed an Irish-Catholic atrocity, a swordsman killing a naked woman, and the motto, ‘Heaven avenges cruelty’. 41

This Janus-faced attitude towards violence against women mimics a fissure on masculine ideology in general as well as military masculinity in particular. As Susan Amussen has shown, violence against women was both part of early modern notions of masculinity and at the same time not
part of the mainstream culture. However, army regiments may have
established subcultures of transgression in which such acts were more
acceptable. Similarly, soldiers preoccupied with the dead sometimes
violated them; the Parliamentarian troops at the siege of Colchester are
said to have desecrated the recently buried bodies of the women of the
Lucas family, the family of their opponent. The dead women offered a
kind of epitome of what the soldier was trying desperately to keep at bay:
death, femininity, the enemy. In this way, Civil War newsbooks – and in
some cases, Civil War soldiers – were able to turn their deepest night-
mares into a kind of homeopathic remedy for those nightmares, feeding
on the very spectacle which threatened them.

Milton responded to and consciously or unconsciously reproduced
these two entangled aspects of war in his portrayal of the war in heaven in
*Paradise Lost*. This, of course, has disturbed critics profoundly; at
times, Miltonists have seemed almost aggrieved that Milton has not
presented a seamlessly idealistic and reassuring picture of war in order
to reassure them. I do not want to deal at length with critical responses
to this aspect of *Paradise Lost* here, but I am of course offering an
interpretation of one of the cruces to which critics have returned again
and again; why is the tone of the war narrative so variable? Why is there
so much grotesque humour? The answer, I am suggesting, lies in the
way the Civil War disturbed the assumption that wars had a single tone,
deriving from the soldier’s inalienable identity. Rather, as we have seen,
the process of fighting undermined the unitary hard masculinity which
soldiers struggled to build, with the result that the experience of war
consisted of the regular irruption of the dark, filthy, disorderly underside
of combat into areas of body, personality and narrative from which it had
been laboriously banished. Responses to this varied, but one response was
to reshape this dark, submerged material into an apotropaic fantasy figure
who could be confronted and seen, reassuringly exposed, symbolically
penetrated. Two instances of this process were given: the figuration of
gunpowder as the secret inside a feminine nature, and the figuration of the
murdered, opened body of the mother. In the war in heaven, I shall argue,
Milton both portrays those moments of disruption and re-presents them
as fantasies which reassure. A hint of this occurs right at the beginning of
Book vi, when the loyal angels are departing for battle:

    clouds began
To darken all the hill, and smoke to roll
In dusky wreaths, reluctant flames, the sign
Of wrath awaked. (*PL* vi, 56–9)
What is striking here is the apparently unthinking reuse of a Civil War trope. As we have seen, Civil War battlefields were dominated and rendered opaque by smoke and fire, and memoirs likened them to a storm. Yet that smoke was caused by the burning of crops and houses, by musket- and cannon-fire, or sometimes by the enemy’s attempt to force opposing troops out of a particular position. Here none of these causes are present, yet the smoke, fire and opacity are retained as pure, detached signifiers of war. This suggests powerful psychic pressures are keeping these signs of disunity in play. Yet Milton is eager to couple these signs of disorder with the military masculine ideal. When the loyal angels set off, his emphasis on their hardness and invulnerability recalls both Elton’s drill manual and the London trained bands:

At which command the powers militant  
That stood for heaven, in mighty quadrate joined,  
Of union irresistible, moved on  
In silence their bright legions, . . . On they move  
Indissolubly firm; nor obvious hill,  
Nor straitening vale, nor wood, nor stream divides  
Their perfect ranks. (PL vi, 61–71)

Here Milton presents a drilled ideal; the angels are united, utterly obedient to orders, and this is signified by the perfect order of their marching. Milton knows that this order is not available to men; the angels can fly, which is why hills and valleys do not break their ranks; man has to work much harder for the same desirable result. At the same time, he presents it as desirable, an instance of the angels’ capacity to outdo man at what he also attempts, an instance of their superior masculinity.

That superior masculinity is equated with virtue because the first to suffer the disruptive effects of war are the rebels, and the first among the rebels is Satan. Satan’s wounding, during his battle with Michael, is of course primarily Homeric, but it is Homer read through a context of Civil War narratives and atrocity stories. Satan is not merely beaten; he is made to suffer and is disgraced:

then Satan first knew pain  
And writhed him to and fro convolved; so sore  
The gridding sword with discontinuous wound  
Passed through him, but the ethereal substance closed  
Not long divisible, and from the gash  
A stream of nectarous humour issuing flowed  
Sanguine, such as celestial spirits may bleed,  
And all his armour stained ere while so bright. (PL vi, 327–34)
Satan does not only feel pain; the pain causes him to lose control of himself, writhing convulsed, his body beyond the control of his will. This loss of control to pain, this loss of the self in pain, is of course presented as a punishment, as atrocities were, but Milton is honest enough to present it as atrocious. Milton emphasises that the wound is discontinuous, that what makes Satan suffer pain is the loss of (phallic) wholeness, control, hardness, armour. As if to emphasise this, Milton stresses the ragged edge of the sword; it is ‘gridding’, or scraping, not only cutting but damaging the flesh by contact. What people are apt to find funny now is the temporariness of all these effects; Satan’s body almost instantly recovers its wholeness, and in that sense he cannot be mutilated. Yet, as if acknowledging the desire for a more permanent sign of dismemberment, Milton portrays the spilling of angelic blood onto Satan’s armour, signifying his transition from a signifier of invulnerability to a signifier of woundedness, discontinuity. Satan almost literally loses himself in this war. This is funny, in the sense that it is grotesque and undignified: Milton is aware that such indignities are the very stuff of warfare.

Satan’s recovery also allows Milton to point to the dismembered bodies of human conflict again, and thus at the disorder which underlies bright armour and marching regiments drilled into perfect formations:

Yet soon he healed, for spirits that live throughout
Vital in every part, not as frail man
In entrails, heart or head, liver or reins,
Cannot but by annihilating die. (PL vi, 344–7)

There is something almost angry, almost guilty about Milton’s need to mention the vulnerable human body here, even though the thrust of the poem is to subsume its frailty in angelic invulnerability. It is as if he cannot or must not forget the Civil War dead; they haunt the poem in their mutilated, divided state, like the ghostly amputees of Edgehill. To avoid neglecting them, Milton must bring them in, but he must also find an imaginative solution to the disorder they represent. Here, man’s anatomy – and the always already known discontinuity of his internal organs – turns out to constitute his vulnerability; by contrast, the holism of angelic substance, despite its apparently unmasculine fluidity, guarantees their ability to survive being disunited by recreating, instantly, their unmarred surface.

That fantasy of wholeness and reuniting is visible in Civil War texts not at the moment when an individual man is killed but at the moment when
a regiment or troop is attacked. Milton is describing individual angels as if they were entire regiments. At the same time, from the point of view of the good angels, this capacity to reunite might be experienced as frustrating or even frightening rather than heartening. Of course, I’m not suggesting that Milton attributes such feelings to the good angels – they would be inappropriate to angels – but rather that he asks us to experience imaginatively what it might be like to fight a foe who, as it were, regroups after every encounter. As the Royalist regiments did after Parliamentarian assaults, this capacity of the foe to keep coming is itself one of the most frightening and problematically unsettling aspects of war, for how is it possible to go on being hard, day after day? Characteristically, Milton reverts to the model of equating masculine hardness with masculine virtue in use in the Civil War when he presents the rout of the rebel angels and the steadfastness of the loyal angels. The rebels break, and the terms in which this is described are extremely suggestive: ‘deformed rout’ and ‘foul disorder’ equate retreat respectively with dismemberment, loss of identity, and with filth, dirt, decay (PL vi, 386–7). By contrast, the loyal angels are figured in terms of male military wholeness and discipline: ‘In cubic phalanx firm advanced entire, / Invulnerable, impenetrably armed’ (PL vi, 399–400). Assigning all the disorderly side of war to the enemy is what produces atrocity stories like those of the 1641 uprising and the Civil War itself. In succumbing to the temptation to consign the cosmic enemy to moral darkness and to loss of male control, Milton is purchasing psychic resolution with what he knows to be tainted money.

It is from this point – this point at which the rebels themselves have been, in every sense, both broken and penetrated – that they themselves begin probing and penetrating the mother earth. Now, this is in one sense realistic; troops did respond to sexualised humiliation by acting out a violation of a feminised other that they could control. Milton is being honest – brutally honest – about war. But he is also assigning – or consigning – those impulses to the rebel angels only, and thus distancing himself and other Christian soldier-males, from any imputation of structural difficulty. That is, Milton seems in danger of abandoning his careful and impartial analysis of the difficulties war generates for masculine identity in favour of straightforward othering, where those aspects of war which cannot be tolerated by the masculine identity are abjected into or onto the enemy. That the rebels are carrying out precisely the sort of procedure described by William Clarke, and in a different way performing an atrocity analogous to the mother-murder of Ulster, is clear from Satan’s rhetoric:
These in their dark nativity the deep
Shall yield us pregnant with infernal flame,
Which into hollow engines long and round
Thick-rammed, at the other bore with touch of fire. (PL vi, 482–5)

The initial image is of depolling a pregnant womb of its offspring, precisely the image used to characterise the Ulster rebels as barbarous, but also the image whose apotropaic power restores masculine identity. Exactly the same image recurs when the rebels eventually get down to the task of digging, ‘and saw beneath / The originals of nature in their crude / Conception’ (PL vi, 510–12). In Satan’s speech, however, the focus switches to the cannon, which becomes both a phallic image and an image of the penetrated orifice. None of this makes literal ‘sense’, or even straightforward ideological sense; there is no simple subordination of the feminine or voiding of the sodomitical. Rather, what is figured is precisely ‘the perverse’; a tangle of gender images, which by its very complexity signifies the unsettling of gender itself. The images of phallus and orifice too recur when the cannon is presented to the startled loyal angels, and it has the expected effects. It reduces those who ‘standing else as rocks’ to a tumbling mass of infantile, even laughable disorder.

All this dark and comic underside of war, this grotesquerie is assigned unhesitatingly to the rebel angels alone, even when the loyal angels are caught up in its effects. What saves the poem from being another lying piece of recruiting posterese about affirming masculinity with reference to the chaos of the enemy is the very sequence most critics have complained of: the mountain-throwing sequence. This allows the loyal angels to partake of and even to create chaos, though a simpler kind of chaos with no dark gender disorder. However, the effects are strongly reminiscent of the darkness of the Civil War battlefield. Even the syntax of the narration becomes chaotic and exhausted by what it must describe:

So hills amid the air encountered hills
Hurled to and fro with jaculation dire,
That under ground they fought in dismal shade;
Infernal noise; war seemed a civil game
To this uproar; horrid confusion heaped
Upon confusion rose: and now all heaven
Had gone to wrack, with ruin overspread (PL vi, 664–70)

This is no longer even war because by now everyone has lost the hard, ordered masculine identity that they must collectively and individually assume to count as warriors. The fragility of such identities is comically deflated by their literal burial under thrown hills, and yet the confusion –
which extends to the reader, his or her own expectations shattered by events – is serious, serious enough to provoke the Son’s entirely serious intervention. What happens is that first the mountains and then the Son obliterate those very hard military identities which seemed so crucial just a few hundred lines earlier. Wiped clean, masculinity is free to re-present itself along new lines; through the family, through talk and eloquence, through resistance to temptation rather than the foe. This is not pacifism, but Milton’s intelligent recognition that the masculinity of militarism is too complex, too contradictory, too prone to excess to form a useful metaphor for Christian heroism, or to assuage the potent terrors that such militarism itself arouses.

At first it is tempting to contrast Abraham Cowley’s *Civil War* with Milton’s warring angels. Cowley’s portrayal of battle has never seemed as big a problem as Milton’s, but *The Civil War* is generally regarded as a poem so riddled with problems that it is unsuccessful. One reason, of course, for its failure is its unfinished state; the Royalist victory which was to conclude the work never materialised. What is more interesting is that although the same themes of masculine anxiety and the risk of feminine engulfment surface in Cowley’s poem, they do so far more overtly. Cowley’s use of Spenserian allegory and of characters from classical epic, especially the *Aeneid* and the *Pharsalia*, allow him to represent the threat to masculinity in arms in terms of a series of feminine personifications. The Fury Alecto, for instance, who hides the Parliamentary commanders in a cloud to defend them from the victorious Royalists, is not only a Medusan figure, but a sign of the disorder of smoke and cannon-fire which opposes the hard masculine clarity of the chivalrous Royalists. In his description of the battle of Edgehill, Cowley bluntly represents both the opposing Parliamentary forces and the terrors of battle in feminine terms:

There Schisme, old Hag, but seeming young appeares,  
As snakes by casting skin renew their yeares.  
Undecent rays of severall dies she wore  
And in her hands torne Liturgies she bore . . .  
Sedition there her crimson Banner spreads,  
Shakes all her Hands, and roares with all her Heads.  
Her knotty haires were with dire serpents twist,  
And all her serpents at each other hist.46

The Medusan figure of Sedition conflates the feminising horrors of battle with the rebellion – which is more than an elaborate way of saying that Cowley blames the Parliamentarians for the war. The disorder of battle and the disorder of rebellion can alike be feminised, with the result
that the abject, feminine aspects of battle can be displaced onto the opposing side. The battle confronting every soldier, the battle between masculine hardness and feminine chaos, is here allegorised as the battle between Royalist and Parliamentarian armies. To be a Royalist is to be on the side of a decorous, un-abject femininity, to be the protector and defender of feminine figures like Loyalty, who ‘an humble crosse displaied, / And still as Charles past by she bowd and prayd’ (ll. 219–20), and ‘White Truth. . . / Clad with those Armes of Prooфе, her Nakednesse’ (ll. 225–6). These controlled feminine figures are not merely routine personifications of virtue; they require the defence of a serenely masculine Royalist army against the ravening assaults of the battlefield chaos represented by the apotropaic feminine figures of the rebellion. Similarly, Cowley conflates the literal obfuscation of cannon noise and smoke, with their implications of feminine chaos, loss of sight and dismemberment, with the figurative obfuscation of perjury: ‘There Perjuries like Canon roar’d alowd, / And Lies flow thicke like Cannons smoaky Clowd’ (ll. 227–8). On the other hand, perjuries are actually less frightening than cannon, less likely to blow your head off. The figure of perjury as cannon carefully divides the Royalist armies from feminine occlusion, and also offers the consolatory image of a cannon that is only a cannon after all, only a piece of paper, only words. Even the forlorn, reproachful ghosts of Edgehill are displaced into the political (though still doubtless reproachful) ghost of Strafford: ‘A thousand wronged Spirits amongst them moand, / And thrice the ghost of mighty Strafford groand’ (ll. 243–4). Ultimately, however, the offensives of smoke and cannonade, real and allegorical, are broken on the masculine figure of the king, immutable, sacred, armoured against assault:

Now flew their canon thicke through wounded Aire,  
Sent to defend and kill their Soveraigne there.  
More than Hee them, the Bullets fear’d his Head,  
And at his feet lay innocently dead. (ll. 245–8)

The solution to the problems faced by masculinity in warfare is the erection (word used advisedly) of a perfect and impermeable masculinity capable of opposing assault both literally and at the psychic level. In other words, the nation could not dissolve into the feminine chaos of war as long as Charles stood for its masculine aspect. Alas for Cowley, this representational resolution proved distinctly fragile in the event, and Cowley’s own unfinished poem became merely another of the fragmented, broken bodies the war made.
On 29 December 1648, Elizabeth Poole confronted the Army Council at Whitehall, saying she had a message from God, conveyed to her in a vision. Surprisingly, the Council devoted three days to examining her claims, and at first what she said seemed rewarding. Poole declared that she had seen ‘the presence of God with the Army’ and outlined her vision:

there was a man, a member of the Army, that some time had bin shewed me, [expressing] his respect unto his country, to its liberty and freedome, which he should gladly be a sacrifice for. This persone was sett before me, and a woman which should signifie the weake and imperfect distressed state of this land on the other hand. The woman was full of imperfections, crooked, weake, sickly, imperfect. I . . . was to appear to the body of the Army in this man that hee should improve his faithfulnesse to the Kingdome, by his diligence in the cure of this person.

Poole equates the female body with the nation-state and the male body with its ruler. Like others, Poole writes the new government into legitimacy by describing it in metaphors used by the monarch. She casts the male figure of the army as a healer-sovereign, a figure at once Christ-like and professional. This figure is securely and unproblematically masculine, its strength guaranteed by the feminine weakness of its counterpart. In Poole’s figuration of the land as woman, the female figure is ‘sickly’, ‘imperfect’, ‘crooked’ and requires male intervention for healing. Naturally the Army Council were susceptible to the implied compliment; Poole’s reflection of what republicans felt to be the ‘natural’ logic of gender helped to authenticate her statements. ‘I see nothing in her butt those things that are the fruites of the spirit of God’, remarked Ireton enthusiastically.

His enthusiasm proved short-lived. When asked on her recall on 5 January about what should be done with the king, Poole gave a response the Army Council found far less comforting:
You never heard that a wife might put away her husband, as he is the head of her body, but for the Lords sake suffereth his terror to her flesh, though she be free in the spirit of the Lord; and he being uncapable to act as her husband, she acteth in his stead; and having the spirit of union abiding in her, considereth him in his temptations, as tempted with him . . . accordingly you may hold the hands of your husband, that he pierce not your bowels with a knife or sword to take your life, Neither may you take his, I speake to you as men, fathers and brethren in the Lord.

Here, the king is the only man in town. Everyone else is feminine, including, by implication, the Council. Possibly aware of her transgression, Poole concludes by appealing to the Council’s authority as male citizens, heads of households whose headship in the family guarantees their role in the state ‘as men, fathers and brethren in the Lord’. We shall see that it is precisely this self-image which becomes central to Parliamentarians’ and republicans’ way of understanding themselves. For Poole, however, the words cannot repair the earlier slip. The damage has been done; metaphorically, they are secondary, and feminine. Why did the Council mind so much? It was not only that Poole had refused to give divine sanction to executing the king. It was also that she had implied that the citizen-male ought to show a feminine resignation while the king was husband of the state. This reversed the discursive moves the Parliamentarian side had been carefully rehearsing. The Parliamentarians, the regicides and the republicans came to see themselves as the only men in town, Charles as an effeminate tyrant. Feeling their masculinity menaced both by his autarchic and overbearing ways and by what they saw as his effeminacy, they had reacted by constructing a new image of a masculine commonwealth, one grounded in the masculinity of the head of the household, the property-owning paterfamilias. However, it turned out that this masculine image could only be defined through constant citation of its opposites; the effeminate king on the one hand, and the misplaced, public woman – like Elizabeth Poole herself – on the other. In what follows, I want to examine the evolution of the image of the Commonwealth paterfamilias and look at how this image expressed itself by contrast with the spectacle of public woman.

The rhetoric of ‘conduct’ in circulation in godly communities figures the public realm of commerce or business as masculine, the household as feminine. Conduct-books understand sexual difference through an opposition between the man’s power to circulate and the woman’s absence from circulation. He is to get goods; she is to gather them together, and save them. ‘The dutie of the husband is to travell abroade, to seeke living,
and the wives duty is to keepe the house. The dutie of the Husband is to get money, and provision; and of the wives, not vainely to spend it. The dutie of the Husband is to deale with many men; and of the Wives to talke with few. One might almost describe these roles as isomorphic with anatomical sexual difference according to Galenic theory; the wife’s duties are an interior, inferior version of the man’s. The very word republic – *res publica*, things to do with the public – therefore did not merely exclude women by oversight, but linked politics with the gender arrangements of the married couple as understood by the regulators of marital behaviour within godly communities. Consequently, it was not surprising that defenders of the new citizen-state drew on the classical opposition between *polis* and *oikos*, state and household, to define what they were doing. Legitimacy came to be vested in masculinity; citizenship was a function of household headship. For these writers, any suggestion that the republic itself was insufficiently masculine, any penetration by women into the *res publica*, had delegitimating connotations.

The head of household’s status as a participant in the public sphere depended on his position as head of household, just as his role as head of household guaranteed his place in the political system. In the seventeenth century, participation in the microcosmic public spheres of village and town depended on place in the household sphere. In Parliamentary elections, in elections to the ministry, ‘the people’ meant ‘heads of households’. The Elizabethan Presbyterian Cartwright wrote that ‘all men understand that where the election [of ministers] is most freest and most general, yet only they have to doe, who are heads of families’, while William Stoughton explained that ‘the chiefe Fathers, Ancients and Governors of the Parish in the name of the whole should approve’. Confirming this notion, even the Levellers excluded servants and apprentices from voting on the grounds that their wills were in their masters’ keeping. Edward Gee argued that ‘the master of a family, having rule thereof, representeth all the persons of his house’ as their ‘Husbands, Parents, Masters or Guardians’. This logic of representation was uncannily close to the logic of monarchic supremacy itself, in which the king represented (and was re-presented to) his subjects. Much anti-absolutist rhetoric draws its force from the symbolic and actual threat posed by absolutism to the power of the head of the household.
To fathers within their private families Nature hath given a supreme power; for which cause we see throughout the world . . . all men have ever been taken as lords and lawful kings in their own houses. Howbeit over a whole grand multitude having no such dependency upon any one, and consisting of so many families . . . impossible it is that any should have complete lawful power, but by consent of man.  

Of course, the power of heads of households (political, economic and personal) was not really a fixed, unchanging, traditional fact before absolutism. The power of what one might term the voting classes was in part a new acquisition. Many of the debates about royal power turned on taxation; well before Locke, many anti-absolutists argued that heads of households had a right to their property, from which their power derived. Some at least of this growing concern with wealth can be traced to the production of a merchant-class whose property could not be equated with land, and it was of course this urban class of enterprise culture who produced the urban environment which eventually came to be a public sphere. This is the power of Dod and Cleaver’s masculine head of household, out in the world getting goods. He occupies the public sphere first as an economic and only secondarily as a political actor, but gradually the latter can come to guarantee the former.

The image of the citizen male as a property-owning household head was affirmed by Cromwell and Ireton in response to the Levellers at Putney House. Humanist legal scholarship gave a central role to the holding of land and the rights it conferred, including the right and duty to bear arms. For Harrington

the greatest bashaw is a tenant, as well of his head as of his estate, at the will of his lord, the meanest Lucchese that hath land is a freeholder of both, and not to be controlled but by the law; and that framed by every private man unto no other end . . . than to protect the liberty of every private man.

For some, like Harrington, it was ownership of property that conferred liberty and removed the threat of servility. Of course women could own property — and did — in early modern England, but the model of property-owning household headship was nevertheless overwhelmingly masculine. If a republic is a res publica, a commonwealth is equally exclusive; it is common wealth, a union of those who have enough to keep them from the commands of others. This necessarily excludes wives and daughters, even where these manage to become property-owners. Yet ultimately the political power of such men came to seem natural because of the power of paterfamilias over his wife and children. Dod and Cleaver wrote that ‘the
Governors of families . . . are first the chief governor, which is the husband, secondly his fellow-helper, which is the wife’. For Gouge, the wife must ‘yield subjection’ to her husband; the husband is ‘magistrate’.21 This set of metaphors helped to produce the notion that heads of households were (naturally) magistrates and governors.

The right to bear arms, and the duty to do so, had always given heads of households a stake in affairs of state. Now those who wished to advocate their rights could draw on republican theories which equated military service with citizenship, such as Machiavelli’s valorisation of the citizen-soldier as the acme of virtù, discussed in Chapter 1. In this alternative image of the masculine citizen, the man’s body rather than his property becomes his stake in the commonwealth. Again, this defines the citizen as necessarily male, and helps to define masculinity as natural to citizenship, in part because war was often opposed by Renaissance thinkers to the effeminising arts of the courtier.

Such ideas are reiterated even in texts which notionally oppose the centrality of the property-owner to the state. For Henry Marten, godly economic labour was no longer enough to guarantee masculinity; becoming involved in affairs had ceased to be ancillary, and become essential:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ignavus ille qui sepultus ocio} \\
(Vi bruta gens animalium) \\
\text{Materna bobus rura vexat pigrior,} \\
\text{Inhians decuplo foenori} \\
\text{Rostris ineptus, impar et se iudice} \\
\text{Civis, cliensq\[ue\] civium.}
\end{align*}
\]

Cowardly, slothful is he who buried in leisure, like the brute race of animals, more sluggish than his oxen, vexes his mother lands, gaping for tenfold increase, unfitted for the rostra, even in his own judgement unequal to a citizen, and a dependent of citizens.22

The landowner is less a safeguard of the republic than a menace to it; his economic industry is misdirected. Rather than making the state productive, he exhausts his ‘wife’, the land, making her ‘bear’ more increase than she can withstand. Marten cunningly reverses the conduct-book notion that economic productivity is the same as appropriate sexuality. Here, earning more and more becomes a kind of reproductive disease, a disease foisted on the woman-land, who is weakened by the man’s insane over-activity. This might pose as super-masculinity, but by associating it with cowardice and sloth Marten divides the economic public sphere from the public sphere of affairs. Despite this, however,
there is an underlying assumption that such a man ought to be the foundation of the citizen-state; it is his crime not to be, a crime presented as an unnatural lapse into femininity. And for Marten the active citizen is still male. The Levellers fiercely resisted the notion that headship of the household and its economic status were what legitimated citizenship, but their rhetoric too reveals an underlying agreement with the assumptions about masculinity that underlay the Commonwealth and its rhetoric. In a much-cited passage, this assumption is clear:

really I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he; and therefore truly, sir, I think it’s clear that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government; and I do think that the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to that government that he hath not had a voice to put himself under.\(^{23}\)

It is not just all the hes in this passage that make it so explicitly about masculinity. It is rather the fact that Thomas Rainborough is arguing that under normal circumstances, man is free, and must consent to be under the authority of another. His wife, who is not mentioned, is not free already. Although the Levellers resisted Cromwell and Ireton’s notion of the propertied as natural citizens because of their stake in the country, they do share the army grandees’ notion that it is men by virtue of their place in the \textit{oikos} who have a place in the \textit{polis}. Ann Hughes, in path-breaking work, has clearly shown that the assumption that the radical movements like the Levellers and the Diggers accepted women on equal terms is wishful thinking. She has rightly pointed out, too, that the Levellers use the idea of the responsible, honest head of household with dependents to plead for their release from prison. By contrast, she shows, the Levellers sought to demonise their foes as violators of their households, and figuratively even of their wives.\(^{24}\) The personal authority of the head of the household was therefore central to the image of the citizen evoked even by radical republican organisations. One might even go farther. Hughes writes that masculinity was central to the Levellers. Their constant appeals to masculinity were not merely rhetorical or strategic, but a fundamental mainspring of the movement. While encouraging their wives in political activism on their behalf, the Leveller men were quick to reappropriate their wives’ acts; both Lilburne and Overton reprinted their wives’ petitions as part of publications of their own, and Overton even claimed authorship of his wife’s petition on his behalf. We might read these acts not solely as attempts to present themselves to their supporters
and foes as heads of households, but more significantly as attempts to be heads of households, to resume the position that had been taken from them by Parliament. The perceived rupture of their masculine authority and its almost literal rebranding or stitching in the incorporation of the women’s pamphlets into their husbands’ publications speaks of anxiety; was it possible that women petitioners subtly alarmed their own side, perhaps even more than their opponents, helping to construct a picture of tyranny as that which abrogates the masculine authority of the husband and father.25

Ultimately, everyone could agree on the need to retain masculine authority in the face of a tyrant:

Nothing is more indecent and distasteful [than female rule] yet sometimes we see that the Husband hath only the name of master, while the wife exercises a Tyrannical Monarchy over the family.26

Pecke’s use of charged political terminology defines misrule in the family. The wife’s monarchy is ‘tyrannical’ because it illegitimately denies power to the true head of the household. In this trope, the threat of all ‘tyrannical monarchy’ becomes clear. Its effect is to emasculate the father of the family, depriving him of his legitimate power by appropriating that power illegitimately.27 By assuming a monopoly on paternal power, the king offers to guarantee it symbolically by representing it: hence in patriarchalist rhetoric the king’s authority assures the order of the household as well as being assured by it. The problem is that this symbolically (and sometimes actually) abstracts authority (or even the right to give it away) from patriarchs themselves. Local anxieties about household authority find a corollary in certain characteristic political anxieties of the Civil War period. Just as the authority of the father was undermined by legal interventions designed to regulate the household in the interests of community and commonwealth, so the authority of the householder as participant in community and church politics and as producer of wealth could also be undermined by the growth of centralised government and the extension of monarchical power.

One way to understand the way such masculine authority worked is to see the way it defined itself against its opponents. The women peace petitioners of 1642 and 1643 and the Leveller women of 1649 and 1654 met with a generally anxious and violent reception.28 Both the peace petitioners and the Leveller women represented a double threat to the masculinity of the commonwealth of heads of households: as well as being rebellious women, the peace petitioners also questioned the link between male
citizenship and male arms, while the Leveller women represented a group who questioned the link between property-ownership and citizenship. Of course both groups of petitioners did their best to invoke the traditional acceptance of women petitioning on behalf of their husbands or other male relatives, but they were not altogether successful; somehow, a group of women seemed different from and more disorderly than a single woman. Ann Hughes argues correctly that women petitioners were not always greeted with extreme and anxious responses; she points to a Royalist newspaper which wearily reports that the Parliament have this week been much troubled with women; as first this new Prophetesse, secondly by the women Petitioners . . . and I would all the oppressed men, Women and Children in England and Ireland were about their ears.

However, since this is a Royalist newspaper this if anything supports my argument that the women petitioners were especially worrying to republicans. Focusing on male responses to the women’s activities rather than determining what the women themselves intended allows us to see exactly what kind of anxieties about masculinity were produced by the eruption of a large number of women into the public sphere, both the sphere of letters and print, and the physical space surrounding the Houses of Parliament. Male responses are characterised by a desire to replace women’s agency with woman as sign; the women demonstrators are represented in carnivalesque inversion. Recourse to inversion in the face of events that are genuinely subversive is not a sign that the events in question were somehow conservative, but an attempt to contain their subversive potential. Through inversion, the women’s protests are refigured not as a threat to male authority, but as proof by contrary of the validity of that authority. Thus the Duke of Lennox, dismissing the women peace petitioners, remarks: ‘Away with those women, we were best to have a parliament of women’, while another commentator suggested that ‘some men of the rabble in women’s clothes mixing among ‘em had set them on’. These (supposed) men in women’s clothing recall figures from inversion rituals such as ‘Captain’ Alice Clark and other male transvestite leaders of food riots, and carnivalesque figures like Maid Marion and the Bessy. There was a case of local protest in this tradition during the war, when ‘Captain’ Dorothy led women protestors against attempts to mine coal. Otherwise, women are the dupes of wily men, who ‘that Munday night put on those women that were ring-leaders of the crew’. Another commentator wrote that ‘the women had been sett on and backed by some men of rank and ability’. Such comments make women the mere puppets
of male agents, but in doing so can hardly help but illustrate that they pose a threat to male agency. The women’s protests become a sign for male political activity. Such moves intersect with hostile reactions to Leveller women’s petitions in 1653. Here the question of whether the petitions can be accepted turns on assumptions about women’s place in the polity. When Katherine Chidley presented her petition, she was told that:

the House could not take any cognizance of their petition, they being women, and many of them wives, so that the law took no note of them.36

Covertly the centrality of the male head of the household to the Parliament and the forthcoming republic is asserted under the skirts of this remark about women’s conduct. Whose petition could be taken seriously? One from heads of households. The women are eliminated on two grounds; they are women, and they are also wives, and hence represented by someone else. Who? The House ‘gave an answere to your husbands’.37 Since they are all wives they are legally and politically covered by their husbands, who have already received an answer on their behalf. To make the point clearer, MPs and newsbooks carefully defined woman’s proper place in opposition to her occupation of improper places:

therefore you are desired to go home, and looke after your own businesse, and meddle with your huswifery.38

Another newspaper likewise opposes women’s place in the oikos to their lack of place in the polis:

they should go home and spin; it being the usuall work of women either to spin or knit and not to meddle in state affairs.39

In both these quotations, going home is equated with beginning productive labour on behalf of the household, behaviour explicitly opposed to the women’s entry into the public sphere because it carries the aroma of those conduct discourses which constructed the distinction between public men and private women. These responses ask women to again become guarantors – by their labour – of male political participation. In other words, these are not merely sexist one-liners; they illustrate the place women were to occupy in the unfolding state.

Of course, if republican ideology of the kind described here had dominated all thinking, it would have been impossible for women to appear as protestors and petitioners at all because such an appearance would have been literally unthinkable. Fortunately perhaps, patriarchy is never as absolute as this. The neurotic and deeply anxious responses
described here are certainly overdetermined; they are equally certainly not inevitable, and they did not overwhelm all women to the point of paralysis. Dagmar Freist describes many of the meaner sort of women actively engaged in conversations about politics, though we know about these women because they ended up in court. Sharon Achinstein rightly points out that some women petitioners were reported sympathetically in newsbooks.40 Some of the Leveller women, at least, were staunchly supported by their husbands, and Richard Overton questioned the entire equation of public women with sexual immorality. Yet even as he complained that women’s reputations – their female public identities – had been destroyed by their entrance onto the public stage and the accusations of sexual immorality which followed, he reinforced the notion of the head of the household as woman’s public defender. One might add, too, that it was perfectly possible for male political transgressors, especially the upstarts, to be seen in sexual terms: both the Duke of Buckingham and Cromwell himself (as we shall see) attracted far more of this kind of comment than the Leveller women. Unfortunately, we are all too familiar nowadays with the idea that exceptions can be used to argue that there are no rules at all; the fact that Margaret Thatcher becomes Prime Minister does not mean that British politics lacks gender bias. David Norbrook has recently made a powerful case for the significance of Lucy Hutchinson as a republican woman writer of history and poetry, and has argued from this evidence that republicans were as hospitable to women in politics as Royalists, if not more so. His arguments work reasonably well for Hutchinson herself, but even Norbrook notes that she articulates exactly the godly ideology of the household and women’s place within it central to republican men, and is as eager to condemn Charles I for uxoriousness as Milton.41 This was, after all, the woman who said that ‘the kingdom . . . is never in any place happy where the hands that are made only for distaffs affect the management of scepters’.42 There is also a big difference between intellectual repartee in marriage and a place in the public sphere, as carefully marked here by Hutchinson herself; talking is one thing, advising is another. The notion that one might lead to the other is precisely what is carefully ruled out. Nor is there any sign that Hutchinson’s example was widely followed, or even accepted. However much we would like the republicans to be politically correct (because they led to us?) we cannot make them so; rather our task is to understand how their notions of masculinity operated within their political thinking.

Another and more complex attempt to turn women’s protests into signifiers of masculinity in the polis is made in a newspaper account which
describes one particular figure at the especially violent demonstration of 9 August 1643:

one amongst the rest being a most deformed Medusa, . . . with an old rusty blade by her side, had her hands tied behind her . . . and was guarded along by the trained bands to prison.  

Here the threat of the woman agent becomes fully visible even as it is neutralised and managed. The image of Medusa expresses and manages fears of woman; if it represents the vulva and an apotropaic response to it, it also restores the phallus by its power to turn men to stone. But Medusa is also a monster dispatched by a hero who successfully founded a state, and her head on Athene’s aegis became one of the guarantees of Athenian sovereignty. Such monstrous emblems of public femininity are dragged into being – as in the famous passage in De Tocqueville much discussed by Neil Hertz, among others – whenever new regimes need legitimation, for monstrous femininity is the antithesis of the masculine hero who dispatches her.  

What might seem like a story about woman is actually a story about male legitimation of a regime already invested in the classical idea of the citizen-soldier.

Another such story is told in the various mock-petitions distributed alongside and as a reflection on the women petitioners. These texts are not simply a satire on women’s intervention in politics; their assumption that women’s authorship of such texts is inherently ridiculous itself controls and expresses the anxieties about patriarchal authority also found in the contents. By turning the disorder of the household, embodied in the uncontrolled women, into a big joke, the pamphlets symbolically assuage the anxieties they embody. They imply that woman’s rebellion is in no danger of becoming rule because it is troped as sexual desire – in effect, desire for the resumption of male rule. This resumption is symbolically enacted – ironically enough – by the writing of the pamphlets under a female pseudonym where that pseudonymousness is relentlessly foregrounded. It might be more exact to term these pamphlets female impersonations; their effect resembles that of drag acts adroitly calculated not to deceive. The drag woman is always already sexualised, always already theatrical. Her unstable, problematic gender is deployed here unequivocally by Royalists, trying to undermine the masculine identities of the Parliamentarian armies. For here as elsewhere in Royalist satire, femininity turns out to be somehow the Royalist’s arena. The unstable theatricality of the Cavaliers is acutely desirable by women, and hence sexual; the self-control of Puritan men is not.
The appearance of women in public can easily be read as the figure of publicly available woman, or whore. The whore paradoxically represents a public woman viewed in exclusively private terms; her publicity is private, and at the same time her privacy is unacceptably public.\textsuperscript{47} In the same vague and abusive sense, Mary Overton was called ‘whore’ and ‘strumpet’ by the soldiers who arrested her in 1646, appellations vigorously contested by her husband. In his impassioned defence of her character, he was able to draw on public concern for women’s sexual reputation, but in so doing he also took up the role of her male defender in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{48} The Petition of the Weamen of Middlesex, for example, with its outrageous subtitle, depicts the women as sexually insatiable, petitioning for an end to war in the hope that this will mean the return of the men.\textsuperscript{49} In The Petition of the Weamen of Middlesex, for example, with its outrageous subtitle, depicts the women as sexually insatiable, petitioning for an end to war in the hope that this will mean the return of the men.\textsuperscript{49} In The Humble Petition of Many Thousands of Wives and Matrons of the City of London, the wives of London are sexually insatiable: those whose lovers or husbands are away at the war are forced to ‘steal or borrow’ satisfaction from their neighbours.\textsuperscript{50} Yet this was probably intended for male consumption; it was an attempt to make men anxious about their wives. Rebellion is responsible for the breakdown of order in the household, symbolised by sexual control of the wife’s body. The metaphor of stealing and borrowing reveals that what is at stake is the absent husband’s control over the property on which his status depends. In The Virgins Complaint, a mock petition of 1643, the sexual insatiability of London women becomes an ironic solution to Civil War, since it forces an end to the conflict in the interests of domestic order.\textsuperscript{51} Similarly, The Mid-Wives Just Petition urges the men to return home to prevent their wives’ infidelities.\textsuperscript{52} All four pamphlets read the public-sphere languages of politics, war and economics as mere metaphors for female desire when those languages are spoken by women; all three interpret women’s public activity as public sexual availability. In this way, women’s public activities are subjected to the pornographic or pleasure-seeking male gaze. That gaze also merges imperceptibly with the look of surveillance: just as women petitioners can be turned into an occasion for defining women’s place outside politics, so they are transformed here into an occasion for policing the female body, and hence the male body too. Yet such a discourse of conduct is also what the pamphlets oppose. Rather, the pleasure-seeking male gaze is effortlessly recuperated as a badge of masculinity in the face of a threat which to Royalists really comes from other men. ‘You may have won the battles’, the pamphlets say, ‘but you have not really “defended” your status as head of household. Using cunning and our own desirability, we have taken your women.’

Republican politics
Similarly, Queen Henrietta Maria’s attempts at cultural production were read as oppositional to women’s traditional ‘place’ at the heart of the bourgeois household, and hence to the authority of the man as head of that household. As usual, if women have arrogated power to themselves, it must be at the expense of men. In satires on French neoplatonism like Jonson’s *The New Inn* and Brome’s *Court Beggar*, anxiety is focused on the fear that the new fashions are emasculating, preventing men from gaining direct access to the objects of their desires and reducing them to abject utterance of endless longing; it resembles the situation created by Elizabeth I’s own anomalous position. These anxieties are often figured directly as fears of the loss of sexual initiative; in Davenant’s *Platonic Lovers*, Theander critically tells Phylamont that he is ‘too masculine’ in asking for the lady’s hand in marriage, the implication being that the new fashions promote effeminacy. John Cleveland’s poem ‘The AntiPlatonick’ puts the matter far more bluntly:

- Give me a lover bold and free,
- Not Eunucht with formality
- Like an Ambassador that beds a queen
- With the nice caution of a sword between.

Cleveland’s poem clearly associates the emasculating effects of platonism with the court’s ‘formality’ and with court offices. The word ‘formality’ gestures at the fear of what may happen when women set fashions and control aspects of cultural production; that control may act to block men from achieving their desires, and thus ‘eunuch’ them. Moreover, the association of eunuchs with foreignness, court luxury and even tyranny suggests the corrupting effect of female fashions on masculinity in politics. The image of the slave-eunuch courtier also gestures at the fear of luxury and conspicuous consumption linked by other satirists with court fashions. The fact that even a Royalist like Cleveland could express such excessive anxieties about the effect of court life on masculinity illustrates the extent to which policing its boundaries became not only a preoccupation but a raison d’être of the crisis.

Another kind of satire acknowledges the presence of women in political circles only to equate that presence with secrecy, scandal, duplicity and treason, hence defining masculinity as proper to all legitimate parliaments. I refer to the series of satires depicting parliaments of ladies, the first of which was printed in 1647. Several of the *Parliaments of Ladies* are attributed to the republican Henry Neville. This might seem surprising, but the pamphlets fit with an aspect of the so-called ‘secular’ republicans
not usually given much weight: their reputation as wits. A letter to Cromwell refers to ‘Tom Chaloner, Henry Nevile and those wits’, while there are numerous references to the acerbic wit of Henry Marten. Wit, or abuse, was a masculine privilege, part of a repertoire of rhetorical skills which could be deployed in politics: Erasmus and More were not above writing bawdy satires and verse in popular forms. They in turn took their inspiration from the classics: similarly, the parliaments of ladies draw deeply on Aristophanic gender inversions, Ecclesiazousae, Thesmophoriazousae and Lysistrata. There were also the numerous railing rhymes produced in protest at the conduct of the Duke of Buckingham and also the Howards during the reign of James I. All these writings were legitimated by the example of Machiavelli, who wrote a sexual comedy, Mandragola, which closely parallels The Prince, working out the same issues of political power on the terrain of sexuality. In Machiavelli’s political writings, power is often eroticised, and eros is a matter of power and conquest. This crossing of the political and the sexual is reflected in the work of Neville, the clearest case of English Machiavellianism. But such crossovers also show how masculinity and republicanism became tied together.

The Parliaments of Ladies are part of the ‘woman debate’ genre, in which the merits and demerits of womankind are debated, often facetiously and with conscious comic intent. Though the genre is associated with popular writers like the notorious Joseph Swetnam and John Taylor ‘the Water-Poet’, it also has high humanist antecedents; Cornelius Agrippa’s A Treatise of the Nobilitie and Excellencye of Woman-kynde is a tongue-in-cheek defence of women which demonstrates the rhetorical ingenuity of the speaker, while Swetnam and others imitate (not always successfully) humanist modes of rhetorical argumentation. Their works are often stiff with classical and Biblical exempla. Admittedly, by 1640 the genre has declined into a kind of quasi-theatrical bawdy comedy, with women given names like Joan Hit-Him-Home that owe more to the stage and to ballads on shrews and scolds than to Lucian, and this is reflected in the mock petitions discussed above. An ur-text that must have been one of Neville’s models, The Parliament of Women, also echoes this rhetoric. This survives in a printing of 1646, but may have earlier origins; Patricia Higgins refers to a petition to the Commons of 1640 complaining of ‘the swarming of lascivious, idle and unprofitable books and pamphlets, as . . . the Parliament of women’, while the fact that one of the Parliamentarian responses to the women peace petitioners makes use of the phrase ‘parliament of women’ suggests the early circulation of the form. Its republication in 1646, however, may signify interest in and anxiety
about women in politics, and may have inspired Neville’s much more significant adaptations. In *The Parliament of Women*, the women who assemble to form a parliament all have made-up names reminiscent of the ‘woman’ debate of the 1640s and the satiric petitions already examined. These names classify the women as city-wives rather than ladies: Grace the Gold-Smith’s wife and Sarah the Silke-man’s, for example. Other names classify the women as hypersexual scold-figures: Mistress Tattle-well, Mistress Tabitha Tire-man, Prudence Prate-all, and so forth, all directly or indirectly derived from texts like the *Juniper* and *Crabtree* lectures. Like the mock-petitioners, these city women are preoccupied with economic and sexual trade; they complain of their husbands’ sexual incapacity in economic metaphors, and eventually decide that their problems can be remedied through polyandry, conspicuous economic and sexual consumption, and punishment through cuckoldry. Connecting up with dramatic satires of city-wives rather than with anti-court satire, this text just makes contact with the political in its invocation of the classical trope of the female parliament as a sign of governmental disorder, and because the same kinds of names from the women debate were also used by critics of some of the women involved in politics: the *Man in the Moone* wrote that ‘Ruth turn-Up, Doll burn it, and sister Wagtayle have petitioned the supream authority for their man John’. Henry Neville’s pamphlets by no means repudiate these themes altogether; it would be surprising if they did given the preoccupation with sexual and economic productivity shown in his later *Isle of Pines*. Nevertheless, *The Parliament of Ladies* does it best to reinvent the genre. What makes *The Parliament of Ladies* different is that it refers to real women by name. Although at the end a few stage transvestites are dragged in, the majority of women dramatised in it have local habitations and names and biographies.

What links many of these women is their association with political activity around the court before the Civil War; the focus seems to be on aristocratic women influential at court, rather than on city-wives presenting petitions. The Royalist ladies include Lady Isabella Thynne, one of the women Ann Fanshawe cites as among those with a good knowledge of affairs of state; the second parliament includes Lady Holland, wife of Henrietta Maria’s confidant the Earl of Holland, Lady Anne Waller who was alleged to be ‘predominant over her husband’, and Lady Carlisle, the queen’s (former) friend and a leading *salonnieré*. Untangling Neville’s mass of references has proved a stumbling-block for many critics trying to determine the object of satire. While Antonia Fraser casually assumes that the first pamphlet, *The Parliament of Ladies*, is directed against Royalist
women, Caroline Robbins as casually assumes the opposite, claiming that the piece is ‘making free with the reputation of prominent women on the Roundhead side’. In fact, there is an unholy mixture of Cavaliers, Parliamentarians, former Parliamentarians, wavering Royalists and the peace party, illustrating the collapse of simple political allegiances by 1647.

There are also significant references to the main players in the second Civil War, three of whom, Lady Carlisle, the Earl of Holland and the Earl of Peterborough, are mentioned here explicitly, as is Isabella Thynne, the Earl of Holland’s daughter. There is a reference to Lady Peterborough as the consoler of wounded soldiers, which may refer to Peterborough’s wound, and may help to locate the pamphlet historically. The question is, why would Neville write about the second Civil War via a parliament of ladies? What are the effects of doing so? One answer, I think, is the persistent equation the text makes between public women and whore-dom. As we have seen, for women to be in public affairs was for women to be whores. Here, too, the women’s sexuality is constantly on display. The women’s powers are exercised in ensuring a supply of ‘French commodities’ without ‘excise’, and in retaining fashionable obstetricians ‘to help them with their most pressing affairs’. The parliamentary and political language of ‘excise’ and ‘pressing affairs’ are ironically contrasted with the private concerns which they signify for the ladies. In its oblique, coded references to the second Civil War, the pamphlet adds another term to its equation: public women = whores; private women = treachery. In *The Parliament of Ladies*, some of the ladies choose Lady Isabella Thynne as their leader, ‘hoping thereby that these acts might have the greatest influence on the Kings Majesty’. Isabella Thynne is both a public woman – a member of a parliament, and hence a whore – and a private woman, acting illicitly to sway the king’s judgement via the bedchamber.

This secret political power, the secret power of sexuality, is associated with treachery through the pamphlet’s links with the second Civil War. The masculine, Parliamentarian solution to such secrets was to expose them, expose them to scrutiny, as the king’s damningly uxorious letters were exposed in *The Kings Cabinet Opened*. Such exposure reclaimed secrets for the masculine public sphere, where women could only ever be a topic of scandal. This strategy is apparent in the pamphlet’s representation of the Countess of Carlisle:

[The House] ordered that an English garrison be put into Carlisle, to prevent a foreign enemy from getting into possession thereof; as is to be feared by reason of some secret intelligence had by the French Ambassador in that place.
Here, military power is eroticised and erotics are linked with power. The reference is to the Countess of Carlisle, already described as ‘not fit to be trusted’, and probably referring to her famous warning to the House that Charles was coming to arrest the Five Members. Here too she is a possible source of leaks, a fissure in military defence. The plotting of women is a weakness in the state. At the same time male sexual prowess is linked with military prowess, and Carlisle as political agent is transformed into Carlisle as territory to be invaded and defended by male agency. This conflation is strengthened by the fact that both Carlisle the woman and Carlisle the city were significant in the second Civil War. This symbolic male mastery of the troublesome ladies is also carried out in the symbolic reduction of female political agency into sexual desire. Even though the women satirised had moved transgressively from private to public, Neville massages male anxieties by assuring his readers that the women’s concerns were really private all along. This demonstrates the inappropriateness of a parliament of ladies by showing that women can never be public-spirited, only publicised.72

A reply to Neville’s pamphlets claims that:

rowing one way, and looking another, he had revil’d, despis’d, and jeered even the Parliament of England, questioning their orders in dark speeches, censuring their actions under feigned names, and deriding their persons by a wilful mistake.73

However, the specificities of Neville’s texts seem less engaged with Parliamentary doings than with sexual speculation; when acts are mentioned, they are exploited for their potential as pornotropes, as in the reference to the self-denying ordinance. It may be that simply portraying a parliament of women was sufficient to render Neville’s text critical, given the anxious jostle for masculinity enacted in the discursive struggle between king and Parliament. Oppositional discourses such as those on Buckingham characteristically trope the corruption of favourites in terms of sexual scandal.74

In this sense, the sexual and therefore personal greed for gratification which misogynistically characterises the parliaments of ladies is a figuration of the intrusion of the personal into the male realm of the political. The fact that the personal and its anti-public excesses are represented as female illustrates, however, the belief that women’s intrusion into public life is a cause as well as a signifier of corruption.

In News From the New-Exchange, anxieties about female political power and consequent or causal male effeminacy which surfaced repeatedly in critiques of the queen’s fashions reappear:
There was a time in England, when men wore the breeches, and debar’d women of their liberty; which brought many grievances and oppressions upon the weaker vessels; for they were constrained to converse only with their homes and closets . . . [but] the ladies rampant of the Times, in their last parliament, knowing themselves to be a part of the free people of this nation, unanimously resolved to assert their own freedoms; and casting off the intolerable yoke of their Lords and husbands, have voted themselves the supreme Authority both at home and abroad, and stiled themselves in the posture of a free state.25

Here the notion that the ladies are part of ‘the free people of this nation’ is styled a Big Joke. Women are not simply left out of the new body politic through an ideological blindness, but deliberately written out in order to define the state as masculine. Women’s politicisation and involvement in public affairs are understood as opposed to their place in the household and thus as threats to gender order. The ladies’ ‘supreme authority’ at home and in public is therefore figured as an intolerable and hilarious usurpation of their husbands’ places as their authoritative representatives.

The texts’ interest in turning women in public into a pornographic spectacle is part of the logic of disclosure which accompanies news culture.26 The display of the ladies as objects of a recuperative and voyeuristic gaze helps to signify female publicity as the absence of proper virtue, as well as the opposite of virtù. This is especially evident in the finale, the spectacle of a sexual apocalypse. It may be that this finale is not Henry Neville’s work; it is printed in a larger typeface than the remainder, as if it were an afterthought, and there is a separate manuscript of it as part of Viscount Conway’s collection of manuscripts. Nevertheless, the printer was not mistaken in including it, for it does exemplify some of the masculine desires and anxieties which have been examined above:

This day there was a vast commotion in the house, by reason of a disorder in the City, occasioned by a rumor of Doomsday, which the people did believe was at hand, and that the World was now ending, because it hath met with its beginning, for Adam and Eve, were seen both in one person, and whereas Eve was once taken out of Adam, Adam was now seen strutting out of Eve.27

This ‘monster’ advances on the House:

But on the sudden they were furiously assaulted, and although Madam Sebran kept stoutly to her post, yet she was faine to fall back at last, and lye at her open guard giving entry to the assailant, who carelessly parting their whifflers, suddenly entered the house, and put almost all to the squeake . . . thus [she] publickly thrust her self into their secrets . . . shee answered that shee entered upon her own right, being as good a member as any there, and that most of them knew shee had
always stood stiffe in the businesse (being in action) when they were but in consultation, and her name was Madame Świvalshe-met-Hungerford.78

Like the pamphlet itself, the ‘monster’ has ‘publickly thrust her self into the secrets’ of the ladies. The monster figures and represents the text’s own logic of opening, thrusting, penetrating disclosure; she makes explicit its phallicity. At the same time, s/he is also an image of the female bodies penetrated; like those who wear the breeches, s/he has artificially usurped phallic power, since s/he proves to be a woman wearing a dildo. Her appearance in the city, greeted by sectarians as a warning of apocalypse, or ultimate chaos, signifies the exposure of the ladies’ own desires and usurpations in the pamphlet. At the end, she also offers the ladies the sexual satisfaction they have been seeking, presenting herself as the object of their desires as well as an image of themselves. This is a clear and direct satiric reference to lesbianism; anti- précieuse satire also made use of the figure of lesbianism.79 What such satires postulate is a sexualisation of relations between women as well as relations between women and power; here this displaces the possibility of a female public sphere constituted by public spirit in the interests of a female private sphere constituted by desire, transgression and disordered monstrosity. And Neville is the man who translates Machiavelli’s virtù, redolent of masculinity, as ‘public spirit’.

As well, it simply says, plainly, that women only enter the public realm out of a longing for sex. This is a very dark and exceedingly hostile and violent image of women’s sexuality, and inevitably the very act of finally fixing women’s place in public as mere whores provokes equal and concomitant anxiety about the inadequacies of male sexuality, anxieties symbolised here by the dildo. (The same fears are eventually given memorable expression by Rochester; in his poem the dildo is a threat to ‘a rabble of pricks that were welcome before’, but who now find that ‘the Porter denies ’em the door’.)80 The dildo is a kind of ultimate republican male; perpetually hard, capable of assault and military battery, invulnerable because lacking in feeling, incapable of the sentimental engagements which Royalist propaganda would later exploit. And yet the dildo is also a threat to that ultimate masculine idea; it can be appropriated and worn by women, dissolving careful oppositions between the masculine and the feminine. Precisely because it exemplifies republican might, it also draws attention to the inadequacy of real men, who cannot possibly be as hard as the dildo itself. At the very moment when this pamphlet proclaims the ultimate separation of the sexes, it begins to worry about whether that separation might be unnatural, and detrimental to men.
Charles too had a patrimony only too easily exploited by his foes. In *The None-Such Charles*, a very thorough attack on every aspect of Charles’s character, a good deal is made of James’s doubtful sexual licence, not only as a figure of absolutism, but also as a sign of the emasculation of the monarch in monarchy:

Who could not contract his horrid filthiness within his Bed, his Ganimedes pallet, or his Closets . . . He must have the Publique to be witnesse of his lascivious tongue licking of his Favourites lips . . . And this was that Stemme from which a None-Such Charles sprang.¹

James’s homosexual acts are problematic both as public acts and as secret vices: he shamelessly forces them on the attention of the kingdom, and at the same time they take place in his bed, in his closet, in secret. James is both a scandal and an unduly private shame. This theme of a secret everyone knows is central to the pamphlet’s understanding of Charles; central to the secret of Charles’s own sexual and gender transgressions. Though not as flagrantly transgressive as James, Charles’s own crimes are structurally similar in that they involve an inversion of nature, and a public and private nature that neither allows the censure of the public sphere, nor averts scandal:

abandoning himselfe so publickly as he did into Dallidas lap, which was openly told him to his face at Paul crosse by a divine in his sermon . . . when as he had been publickly seen at Mass at Somerset House thinking to have gul’d the world, when he was plac’d in the Queens Lobby, even as the women are in the Jewish Synagogues, who though vailed yet do see, and are seen of all the world.²

Like the Jewish women, Charles manages to be both secretive and scandalous; he is publicly seen, but he also tries to deceive. He is impervious, too, to the world’s criticism; the proper godly public sphere of a sermon at Paul’s Cross is contrasted not only with the secret Catholic world of Somerset House, but also with Charles’s duplicity. Both the
image of Charles as public transgressor and the image of Charles as secret deceiver are, importantly, signs of his feminisation. His exposure and secrecy make him like a woman – and a Jewish woman at that, a traitor to Christ – and his submission to Rome and to his wife is likened to the emasculation of a Samson who willingly lies down in the lap of Delilah. It is impossible to tell whether this Dallida is Henrietta Maria or the Church of Rome, and it does not matter, for both are images of seductive betraying femininity, femininity that robs masculinity of its nature. In this chapter, the relations between the problematic duplicity of Charles, his scandalous abandonment of the masculine, and the story of Samson and Delilah will be explored, initially through the representation of Charles’s letters seized at Naseby and published as The Kings Cabinet Opened in 1645.

The recovery of Charles I’s letters was an extraordinary stroke of luck for Parliament, largely because their contents turned out to be as damning as his most ardent opponents could wish. Charles’s correspondence was perhaps the most influential publication in the history of the conflict. In assessing the publicity value of the letters, historians have tended to focus exclusively on the revelation that Charles was uncommitted to the peace negotiations and supported instead the enlistment of (Catholic) Ireland and France in his cause in exchange for toleration of Catholicism. Such accounts, though not invalid, ignore a factor relentlessly foregrounded by Parliament’s presentation of the letters and given great significance by later commentators on the events described, notably Thomas May and John Milton: the revelation of the role of Henrietta Maria in Civil War politics and in Charles’s counsels. It is not too much to say that the English republic was grounded in the insistence that Charles was unfit to rule because he was himself ruled by his wife. This made Charles himself seem emasculate, an unsuitable leader; it also allowed republicans to begin to construct an alternative model of legitimation, one which opposed a private sphere of monarchy, feminised and therefore treacherous and unavailable to scrutiny, to the masculine public sphere in which the letters themselves could be read by the citizens of the Common-wealth. In doing so, the editors of the letters and those who followed them created a res publica that was by nature and from its foundation ineluctably masculine.

The importance of Charles’s defective masculinity to this project was clear from the fact that of the four annotations appended to the king’s letters, the first three concern the queen; the first explicitly makes her the protagonist of the unfolded drama:
It is plain . . . that the Kings counsels are wholly managed by the queen: though she be of the weaker Sex, born an Alien, bred up in a contrary Religion, yet nothing great or final is transacted without her privity and consent.

The text lists three reasons for the queen’s unsuitability for the role of chief counsellor: the first is her ‘weaker sex’. The spectacle of female rule is complicated by the other factors listed: the queen is an alien and a Catholic. Yet these complications do not erase but reinforce the problem of her gender. The queen’s influence over the king is grounded in her femininity, or in their private relationship. But that private relationship—and the queen herself—are figured as illegitimate openings through which hostile and inimical Others can gain control of the king (and thus the state). Henrietta Maria, and the private sphere in which she operates upon the king, are together a kind of fifth column, an uncanny site of otherness revealed at the centre of the body politic, at the centre of Charles’s rule, where masculine authority should be. By the third annotation, the queen is openly figured as the enemy within:

The queen appears to have been as harsh, and imperious towards the King . . . as she is implacable to our Religion, Nation and Government . . . The Counsels also in England which she gives to the King are of very pernicious consequence.

Here, the queen’s status as an enemy of the nation-state is elided with her disorderly conduct as a woman/wife. Her harshness towards the king is conflated with her hostility to the nation. As such, her unnatural dominance is associated with her otherness, creating a powerful and threatening image.

Henrietta’s threat is located in her inappropriate placement: she should be subordinate but in fact ‘commands’ her husband; as an foreigner she should be outside the nation but in fact commands its centre; as a Papist she should likewise be excluded from counsel, but in fact is inappropriately included. Her transgression of all these boundaries becomes a general figure for the instability of the state, and thus becomes a criticism of the king. Charles is feminised in relation to the figure of his unruly wife:

The queen’s counsels are as powerful as commands. The King professes to prefer her health before the exigence, and importance of his own public affairs.

The problem is not just Charles’s willingness to be commanded by his wife. Charles’s uxoriousness and weakness are linked to his (illegitimate) valorisation of private interest over public business; he is more concerned about his wife, his personal relationship with her, than about the state. The passage crystallises fears of private or sexual politics and inaugurates the assumption that private and public interests are opposed. Henrietta
Maria is a threat because she operates in the private sphere, on the monarch-as-husband, on the monarch personally. This means her activities are secret, not open to public scrutiny, enclosed within the private realm of the marriage relation. At the same time, she embodies the threat of personal rule: the fear that the monarch will cease to represent and act in the public interest is displaced onto Charles’s indulgence of the queen. As a result, the entire figure works to undermine defences of monarchy; it figures the king as (illegitimately) a person rather than a political figure. He has ceased to represent public interest.

The publication of the letters represents the state as keen to manage the threat of the private within the public by exposing the private to scrutiny. Although Parliamentarians were initially anxious about where to locate the boundaries between private and public, refusing at first to open Charles’s letter to Henrietta Maria in a bundle seized in 1642, the publication of *The Kings Cabinet Opened* reinforces and renegotiates public and private in the royal household in relation to the rest of the state. As Annabel Patterson has shown, the title of the work involves revelation, the opening to scrutiny of that which was previously secret. As well as publishing the texts of the letters, Parliament also placed the originals on display at Westminster, so that their authenticity could be scrutinised. These moves were not uncontroversial: Royalists responding to Parliament’s moves represented the episode as an invasion of privacy, an unstudied intrusion of the political into the personal. This response was not merely an attempt to limit the damage of *The Kings Cabinet Opened*; as early as 1642, James Howell lamented that the practice of opening seized letters ‘bereft all Ingenious Spirits of that correspondency and sweet communication of fancy, which hath always been esteemed the best fuel of affection’. The state is here deemed a threat not just to privacy, but to affection. For the Parliamentarian editors of *The Kings Cabinet Opened*, by contrast, excessive affection is deemed a threat to the state.

What appears to vindicate the transgression and relocation of the boundaries between public and private in *The Kings Cabinet Opened* is its implicit claim that those boundaries had already been transgressed by both Charles I and Henrietta Maria. The publication reinterprets the royal marriage in the light of its own, alternative reading of public business and private interests. Henrietta Maria’s transgression is her involvement in ‘public business’, her alien intrusion into the affairs of the state. The representation of the queen as principal emblem of the disorder of Charles’s rule had been established by earlier scandals connected with her Catholicism, her influence over court appointments, her circle of
women courtiers and their attendance at Mass, and her theatrical appearances. Of course this reading of Henrietta Maria was not uncontested, but Parliament’s interest in reproducing it prior to the discovery of the Naseby correspondence can be clearly seen in the interested readings produced of the so-called ‘Popish Picture’, said by Mercurius Britannicus to depict the king handing his sceptre to the queen, who offers it to the Pope.\footnote{14} The controversy suggests that the figure of female rule had powerful propaganda value, because it could be seen as an intrinsic weakness of monarchy in general and Charles in particular.

Charles I, and by extension personal rule, were understood in these texts as always at risk of emasculation or insufficient masculinity \textit{because} always intrinsically private. Like the queen, the king figures as a transgressor of legitimate boundaries in \textit{The Kings Cabinet Opened}. The queen’s undue involvement in politics is shaped by Charles’s inappropriate engagement with the personal. Each occupies the other’s proper sphere. Because Charles’s feminine immersion in the private is an attachment to a wife figured as shrewish and dominant, forsaking the affairs of state for affection can be figured as effeminate. Symbolically, Charles surrenders his sceptre, emblematic of masculine as well as monarchical rule. The effect is to dismantle royal iconography, whereby the monarch signifies the public realm. Charles’s own enactment of a separation between the personal and the political becomes the occasion for legitimating the separation of state and monarch. This possibility is only shadowed here, but it follows from the strategies of \textit{The Kings Cabinet Opened}. The republic legitimates itself by pointing out that the monarch is not masculine because he is private, and it thereby opens up an alternative public, masculine sphere for itself.

Seeing Charles’s activities as inappropriately personal is also the basis for the pamphlet’s insistence on his abnormal secretiveness. The fact that the letters were believed to be in code helped to determine their reception;\footnote{15} cipher is an attempt to make correspondence private, and in fact Charles and Henrietta Maria, like others, adopted it as a response to the reintegration of correspondence into the public sphere through the interception of letters. In \textit{The Kings Cabinet Opened}, however, this strategy is figured not as an appropriate attempt to maintain the boundaries of the private realm, but as an illegitimate attempt to close off matters of state from public scrutiny. The figure of the cipher itself becomes a code for monarchical illegitimacy; it is metonymically connected with a series of other figures which represent Charles’s politics as secretive intrigues. The preface terms the Royalists ‘our Cabbalistical adversaries’,
commenting that ‘the King himself has not appeared with an open face in the business’ (Preface). The king’s acts of ‘hostility’ are marked by his policy of ‘covering them over with deep and darkest secrecy’ (p. 44). The king’s darkness and doubleness, his failure to appear with an open face, are exemplified by his admission that acknowledging Parliament was merely strategic: ‘he calls us a Parliament publicly, but acknowledges us not a parliament secretly’ (p. 45). In the final note on the king, there is much emphasis on his deceitfulness, especially in relation to the peace negotiations.

Such representations open up a gap between the king’s presentation of himself in public and his secret policies. As well, Charles’s duplicity locates his true self outside his public self-representation, and inside the private sphere. Charles’s secret activities are not just the outcome of his marriage to Henrietta Maria; the queen also acts as his agent, carrying out the kinds of personal politics which are a source of anxiety in *The Kings Cabinet Opened*. In a particularly significant passage, Charles urges the queen to bypass other parliaments abroad in order to secure foreign assistance:

*I see that Assemblies in no countries are very agreeable to thee, and it may be done a purpose to make thee weary of their companies, and excuse me to tell thee in earnest, that it is no wonder that mere statesmen should desire to be rid of thee, therefore I desire thee to think whether it would not advantage thee to make a personal friendship with the queen Regent.*

Unsurprisingly, the annotations loudly draw attention to this passage. The king ‘urges [the queen] to make personal friendship with the queen Regent, furnishes her with dextrous policies, and arguments’ (pp. 44–5). Here the role of women’s personal relations with each other is represented as a political problem. At the same time, Henrietta Maria’s personal relations partake of the artifice also demonstrated by Charles. She is taught ‘dextrous’ policies by him; her sleights of hand signify his manipulativeness. This artifice situates Charles in Henrietta Maria’s feminised world of theatricality, duplicity and cryptic iconography. He is not merely feminised because he is ‘commanded’ by his wife, he is also feminised as a political agent through his engagement in the politics of artifice, channelled through not one but two female figures.

It is the production of the politics of the court – and specifically the royal couple – as secretive, coded and feminised which allows *The Kings Cabinet Opened* to shadow forth the notion on which the public sphere would depend; the notion of governmental legitimacy grounded in
openness to public scrutiny. This opening of state affairs to the public gaze, the disclosure of secrets, is in *The Kings Cabinet Opened* dependent upon two other figures which ground and shape this open legitimacy: the feminised king and the queen who usurps his power. Republicanism in England, from its practical inception, thus grounded its legitimation of publicity in the figuration of a secret, coded, closed and artificial realm of femininity, a realm which both threatened and necessitated the public sphere itself. A much later defence of Parliament – printed in 1681 – illustrates the thinking perfectly: without a Parliament, the author writes, England might be ruled like the Turkish empire under a weak Grand Seigneur, by the prevailing concubine of the seraglio, who is perhaps herself managed by no higher dictates than those of her chief Eunuch, or she-slave.

Without a Parliament, in other words, monarchs will be ruled by women, ruled in the bedchamber by them and ruled by them in the state.

The significance of these figures for liberal rhetoric and secondarily for Parliamentarian historiography, can be grasped from their frequent reiteration. Both the historian Thomas May and the anonymous author of *The Life and Death of King Charles, or the Pseudo-Martyr Discovered* deployed the figure of Henrietta Maria developed in *The Kings Cabinet Opened* to legitimate, respectively, Parliamentary history and the execution of the king. *The Life and Reigne of King Charls* explicitly compares Charles’s affection for Henrietta Maria with his disdain for his people, figuring him as ‘overpowred with the enchantments of a Woman’. Similarly, Lucy Hutchinson wrote pointedly that ‘hands made only for distaffes’ bring ‘sad desolations’ when they ‘intermeddle with affairs of state’. A companion-piece to *The Kings Cabinet Opened*, published in 1655 and frequently reprinted, keeps these tropes alive in a different way. *The Queens Closet Opened: Incomparable secrets in physick, chyrurgery, preserving, candying and cookery*, as its full title suggests, contains not political secrets but recipes, remedies and beauty treatments. However, this is not an apolitical move. Given the satiric motif of female artifice as a metaphor for corrupt royal politics, the beauty recipes here may signify the kind of ‘colouring’ stigmatised in pre-Civil War criticisms of the queen and the king she ruled: dissembling or artifice. As well, the contents of the closet disclose the queen’s role as arbiter of taste and promulgator of luxurious consumption, and this too is part of the pre-war satiric tradition. Finally, the pamphlet shows the queen’s move from such private matters to public as inappropriate by symbolically relocating her
in the sphere of household production. Instead of encouraging women to take up the fashion of politics, Henrietta stands in this text for the housewife, preoccupied with housekeeping and confined to its space. ‘Meddle with your huswifery’, the text says, just as Parliamentarians said it to Leveller women.

Royalist attacks on the logic of The Kings Cabinet Opened reread it as a perfidious episode in a royal romance narrative. Some argued that the king’s deferrals to his wife’s opinions should be read as part of the discourse of love rather than politics. This directly addressed the purport of the publication by creating a figure of love and politics as compatible and even inseparable, undoing the Parliamentarian opposition between public business and intrusive private affection. In the Kings Cabinet polemics, Royalists had also revealed vulnerability to the Parliamentarian charge that the king was effeminate. In A Letter in which the Arguments of the Annotator . . . [are] Answered, the writer somewhat defensively claimed to have been impressed by the king’s ‘masculine’ style. This defensiveness was an outcome of the rhetoric in which the king figured masculine authority, taken together with the gendering of the romance code used to present that authority.

Parliamentarian rhetoric revived the notion that romance was emblematic of the illusion, fictiveness and frivolity inimical to the business of public rule. As Helen Hackett has shown, romance writing in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was often set over against the public writings of political treatises, manuals of hunting and other blood sports and similar masculine genres. The public labours of politics, hunting and war were opposed to the luxury and idleness which the romance came to connote, and this idleness and luxury were in turn linked with the feminine realm of leisure and fashion which was opposed to the productive bourgeois household. When Parliamentary newspapers and pamphlets denounced Royalist activities as apolitical, determined by an unrealistic romance code, they aligned the Royalist party with this feminine realm to signify their lack of fitness for government. The Life and Reigne of King Charls dismisses rumours of an invasion as ‘Chimaeras of the old romances’, while Mercurius Brittanicus describes that late fine Romance of the Isle of Wight, a business that carries as much probability as anything that we read of King Arthur or the Knights of the Round Table.

As Lennard Davis shows, writers who elaborated romance genre theory were themselves anxious about the relations between romance and
reality, negotiating this anxiety by locating romance between fantasy and verisimilitude. One means of doing this was to locate the action in the remote past, historical and at the same time fictive.\textsuperscript{26} ‘Serious’ or ‘political’ romances represented the marginal place of women at court in relation to politics: romances offered a way to figure women as at once in and out of politics and the state, connected to them symbolically but not as agents or actors. Parliamentarians refused this reading strategy, and instead troped romance as separate from reality and \textit{realpolitik}. Milton’s notorious judgement on Charles’s use of the \textit{Arcadia} can be read as part of this Parliamentarian discourse, involving the construction of a notion of generic and metaphoric propriety analogous to that produced in \textit{The Kings Cabinet Opened} for public and private, and thus connected with Milton’s own observations on the royal marriage.\textsuperscript{27}

The romance thus came to summarise an aspect of court culture to which Parliament had an interested response; it represented metonymically the closure of the court, and hence its artifice – and its femininity. \textit{The Kings Cabinet Opened} sets this feminine space against the shadow of a masculine public sphere comprising Parliament and the readership of its own texts. \textit{Eikon Basilike} was in part a response to this Parliamentarian strategy. Consequently, one of Milton’s tactics in \textit{Eikonoklastes} is to refine the metaphors of revelation and opening which characterised \textit{The Kings Cabinet}: while \textit{Eikon Basilike} seeks to represent the king as icon, \textit{Eikonoklastes} performs the equally public act of showing how that apparently open representation works as a series of deceptions or codes, and hence is feminine. Just as Parliament decoded the king’s and queen’s letters, Milton decodes the king’s metaphors, narratives and textual strategies.\textsuperscript{28} In both cases, duplicity and artifice are conflated, so that court codes and royal self-fashioning come to be evidence of deception and secrecy. In both cases, the masculine figure of the monarch turns out to be a cover for a shocking and inappropriate feminine encroachment on the monarch’s person.

In Milton’s text, the \textit{Arcadia} is a court encodement which Milton can offer to decode, a truth concealed by Charles’s ostensible devotion. Milton’s disclosure of the source of Charles’s prayer is scholarship as the discovery of a secret, the ultimate secret of the father’s seduction and castration. Milton sees borrowing as an inadvertent signifier of royal impotence or idleness:

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 Knighterrancy could yeild him prayers.\textsuperscript{29}
The king’s borrowing illustrates Charles’s imaginative impotence, and is linked to the idleness which romance connotes. Such readings and borrowings are debilitating, sapping the creative energy Charles needs to produce a prayer of his own. Charles’s supporters stressed his physical potency in his many children; Milton here stresses Charles’s authorial impotency. Unlike Milton, he cannot be a father-author. In any case, his textual child has a corrupt, foreign parent, an infidel, a heathen. ‘Heathen’ prayers are not just a figure for Charles’s generic impropriety; generic impropriety is a figure for gender impropriety.30 Charles’s creative weakness is figured as the result of indulgence in a ‘vain Amatorious poem’ (p. 362). The phrase significantly echoes Prynne’s dismissal of ‘Arcadias’, but the adjective ‘amatorious’ is not merely an index of abuse, of Sidney or the king, but a crucial part of the logic of Milton’s discovery. Romance literally weakens the king as an agent on the very terrain which for Milton was central to masculine identity: the begetting of textual sons. Reading an ‘amatorious’ poem, ‘without good caution’ (p. 362) creates and reveals his (feminised) weakness.

Behind the figure of the martyr-king at prayer, then, is the ‘reality’ of an impotent king who cannot create, but only borrow. Moreover, Milton lays great stress on the fact that the king’s illicit borrowings have a feminine source. He ‘doubted not to find better praying, to his mind with Pammela in the Countesses Arcadia’ (p. 366). The double female names emphasise the point: the Arcadia is a feminine text, ‘owned’ by the Countess, and the king’s borrowed prayer is spoken by a woman. Behind the figure of the praying king stands a woman; in borrowing the prayer, the king is acting out a female role. Significantly, too, Milton somewhat wilfully lays stress on Pamela’s non-Christian status, referring to ‘Heathen orisons’ (p. 366). Responding to Eikonoklastes, Joseph Jane points out that the prayer in contention is originally Sidney’s rather than Pamela’s, made by ‘the Author a Christian without reference to any Heathen Deity’.31 Jane’s response illustrates the apparent perversity of Milton’s strategy. But the figure of the ‘heathen’ woman standing behind Charles, sometimes acted out by Charles, is central to Eikonoklastes as it was to The Kings Cabinet. The idea occurs elsewhere in the text without reference to Sidney, and Pamela’s prayer is connected to other figures which suggest the king is ruled by a woman and acts out women’s desires.

Milton’s response to Charles’s figuration of the monarch as a generative and paternal sun also addresses the king’s masculinity, as it must when the sun is a central image of masculinity and its power. In Eikon Basilike the
king is the source and potent origin of all power, Parliament a mere beneficiary of his light:

[Without his] reason concurrent with theirs (as the Sun’s influence is necessarie in all nature’s productions) they cannot beget, or bring forth anie one complete and autortitative Act of Publick Wisdom, which make’s the Laws.\(^{32}\)

The author of *Eikon Alethene* was content to invert the metaphoric logic of this passage, arguing that the king is the moon which glows only with the reflected light from the sun of Parliament.\(^{33}\) This certainly puts the king back in a feminine place, but it was not enough for Milton, who goes beyond this logic of inversion to contest metaphor itself as a form of duplicity, a cover for illicit desires and secrets. He does not merely expand the king’s trope to explosion point by arguing that the king must in that case tyrannically desire incest with his mother-parliament; he also represents the king’s figuration of sun-ship as a form of son-ship which fictively disguises its own identity. The image of the sun is the image of that which makes visible; Milton turns it into a trope, a turning away from what can now be revealed. What is revealed is the inherent absurdity of a female parliament:

So farr doth self-opinion or fals principles delude and transport him, as to think the concurrence of his reason to the Votes of Parliament, not onely Political, but Natural, and as necessary to the begettting, or bringing forth of any one compleat act of public wisdom as the Suns influence is necessary to all natures productions. So that the Parliament, it seems, is but a Female, and without his procreative reason, the Laws which they can produce are but wind-eggs. (p. 467)

The notion that Parliament is even metaphorically female is presented as a product of the king’s deluded state. The apparently inherent absurdity of such a notion is literalised in the sinister figure of Charles incestuously impregnating his own mother. This figure is presented as an alternative to Parliament’s masculinity: ‘if he count it not male’ then it must be maternal. The king’s pretence of masculinity is a cover for Parliament’s true generative power and a disguise for his own relative weakness. The end-product of Milton’s deconstruction is the construction through opposition of a male parliament capable of that autotelic male self-replication which was Milton’s chief trope for his own authorship. By showing that a female parliament is absurd, Milton figures the king’s own paternal and generative pretensions as mere figures, likewise absurd. At the same time, the strategy illustrates the tension generated by the struggle for paternal authority between heads of households and the monarch. Milton
restores authority to Parliament by suggesting that depriving it of that authority would be ridiculous.

The king’s duplicitous and deluded gender metaphors here parallel his error with the *Arcadia*; in both cases, boundaries are crossed, improprieties enacted, laughter provoked. Just as Charles improperly borrows authority from the heathen shepherdess of the *Arcadia*, mistaking the truly feminine for the masculine, the truly idle for spiritual energy, the truly amatorious for the religious, so he represents himself in relation to Parliament, spuriously disguising his weakness as a creative energy he does not possess. Other crucial passages refigure these transgressions while exposing the king’s pretensions to paternal authority as deceits on the terrain of his own household. *Eikonoklastes* does not merely duplicate and build on the strategies of *The Kings Cabinet Opened*; the earlier work is also cited and re-read. Summarising, Milton writes:

They [the letters] discover’d his good affection to Papists and Irish Rebels, the straight intelligence he held, the pernicious & dishonorable peace he made with them, not solicited but rather soliciting, which by all invocations that were holy he had in public abjur’d. They reveal’d his endeavours to bring in forren Forces, Irish, French, Dutch, Lorrainers and our old Invaders the Danes upon us, besides his suttleties and mysterious arts in treating: to summ up all, they shewd him govern’d by a Woman. (pp. 537–8)

The crucial clause is the last one: the revelation that Charles is ‘governed by a woman’ somehow ‘sum[s] up all’. As in *The Kings Cabinet* itself, these transgressions are the introduction of the alien other into the centre, symbolised by the king’s dealings with ‘forren Forces’ and his ‘good affection to Papists and Irish Rebels’, and his duplicitous dealings. It is easy to see why the queen represents foreigners, rebels and Papists, but for Milton her government of the king also causes his ‘suttleties and mysterious arts in treating’ and his double-dealing over the peace treaty. This suggests that Milton subscribes to the anxiety about feminine ‘personal politics’: Charles’s engagements in duplicity are themselves feminised.

As well, the revelation that the king is ‘governed by a woman’ demonstrates his own unfitness to govern. This is not only because Henrietta produces in Charles undesirable feminine traits, but because it signifies the king’s privatisation. Milton writes:

He [the king] ascribes Rudeness and barbarity worse than Indian to the English Parliament, and all vertue to his Wife, in strains that come almost to Sonnetting: How fitt to govern men, undervaluing and aspersing the great Counsel of his Kingdom, in comparison of one Woman. (pp. 420–1)
Here, as in *The Kings Cabinet*, the king’s female ruler is opposed to the (masculine) Parliament, and also to the ‘men’ the king governs. The king’s swerve away from the public to the private, the general to the particular, is a swerve away from the masculine to the feminine. Milton shrewdly tropes such a swerve as ‘sonneting’: the discourse of love which Royalists insisted dominated the Cabinet letters is part of the problem, not a possible solution. Moreover, like romances, love sonnets are often about withdrawal from the public into a privatised and feminised sphere where a woman rules.\(^3\) That withdrawal is figured here as a sign of inappropriate female domination and feminisation. They also often represent the male as utterly and completely abject, while wielding seductive powers of speech. In Milton’s lexicon, both abjection and seduction are signs of a lapse from masculinity.

Female rule and the feminisation of the king are ultimately reducible to general images of disorder:

Examples are not far to seek, how great mischief and dishonour hath befall’n to Nations under the Government of effeminate and Uxorious Magistrates. Who being themselves govern’d and overswaid at home under a Feminine usurpation, cannot but be far short of spirit and authority without dores, to govern a whole Nation. (p. 421)

This passage’s depressing purport is so clear that it hardly needs any gloss. An ‘interested’ depiction of the queen’s female rule is here expanded into a general principle; female rule can only be a ‘usurpation’ which produces ‘effeminate’ magistrates. Figuratively, the king is not (even) the head of a household; just as Winstanley and others claimed that heads of households made natural magistrates, men who fail to head their own households are unfit for government. There is a striking parallel between this household disarray and the effect of reading romances on prayer; in both cases, the result of the process is a lack of power, an impotence, insufficient ‘spirit and authority’. Just as the king cannot author his own prayers and cannot beget laws, so he lacks authority to govern other men, who exceed him in potency since they at least can govern their wives and compose original works. Matters could only grow worse where not one but many ladies were involved:

Court ladies, not the best of women . . . when they grow to that insolence as to appeare active in State affaires, are the certain sign of a dissolut, degenerate and pusillanimous Common-wealth. (p. 370)

The otherness, alienness and emasculating threat of female rule are represented in the last chapter of *Eikonoklastes* in a metaphor which sums
up the meanings produced elsewhere to attack the most important meta-
phor of *Eikon Basilike*: the representation of Charles I as martyr. As
Milton represents it, Charles:

turns his Meditations upon death into obloquie and bitter vehement against
his Judges and accusers; imitating therin, not our Saviour, but his Grand-
mother Mary Queen of Scots, as also in the most of his other scruples,
exceptions and evasions: and from whom he seems to have learnt, as it were
by heart, or els by kind, that which is thought by his admirers to be the
most vertuous, most manly, most Christian, and most Martyr-like both
of his words and speeches heer, and of his answers and behaviours at his
Tryall. (p. 597)

Again, a woman stands behind Charles; like Pamela, like Henrietta, this
woman is a menace, an outsider. This time the woman is his ancestor
Mary Queen of Scots, whom Charles, monstrously, resembles. Images of a
masculine Christ and a feminine Mary Queen of Scots as originals
for Charles’s imitation are set in opposition. Mary Queen of Scots is
opposed to Christ as an emblem of (bad) female rule against (good) male
rule, foreignness and Catholicism against national and religious unity.
Aligning Charles with Mary rather than Christ is to figure him as feminine,
Catholic and foreign; it also aligns Charles with Henrietta Maria, who
also exemplifies these evils, against the English nation-state. Like heathen
Pamela and Henrietta, Mary is the feminine origin of Charles’s duplicity;
his ‘scruples, exceptions and evasions’ derive from a female ruler, as his
double-dealing derived from Henrietta Maria. At the same time, Charles’s
claims about the descent of paternal authority through a line from father
to son are disrupted. Both Mary and Henrietta represent breaks in that line.
In Mary’s case, the break is enacted by Charles himself: he has learned
from her ‘by kind’, showing his descent from a female usurper rather than
from paternal authorities. Henrietta then usurps his authority, enacting
another break. In this way, both queens represent femininity’s power to
disrupt patriarchal authority. Milton does not quarrel with the notion that
such breaks are disruptive: his aim is to show that monarchy in general
and Charles in particular are an especial threat to masculine govern-
ment because of their vulnerability to female usurpation and effeminisa-
tion. Finally, Charles’s borrowing from his grandmother parallels his
illegitimate borrowing from Pamela in the *Arcadia*: like the purloined
prayer, Charles’s martyrdom is revealed as a show of devotion which
deceives ‘his admirers’ but actually illustrates his duplicity, impotence
and feminisation.
The prime function of the figure of Mary Queen of Scots, however, is to legitimate Charles’s execution. *The Kings Cabinet Opened* may refer obliquely to the Cabinet letters which dramatically lowered Mary’s reputation, establishing another link between her and Charles I. More importantly, Mary’s execution did not produce the remarkable images of castration which accompanied the death of Charles. Since she was a woman, it was impossible for her to figure the masculinity of all her people; beheading her therefore did not symbolise the loss of that masculinity. By troping Charles as Mary Queen of Scots, Milton subverts the images of castration and loss which empower Royalist laments by suggesting that Charles’s paternal authority and masculinity were lost long ago, not taken away by Parliament. In this way, too, he renders obsolete the figures of the widowed and bereaved nation. Because Mary is a woman, the figure of the male ruler and the nation as widow do not fit her, and thus cannot apply to Charles either.

The threat of Charles’s effeminacy in *Eikonoklastes* expresses and manages fear of the absolutist monarch who successfully exerts patriarchal authority. Charles’s female domination successfully erases his actual domination, revealed to be fictive. At the same time, this manoeuvre opens up a fissure in Milton’s discourse of sovereignty; if the monarch is threatening when paternal and when feminine, then there seems no possible space left in which a king can legitimately represent the people. Milton’s answer, in the end, is iconoclasm; like all iconoclasts, his destructiveness is inexplicable unless he grants some power to what he wishes to destroy. In *Samson Agonistes*, iconoclasm, ‘heathens’, and femininity are again interwoven in a terrible fantasy about the beleaguered masculinity of the republican citizen-male.

The frighteningly intense misogyny of *Samson Agonistes* arises directly from exploring the place of the male citizen within the private and the public. Milton’s virtuous male citizen is the opposite of the feminine, which is therefore a private threat to public virtù. A reading of *Samson Agonistes* challenges the sanguine notion that the bourgeois public sphere can readily be purged of its unacceptable masculinisation. The tense opposition between private and public is created in Samson’s first lengthy speeches. As many critics have noted, Samson’s primary anxiety lies in the fact that his imprisonment prevents him from following his calling to serve his nation. Samson’s speech about the portents surrounding his birth figures a preoccupation with the public good; it is a ‘benefit revealed to Abraham’s race’. His position is couched in public, national terms: ‘Promise was that I / Should Israel from
Philistian yoke deliver’ (ll. 38–9). Opposed to this realm of public knowledge, service and virtù are a series of figures. There is the prison, a closed realm which shuts Samson off from his nation (‘The air imprisoned also, close and damp’, l. 8). The prison is a private realm of impotence, and Samson’s enclosure within it aligns it to the household, an opposition common to seventeenth-century writings on masculinity. Sir John Harington, for instance, opposes the prison-space of the household to the active public life of a courtier in his poem to his wife: this exhorts her not to try to keep him at home, since:

Among wise men, they demed are but momes
That allwayes ar abiding in their homes
To have no home, perhaps it is a curse;
To be a prisoner at home ’tis worse.40

The poem shows how the wife’s demands and the private sphere could seem a threat to the active political life of the courtier; just as the wife’s demands to share that life could threaten domestic order, so the private sphere’s demands could oppose the vita activa. As well as prison, Samson is also held within the Philistine nation-state, which for Milton is an inappropriate public realm of superstition, idleness and domination which oppose the labour, godliness and virtue of Samson’s participation in the public. Finally, there is the household, always already set over against public virtù because figured as the place of its loss:

Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
In what part lodged, how easily bereft me,
Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
O’ercome with importunity and tears.
O impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom, vast, unwieldly, burdensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,
But to subserve where wisdom bears command. (ll. 47–57)

The tangled syntax and ellipses of this passage express ambiguities about how to interpret the oppositions set up here. ‘Strength’, signifying the outward sign of public virtù, becomes weakness when it is revealed to the woman; thus far, the reasoning is close to the logic of The Kings Cabinet Opened. Because woman is weak, public strength becomes weakness in her hands: the story of Samson’s fatal haircut literalises this
logic. But if man is strength and woman is weakness, then woman can only make man weak if she is herself really strong, or if he is somehow weak. Samson worries at the question like a puppy. At first, he thinks, he is overcome by woman’s ‘importunity and tears’. Both are signs of woman’s weakness: pleading is the recourse of those who cannot command, while tears are a sign of loss of control; both are associated with women’s allotted role in public as suppliants. Yet this shows the characteristic Parliamentarian distrust of female petitioners seen earlier, because such feminine wiles – in the public sphere – always threaten to unseat masculine strength. Emotion overwhelms mind, and rhetorical seduction dominates reason. Samson then switches to the second interpretation; his strength becomes a sign of his weakness. Like Charles I, he has an impotent mind. Women’s weakest subtleties become a signifier of his greater weakness, since he has fallen for them. This state of affairs is unnatural; such weak subtleties and by extension woman herself, are not ‘made to rule’, but ‘to subserve where wisdom bears command’. At the same time, the phrases ‘not made to rule’ and ‘to subserve’ apply also to bodily strength itself; its dominance is opposed to a more correct hierarchy where the mind rules the body/emotions. Samson’s bodiliness is thus associated with his weakness, his vulnerability to the weak stratagems of woman. These vacillations illustrate the way masculinity could never be a secure and unproblematic construction; the process of opposing it to the feminine is always vulnerable to collapse under the pressure of a history of defeat and disillusion. For ultimately, Samson is asking why the wrong side won in the Civil War, why the English republic failed – why masculinity itself failed, and was replaced by the feminine courtiers, the promiscuous, indulgent king.

This point is developed more fully later in the poem, but in the opening scene the central metaphor for failure and loss is Samson’s blindness. Crudely, blindness is a metaphor for loss of control – and hence castration – but Samson’s blindness is also another form of imprisonment and hence exclusion from a place in the public sphere. It also positions him as trapped in the private, whatever space he actually occupies: ‘within doors, or without, still as a fool, / In power of others, never in my own’ (ll. 77–8). These lines accurately describe women’s position in the social dispensation; Samson is feminised by blindness. Like woman, Samson hovers between being and nonbeing: ‘scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half’ (l. 79). Samson’s figuration of blindness also recycles one of the central metaphors of gender,
heavily taken up in the *Eikon* controversy, the metaphor of sun and moon:

The sun to me is dark
And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave. (ll. 86–9)

For Samson, blindness means losing the ability to place himself in relation to gendered signifiers: the sun is for him the same as the moon. However, Samson is like the feminine moon; he is imprisoned in inactive darkness. Like the moon, he has ‘desert[ed]’ his role; he is hidden in the private realm, and this enclosure is ‘vacant’, devoid of appropriate activity. What is normal for the feminised moon and for woman is an unnatural disaster for Samson; he insists that his proper role is defined by the light and power of the sun. The entire metaphor reinforces Samson’s problematic feminisation, and also supports the notion that this feminisation is linked with the vulnerability of the body. Samson complains that the power to see light is ‘confined’ to the ‘tender ball’ of the eye (l. 94). Like Samson’s strength, the eye is at once strong and weak; its power to see is a metaphor for the public *vita activa*, but also a sign of the vulnerability of man to other kinds of sights; this becomes more evident when Dalila comes into focus.

Samson’s loss of the public *vita activa* is thus equated with a loss of masculinity brought about by woman, or by the failure to control her, while his enforced withdrawal from the exercise or labour of public life aligns him with his Philistine jailers. The Philistines in *Samson Agonistes* show Parliamentarian anxieties about Stuart court culture; the Philistines are superstitious idol-worshippers and their culture represents the idleness, luxury and decadent corruption of the court in terms strikingly similar to court satires. Like Charles and Henrietta Maria, the Philistines work by deceit and trickery, and these devices and sleights-of-hand operate entirely through female agents. The Chorus first raises the issue explicitly in terms which recycle Samson’s own confused and fractured internal debate; they ask why he chose to marry Philistean women instead of women of his own nation (ll. 216–18). Samson’s exogamous marriages hint at the possibility that he himself is the problem, the weakness in the integrity of the state. Samson’s answer lays this bare: he marries the woman of Timna, another betrayer, because ‘she pleased / Me’ (ll. 219–20), implying that private attractions overwhelmed public commitments, the body
overwhelmed the mind. But Samson then adds contradictorily that ‘what I
motioned was of God’:

I knew
From intimate impulse, and therefore urged
The marriage on; that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel’s deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely called. (ll. 222–6)

Whereas ‘she pleased me’ suggests a private impulse in conflict with pub-
lic calling, these subsequent lines rewrite Samson’s marriage as part of public
virtù; God has urged Samson to marry as part of a programme to liberate
Israel. It remains unclear what kind of occasion might enable Israel’s deliver-
ance; the Chorus suggests that Samson’s act makes the marriage itself
an occasion for war, ‘to provoke / The Philistine, thy country’s enemy’ (ll.
237–8). Rather than relating to any actual scheme, Samson’s first marriage
seems symbolic; in masculine fashion Samson is prefiguring and acting out
his conquest of the Philistines by taking one of their women; the woman is a
symbol of the nation, so the nation is feminised both by nature and by
Samson’s conquest. Dalila, Samson’s second wife, might have been part of a
similar project of masculine self-assertion, but in her case the gendered logic
is reversed and it is Samson who is ‘vanquished’, yielding his ‘fort’ to a
woman armed only with words (ll. 235–6).

The entire work is anxious about the place of marriage in the public
sphere. If marriage and woman are placed in a private sphere separate
from and opposite to the public realm and the state, then the male
citizen’s commitment to the latter is difficult to reconcile with his involve-
ment with the former. If Samson marries Philistine women for ‘private’
reasons, this in itself threatens to undermine his political commitment,
since his story reveals that such swerves have disastrous consequences. On
the other hand, if the private sphere somehow becomes politicised, which
is what Samson achieves with his two marriages, then women may
intervene in politics, and private emotions become sites for political
subversion. If marriage is part of a battlefield, the ‘wrong’ side might win.

The entrance of woman is prefaced by the Chorus’ question, ‘what is
man!’ (l. 667). The Chorus can only answer the question comparatively;
God’s treatment of man is not his treatment of the angels, ‘inferior
creatures’, or ‘the common rout’. The unanswered question of how public
virtù can operate when God does not support it, the unanswered question
‘what is man’ are displaced by the counterquestion ‘who is this, what
thing of sea or land? / Female of sex it seems’ (ll. 710–11). The structure
suggests that what seemed a lack in God and consequently a lack in man and his masculinity, can be displaced onto woman. If woman is the problem, and woman’s inappropriate behaviour, then God is reprieved, and so is Samson. The Chorus’ description of Dalila’s entrance stresses her otherness; at first ‘she’ is an ‘it’, a ‘thing’ whose proper element and place are uncertain. ‘It’ ‘seems’ ‘female of sex’, but the word ‘seems’ implies the difficulty of classifying the sight. Seemings may be ‘specious’, deceptive artifices which conceal a monster. This thing is difficult to categorise; ‘it’ is a drifting signifier which cannot be read. This ‘thing’s otherness and duplicity are further signalled by its decoration: ‘bedecked, ornate, and gay’ (l. 712), it dazzles the eye with display so as not to make itself readable. Its foreignness and semiotic ‘wandering’, or dis-placement, are further signalled by the ship metaphor; this is a ship from foreign ports, bound for foreign ports (ll. 714–19). Again, there is emphasis on decoration; ‘bravery’ and ‘streamers’ which divert and delude the eye. When at last the thing becomes named and known as Dalila, her image ‘at nearer view’ remains determined by the figures of uncertainty, ambivalence and artifice which precede the revelation of her identity. These place Dalila as misplaced in the order of things and in the dramatic situation. She is an intrusion, even an invasion; in her very being, her borderline status, she is a threat to order.

Dalila’s otherness closely parallels Henrietta Maria’s in The Kings Cabinet Opened; like the queen, she is a foreign invasion-force, a transgressor of gender, a misplaced signifier, and perhaps above all, an artificer. Dalila’s elaborate dress is a sign of her threat in politics and household alike; like Henrietta Maria, she represents the power to ‘colour’ or deceive in its specifically feminine form. It also specifically alludes to Henrietta’s clothing, her fashions, her theatrical self-presentations. In Samson Agonistes, as in The Kings Cabinet Opened, the redefinition of public and private spheres is central to the representation of both masculinity and femininity. This is worked out dramatically in Samson and Dalila’s colloquy. Samson’s first words about Dalila equate female impropriety with political crime: ‘my wife, my traitress’ (l. 725). In being Samson’s wife and in betraying him, Dalila is a traitor; Milton may here be referring to the ‘petty treason’ of husband-murder. For Samson and Dalila, however, domestic insubordination has real rather than merely symbolic political consequences, so that the Samson story acts out what was implicit all along in the confluence of domestic and political rhetorics. What happens to Samson is proof that political order depends on domestic order, and thus on the control and containment of women.
The difficulty in achieving this lies in woman’s duplicity. Like Henrietta Maria, Dalila is a traitor in several senses; both are treacherous not just because of their intents, but because of their power to conceal their real natures. Dalila plays her scene with Samson by the rules of the godly conduct-books which influenced Parliamentarian thinking on gender and the state. Such books urge the wife to be the first to apologise and submit to her husband’s authority if there is any dispute. Adopting a submissive posture, ‘with head declined’ (l. 727), she is properly hesitant about speaking, and offers conjugal affection as the reason for her utterance. Samson’s response is an outburst which reveals an acute and misogynistic anxiety about how woman is to be controlled, for what if woman obeys all the rules designed to contain her as a subversive strategy, exceeding the very terms laid down to envelop and enclose her?

these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconcilement move with feigned remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change . . .
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;
That wisest and best men full oft beguiled. (ll. 748–59)

Samson grapples here with a general problem of political control; the rules must be clearly laid down, but laying them down creates the possibility of spurious imitation.

The disparity between appearance and reality recalls Milton’s Sin in *Paradise Lost*, and the resulting indeterminacy recalls the hermaphroditic monster of *Strange News from Scotland*; we shall see that such figures are themselves marked with masculine anxieties. Samson’s cry ‘Out, out hyaena’ (l. 748) refers to a creature of naturally indeterminate sex, like Dalila when first glimpsed by the Chorus. This is a kind of rationalisation and stigmatisation of the unnaturalness of Dalila’s gender roles; her femininity, it transpires, is a cover for gender ambiguity produced by her inappropriate political activities, and her consequent inappropriate domination of her husband. Dalila figures her ‘treachery’ as loyalty to the state:

thou know’st the magistrates
And princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threatened, urged,
Adjured by all the bonds of civil duty
And of religion . . .
Only my love of thee held long debate;
And combated in silence all these reasons
With hard contest: at length that grounded maxim
So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men; that to the public good
Private respects must yield; with grave authority
Took full possession of me and prevailed;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty so enjoining. (ll. 850–70)

Dalila’s speech marks out a division between the realm of the public –
magistrates, princes, states, religion and civil duty – and the private:
‘respects’ figured as conjugal love, precisely the division in The Kings
Cabinet Opened and in Eikonoklastes. The problem lies in Dalila’s move-
ment from the private sphere of conjugal affection to the public sphere of
civil duty. Some critics have wished to argue that Dalila’s speech is
defensible because it replicates some of Milton’s own political pronounce-
ments; this is precisely why it is indefensible.47 Spoken by a man, the
speech is correct; spoken by a woman, it is a voicing of monstrosity.
Samson, quoting Christ so that it’s clear that divine authority is on his
side, clarifies this:

Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave
Parents and country; nor was I their subject,
Nor under their protection but my own,
Thou mine, not theirs: if aught against my life
Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,
Against the law of nature. (ll. 885–90)

Samson’s response marks Dalila’s choice of civic duty as a transgression
of her role as wife. The wife, it is clear, ceases to be a member of a
nation when she marries because she moves from the protection of the
state to the protection of her husband (‘thou mine, not theirs’); marriage
effectively cuts her off from the body politic and from civic duty. Dalila’s
defence of her actions on the grounds of public good simply proves that her
feminine behaviour is artifice; in acting as a political agent she is acting
like a man, usurping the role which should be Samson’s. Meanwhile he,
like Charles I, is forced into the position which should be woman’s, of
putting private affections before public considerations. When Samson
finally repudiates her, Dalila reveals herself in her true colours, as a public
heroine, the kind of public role from which Samson has just explicitly
debarred her:
in my country where I most desire,
In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath
I shall be named among the famousest
Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb
With odours visited and annual flowers . . .
Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
The public marks of honour and reward
Conferred upon me for the piety
Which to my country I was judged to have shown. (ll. 980–94)

This speech puts an end to any chance of reading Dalila sympathetically; the Chorus exclaims that she is ‘a manifest serpent by her sting / Discovered in the end, till now concealed’ (ll. 997–8); as everyone has long known, this especially recalls the monstrous Sin. Dalila’s public role is dangerous monstrosity. Dalila’s venom must lie in her willingness to sacrifice the role of wife for public recognition. Though she revels in this publicity, for the Chorus it discloses her ‘sting’. Of course, history sides with Samson and the Chorus. What Dalila imagines as public recognition and the place of a hero is transformed in sacred history into scandalous notoriety.

But if Dalila, like Henrietta Maria, represents the threat of female usurpation of a public, masculine role, she also represents an equal and opposite threat. Just as Dalila moves improperly from private to public, so Samson moves improperly from public to private. Philistine imprisonment is for Samson a kind of private space which blocks him from enacting a proper public role; his debate with Dalila reveals that this state of affairs is the result and continuation of the inversion of order in his marriage. Dalila elaborates her plan to privatise Samson while publicising herself:

I knew that liberty
Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,
While I at home sat full of cares and fears,
Wailing thy absence in my widowed bed;
Here I should still enjoy thee day and night
Mine and love’s prisoner, not the Philistines’,
Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love. (ll. 803–10)

Central to a reading of the passage is the term ‘liberty’. ‘Liberty’ here represents not just Samson’s individual freedom of movement, but those
large, abstract political ideas which the woman willingly sacrifices to personal desires. Liberty means that Samson embarks on perilous enterprises while Dalila worries not about the enterprises but about him. The fear that such female personal anxieties will undermine male political commitments is characteristic of the construction of a public sphere which excludes the personal, represented by the female. ‘Perilous enterprises’ like the Civil War itself are primarily interruptions in private life and the emotional and sexual economy of the household. This was not Milton’s understanding of the Civil War, and Dalila’s desires are presented as a threat to Samson personally, and hence to the kind of abstract Virtue necessary for the godly state.

Dalila’s attempt to turn Samson into a kind of toyboy resembles the pastoral and platonic court masques sponsored by Henrietta Maria, in which lover and beloved moved into a realm ruled by love alone. But whereas these masques figured their pastoral landscape as a metaphor for the state, Milton severs the romance from politics, as he does in *Eikonoklastes*, making the former appear a decadent and illegitimate escape from the latter. This notion is the direct outcome of the idea of companionate marriage as a refuge from the cares of business and politics voiced in Milton’s divorce tracts. For the home or marriage to be such a refuge, its values, norms and contents must be opposed to the realm from which it provides respite. But when this happens, there is a risk that these opposite values will somehow become oppositional, that the realm of leisure will undermine the public spheres of politics and production. Concretely, there is a risk that man will be feminised by contact with the private sphere and woman.

This is symbolised by sex. Dalila’s offer of sexual pleasure is the obverse of her desire to ‘enjoy’ Samson day and night. Like the insatiable city-wives of the mock-petitions, Dalila’s desire is a representation of her threat to public affairs. Her offer to care for Samson sexually translates into a desire to make him effeminate:

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though sight be lost,
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoyed
Where other senses want not their delights
At home in leisure and domestic ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance to which
Eyesight exposes daily men abroad. (ll. 914–19)
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Early modern masculinity is often acutely anxious about the extent to which female sexuality might actually destroy the male who falls prey
to it. So Samson translates Dalila’s offers as a desire to enslave him ‘uxorious to thy will / In perfect thraldom’ (ll. 945–6). It is for him another deceit; he compares Dalila’s offer of sexual pleasure to Circe’s ‘fair enchanted cup’, the cup which reduces men to beasts and deprives them of both public life and sexual mastery (l. 934). Woman’s offer of sexual pleasure is an artifice which conceals a desire to subordinate men. Like Henrietta Maria behind the bedcurtains, Dalila is practising politics by other means, using her husband’s sexual weakness to emasculate him further by taking power from him. Female vice is the assumption of a public role of civic duty, in conflict with subordination to domestic rule by a husband, and the assumption of a sexually authoritative and thus emasculating posture in the private sphere. The corruption of the Philistine state and its resemblance to the monarchic states of seventeenth-century England are due to the effeminisation of men by female agency.

For Milton, this could be generalised to all regimes in trouble. In writing his History of Britain, Milton links court luxury, tyranny, sexuality, drunkenness and effeminacy in describing the disastrous effects of the Norman conquest:

The great men giv’n to gluttony and dissolute life, made a prey of the common people, abusing their Daughters whom they had in service, then turning them off to the Stews, the meaner sort tipling together night and day, spent all they had in Drunk’ness, attended with other Vices which effeminate mens minds.  

Mental effeminacy becomes the chief result of physical vice. The ‘daughters’ of the common people are not themselves common people, but become common women. They too are significant primarily as signs of tyranny and as causes of the effeminacy of men’s minds. Effeminacy is the chief pretext for rebellion and regicide, since such effeminacy makes such men intrinsically unfit to govern as well as threatening to undo the masculine identities of their subjects. In Paradise Lost, too, the historical narrative links effeminacy with consumption, sexuality and the display of the female. Adam sees a vision of postlapsarian weddings which turn out to be signs of corruption:

A bevy of fair women, richly gay  
In gems and wanton dress; to the harp they sung  
Soft amorous ditties, and in dance came on:  
The men though grave, eyed them, and let their eyes  
Rove without rein, till in the amorous net  
Fast caught, they liked, and each his liking chose. (PL xi, 582–7)
Though Adam mistakenly takes these nuptials for a sign of hope, the emphasis on the women’s ‘gay’, ‘rich’ and ‘wanton’ dress are recognisable from the anti-court polemics of the 1630s and 1640s, and the women’s singing and dancing are further signs of improper display. This makes it apparent that the women are opposed to the interests of the grave and sober men; like Dalila, their accoutrements are a lure in which they can snare men ‘in the amorous net’. Sure enough, Michael explains that the weddings are actually a global disaster:

For that fair female troop thou saw’st, that seemed
Of goddesses, so blithe, so smooth, so gay,
Yet empty of all good wherein consists
Woman’s domestic honour and chief praise;
Bred only and completed to the taste
Of lustful appetance, to sing, to dance,
To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye. (*PL xi*, 614–20)

Here the women’s public displays of their bodies to allure men, and their extravagant and fashionable dress, are again opposed to domestic virtues. The women are ‘empty’, as if they have poured out or spent that which they should have stored in domestic privacy. To these women the men will ‘yield up all their virtue, all their fame’ (*PL xi*, 623) – all their masculinity, and all their place in the public realm. Following the angel’s speeches, it is not surprising that Adam remarks that ‘the tenor of man’s woe / Holds on the same, from woman to begin’ (*PL xi*, 632–3). But Michael replies:

From man’s effeminate slackness it begins,
. . . who should better hold his place
By wisdom, and superior gifts received. (*PL xi*, 634–6)

Women’s inclusion in history results in a series of lapses from public virtue that constitute an effeminate slackness, a masculine limpeness, even detumescence, amounting almost to castration. Like Samson, postlapsarian masculinity is endlessly struggling to maintain itself by exclusion of the feminine, a notion confirmed by Eve’s exclusion from the vision of history shared by Adam and the intractably masculine warrior angel Michael. History itself, as a site of visions and a place of writing or self-inscription, is a male terrain because it illuminates and shapes the public realm as an instrument of learning. The newly emerging discipline of history was also part of the public sphere of letters and print culture, emerging indirectly in part from the news-discourses of the Civil War period and sometimes coextensive with them. Eve is consigned to a space
where she cannot ask ‘what news?’, even of her own future; the implication is too that she has no need of the lessons in moral and political virtue drawn by Michael from the narrative for Adam’s benefit. Eve’s alternative vision is a vision of woman’s place in the reproduction of the species which will eventually lead to the birth of Christ, a privatisation of woman which confines her role to biological and marital function, and to an ancillary place in sacred but not secular narrative (PL xi, 620 ff.). For Milton, only such strenuous godly confinement can ensure that history, the state and masculinity can flourish as they should.
In the past ten years, historians have paid a great deal of attention to the representational strategies adopted by a number of early modern monarchs, including Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I. It might be possible to pause in these ongoing projects in cultural history in order to note that one of the factors linking Elizabeth and James is a certain problematic of gender: bluntly, Elizabeth was a woman, and James homosexual. Yet it was the ostensibly less problematic Charles, certainly and even piously heterosexual after the death of Buckingham, who eventually found himself facing the axe. Does this suggest that representation is not the issue? It certainly suggests that symbols are not the sole factor in monarchic legitimation.

But if we pause to look more carefully at the figure of Charles himself, we may see that he was not as unproblematically male as he may seem at first glance. In fact, Charles’s gender and even his sexuality were open to question precisely because his father’s had been. This was literally true because of Charles’s attachment to Buckingham. He began his reign in thrall to Buckingham, and a poet named Alexander Gill may have spoken for many when he wrote and asked

\begin{verbatim}
God to save
My sovreign from a Ganymede
Whose whorish breath hath power to lead
His Majesty which way it list:
O! let such lips be never kist.  
\end{verbatim}

The king ‘let me sway / His sceptre as I pleas’d’, said Buckingham in a dialogue. Telling as these representations of monarchic effeminacy are, they are also carried over on the person of the duke from the previous reign, a symbolic balance brought forward. What seems far more significant is that Charles’s efforts to distance himself politically and symbolically from his father, ably documented by Kevin Sharpe, nevertheless failed to
produce an unproblematic image of monarchic masculine virtue – or virtù. Rather, Charles’s newly regulated court, marriage and family became focal points for outbreaks of fresh anxieties. It is possible that some at least of the stresses and strains borne by Charles’s image were also a legacy of the extent to which monarchic masculinity had been called into question, by, successively, Henry VIII’s struggles over the succession, the reigns of his daughters, and the behaviour of James and his courtiers. The rise of political satire, news and a politicised literature of libertinage further conflated discourses of rule and sexuality.4 Perhaps by 1625 it was difficult not to question the monarch’s masculinity. If royal image management has been a focus for recent historians, however, we have heard far less about what made images of the monarch work, and whether, or why – and most of all how – they came to fail. Yet it is by asking these questions that we can begin to use images of Charles I to prise open larger issues of mentality and causality. In particular, it may help us to begin to think about Charles himself; how far was his own troubling stubbornness, his resistance to advice and belligerence, an attempt to create and control an image of masculinity that would, unlike his father’s, be beyond criticism? If so, the irony is that his final triumph, which could only come when he was an image and not a man, depended on a perception of him as abject to the point of deliquescence.

In considering the question of masculinity in the years of the English Civil Wars with particular reference to Charles I, we might begin with Judith Butler’s notion of a masculinity which rejects mastery, and embraces debility and ruination, an abject masculinity. This sounds subversive, yet Butler also cautions us against automatically regarding such masculinity as liberal or liberating; ‘there are ways in which even the most obvious antithesis of the dominant ideology of masculinity can sometimes be made to serve that ideology all the same’.5 The representational paradoxes which haunted the figure of Charles I are typical of such abjections; the male on his knees, open, bleeding, silenced, is not necessarily a helpful figure of gender subversion. Rather, this image of the dead and dying Charles, Charles the Martyr, is a successful attempt to resolve the terrible gender tensions and anxieties generated by Charles’s persona as monarch, and thus to restore patriarchal monarchy to an unassailable cultural position.

We might begin with the famous frontispiece to Eikon Basilike. If we allow ourselves to look at the image itself, what we see is a man down on one knee. No one ever remarks upon this, because it is so familiar; one kneels to pray, just as one kneels to a social superior; it signifies Charles’s piety and pre-emptively overturns attempts to portray him as a haughty
tyrant. Moreover, his pose replicates that of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, as he takes a Crown of Thorns in one hand, and he is surrounded by more-or-less masculine images of mighty and impervious resistance: a rock that is strong against stormy seas, and a palm tree that grows despite being held back by weights. Yet ultimately to kneel is to abase oneself. In carefully excising the image of the overmighty ruler, the print offers Charles’s position not as controlling, but as extremely, even uncomfortably abased, abject. It is a posture of surrender which offers two things to the viewer; abject identification, or autocratic supremacy, and both at once. In his celebrated essay ‘A Child is Being Beaten’, Freud pointed out that in this popular masochistic fantasy the fantasiser can identify with the child, or the one doing the beating, or both. Here, Freud might have said that a king is being beaten. We can identify with Charles’s mastery of his fate, his choice, or we can melt in the face of the pathos of his suffering, or both at once; the one guarantees the incorruptibility of the other by the excesses of femininity. What would happen if we saw the picture of the kneeling Charles not as a picture always already inscribed in a political spectrum, but as an icon of masculinity, or its lack? Leaders have psychic and social significance; their social identity is in part determined by psychic investment and vice versa. There is a subtext of anxiety about gender and about masculinity in many, perhaps most Civil War texts, and this subtextual anxiety motivates some of what to us seems strange about them.

Such anxiety arises in part from problems connected with Charles himself. The king has to be phallic, but not too phallic; that is, people want the monarch to be representationally phallic but not to outdo or take away their own phallicity. To put it another way, the paradox is that a very phallic monarch is emasculating, and so is one who is insufficiently phallic, unless a way can be found to make that male abjection into a supporting pillar of male identity. To put it crudely, no one can be phallic enough without being too phallic. Or, less statically and more narratively, the effect of these dual and opposite pressures was to create an oscillating anxiety about being overmastered that could fasten equally on a figure like Charles for being sodomitically infatuated with Buckingham or for loving his wife and begetting a long family. What might seem like appreciable signs of virility – a large family – could become signs of too much.

Charles was in particular trouble before the war because ideas of masculinity were changing, and his ideas did not seem to fit well with those changing ideas. During the period of personal rule, he sometimes seems to have felt compelled to appear decisive, even belligerent, where
mediation would have been better, thus undermining the paternal and patriarchal authority of other men. At the same time, Charles was difficult to represent as phallic. He was short, he stuttered, and his autocracy was difficult to harmonise with these inadequacies. Moreover, Charles’s own perfectly correct recognition of the need to be and to be seen as the father-phallus could also be understood as the occasion for lies and hypocrisy, as when he ordered the sculptor Herbert le Sueur to make an equestrian statue of him at least six feet in height.

Charles’s height was indeed a problem; at around 4 feet 11 inches, with severe rickets, he could hardly help suggesting deficit. It may be that Charles himself struggled with a sense of inadequacy imposed by the bullying he received as a rickets-stricken child from his father and brother. His father imposed the wearing of (probably very painful) corrective boots on the young Charles, and Henry teased that he would have to become Archbishop of Canterbury and wear a long skirt to hide his deformed legs. Charles had to be dragged away, screaming with rage. Henry’s cruel teasing suggests real deformity, and deformity of the legs was an especial blow at the Jacobean court, where good legs in good hose were the sign of the virile, lusty male. Henry was also impugning Charles’s masculinity by insisting he needed a dress to hide his legs. Sir Charles Cornwallis, who recorded the incident, called this ‘rough play and dalliance’, macho language which implicitly likened the two fighting princes to boys’ play. Nevertheless, even he thought it might account for Charles’s moroseness. It is striking in the light of later events that Charles responded to this by a plea for love from a position of extreme abjection: ‘Sweet, sweet brother’, he wrote, desperately, when he was nine, ‘I will give everything I have to you, both horses, and my books, and my pieces [guns], and my crossbow, or anything you would have. Good brother love me’, he begged. Attempts to remedy this perceived defect were not always successful. Charles was attracted to the image of himself as an armed knight, even a knight-errant; he altered the royal seal so that it showed him holding the drawn sword of knighthood; so did Briot’s design for the image on the coins issued in the 1630s. Such a medieval image was doubly phallic, linking Charles to his ancestors through the symbolic sword. A medal struck to commemorate Charles’s return to London in 1633, after the Scottish coronation, couples the image of Charles as knight with the equally phallic image of the sun bursting through the clouds and illuminating London, an image taken up and turned against him by Charles’s critics later. The overstress – ‘see, I DO have the phallus!’ – is telling. The celebrated Van Dyck portrait of a
horse with Charles is an example. The Van Dyck portrait attempts to use ideas of chivalry to recuperate Charles, to represent him as a tight armoured masculine body with no deficits, and explicitly to link him with the masculine pursuits of jousting, hunting and warfare. Iconographically, this is exactly what the portrait does, and it is a triumph, its great size and vivid chiaroscuro staging a kind of masque of chivalry. And yet the exquisite new naturalism of painting means that the lack of equivalence between the noticeably small body of the king and the accoutrements is rendered visible. Of course, this is not what Van Dyck or Charles himself would have seen as they looked at the portrait, but it does illustrate the difficulty of making a naturalistic image for monarchy, painting the body politic through a representation of the body natural. Kaja Silverman writes of a visible disjunction between the penis and the phallus in nineteenth-century decadence; as Abigail Solomon-Godeau points out in response, this crisis is a veritable and venerable topos in elite visual culture; large swords and scabbards, diminutive genitals. ‘The manifest nonequivalence of physical organ and symbolic phallus is a central problematic in the imagery of heroic masculinity.’ In Van Dyck, Charles and the horse are both phallic signifiers; yet the disparity between them might well stand in for that other disparity, between phallus and penis. The reading I offer here is a little unorthodox; the painting is generally regarded as an unproblematic triumph, largely because aesthetic is confused with political success. This illustrates aptly the difference that psychoanalysis makes.

Despite these ambiguities, Van Dyck’s picture does offer to resituate Charles as an icon, a re-presentation, in Habermas’ sense, of a masculine monarch, and also of a Renaissance monarch, one who saw visual representations and the control of visual representations as the key to social harmony and authority. Yet Charles often – though not invariably – resisted re-presentation. He made some sporadic gestures at it, but even these had an air of reluctance; his triumphal return from his Scottish coronation was cancelled, his processions in 1637 and 1639 lacked pageantry. In particular, triumphal entries into the city, an occasion when the monarch presented himself as Roman triumphator, and hence as a masculine soldier – were rare under Charles. In 1626, for example, the king asked the Mayor and aldermen of London to remove their preparations for a coronation pageant, on the grounds that it obstructed the roads. A proclamation to prevent ‘disorderly and unnecessary resort to the court’ issued on 17 May 1625 set out to keep people away: those who wished to see the king were told that ‘hee is contented to dispense with
those publike shewes of their zeale, cheerfulness, and alacritie’, that is, that the king no longer welcomed ‘poore people, who are used to come flocking into the high wayes and streetes, where his Majestie is to travell, under colour of reliefe from the Almoner’. The king went on distributing alms through the almoner, but without their appearance on the royal route. Royal progresses increasingly became hunting trips, and were understood as such by the Venetian ambassador, and Charles took steps to ensure that royal petitioners did not interrupt his hunting or get between him and the quarry. On his journey north for his Scottish coronation, ‘he will mount on horseback and pursue his journey through the parks and forests on the road, so as not to lose the pleasures of the chase’. It is also significant that few portraits of Charles were available in cheap reproductions; there were very few copies of the Van Dyck portraits, even the equestrian ones; they were signs of Charles’s withdrawal into an iconography of personal rule. This fits with his division of his household rooms:

The king observes a rule of great decorum. The nobles do not enter his apartments in confusion as heretofore, but each rank has its appointed place . . . The king has also drawn up rules for himself, dividing the day from his very early rising . . . It is said that he will set apart a day for public audience, and he does not wish anyone to be introduced to him unless sent for.

All this is usually understood in terms of royal re-presentation and iconography, but it is also possible to understand Charles as refusing some of the paternal aspects of his role, proving a distant, authoritarian father to his children-subjects. If so, he was mirroring the way he had himself been fathered, both by James as a monarch and by James as a father. But in Charles’s case, this contrasted with his carefully cultivated image as the father of a biological family, as fertile and prolific, and as one half of a happy couple, the loving father of a teeming family also duly represented by Van Dyck. And Charles’s position surrounded by his children had iconic public significance, too. If Henry VIII, and even James, had been threatened by a failure to beget, Charles was triumphant in that respect. We could see this as both a reinforcement and a mitigation of Charles’s authoritarian image. More alarmingly, though, it may be that the effect of Charles’s withdrawal into the bosom of that family, however, may have been to inaugurate, certainly to reinforce – however vaguely – some of the divisions between private and public which – as we have already seen – were to prove very significant later in the conflict. To say this is not to suggest that the Civil War could have been prevented by
more pageants and prints. It is, however, to point to the way the gender implications of Charles’s withdrawal served as the basis for opposition to him later.

One area of royal self-presentation and performance characteristically presented male monarchs in a Christ-like, even quasi-maternal role. In touching for the king’s evil, the king not only acted as a type of Christ, offering his healing body to the sick bodies of his subjects; he also nurtured them from his own body, and of course his own purse. Curative sessions were also the occasion for the distribution of largesse in the form of gold angels, understood as both curative and as a symbol of royal care for the meager sort. The ceremony thus both affirmed and dissolved the difference of rank; the king’s unique body was emphasised, but he also brought that body into apposition with the sick, polluting bodies of his subjects. Unsurprisingly, Charles was distinctly unkeen on such touching, especially in the early years of his reign. He seems to have been particularly bothered by crowds. Attempts were made to limit the numbers at touchings with tokens, but counterfeit tokens scuppered the scheme, and as a result ‘his royal presence was disturbed by their outcry’ when too few angels had been provided for the swollen crowd. Some of his complaints certainly imply distaste for the messy, unhealthy bodies of his subjects:

whereas diverse People do daily resort unto the court, under pretence of having the Evil, and whereas many of them are in truth infected with other dangerous Diseases, and are therefore altogether unfit to come into the king’s presence.

The popular reaction to this can be gauged from a letter:

I have made fortye Joynes to Whytehall for Elin but can do no good, the sicknes begins in London and the Ki. will suffer no diseased persons to come neere him, yet there were som healed, but it was such as had some noble mans letter, and it was done privayle in the garden, all the rest are sent away and apoyneted to come agayne at Mich.

The opening gap between a private, closed realm of governmental faction and corruption and a publicly available monarch who is willing to act as a benevolent father, even a benevolent mother to his subject-children, is shadowed here. Yet so unenthusiastic was Charles on public touching that various substitutes were found by the public, including seventh sons, whose magical bodies also spoke of successful continuance of a paternal line. Though Charles disapproved ardently of seventh sons touching for the king’s evil, this was not on grounds of usurpation, as Bloch suggests, but on the grounds that they were impostors, whose
‘pretended cures’ ‘abuse divers of his Majesty’s subjects’. The importance of the entire issue to ordinary people is revealed by the attempts by Royalists to use it as a part of propaganda during the conflict, as an argument for the necessity of having a monarch. Charles did make efforts to return to touching for scrofula in 1635, but this was too little, too late. We shall see that the model of the king’s body in touching for the evil was to be an important source for Royalist propagandists depicting the king’s dead body and its powers.

Another problem was Charles’s stutter, only too easily seen as a limp or lack, a lack of mastery of language, but also a kind of cutting off of words, a worrying castration. In 1644 a London woman referred to Charles as ‘a stuttering foole’ and asked, angrily, ‘is there never a Fel[t]on yet living? If I were a man, as I am a woman, I would helpe to pull him to pieces.’ However, when Marchamont Nedham apparently alluded to the king’s stutter, there was such an outcry that he was forced to retract his claims. If anything, the subject is raised more by the king’s defenders than his accusers: ‘though he hath some imperfection in his speech, yet he meanes speedily with his pen, or at leastwise he can answer all their Propositions’; ‘He has a natural imperfection in his speech; at some-times he could hardly get-out a word’; ‘Great Tully had been silenc’d among men, / Had but thy tongue been equal to thy pen.’ We can begin to understand this emphasis when we note that some elegies seem to stutter too:

’Twere all as inarticulate, and weak,  
As when those men make signes, that cannot speak.  
But where the Theme confounds us, ’tis a sort  
Of glorious merit, proudly to fall short.

In what will become a familiar move and the symbolical key to the representation of Charles, what was once Charles’s lack can be safely displaced onto his murderers. The poet stutters not out of natural infirmity, but because of their unnatural crimes. Anything that is not smooth, flowing, phallic, can be explained with reference to Charles’s enemies. The king himself is a perfect plenitude of signification. And yet such references can hardly help but point to the disturbing power of the stutter too, and hence to anxieties about Charles.

Charles’s other limitations as masculine signifier had to do with the swelling anxiety about his wife and her influence on him. This was not just an anxiety about Catholics; it was an anxiety about gender as well, for gender anxieties were in any case inscribed in anti-Catholic discourses, and anti-popery shot through with fears of sodomy, effeminacy, and loss.
of the authority of nation and head of household. In May 1640, Mrs Chickleworth met Mr Leonard and William Mayle and told them that as she has heard the Queen’s Grace went unto the communion table with the King. And the Queen asked your grace whether that she might not be of that religion the King was – yes or no? Whereupon his Grace answered her Majesty you are very well as you are, and I would wish to keep you there. And now the King goes to Mass with the Queen.

‘The king was a traitor and his crown the whore of Babylon’, said Robert Hand, elegantly conflating the feminised images of the queen and the Catholic Church into one signifier of unruly femininity. When Alice Jackson ‘saw two sheepes heads in a poll’ she exclaimed that she wished the Kinge and Prince Ruperts heads were there instead of them, and then the Kingdom would be settled, and the Queene had not a foote of land in England and the King was an evill and an unlawfull Kinge, and better to be without a Kinge than to have him Kinge.

Jackson’s stress on the queen’s real position – without a foot of land in England – marks out her political role on the basis of her property ownership, her stake in the nation. This has to do with her nationality, of course, but also her sex. This muddled statement of grievance stresses the idea that Charles’s illegitimacy comes from listening to his wife, an opinion shared by many pamphleteers. In The Great Eclipse of the Sun, Charles the Sun is overshadowed by his wife, the moon:

For the King was eclipsed by the Queen, and she perswaded him that darkness was light, and that it was better to be a papist, then a Protestant . . . and the Bishops told the king, it was true religion, to pray unto the Lady Mary, and be rul’d by his little Queen Mary . . . whereupon the King being in full conjunction with this popish Plannet, the Queen, he was totally eclipsed by her Councell, who under the Royall Curtaines perswaded him to advance the plots of the Catholickers, under the colour of maintaining the Protestant Religion. Ordinary women, can in the night time perswade their husbands to give them new Gowns or Petticoats, and make them grant their desire; and could not Catholicke Queene Mary (think ye) by her night discourses, encline the King to popery?

Here the whole point of the story is that the queen uses her female body and the king’s sexual desire to persuade him; such persuasion is private, and it is through sex that the queen makes her entry into public affairs from which she should be absent. We have already seen the characteristic anti-monarchical linkage between privacy, femininity and duplicity also implied here. Exactly the same kind of anxiety is expressed in Vox populi or the Peoples Humble Discovery, which complained of the
king’s choice of a Catholic ‘to be the consort of your Royall bed’. Similarly, the war saw the Sussex Picture scandal, a picture said to be of ‘the weaker sexe triumphing over the stronger, and by the help of a Miter, thou has seen the Scepter doing homage to the Distaffe’. It also saw the publication of *The Kings Cabinet Opened*, which I have discussed extensively above (ch. 3), the king’s letters captured at Naseby, which revealed to a horrified nation how far the king had fallen below the standards of dominance required of his sex.

Charles does seem to have made early efforts to grapple with the representational dilemmas surrounding him, or, to put it another way, to create a different kind of masculine identity. Roy Strong suggests that a fashion for melancholia influences the expression depicted so often on the king’s face. Carlton suggests that the king was really melancholy because his early life was plagued by bereavement. Either way, melancholy becomes part of the representation of Charles. As Juliana Schiesari writes, sixteenth-century melancholia is a gendered invention that represents a privileged and male speaking-position. Marsilio Ficino began the trend, arguing that those who feel under the unlucky planet of Saturn, as he had, were unusually gifted. Depression became translated into a virtue for the man of letters (which fits with all the comments on Charles’s literary abilities) and became an elite illness that afflicted men as the sign of their exceptionality: hence melancholia becomes a way of representing male creativity. At the same time, the exclusivity of Charles’s world required the negation of everything different from himself, hence a self split from the self, fleeing the social into a perpetual dialogue with his own imaginary. The sufferer bemoans the inability to suture the self or to overcome the necessity of lack. Charles may have tried to appropriate this position as a version of masculinity. If so, it could not succeed until events had helped to fuse it with an image of the king as object of pathos.

The king’s phallic power was further undermined by the imminent prospect of military defeat, evidently on the cards after Marston Moor. Renaissance writers on masculinity tended to equate court affairs and diplomacy with effeminacy and warfare with masculinity; instances abound. The king was not helped by the discourses of masculinity the war itself produced: constant references to Essex and his chivalric and military exploits, together with Royalist critiques of his impotence, and later similar encomia to Cromwell as the perfect ‘hard man’, armoured against the sensuous and effeminising corruption of the court, with fewer critiques. Such rhetorics endorsed a simple, soldierly model of masculinity with no
room for the complex and chivalric elegances of Charles’s image. Success made Cromwell look even harder, and stories about his directness of speech, plain clothing and abstemiousness furthered the image of hard masculinity. His anti-Presbyterian endorsement of plain-spoken captains made matters even worse, for many of the aspects of Charles’s image which sometimes looked effeminate were chosen because they spoke of elevated social class. Fractures in ideologies of masculinity helped to widen class divisions, too.

If the king’s representation became a problem, why on earth was a solution found in the abject, apparently more feminine image of King Charles the Martyr? For if ever there was a body of representation that offered the public a spectacle of masculine abjection and even masochism, it was the bizarre, excessive, hyperbolical elegies produced to commemorate Charles’s death. They borrowed the dispersed and dismembered body as a signifier of other things from dual sources in Jacobean tragedy and metaphysical lyric. What is doubly strange is the appropriation of that signifier of the dismembered body to redeem Charles from the dangers of effeminacy. What we have here is a subtle distinction between masculine abjection and effeminisation, with the former acting as the ideal cover for the latter.

Of course, the idea that Charles’s execution somehow saved his supporters by allowing them to represent him favourably is scarcely new. In particular, literary critics and historians have long agreed that, paradoxically, it allowed poets to show him in control. All Charles’s defects of phallicity are on display precisely so that they can be corrected. Anxiety about his masculine control and authority was expressed through nervousness about whether he would stutter in his final speech and in emphasis on his bodily control: wearing an extra shirt to stop himself trembling with cold. By contrast, the short block — and Charles’s doubts about it — emphasised fear of a loss of control: there’s an implicit reference to Charles’s height in the short block, and to his lack of fortitude in the straps placed there in case he struggled. Marvell captures best the sense of surprise that Charles somehow managed to overcome all these obstacles to masculine control: ‘He nothing common did or mean / Upon that memorable scene’, lines which gesture at the commonness and meanness they explicitly rule out. Above all, the scene was haunted by the figurative abjection and castration of the decapitated body, already inscribed in teratology and in literature. Nothing could be a more obvious symbol of chaos than that body. In particular, the links between castration and decapitation are painfully obvious. Charles’s headless trunk, oozing
blood, must have been a spectacle of gender disorder, and as such a
microcosm of political chaos.

Some of the implications of the figure of the dismembered king can be
glimpsed in a prophecy about his death. Grace Cary, a Catholic happily
converted to the true evangelical way by a vision, was also offered a
prophecy of the Civil War:

She heard hideous shreeks and outcries of the people oppressed, and captivated
by enemies: also a sound of waters, as it were, beyond Sea, accompanied with
loud and terrible roaring of waves; A voice also day and night cried, and called to
her, even to the interruption of her rest and sleep, saying, *Treason and death, Treason, Treason, death, death.* There was presented likewise to her sight an
apparition and shew of blood; and to her hearing, volleys of shot, as if many
Pistols and Muskets had been all at once discharged, which terribly frightened
her, and pierced her to the very heart, as if an arrow, or dart of death had
remained in her breast.\(^{37}\)

This is a figure of the war itself, and the war is, as always, figured in terms
of acts of violent penetration; here it is Grace’s heart that is pierced, but
this may signify the bodies of others and the body of the nation. In
keeping with its preoccupations with blood and weaponry as signifiers of
failure or success in masculine warfare, the vision continues to imagine a
Charles on whom the struggle impacts directly:

while she was at the Church serving God publickly with the Congregation, in
Sermon-time on the Lords day, there appeared plainly and evidently to her view
the perfect shape of a Kings head and face without a body, which looked very
pale and wan; it had a Crown upon it, and the Crown was all bloodie in the
circle round about.\(^{38}\)

As a Catholic convert, Grace is well placed to interpret this sign; it is
not merely proleptic of the king’s execution, but a mark of what he
already is. The body severed from the head was often a sign of marital
disorder; a ballad describing an unruly wife who sold her soul to the devil
for enough money to be fashionable and disobeyed her husband uses the
same figure (with perhaps a glance at the king’s body): ‘Her head was
from her body torne / Her lymbs about the room did ly.’\(^{39}\) Yet precisely
because it precedes the execution by several years, Cary’s prophecy lays
out conveniently the symbolic significance of this particular form of
regicide. This is Charles Stuart the Man of Blood, whose head has been
severed from his body, the nation, by his ‘cruell Queen’.\(^{40}\) Cary follows
Charles about until she can tell him her vision and the importance of
getting rid of papists and converting the queen, for it is these women that
divide the king from his masculine place of rule over his body. All that
Charles’s executioners had to do was to turn Cary’s vision into reality, or rather, to repeat and reify actions that she saw him perform in life.

Yet Royalist writers were able to turn the king’s headless body to account, to make it not the foundation of republicanism, but the foundation of a new royalism. They did this by using – albeit with difficulty and with reservations – the abject male body of the Royal Martyr. Martyrdom is of course a socially sanctioned form of masculine abjection. In particular, Christianity offers the spectacle of the crucified Christ, a figure whose passivity, wounded body, bleeding, and implicit femininity are understood as signs of good fatherhood and even motherhood. Yet Royalist writers on the whole are characterised by their evasion of the martyrological trope of the suffering body. True, martyrological suffering is partially displaced onto inner suffering, but only partially. What we do not find in accounts of Charles’s death is Foxean, gory descriptions of the martyr’s execution. And despite Laura Knoppers’ ingenious argument, we do not find the Parliamentarians engaged in Foucauldian images of the amende honorable of Charles’s execution; the woodcut normally reproduced showing Charles’s headless body bleeding profusely is of German origin. William Rainborowe’s banner did show the king’s severed head dripping blood, while a hand held out an axe. The motto was ‘the people’s safety is the highest law’. However, battle standards were often self-consciously violent and transgressive, and if anything the appearance of Charles’s head on one only illustrates the extremity of the representation. State power is not, apparently, written on this body, even though one would have thought, with Knoppers, that such an inscription was precisely the point of the event.

Foucauldian execution is a display of state power that can readily be turned into a trope of tyranny. The most famous example is Foxe: the execution of the Oxford martyrs offers the peculiar sufferings of Ridley in particular as a spectacle of disgust that turns against the state who perpetrated it. The reader’s response, ‘why should we have to suffer this?’ quickly becomes ‘why should he have to suffer this?’ Disgust allies the reader with the victim in suffering. Hence, disgust turns to rage with the perpetrator, the state (not the author). Bungled executions like Ridley’s suggest the state is bungling; efficiency suggests ruthlessness. Bungling also suggests that the state does not enjoy the support of Providence in its endeavours, hence the common idea that failed hangings denote innocence. At one level, portraying Charles as a martyr reverses the paradox of his execution; instead of manifesting state control, it manifests Charles’s control, his monarchic control, hence the importance of his demeanour,
his speech free of stutters, the restraining block that was not used. By moving deliberately, even eagerly, towards death he affirms his power. Why do people enjoy being dominated? Because they feel as though they have a choice. At a psychic level, basic disgust, sadistic pleasure become objects of horror in the subject in which they originate: sadistic pleasure and masochistic reverie are evoked in order to be sidestepped by the reflex of (self) disgust. Self-disgust becomes disgust with the other, though there is always a risk that this disgust will be turned against the dismembered corpse of the victim; this was the state’s goal. One obvious suggestion: Charles as troublingly autarchic father had to be concealed in Royalist rhetoric, and even more in Parliamentarian: that is, the guilty pleasure of killing/castrating the castrating/murderous father cannot be displayed too openly.

Yet like Royalists, Parliamentarians liked to tell stories of bloodshed, and this rhetoric of prodigious or miraculous bloodshed put into circulation images of Christological prodigy that were eagerly taken up by Royalists and used to write about Charles I’s dead body. One pamphlet described a rain of blood, blood falling from the heavens: ‘shortly after the Scots march into England in aide of our Parliament, it rained blood, and covered the church and church-yard of Bewcastle in Cumberland’.

A drinking pond for cattle filled, prodigiously, with blood in Leicestershire:

Being come unto the pond they found the colour of the water changed, for it begin to looke red, and the substance thereof, was thicker then before amazed at the novelty of this sight they departed from the place they make a relation of it to their friends. . . . and as the people came in it did increase in colour, This continued for the space of foure dayes . . . It waxed more red the second day then it did at the first, and farre more red the third day then it did of the second, and on the fourth day it grew a perfect sanguine . . . The knights the Gentlemen and the Ladies the Peasants and their families stood all close together round about it, and being overcome with the amazement of the sight there was regard unto degrees and distinctions of persons, and it seemed they learned this instruction from the Pond which they now made use of. That they were all but one blood.

Such images of a flood-tide of blood are the results of the war, and in particular of the king and his agents:

From the observation of the blood they fall into the consideration at last of the bloody times, wherein they live, and being so neere to Loughborough they grow in discourse of how much blood hath beene spilt by the Lord of Loughborough his means who being there the great Agent for the King hath robbed many housekeepers in those parts of their goods and their treasure and which is far
more deare to them many of their Childrens lives. Report in the way is made how many families hath he robbed of their father, and how many he hath left without their children.\textsuperscript{46}

The blood is a sign – not a symbol, but a divine sign – of the loss of paternal self-replication in the chaos of war. The womblike pool of blood suggests menstruation, abortion, lochia; it suggests the power of the womb to destroy patrilinearity. This pool of blood is the antithesis of the children whose death it signifies. Nehemiah Wallington claimed that one Royalist banner showed a Protestant’s head with the ears cut off and the head itself cut and mangled.\textsuperscript{47} These fragmented, even castrated images inspired acts of phallic assertion. Such images were flagrant incitements to the perpetual re-enactment of the same crimes they depicted, as their appearance on military banners suggest. We have already seen how military models of masculinity enforce repeated acts of violence by a psychic mechanism to help subjects avoid a kind of maternal \textit{abysme}. In the same way, Charles’s role as ‘the man of blood’ became a spur to rendering him bloody. Charles was for Parliamentarians the Man of Blood, the murderer of the innocent, the father-tyrant whose crimes demanded vengeance. Blood will have blood. This strand of Parliamentarian imagery may also have antecedents in the godly pamphlets of the Jacobean and Caroline periods, with their stress on blood, murder and divine retribution.\textsuperscript{48} \textit{The Great Eclipse of the Sun} is illustrated with a woodcut showing a scene scattered with dismembered corpses; one lacks a foot, one is minus a head. At the top right is a Cavalier figure, possibly Charles himself, holding a sword. The text reads ‘Thy subjects’ blood, with fire and sword / Cries Vengeance, Lord.’ ‘Have not your eyes seen it, and your Eares heard the Groanes of the Wounded, gasping for Life? Is all this nothing in your Eyes?’ implored one petition.\textsuperscript{49} As the war continued and the death toll mounted, attitudes hardened: the army later said that ‘we were then powerfully convinced that the Lord’s purpose was to deal with the late King as a man of blood’. Later this became a key point of his trial:

I do humbly demand and pray the justice of this high court, and yet not I, but the innocent blood that hath been shed in the three kingdoms, demands justice against him . . . This blood hath long cried, How long, Parliament, how long, army, will ye forbear to avenge our blood?\textsuperscript{50}

The rhetoric of murder pamphlets is visible in the final sentence, where the blood spilt in the wars cries for vengeance. The blood signifies a loss of patriarchal control over individuals and nations, and a need for its reassertion. It is a plea \textit{for}, not \textit{to}, a national father.
Royalists were more-or-less forced to counter by pointing to Charles’s unmasculineness and hence his freedom from those characteristics thought to make for hot blood and violence: his abstemiousness, moderation in food and drink and sweet temper:

his owne uncruell, and un-Tyrant spirit, and disposition, will Conquer him; So farre from thirst of Bloud, and severity of vengeance, that Justice may rather seeme to complain of being cloyed with so great a Sweetnesse.51

So Royalists were obliged to avoid the idea of flowing blood because it was already imbued with justification for Charles’s death as an appropriate end for the Man of Blood. However, matters are complicated: Charles as Man of Blood is both a tyrannical father too phallic and a man dipped in filth. Although blood is not always a pollutant, the bloody tyrant is seen as one. Polluting blood is feminine and feminising; not merely a signifier of castration, but a sign of attachment to the maternal body. All newborn babies are covered in blood, covered in the filth of femininity. It is the task of masculinity to break free of this womb-filth, yet Charles in many respects still seemed to be in thrall to it. With so many apparent discursive motivations for engaging in graphic description, why is there such a silence around Charles’s dead body and the moment and means of his death? For that reason, one would imagine, Royalists could not allow themselves the luxury of an image of Charles’s decapitated body covered in his blood.

Yet Royalists sometimes seemed to be courting this very image, even before Charles’s death, albeit in a displaced fashion. The king’s banner, first unfurled at Nottingham, bore the royal arms quartered by a bloody hand pointing to the crown above and with the motto ‘Give Caesar his due’, while scarlet was the king’s chosen colour, prompting apocalyptic Parliamentarian visions of the heavens dyed red.52 Royalist flirtation with castration and decapitation continued with the body of Charles; the representational *aporia* that was Charles’s body became a way of registering shock at regicide. The refusal to look at the spectacle became a figure for loyalty rather than inability to register castration. And, above all – and this is the point on which I want to dwell – Royalists found ways to turn the king’s dead body into a figure that was abject indeed, even feminine, but which somehow evaded the terror of the castration wound itself. This was done largely through displacement of the spectacle of the abject body of the king into images of his blood, blood which carries the power and significance of the royal body and when spilt, displays that significance. Yet this in turn led to abject figures
of deliquescence – seductive, formless, but also dangerously close to decadence. Blood is key to all these images, as are tears. Charles the Martyr is a largely liquid figure.

In elegies for Charles, images of blood are characteristically wildly hyperbolical:

Where am I hurried? What sanguinous place
Is this I breathe in, garnished with disgrace?
Why? What’s the reason that my eyes behold
These waves of blood? Does the Red Sea infold
My shivering body? Oh what stormy weather
Was that which violently tost me hither?
Where am I now? What rubicundious light
Is this, that bloudies my amazed sight?
What reformations this thats newly bled,
And turns my white into so deep a red?
. . . I see
Those lofty structures where mild majesty
Did once reside; abounding with a flood
That swells (and almost moates them round) with blood.53

Charles himself is a puddle of gore; London and the spectator melt into blood; and this melting is a kind of apocalypse.54 Elsewhere the distinctiveness of Charles’s royal blood is stressed, in for instance ‘The Princely Pellican’: ‘those pure-crimson streamlings which were shed / On the sable stage, where he resigned his head’.55 But the distinctive purity of Charles’s blood cannot altogether individuate the puddles, lakes, waves and oceans of gore which chaotically overwhelm the state and the onlooker in these elegies. The melting monarch cannot help but gesture at the opened, castrated body which the poem evades.

Even though we know that nonphallic masculinity does not cause any trouble to patriarchy, or particularly subvert it, that it can exist perfectly well in the framework of male homosocial bonding, without troubling it at all, the masochistic reverie of these elegies is bound to be troubling. I say masochistic because the elegies partake of a disguised sadistic pleasure in death, an incorporation of viewing subject into spectacle of blood, and above all a loss of boundaries and organisation of the self in spectacle. The male subject renegotiates his relations to an event by shifting from a passive to an active position; repeating something is mastering it. The huge plethora of deliquescent elegies following Charles’s death suggest precisely this concept of mastery; all of them pit poetic mastery against masochistic spectacle. Yet Freud insists on the compulsive nature of this
repetition, a characterisation which runs directly counter to the notion of mastery. He adds that

the most moving picture of a fate such as this is given by Tasso in his romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Its hero Tancred unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight. After her burial he makes his way into a strange magic forest . . . He slashes with his sword at a tall tree, but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda . . . is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again.\(^{56}\)

This repetition–compulsion characterises elegy; its mourning figures as a desire to relive (sadistically, pornotopically, repeatedly) the moment of bereavement, the moment of loss. To be trapped in such repetition is to be melancholic. Melancholia for Kristeva is the result of disavowing the primary separation from the mother. This refusal of loss gives rise to an impossible mourning. The Kristevan melancholic does not have the words to symbolise his loss, but only the broken rhythms and spasmodic intonations of the semiotic, analogous perhaps to the stutters of Charles and his elegists.\(^{57}\) Yet flooding blood and tears, dissolution, imply a return to the originary unity of mother and child, a return to those feminine bodies without secure boundaries that are normally abjected, a regressive re-enactment and fetishisation of tears and blood as liquid signs of the maternal.

Though tears and pathos might seem less uncomfortable images of melting or dissolution than blood, tears are nevertheless problematically feminised. Tears and the pathos that evoked them were often gendered feminine: Vaughan writes that ‘fair manhood hath a female eye’.\(^{58}\) Marvell’s ‘Elegy Upon Lord Francis Villiers’ is evidently arguing counter-intuitively when it associates crying with masculinity: ‘The purer fountaines from the Rocks more steep / Destill and stony valour best doth weep.’ Marvell adds that ‘Besides Revenge if often quencht in teares, / Hardens like Steele and daily keener weares.’\(^{59}\) For Charles’s opponents, then, dissolving into tears was a sign of weakness. Central to Catholic martyrology – though, as Alison Shell writes in an inspired phrase, inclined to ‘substantial outward seepage’ into non-Catholic rhetoric – the image of the contemplative lost in tears was above all a potent image of conversion, and thus especially appropriate for a nation which had been false to its sovereign, newly confronted by his image. The rhetoric of dissolution into tears was applied especially to the spectacle of the Passion, so its deployment in elegies for Charles subtly reinforced the link between king and Christ developed throughout the elegiac tradition.\(^{60}\) All these literary and rational considerations do not obviate the
gender valency of the images of liquefaction, however; indeed, Royalists
continued to evoke it precisely because for them the gender disorder
presented by the image of a river of tears was a sign of the enormous
atrociousity of regicide. Dissolution into tears, like rivers of blood, is a sign of
the loss of social order and cohesion; ‘did not the dolefull Bells / Dissolve,
when as they told his sad farewells’, enquires one elegy, drawing together
dissolution and silence, while another asks

    Could I command all eyes, I’d have them make
    (As a memorall for great Charles his sake)
    A sea of teares, that after ages may
    Lament to see, but not lament to say
    He dy’d without a teare; and it should be
    Call’d the salt sea of flowing loyaltie.

The same poem has Charles hyperbolically forced to swim towards his
own funeral in the tears of his subjects, like Alice in Wonderland.
Charles’s death provokes such tears that heaven itself is drained dry:

This Day it did not rain at all, yet it was a very wet day in several places in and
about the City of London, by reason of the abundance of affliction that fell from
many eyes for the Death of the King.

Similarly, another elegy imagines the very balls of the eyes, the very power
to look, dissolving into moisture: ‘Tempests of sighs and groans, and
flowing eyes, / Whose yeelding balls dissolve to Delugies.’ The eyes are
central to spectacle; here, the sight of Charles’s bleeding body is literally
occluded, but as that happens, the spectator’s own body emulates the
king’s castration.

The image of the Flood was another invocation of dissolution as
apocalypse, revelling in the loss of all that constitutes masculinity: hard-
ness, autonomy, unity. The spectator is naturally imbricated in the
general disaster:

    Were not my faith boy’d up by sacred bloud,
    It might be drown’d in this prodigious floud; . . .
    So while my faith floats on that bloudie wood,
    My reasons cast away in this red flood
    Which ne’re oerflows us all; Those shores past . . .
    No wonder then if all good eyes look red
    Washing their Loyall hearts from bloud so shed;
    The which deserves, each pore should turn an eye,
    To weep out, even a bloody Agony.
The image of Charles’s death as provoker of a universal cataclysm was popular: ‘Nothing could appease but blood / Death took her king, and left a flood.’ Images of flooding tears and streaming blood naturally flow together. Another elegist makes the connection between the flood and the bleeding castrated body apparent:

Or bound the wanderings of the floating blood?
And to his purple channell charm his flood?
Can you a gasping hearts falt heat repair,
And into breath coyne the unfashioned ayer?
Can you unweave the nerves, then twist their thred
And to th’unravelled corps re-fit the head?

Or, as another elegist puts it:

Does his royall bloud,
Which th’earthe late drunk in so profuse a flood
Not shoot through her affrighted wombe, and make
All her convulsed Arteries to shake
So long, till all those Hinges that sustain,
Like Nerves, the frame of Nature shrink again
Into a shuffled chaos? Does the Sun
Not suck it from its liquid mansion
And ‘still it into vaprous clouds? which may
Themselves in bearded meteors display,
Whose shaggy and disheveled Beames may bee,
The tapers at this black solemnitie?

Both these elegies use the figure of the disordered, slaughtered body as an image of powerlessness, but the first adroitly transfers the powerlessness from Charles to his murderers; they may have been able to kill him, but they are not able to revive him. As such, the image of the broken body of the king ceases to be an emblem of the power of the fledgling republic, and becomes a sign of its overmightiness, its transgression of the limits set for men by God. In this way, the prodigiousness of the dissolution into blood and tears unleashed by the fallen body of the king becomes a sign of divine wrath and also of *republican* emasculation. Similarly, the second of these examples illustrates the way in which ‘th’ fairest body that’s beheaded’ is not Charles, but the state. Here, the discourse of the prodigy becomes an inventive way of telling the story of a beheaded body not as an offputting singularity, but as a national cataclysm. As such, blame can again be displaced onto Parliamentarians.
The spectator’s implication in such moments continues to seem problematic:

The blow struck Britain blind, each well-set Limbe
By dislocation was lop’t off in HIM
And though shee yet live’s, she lives but to condole
Three Bleeding Bodies left without a Soul.\textsuperscript{68}

This cluster of castration images seems to displace Charles’s dismemberment onto the spectators; sadism becomes masochism, as it does in the melancholic images of floods and deluges. Similarly, Richard Lovelace’s ‘A Mock-Song’ unites the images of dissolution and the severing of limbs:

\begin{verbatim}
All the stars dissolved to a jelly;
Now the thighs of the crown
And the arms are lopped down,
And the body is all but a belly.\textsuperscript{69}
\end{verbatim}

Worse still, the onlooker sometimes becomes the object of a kind of sadistic homoerotic ravishment by the state that has created the spectacle of Charles’s death:

\begin{verbatim}
My Heart is full of Arrows shot of late
From the stiff Bow of a commanding State,
Each wound is mortall, yet in spight of pain
Ile pluck them out and shoot them back againe.\textsuperscript{70}
\end{verbatim}

Such aggressive, sadistic eroticism implicitly eroticises Charles too, and the royal body of masochism does readily become the royal body of sexual desirability.\textsuperscript{71} One rather astounding dream-vision elegy makes this eroticisation apparent:

\begin{verbatim}
'Tis true, I dreamed methoughts my watchful eys
Observed a king, and then a sacrifice;
And ravish’d with that majesty and grace
I saw united in his modest face
I ran to kisse his hand, but with a fall
I wak’d, and lost both King and kisse and all . . .
I was enrag’d to think that I should misse
(Being so near his hand) so sweet a kisse . . .
My soul was ravish’d, and the private dart
Of new-bred love, struck pity in my heart.
I could not hold, but silently bequeath
Some drops unto the ground, my soul did cleave
\end{verbatim}
Unto his lips, for every word he spoke
    Was ponderous, and would have easily broke
Th’obdurest heart.  

Here the sadomasochism underlying the cult of Charles the Martyr forms an alliance with the abject male of Petrarchan love poetry. As Catherine Bates has shown, the courtly sonneteer is not a man in control, but a man constantly on his knees in front of an icon he cannot manage. Here, both Charles and the speaker are abject in the face of the cruelty (Petrarchan word) of the executioners. Ineluctably, this invests the executioners – the Parliamentarians – with a kind of masculine superiority. Inevitably, too, the Royalist authors are transgressing in making the father-figure of Charles an object of fairly explicit desire.

But the abject masculinity of Charles and his mourner is not subversive of masculinity. Rather, the unnaturalness of the postures of Charles and his mourner are the outcome of the unnatural behaviour of his killers. The fact that Charles’s abjection is now foisted on him by oppression rather than an outcome of his own choices vindicates his critics, and allowed Royalists to celebrate and enjoy his abjection and their own. The abject, eroticised Charles was a far more powerfully seductive image than the merely defective Charles of the pre-1649 panegyrics, precisely because he was a legitimate outlet for desires that could not normally be revealed.

By contrast, republicans could sometimes manage the feat of transforming the signifier of Charles’s head into an image from classical myth. In classical stories, states are often inaugurated on the bodies of dismembered corpses, male and female and monstrous. The notion of public sacrifice as a way of renewing the polity was not lost on republicans either. In a few hands, the image of Charles I’s blood and his severed head became signs of the masculinity that rises from a kind of uterine chaos of blood and abjection. Thomas May’s ghost of Lucan drinks sacrificial blood to renew republican discourse, republican poetry:

Lucan, drink this bloud.
    No other Nectar Phoebus give thee now;
Nor can the Fates a second life bestow;
    A second voice by this charm’d cup they may,
To give some progress to that stately Lay
    Thou left’st unfinished. End it not until
The Senates swords the life of Caesar spil;
    That he, whose conquests gave dire Nero Reign,
May as a sacrifice to thee be slain.
This rather wholehearted endorsement of the idea of regicide as a necessary sacrifice is not, however, found abundantly elsewhere, and where there is a hint of such an idea, it is characteristically hedged about with cautions. In part these are an effort to avoid an inadvertent appeal to the pathos constantly evoked by Royalist propaganda, and also to evade the troubling spectacles of parricide and castration that could with perilous ease be evoked. Marvell evokes a founding and liberating act of regicide in the foundation of the Capitol:

So when they did design
The Capitols first Line,
A bleeding Head where they begun,
Did fright the Architects to run;
And yet in that the State
Foresaw it’s happy Fate.  

An alternative image of a bleeding head, and one put into circulation in the iconography of the Italian Renaissance republics, was the image of Judith, the state, cutting off the head of Holofernes, and thus freeing her people. The None-Such Charles, for instance, portrays Charles’s bleeding head as that of Holofernes: ‘this Blow (like unto that which by the hand of a woman struck Holophernes his head from off his Shoulders)’. This image also seemed to justify the parricidal violence of the act by reference to Biblical precedent for the removal of tyrants. Nevertheless, it was noticeable that the fatal blow had been struck by a woman, and perhaps the failure of this image to proliferate might signify a degree of Parliamentary discomfort about that. Just as the Florentines had felt more comfortable with David than with Judith, so the English republic did not seem at home with an image of itself as a murderous woman, an image so associated with masculine discomforts that it could not be repaired.

Nevertheless, powerful though it was, the image of an abject royal body was so problematic that some – republican and Royalist alike – preferred to displace representations of Charles into something else. This proved an unreliable way of evading the problems of masculinity, however. Instead, exactly the same anxieties about too much hardness or too little surfaced in representations of the prodigies which signified Charles’s execution. It was as if Charles made it evident to everyone that the same issues might also extend to the representation of God. Certainly, such prodigies were in the first instance a way of linking Charles with Christ, and so urgent was the need to do this with Heaven’s assent that very minor events were scoured for symbolic significance:
When our Saviour suffered, there were terrible signs and wonders and darknesse over all the Land: So during the time of our Soveraigns Martyrdom, ther wer strange signs seen in the sky, in divers places of the kingdom; and it was thought very prodigious, the Ducks forsook their Pond at Saint Jameses, and came as far as Whitehall, fluttering about the Scaffold.  

To say the least, this sounds desperate. More convincingly, another pamphlet echoes more precisely the events surrounding Christ’s death as described in Matthew’s gospel:

the King came to the Fatal Block, and lay down, and then at that moment a Dark thick cloud covered the face of the Sun, which for a time so continued, that a Gentlewoman standing by me to behold this Dreadful Tragedy, cryed out, Look, look sir, the sun is ashamed and hides his face.

This Christological omen is also a sign of masculinity eclipsed; the king dies, and as he does so his masculine symbol, one of those he chose and actively promoted, the sun, is blotted out by darkness. The gloss given the event by the bystander, however, is slightly more problematic. In this ‘Dreadfull Tragedy’, there is a recollection of another death on another stage; at the end of Romeo and Juliet the epilogue tells us that ‘the Sun for sorrow will not show his head’. The image of Charles as a Romeo, dying of despairing love, is not far from the one the Royalists were trying to promote. Nevertheless, the image of the eclipse could easily become psychically problematic because it seemed to imply, as did the bleeding body of the king, that masculinity had been permanently vanquished. The image of the eclipsed sun was, after all, the very one that had been used by Charles’s opponents to describe his wife’s domination of him. Eclipse made Charles’s masculine authority powerless. Such anxieties are visible, and are visibly met with further brandishings of a renewed masculinity, in other accounts of terrible omens:

On the said day, the Woman sitting in the door with a little Girl in her arms, she perceived the sun to shine exceeding red, and casting her eys upwards, she beheld a dark body over the sun, aboutt the bignes of a half moon, and in a short space, the said body divided into several parts, seeming numberless to her view, about the bigness of small Pewter dishes, which came swiftly towards her, and immediately the court about the house seemed to be filled with armed hands and gantlets, with swords; glittering and fighting (in their imagination) with another as great an Army, and it seemed to their view to be in the ayr above them . . . beheld infinite of Horses legs and feet trampling, and great canons and Ordnance on the other side of the House reared up together . . . these birds were of sable with red, or sanguine colour but the Men, Horse, Sword and canons all like fire.
Here the *aporia* of eclipse is rapidly transformed into the panoply of battle, which of course in turn slides into ominous images of war, blood and dismemberment. This pamphlet is godly and perhaps anti-monarchist, but it is still grappling with the same images that perplexed Charles’s propagandists. Weapons in the sky were a frequent sight:

There was a Pillar of Cloud obscure to ascend from the earth, with the hilts of a great sword in the bottome of it, which Cloud fashioned it self into the forme of a sharp steeple, which was encountred by a pike or Sphear coming down point blanck from heaven, and threatened by another Lance or Pike, with very sharp points descending out of the Skye, standing ready to interpose.  

The sky is positively bristling with exactly the menacing father-phallicity threatened by Charles and subsequently lost by him. These phalluses are not benign, but signs of forthcoming excesses of masculinity, the excesses of war, and like the portentous apparitions of the dead seen around Edgehill, they are testimony to its unnaturalness. Another way to represent the dead body of Charles through the discourses of Christology and prodigy was through its miracles. In miracles, the power of the body of the saint extends itself from the immediate locale of that body into other bodies, curing or wounding them. In such images, the spreading blood of the martyr’s corpse becomes not a sign of feminine abjection, but a way of understanding feminine abjection as unimaginable might, whether relayed through the power of God or indigenous to the body of the suffering martyr.

Even before Charles had been condemned to death, his supporters were busily investing his body with extraordinary apotropaic powers; a miracle story of a man who said the king deserved to die manifests the astounding phallic power of the king and the God who defends him:

One White . . . began an invective, and bitterly rayled against His Sacred Majesty, using many vile and reproachful speeches against him . . . that hanging was too good for the King, and that if he were buried alive, it were a Death good enough for him; and added rather then it should be undone, he would be ready to doe that himselfe; . . . which words were scarcely out of his mouth, when the wagon . . . is suddainely overturned, and this blasphemos Wretch white, killed one night, without leave of one words speech.

This death is as significant a tribute to Charles’s continuing phallic power as can be imagined, with heaven standing in for central government in censoring tongues that are now allowed to wag freely. Similarly, a sticky end comes to some soldiers who act out the king’s trial:
a company of young Sparks had consulted to act a Tragedy of the Tryall of the late King of England, and putting the same into execution, Commissioners were appointed, a high court of Justice called, and the several Offices thereunto nominated, and having made choice of a Soldier to represent the Kings person, he was accordingly brought to the Bar, where he was impeached of high Treason, &c, and sentence denounced, to have his head separated from his body. The playacting becomes real when the man blasphemously impersonating the king is really beheaded; here again we see the idea of the iterability of castration, the endless, game-like repetition of castration as itself a displacement of the troubling spectacle it presents. After Charles’s execution, the effusion of his blood spread the influence of his body among those who no longer had access to it:

It hapned by Gods appointment, that one master John Draper by profession, hearing of the misery that mris Baylies daughter was in, he having a Handkercher about him which had been dipped in the Kings blood on the day that he was beheaded. This Mr Lane gave her a piece of the same Handker which the Mayd tooke, and applied to her sores, and wiping her eyes with the bloody side of the Handkercher, hath through Heavens providence recovered her eyesight, and is become lusty and strong.

Both reminders of his absence and signs of his continuing presence, relics that preserve Charles’s blood circulate his body more freely among the people than he would have allowed in his lifetime, undoing the image of him as aloofly consigned to a feminised privacy.

And now beloved Christians, let us consider what a precious Jewell we lost, when we parted from our Kings life; . . . But it fared better with such poor distressed souls while the King lived, for he was so gracious, that when there were a numberlesse company of poore distressed people, he would appoint them a time to give them a visit, and be as good as his word; and when his patients came into his presence, He scorned not to toucht the poorest creatures sores, and handle their wounds to does them good, while the corruption of their diseases ranne upon his Princely fingers, and by vertue of the same they had their perfect cure.

Charles’s blood, however feminine, has the very public masculine potency which some found lacking in the image of his living body. Dead, his dispersed body may seem problematically abject, but it can also be manipulated to behave in ways that the living Charles would never have accepted. It can, in other words, be reduced to a simple and manipulable signifier, with no awkward monarchical signified attached. Of course nothing could be more effeminate than a king who would take orders from his supporters, which may even have been what Charles
thought when he consistently refused their advice, but this feminised puddle of gore is nevertheless a more satisfactory image to hang a dream of masculinity upon than was the man concerned with his private persona. Charles’s dissolution into blood and suffering offered Royalists a way out of the representational dilemma posed by the king when alive; executed, dead, he became a persuasive and even seductive figure of male abjection that could coexist happily with the male identity of the *paterfamilias* without undermining it by too much authority or too little phallicity.

Rather, the Royalist *Cavalier* image – drinking, fighting, screwing – was underpinned in its machismo by the abject self-denial of Charles. They flowed with drink; he flowed with blood. They fought battles and duels; he refused to struggle. They were amorous; he was an object of desire that could never be reached, but only represented. The figures of Charles and Cavalier were related, but comfortably, cosily opposite. Sanctified by the abject, filthy blood of Charles the Martyr, the Royalists could refashion their own masculinity in a form which was to become a template for Charles’s heir. Yet this image, too, had its ambivalences and anxieties, ambivalences which carried over into the Restoration, when the Cavalier was transmuted into the libertine.85

The difficulties generated are perhaps most visible in ancillary figures. The younger royals, as we should perhaps call them today, were also the focus of ideas about the masculine; arguably, some provided something like competing alternative practices of masculinity. In particular, Prince Rupert prefigured and to some extent dictated the form taken by the Cavaliers. Far more than Charles, he presented exactly the straightforwardly chivalric image of aristocratic masculinity – mounted, chivalrous and fully armed – that Charles had sought to embody and circulate before and during the war through the representations of himself as a knight with drawn sword. John Cleveland’s poem to him wittily takes Parliamentarian suspicions that Rupert is a witch and turns them into solid proof of his masculinity:

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But you’re enchanted Sir, you’re doubly free
From the great Guns and squibbling Poetrie:
Whom neither Bilbo nor invention pieces
Proof even ’gainst the Artillerie of Verses.
Strange! that the Muses cannot wound your Maile;
If not their Art yet let their Sex prevaile. 86
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Rupert is impervious to gunfire, but also to flattery, that great effeminiser of leaders. His one area of susceptibility is his gallantry to the ladies
Here Cleveland reverses the associations between Turks and subjects of tyrants; now the state is unacceptably decadent and Oriental because its chief general actually has a dysfunctional penis, not because of any metaphorical logic of effeminisation by tyranny. For Cleveland, what was otherwise merely metaphoric impotency in war becomes suddenly and comically literal, thanks to Essex’s personal history. What is truly startling, however, is Cleveland’s image of Charles I as the successful rapist of the feminine nation. It would be an understatement to call this a high-risk figure of a monarch already seen as tyrannical. Cleveland eschews, bluntly and even cantankerously, the preferred Royalist image of Charles’s masculinity as expressed through his kindly paternal care for his family and the nation, and evades the chivalric model of Charles as knight, too. Once the state has been described as a needy woman, a woman who needs a man who is fully functional, the figure of the state as rape victim cannot help but evoke the image of Tarquinus Superbus, ravisher of Lucretia, and the demise of the kings of Rome; Susan Wiseman has recently argued that this was an image which became a central part of the republican political imaginary, a way to think about tyranny and subjection.

For Charles’s chosen self-image, there is certainly such a thing as restoring too much masculinity. But for Cleveland is there? Is Cleveland actually saying, without a trace of discomfort, that what England needs is a good seeing-to? That its rebellious, disorderly behaviour is merely greensick lust run riot? If so, this is a refiguration of the gender of the

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**Charles I**

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- here Cleveland is one of the Royalists labouring to represent romantic attachments as heroic rather than unmasculine – and even there he is actually again impervious. Yet, as is characteristic of Royalist writing on masculinity, Rupert’s hard body almost at once melts into a posture of liquefying Petrarchan abjection: ‘every arrow / Had launc’d your noble breast, and drunk the marrow’ (ll. 37–8). The vampiric, feminine arrows, who steal Rupert’s strength, are also menacingly phallic, and suddenly his posture of sexual aggression threatens to become a weakening feminine subjection to lust. Then the poem makes another quick turn; Rupert is contrasted with Essex’s impotence, and this coincides with a fascinating, rather dangerous image of Charles:

Impotent Essex! is it not a shame
Our Commonwealth, like to a Turkish Dame,
Should have an Eunuch-Guardian? may she bee
Ravish’d by Charles, rather then sav’d by thee. (ll. 45–9)

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participants so spectacular, so excessive that it looks like desperation; in order to represent Charles’s masculinity, Cleveland apparently has to invest in an image of him as crude sexual controller of the nation. Abruptly, even violently, the nation, which includes Charles’s Parliamentary opponents, are gendered feminine, and femininity here is simply sexual need. There is a strong overlap between the enormity of this move and the numerous Royalist mock-petitions which depict the wives of Parliamentarian soldiers as desperate for the Cavaliers to return and satisfy their sexual needs; both invoke the image of the nation as a woman in need of mastery and masculine sexuality, unruly without it. This is not just a defence of absolutism, but a defence of tyranny exerted through the raw male power of the phallus, understood as necessary to keep women and nations in line. Stop moaning, Lucretia; that was what you needed all along.

Is Cleveland trying to tell Charles something, as well as the republicans? It seems so, once Cleveland has evoked his muse and her longing womb’s dissatisfaction with the asexual Parliamentarians and her passion for a good lusty Cavalier like Rupert:

But why, my Muse, like a Green-sicknesse-Girle,
Feeds’t thou on coales and dirt? A Gelding-Earle
Gives no more relish to thy Female Palat,
Then to that Asse did once the Thistle-Sallat
Then quit the barren Theme; and all at once
Thou and thy sisters like bright Amazons,
Give Rupert an alarum, Rupert! (ll. 72–8)

This is bullying metaphysical gendering, but it is also a conscious attempt to endow the Royalist cause, through Rupert, with masculine sexual power, and to drop a hint to Charles about how to manage his affairs. So masculine is Rupert that even cannons are hopelessly feminised when he confronts them:

He gags their guns, defeats their dire intent
The Cannons does but lisp and complement.
Sure Jove descended in a leaden shower
To get his Perseus; hence the fatall power
Of shot is strangled; bullets thus allied,
Feare to commit an act of Parricide. (ll. 159–64)

Here cannons cease to be ominous phallic menaces and become the feminised monsters which the true hero can defeat. What is buried in
this is the figure of Medusa, again; the castrating power of the phallus will be conquered by Rupert, son of Jove, through the force of a masculine patrilinearity that cannot be altered. This Rupert comes honestly by his male identity. Yet that identity can easily tip over into a sexual excess that can be understood as thraldom to feminine lusts.

An alternative masculine image for Royalists is implicit in the almost ceaseless veneration of Rupert’s sexual prowess, and Charles’s too, in Cleveland’s somewhat singular case. The controlled melancholic body of Charles, opened and dissolved by death, is displaced by a grotesque alternative whose masculinity is signified not in its control but in its ability to dispense with control. A possible male body is Falstaffian rather than heroic; it is above all open, open to sexual and gustatory pleasure, and hence, paradoxically like the female body. This kind of body, a ‘literary fat lady’, as Patricia Parker has called it, is subject to deferral, and is perhaps its result; and it comes into its own in figurations of loyal Royalists waiting, waiting endlessly for the Restoration, for the king to come into his own again.

Examples abound, but drinking songs, themselves a classical genre of licensed excess where sexual and alcoholic consumption become robust assertions of masculine privilege, are an arena for such figurations. ‘Lord! What is man, and sober?’ opines Richard Lovelace, in a poem that celebrates the joys of mingled drunkenness and sex. In his ‘The Vintage to the Dungeon’, drinking becomes a way of defying his captors:

Live then Prisn’ers uncontroil’d;
Drinke oth’ strong, the Rich, the Old,
Till wine too hath your wits in hold;
Then if still your Jollitie,
And throats are free
Tryumph in your Bonds and Paines
And daunce to th’ Musick of your Chaines.

Here the unbounded body of the drunkard or rake becomes a subversive riposte to the straitening definitions of prison. This idea is developed further and applied, not to prison, but to defeat, in the poems of Alexander Brome. Brome recycles exactly the tropes used for Rupert by Cleveland, but in a context of passive waiting rather than active military campaigning. He constantly writes love poems about the resistance of the mailed breast to love, most tellingly when he contrasts adult manhood with the beardless effeminacy of Cupid himself:
For Brome, as for Cleveland, male sexuality can no longer be expressed in terms of liquid abjection before the mistress; it must be assertive, bluntly sexual. But on the other hand, the male body can find a deliquescent posture of abjection elsewhere:

Since we have no king, let the goblets be crown’d,
Our Monarchy thus we’l recover;
While the pottles are weeping, we’l drench our sad souls
In big-bellied bowles
Our sorrows in sack shall lie steeping,
And we’l drink till our eyes do run over.
And prove it by reason
That it can be no treason
To drink and to sing.

This image of the Jolly Drinking Cavalier, once a staple of 1666-and-all-that history, is still so familiar that its peculiarities have attracted little attention. The speaker evokes sensuous indulgence in drink as a subversive form of resistance to the godly regime, a position derived precisely from godly opposition to excess in drinking as a sign of effeminate indulgence. Descriptions of hopelessly drunken courtiers, such as Harington’s famous depiction of the chaos of a Jacobean court masque in which all the participants were too drunk to perform, are signifiers of the indulgence and corruption of the courtier, the effeminate antithesis of the godly magistrate or elector. Drink also signifies consumption as opposed to production, in opposition to the godly head of the household who works to make his property and the state grow. The drunkard, by contrast, is profligate, claiming an hereditary privilege to waste and excess which is the antithesis of the republican ideal of the male citizen.

The very deliquescence of the drunkard, who loses masculine control over his body and its functions, are signs of effeminacy, and Brome courts this image of a body run out of control in the implicit linkage between the ‘big-bellied bowles’ from which the Cavaliers drink and their own big bellies, full of liquid. In taking up the role of the drunkard, Cavaliers like Brome were deliberately ignoring the association between bodily regulation and masculinity which the godly had tried to establish. Just
as Cleveland figures Charles I as a rapist, so Brome seems to say that masculine identity and the recovery of a masculine state require an authoritative, unflinching claim to bodily excess, an excess demonstrated, paradoxically, in images of flow – tears, bowls running over, drenched souls.

And yet there is an uncanny parallelism between the body of the drunken Cavalier, weeping at every pore with liquid excess, and the body of Charles the Martyr, flowing with sacred, spilled blood. Charles’s death can be given masculine meaning by its recapitulation and imitation in scenes of excessive drinking which make his subjects’ bodies flow with tears. The meaning given to it is not, of course, Christ-like abjection, but choice: Charles chose to flow with blood, or was at least resigned to it, just as his followers exercise a right to bodily excess. It is this right to have a demanding body which becomes the leitmotif of Royalist masculinity, and of its restoration too. Like the sexuality of Charles I (as understood by Cleveland at any rate), Rupert and the Cavaliers, Charles II’s sensuous indulgences, his priapic involvement with one mistress after another, could be understood as simply and unproblematically phallic, signs of masculine authority, or as an effeminate slither into luxury and lust, a capitulation to the feminine.⁹⁴ (Depressingly, perhaps, the same polarity could be observed in commentaries on Bill Clinton’s sexual activities.) In particular, Charles II’s evident submission to his mistress Barbara Villiers, Lady Castlemaine, and his reputed sexual failures with her could spread a kind of contempt for royal power, though Turner also suggests that this might have been consolatory for men who were also having trouble.⁹⁵ On the other hand, Charles’s opponents seem to have delighted in portraying him in terms of an unchecked and priapic masculinity. In Marvell’s ‘Last Instructions to a Painter’, Charles has a vision of the nation as a woman ‘Naked as born, and her round Arms behind, / With her own Tresses interwove and twin’d’.⁹⁶ Charles’s response, though romantic, is tinged with sexuality; he refrains from rape, but presses the hand of the vision, recoiling when he finds it cold. Apparently necrophilia, at least, is beyond him, but it was the work of the image-makers that preceded Marvell that made such a vision ominous. In ‘Brittania and Rawleigh’, the menace is made literal: ‘Tast the delicious sweets of sovereign power’, Charles is urged, and ‘three spotless virgins’ are brought to his bed to deflower by a monstrous figure representing French absolutism. This monstrous figure is, of course, female too, so that when the king is apparently most phallic, he is most in thrall to the terrifying underbelly of the feminine.⁹⁷ Is there
something reassuring about the sheer straightforwardness of this image of ultra-phallic kingship? Or is it simply that Charles II literally threatens to take away the masculine power of every other citizen and accrue it to himself? The ambiguities of this royal image, however, are partially generated by what precedes it, the endless and anxious republican figuration of the iron-hard, self-contained and perfectly masculine body and person of Oliver Cromwell.
As we have just seen, Charles I appears to pose immense problems for masculinity, yet eventually a way is found to represent him as feminine which leaves patriarchy quite untroubled, a way which incorporates what began as Charles’s threat into a productive and consolatory image of heroism. Cromwell, by contrast, appears to pose no problems at all. His military prowess is itself comfortingly phallic. His godliness, plain dress and lack of interest in the consuming extravagance of court life show a masculine swerve away from anxiety-provoking images of effeminate and effeminising tyrants. Taken together with his victories in battle, Cromwell’s abstemiousness creates for him a hard and unitary body, absolutely isomorphic with the phallus. In Klaus Theweleit’s analysis of the men of the *Freikorps*, military masculinity is constructed over against the filth, chaos and disorder of battle and death. We saw in looking at Civil War battle memoirs that the logic of the hard male body versus the chaos of battle was inscribed in the discourses of the war before Cromwell became crucial to its representation.¹ In a sense, the pro-Protectorate Cromwell is or ought to have been a perfect soldier, his hard body triumphing over the foe. Around and from such a body, a figure of masculine republicanism can be created, or recreated, since it draws extensively on classical art and writing, a figure that endures until the French Revolution and after: the strong figure of the male body of citizenship, a Heracles who can defeat the monster of tyranny.²

And yet somehow matters are not quite so simple. The paradox of the Civil War may be that Charles I looks like a problem for patriarchy, but turns out not to be one, while Cromwell looks like a patriarchal fantasy, yet somehow proves more difficult to assimilate than one might expect.

Charles and Cromwell exemplify the two dominant archetypes of masculinity identified by Paul Hoch. Cromwell (ironically, perhaps) is what Hoch calls the Puritan, the hardworking, hard-fighting male who adheres to a production ethic of duty before pleasure. Charles is – or more
accurately could be represented by his opponents as – a more aristocratic
playboy who lives according to an ethic of leisure and sensual indulgence. Arguably, the history of the representation of Charles and Cromwell is
the deconstruction of this binary opposition; what if the productive
masculine is sensuous and the leisured male self-denying? Crossovers
and tangles occur between these images, but nevertheless the former is
far more often fastened onto Cromwell and the latter onto Charles than vice versa. Given that the playboy did and does continue to pose representational problems for masculinity, though not problems incapable of
solution, what problems does the productive Puritan pose? For problems
there are. It is a commonplace of literary criticism of the Civil War era to
remark that Cromwell did not attract very good panegyric, but the
reasons for this are less often investigated. Even avidly or determinedly
pro-Cromwell writers apparently could not simply settle into celebrating
Cromwell’s efficacy on the battlefield and his military prowess, his abstemious lifestyle and religious devotion. Rather, everyone from Milton and
Marvell down to the hacks of the Protectorate swerve away from what
might seem to be the ideal synecdoche of the masculine body as strong
state to celebrate something else about Cromwell, something other than
his military body. Why?

On examination, the failure to establish an iconography of the republic
grounded in Cromwellian masculinity has many causes. Most evidently,
such a figuration risked obviating rather than confirming the status of the
republican head of household. The Cromwellian regime sought to evacu-
ate the state from the private realm, and advertised its own willingness to
do so. But this very evacuation of the state from the private realm limited
the possibilities for the representation of the ruler’s person or family. If
the representation of the head of state through the trope of ‘family’, and
especially through the trope of marriage, had proved discouraging – even
alarming – in the case of Charles I, then attempts to do so through the
Cromwellian family ran the risk of replicating the very rhetorics used
effectively to undermine Charles’s own authority and masculinity.

Another problem lay in discomfort about the imperial policies of the
Protectorate. Virtually every republican seems to have been eager to praise
Cromwell’s assaults on Spanish power and prestige in the New World.
What David Armitage describes as ‘the imperial moment of the English
republic’ was spearheaded by Cromwell’s reputation as a military genius
with few equals, and those who had been anxious about Stuart quiescence
in the face of Spanish and papist expansion could celebrate the new
government’s more militant stance. However, there was anxiety about
the government’s motives; a holy crusade against the papal Antichrist was one thing, a war for gold that would in turn generate effeminate luxury another. Moreover, the notion of Cromwell as a mere bully and tyrant, in pursuit of luxuries to which birth had not entitled him, became – as we shall see – a crucial part of Royalist portrayals of Cromwell, and his supporters had to be careful to refute such claims. In the same way, Cromwell’s campaigns in Ireland were at once exceedingly welcome to those that already agreed with him, and also excessive.

Excess is the key, because any positively coded or even unironic representation of the phallic Cromwell had to contend almost from the inception of such images with a shadow. That shadow was the Royalist construction of Cromwell in terms which managed to unpick the linkages between the Cromwellian body and the phallus by hyperbolic exaggeration. From the inauguration of Royalist satire of Cromwell with John Cleveland’s *The Character of a London Diurnall*, Cromwell is vast and predatory, with a nose ‘a bloody beak’, ‘able to try a young eagle’.\(^5\) Like most of Cleveland’s satire, this image of menace was repeated in subsequent, even in post-Restoration texts, so that not only his foes but also his hostile chroniclers could not help seeing him in gigantic, hypermasculine terms:

that imp of Satan, compounded of all vice and violence, and the Titan-like courage, devoid of all pity and conscience, the greatest of the soldiery, and by his arts greater than them all, waxen to be a Colossus, between whose strides the seas flowed, his countenance confessed him a tyrant . . . But his way was to govern three kingdoms by his armies, the armies by the Agitators, and the Agitators by himself, whom he shot dead upon the place, if they crossed his will.\(^6\)

It is easy to dismiss such representations as *simply* puerile and hostile, especially those that occur after the Restoration.\(^7\) The Restoration regime, of course, inaugurated its own legitimacy by a display of control over Cromwell’s body, a feat which seemed to bear almost endless repeating in the textual representations of the usurper. This tendency to repetition – even to compulsive repetition – can be extended backwards into the satires produced during the Civil War and the Protectorate, one reason why a chronological narrative of their development is unhelpful. Virtually every trope that characterises Restoration Cromwell had an airing before the Protectorate, and virtually all were inspired by or connected with regicide and usurpation.

For one thing, Royalists seemed to need to *keep* disconnecting the man and the nation. Perhaps the endless repetition was needed because
somehow matters were not quite so straightforward, not least because such gigantic images were genuinely frightening. Royalist Cromwells in satires boast eloquently and joyfully of the terror they used to arouse:

is not this the arme
Has often made the blood shrink from your hearts
At every motion? Is not this the brow
From whence you have often read my bloody lessons?¹

What we can infer from this is that masculinity actively requires chaos to come into ordered being. Only by encountering extremes of chaos can a masculine icon be made. To put it even more summarily, tyrants, as the ancients knew, need wars, not only for pragmatic reasons, but to maintain their psychic images as masterful males whose hardness and wholeness triumph over the mess around them. This motif is very evidently visible in the stories of heroes who attain apotheosis by confronting monsters emblematic of various kinds of disorder: Medusa the symbol of castration, the Chimera with its mixture of body parts, or by contrast the Nemean lion with its unnatural impenetrability, its hardness and phallicity.⁹ And yet to greater and lesser extents the heroes who deal death to these monsters are also a threat to the men in their own families. Both Perseus and Theseus kill their fathers, directly or indirectly, as does Oedipus, who confronts the monstrous and unnatural Sphinx. Hercules, on the other hand, massacres his own family, extirpating his line, in a frenzy of masculine power run amok.¹⁰ When George Wither compared Cromwell’s death to that of Hercules, he invoked a comparison he was powerless to control:

On Oeta’s top, thus Hercules lay dead,
With ruin’d Oaks, and Pines about him spread:
Those his last Furie, from the mountain rent,
Our dying hero, from the Continent
Ravish’t whole Towns, and Forts from Spaniards reft,
As his last Legacy to Britain left.¹¹

Cromwell’s exceptional strength teeters on the brink of threatening madness, for when Hercules pulled up the trees he generated chaos rather than order. Behind every phallic hero lurks an unsocialised monster, a male whose violence is threatening to society because it is profoundly asocial, because it has so transcended the chaotic body of the mother that it has also transcended the other things she may represent, social induction and acculturation. For if the chaotic maternal body is itself profoundly removed from culture, the mother-function within the social unit is deeply imbued with the significance of bringing the raw stuff of the
child into culture. A too-effortless triumph over the former may imply a
dangerous triumph over the latter. To put it another way, it is possible to
be too masculine.

This was particularly so for Cromwell. A woodcut illustrates the
representational dilemmas he created perfectly. It depicts Cromwell, clad
in armour from head to foot, snatching the crown, and saying ‘Letts kill
and take possession’. The hardness of his armoured body is in contrast to
his grotesque posture: his head is tilted backward, and to the right, giving
him an almost crookbacked appearance; his legs are apart. His foot rests
on a book. In the background, a headsman raises his axe high while a
gowned cleric holds up his hands and cries ‘O horrible murder!12 This
picture sums up much of what I wish to discuss; the hard body, deformed
by Machiavellian duplicity into something less phallic than it should be,
and finally the threat to the identities of other men, as the castrating
might of the axe indicates. Hardness is resolution, but also, in the
Christian framework, impenitence: ‘No, we would have your impenitent
hardnesse, as well as the softer world to know, that we look back with
extream sorrow . . . to this unhappy warre.’13 The axe is of course aimed at
Charles, and Cromwell is especially at risk because of the ever-present
possibility of representing him as a parricide, like the ancient heroes on
whom his positive image was modelled. In Christopher Wace’s Royalist
translation of Sophocles’ Electra, the parallel is particularly explicit.14
Presented to Elizabeth of Bohemia, the play in Wace’s version urges her
to be Electra, to seek revenge on the murderer of her father, and it is
interesting and significant that Wace gives enormous weight to the
adultery of the murderer, the adultery of Aegisthus. For adultery, as we
shall see, is another sign of masculinity in excess, masculinity that is no
longer guaranteeing but exceeding the social bonds around it. Now,
parricide and adultery have in common not merely associative links from
both classical and Renaissance tragedy, but also their status as transgres-
sions of father-right. The head of the household’s authority is under-
mined equally by parricide and by adultery; adultery cuckolds him,
adding insult to injury, and threatening his symbolic death by casting
his paternity into doubt. What we shall see is that just as Charles I was
perceived as a threat to the head of the godly household, so Cromwell
increasingly came to be seen as a threat to the rights of all heads of
households tout court. Regicide could through the image of adultery
become a metaphor for the threat Cromwell posed to the rights of peers
and others. It is noticeable that this is recognisably an anti-republican line,
though one later deployed by the political left. The very image of
masculine hardness and triumph, heroic solidity, on which his reputation was founded could all too easily be turned to account by Royalists eager to portray him as altogether excessively masculine. To do this, Royalist writers made use of a series of images from literary sources, notably classical hero-tales, and the tragedies of Shakespeare. The latter in particular were important to almost every Royalist representation of Cromwell. Scarcely a pamphlet play or ballad is without the influence of Richard III, Macbeth and above all Sir John Falstaff, the upstart muster-master whose military employment is merely a cover for cowardice and excess. Laura Knoppers has argued that such figures are all Machiavellians and are also based on the medieval Vice, but genre is not the only determining factor here. Rather, in importing figures from the tragic and epic genres into political polemic, writers cannot evade the problematic gender connotations they bring with them.

Excessive masculinity, as we shall see, has a curious tendency to tip over into problematic femininity through tropes of loss of control. Because masculinity is always about mastery, even masculine failures of mastery are unmasculine. This paradox is fundamental to representations of the tyrant in both classical and Renaissance writings, where extreme power becomes an occasion for excesses that are figuratively feminine. The image of the tyrant and his excesses underlies Royalist representations of Cromwell, becoming a means to undo his otherwise problematic masculinity. This is how we can begin to understand the obsession with Cromwell’s nose which has often been noticed in Royalist writings, and which dominates representation of him from the Republic to the Restoration, without very much intermission. One critic so dislikes the emphasis that he makes the nose a kind of IQ test; if there is a reference to the nose, it is proof that the rest of the work will be devoid of intellect. Actually, Cromwell’s nose perfectly summarises the rather nervous Royalist sense of Cromwell’s phallic authority together with Royalist attempts to undermine that authority through images of masculine excess that by their very excessiveness spill backwards into femininity. Such notions of excess depended not only on the fact that the nose was an identifiable and hence caricatured physical feature, but also on the familiar story that Cromwell had been a brewer; the excessively red nose was already associated with drink – and with the emerging figure of the libertine, in whom drink provokes lechery.

These images can be understood as violent exertions of control over the Cromwellian image, and as transformative, if we understand them through the literary genre in which they are written, the genre of
satire. Rather like the Restoration satires etymologically linked to them, the satyrs represented a kind of alternative universe of sexual excess.  

Etymologically, the satire reaches back to the satyr, and the satyr satirises (among other things) the very Greek preoccupation with the extent to which the phallus and the penis are interchangeable. For the satyr, they are not. The Greeks represented satyrs with large, erect penises, yet these huge organs were not (confusingly) phallic; that is, they conferred no authority or respect on the satyr who boasted them. Rather, the effect of the satyr’s giant penis is comical and undermining; it figures as a locus of animality, and hence of loss of control over the managed masculine body, and hence it marks the satyr out as foreign and different. The desirable Hellenic penis, the phallic penis, if you will, was oddly modest in size. In turning Cromwell into a kind of satyr through displaced phalloi of various sorts, especially his allegedly gigantic nose, the Royalists were not endowing him with evolved masculinity, but trying to take it away from his image, though I shall also suggest that this is in itself testimony to ongoing anxiety about it. Royalist satires were insisting on uncoupling his bodily masculinity from its symbolic value; saying, in effect, that even the hardest body is just a body, not a state. Yet this strategy involves an insistence on Cromwell’s supreme phallicity that could itself collapse into uncomfortable praise, or even into semiotic disorder.

The nose could be satirically emblematic of Cromwell’s rule: ‘Who leads these Bacchanals; Cromwell, is’t thee / Thy fiery nose speaks; all must burned bee’, or, more transparently:

Lewd Oliver, shew but thy Nose,
Thou needst not fear ten thousand foes;
Brave Cavaleers are Loyal friends
Thy Nose hath brought them to thy ends.
The Yorkish and Lancastrian Rose,
Are both usurped by thy Nose.

Elizabeth Cromwell also defends Cromwell’s sovereignty in relation to his nose in *The Cuckoos Nest at Westminster*:

‘tis he that has done the work; the conquest belongs to him; besides your husband is counted a Fool & Wants Witt to reigne; every boy scoffs at him: my Noll has a Nose will light the whole Kingdom to walk after him; I say he will grace a Crown, being naturally adorned with Diamonds and Rubyes already; And for my self (thou I say it) I have a Person as fit for a Queen as another.

The point here, of course, is that Cromwell’s claims to sovereignty are based on the exceptionality of his nose, a claim assumed to be shaky; there
is an implicit opposition between Cromwell’s nose in its impropriety and the genuine exceptionality of royal blood and the body of the true king. Both Cromwell and his wife are presented as misreaders of the text of royal supremacy as inscribed in the body; they assume that any old bodily exceptionality will do, but actually only the particularity of royal descent is valid. This in turn slides into a very frequent satirical take on the Cromwells as ignorant upstarts, a take for which the nose is also blazing evidence, acting as it does as a signifier of their origins in brewing. The nose, like the satyr’s penis, uncouples signifier and signified. The nose is just a nose; it is not really the phallus.

And yet this uncoupling can never be definitive. The image of the nose does tie Cromwell’s power in with his body and its powers. In this poem, Cromwell’s nose is apotropaic: it is a joke emblem of sovereignty, but one that nevertheless gestures at his military power. When some citizens remarked after the Restoration that ‘Oliver would have sold his great nose rather than Dunkirk’, they were connecting its size implicitly with the extent of his rule and his military prowess.

Or, as *Cromwells Panegyrick* puts it:

&> He that can rout an army with his name  
&> And take a city, ere he views the same . . .  
&> Well may his Nose, that is dominical,  
&> Take pepper in’t, to see no Pen at all,  
&> Stir to applaud his merits.  

Cromwell’s nose also has links with Royalist parodies of classical heroism of the kind beloved by those wishing to praise Cromwell. Classical heroes were a central part of the legitimating rhetoric of the Stuart monarchy, so it was crucial that they should not be appropriated too thoroughly by Parliament or the Protectorate. The figuration of Cromwell’s nose as his signifier as hero deflates his heroic image, as in Henry Tubbe’s poem:

&> Without a wrestling Comment it may passe  
&> For Sampson’s mighty Jaw-bone of an Asse!  
&> Scanderberg’s sword, Goliah’s Weavers-Beam,  
&> Alcides club, the Fist of Polypheme,  
&> The Giant’s burly hoofe with his Six toes,  
&> Are but weak shadows of this valiant Nose.  

All these weapons, the poem implies, might truly be phallic, worthy of respect, powerful. In comparison, Cromwell’s nose is inadequate. Similarly, in *Cromwells Conspiracie* Hugh Peters’ image of Cromwell’s nose is
immediately followed by an image of Cromwell as the conqueror of Zeus with the help of the Titans:

Had the Snake-footed Earth some Sonnes of old, but had thy aid empowered Pelion Ossae, old Saturn might have laughed to see his son sit sadly by him in the Cimerian shades, while thou didst sway the Empire of the Skies.

Why does Cromwell’s nose help to deflate the rhetoric of heroism? It represents a bodily excess rather than bodily control. Otherwise the nose has apocalyptic value as a portent. Satirising anti-Royalist interest in omens, Royalist writers figure Cromwell’s nose as the excessive omen of his own rise. Peters hails his master’s nose as a comet:

thy Nose like a bright Beacon sparkling, still (the Aetna that doth fame our English World) hangs like a comet ore thy dreadfull fate, denouncing death and vengeance.

while Tubbe likewise portrays the nose as a prodigy:

Now blesse us heav’n! what Prodigy is this?
A Blazing Star! a metempsychosis
Of fierie meteors! a blew, bloody ghost
Transformed to bee the Leader of an Host!

This acutely attacks the ultimate signification of Cromwell’s rise in his own eyes, that is, its providential signification. The nose as what Cromwell himself might have termed a ‘providence’ is a sign of Cromwell’s incapacity as an interpreter, his lack of control over meanings and languages.

Cromwell’s nose is out of place in another sense too. It signifies his class origins, which are always assumed to be written on the body. In De Sensu Aristotle writes that ‘our sense of smell is inferior to that of other animals, and is the poorest of the human senses’. De Sensu was an influential text in the Renaissance and here Aristotle implicitly links a large nose to animality and hence to the lower orders, always assumed to be more proximal to the animal. A dominant nose implies a kind of coarseness, a failure to distinguish the self from the animal. This raises problems for masculinity, since excessive masculinity can tip into animality. Masculinity must assert rather than deny its humanity. Cromwell’s nose can be a giveaway, though, a revelation of the insecurity of his image and the plebeian origins of the body that underlies it. Not sanctified by chrism, his body remains for Royalists resolutely material and hence repulsive, excessive. Perhaps the very process of displaying or re-presenting a body that is not somehow made different from other bodies is problematic, even feminising? Whether or not that is true, Cromwell’s nose becomes emblematic of
the body’s excesses in its excessive size, colour and brightness. Consequently, it is woven into stories of Cromwell’s sexual excess, stories to which we will later turn; the nose is also associated with signs of syphilis, an easy metaphor for the disease of the state and the body of its ruler:

Look, Look, how Oliver’s moldy nose peels
For fear lest his pimples discover his pox.32

Such notions of Cromwell’s nose as a signifier of sexual excess depend on the understanding of the nose as somehow linked to the genitalia. This is neither an anachronism nor a cultural constant, but something specific to early modern understandings of the place of the nose in the body. One Renaissance text which resembles the Cromwellian satires in its willingness to understand the nose as a portent explicitly links the nose to the genitals; the condition of the nose is a sign or guide to what the genitals are like:

What Moles Signify on the Nose

A conspicuous shining or Red Mole appearing on the Nose of a man or Woman, by the consent of Antiquity, another may be found, in the most Secret parts, a Man or woman having Moles in or about the hands as well as the Nose, is Signified to generate by strangers, in plain terms Bastards, and oftentimes a Mole on the Nose signifies one on the Ribs, as well as the privy Parts, there is the same natural reason in effect for this, as we mentioned before, namely, whoever is Notated in any of the luxurious members, especially with a mole or a red Colour, or fiery, without doubt the person is signified to be superlatively Luxurious, and that man saith the Melampus, who hath such a Mole on the left side of the Nose, he shall wander from place to place in an unsettled condition...a mole on the left side is governed.33

So an excessive nose is a sign of other forms of excess, a notion made plausible by the Renaissance observation that syphilis affects the nose. In Cromwell’s case, the nose, extending outwards from the face and body, is not only a signifier of the unruly, uncontrollable genitalia, but is also a sign of vulgarity, of a failure of personal containment. It thus signifies Cromwell’s ambition; like his nose, his whole self is out of place.34 Does it imply that he comes from another place, a place beneath, like the satyrs with their alien behaviours? All this assumes significance of another kind since sexual and gustatory excesses are associated with tyranny. Cromwell’s nose paints him a tyrant; he may try to persuade us that his body is a site of masculine control and containment, but his nose gives the game away.

The visible excess of the nose, its colour and size, are also signs of disorder, signs of the kind of disorder associated with femininity. The
nose is sexualised chaos. Paradoxically, while figuring the male genitals, Cromwell’s nose can also therefore be linked with the female genitalia. One satirical poem brings together the themes of disorder and feminine sexuality in linking Cromwell’s nose with his wife’s sexual body:

Jone hath a hole and they call it Hell
More fit for thy Nose then Whitehall to dwell . . .
This Nose, hath more flat noses made,
Than Ladies of Pleasure with their trade. 35

Elizabeth or Joan Cromwell’s vagina is contrasted with Whitehall Palace, evoking a series of binary oppositions: high versus low, civilised versus bodily, ordered versus disordered. For Cromwell’s nose to dwell in it, however, evokes chaotic sexual perversion. Cromwell’s nose is acting as a penis, which means that his upper body is substituted for his lower body in a *hysteron proteron* which is the perfect signifier for his crime of usurpation. Joan’s vagina is also hell, of course; the misogyny of this linkage draws attention to the way Cromwell has failed to distance himself from the feminine in its bodiliness and chaos. Hell is his destination not only because he is bad, not only because it signifies the lowness that is his proper place in the vertical hierarchy of the universe, but also because hell is the appropriate place for his burning nose, which becomes a sign of that destination. Hell is a place of smells, too, and odour is linked with the nose not only by function, but by excess. And yet this entire image, workable though it is when analysed, seems extraordinarily anxious. It cannot help but assign rather fearsome phallic power to Cromwell’s nose, power that is demonised but nonetheless frightening.

For if Cromwell’s supporters found it difficult to praise him in the terms that might have seemed obvious, Royalists found it hard to avoid doing so. The excess of Cromwell’s nose and its links with his wife are reflected in another aspect of the satiric tradition, an aspect that involves the representation of sexual excess as power, but problematic power. Puzzlingly, in defiance of likelihood, Royalist satirists repeatedly insist on portraying Cromwell as an adulterer. The usual suspect is Mrs Lambert, and she is rounded up rather often, especially in those texts which more-or-less explicitly draw on the figure of the Machiavellian tyrant as portrayed in Renaissance tragedy; somehow, Machiavellian prowess has to be signified through seduction of a woman as well as (and sometimes instead of) subversion of the state. 36 This kind of text may have proliferated at the Restoration as part of the extension of libertinage in political satire, but it
definitively predates the peccadilloes of Charles II (and may, for all we
know, have been an influence upon them, given the difficulty satirists
experienced in separating a degree of admiration from their critique of the
tyrant). As well as the recurring tale of Mrs Lambert, there are more
general references to Cromwell’s sexual prowess. An early life of Cromwell
establishes a critical biographical trend in portraying him as a youthful
prodigal. But Cromwell is not a weak prodigal. He fritters away his
patrimony, but he does so as part of a career of ‘roaring’, tearing about
drinking and wenching. In particular, he is potent. The pseudonymous
Philo-Regis lists his accomplishments: ‘he had gotten seven wenches with
child (and was named the Town Bull of Ely).’ The same theme is picked
up and elaborated by the even more hostile biographical sketch in
Flagellum:

his uncontrolled debaucheries did publiquely declare, for Drinking, Wenching,
and the like Outrages of licentious youth, none so infam’d as this young
Tarquin, who would not be contraried in his Lusts, in the very strain and to the
excess of that Royal Ravisher.

Here it is evident that the point of sexual excess is that it is the mark of
the tyrant. The explicit allusion to Lucrece draws attention too to the
analogy between the state and the female body which itself cannot help
but define the ruler as masculine. In the very process of trying to
undermine Cromwell’s masculinity and authority through an allusion to
the excess of his desires, the biographer is forced to invoke an image that
coverly celebrates them. Similarly, a scene designed to show Cromwell’s
excessive desires as the occasions for violence and bloodshed, and hence to
create an analogy with the Civil War and the unruly desire for the nation-
state, cannot avoid showing Cromwell to be an almost unstoppable force,
terrifying and powerful:

His lustfull wantonnesses were not less predominant than the other unruly
appetities of his mind... it being now his rude custome, to seise upon all
women he met in his way on the road, and perforce ravish a kiss of some lewder
satisfaction from them, and if any resistance were made by their company, then
to vindicate and allay this violence and heat of his blood, with the letting out of
theirs, whose defence of their Friends Honour, and Chastity, innocently ingaged
them.

Such tropes figure by opposition an alternative ideal of Royalist mas-
culinity that defines itself as protecting the women of the household. And
yet violence against women rapidly becomes violence against men, both
key definers of early modern masculinity, as Susan Amussen has rightly
pointed out. Here Cromwell’s domination of the scenarios in which he is imagined deflates his would-be deflators. The linkage between sexual and military prowess, also a virtual cultural universal, may also be implied here. However, the overall impression is derogatory, because early modern culture did not in fact tolerate rape or sexual assault; both were seen as disgraceful for the perpetrator. A problematically excessive masculinity might force itself on an unwilling woman, but in doing so the man would call his own identity into question.

Coercive sex within courtship was a different matter, however. In satires which deal not with Cromwell’s youth, but with the years of his Protectorate, he is portrayed as equally lustful, but now able to use state power rather than raw physical force to obtain what he wants. In one pamphlet dialogue, Cromwell tells Hugh Peters of the secret network of passageways he has created around Whitehall:

For what Cause doest think I make so many Avenues and recesses up and down at Whitehall and Hampton Court, but for the better convenience of my Letchery, although it was pretended for the greater security of my Person; else, why did I make that privy recluse in the tilt-yard to passe towards Wallingford house and the spring-garden? But this, thou knowest, I did to blind my Wives eyes, whose Country-Butcher-Like face (thou canst tell) did never so affect me, but that I alwayes had my Hand Maids to be helpers to me, for the propagation of my Renoun.

Here, too, the trope of the privacy of the tyrant’s body is central. Cromwell’s lusts, like access to them, are secret; secret from his wife and from the public, not open to scrutiny. As in Parliamentarian rhetoric, though with greater discomfort, the press gives itself a role in laying bare what has been kept hidden; an anatomist, it dissects the body politic and finds it full of secrets. But the secret passages are also figurative of the body itself. A privy recluse is suggestive of the female genitalia to which it provides access. In embracing that body, Cromwell is both enacting excessive masculinity and swerving away from masculinity into apposition with a female body marked by secrecy and lack of control. In *Cromwells Conspiracie*, Peters procures Mrs Lambert for Cromwell’s bed. She has doubts, and Peters has to advise Cromwell on how to handle a woman:

Mrs L. Sir can you think me so forgetful as to forget
My marriage vow? Alas what have I done,
I’ve given away that which is none of mine,
Oh Heaven!
pete r s. 'Sfoot Sir, she's fal'n into a Relapse;
    Kiss her, sir, quickly, or shee'l cool so fast
    You'll hardly warm her again.

cromw. How stupid I am in these amorous arts!
    My dearest mistress, say, what can you fear
    When I dare be your friend.44

Here Cromwell’s lack of ability in courting women, even in seducing them and bedding them, is highlighted. This inadequacy proceeds not from a lack of masculinity, but from its excess. Like Richard III, his model here as elsewhere, Cromwell knows nothing of the arts of peace, or even of any arts. His tyranny is signified not by effeminacy, but by an absence of civilité. This is reinforced by the pamphlet’s ironic reference to other, more civil beddings; Cromwell’s adultery is accompanied by an ironic antimasque of Ambition and Treason instead of the hymeneal masque so characteristic of the Caroline court. This antimasque is followed by his disappearance with Mrs Lambert into ‘The Chamber of Delight’.

Cromwell’s adultery with Mrs Lambert also signifies the execution of Charles I and his betrayal. We have seen in the last chapter that there is an underlying symbolic linkage between beheading and defloration, and that innocent blood can easily be understood as hymeneal blood. Personifying the nation whose blood Cromwell has made to flow, Charles I’s bleeding body is a signifier of the masculine excess and hence tyranny of the Town Bull of Ely. Hence the same figure can be improvised around the complicit adultery of Mrs Lambert, all of whose lines in this dialogue appear to have been lifted almost verbatim from Jacobean tragedies like Women Beware Women in which adultery represents the state of the state. In Mrs Lambert’s case, what is signified is the state’s corruption by Cromwell’s violation, rather than the rape of its virgin innocence. The seduction of the people, in particular, is meant. But the fact that these two narratives are sexual metaphors means that the ruler’s masculinity is necessarily stressed along with the femininity of what he rules. In Cromwells Conspiracie, the martial associations of both seduction and rule are made explicit when Mrs Lambert exclaims that

        You are as valliant, my dear sir, in those
        Soft skirmishes which Venus doth expect,
        As in these deeds of death which Mars approves
        As Heroick in his tents.45

Repeated references to Mr Lambert manifest Cromwell’s power as a disrupter – as a usurper – of the masculine authority of others. In The
Famous Tragedie of Charles I, we are not allowed to see Charles’s execution, but we are shown the seduction of Mrs Lambert; it is as if regicide is displaced into the act of making another man a cuckold. It makes sense for adultery with Mrs Lambert to signify Charles’s execution; in both cases Cromwell is taking by crime what belongs properly to another. But we cannot fail to note the way Cromwell’s political act manifests itself in gendered terms. The claim – explicit and implicit – that Parliamentarian, republican and later Cromwellian rule are justified by the effeminacy of Charles I is inverted; here Charles is effeminate only because his masculinity has been stolen from him, because he has been cuckolded with his ‘wife’ the nation. And Mr Lambert is murdered, just as Charles is murdered. Rightful masculine authority is replaced by usurped authority.

Charles’s ever-missing severed head appears only in Cromwell’s final, deathbed nightmare, a nightmare taken straight from the tragedies of tyrants:

See, see there ‘tis again A Body, and a Head,
But yet the’re parted; sure it is the Kings
His blood I now begin to feel; here, here.
(Points to his heart) . . .
And now the blood that I have caused to flow
From several bodies, appears all at once,
And threatens for to drown me; Oh, keep off?

Here Charles’s unique and precious royal blood at last flows through Cromwell’s body, but does not unite with it. In Hells Higher Court of Justice, too, Charon on arrival notices that Cromwell is covered in blood, ‘mantled . . . in purple gore’. Similarly, in The Court Career, Cromwell has a deathbed vision of Charles’s blood: ‘thou Purple ocean which inviron me? . . . What means these Scarlet veils hung in that sort?’

The ur-text of all these metaphors is probably not a play about rule, but the death-visions of Marlowe’s Dr Faustus, screaming that he sees ‘where Christ’s blood streams in the firmament’. As such their transference to Cromwell signifies his absolute and inescapable damnation and of course Charles’s often-noted Christological significance. As well, blood here as elsewhere signifies the abject, filth. Charles’s blood torments Cromwell, as does his severed head, because both have become matter out of place; now Cromwell can be located as the source of their dis-placement, the agent of chaos. His hard masculine body and its paternal power to cut become the means of his own transformation into a feminine abyss. Elsewhere that abyss threatens to close over Cromwell and the nation, in figurations of feminine engulfment:
wading to the government of these nations over head and ears in blood . . . He cares not to spill the blood of his subjects like water, plenty whereof was shed in our streets during his short and troublesome reign, by his oppression, dissimulation, hypocrisies, and cruelty.48

In *Cromwell's Bloody Slaughterhouse*, the connection between the abyss and the gulf of feminine sexuality is made far more explicit:

Usurpers like deep Ditches, and open Sepulchers, having swallowed up, our King, Our Parliament, our Estates, our Liberties . . . now like impudent Strumpets, in the wantonnesse and security, to which success have hardened their hearts and Foreheads, wipe their mouths as if they had done no evil; and now lying in wait for our pretious Souls, dress their whorish Faces with the Harlotry and temptation of a New-Fashioned representative.49

A bizarre collocation of images of disorder which brings together monstrous femininity, dirt, decapitation and blood characterise *Cromwell's Bloody Slaughterhouse*, and all of them work to locate usurpation not as the transgressive male sexuality of *The Famous Tragedie* and other satires, but as the transgressive female sexuality of whoredom. The whore is always a natural image for the Machiavel, just as makeup is a natural image for the deceptiveness of rhetorical colouration, but this passage’s preoccupation with creatures of uncontrollable appetite suggests that usurpation somehow *aroused* a great fear of female engulfment. Why this should be so can be understood through the metaphors used to articulate it: the usurpers’ ‘soft and fained voyces’ are ‘like Syrens’ that ‘charm, and enchant the honest people of England, into such Beasts and Monsters, as your selves are’. Here feminine deceptiveness and rhetorical efficacy are one. Similarly, the rebels are also

Such filthy Harpies, such cunning, yet cruel hyena’s, such weeping yet devouring Crocodiles; such banners as bear not the Kings Arms, but his head cut from his body; such banners as are dyed in the bloud of their King, murthered by them, while they pretended to fight for him, and preserve him.50

The masquerade of female sexuality is not only a metaphor for Machiavellian doings, but a *reason* to fear them. The notorious misogyny of some Civil War polemics might be explicable in the light of the spectral threat thus announced, a threat magnified by the perception that the new government was undermining the position and economic power of heads of households by taxation, government corruption and the demotion of those who had previously been the professional classes. Yet the language this pamphlet uses to denounce such abuses is saturated with the imagery of bodily inversion, filth and degradation:
ministers and their families may either eat their own dung, and drink their own piss; or be forced by necessities of life to desert their function.\textsuperscript{51}

This is an image of the cessation of proper circularisation of resources; the minister and his family are consuming themselves, transformed into autocannibal monsters by the monstrous state. Yet eating shit is not only self-consumption, but self-abasement, abjection. The paterfamilias forced to do it, left with nothing but shit to give his family, nothing but his own bodily products, is emasculated, depleted, and above all humiliated. His own masculinity, like that of the headless king, as been abrogated by the filthy excesses of the rebels.

Dissolutions into chaos are often marked by the signs of castration, since for the early modern thinker, as we have seen, the order of gender is always part of as well as a signifier of the order of the cosmos. Consequently, Richard Lovelace’s satiric ‘A Mock Song’, conflates dismemberment with dissolution into a formless mass:

\begin{verbatim}
Now the sun is unarm’d
And the Moon by us charm’d
All the stars dissolved to a Jelly:
Now the thighs of the Crown
And the Arms are lopp’d down,
And the Body is all but a Belly.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{verbatim}

The jelly-like stars are brought into apposition with lopped thighs and arms, so that the body politic is reduced to a belly, an inarticulate greed. Similar images of castration and dissolution into goo recur in The Court Career, which meditates on the breaking of a statue of Cromwell:

\begin{verbatim}
NOLS statue broke in pieces! What hand could
Had it Briarus sinews, be so bold?
Why not? It is by those strictrues nothing lost,
Pieces were emblems of the coyn they cost.
NOLS Funerals are past, his shrine set up,
Hey boys lets Cant it o’re our Wassal-cup.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{verbatim}

Glossing its own rhetoric, the pamphlet likens the destruction of the statue of Cromwell to the murder of Caesar:

I had read so much in Plutarch, How there was nothing that inraged the people more against the Actors of Caesars Murder, then the shewing of Caesars gastly wounds by Mark Antony, that was the Sight which begot in the people compassin generally. This it was that sprung a tear in every eye, and a vow of revenge from every hand.\textsuperscript{54}
In figuring the destruction and dismemberment of Cromwell’s statue as a response to the display of the wounds of the victim, though, the pamphlet cannot help suggesting that it is a mimetic response; one dismemberment prompts another, which in turn prompts a third replication (the poet’s). Such a disturbing abysme points to the essential iterability of both parricide and castration; one prompts the other. Appropriating the crucial republican rhetoric of iconoclasm, and writing against republican figurations of Lucan’s portrayal of Caesar as an image of Caroline tyranny, the pamphlet seizes on the image of a broken statue as a figuration of the threat to masculinity posed by images of breakage and rupture. Here, however, the breakage and rupture are authored not by the statue’s breakers, but by its makers, who have disrupted the continuity of patrilineal replication by installing such a figure as a public monument. Where masculine signifiers of continuity are lacking, language is dislocated from meaning, which makes possible the political tangles of lies, ambiguities and other deceptions:

His trulys cheated, and his smiles betray’d;  
In velvet-skabberd lay his murd’ring blade.  
His poys’rous heart in Beds of flowers lay;  
Like Quagmires into which their greens betray.  
A Sodom-apple, rotten at the coar,  
A Pestilential Bubo, plaistred o’re.  
But now the Botch is broke; his reign is done,  
And he himself into corruption run.55

Here Cromwell’s verbal deceptiveness is linked with the disorder of his body. Just as his ‘trulys’ cheat and his promises work like the alluring green which covers a quagmire, so he can also be metaphorised as a syphilitic or bubonic sore, holding more poison within than without. Here Cromwell is not phallicly guaranteeing the truth of language, but actually the instrument that unhinges words from meanings, the undoer of his own and other men’s masculinities.

Now hypermasculine, now engulfed in femininity, Cromwell’s perplexing gender is also reflected in the many hostile representations of his wife Elizabeth. Of course, such representations were also motivated by factors other than turbulence around Cromwell’s gender; the majority centre on the notion of woman as a signifier of appropriate class position, and figure Elizabeth Cromwell as a repellent middle-class upstart occupying a position as arbiter of social taste which threatens to undermine all civilité. In particular, The Court and Kitchin of Elizabeth, commonly called Joan Cromwell, purportedly a recipe book, links Elizabeth Cromwell’s
inappropriate middle-class cuisine with other features which demonstrate her inability to act as the wife of the ruler. The pamphlet describes Elizabeth Cromwell in terms which suggest sexual excess and an inability to fit into a class position assigned to her:

like some Kitchin Maid preferred by the Lust of some rich and noble Dotard, was ashamed of her sudden and gawdy bravery, and for a while skulk’d up and down the House, till the fawning observances and reverences of her Slaves had raised her to a Confidence.  

In *The Cuckoos Nest at Westminster*, Mrs Cromwell does battle with the slightly less offensively working-class Mrs Fairfax for the crown of England:

Q. FAIR. Thou a Queen; thou a Queen? Udssutt minion, hold your clack from prating Treason against me, or Ile make Mrs Parliament lay her Ten commandments upon thee? thou a Queen, a Brewers Wife a Queen! that kingdom must needs be full of drunkards, when the King is a Brewer? My Tom is nobly descended, and no base mechanick.

MRS CROM. Mechanick? Mechanick in thy face; th’art a Whore to call me mechanick; I am no more Mechanick than thy self; marry come up Mother Damnable, Jone Uggly; Must you be Queen? Yes you shall; Queen of Puddle-Dock, or Billingsgate, that is fittest for thee: My Noll has won the kingdom, and he shall wear it in despight of such a Trollup as thou art; Marry come up here Mistress Wagg-Tayle?

Here Mrs Cromwell’s stream of invective is intended primarily to be revelatory of her social origin, but it also works to figure her both as sexually too knowing, too conversant with terms of abuse aimed at improper women, and as a scold, a woman with an unruly tongue. This of course reflects on her husband, in a number of ways. Simply, the husband of a scolding wife was often assumed to be emasculated by her displays, because it was for him to control her excesses. More problematically, the unruliness of Elizabeth Cromwell signifies the unruliness of the state and in particular the lower orders; just as Cromwell cannot control Elizabeth’s tongue, so he is figured as failing to control the nation. This image persisted after the Restoration: here in one of the many songs and satires depicting Cromwell in the underworld, Pluto addresses Cromwell on the subject of his wife:

Where is old Joan thy wife?  
Her Highness I would see,  
Come let her in  
She shall be my Queen,
For a Cuckold thou shalt be, 
Make room for a Romping Lady, 
One of the Devil’s Race 
This ugly witch, 
And nasty bitch 
Spat in the Kings sweet face.58

Here Elizabeth Cromwell’s inversion of the social order in spitting in the king’s face is paralleled by the punishment of her husband with cuckold’s horns, also an inversion of what should be.

Spitting in the face of Charles also aligns Elizabeth Cromwell with the Roman soldiers who playfully crown Christ with thorns and then spit in his face. Obliquely, it reminds the reader of the potential opposition between the Roman state and the Christian, thus subverting republican attempts to draw authority from Roman writings. The Romans are not only pagan, but anti-Christ. At the same time, such images are also figurations of a hypermasculinity which opposes Christian softness and vulnerability; another way of turning the hard body of Cromwell into a strike against him. On the heels of this idea comes another series of images for Cromwell, images which likewise align him with hypermasculine Christ-killers.

A final way of figuring Cromwell as problematically feminised, and thus attempting to meet the challenges posed by his masculine image was the representation of the Protector as racially or ethnically other. The majority of such references are overdetermined references to the Turks as synonyms for tyranny, drawing perhaps on Fulke Greville’s Oriental tyrants, and at the same time gathering up their effeminate and hypermasculine connotations. For the mid-seventeenth century, Turkish tyranny is accompanied by luxurious excess and the enslavement and emasculation of the enslaved subject. Reporting on the execution of some prisoners, for instance, The Tyranny of Tyrannies makes the killings into a motif for the feared castration of the subject under a too-strong leader:

the new Turkish tyrants, Cromwel and Ireton, at a Council of War, have already privately condemned to death Sir William Waller, and Major General Browne . . . in whose blood they will write their own victory, and the City’s slavery.59

Here Cromwell’s victory is created through the shedding of the blood of others, and hence it is Turkish, enslaving. Again, Cromwell’s hypermasculinity is excessive when it can be presented as a threat to that of other men. The figure of the Turk allowed the Royalist writer to turn
Cromwell’s assets – his military success, resolution and masculinity – into defects. Others stressed the Turkish tyrant’s effeminate liking for flattery:

’Tis true, a Slave or two, to show his face,
Made Stix not Helicon his looking-glass.
Their Turkish Souls and fancies were so vain
To serve as footstools to that Tamberlane . . .
Wit, like true courage, never should abate,
But bravely stand unmoved in spite of fate;
Confront the Tyrant in his guarded den,
And like bold Brutus, stab him with a Pen.60

Here Shipman compares the poets to Turks, perhaps with a pun on the Ottoman footrest. This links Turkish flattery with degenerate luxury. The reclining Tamberlane, whose recumbent posture is achieved at the significant cost of making his tame poets bow down and lose their own masculinity, is contrasted with a masculine image of the true poet, bravely standing unmoved in spite of fate, willing to bow to no one. Yet his masculinity, too, is guaranteed by violence; he stabs his foe, albeit with a pen. Still others stressed Cromwell’s usurpation as somehow Oriental because it involved claiming an authority that was not his by right: for Butler, Cromwell was ‘beyond Pope or Turk, or Mahomet, the greatest impostor that ever was born’.61 Similarly, Cromwells Conspiracie likens Cromwell to Mahomet, a false prophet who acts to deceive the nations:

CROM. Methinks I see thee sainted, for we two
Like Mahomet and his plyant Monck will frame
An English Alchoran.62

Yet another Eastern image was particularly associated with Cromwell by his own actions. He was widely credited with readmitting the Jews to England, which added to the Royalist sense that he was on their side because they were also regicides. Perhaps that is why Thomas Jordan manages to wring the image of the devious, Christ-killing Jew from Cromwell’s name:

OLIVER CROMWELL; RULE WELL OR I COM
Rule well or I com cry’d the red nos’d Jew,
’Tis just (since you trap all men) I trap you.63

Such images figure Cromwell not merely as deceptive, but as explicitly out of place. Matter out of place himself, he cannot help but represent its effects.

The imbrication of the chaotic and corrupt feminine in the most apparently simple representations of phallic might was a problem for Cromwell’s panegyrist as well as his critics. Milton solves the problem
with spectacular simplicity; for him, the chaos of femininity is generated by rival, Royalist poets, and thus their own attacks are turned back upon themselves, leaving Cromwell an enlightened and sublime point of masculinity cleaving the feminine clouds:

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud  
Not of war only, but detractions rude,  
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude  
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast ploughed.64

Cromwell’s steady forward progress is also achieved through blood; through blood in two senses; across it, and by means of it. In this case, the blood of the Scots is meant, but there is inevitably a glance at Charles’s execution too. Unlike other panegyrists, Milton does not discard such warlike images in favour of peace and its arts. Rather, he insists that the virtues of war are and must be transferable to peace, a different proposition altogether, and one that draws on Machiavelli’s notion of the soldier-citizen, a notion which influenced Milton and other republicans elsewhere. Here Cromwell’s military prowess becomes a guarantee of the virtù that will allow him to incarnate the godly church. The sonnet is defiantly asserting that it has no problem with Cromwell the heroic conqueror, whatever others may say; it is itself eager to court a kind of hypermasculinity.

Other writers were less comfortable with the macho Cromwell, sharing some of the anxieties his image generated among Royalists. It is as if Edmund Waller recognised the problem in advance, for in his Panegyrick to My Lord Protector, Cromwell is armoured against hypermasculinity by the new role in which Waller casts him, the role of bringer of peace and civilité. For Waller, masculine authority is peace-giving.65 Ironically, Waller plunders the images of masculinity used by both James I and Charles I to present Cromwell not merely as a natural ruler, but one not obliged to use excessive force in his dealings with those he rules. ‘Of a War with Spain and a Fight At Sea’ depicts war as inherently inglorious; the love of the Marquis de Badajos and his wife supplants the war as the centre of attention, and the English are congratulated for their compassion to the defeated rather than for their military prowess. The message is clear. There are no men of blood here. Waller’s original version of this poem contains concluding lines praising Cromwell lavishly for his victories:

Let the brave generals divide that bough  
Our great Protector hath such wreaths enow;  
His conquering head has no more room for bayes.66
These lines, as Metcalfe points out, may not simply endorse Cromwell, but rather may ask him to separate himself from his generals, to take on a different, more peaceable role. Similarly, Waller’s *Panegyrick* celebrates Cromwell’s military victories, but also shies away from them; they are not really acts of violence, but something else:

A race unconquered, by their clime made bold,  
The Caledonians, armed with want and cold,  
Have, by a fate indulgent to your fame,  
Been from all ages kept for you to tame.  

Cromwell’s triumph over kings is marked; he has done what they have not achieved. And yet for Waller the Scots are ‘tame[d]’, like horses or hawks; Cromwell has brought civilité to what was previously wild. He has not slaughtered his way to victory (whatever Milton might urge to the contrary) but has used his superior authority to translate wildness into tractability. Despite his deftness, however, Waller’s poem indicates considerable discomfort with the image of Cromwell as a man of war, notable mostly for his conquests. Some of that discomfort no doubt arose from the use made of the image by Royalist writers, but some may have come from deeper anxieties about the fate of the male subject ruled by force.

The same kind of anxiety is manifest in Dryden’s ode: not surprising, since it draws heavily on Waller’s *Panegyrick*. It is almost silent about Cromwell’s acts — indeed, it is almost silent about everything, so great are its hesitations and self-cautions. We might begin by noting an anxiety with which we are already familiar. Dryden is especially troubled by the image of Cromwell as conqueror; in one of the few concrete and fully realised images, he describes Cromwell as an Alexander:

Swift and resistas through the land he past  
Like that bold Greek who did the East subdue;  
And made to battels such heroic haste  
As if on wings of victorie he flew. (ll. 49–52)

The poem neatly locates itself on the boundary between the two Alexanders of the historical tradition, the brave and noble conqueror, defender against Eastern tyranny, and the Alexander who is all too Eastern himself, despot and given to luxury, drunkenness and the abuse of power — the Alexander, in fact, that Dryden was to portray in ‘Alexander’s Alexander’s Feast’. When the hard military body and its symbol of empire reunite, the results are ambiguous, which may be why Dryden rejects image after image on the grounds that they are somehow incommensurate with the inner man, a poor representation of the person who performed
them. This splitting of icon and inner being might be readable as a kind
of defence against the reification of Cromwell’s body by his opponent.
This may be intended to refute the figuration of Cromwell as a slippery,
feminised Machiavellian whose words are not his bond, but it also recalls
that image: ‘Thus poor Mechanique Arts in publique moove / Whilst the
deep Secrets beyond practice goe’ (ll. 147–8). Like Waller, too, Dryden is
concerned to emphasise Cromwell’s conquest by civilising, educative
power of example, rather than by force of arms:

  His ashes in a peaceful urne shall rest,
  His Name a great example stands to show
  How strangely high endeavours may be blest,
  Where Piety and valour joyntly goe. (ll. 125–8)

Norbrook is no doubt right to point to the exhaustion and even
boredom conveyed by these lacklustre lines, but the exhaustion in ques-
tion and the languor it brings to the speaking voice are themselves a kind
of refutation of the figure of the energetic, Machiavellian Vice of Royalist
rhetoric. On the other hand, Dryden seems willing to sound like a
courtier, though not a sycophant, and the image of the tired, rhetorically
gifted courtier has complex gender valencies in this tangled context. The
return to the (conservative) notion of the rhetorical performer as emblem-
atic of a manliness produced by civilité represents at once the extreme end
of the process of seeing Cromwell as a civilising, stabilising power, and
also the defeat of the alternative notions of manliness put forward by
republican idealists. Zeal is replaced by control, and immediacy by
cultivated restraint. This notion of manliness is above all a notion of
cultivated manliness, a manliness that is not innate or a product merely of
the role of head of household, but a manliness produced above all by
education. Military and godly manliness, though also produced, purport
to be the natural outcome of the masculine body. Jettisoning Cromwell
The Iron Man turned out to mean jettisoning the republican ideals of
masculinity too, and replacing them with different, more conservative
ideals.

Precisely the same anxieties beset Marvell, and in one sense all this has
been an effort to begin a new explication of the difficult cruxes of his
‘Horatian Ode.’ In the context of Royalist ambivalences and anxieties,
Marvell’s poem can be understood as an exciting attempt to assert the
masculinity of Cromwell, but to find ways of doing so which evade the
negative associations built up by Royalist satire rather than confronting
them as Milton had. More than any other eulogy to Cromwell, Marvell’s
‘Horatian Ode’ sets out to create a masculinity that is synonymous with the state, and to inscribe in *epideixis* Nedham’s statement that ‘the power of the sword is and ever has been the foundation of all titles to government’. The poem begins with an explicit contrast between the cultivated masculinity that arises from books and the heroic masculinity embodied in the hard body figured by Cromwell:

"\'Tis time to leave the Books in dust,  
And oyl th’unused Armours rust:  
Removing from the Wall  
The Croslet of the Hall.  
So restless Cromwel could not cease  
In the inglorious Arts of Peace,  
But through adventrous War  
Urged his active Star."

Cromwell’s restlessness, his turbulence, disturb the quiet of the study, in which armour and by implication glory have been obscured by dust and rust. Cromwell’s uncultivated masculinity breaks through this encrustation, detaching the masculine from cultivation and pushing ‘the forward Youth’ out of the languishing inertia of poetry and into action. Cromwell’s autonomy is another masculine characteristic; here he is not driven by his fate, but himself drives it. The poem constantly associates Cromwell with natural phenomena which are not merely apocalyptic but also both penetrating and cutting: lightning that makes a break in the clouds and divides by fire; the falcon who cleaves the sky with her stoop; a marching army; an erect sword. He is not a human being at all, but a cosmic force unleashed, the visible agent of God’s will. And yet having turned Cromwell into a speechless, devastating lightning blast, Marvell stops dead, as if suddenly reminded that there is a real man:

And, if we would speak true  
Much to the man is due.  
Who, from his private Gardens, where  
He liv’d reserved and austere,  
As if his highest plot  
To plant the Bergamot,  
Could by industrial valour climbe,  
To ruine the great work of Time,  
And cast the Kingdome old  
Into another Mold. (ll. 27–34)

Marvell is naturally concerned to refute the silly Royalist image of Cromwell sitting about in Huntingdon plotting to gain the throne. His
portrait of Cromwell as essentially a private individual whose body is entirely subordinated to the goals of civility is a refutation of the Royalists’ figuration of his excesses and greed. That private gentleman is also contrasted with the sublime figure the poem is celebrating. Public duty calls the gentleman away from country retirement; such retirement must be sacrificed on the altar of the nation. Such a sacrifice refigures public masculinity over against the traditional and consensual definition of headship of the household. Marvell deploys an Adamic image of Cromwell cultivating the garden by raising the bergamot pear, only to reject it for the more radical God of the apocalypse. While ‘On Appleton House’ resituates the Edenic garden-state on the figure of Maria Fairfax, a feminine nymph who displaces the paterfamilias Fairfax, in a manner which will be repeated in Marvell’s elegy on Cromwell, here the poem is apparently content to move on, so that masculinity as well as the kingdom is cast ‘into another mould’, one which can hardly yet be specified because it is unimaginable and radical.

The story told about youth at the outset is reiterated, with Cromwell as its protagonist; the quiet life of cultivated masculinity is abandoned for an apotheosis of apocalyptic military masculinity. And yet Marvell backs away from a complete abandonment of the image of the head of the household; like Waller’s Scots, the Irish are not slaughtered but ‘tamed’, in an image which brings the gentleman farmer back into contact with the warrior leader. And as we have seen, Marvell is not afraid to figure the new state as founded on the severed head of the king. The normally awkward implications of this can be got around adroitly here because Marvell has carefully established Cromwell as doing violence only apocalyptically, that is, only as a force of nature. It is precisely by transcending the image of the armoured male body with images of natural disasters that Marvell can portray Cromwell as a regicide without invoking the image of the overly hard, callous figure of castration exploited by Royalists. Cromwell’s perpetually erect sword can support the masculinity of others, can redeem the nation.

‘The First Anniversary’ is a transitional poem between the dazzling, even pushy certitudes of the ‘Horatian Ode’ and the hesitations of the ‘Poem upon the Death’. Unlike the ‘Horatian Ode’, ‘The First Anniversary’ was published in 1655, and was also mentioned in Mercurius Politicus. Perhaps even this publication was equivocal, since it was anonymous; Marvell did not lend his name to his paean. But we should not make too much of this; as Harold Love has shown, Marvell preferred to direct his poems through carefully mapped networks of patronage; even the
'Horatian Ode' may have been meant to reach Cromwell's hands. 'The First Anniversary' begins with an assertion of confidence in Cromwell's masculine power, comparing the 'vain Curlings', the feminine meanderings of 'the Watry maze' of mankind with Cromwell, who 'alone with greater Vigour runs'; he is that most paternal of all images, the Sun itself.\(^77\) Marvell's 'First Anniversary' struggles to offer an unequivocally masculine and empowered Cromwell, one who 'cuts his way still nearer to the Skyes' (l. 46), cutting signifying here both clearing a path and cleaving through opposition, just like the lightning bolt in the 'Horatian Ode'. Cromwell's power is also creative and civilising, rather than merely destructive; the metaphor of Cromwell as Amphion above all links Cromwell with poetry, rather than figuring the warrior-ruler as ineluctably divided from the languorous poet, as did 'An Horatian Ode'. Yet Amphion is an ambivalent image for Cromwell, for although distinctive for his mildness, his twin brother Zethus sometimes drew him into acts of violence. Marvell refers specifically to Amphion's use of the lyre to wall Thebes, helped by his brother; the image is one of the labour of state-creation harmonised by one powerful presence, itself in tune with the cosmos. But there is also an oblique allusion to the regicide in which the Republic is also grounded, for Amphion and Zethus kill the previous rulers of Thebes, Lycus and Dirce, because they have enslaved the twins' mother Antiope. The murder of Dirce in particular has a fairytale bloodiness; she is yoked to a bull which drags her over rocks until she is torn in pieces. Although Marvell suppresses all references to the bloody vengeance which sets Amphion on the throne of Thebes, the image of Amphion – intended again to mark Cromwell as one who rules by civilité and the will of heaven, and not by force – cannot altogether evade the image of the man of blood and iron.

The poem is dominated by the apocalyptic imagery of its central section, in which Cromwell's singular and sublime energy and masculinity inaugurate not only the English republic, but the millennial final struggle against the significantly feminine Whore, the 'monster' who is driven 'shrinking to her Roman Den impure' (ll. 128–30). The hasty introduction of the feminine Catholic Church brings to bear on Marvell's sublime Cromwell the gender pressures of critiques of Henrietta Maria; yet again, the English republic's masculinity has to be shored up at the expense of a female and Catholic Other. In this case, it is Cromwell's soaring masculinity which can now be unequivocally celebrated and legitimated, because it is separate from the coiled femininity of the Catholic monster. The rushing speed of linear, phallic masculinity is
expressed in images of Cromwell now as the driver of a fiery chariot, now as himself driven by a higher force; these images are mirrored in the gathering pace of the verse.

By contrast, Marvell’s ‘A Poem upon the Death of O. C.’ oscillates rather unhappily, though powerfully, between figuring Cromwell as the classical warrior-hero, emblem of the state, and representing him as misunderstood, not truly hard, but surprisingly soft. Softness is stressed early on:

And he whom Nature all for Peace had made,
But angry Heaven unto War had sway’d,
And so less useful where he most desir’d,
For what he least affected was admir’d,
Deserved yet an End whose ev’ry part
Should speak the wondrous softness of his Heart.78

Elsewhere in the poem, Cromwell’s breast is open (l. 25). Despite this softness, however, he also resembles classical heroes. In a very dark allusion to Homer’s portrayal of Hector’s doomed son Astyanax, Marvell depicts Cromwell holding his baby daughter Elizabeth, and makes an explicit contrast, as Homer does, between the warlike male body, the softness of the baby, and the softness of the maternal breast:

Her when an infant, taken with her Charms,
He oft would flourish in his mighty Arms;
And, lest their force the tender burthen wrong,
Slacken the vigour of his Muscles strong;
Then to the Mothers brest her softly move,
Which while she drain’d of Milk she fill’d with Love. (ll. 31–6)79

This is not merely an image of paternal affection, or family values. In showing Cromwell capable of tenderness, Marvell implicitly refutes the notion that his Herculean qualities are inimical to the weak and the helpless. In particular, Cromwell’s restraint in deliberately weakening his muscles, deliberately softening his body, figures him not merely as protector of the vulnerable, but as in control of his body and its acts; this is a Hercules without the furens. The image of Cromwell holding his daughter gently replaces the image of illicit embraces with Mrs Lambert as an image of his relations with the feminised state. Here, rather than possessing, penetrating and exploiting femininity, Cromwell protects it, as a good father of the household. Because the lactating breast here is imagined not as part of Elizabeth Cromwell, but as a kind of entity in itself, it too is subtly linked to Cromwell, so that his hard muscles,
available though still relaxed, are counterpointed by a source of feminine nurturance of which he is the guarantor. Here is the godly paterfamilias, capable of an almost feminine nurturance, but innately – and literally – the Protector. Here, too, is a subtly Christological figure to set against Charles’s powerful adoption of that image.80

Like Maria Fairfax in ‘Upon Appleton House’, Elizabeth offers a way out for the burden of masculinity, a burden of violence and excess and blood. Without being in the least a radical or feminist figure, the daughter can contain masculinity without weakening or diluting it. It is an error, I think, to see these figures as tainted by what William Kerrigan has termed ‘nympholepsy’; rather they seem to signify a phase in the life of masculinity which is associatively linked with childhood.81 We have already seen that there was every reason for Renaissance writers to understand masculinity as in some sense born from a childhood located in the feminine world, even as sculpted painfully from a girlish self accustomed to feminine pleasures. In Marvell’s constant reversion to the figure of a little girl – in a garden – as a sign of all that is private, enclosed, retired, safe from the public world of war and politics and the state, we have nothing less than a retreat from masculine pain into a child’s world of feminine pleasure, a retreat that is also and sometimes explicitly a retreat from adult sexuality. There is a longing here for precisely that safety, that maternity which masculinity must disavow. Cromwell, on the other hand, is constantly and enviously signified being born again as a force of masculinity from within that feminised world.

And yet even for Cromwell the figuration of the father is not an unproblematic and uncontradictory resolution of the longing for Edenic girlhood and the social need to be a man. The haunting of the tender figuration of Cromwell and Elizabeth by the equally tender but more ominous figures of Hector and Astyanax, however, means that the entire image is bracketed by a consciousness that heroes are those who face death. Here, the order of deaths is reversed, however; in Homer, the child dies as a result of the father’s death, but here the father dies as a result of the child’s death. So important is Elizabeth’s death that Cromwell’s own could easily be read as an anticlimax; a more interesting possibility is that Marvell has chosen to represent Cromwell’s own death through the death of a woman-child. Implicitly, this gives Cromwell the vulnerability of the very state-family that he as paterfamilias must protect. Of course, when Hector dies the fall of Troy is assured, so there is an obvious sense in which Cromwell’s death is the death of the state; this is signified not only by the chaos in nature wrought by his demise, the storm, but by the
inversion of the events in the Hector story. The death of a child leads to
the death of her original, her father; why then should not his death lead to
the death of his original, nature? Here Marvell simply evokes the standard
metaphoric apparatus for the death of a king.

Having carefully established the traces of softness and femininity in
Cromwell, Marvell can now turn to his military successes. Cromwell is
celebrated less as a victor than as the man who gave meaning to the empty
signifiers of war by filling them with religion. Having talked of ‘inward
Mail’ and cities conquered by a prayer, Marvell at last allows himself the
image of Cromwell as a hard body:

\begin{quote}
Hence, though in battle none so brave or Fierce,
Yet him the adverse steel could never pierce. (ll. 195–6)
\end{quote}

Instead, Cromwell’s heart is pierced by pity for the foes he kills:

\begin{quote}
Pity it seem’d to hurt him more that felt
Each wound himself which he to others dealt. (ll. 197–8)
\end{quote}

In elegantly compressed form, these lines engage with and refute the notion
that a hard and armoured body makes for a hard heart. Marvell insists that
Cromwell is indeed invulnerable, unassailable, but also insists that he
can be assailed, though only by emotions of empathy. This is a Christo-
logical image; holiness that can reach out to the weakness of others, wounds
that come not from weakness but from strength – and so it also subtly
assails the Christologies of Charles I, which are much more inclined to
equate suffering with weakness. The figuration of Cromwell’s dead body
foregrounds the loss of the hard body to death as a kind of martyrdom:

\begin{quote}
That port which so majestique was and strong,
Loose and depriv’d of vigour, stretch’d along:
All withered, all discolour’d, pale and wan,
How much another thing, no more that man? (ll. 251–4)
\end{quote}

Whereas eulogies to Charles generally insisted that his body was
saintlike, incorruptible, even (in engravings) oddly vigorous, sitting up
to regard the viewer, Marvell stresses the exhaustion and dissipation of
Cromwell’s hard body in death. This is a straightforward figuration of the
transience of earthly glory, as the succeeding lines indicate, but it also
comments obliquely and yet again on that hard body, now dissolved. It
refutes the notion that Cromwell’s value could be equated with his body.
Heroes, Marvell asserts, are like saints in that they transcend death, and
here transcendence is achieved for the military Cromwell not through the
body, but through writings:
Thee, many ages hence, in martial verse
Shall th’English souldier, ere he charge, rehearse;
Singing of thee, inflame themselves to fight,
And with the name of Cromwell, armies fright. (ll. 277–80)

Again the model is classical heroism, this time as commemorated by Pindar and hence installed as the heritable basis for a new household or state. The heritability is significant not only for Richard Cromwell, but also for Oliver’s image as father of the renewed state itself; his masculinity imparts hardness to the nation. Marvell may also have been thinking of the story that Theseus came back to fight at Marathon and encourage the Athenians. In both cases, stories about Cromwell become the site on which England’s armies can erect their own hard bodies, with the result that although Cromwell’s own body is gone, its significance as a guarantee of the freedom of the state remains.

Despite the efforts of Marvell, Waller and Dryden, the Royalist representation of Cromwell was to triumph, at least for them and for their own day. Marvell, who had withdrawn his elegy for Cromwell from the commemorative publication, apparently at the last moment, must have felt relieved that he was not haunted by the Protector of his own imagination, as the others were. Ironically, keeping refutations of the Royalist man of iron in circulation may have helped to keep the originals alive too; as Derrida once remarked, refutation requires that one repeats what is to be refuted. So in John Ogilby’s description of the painted imagery at the coronation entertainments of Charles II, the triumph of the Royalist representation of Cromwell can be seen clearly:

the King, mounted in calm motion, USURPATION flying before him, a figure with many ill-favoured heads, some bigger, some lesser, and one particularly shooting out of his shoulder, like CROMWELL’S; Another Head upon his Rump, or Tayl; Two harpies with a Crown chased by an Angel; Hell’s Jaw opening. Under the said representation of the King pursuing Usurpation is this motto, VOLVENDA DIES IN ATTULIT ULTRO.83

Rebellion, of course, is represented by a woman, and as such is compatible not only with the many Royalist satires of a female Parliament, but with the figuration here and elsewhere of Cromwell as a feminised monster, the kind of monster that a hero might defeat by having a flawless, hard body. But here there is no hero, no Hercules, for all such figures were tainted by their associations with the many-headed monsters of rebellion. Rather, the king needs simply to appear to rout the beast. The king is Dryden’s civilised and knowing masculinity, not the
embattled masculinity of the republicans. Political triumph fixes the meaning of the masculine.

At least for the moment. As Blair Worden has recently shown, however, the re-presentation of Cromwell in subsequent ages has been central to the political scene. Clarendon’s ‘bold bad man’, with his virtues and crimes, is a more sophisticated version of the by-now-familiar image of Royalist Cromwell, admirably hard but drenched in blood. Carlyle, too, seemed drawn to Cromwell because of his masculinity, rejecting the ‘smooth-shaven respectabilities’ of the Parliamentarian leadership, repeatedly calling Vane ‘thin’, and speaking of the leaders’ skill in rhetoric in terms which contrasted its smoothness unfavourably with Cromwell’s plain and unskilled speech. It was in part the representations of the Civil War years which had so coloured the language Carlyle chose to use, so that Cromwell could emerge as the patron saint of an active, Christian and entirely Victorian masculinity.
In 1647, a text called *Strange News from Scotland* described the birth of a ‘terrible and prodigious monster’ on 14 September:

a child, or rather a monster (I think Learna nor Egyptian Nile ever produced the like), with two heads growing severally, somewhat distant one from the other, bearing the similitude of man and woman, the one face being all overgrown with long hair, the other more smooth and more effeminate . . . From the secret parts (which showed it to be both male and female), downwards all hairy, like your Satyrs or Sylvan Gods . . . those that were eyewitnesses . . . standing amazed as if they had beholden Gorgon.¹

This monster has been born to a woman who explains how it came about:

‘Good people’, says she, ‘pray for me as I do for myself. This judgement is questionless fallen upon me for my sins . . . for I have often wished this or some like judgement might befall me, which might not only be a terror to myself, but all other that should behold it, rather than any child born of my body should receive these Christian rites which by the laws and ancient customs of England and Scotland were given children at the font . . . And I confess that I did vehemently desire, being seduced by heretical factious fellows who go in sheep’s clothing but are naught but ravening wolves, to see the utter ruin and subversion of all Church and State government, which too many in these times have desired, as the late unhappy differences can testify.’²

Why should the desire for the dissolution of Church and State produce a hermaphrodite monster, one who reminds those who gaze at it of various of the classical beasts normally slain by hard-bodied heroes? There are several kinds of interpretation going on here, all with gender implications. The monster is marked as part of wider issues by the evocation of classical mythology, whose feminised monsters, as we have seen, help to define the good order of masculinity. The monster’s mother also sees the monster as the outcome of her own involvement in politics, the visible expression of the chaos which has invaded church and state government. That chaos is presented in the body of the monster as a

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¹ See footnote in the text.
² See footnote in the text.
deformation of masculinity; the monstrous child is not defined as either male or female, but the use of the term ‘effeminate’ to describe one of its faces suggests that something has made the foetus lapse into femininity, into hermaphroditism, from a masculine starting-point. This fits with early modern embryology, in which femininity is normally seen as itself a kind of malformation of masculinity, a swerve away from masculine bodily integrity. But as well, and most importantly for the place of such bodily texts in the Civil War, the monster is the outcome of its mother’s ‘vehement’ desires. She is a rebellious woman in any case, disdainful of the authority of church and state, authority seen as masculine. Maternal desire, acting on the foetus, brings about a gender deformation. This interpretation, arising from the bringing together of providential discourses about prodigies with theories of birth abnormality, explains the particular freight of male anxiety carried by the image of the hermaphrodite monster. The monster was to become one of the Civil War’s aptest symbols of male anxiety, a symbol in which male fears about lineage, inheritance and identity and their importance for masculinity could be represented.

Monsters were well-established in print culture before the Civil War, and their place in religious controversy was likewise well-marked. Monsters perform many functions; at its simplest, the monster is simply displayed, and the reader left to make what he can of it. In 1531, a single-sheet pamphlet appeared, carrying the story of the Liebenham monster, a pair of porcine Siamese twins. This is the first printed monster-text in English to have survived. Three-quarters of the sheet is taken up with a detailed woodcut showing the creature itself, its two bodies symmetrically depending from a single head. A brief textual note tells where the monster was born and describes its appearance, but offers no comment or story. The entire production seems little more than a single-minded display of the monster’s body. These single-sheet monster texts replicate the actual practice of displaying monsters in church porches for the gaze of the community. By the early seventeenth century, however, the business of showing freaks had become more complex; the Master of the Revels Sir Henry Herbert had become the licenser of monster displays, monsters had become one of the main attractions at Bartholomew Fair, and monsters were sometimes brought to the city to be ‘shown’ as freaks. Yet some Puritans objected to showing if it was at the expense of demonstration: Thomas Bedford complained that ‘the common sort make no further use of prodigies and strange-births, than as a matter of wonder and table-talk’.
The interpretations to which such spectacles were subject varied, from simple providentialism – monsters as signs of God’s wrath – to more complex exegesis which combined providentialism with medical and political understandings. For the new and increasingly fashionable discourses of monster reading, the etymology of the term ‘monster’ was crucial. Whereas simpler monster publications drew on Augustine’s argument that monster derived from *monstrare*, to show, or *monstrum*, that which is shown, others claimed that monster derived from *monere*, to warn. Others pointed to the link between monsters and demonstrations, or proofs. The contestation around the monster phenomenon is inscribed in the plural etymologies generated by the word itself. Discourses on prodigies in general and monsters in particular became increasingly fashionable with the scholarly, medical and authorial communities. Medical treatises deal with monsters with increasing frequency and detail from the mid-sixteenth century, and contemporary chroniclers and correspondents make a point of recording the display or birth of monsters in their digests. Moreover, monsters began to appear in literary texts: in *The Faerie Queene*, and in Drayton’s ‘The Moone-Calfe’. Such monsters had dual antecedents in the epic monsters of classical antiquity and the unnatural births described in newsbooks. Monsters traversed the entire cultural terrain, but were interpreted differently in high and popular circles. Increasing interest in monsters and their meaning produced complex contestations around issues of authorship and print culture, publicity and the public gaze, theatricality and writing, and above all the gendering of authorship.

These contestations and the new discourses of monster exegesis were themselves products of the growth and diversification of print culture. As we shall see, anxieties about breeding meanings which multiply uncontrollably, central to the discourses of monstrosity, were increasingly mapped onto texts about monsters, so that monsters become the occasion for breeding words. One strand of exegesis has particular significance for questions of masculinity, authorship and publication. I want to begin by looking at the notion of patrilinearity, and then to map the tensions in this structure onto certain discursive formulations of the process of conception in medical writings. Medical writers too often based theories on etymological ingenuity; one group of medical writings derive *monstrum* from *menstruum*, and consequently argue that monsters are the product of illicit sex during menstruation. Hidden in this etymology is an acute anxiety about the part women have to play in generation, an anxiety which the monster could symbolise, and which could connect to other anxieties about...
the war’s disruption of the secure transmission of lineage and identity, anxieties about patrilinearity.

Simply, patrilinearity means the tracing of descent through the male rather than the female line. Obvious markers of this tracing include surnames, adopted by most of society in the late middle ages, and passed from father to son; the descent of arms and titles; the construction of genealogical tables; and the predominance in the discourse of monarchy of the metaphor of monarchs as the descendants of their fathers. Socially, patrilinearity produced certain practices, most notably a system of primogeniture which was insistently retained despite its capacity to create social problems. Primogeniture is the most evident instance of patrilinearity operating to construct a male identity of self-sameness. The descent of name, title and property intact (the same) from father to son produced the son as the same as his father, having in every respect the same (social) identity. In such a system, name and property can scarcely be said to be transmitted; they do not pass from one individual to another, but remain in the same hands. So dominant was sameness that fathers were reluctant to provide for younger sons if this meant that the eldest would receive less property than they had themselves.

Patrilinearity must be understood as an early modern narrative, a story, rather than a social (much less biological) actuality, a story men told themselves which helped them to make sense of the world. It must not be conflated with actual familial arrangements and pursuits; indeed, it often appears to be violently at odds with these. Nor was it the only possible story; often a patrilineal narrative of self came into conflict with alternative narratives which emphasised self-differentiation from ancestors. These conflicts undoubtedly became more acute in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when improvisation, providence and profit became possible ways of constructing the male self as upwardly mobile (as we would say). Nevertheless the old story was still so important by the end of the seventeenth century that autobiographies and biographies routinely contained lengthy genealogies of male ancestors. The problem with patrilinearity as a story of male identity was the woman in the person of the mother. The logic of masculine sameness depends upon the repression of femininity and the displacement of the maternal body.

Feminist critics have often noted the masculine conceptualisation of the female body as the passive recipient of male sexuality/seed. In early modern medical writings, however, there is a marked distinction between female sexual activity (necessary for conception) and female reproductive passivity (necessary for masculine self-replication). In
Nicholas Fontanus’ *The Womans Doctour*, for example, the place of the mother in reproduction is clearly figured as a problem:

Provident Nature at all times hath not a greater care of any thing, than of the propagation of mankinde, and this although it appeare not so much in the species, yet it is cleare and manifest in the individuall, and thus he hath framed woman to be a delight in venerous conjunctions, that they might in greedinesse suck in the mans seed, and dispose and cherish it to generation. So soone as the woman hath conceived, Nature hath an especial care to fashion, augment, nourish, adorne and perfect the childe, and at a determined time to send it out into the world, in all respects complete and absolute.22

A careless reading of this passage would suggest that Nature and the maternal body are conflated. In fact, Nature is clearly designated masculine, and hence active; it is he who frames woman, he who fashions and perfects the child. The consequence is to evacuate shaping power from the female body and assign it instead to an abstract male force. ‘So soone as the woman hath conceived’, Nature takes control of the shaping process even to the extent of sending the child into the world ‘in all respects complete and absolute’. Nature’s ‘especial care’ is motivated by the desire to propagate mankind, to prevent any swerves away from perfection and completion. For this to take place, the passage implies, shaping power must be transferred from the feminine to the masculine.

The striking polyvalence of describing Nature as ‘provident’ helps to explain his role in reproduction. The term suggests Nature is a sign for the deity, and it also carries its primary sense of forethought, concern for the future. This is however underpinned by a secondary economic sense, in which ‘provident’ means frugal, prone to save rather than to spend. Nature’s economic ‘providence’ expresses itself not only in the desire to save mankind through propagation, but in the process by which this is done. Thus he ‘frame[s]’ the woman (but not the man) to be provident of male seed, ‘to dispose and cherish it to generation’. This female providence is associated with Nature’s masculine agency not just because Nature’s own ‘provident’ care is its cause, but also because the only moment of female bodily agency the passage allows is an agency of consumption, sucking in the seed ‘in greedinesse’. Feminine agency is thus different from providence, since it involves a taking-in that is consumptive rather than merely preservative. Only the (external) agency of masculine nature can convert this logic of consumption to a logic of production, or reproduction. At this point it becomes clear that *The Womans Doctour’s* story of conception is a rewriting of a story of familial relations. Nature plays the part of the wise father and property-holder,
who ‘provident[ly]’ cares for the transmission (replication) of property/identity ‘complete and absolute’. The mother plays the role commonly assigned to the virtuous godly wife: to cherish that which is proper to the man.\textsuperscript{23} But the passage grants this provident father-figure a power which society could not, for in conception he is able to transform female consumptiveness – the greedy sucking-in of masculinity – into an essential part of his own project of reproduction. In society at large, matters were not so simple. Godly conduct-books abound in anxieties about wives as consumers, whose spendthrift ways and upward mobility were thought to threaten the masculine self-replication on which the social order depended.\textsuperscript{24} The entire passage can therefore be understood as a \textit{fantasy} of male power in reproduction which expresses and manages a social problem in economic metaphors.

The story of patrilinearity cannot ever entirely displace the maternal body, since that body is only too clearly metonymically associated with offspring in a fashion which the paternal body cannot hope to emulate. Its visibility, its insistent presence, always threaten to become the determining factors in any narrative of reproduction. By denying femininity any shaping power, medical discourse struggles to make the maternal body a mere receptacle. But the fashioning power of the feminine, perceived as a social threat, is also insistently on display in other texts, and its trace can be clearly discerned in medical literature. ‘Just as in a baker’s trough, the flour mixed with warm water and set in motion by the yeast, swells up into one single mass, if the baker sets a hand to it, he can make all different kinds of cake of many different shapes: so in women, ideas make the same sort of impression on the foetus’, remarked Claude Quillet.\textsuperscript{25}

Woman’s shaping power must always be greedily parasitic since it involves the consumption and waste of male property. In reproductive terms, women’s improvisational interventions involve a similar wastage of male property and identity, incarnated as male seed. The primary cause advanced to explain the occurrence of monstrosity is a conception by the mother, or, as Jane Sharp puts it, ‘the strength of the mother’s imagination’; women’s ideas and desires take monstrous form:\textsuperscript{26}

sometimes the mother is frighted or conceives wonders, or longs strangely for things not to be had, and the child is marked accordingly by it . . . A woman that lookt upon a Blackmore brought forth a child like to a Blackmore; and one I know, that seeing a boy with two thumbs on one hand, brought forth such another . . . as that woman who brought forth a child all hairy like a Camel, because she usually said prayers kneeling before the image of St John the Baptist who was clothed all with camels hair.\textsuperscript{27}
Sharp’s source is the sixteenth-century medical writer Ambroise Paré, who tells similar tales to account for the birth of monsters. Paré appeals to ancient authority to support his assumption that monsters are maternal misconceptions:

the ancients, who sought out the secrets of nature, have taught of other causes for monstrous children and have registered them to the ardent and obstinate imagination that the mother might receive at the moment she conceived – through some object, or fantastic dream . . . Damascene, a serious author, attests to having seen a girl as furry as a bear, whom the mother had bred thus deformed and hideous, for having looked too intently at the image of Saint John dressed in skins . . . Hippocrates saved a princess accused of adultery, because she had given birth to a child as black as a moor, her husband and she both having white skin; which woman was absolved upon Hippocrates’ persuasion that it was the portrait of a moor, similar to the child, which was customarily attached to her bed.28

Whereas Sharp sees such maternal conceptions as accidental, the products of fright,29 Paré sees them in moralistic terms; the mother’s imagination is ‘ardent’ (almost greedy) and ‘obstinate’, in a primary sense of fixed and immovable, but with a secondary sense of the engagement of the will. The mother looks ‘too intently’ at an image in Paré’s account; this implies that the woman herself is culpable. Moreover, Paré sees the moment of conception itself as crucial for the formation of the child-monster. Whereas Sharp concludes that the formation of monsters is an outcome of the entire pregnancy, Paré locates the two conceptions at the same point in time. This is signalled by the presence of the painting of the Moor on the bed of the lady accused of adultery; the lady’s glance at the portrait image takes place during conception itself. Paré’s formulation means that monsters become the product of a feminine interference in conception.

For Paré, then, a monster is not a deformed child, but a child who does not resemble its parents, or rather, a failure to resemble the father is itself a deformity. This is the significance of Hippocrates’ proof that the mother of the Moor is not an adulterer; if she were, generation would at least be normal. In monstrous conceptions, reproduction becomes production. This comes about not because the mother ceases to be a simple receptor, but because her receptivity is widened to include images other than those her husband gives her.30 For Paré, this is an ‘obstinate’ act of the mother’s will, an engagement with images beyond that of her husband, a kind of infidelity. This story of conception is a rewriting of a social story, the story of ‘ideal’ godly marriage, in which women’s position is represented in the idea that they should not ask questions in church but should ask their
husbands at home. In this way, female knowledge acquired from sources other than the husband is troped in medical literature as the cause of monstrosity.

This anxiety, together with economic anxieties about spendthrift women consuming instead of preserving their husbands’ property, is mapped onto monsters in the many monster pamphlets which read monsters as parodies of fashion. The female monster born with ‘a peece of flesh two fingers thick round about, the flesh being wonderfully curled like a gentlewoman’s attire’ represents this female power of self-transformation through consumption as monstrosity. Other monsters are born with thick ruffs around their necks which are likened to those ‘in use’ in fashion. One such pamphlet makes an explicit connection between the monster’s form and the monstrosity of fashion in its title: An admonition to all women to see the iust judgement of god for the punishment of pride purtraied in a wonderfull childe. Given the links made by godly moralists between such female consumption and adultery, it is tempting to argue that the monster’s conception is a trope for adultery and subsequent illegitimacy, as Marie-Hélène Huet does. However, these stories seem not to be reducible to fears of adultery; rather, the fear expressed is of maternity itself and its power to disorganise masculine identity.

In A Most Strange and True Discourse of the Wonderfull Judgement of God, however, the association of paternal and political authority is central to interpreting woman’s transgression. This story locates the origins of monstrosity in the future mother’s refusal to marry the man selected for her by her parents:

She fell to mislike with the man, to shunne his honest company, and in the end, wholly to break off from the match: whereof, any maid indewed with modesty, would have been greatly ashamed, and unwilling unto.

This refusal of paternal authority is linked with a failure of modesty, or a failure to control the body and keep it private. The woman is termed a ‘slipperie Eele’ who ‘wind[s] away’ from her chosen betrothed to the incestuous embrace of her cousin german, by whom she conceives the monster:

God in iust iudgement (to show his displeasure against mockerie with his holy institution of marriage, and his hatred of the sinnes of whoredom, adulterie, fornication, inceste, and all other uncleannesse) made this proude, this scornfulle and unconstant wench, the mother of a monster, and not of an orderly birth.

The monster is not only the mark of incest, but the visible sign of a specifically female and sexual ‘uncleannesse’ which demonstrates female
disorderliness for all to see. The monster is a disorderly birth, as opposed to an ‘orderly’ one; the woman is likewise a disorderly woman. A woman’s attempt to shape her own life in defiance of paternal authority is mis-shaping; female authority is disorder because it can only exist at the expense of paternal order. This denial of paternal will is linked with an entire range of social transgressions. Anxiety about adultery is not the basis for such fears, but another expression of them. The woman’s monstrous child becomes a synecdochal representation of the social disorder which results from women evading male paternal authority. Without the law of the father, there can be no order.

This idea had obvious applicability to political and religious controversy. The politicisation of monster exegesis dates back to the Reformation, when Luther authorised publication of a monk-monster designed to show the deformation of religious life, while monster exegesis was also used in the propaganda of the War of the Holy League. Questions of authority and self-replication which were already embodied in the monster discourses of medicine were crucial to seventeenth-century political debates. In the Civil War, too, the image was taken up. In a particular narrative, *A Declaration of A Strange and Wonderfull Monster born in Kirkham Parish*, anxieties about masculinity and political fears, already entangled, are wound more tightly together. Published in 1645/6, the pamphlet appears to engage primarily with local difficulties; it is a godly critique of the people of Lancashire, who are resisting attempts to improve them:

No parts in England have so many witches, none fuller of Papists, and they were the chief instruments in seeking to have that wicked Book of Allowance for Sports on the Lords day to be published, and it was set forth by their procurements, and the godly people amongst them have suffered very much under their reproaches and wicked malice.

These references to the *Book of Sports* and to the Lancashire witches suggest anxiety about local misrule under the Stuart monarchy, anxieties which manifest themselves in fear of unruly women. This is reinforced by the status of the mother of the monster. She is described on the title page as ‘a Popish gentlewoman’. Foremost among the signs of ‘notorious Papacy’ is the presence of icons. The mother of the monster is described as ‘having many popish pictures and crucifixes, and other popish trumpery in which she much delighted’ (p. 8). This recalls Paré’s mothers of monsters, who spent much time in the contemplation of images. One might even argue that part of godly iconoclasm was an anxiety about the
influence of images on women, especially illiterate women. Paré’s narrative of the birth of monsters harmonises perfectly with Puritan theories of icons, iconoclasm and worship. As Ann Kibbey and others have shown, Puritan iconoclasm was a complex matter; icons and images were resisted precisely because Puritans were fearful of their power. Set over against the icon was the anti-icon of the living body as the only true site of God’s operation upon the fabric of the world; hence the living body was constantly interpreted as a set of inscribed signs of the state of the soul within. Icons, as works of art, are mediations of the workings of that process of divine inscription. They might actually get in its way, either by mocking, defining or limiting it, or by simply standing distractingly in the way of the kind of contact believed to be appropriate. It was because Calvin and other early reformers granted so much power to visual representations of this kind that it became necessary to abolish them in favour of the martyred bodies of the godly. The living body was demarcated as a sacred site for the operations of divine grace, eliminating other possibilities by contrast.

The story of bodies versus icons might be read in the narratives of the genesis of monsters in which the mother of a monster looks away from the living body of the father and towards a mere representation. In such stories, the mother is cast as the susceptible victim of the power of art, the believer whose relation to God – and to her husband – is blocked by her too-willing apprehension of the idol. A Declaration suggests both direct and indirect causes for the monster’s birth. The indirect cause is the woman’s papist practices with icons, but this is complicated by the chief sin of the mother’s mother – the monster’s grandmother – which is a crime relating both to icons and to lived bodies as signs. Papist icon-worship goes hand in hand with anti-Puritan iconoclasm:

amongst other reproaches and scorns which her mother cast upon religious people she took her Cat; and said that it must be made a Roundhead like Burton, Prinne and Bastwick and causing the eares to be cut off; called her cat Prynn (instead of pusse) both then and after she hath often said that she hoped to see the Church flourish againe (meaning the Popish Church) and all Roundheads subdued. (p. 5)

The role of the mutilated bodies of Prynne, Burton and Bastwick in Protestant discourses of the lived body as sacred sign has been noted before. Carnivalesque mockery of the Protestant martyrs to the good old cause replicates certain Puritan iconoclastic practices. Most importantly, the semi-castration and mutilation of Prynne, Burton and Bastwick is
already a source of anxiety; the woman’s replication of it on the body of her cat suggests that such emasculations may multiply, and of course they do. What the grandmother does to the cat is analogous to what the state has done to the rebels; it is also analogous to what the mother’s imagination will do to the foetus she carries.

The complex interaction of iconolatry and iconoclasm, the sacred living body and representation, reaches a climax when the narrative describes the events which directly cause the monster’s birth. The mother has a debate with the godly when she criticises the Roundheads:

she was replyed to, that those called Roundheads were honest men, and in the right way of walking, and living like the people of God, and suitable to the profession of Christians; and withal wishing, if it pleased God, that she might have her eyes opened, and was such a Roundhead. No saith she, I had rather have no head nor life: I nor any of mine, I hope will ever be such. Answer was made her, that her children if she had any, might (if God so please) have their eyes opened; and see that good which she is ignorant of. Mrs Haughton made answer again in these words: I pray God that rather than I shall be a Roundhead, or bear a Roundhead, I may bring forth a Child without a head. This was a fearful saying, and taken notice of by divers of her neighbours that heard her speak it. (p. 6)

The papist mother obstinately fastens on the image of a headless child; consequently her child is reproduced in that image. The primary sense of her (maternal) obstinacy in deflecting her thoughts from what is socially endorsed is reinterpreted in the specific terms of religious controversy. Refusing the reproduction of the valid and the correct, she necessarily becomes the producer of the monstrous. Monstrous birth narratives manage anxieties about social dissidence and male anxieties about the powers of maternity. And the monster itself becomes a metaphor for the powerful maternal body as well as a metonym for social disorder. Absent from this narrative is the father of the monstrous child. His absence reinforces the monster’s role as metaphor for the mother. The birth of a monster does not here signal the wife’s rebellion against the specific and local authority of her husband, but her deviance from the authority which he embodies. The absence of the father and his law is signified by the form the monstrosity takes; a headless child symbolises the absence of the head of the household, and the absence of the political authority which he ought to embody. The entire narrative links woman’s maternity with a specific threat to masculinity in the form of a decapitated body.

Ironically, though in such stories mothers are authors of monsters, their real authors are the writers of the pamphlets in which they appear.
Precisely because monstrosity had to do with paternal authority, with the power to shape a single product, monsters also had to do with authorship. The peculiar status of the newsbook, its interstitial position between concepts of factual reportage and fictional imagining as we know them now, is germane to this issue too. Newsbooks make extraordinary claims about the truth of their narratives, while at the same time pointing to the fictionality of their enterprise. Early seventeenth-century monster newsbooks are typical in this respect. *A Wonder Woorth the Reading* begins with a prefatory poem which contrasts the veracity and probability of its narrative with the unreliable prodigy narratives also circulating:

Ile broach no lye, past mans beliefe or reason,  
For that I would keep custom with the season  
I bring no newes here of some hideous *Dragon*  
Nor tell I of *Charles Starre-Bestudded Waggon*  
New hurl’d from heaven: Nor of some *Horse and Bear*  
Which fore the King did one another teare . . .  
But here I bring (in a new true-borne *Storie*)  
*A Monstrous Message sent from the King of Glorie*.

Here the writer contrasts his own truth with others’ lies. His definition of ‘truth’ appears to be based on a notion of credibility; his narrative is ‘true’ because it does not strain ‘mans beliefe or reason’. More complex is the writer’s allusion to his narrative as ‘a new true-borne storie’. ‘True born’ also means legitimate, correctly of the father’s line, and yet this ‘true born’ story tells of one who is not true born. The paternal authority of authorship is opposed to the unreliability of biological reproduction. Yet the unity of authorship may be illusory. Having dismissed prodigy narratives other than his own as ‘lye[s]’, the author contradicts his earlier statement that ‘lyes’ can be distinguished from truth according to credibility by drawing attention to the way his own narrative strains belief:

I will briefly relate a most strange and monstrous accident in nature . . . howsoever in mans apprehention, it may seeme unpossible. Therefore, lest any should meet my discourse with a scoffe, and *smilingly say* This is an usuall tickle put upon the worlde for profit; and that this monstrous childe birth (whereon my present subject is chiefly grounded) was begotten in some monster-hatching brayne; produced for a Bartlemew-faire babee; and sent at this time (for order sake) to be nursed at the common charge of the newes-affecting multitude; let them know; that not one syllable shall be added to the making up of an untruth: but as it is approved to be true, by the attestation of many godly, honest and religious women.
The monster is also ‘unpossible’ because monstrous birth narratives were written for profit and for the literary marketplace.\textsuperscript{48} This is confirmed by a balladeer who contrasts his own true story with the improbable fictions written by others for profit: ‘I tell you no tales of Battels and fights with a fa etc / Of wonders of monsters of Goblins of Sprights’.\textsuperscript{49} Monster narratives could thus be read not as ‘true born’, but as the bastard children of commerce. Monster narratives are produced not in wombs by God, but in ‘monster-hatching brayne[s]’ by authors desirous of income. One way of reading monster narratives was as ‘tickles’, as entertaining fictions rather than edifying events.\textsuperscript{50} This author seems at once to claim a special place for himself in the literary marketplace as one who sells items of real rather than dubious value, while at the same time half-repudiating the entire market in the interests of truth-telling. The author, the sole truthful trader in a world of Bartholomew-fair tricksters, is able to justify his entry into a sordid milieu by drawing attention to his reforming zeal; that zeal is also, however, an ironic ‘selling point’ in conformity with the laws of the market. Moreover, while he explicitly repudiates a certain way of reading monster narratives, his very elaboration of that way of reading seems to guide the reader towards the possibility of seeing the text as a mere entertainment. This closely parallels the attitudes found in seventeenth-century city comedies, in which tricksters sell their wares by declaring themselves the only honest merchandisers, while exchanging knowing glances with the discerning audience over the heads of their victims.

In abandoning his defence of the monster on grounds of credibility, the author immediately moves to a process of empirical verification drawn from legal practices. This method of verification is characteristic of the monster narratives of the seventeenth century, which often conclude with the lengthy authentications of reliable witnesses, often including midwives and ministers. Such testimony could be fake, however, and increasingly it came to be seen as a trope rather than truth.\textsuperscript{51} When seen as unequivocally fictional in this manner, the monster becomes not a figure of literary productivity and generation of resources, but the \textit{cause} of the very wasteful consumption of resources which it is supposed to symbolise; in \textit{A Wonder Woorth the Reading}, the monster-fiction is ‘to be nursed at the common charge of the newes-affecting multitude’: in other words, a bastard child to be supported by an exploited parish.\textsuperscript{52} In \textit{Strange Newes out of Kent}, the monster is a bastard, child of a stranger to the parish, who slips away leaving the parishioners to cope with her hideous progeny.\textsuperscript{53} Popular print culture is aligned with monstrosity and thus, implicitly,
with female transgression. The image of the text as wasteful consumer of resources, as a ‘tickle’ or (sexual) pleasure, and as a monster align popular authorship with the female author of monstrosity. Just as monsters indicate unregulated sexual reproduction, so the newsbook and popular print trades indicated the uncontrolled proliferation of meaning, likely to destabilise society. The author of this pamphlet does not mention the problem of originality, but contemporaries anxious about popular newsbooks often figured the newsbook author as patching out a discourse from diverse sources. This assemblage process was often compared with the correct transmission of sources through the development of a *copia* and rhetorical skill. In the same way, female iconolatry and fashionable self-representation are contrasted with the ‘correct’ transmission of paternal authority. The true paternity of literary works is contrasted with the bastardy of monsters.

Questions of maternal and paternal authorship and authority recombine in the appearances of monsters in literary texts. In Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, the figure of Errour brings together issues of truth, lies and authorship with the figure of the monster. Errour is herself ‘a monster vile’, but is also the mother of monsters. In the popular tracts we saw how the monster became a figure for the mother; here the monstrosity of mother and offspring are dissolved into a single image. Like the mothers of monsters, Errour is described in terms of uncleanness, openness, pollution and transgression:

Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine,  
And as she lay vpon the duttie ground,  
Her huge long taiie her den all ouersped,  
Yet was in knots and many boughtes vpwound,  
Pointed with mortall sting. (i, i 14.9–15.4)

Errour is not merely the mother of one monster, but the maternal origin of ‘a thousand yong ones . . . of sundry shapes, yet all ill fauored’. Her young suckle on ‘her poysonous dugs’ and are reabsorbed into her body at intervals: ‘into her mouth they crept, and suddain all were gone’ (i, i 15). The boundaries of Errour’s body are unstable and shifting, constantly crossed by her offspring. These unstable bodily boundaries double for the multiplicity of Errour’s offspring, as does her tail or ‘endless traine’. Errour’s name and her activities figure her as a trope for authorship in trouble. She stands for the uncontrolled proliferation of meaning which Catherine Gallagher calls semiotic riot. Errour’s name and her monstrosity allow this proliferation to be figured as
the opposite and enemy of Truth. But as Gallagher shows, this prolif-eration of meaning can be trooped through the signifier of the maternal female body outside patriarchal control. The mother of monsters is a major instantiation of the fear of uncontained maternity. And in a kind of way, Errour turns out to be a female author, a producer of a flow of texts which deviate from truth. These texts are produced in her body:

Therewith she spewd out of her filthy maw
A floud of poyson horrible and blakke,
Full of great lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw,
Which stunck so vildly, that it forst him slacke
His grasping hold, and from her turne him backe:
Her vomit full of bookes and papers was. (1, i 20)

These vomited chunks of flesh are almost immediately equated with Errour’s offspring; the ‘lumpes’ are like the crocodiles bred from Nile mud by the sun, or like ‘ugly monstrous shapes’ (1, i 21). Errour’s monstrous offspring had previously disappeared into her mouth, from whence comes this flow of material. Vomiting and birth can be tropes for each other, through shared images of expulsion from a bodily orifice, and through the commonsense observation that women in labour often vomit. Just as the authors of monster pamphlets often equated their own pamphlets with monstrous births, and also likened the growth and proliferation of the literary marketplace to the disorderly body of a monster, so Errour’s endless train of monstrous maternity also encodes the proliferation of texts in an uncontrolled market, to the detriment of truth. True texts, by contrast, have clear paternal origins. Anxieties about masculine patrilinearity readily become anxieties about the role of the author himself in maintaining control over his own offspring, and hence the role he plays in transmitting an idea of identity which is intrinsically aristocratic, and of which he can if lucky partake. In other words, it is because authorship and aristocracy are alike about replication of masculinity that each can also be about individuality and autonomy.

A narrative so charged with questions of truth and fiction, legitimacy and illegitimacy, descent and dissent, masculinity and femininity, should have become caught up in the turmoil in political thought and polemic which characterises the Civil War. Spenser’s Errour influenced many of these productions of monstrosity, directly or indirectly, and also offered a way of reading the classical monsters whose images were sometimes added to the image of monstrous births. The interest in monsters
was helped by the general tendency to represent political unrest and particularly rebellion as a monster: Griffith Williams, for example, wrote that

a monster, more hideous and monsterous than any of those that are descrid
either by the Greek and Latine poets; and more noysome and destructive to humane kinde . . . the name of it is rebellion, an ugly beast of many heads.59

Classicising monsters of this sort abound in Civil War writings of every kind; there are so many in Joseph Beaumont’s Psyche, for example, that it is pointless to attempt a census. In Abraham Cowley’s Davideis, too, the figure of Envy is a classical monster. Yet this kind of monster was not the same as a monstrous birth, though the categories could overlap. The birth of a monster was an event, and it is the narration of that birth as an event that registers the specific anxieties addressed here. The monster narrative lent itself particularly to the polemical purposes of Royalists and patriarchalists, given its general concern with social continuity troped as paternity. However, though consequently Royalists perhaps exploited the signifier of monstrosity most frequently, Parliamentarians also struggled to control it and to wrest it to their own purposes.60

One consequence of this was to mark out another terrain consisting primarily of the female body on which male political struggles could be fought out. This process can be seen by looking in some detail at a group of Royalist texts first published in the spring of 1648,61 and subsequently reconfigured and reissued at the Restoration and its immediate prelude.62 These texts, termed political dialogues by Lois Potter,63 narrate the allegorical story of Mistress Parliament, later to become Mrs Rump, her sexual peccadilloes, allegiances with undesirable characters ranging from Parliamentarian leaders to Satan himself, and ultimate proof of her own corruption through giving birth to one, or several, monsters.

The first of these pamphlets, entitled Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed of a Monstrous Childe of Reformation, draws on an extensive tradition of images of birth and reproduction, a tradition which includes the monster newsbook and early Protestant attacks on the Roman Catholic Church. Royalist writers made use of the rebellious stock-in-trade of carnivalesque imagery previously associated with critique of or opposition to the established Stuart state.64 Monster narratives – and the imagery of birth and reproduction – were before the war associated more strongly with the godly and hence with criticism of the status quo than with conservatism. Politically, monster newsbooks are prone to be critical rather than celebratory of the existing state of things. They provide a narrative structure
in which such criticism can be figured as a return to the traditional order from a position of disastrous deviance.\textsuperscript{65} Pre-Civil War reformism – especially in religious matters – was often couched in highly conservative terms.\textsuperscript{66} From the food rioters who argued that it was a good world in the old days, when prices were low, to the religious reformers who stigmatised the Church of Rome as a bastard deviation from early Christian normality, political opposition was characteristically couched in backward-looking terms,\textsuperscript{67} and this was as true of Parliamentarians as it was of Royalists, at any rate in 1642. Only certain apocalyptic and millenarian discourses offered an opportunity for conceiving political ideas in futuristic rather than regressive terms. The Parliamentarian imagery of conception, pregnancy and birth was therefore a crucial attempt to justify change with reference to ongoing natural processes. The Puritan ‘Babe of Grace’, or child of reformation, to be born as a result of great labour, was not only a messianic signifier but an attempt to ground the unfamiliar in the always-already known. It also depended on the very notion of legitimacy through paternal similitude with which, as we have seen, the monster narrative was largely concerned. The Reformed Church, the ‘Babe of Grace’, had to be understood as sacred resemblances of their divine (and earthly) fathers in order to appear the legitimate ‘heirs’ of positions previously occupied by their opponents.

The \textit{Mistress Parliament} plays reveal the extent to which this discourse necessarily enabled a Royalist response. For monarchist political thought was the progenitor of seventeenth-century notions of patriarchalism, legitimism, singularity and self-identity.\textsuperscript{68} Working to displace maternity from political and reproductive discourses and to stabilise political conceptions with reference to supposedly natural phenomena, the discourse of monarchism drew heavily on familial and biologistic metaphors. Consequently, the monstrous birth narrative offered peculiar opportunities to represent the disorder resulting from a radical break with patriarchalism. In the \textit{Mistress Parliament} plays, there is a shift in focus from the body of the monster to the body of the monster’s mother as the prime site – and sign – of social and political disorder. The physical disorder of the monster’s body was a metaphor for the physical and sexual disorder of the mother’s body and mind, but in the \textit{Mistress Parliament} plays this metaphoricity is less important than displaying the disorder of the mother’s body itself. This comes about because it is the mother who is an allegory of Parliament.

The first of the plays features an all-female cast of midwives, gossips and dry-nurses who are allegorisations of aspects of Parliamentary rule (Mrs London, Mrs Schisme and so forth).\textsuperscript{69} By setting the dialogue in
the feminised world of childbirth, normally a world peopled exclusively with women, the text both degrades Parliamentary rule as a female usurpation of power, and establishes the basis for its own newsworthiness. Like the (supposed) vices of Parliament brought to light here, the world of childbirth was secret: closed to men, interior and impenetrable. As both Natalie Zemon Davis and Adrian Wilson have argued, the feminised space of childbirth can be seen as an instance of gendered symbolic inversion, a place where the usual gender hierarchy is suspended and women rule.70 There is evidence in *Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed* that this particular inversion mobilised and produced male fear, and specifically the male fear of the power of maternity manifest in monster narratives in general. Equally important for those narratives, and for the play under discussion here, is the way early modern childbirth practices excluded men from seeing the maternal body. Those practices at once suggest that men require protection from a threatening and polluting sight, and also imply that what is rigorously concealed must be too terrible to behold. Masculinity, then, is what is excluded from the site and sight of childbed.

Playing on and contributing to these notions, *Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed* uses them to ‘sell’ its own interpretation of Parliamentary rule as a disclosure, the ‘revelation’ of a horrific and polluting truth hitherto concealed. By constructing an allegorical narrative which is itself a ‘secret’ story, the play suggests that its assertions are revealed truths. The metaphor of childbirth is not incidental to, but crucial for, its political purpose. The entire locution depends on a relentless re-presentation of the maternal female body as a site of disorder: the occasion for horror, but also its cause. Otherwise the representation of politics as bodily pollution would trouble the pamphlet’s own project, suggesting that its ‘news’ reveals what ought to be kept secret or covered, and positioning it as the source of pollution-by-contact. By locating the cause of the pollution in femininity itself, newsworthiness is distinguished from dangerously contagious scandal-mongering, or gossiping.

Given the play’s concern with the disclosure of shameful secrets, it is not surprising that its two chief metaphors represent a female body which is problematically open, constantly expelling to the outside matter which ought to remain within. Mistress Parliament does not only give birth: she also vomits up blood, declarations, money and papers, just as Spenser’s Errour does:

* Nurse: Why Mrs Parliament I say; how doe ye Mrs Parliament I say; how doe ye Mrs Parliament; will ye have a little strong-waters, or a caudle to comfort ye?
MRS PARLIAMENT: Oh, sick, sick; I must cast Nurse; pray reach me a bowl:
howe: howe.\(^71\)

Mistress Parliament’s vomit contains ‘innocent blood, that hath lain in
clodds congealed’ (ll. 80–1); the ‘accursed declaration’ against the king,
which ‘stinks all the Kingdome over’ (ll. 99–101); money or ‘accursed
gold’. The political secrets disclosed by her body are in themselves repul-
sive, and so is the process of their disclosure. The horror of vomit and
vomiting becomes a trope for the horrible truth of political disclosures.

But the exposure of these secrets is not a purgative process. Mistress
Parliament is not cleansed by her ejection of them. This becomes appar-
et when (in a second trope of disclosure) she makes a confession of her
faults which is said throughout to be partial or insincere:

I confess and acknowledge (*though not from the bottom of my heart*) that for the
space of these seven Years I have been a most cruell murderer . . . My greatest
grief of all being, that I know I have committed all this, and much more, but
cannot Repent for the same. (ll. 144–74)

In fact she remains the source of corruption, her confession designed
only to allow her to maintain it through continued rule. The subsequent
dialogues in the series use the trope of partial confession repeatedly; in
Nurse discuss the confession and the revelation of the monster itself, and
the whole dialogue is a debate about which pamphleteers can help
Mistress Parliament re-establish her position against the threat of further
revelations.\(^72\) The openness of the female can therefore never become an
admirable *glasnost*, or a creative purgation; because the female is herself
intrinsically a site (or sight) of horror, all that flows from inside her can
only provoke further horror. At the same time, by insisting that the female
body of Mistress Parliament is the inexhaustible source of horror never
fully purged, the play ensures that *all* is not made visible. Undisclosed
horror still lurks within. In this way, arguably, the threat of revealed
castration is managed: the female pollution can only be gestured at, never
seen. This also means that in the political allegory the *coup de grâce* can be
located in the future of Parliamentary rule.

The homology between vomiting, confession and birth involves a
conceptualisation of all three as the movement of matter from inside to
outside, from invisibility to visibility. When the Babe of Reformation is
finally expelled as a deformation, that birth is described as not merely
polluting but dislocating, not merely disorderly but chaotic:
the room was strangely overspread with darkness, the candles went out of themselves, and there was smelt noysome smells, and heard terrible thunderings . . . that strook a great terrour to the hearers; at the same time Mrs Parliament, was miraculously delivered of a Monster of a deformed shape, without a head, great goggle eyes, bloody hands growing out of both sides of its devouring panch. (ll. 226–36)

The chaos of the monster is both invisibility (darkness, candles) and visibility (the lengthy description of its allegorised peculiarities). The moment of birth itself, the opening of the disorderly female body, must remain hidden while what is undisclosed is described as horror. That bodily opening is most clearly configured in the ‘noysome smells’, frequently associated with monsters, which are themselves signs of pollution, disease and the bodily interior in early modern medicine. In this sense, the monster’s visible disorder, like the clotted blood, money and stenches, is merely a synecdoche of the horrors which still lurk within. The ultimate display of its monstrous progeny substitutes for a more unsettling display of the open female body itself.

The interplay in the entire play between the longing to reveal and the fear of revelation can be understood in psychoanalytic terms. On one hand the truth of paternity can only be revealed through the mother’s confession. As we have seen, the monster displays a bodily or visible truth of paternity by showing and warning against its loss. At the same time, this showing involves the threat of displaying both maternal agency and female difference; the interior of Mistress Parliament is fetishised and displayed in public. The monster, the vomit and the confession play fetish roles; in insistently making the monster visible, the text is able to keep female difference invisible, and hence at bay.

That female opening and concomitant disorder at once symbolise and enact the troubled state of the kingdom. Mistress Parliament’s extrusion of the horrors within her positions the female body as cause of and sign for disorderly rule, and the loathsome smells and pollutions she emits are signs of political as well as physical corruption. Unsurprisingly, her never-fully-visible openness is also metaphorised as sexual unruliness, and it is this metaphor which is crucial for the Royalist politics of the dialogues. The Nurse reports Mistress Parliament’s openness, her sexual disorder, and her consequent publicity:

Who is it almost that has not known the Parliaments to be as honourable as ever was any Family in England (next to the King, God bless him) and hath done as much good for the Kingdome: and now to be despised by every sause-boxe boy, and loose fellow to make Rimes as they call them, and sing songs of her, making
of her a Whore, and no better than the arrantest strumpet that ever went upon
two shooes, telling her, that she hath imprisoned her Husband, and prostituted
her body to a very Eunuch . . . and turn’d up her tayle to every lousy Independent
Rascall in the Army. (ll. 53–65)

The Nurse’s speech uses the familial metaphor common in Civil War polemic. The king is the husband of Mistress Parliament; as a wife, her
relations with other authorities are adulterous. Like the mothers of
monsters, Mistress Parliament’s own disorderliness arises from a refusal
of male authority, from a refusal to accept a subordinate role. Mistress
Parliament is consequently not only sexually open, but also dangerously
public; in making her sexuality public she becomes notorious, visible to
observers and vulnerable to gossips.

These metaphors do not merely make Parliamentary sovereignty visible
as disorder and insurrection against legitimate rule, though of course their
main function is to represent a contestation of authority as insubordin-
ation and inversion. They also insist that the visibility – or even speak-
ability – of the reproductive or sexual female body is itself a sign of
disorder and impending chaos. Mistress Parliament’s adulterousness re-
instates the notion that social order is dependent on female fidelity to the
husband; as in the monster pamphlets, a monstrous swerve away from
reproduction is the consequence of a feminine instability that refuses its
proper role of container or receptacle for the agency of man. The horror
represented by the Babe of Reformation is thus the familiar horror of the
visibility of female agency, for when man is not the sole agent, proper re-
production does not occur. In this fashion, Parliamentary rule is stigmas-
tised as a source of anxiety for the system of male identity, inheritance and
propriety. In this context, the plays’ obsession with Parliament’s disrup-
tion of wealth inheritance and accumulation are relevant: in Mrs Parlia-
ment her Gossiping, Truth laments that the righteous have been ‘Robb’d,
Plunder’d, and sequestrated of all our Lands and Goods’. 73 Since the only
social order conceivable as anything other than disorder is the reproduc-
tion of a fixed pre-extant state, all reformation will become deformation,
and deformation of the masculine identity guaranteed by secure inherit-
ance of both identity and wealth. The metaphors of femininity and
monstrousness function powerfully to naturalise a political position while
replicating a particularly rigid sex–gender hierarchy and anatomising the
open female body as a site and sign of all-but-unspeakable disorder.

It is important to note the role that allegory plays in managing the
question of visibility. On the one hand, the concretisation of Parliament
as a female body is precisely what allows it to become a sight rather than a
mere site of misrule. On the other, the allegory is always clearly marked as fiction, so that the sights we see are not worryingly real. Allegorisation does however permit the trope of revelation, appealing to the empirical criterion which insists that seeing is believing.

So successful was the format coupled with the semiotics of monstrosity that monsters began to proliferate as representations of the forces of the English Revolution. Many of these representations were opportune republished at the Restoration, including the poems of Alexander Brome, which had appeared anonymously and pseudonymously in ballad form during the Civil War. Brome was especially obsessed with lineage, birth and breeding. As a means of manoeuvring Parliamentarians onto the political ground of monarchism, the question of lineage was especially useful. Brome’s ballad, ‘The Parliaments Pedigree’, is a particularly strident example:

No Pedigrees or Projects
Of after-times I tell,
Nor what strange things the Parliament
In former times befell,
Nor how an Emperor got a King,
Nor how a King a Prince,
But you shall hear what Progenies
Have been begotten since.
The Devil he a monster got,
Which was both strong and stout,
This many-headed Monster
Did strait beget a Rout:
This Rout begat a Parliament,
As Charles he well remembers,
The Parliament got Monsters too
The which begat Five Members.74

Brome’s parody of Biblical genealogies of patrilineage leads him to use the term ‘beget’, which defines the male role in procreation. The association of monstrosity with multiplicity and uncontrolled proliferation is in turn associated with the populace (‘Rout’) and with Parliament. The king’s unitary singularity is thus set over against the demonic disorder of multiplicity and a breeding which is not replication. This illegitimate proliferation is contrasted with the legitimate patrilinearity of the descent of the Stuart kings.

The connection between monstrosity and uncontrolled multiplicity is crucial for the political applicability of the trope. During the Civil War, the figure of the many-headed monster was frequently revived as part of
fears of mob rule. In _An Alarm for London_, Hackluyt uses the figure of a whore breeding monsters to describe London:

> What a monstrous birth flows from thy fruitfull wombe? . . . what? the glorious Queene become so base a whore, to prostitute under every hedge, to open her quiver to every arrow, to act every new invented sin.

Here, monstrosity flows unchecked from the too-open womb of the whore-like city. Uncontrolled sexuality leads to uncontrolled production, leading in turn to the figuration of the crowd as a signifier as well as a signified of disorder. Placing the crowd in a deviant pedigree which cancels the reassuring singularity of the royal lineage places multiplicity as disorder.
Such is monstrosity when compared to the subject of monarchy, a masculinity guaranteed by inheritance, biological and economic. What happens to the logic of monstrosity when the narrative of patrilinearity which underpins it is co-opted for the construction of an entrepreneurially self-fashioned figure: the male author as liberal subject? It has long been recognised that Milton’s *Areopagitica* strives to envisage republicanism in government and in letters. As critics have argued, fictions and extended metaphors play an important role in Milton’s prose, mediating between the abstract and the concrete, the general and the particular. What Le Doeuff terms ‘the philosophical unconscious’, the repressed metaphoricity on which abstract discourse depends, is a doubly feminine space in Milton’s writing: feminine because it is the silenced other of rationality, and because its metaphors depend on certain crucial figurations of the female body. What Milton does in *Areopagitica* and elsewhere is to use the patrilineal discourse of monstrosity to coin metaphors for political change understood as at once traditional and new, and the chief means of achieving this awkward rhetorical manoeuvre is to associate swerves away from the proper order of the state with woman as mother, as opposed to the self-generating author-figure who produces texts of pure and complete masculinity. Milton’s political prose involves itself with the questions of truth or truths, singularity or multiplicity, straightness or divergences, and the way these involvements are complicated by their grounding in a metaphoric unconscious of feminine figures and reproductive narratives.

What complicate these engagements are the factors exploited in monster-stories; if the liberal polity and the liberal male subject can only achieve autonomy at the expense of the father, then it becomes easy to imagine such liberal states as parricidal, and hence the loss of all patrilineality and the insurgence of chaos. Caught between the desire to free himself from the power of the father and the fear of destroying
the source of paternal power, Milton repeatedly seeks to represent himself as his own father and to arrogate to the male subject both the powers of paternity (the phallus) and maternity (the womb). This procedure is itself derived from the metaphorical structure of classical Athenian philosophy, which similarly figures philosophy, or Truth, as the outcome of a relation between two men which is metaphorised in terms of sexual reproduction. Where Milton works on his classical models is in addressing the problem of strife, created by the destruction of fatherly authority in the person of a single controlling ruler. Milton tries to deal with the psychic problems this raises by repeatedly displacing the civil strife or fraternal turmoil thought by Royalists to be created by the loss of the father onto the maternal body. The result is a series of covert engagements with maternity. By representing purely paternal births as the products not of the lower body but of the brain, Milton associates those lower bodilinesses with the mother while disassociating masculinity from them along a mind/body split. This position allows the alternate demonisation and disavowal of maternity glimpsed in the prose, and a robust assertion of a republican masculinity not tainted by parricide.

In its development of an alternative theory of masculinity, Areopagitica is a direct engagement with the political ideas of absolutists, envisaging a form of authority which is ordered, but not identical with or dependent upon the father-figure of the monarch, imaginatively constructing a liberal space which does not yet exist either conceptually or in political reality. Whereas for modern feminist readers of absolutist political theory the crucial asymmetry lay between fathers and mothers or husbands and wives, for liberals the crucial asymmetry lay between fathers and sons. Areopagitica does not set out overtly to reimagine the familial relation along the axis of gender, but along the axis of descent, lineage and authority. Milton’s own historicisation of his text and of his identity as polemicist partakes of a new image of fatherhood: the fatherhood of texts. Milton grants himself an extensive paternity. His own claims to authority are underwritten by the historical precedents he amasses. These include Euripides, whose assertion of authorial autonomy appears on the title page. The quotation comes from Suppliant Women, and authenticates both Milton’s own free speech (advice to the state) and the notion of free speech. The lines quoted are spoken by Theseus as part of a lengthy diatribe against absolutism which seems very close to some of Milton’s concerns in Areopagitica:
Nothing
Is worse for a city than an absolute ruler . . .
How can a city become strong
If someone takes away, cuts off new ventures
Like ears of corn in a spring field?³

As Page duBois has shown, the metaphor of the growth of corn in the field was a metaphor of maternity.⁹ Theseus speaks of censorship as the cutting off of new birth from the fields, the prevention of reproduction as well as nourishment and growth. Though Euripides does not stress the maternal role of the earth, it is vestigially present in his metaphor for free speech. But, as we shall see, Milton’s metaphorisation of writing as autochthonic reproduction marginalises the female role in reproduction, constructing an image of autotelic, purely masculine texts rising unimpeded from the earth. Thus his choice of Euripides’ lines deflects attention from the maternal in order to construct a lineage for his own discourse.

Moreover, Milton is preoccupied with questions of politics and legitimate authority shaping Areopagitica’s engagement with censorship. As Patterson points out, Theseus is quoting the words used by the herald to open the reconstituted Athenian assembly in 486 B.C.¹⁰ So Milton is quoting Theseus quoting the herald, placing his text as the rightful descendant or patrilineal replication of an authority which can be traced to a textual father. Theseus is not the author of his own speech, but voices an ideal of justice and order authored by the people. This is crucial for seventeenth-century political debate, which often focused on where sovereignty originally inhered. In the textual logic of Milton’s project, Theseus is less important than Euripides, who displaces the king-father Theseus in favour of an author-father who also wrote against censorship.

A dilemma arises from the struggle to construct an autonomous speaking-position which will also be authoritative. This problem arises in the very appeal to classical authorities. By citing Euripides and by referring obliquely to Isocrates and Dion Prusaeus, Milton attempts to establish precedents for his own speaking and for free speech. But the example of Isocrates seems to represent constraint rather than liberty or transgression. Not only does Milton refuse to name him, this refusal seems connected with Isocrates’ notorious privacy:

Out of those ages, to whose polite wisdom and letters we ow that we are not yet Gothes and Jutlanders, I could name him who from his private house wrote that discourse to the Parlament of Athens, that perswades them to change the forme of Democracy which was then establisht.¹¹
Milton’s reluctance to name Isocrates is linked by Abbé Blum with his stress on ‘his private house’ and his statement that Prusaeus was ‘a stranger and a privat orator’. Similarly, Milton himself has devoted his life to ‘studious labours’ (pp. 489–90). Milton’s masculine autonomy is guaranteed by his resemblance to and descent from other autonomous individuals. These stories act as legitimating precedents, and as shapers and definers of Milton’s own position. Claims of authority are made by tracing the lineage of text and author through a series of literary fathers whose texts Areopagitica reproduces.

Milton’s reluctance to name these fathers takes on special significance in the light of the evidence of the struggles of the liberal subject to free himself from authority. As Freud noted long ago, the son must kill the father in order for social relations to form. Refusing to name the fathers gestures at their desirable autonomy; it also suggests that Milton’s own proper name is the sole remaining signifier of that autonomy. The fathers exist only in order to beget the worthy son, who then comes to stand for all that they stood for. Moreover, the son is the only monument of those fathers: their visibility is entirely under his control. In this sense, Milton is already a licenser after just three pages of Areopagitica. While denouncing the powers of the overmighty father, he appropriates them. The gendered unconscious of the entire tract describes a space in which men cannot merely give birth, but can give birth to themselves and hence become, in a sense, both father and mother to themselves. In this way, Areopagitica formulates a (proto-) liberal masculine subjectivity by rewriting the family metaphors of monarchism.

The contradictory desires to preserve and erase the fathers can be glimpsed in a set of linked metaphors which also contains a struggling attempt to erase these contradictions by invoking an absent mother, especially the famous metaphor of the dragon’s teeth:

For Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. (p. 492)

Books are the essence of the intellect, distilled and stored up for ever, like seed in sons. But they are also, and far more significantly, the progeny of the soul. Metaphorically at least, literature can offer the prospect of an entirely paternal progeny, a way for man to reproduce his vital essence.
without contact with female flesh. Milton imagines a means of (re)production which is purely and completely masculine. Unlike other myths of autochthony, the myth of the dragon’s teeth focuses on the sowing process; the active element in the equation is the sower of the ‘seed’, and in Areopagitica this sower seems to be a metaphor for the author: Milton envisages himself as the literary father who sows the literary seed. Milton explicitly contrasts this desirable masculine autonomy with the more troubling hybrid of the essence trapped in a body:

the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that ethereall and fift essence, the breath of reason it selfe, slaies an immortality rather then a life. (p. 493)

But although the prospect of lively books as the patrilineal progeny of the male soul is attractive, it is also potentially threatening. This pure paternity can be inverted to become an image of proliferation and disorder, an image of what happens when paternal control is lost. The figure who lies behind this anxiety is Spenser’s Errour. For Milton, too, the desirable ‘lively’ and ‘vigorous’ progeny of the male soul can lead to divisive destructiveness. The essences enclosed in books, in acquiring the power to become real men, likewise become armed men. But armed against whom? For the image alludes to two separate Ovidian stories, with quite different implications. The story of Cadmus, who slays the dragon and sows its teeth to create a new people, suggests that from civil strife may eventually arise a stable polity. This is close to Areopagitica’s argument that the publication of sectarian writings causes a conflict from which a single Truth will be formed. On the other hand, the story of Jason, who sows the dragon’s teeth and then tricks the warriors into fighting each other until all are killed, suggests that civil strife is merely destructive, leading to the power of one man over all others. The emergence of the armed men in the Cadmus narrative is likened to a theatrical revelation:

sic, ubi tolluntur festis aulaea theatris,
surgere signa solent primumque ostendere vultus,
cetera paulatim, placidoque educta tenore
tota patent imoque pedes in margine ponunt.

(So when on festival days the curtain in the theatre is raised, figures of men rise up showing first their faces, then little by little all the rest, until at last, drawn up with steady motion, the entire forms stand revealed, and plant their feet on the curtain’s edge.)

whereas in the Jason story it is likened to an autochthonic birth:
utque hominis speciem materna sumit in alvo
perque suos intus numeros componitur infans
nec nisi maturus communes exit in auras,
sic, ubi visceribus gravidæ telluris imago
affecta est hominis, feto consurgit in arvo,
quodque magis mirum est, simul edita concutit arma.

(Just as in its mother’s body an infant slowly takes on human form, and is completed in all its parts within, and does not emerge into the air until it is formed; so, when the forms of men had been completed in the organs of the pregnant earth, they rose up in the fertile soil, and remarkably, clashed weapons they brought forth with them.  

These two stories are precisely the alternative narratives which Areopagitica explores. Whereas Cadmus’ sowing of the teeth is immediately preceded by the death of the serpent, slain by Cadmus himself, Jason’s sowing is not only presided over by the anxious Medea, but is actually metaphorised as a birth from the maternal womb of the earth. Cadmus’ sowing can stand as a metaphor for the motherless reproduction Milton configures here, but Jason’s cannot. It is notable that it is Jason’s narrative which is to end in utter disaster, and in particular disaster for patrilineal reproduction; Jason’s children are killed by their mother Medea. This could stand for a refutation of the productivity of dissent, while Cadmus might represent the possibility of a polity created by civil strife. In refusing to particularise the image, despite the obvious relevance of the differences between them, Milton refuses a conclusion. But what is gestured at in this allusive indeterminacy is the radical possibility of constructing a liberal polity on a civil strife which masks the slaying of the father by displacing violence onto the mother. Whereas the Cadmus story promises to instate the founding myth of contractual liberalism in which the origin of the polity lies in the violent death of the father and a subsequent conflict between sons resolved into civic harmony, the story of Jason displaces the origin of civil strife onto the female body of the mother/wife, who in the person of Medea instates civil strife in order to instate the absolute rule of one man and the massacre of the others. For the moment, Areopagitica can endorse neither of these narratives: the warring desires to replicate and to repudiate the father’s name and authority, and the suspicion that the son cannot attain that desired autonomy without parricide, inform Milton’s attempt to tell the story of his own text. It is scarcely surprising that he should vacillate between the figure of an overmighty father and the possibility of slaying him. He also vacillates uneasily between images of uncontrolled strife and images
of uncontrolled autarchic power: the twin nightmares of seventeenth-century political theory.\(^{22}\)

Locating violence and strife in the maternal body might offer a way of managing these difficulties, but this is not allowed to become fully visible in this passage. However, it is perhaps a crucial part of the formation of that liberal and male subject whose emergence in *Areopagitica* is less smooth than the emergence of armed warriors from the ground.\(^{23}\) This can be illustrated by examining another passage from *Areopagitica*, another historical narrative which grounds the text itself and its liberal author in a past authority. This move pre-empts the myths of origin with which liberal political theory was to concern itself, and harks back to the Renaissance tradition of classical republicanism already written into the Parliamentarian discourse of the Civil War. It is here that the desire to beget a civil society through masculine agency alone becomes most apparent, and it is here that this desire connects most evidently with the need to appropriate the mother’s function while repudiating her exercise of it.\(^{24}\)

Concluding his history of the Inquisition’s arrogation to itself of a patriarchal power disruptive of the civil polity, Milton writes:

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Till then Books were ever as freely admitted into the World as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more still’d than the issue of the womb: no envious Juno sate cros-leg’d over the nativity of any mans intellectuall off spring; but if it prov’d a Monster, who denies, but that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the Sea. (p. 505)\(^{25}\)
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Here men’s power to beget books is again equated with women’s power to give birth, arrogating to men the reproductive capacities of both sexes. Moreover, it is the opponents of this begetting process and its proper working who are feminised. What was the autocratic father-figure of the Catholic Church is metaphorically transmuted into the figure of a jealous woman. But Juno is not merely any jealous woman; she represents here both the father’s problematic control over the son’s autonomy as a begetter, and the femininity which might interpose itself between the father and the son, between the begetter and the begot. Envisaged sitting ‘cros-leg’d’ over the birth of ‘any mans intellectuall off spring’, Juno blocks with her closed body the birth of vital male essences. Juno is not blocking any birth, but the birth of the masculine hero. There is an explicit reference here to Juno’s plot to trick Jupiter into making Eurystheus and not Hercules the king of Mycenae by delaying the birth of the latter. As we have seen, the new republic was fond of seeing itself as a Hercules or a St George who beat off monsters, so this metaphor directly
links feminine interference in reproduction with attempts to prevent the emergence of a masculine state.\textsuperscript{26}

The realisation of the fact of paternal or maternal interference in male self-replication comes with the image of the monstrous progeny. Monsters are an outcome of female interference in the birth process; they can also be a sign of God’s own intervention. Consequently, the metaphor of the monster allows Milton to express and manage both anxiety about paternity and anxiety about maternity. Because paternal power is never \textit{fully} displaced onto the mother, the entire collocation of images mediates between the threat of the father and the threat of the mother. And because both threats can be made visible and knowable in the form of monstrosity, their problematic results can be obliterated. In this way, the social and political fear of disorder, troped here as monstrosity and previously as civil violence, can be easily identified and destroyed in a manner not registered as an act of violence. The result is the figure of the liberal – or liberated – son, freed alike from the restraints of an overmighty father and a problematic mother through his power to reproduce himself. This figure is located in the past and hence only tangentially the author of \textit{Areopagitica}, but at the same time \textit{Areopagitica} can be understood as the progenitor of this ‘intellectuall off spring’ for the seventeenth-century polity.

Femininity as an obstruction of masculine self-replication rather than a necessary component of it appears also in a later passage:

This obstructing violence [i.e. licensing] meets for the most part with an event utterly opposite to the end which it drives at: instead of suppressing sects and schisms, it raises them and invests them with a reputation . . . This order therefore may prove a nursing mother to sects, but I shall easily shew how it will be a step-dame to Truth: and first by disinabling us to the maintenance of what is known already. (pp. 542–3)

The ‘nursing mother to sects’ and the ‘step-dame to Truth’ repeat the transference of problematic absolute power from the overbearing father-law-giver to the metaphorical mother. Wrongly-placed nurturance on the part of the ‘nursing mother’ is linked with the folkloric image of the stepmother who neglects her stepchildren, or even murders them, in the interests of supporting her own less desirable children.\textsuperscript{27} This destructive mother-figure is however not granted the status of giving birth; her role is confined to destroying that which others (men) have begotten. The passage creates an opposition, or rather a triangle, between writer–begetter/creator; mother–destroyer; Truth–child/victim. The violent dismemberment of Truth’s female body\textsuperscript{28} seems at this moment to be
displaced onto the sinister figure of the stepmother. Thus Milton again avoids the violence required to take on the father thus metaphorised.

The prevalence of these images of male birth in Milton’s other writings points to their particular relevance to the image of Sin in *Paradise Lost*; these images represent ongoing attempts to grapple with the construction of liberal male subjectivity. *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* recycles the same image of female Truth:

> For Truth is as impossible to be soil’d by any outward touch, as the Sun beam. Though this ill hap wait on her nativity, that shee never comes into the world, but like a Bastard, to the ignominy of him that brought her forth: till Time the Midwife rather than the mother of Truth, have washt and salted the Infant, declar’d her legitimat, and Churcht the father of his young Minerva, from the needless causes of his purgation.\(^{59}\)

Once again, a male author gives birth. And here Milton insists on the male appropriation of the power of motherhood through the rewriting of the popular proverb that Truth is the daughter of Time. Time is not the mother of Truth; she is a midwife.\(^{30}\) Truth’s mother is the male author. Midwifery is identified not as the profession which helps the mother give birth, but as needed only because of practices required by those who would impede Truth’s birth.\(^{31}\) The consequence of all this is to argue that the legitimating function, properly belonging to ‘him that brought her forth’, to the maternal father, is wrongly appropriated by a state or reading public which requires a ritual to recognise Truth for what it is. In gender terms, this naturalises Milton’s appropriation of maternal powers by pointing to woman’s appropriation of paternal powers. In this sense, Milton’s political argument is made to depend on male fears of midwifery and the female control of childbearing, which refer back to the fear that patrilineal self-replication will be disrupted by maternal agency dramatised in the monster tracts.

Foregrounding the metaphoricity or merely symbolic value of Truth through the reference to Minerva excludes women from any participation in her genesis. In this sense, Milton’s representation of autonomous male subjectivity is entirely contingent upon the ‘grotesque’ nature of the image. By invoking the ‘low’ (midwifery), Milton is able to delineate the ‘high’ (Truth) and to separate it entirely from the maternal body and from maternal genesis.\(^{32}\) The passage’s evident correspondence with figures in *Areopagitica* is perhaps more noticeable than its correspondence with Book 11 of *Paradise Lost*. Milton’s Truth is not the dismembered female corpse of *Areopagitica*, but a ‘young Minerva’. As Marina Warner
has shown, the figure of Athene/Minerva represents a truth produced by male appropriation of the power to give birth, a truth thus ultimately produced without feminine interference.\footnote{Athene is produced from Zeus after he has devoured her pregnant mother. In this context, it may be important to note Milton’s metaphorisation of the acquisition of knowledge through the troping of books as food in \textit{Areopagitica}: ‘To the pure all things are pure, not only meats and drinks, but all kinde of knowledge’ (p. 512). As Nigel Smith points out, the violent consumption of books as meat appears to sit oddly with the metaphorisation of them as the vital essences of men.\footnote{Milton attempts to reconcile these images in the figure of male birth, typified in \textit{Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce} as the birth of Minerva. In that shadowed narrative, male appropriation of the power of (re)production does involve the violent devouring of not just the mother, but his own seed within her. That devouring process obliterates the mother while preserving the male seed and allowing it to be reborn. In this way, the apparently contradictory images of books as male essences and books as food are reconciled, at the mother’s expense.}

The flaw in this attempt to figure civil male autonomy and self-replication, which becomes an open breach in Book II of \textit{Paradise Lost}, is also evident in a passage from \textit{The Reason of Church Government}, a passage on prelacy which recycles the same set of metaphors:

\begin{quote}
So farre was it [prelacy] from removing schisme, that if schisme parted the congregations before, now it rent and mangl’d, now it rag’d. Heresie begat heresie with a certain monstrous haste of pregnancy in her birth, at once borne and bringing forth. Contentions before brotherly were now hostile. Men went to choose their Bishop as they went to a pitcht field, and the day of his election was like the sacking of a City, sometimes ended with the blood of thousands.\footnote{The same images dominant in the other tracts recur: violence, civil strife, the disruption of fraternity; a paternal authority so strict it forces rebellion upon the sons, and the image of birth. But whereas in \textit{Areopagitica} birth was a male function which produced a unified truth, here birth is again the product of the maternal body. As usual, the consequences are dire: ‘Heresie begat heresie with a certain monstrous haste of pregnancy.’ The masculine fear of and preoccupation with multiplicity and its consequences appears here in an unusually demonic form, apparently the consequence of the \textit{combination} of excessive paternal authority and maternal activity. It is as if the former somehow prevents the son figure from successfully appropriating the latter in order to become the parent of a single unified truth once more. Again the image can work only through its}
\end{quote}
overt insistence on the ‘monstrous haste’ of feminised birth and its hideously multiplied offspring of civil strife and disobedience. Femininity is thus the agent of violent division through its always already evident associations with chaotic fragmentation.

In this way the disorderly female body is once again a metaphor for male social and political disorder. It is not Truth which is born of woman, but a multiplicity which is unproductive, even destructive. Milton’s prose begins to construct a position for the autonomous male subject of liberalism by rewriting the familial and reproductive metaphors of patriarchalism. Caught between the desire to free himself from the power of the father and the fear of destroying the source of paternal power, Milton repeatedly seeks to represent himself as his own father and to arrogate to the male subject the powers of paternity (the phallus) and maternity (the womb). In doing this he displaces the civil strife or fraternal turmoil thought by patriarchalism to be created by the loss of the father onto the maternal body. By representing purely paternal births as the products not of the lower body but of the brain, Milton associates those lower bodilinesses with the mother while disassociating masculinity from them along a mind/body split. This position allows the alternate demonisation and disavowal of maternity glimpsed in the prose. Finally, the fraternal strife necessarily linked with maternity is also linked with those lower bodily functions through the figure of a problematic multiplication which disrupts the due boundaries of genesis, formation and birth: ‘At once borne and bringing forth’, the multiplying heresies reproduce in a manner which disturbs the positions between life-stages and between the inside and the outside of the body.

This dread of maternity and its exclusion from the process of the birth of Truth can also be glimpsed in Milton’s lyric poetry. As John Broadbent observed some years ago, Milton’s ‘On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity’ is uniquely chilly in its representation of that nativity. What is shown, as Broadbent and others argue, is less a birth than an apocalyptic descent. As David Norbrook argues, this apocalyptic or prophetic discourse determines the poet’s political engagement. However, the form of that engagement rewrites the tradition of nativity and Christmas poems in a manner which has implications for gender as well as for politics. Milton does not merely refuse to mention Christmas and obliquely associate the pagan gods’ dispersal with the Christmas games which the Puritans found so obnoxious. He also excises other kinds of bodiliness. Whereas traditional nativity poems characteristically celebrate the physicality of the infant Christ in relation to his mother as an emblem for the transfiguration
of the body, Milton virtually eliminates any question of fleshly incarnation altogether, and with it the central role of the Virgin Mary. It would be easy to dismiss this as a simple avoidance of Catholicism were it not for its connection with the poem’s central project, which is to focus not on the first but the second coming, the circling-back of time upon itself to its point of origin. Christ must therefore be ‘the Prince of Light’, with a ‘globe of circular light’ made up of armed angels capable of dismissing the foe. The consequence of this is that Christ’s engagement with nature and with the flesh is not one of transformative incarnation, but of conquest. The poem refuses a rapprochement between heaven and earth, mind and body, preferring to denigrate a feminised Nature while excluding her from any role in Christ’s pure masculinity.

Nature’s female denigration in relation to the descending Christ is figured in terms highly suggestive of the dangerous disorderly female body of the prose. Christ is associated with a light that illuminates and makes visible Nature’s deformities. Nature must ‘doff . . . her gaudy trim’ which is linked with her ‘wanton’ pleasure with the sun (ll. 33–6). Instead she must cover over her ‘foul deformities’ with a ‘saintly veil of maiden white’ snow, ‘confounded, that her maker’s eyes / Should look so near’ at her ‘naked shame, / Pollute with sinful blame’ (ll. 39–44). This description of the sinfulness of flesh is resonant with overtones of the condemnation of fashionable and sexually active ladies. Nature’s ‘gaudy trim’ is reminiscent of the fashionable court dress which monsters replicated and against which Puritans consistently inveighed; it’s therefore not surprising to find it linked with wantonness. But this gaudy dress is no more shameful than the nakedness it purports to conceal, which is ‘pollute with sinful blame’. Nature’s deformities are not altered but merely concealed by her cloak of maidenly white snow, but that virginal covering suggests that the deformities concealed by it are somehow sexual.

This imagery underlines the poem’s refusal of an integration of Christ and the world, truth and flesh. It also figures Christ’s emergence as the pure, unified truth of a self-replication which distinguishes itself from the nausea of the female body. Christ’s descent from the heavens is a birth from those heavens, not a birth from woman. Femininity instead is associated with the low to which he descends; the ‘darksome house of mortal clay’ which covers up his illumination is a metaphor for the body which suggests the womb as well as the tomb (l. 14). Just as the birth of the self from the brain valorises the high by denigrating the low in the prose, so the birth of ultimate Truth from heaven also marks the high as a valid point of origin by distinguishing it from Nature’s cloaked pollution.
The relation between the two ideas can be glimpsed more easily with reference to Catherine Belsey’s contention that the poem is primarily about the birth of Milton as poet.\(^{39}\) Once again, the authorial subject’s autonomy is contingent upon a series of negotiations with metaphors of birth and the displacement of the disorderly female body. Nature’s disorderly female body is immediately associated with male strife and violence, since to quiet Nature’s shame God sends down Peace, who prevents war and creates a resonant silence. The fact that Peace is sent to ‘cease’ the ‘fears’ of Nature (ll. 45–6) suggests that her ‘foul deformities’ represent the fratricidal strife of warfare.

The absence of maternity can also be noted in *Paradise Regained*, which again manages to avoid representing the Virgin Mary other than incidentally.\(^{40}\) Where Milton does elaborate on the maternal body, it is characteristically linked with pollution, decay and (above all) death. Despite Milton’s strictures on the superstitiousness of the ritual of churching, his sonnet ‘Methought I saw my late espoused saint’ suggests a different and less enthusiastic view of childbirth:

\[
\text{Mine as whom washed from spot of childbed taint,}
\text{Purification in the old Law did save,}
\text{And such, as yet once more I trust to have}
\text{Full sight of her in heaven without restraint,}
\text{Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.}\(^{41}\)
\]

Milton may consign the ritual to an ‘old Law’ now superseded, but he vindicates purification itself, which becomes linked with the saint’s white garments. These recall the mantle of snow Nature used to hide her deformities, and this spotlessness stresses the ‘spot’ of ‘childbed taint’ cleansed away. The problem with churching is that it can never fully wash away ‘childbed taint’, unlike the purification of death and transfiguration: in other words, Milton’s repudiation of the ceremony of churching is the standard godly notion that church ceremonies are dubious because only God can perform such acts directly on the believer.

More striking is the linkage established between maternity and death rather than birth. This linkage is one explored again and again in Milton’s poetry. To be sure, this might seem natural in a seventeenth-century context, where childbirth mortality was high for both mother and child.\(^{42}\) Yet for Milton birth and death are routinely constructed against an apotheosis which offers the only possibility of coping with the pollution of maternity, an apotheosis which strikingly resembles the male births envisaged in the prose and depicted in the ‘Nativity Ode’. This can be
illustrated by comparing Milton’s ‘Epitaph on the Marchioness of Windsor’ with certain key passages in *Lycidas* concerning the ‘birth’ and ‘death’ of poetry.

In the ‘Epitaph’, Milton praises the Marchioness’s willingness to sacrifice her life for ‘the world’[s] increase’, and it is her death rather than the child’s which is ostensibly the chief subject of mourning. However, the poem also dramatises a fear that the mother will *not* give birth, will refuse to increase the world’s population, a fear also glimpsed in the image of Juno discussed earlier, and more fully developed in *Lycidas*. This fact surfaces obliquely in the horrified and horrifying image of the Marchioness’s body as a moribund but living tomb for her dead child:

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The hapless babe before his birth
Had burial, yet not laid in earth,
And the languished mother’s womb
Was not long a living tomb. (ll. 31–4)
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The first two lines are like a riddle: how can a baby be buried without being laid in earth? This riddle is answered through the homology of the womb and the tomb, stressed by their rhyme. This commonplace homology depended not only on the paradox that life’s beginning-point was shaped like its destination, but also on the assumption that the womb, like the tomb, was a mere container. The paradox is given force by the adjective ‘living’, which attaches itself both to the tomb (womb) and also inexorably to its contents: the womb is a tomb for the living. The significance of this move is to point obliquely to the horror of the mother’s failure to give birth to the child. But the child is the author of the mother’s death too; her death is a mere accident resulting from the desire to kill the child. The image of flower and parent-plant which follows recycles images also found in ‘On the Death of a Fair Infant’, but here its role seems to be to displace the problematic question of a contagion of death from mother to child or from child to mother by invoking an outside agent responsible for both deaths. Significantly, a similar move is made earlier on. The Marchioness calls on Lucina to help her give birth, but ‘whether by mischance or blame’ Atropos comes instead (ll. 27–8). Lucina as goddess of childbirth often appears as a rather threatening figure because she is responsible for the occurrence of birth, for undoing the strings of the womb. Like the ‘cros-leg’d’ Juno of the prose, Lucina often fails to undo those birth-strings, refusing to permit mankind’s increase. Her control over birth and death is displaced onto Atropos, but despite her ‘remorseless cruelty’ in spoiling both fruit and tree, her intervention
turns out to be a cover for another and more crucial displacement of agency. For it is the poet who assumes control over the processes of entombment, memorialisation and consequently self-replication, or birth. The poem promises promulgation of the ‘virtuous Name’ of the Marchioness; more importantly, it enacts her removal from the sphere of death and pollution to the characteristic illumination of Miltonic heaven. This apotheosis is significant because unlike that described in Jonson’s ‘Elegy’ on the Marchioness, it is contrasted with the failure to give birth and reproduce on earth, and the intrinsic linkage between the corruption of the womb and the corruption of the grave. By dying, the Marchioness achieves the necessary transmutation of her deathly flesh. But her rebirth is controlled by God and by the poet, who by mutually elevating her again arrogate to themselves her power to give birth and emphasise her failure to use that power herself. Masculine poetry is again constructed through the displacement of the mother.

These figures recall the trope of maternal failure central to *Lycidas* and thus to the male power of giving birth to books and poetry. Yet Atropos is precisely not named in *Lycidas* though the context makes it clear that Atropos is invoked, the bearer of the shears and the cutter of the thread. Milton’s ‘mistake’ in substituting a Fury for a Fate at a crucial point has always been difficult to explain, though it is tempting to embark immediately on a psychoanalytic reading: since the Furies were those who punished those who had slain their blood-kin, the substitution may obliquely refer to the violent displacement of the father’s authority which is necessary for the creation of the autonomous and powerful speaker and writer. The blind Fury may have sniffed out the parricidal urges of the son. More crucial still is the linkage made between the Fury (or Fate) and the failure of Orpheus’ mother to defend him from the assaults of maddened women:

What could the muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The muse herself for her enchanting son
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent. (ll. 58–62)

So important is this figure of Orpheus to Milton’s project of self-fashioning as a poet that he reuses the narrative and many of the same terms in Book vii of *Paradise Lost*. Most discussions take for granted Milton’s fear of the castrating Maenads in both allusions. But the key moment is actually Orpheus’ *symbolic* castration through the drowning of
his single voice in the ‘savage clamour’ and ‘hideous roar’ of the women.\textsuperscript{50} The same associations of failed motherhood, singularity and unity dissolving into a female multiplicity, which is chaotic and destructive, and consequently equated with death, show that what is at stake is again the project of producing a self-authenticating, singular truth (here represented as the poetic voice) and the threat to it from chaos. Another way to put this is to assert that death is figured here as the loss of a unitary voice in clamour, or (as Kristeva might say) a slide back into the \textit{abyss} of non-identity phantasmically represented by the maternal body which must be disavowed. The ceaseless Miltonic connections between maternity, violence, chaos and death must thus be read not as an outcome of Milton’s personal life but as a cultural confluence resulting from the attempt to construct a liberal identity set over against these disturbing elements. As usual too the very instatement of Orpheus as a figure for the poet who speaks in \textit{Lycidas} manages the fear of feminine chaos by figuring a patrilineal continuity of the masculine poetic voice which is always already inviolate even as violations of it are registered.

It has perhaps seemed inevitable that this discussion of monstrosity should eventually be mapped onto that mother of monsters, Sin in \textit{Paradise Lost}. Yet Sin makes sense only in the context of the republication of some key \textit{Royalist} texts which link the parliaments of the republic with the mother giving birth to monsters. The first of the \textit{Mistress Parliament} plays was reprinted in 1660 as \textit{Mistress Rump brought to Bed of a Monster} and \textit{The Life and Death of Mistress Rump}, and a collection of Brome’s political poems was published the same year as \textit{Rump}.\textsuperscript{51} Since Milton acted as a censor of \textit{newsbooks} in the 1650s, he may have met Mistress Rump before. Taken together with the evident resemblance between the figure of Sin and the figure of Parliament, it seems likely that Milton is consciously engaging with these representations, that the figure of Sin in \textit{Paradise Lost} marks a remarkable though not unprecedented extrusion of the popular into the highest epic discourse, and further that this moment of dialogism is mediated through the influence of Spenser, whose \textit{Faerie Queene} is one of Milton’s models for a politically engaged epic poetry. The figure of Mistress Parliament and the figure of Sin might be not merely epiphenomena produced by the circulation of discourse, but the sign of political engagement, agency and opposition.

In particular, Milton’s Sin may be an engagement with the representation of the monstrous Rump and the virtuous Free Parliament in \textit{The Life and Death of Mistress Rump}.\textsuperscript{52} This reprints \textit{Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed} word for word until after the birth of the monster, putting the image
of the political monster back into circulation for the Restoration. So Mistress Rump is presented as an adulterous, rebellious and uncontrollable wife. However, in this later rewriting her role is counterpoised by the presentation of a virtuous wife, Free Parliament. Free Parliament plays a role familiar from godly dialogues on wifely virtue: she sternly rebukes her rebellious companion, to repeated rounds of applause from other women. Properly subordinate to male monarchical rule, she stands not only for wifely virtue, but also for the restoration of an appropriate political hierarchy.

Milton’s Sin resembles both Mistress Rump and Free Parliament. Like Mistress Rump, her sexual relations are unregulated, and she is the mother of monsters in addition to being a monster herself. But like Free Parliament, Sin is an obedient wife/daughter, devoting herself to enacting the will of her father and husband, Satan. Sin’s remarkable dutiousness and resemblance to the ideal of wifely and daughterly virtue have often been remarked, but these have not been related to the compliance of Satan’s rigged Parliament. Likewise, the compliant council of fallen angels has often been compared with the Royalist ideal of Parliament as a mere agent for the monarch’s wishes, but this has not been related to Sin’s wifely and daughterly compliance. In the light of the Mistress Parliament plays and their Restoration reworkings, Sin might be read as an allegory of political corruption in a particular form: the effeminate and repulsive submissiveness of Parliament to the will of a tyrannical monarch.

The intractably complex familial metaphors embodied in the allegory are in this reading overdetermined by the contexts – political and polemical – of the poem itself. The infernal ‘family’ and its opposition to the heavenly ‘family’ and the earthly ‘family’ are determined by a network of intertextual entanglements. Such representations of the family are created via the allegory’s involvement in the project of reworking familial metaphors useful to monarchism for a (lost) republican cause, and the effect of this engagement on the attempt to construct an autonomous poetic subjectivity. Given that Satan does embody a critique of authoritarian monarchism, Milton remained engaged with the question of how the ‘natural’ order of kinship and the family could be restructured in order to exclude the use that monarchism had made of it to secure absolutism. The fact that some originally on the Parliamentarian side became overmighty fathers in their turn made the need to engage with this question more pressing, but did not fundamentally change its nature.

The episode of Sin in particular stands out; its divergence or swerve from epic decorum represents not a lapse of taste but a reflection of the
allegorical pamphlet-texts with which it engages. Allegory, deriving from the Greek *allos* (other) and *agoreuein*, to speak openly, signifies an open or public speech that nevertheless manages to speak otherwise, to contain a layer of meaning at once gestured at and concealed. The radical switch of writing modes in *Paradise Lost* from high epic to tertiary or allegorical epic performs a similar function, given the central place of allegory within a tradition of Protestant political poetry. Critics have often noted that the allegory of Sin and Death is one of the clearest marks of Milton’s engagement with his predecessor, Spenser. But they have not gone on to note that the introduction of allegory as a mode connects this part of *Paradise Lost* through Spenser to a tradition of Protestant poetry which contains direct political commentary. Milton’s allegory is thus trebly dialogic. Its generic disjunction from the early part of the poem is marked enough to disturb the singularity and decorum of the epic genre itself; allegory here represents a connectedness with a poetic tradition always dialogic by reason of its incorporation of political motifs; allegory here involves the same kind of incorporation of popular cultural materials into high culture which characterised the Renaissance tertiary epic, and here those materials are garnered not only from the popular culture of newsbooks, but from the hybrid form of the popular political dramas and ballads which themselves draw upon newsbooks. This moment in *Paradise Lost* can be read as subversive, carnivalesque, a violent and disturbing irruption of the popular into the high. Its power is evident; the intrusion of allegory bothers everyone from Dryden and Johnson on as a fatal breach in epic decorum, and it cannot be fully reconciled with the strategies of the remainder of the poem. The allegory of Sin and Death deflates the political rhetoric of Pandaemonium rather than the epic strategies of the poem itself. In other words, ‘lowness’ is an attempt to represent the low (Hell). Above all, however, the intrusion of allegory into the epic is an attempt to manage the disorderly female body. Direct political interpretation or equation of the figures with topical institutions or persons is inappropriate. Encoded in the narrative of Satan’s encounter with Sin and Death is not one monster story, but three. First, Sin is herself a monster, and her birth and acquisition of monstrosity are part of the poem’s narrative. Secondly, there is Death, also monstrous, whose begetting is unnatural because incestuous. Thirdly, there are the many hell-hounds, who look monstrous and behave monstrously, and who are also the products of incest. These monsters are connected with each other by the shared central concern with transgression of boundaries which also concerns the marketplace monster-stories and analyses. Not
only in their incestuous begetting, but also in their births and most of all in their bodies, the monsters represent transgression.

As related in the poem, the starting-point for these transgressions is Death’s attempt at parricide; in the narrative of Sin, the starting-point is her own birth from Satan’s head. There is an obvious similarity between these transgressions. In reshaping the authenticating political metaphors of absolutism, Milton sought to envisage a liberal subject exempt from paternal authority who nevertheless evaded parricide. The struggle to imagine the execution of the monarch in familial terms which are not parricidal is also marked in *Eikonoklastes*. Parricide is the end-result of a series of transgressions which commence with what appears to be a parody of the autonomous author-figure, the only begetter of his own works. As many commentators have noted, the birth of Sin alludes to the birth of Minerva, and we have seen that the birth of Minerva was in Milton’s early prose a figure for the birth of an autonomous truth from its autonomous author’s brain. Here, that male birth is a disaster, and also the sign of a disaster; the disaster is parricide, which in the prose (as here) is a mark of precisely that chaos and civil strife which Milton feared might be caused by liberty.

There is also a sense in which the birth of Sin is caused by rebellion against the father. Satan repeatedly figures God as the overmighty and censorious father-figure characteristically represented in *Areopagitica*. Sin is ‘born’ during Satan’s ‘bold conspiracy against heaven’s king’. Is Milton conservatively rewriting himself? Yet the Minervas and Truths begotten by the Miltonic author-figure are in the end guaranteed by the authority of God the Father. They resemble the descent of the Son in the ‘Nativity Ode’, and the begetting of the Son in *Paradise Lost*. What differentiates Satan’s activities from Milton’s is that his self has become a swerve away from the divine self-replication which in Milton guarantees identity and value. The point therefore is that Satan’s parricidal intent is primary in determining the kinds of self-representations he can generate. In the prose, Milton repeatedly refuses to take up precisely the oppositional stance attributed to him by generations of optimistic Romantics and Marxists. Rather, he repeatedly attributes to his opponents the transgressive role, very often on the terrain of the family, gender and the body. By keeping monarchist familial metaphors in circulation, Milton is able to cast Royalists and absolutists as deviant from a putatively natural (because divinely instituted) norm. From this perspective, it is easy to see that what is at stake politically in this sequence is the attribution of monarchist critiques of Parliamentarians to monarchists themselves, and
to the monarchy. Satan’s usurpation of the divine prerogative of self-begetting precisely parallels James I’s and Charles I’s representations of both Parliament and the people. Filmer argued that Parliament owed its very existence to royal grace alone; moreover, he made a number of suggestive comments about its fragmentation and mutability.60

Under these circumstances Parliament could not act as a check on absolutism. When James I warned Parliament in 1610 that prayers and tears were the only arms which subjects could use against their kings, he appeared to reduce Parliament to the status of a wife or child; wives were able to plead with the king, to be petitioners, but had no authority of their own. James had feminised Parliament.61 Just so is Sin treated by Satan; she pleads with him, she is his petitioner, but she has no authority. In Milton’s allegory, this is scarcely surprising; she is an expression of his will, an aspect of himself: the ‘perfect image’ of his own design, a perfect wife who does not cross his will. Just as Satan’s Parliament of Fallen Angels is a mere occasion for the imposition of his will on the majority, so Sin represents a pliant body, who cannot resist Tyranny despite divine commands to do so. The horror of Sin, the horror of her monstrosity, is that it is a perversion of what ought to be masculine. Like the hermaphroditic monster born in Scotland, Sin is a monster because her sex is wrong. Sin is like the Parliament of Ladies, and like their final emblem, the woman with the dildo. Parliament ought to be masculine; a feminine Parliament can only be a monster.

A feminised Parliament, for Milton, is a repellant effeminisation of the body politic, a transgression of the family structures it purports to uphold and a grotesque mistake. What Milton does is to use the tradition of the monstrous birth as an introduction of the feminine into processes of masculinisation to create deformity as a way of defending the masculinity of Parliament. More importantly, he suggests that the horror of such erroneous femininity is analogous to the horror of maternal incursions into reproduction; Sin is both an imperfect replication by virtue of her erroneous femininity and an imperfect replicator, herself breeding further monsters as her femininity impedes correct masculine self-replication. A chain of sexual and familial breaches of boundaries leads in the end to Satan’s breach of the boundaries of Hell itself, which Sin is supposed to guarantee.62 But it rapidly becomes apparent that Sin will not be an appropriate guarantor of boundaries, or of the law of the Father. She is the product of a transgression, the producer of transgression, the embodiment of transgression. Her body is monstrous in two respects: it incarnates the horror of the maternal body as well as the horror of monstrosity.
which is the result of its inappropriate incursion into masculine self-replication:

The one seemed woman to the waist, and fair,
But ended foul in many a scaly fold
Voluminous and vast, a serpent armed
With mortal sting: about her middle round
A cry of hell hounds never ceasing barked
With wide Cerberian mouths full loud, and rung
A hideous peal: yet, when they list, would creep,
If aught disturbed their noise, into her womb,
And kennel there, yet there still barked and howled,
Within unseen. (11, 650–9)

Milton can hardly bear to tell us of Sin’s horror. The ‘foul’ ending of Sin’s body is ‘voluminous and vast’; it is also folded many times. Woman’s lower body parts – the womb, the vulva – are gestured at, but cannot be seen. But Sin’s body is also problematically open. Her monstrousness and the monstrousness of her offspring are literally conflated: not only do her children bark ‘with wide Cerberian mouths’, further symbols of the open womb which cannot be shown, they also signify the openness of her womb by penetrating it, though ‘within unseen’. This trope of monstrous generation derives directly from Spenser’s Erreur, whose innumerable young crawl back into her mouth and are repeatedly disgorged. Such openness is symbolic of the wife and mother who does not accurately replicate the father’s identity; it suggests adultery, spending, openness to images other than those of the father.

The initial description of Sin is thus revealed as a figure of the horror evoked by the female body, a horror analysed by Freud in his essay ‘Medusa’s Head’. Freud argued that the head of Medusa represents ‘a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something’. The horror is the possibility of the castration of the male, and the reason this naked image of feminine horror seems appropriate is because it represents the Parliamentarian fear of the castrating power of absolutism. The risk is that Sin’s femininity will swamp the masculine identity of heads of households, that a feminine parliament will become a self-image, and hence an image of castration. This is an instance of the way in which inevitable psychic anxieties about masculinity can become reasons for political positions. Similarly, Neil Hertz points out that the French Revolution is often represented in terms of prostitution, and argues that the order of society depends on the propriety of woman’s sexual and reproductive behaviour, since the self-representation of the man was still the name of
the father. The sight of woman’s disorderly body, circulating freely, or ‘open’ to other men, signified a disruption of that order. So Sin as Parliament is a double threat, as a self-image and as an image of the loss of paternal authority.

As Catherine Gallagher astutely points out, what Hertz (and Freud) ignore is the threat of chaotic female generativity. Figuring the sight of woman as the site of a lack, they miss the threat of woman’s positive and productive capacities, and the metaphoric significance of that threat in political contexts. It is this figure of uncontrolled maternity which seems crucial for Milton’s representation of the horror of the female lower body. Sin’s generative capacities are the centre of her monstrousness, and are the literal cause of her terrible appearance. Giving birth is repeatedly enacted in her narrative; the birth of a monster is not a single event, but one constantly replayed. This riotous, uncontrollable multiplication is figured in the first description of Sin, whose open womb provides a kennel for her howling offspring. Later, Sin describes the process in a manner which emphasises the headlong haste:

These yelling monsters that with ceaseless cry
Surround me, as thou sawest, hourly conceived
And hourly born, with sorrow infinite
To me, for when they list into the womb
That bred them they return, and howl and gnaw
My bowels, their repast; then bursting forth
Afresh with conscious terrors vex me round. (11, 795–801)

Conception, birth and re-entry into the womb all figure Sin’s troubling and troubled openness, but they also represent the chaos of a reproduction which exceeds its own limits. A sign of this excess is the monsters’ cannibalistic devouring of Sin’s bowels, ‘their repast’, a cannibalism which renders literal the breakdown of familial, sexual and bodily laws. Understood as the product of Satan’s failed attempt at making his ‘perfect image’, the magnitude of that apparent failure is revealed in the numerousness of his offspring. Rather than producing a single, stable heir, Satan’s children are a deformed multitude which reflects both his fragmentation and his lack of unity and self-same propriety. Thus the masculinity of absolutism is called into question, for it turns out that it is powerless to replicate itself, degenerating at once into feminised chaos. As ever, by arrogating all masculinity to himself, the absolute monarch can only undermine masculinity. The monstrousness of Satan’s offspring, arising as was traditional from a mixture of body parts from different species, represents that lack of unity; their numerousness makes them an
unreliably multiple image of Satan’s nature. Or are they so unreliable? Milton also invites the reader to see Sin and her brood as an exposé of the truth of absolutism; that beneath the monarch’s claims of masculinity lies a disorderly effeminisation.

The process of birth is atrociously violent in Sin’s narrative. The birth of monsters was always supposed to be painful, but here it is not merely painful but deforming. The bodily excess of Sin herself represents and is represented by her generative capacity, and is also caused by it:

    my womb
    Pregnant by thee, and now excessive grown
    Prodigious motion felt and rueful throes.
    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
    Transformed. (11, 778–85)

Sin’s pregnant body is ‘excessive’, symbolising her reproductive chaos. There is a nice Miltonic pun on ‘prodigious’, signifying not just size but also the pangs of producing a prodigy. The birth of Death, the agonising birth process which makes Sin’s body bulge and racks it with pain, also ‘distort[s]’ or deforms it, and eventually tears it open. The maternal body made invisible in the birth of Christ is painfully open in the birth of Death. Despite the fact that the poem insists that the birth of Death is abnormal and unnatural, this draws its force from its grim accuracy: it could almost be a literal description of pregnancy and childbirth in the early modern period – from the perspective of one utterly horrified by them.

Horror at labour and birth might arise from Milton’s tendency to connect them with death. Just as Milton’s poems are littered with the bodies of dead infants, who sometimes cause the deaths of their mothers, so the maternal body itself here comes to be associated with death. Sin’s body, her womb, are not the origins of life, but the origins of death. The homology between womb and tomb is fully played out: the womb creates, and is, the tomb. A psychoanalytic reading, drawing on Kristeva, would perhaps argue that the association between the abjection of the maternal body and the fear of death is the consequence of the fear of the dissolution of (masculine) subjectivity in the maternal embrace. Since identity is founded on the repression of the maternal body, a return to that body threatens what has been constructed. Such a reading might find some support in the description of Death himself, who has no shape or
substance, no secure outline. And yet it is also true that by locating the tomb in the womb, by insisting that the maternal body produces death and not life, Milton both expresses and manages the threat posed by the womb to the social order and to an identity still grounded in the paternal. The womb’s threat lies in the disruption of that paternal line, those masculine identities in the polity. And yet the allegorical mode allows the visibility of an overt and controlling author-figure, an author of the kind asserted by the monster pamphlets and by Areopagitica, one whose attribution of signification in the naming process means that semiotic chaos is never allowed to overwhelm the position of ‘objective’ and autonomous observation which he occupies.

Death also provides a means for Sin’s subsequently greater dynastic achievements, however. Sin embodies the chaotic breach of boundaries which nevertheless become more visible as boundaries because of her transgression of them, but her penultimate transgression is another act of opening which releases Satan into chaos itself, as well as opening the earth to Hell. This of course helps to make a female figure (and not, for instance, God) the implementer of the ‘sad instrument of all our woe’ (11, 872). But it also provides yet another linkage between openness and the darkness of the womb and tomb. Chaos is ‘a dark / Illimitable ocean without bound’ (11, 891–2); it is also ‘the womb of nature and perhaps her grave’ (11, 911). Just as Satan nearly becomes lost in the darkness produced by Sin’s womb, so he is nearly swallowed by Chaos. Like the womb and the maternal body, Chaos is also a figure of strife, a place of ‘eternal anarchy’ and ‘endless wars’ in which ‘faction’ forms and dissolves: ‘To whom those most adhere, / He rules a moment’ (11, 906–7). The political and military metaphors suggest a connection between the operations of nature and the function of government. As in Areopagitica there is tension between the opposing images of strife without government and tyrannical power. But here, as in the prose, the former is again figured as a maternal body. Sinful disorder is thus understood as a feminine Other of secure male self-replication and autotelic self-construction which nonetheless always returns to threaten these male poetic – and political – practices.
As a contemporary pamphlet tells it, some soldiers searching for food before the first battle of Newbury had a strange encounter with an old woman, spotted in the act of crossing a river on a raft. The old woman was not merely floating on the raft, but manipulating it unnaturally. Somehow she was able to turn it from side to side, changing direction at will, oblivious of the current, ignoring the laws of nature. Her power over the water terrified the soldiers, and they immediately concluded it was supernatural. Worse was to follow. The soldiers struggled to kill the old woman, who proved impervious to their efforts. After shooting at her:

One [s]et his carbine close unto her breast, where discharging, the bullet back rebounded like a ball, and narrowly he missed it in his face that was the shooter; this so enraged the gentlemen, that one drew out his sword and manfully run at her with all the force his strength had power to make, but it prevailed no more than did the shot, the woman still though speechless, yet in a most contemptible way of scorn, still laughing at them which did the more exhaust their fury against her life.

At last, one soldier remembered a method of dealing with a body reinforced by magic:

yet one among the rest had learned that piercing or drawing blood forth from the veins that cross the temples of the head, it would prevail against the strongest sorcery, and quell the force of witchcraft, which was allowed for trial; the woman hearing this, knew then the devil had left her and her power was gone, wherefore she began aloud to cry, and roar, tearing her hair and making piteous moan, which in these words expressed were ‘And is it come to pass that I must die indeed? Why then his excellency the Earl of Essex shall be fortunate and win the field.’

With this gratifying disclosure, the witch proves that Satan is on the king’s side: the Earl of Essex was a leading Parliamentarian general at Newbury. Since her magical armour has been unlocked by the act of piercing her at a particular spot, her body is no longer invulnerable. So she
is shot and sinks to the bottom of the river. Her initial invulnerability and subsequent collapse can be allegorised as a story of the decline of Royalist military fortunes, and they partake in particular of the logic of siege. Both cities and castles under siege are often compared to the female body, just as Petrarchan poetry borrowed the language of war to describe seduction.  

Here, after artillery has failed, a sneak attack on the body’s weak point causes its defences to collapse.

Yet the besieged human body is not quite like a town: once conquered, there can be no rebuilding. The soldiers who killed the witch were themselves soon to be besieged bodies, soon to be forced to assume the same iron-hard defensiveness and confident fearlessness that she assumed. But they would be forced to assume these postures by nature, as a function of their masculinity, their godliness, their salvation in both physical and spiritual senses. (In the Civil War, as in other wars, to run away was to betray one’s fellows to the slaughter of a rout.) The witch’s bizarre doubling of the ideal soldier’s posture of iron-clad defence, her body’s power to repel shot and sword, replicates the very identity her murderers wished to claim. As long as she is so defensively arrayed, she is their opponent. And so it also follows that like any other military opponent, she must be divested of her defences and destroyed, so that her destroyers can be safe.

Offered as a story before the battle, the witch of Newbury’s story can only have been told after the battle. It makes sense only in the context of that battle, since Newbury was a particularly frightful and frightening experience for Parliamentarian soldiers. Fright, as Freud rightly notes, differs from fear and anxiety in that it involves surprise, the subject at a loss as to how to protect himself against it or master it. ‘Many men were killed on both sides’, says the ardently Parliamentarian newsbook account, but god be praised wee won the field of them . . . The fight was long and terrible, some talke of thousands slaine on the kings side; I viewed the field, and cannot guesse above 500, but this the townsmen informed us, that they carried 60 cart loads of dead and wounded men into the Towne before I came to view the place, and much crying there was for Surgeons as never was the like heard.

As never was the like heard: the pamphlet lamely tries to record fright, the moment when the subject is challenged by an experience so unprecedented that it is threatening, an undoing of the known.

The nakedness of relatively new recruits to the horrors of battle was exacerbated by the unleashing of new weapons of unprecedented destructive power. Cannon played an especially large role at Newbury, and John
Milton was not alone in thinking it an invention of the devil. Captain Gwynne described its consequences when he saw ‘a whole file of men, six deep, with their heads struck off with one cannon shot of ours’. The tendency of cannon to dismember was recalled with a mixture of horror and relish in George Lauder’s ballad, _The Scottish Soldier_: ‘to see legs and arms torn ragged fly / And bodies gasping all dismembered lie’. Colonel Slingsby, similarly, saw ‘legs and arms flying apace’ when cannon fired point-blank at infantry, while Sergeant Henry Foster, another Parliamentarian, recalled that ‘it was somewhat dreadful when bowels and brains flew in our faces’. As if this were not enough to unsettle, there was another alarming incident in which the Parliamentarians were surprised on the second day of the Newbury battle:

Colonel Hurry . . . made after us, but such was the cowardice of our horse . . . that upon a weake assault of the enemy they ran away, rode quite thorow our foot in a narrow lane, prest many of them downe under their horses feet, and for the present utterly routed us, which caused the enemy to fall on with great eagnersesse and resolution, but God be praising our Foot got over into the fields out of the lane, lined the hedges with Musketiers, and killed them like Dogs.

This providential turning of the tide replicates the story of the witch, successful right up to the moment when she is unmasked – or uncased – as vulnerable.

It is apparent that the story of the witch of Newbury is a fantasy story, a story that expresses and manages the terrible anxieties created by war and battle and the assumption of military identity. Throughout the Civil War, as I will try to show in this chapter, those anxieties, and the others produced by the national cataclysm, found an outlet in the manufacture and circulation of stories about witches, so that the figure of the witch was constantly caught up in and reshaped by the swirling, ceaselessly changing discourses of the politics and persons of the Civil War era. This chapter will focus on one particular kind of fantasy, the fantasy produced by and from the particular stresses the Civil War produced for combatant men and also for non-combatant spectators. The crisis in masculinity produced by the experience of battle and the ever-present threat of war and of concomitant loss of control over one’s own life issued forth in violent fantasies and violent deeds, some using the figure of the witch as a condensed, displaced image of all there was to fear. By destroying her, men could feel, as the soldiers at Newbury felt, that they were restoring normality and thus restoring their own gender identities as well. I will be looking at the recurrence of this fantasy in a number of
different contexts, but I shall be focusing at length on one man’s stories, stories which allow us to see how public issues were vivified by personal investments, or self-fashioning. These are the stories told by England’s self-appointed Witch-Finder General, the notorious Matthew Hopkins. I will be suggesting that although as far as we know Hopkins was not a combatant, his fantasies are best understood in the context of Civil War anxieties about masculinity and its preservation.  

Matthew Hopkins was, however, just one of those able to use the figure of the witch to understand their position in the Civil War years. The witch proved to be a figure so labile that diverse and even opposed meanings could attach to her, making her immensely useful to the factious polemicists of the Civil War era. First, many commentators interpreted the proliferation of witch-trials as a sign of disorder. On the Royalist side, the text ‘rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft’ (1 Samuel 25. 23) was frequently quoted, while the Royalist newspaper *Mercurius Aulicus* observed that witchcraft is ‘an usuall attendant on former rebellions’. James Howell, while wearing his Royalist hat, remarked that we have also multitudes of witches among us, for in Essex and Suffolk there were above two hundred indicted within these two years, and above the one half of them executed. More, I may well say, than ever this Island bred since the Creation, I speak it with horror. God guard us from the Devil, for I think he was never so busy upon any part of the Earth that was enlightened with the beams of Christianity; nor do I wonder at it, for there’s never a Cross left to fright him away.

*The Parliamentary Journal* responded irritably that it is the ordinary mirth of the malignants of this city to discourse of the association of witches in the associated counties, but by this they shall understand the truth of the old proverb, which is that where God hath his church, the Devill hath his Chappel.

More ambiguously, a pamphlet entitled *Signes and Wonders from Heaven* bundles witches together with monsters and thunderstorms to argue that the Lord decreed a separation between the King and his parliament before the wars began in England for the sins of the whole nation. That the Lord is angry with us every one; for our sin, doth appeare in this; . . . have not a crew of wicked Witches, together with the Devils assistance done many mischiefes in Norfolke, Suffolke, Essex, and other parts of our Kingdome, whereof some were executed at Chenfford in Essex last to the number of fourteen?

For others it was belief in witches and witch-prosecutions which represented the intellectual and social disorder of the Civil War years. For Sir Robert Filmer, the fact that Parliament had the upper hand was a
sign that popular ideas had got quite above themselves. In his *Advertisement to the Jury-men of England*, Filmer scouted popular witch beliefs in robust terms: ‘To have nothing but the publique faith of the present Age, is none of the best evidence’ he wrote. From an entirely different and far more godly perspective, Thomas Ady located belief in witchcraft in an ungodly and outdated reliance on inappropriate worship and ritual of the kind Parliament was seeking to reform away. Both Filmer and Ady agreed in finding witch-beliefs plebeian and superstitious, but differed in assigning causes, each blaming his opponents. Similarly, *The Moderate Intelligencer*, a Parliamentarian journal, questioned Hopkins’ activities in East Anglia, scornfully inquiring

whence is it that the Devills should choose to be conversant with silly women that know not their right hands from their left, is the great wonder. They will meddle with none but poor old women, as appears by what we received this day from Bury.

Both sides also used the figure of the witch as a propaganda weapon, trying to build up an association between prominent enemy figures and witchcraft. Two examples, one from each side, are Oliver Cromwell and Prince Rupert. The imagery surrounding Rupert was more luridly imaginative than that surrounding Cromwell. *Signes and Wonders From Heaven* reports that the Norfolk witches’ arrest, like the death of the witch of Newbury, would impede Royalists, since the witches had been working for Rupert:

It is likewise certified by many of good quality and worth that at the last Assizes in Norfolke there were 40 witches arraigned for their lives, and 20 executed: and that they have done very much harme in that countrey, and have prophesied of the downfall of the King and his army, and that Prince Robert [Rupert] shall be no longer shot-free: with many strange and unheard-of things that shall come to passe.

James More of Halesworth, admitting making a covenant with the Devil, said he returned his imp to his sister Mary Everard, ‘to send with others to Prince Rupert’. There were a number of satirical portrayals of Prince Rupert’s dog, Boy, as a familiar. ‘Certainly he is some Lapland Lady’, said one none-too-serious account, ‘who by nature was once a handsome white woman, and now by art is become a handsome white Dogge, and hath vowed to follow the Prince to preserve him from mischiefe’. Among his other gifts, Boy can find hidden treasure: the Oxford plate, which could not be found by Parliament. Like the witch of Newbury, the dog is proof against attack: ‘once I gave him a very
hearty stroke, with a confiding Dagger, but it slided off his skin as if it had been Armour of proofe nointed over with Quicksilver’. He also catches bullets aimed at Rupert in his mouth. ‘He prophesies as well as my lady Davis, or Mother Shipton’, concludes the pamphlet. Neither Boy nor Eleanor Davies could have felt complimented. This reads like a joke about preoccupations with occult significances on the Parliamentarian side, rather than as a serious account of such preoccupations; it shows too that the figure of the witch could retain, in Royalist hands, some of the comic suggestion of hicks and ignoramuses that it acquired in the 1630s.

Cromwell too was likened to a witch, often metaphorically rather than literally. When Denzil Holles described Cromwell as a witch working to overthrow the realm, he was using witchcraft as a metaphor for a secret plot: your Sabbaths, when you have laid by your assumed shapes, with which you have cozened the world, and resumed your own; imparting to each other and both of you to your fellow-witches.

This metaphor of the witch as spy, plotter, or secret agent also surfaces in the account of the witch of Newbury as an agent sent to blow up the magazine of the Earl of Essex. An eighteenth-century historiographical tradition depicted Cromwell making a pact with the Devil before the battle of Worcester, to run for seven years. Cromwell was also associated with a witch in a post-Restoration pamphlet, The English Devil, or Cromwell and his Monstrous Witch discovered at Whitehall, 1660. The witch, ‘disguised’ as a prophetess, is given the role of suggesting regicide to the Army Council. Dimly recognisable as Elizabeth Poole, who in fact made herself unpopular with the Council by urging them not to kill Charles I, this represents a woman with occult powers as secrecy or duplicity. Whereas the reference to Eleanor Davies in the pamphlet about Rupert is primarily intended to ridicule, the reference to Poole belittles her supernatural claims, while associating her with treachery and regicide. These ideas could be taken up with frightening literalism by soldiers or prosecutors with the power to harm those on whom their eye fell.

In the summer of 1645, The Parliaments Post reported that

There is an infection in wickednesse; and the spirit of the Cavillers because it could not prevaile with our men, hath met with some of our women, and it hath turned them into Witches.

Elegantly equating weakness with femininity, and thus expressing terror of the feminisation of the army and its consequent vulnerability through the figure of the witch, this statement encapsulates relations between Civil War witch-trials and the war itself. As we have seen, war creates a number
of anxieties about gender and masculinity. We have already seen such anxieties adopting defensive positions, not giving way or opening up, in the case of the witch of Newbury. The very disruptive effects of war itself on the life of the individual and the nation impact on the ego to generate fears of further engulfment and chaos, setting abjection in motion. Both aggressive actions and violent repudiations are produced by these psychic pressures. One instance of the effect of such pressures is the systematic iconoclasm of the 1640s. In Suffolk, William Dowsing led a campaign which destroyed decorations in 150 Suffolk churches. Though not a combatant, Dowsing believed his activities had a direct relation to the course of the war: he thought Fairfax was given victory at Nantwich because on that day images were destroyed at Orford, Snape and Saxmundham. Like those who unmasked the witches who had enchanted Prince Rupert, Dowsing had removed the protective carapace of one side and thus strengthened the other. King-breaking, Margaret Aston claims, was lumped with thing-breaking by Royalist historians, but the same was also true of Parliamentarians in the sense that there was an effort to make something new by cleansing, by destruction. All this applies also to the Parliamentary soldiers at Newbury, and to Hopkins, whose zeal came from the same impulse to obliterate whatever might hold England back.

Iconoclasm also resembled atrocities, and was often described as if it were an atrocity; it offered the same chance to organise the self by attacking the helplessly mysterious and powerful: soldiers attacking a figure of Christ might have been attacking any feminised target:

another said ‘here is Christ’, and swore that he would rip up his bowels: which they accordingly did, as far as the figures were capable thereof, besides many other villainies. And not content therewith, finding another statue of Christ in the frontispiece of the South-gate, they discharged against it forty shot at the least, triumphing much, when they did hit it in the head or face.

Iconoclasm and the removal of witches were sometimes linked:

The late lamentable Warres began, yet God was good to us in discovering many secret treacheries . . . And many superstitious reliques were abolished, which neither we nor our godly fathers (as ye have heard) were able to beare. Since which time, ye knew, many witches have been discovered by their own confessions, and executed; many glorious victories obtained (beyond any man’s expectation) and places of strength yielded, above seventy in eight moneths space.

After Naseby, some victorious Parliamentarian troops came across a party of women, said to be camp-followers. They slashed at the women’s heads and faces, with such ferocity that some of them later died of their
wounds. According to one story they were seen as whores; another account says they were assumed to be Irish because they understood no English (they were Welsh). But there is yet another Other that the women might have represented to the soldiers. Attacking the women’s faces and heads is reminiscent of the most common and most thoroughly masculinised method of dealing with a witch, scoring above the breath, or scratching. This is used by the soldiers at Newbury to great effect: it is piercing the witch’s temples that allows the soldiers to kill her. It may even be that the troops at Naseby had heard about the events at Newbury. A very similar episode occurred during the Irish uprising of 1641, where a Scottish settler attacked an Irishwoman in reprisal for what he claimed were attacks on his own family. Granny Mullan told the story: John Erwyn led a party of Scots soldiers to Edward O’Mullan’s house on Sunday 2nd February 1642. He drew his sword, and wounded the said Mary Mullen in her head, and forehead, and cut her fingers, at which time she cried out, “Dear John, do not kill me, for I never offended you”, repeating this to him two or three times, whereupon he thrust her under the right breast and she gave up the ghost . . . And after a time the said Erwyn took a mighty lump of fire and put it on the said Mary Mullen’s breast, expecting she was still living.

Mary’s words sound like the excuses of women accused of witchcraft by violent neighbours. Particularly telling is the test to see if Mary is really dead; it sounds as if Erwyn expects Mary to be impervious to weapons. Alternatively, he may not really have believed she was a witch, but may have intended to insult her by comparing her with one. In England, ‘witch’ was a standard term of abuse, like ‘whore’. Erwyn may have intended to mark Mary as a witch, to convey to her and to himself his notion of how an unruly woman might be mastered. As a settler, Erwyn was also symbolically mastering the rebellion itself, and hence the Irish, then as now apt to be figured by their colonial rulers as repositories of the primitive, the superstitious, and hence the feminine. More than one early modern coloniser compared the Irish to Circe, a figure combining femininity, seductively uncontained sexuality and witchcraft. Just as the Parliamentarian soldiers saw the witch of Newbury and other witches as responsible for Royalist successes, so those fighting the Irish saw witches as involved in making their jobs harder. When a large storm blew up in early summer of 1641, men and officers ‘attributed this hurrikan to the devilish skill of some Irish witches’. Similarly, Ann Fanshawe describes seeing an apparition during a sojourn in Ireland; she and her husband
concluded the cause to be the great superstition of the Irish, and the want of that knowing faith which should defend them from the power of the Devill, which he exercises among them very much.\textsuperscript{33}

The soldiers at Naseby may not have cared whether the women were whores, witches, Irish or all three; they may not have made especially sharp distinctions between these groups. What all three represented was the kind of feminised chaos which as soldiers they must control, contain and even deny in order to assert their own identities.

An even more egregious case of violence and aggression among soldiers taking a woman as witch as object comes from Warminster. Anne Warberton was attacked by a group of soldiers there, as she described

upon the feast day of thannunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary last past [25 March, 1643/4] was two yeares sithence one George Long of Warminster came to the house of yor peticoner and two souldiers in Armes with him and the said Long and one of the souldiers required the peticoner to open her dore who answered she would not unless he was an officer. Then the said Long said he was as good as any officer whatsoever and ymmediately by force broke downe a windowe leafe wch fell into the house upon a paile of water whereby both window leafe and paile of water fell upon yor peticoner and her child wch dod so bruise the child that it fell sick and shortly after dyed. Yet not being contented they also broke up the dore and entered the house by force and then the said Long fell to byting pinching and scratching of yor peticoner saying and swearing in most execrable and ignominious manner shee was a witch and therfore hee would have her blood which he drewed from her in great abundance for wch abuse hee was bound over to answer at a generall Sessions at ye Devizes but while yor peticoner went for a bill of indictment the said Long ran away from the Devizes and hath not answered the Law.\textsuperscript{34}

In Wiltshire the Civil War was grim: the county changed hands several times with bitter fighting until the final triumph of Parliament in 1645. This may have been the occasion for many acts of violence. The Civil War often enabled behaviour ordinarily open to censure; like other wars, it both placed intolerable strain on male identity and allowed it full and destructive rein. Both interpretations – the psychic and the opportunistic – are also possible for Matthew Hopkins’ activities in East Anglia, also characterised by repeated acts of seemingly incomprehensible aggression. And yet the English Civil War did not ‘cause’ the witchcraft prosecutions of the 1640s and 1650s. In Europe as a whole there was a commonsensical inverse relationship between really intensive warfare and witchcraft prosecutions in the courts, though this does not take account of soldiers taking the law into their own hands.\textsuperscript{35} The anxieties produced by the war and revolution could sometimes be relieved
via witch-discourses, and conversely these anxieties reshaped the fantasy of
witchcraft.

There was no special reason why a witch-craze of vast proportions
should have started in Essex rather than in Wiltshire or Hertfordshire.\textsuperscript{36}
What started it, and then facilitated it at every turn, was the presence of
Matthew Hopkins. The depositions collected from plaintiffs closely re-
semble those from other witch-trials, recapitulating popular preoccupa-
tions with food preparation, the household economy, family tensions, and
the stresses and strains imposed by pregnancy, childbirth and maternity.\textsuperscript{37}
Once the prosecutions did start, however, Hopkins’ fantasies and the
local depositions he collected were tinted by the particularities of the
locale, the historical moment, the man himself. As far as we know,
Hopkins was not a soldier, yet his fantasies seem motivated by similar
anxieties about the fragility of masculine identity. Though not literally
involved in war, Hopkins may nevertheless have seen the witch-hunt
as analogous to war, because of the discursive context which understood
witches to be part of the war effort. His partner, John Stearne, wrote of
witch-hunting as a way of fighting spiritual battles in language which
recalls the New Model Army’s understanding of its literal military
activities as metaphorically spiritual:

\begin{quote}
And so going ever well-armed against these rulers of darknesse, devills and evil
spirits, furnished with the heavenly furniture and spirituall weapons, of which
the Apostle speaketh, Eph. 6.14.18, and being thus qualified, and armed, to trust
in God only, who will keepe thee under the shadow of his wings, Psal. 91.\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}

As a godly soldier facing danger, Hopkins uses the same narratives and
metaphors as the soldiers at Newbury and Naseby, and experiences the
same terrors.

There is a local and possibly unreliable tradition that Hopkins ‘as a
childe’ ‘took affrighte at an apparition of the Devill, which he saw in the
night’.\textsuperscript{39} Though not authenticated, this story is believable in the light of the
fantasies that Hopkins was to produce, fantasies that resemble godly night-
mares. As the child of a godly vicar, whose will insists firmly on salvation
through faith alone, Hopkins was part of a godly discourse that could terrify
through its vehement insistence on the gap between election and damnation.\textsuperscript{40} Although all his biographers have seen Hopkins as marked by this
lineage, Hopkins himself frequently invented alternative ancestries for
himself, possibly grounded in family legend, but betokening a wish to make
something, or perhaps to make something different of his patronymic.
He told William Lilly that he came from a line of schoolmasters in
Suffolk, ‘who had composed for the psalms of King David’; there was indeed a John Hopkins, an English hymn-writer, a different godly father, perhaps, from his own but one less terrifying, more obviously a maker himself. By contrast, Hopkins told Lady Jane Whorwood that he was really named Hopequins and was the grandson of an English Catholic diplomat, Richard Hopequins. Lady Jane was a Royalist, so this may have been designed to create an identity acceptable to her, as well as to Hopkins. But it may also have given him subtle pleasure to represent himself in a way not approved by his father. Self-fashioning involves the death of the father in the refusal to replicate his social identity; there is even a kind of murderousness in the obliteration of the father.

Hopkins first appears as a witness in the 1645 pamphlet account of the Essex witch-trial, in which, as well as featuring as a witness to the principal confession, he also offers, more unusually, an account of strange goings-on to supplement the witches’ confessions and depositions of maleficium. It is these narratives that bring us closest to the mind of Matthew Hopkins, since they offer an opportunity to analyse his own witch-stories, and since they are markedly different from standard popular accounts of local maleficium without direct recourse to the theorists of demonology. The first such story goes like this:

And this informant further saith, That going from the House of the said Mr Edwards to his own house, about nine or ten of the clock that night, with his Greyhound with him, he saw the Greyhound suddenly give a jumpe, and ran as shee had been in a full course after an hare; and that, when this informant made haste to see what his greyhound so eagerly pursued, he espied a white thing about the bignesse of a kitlyn, and the greyhound standing aloofe from it; and that by and by the said white impe or kitlyn daunced about the said greyhound, and by all likelihood bit off a piece of the flesh of the shoulder of the said greyhound, for the greyhound came shrieking and crying to this informant, with a piece of flesh torn from her shoulder.

Though told by a young man, this is a little boy’s story and a frightened little boy’s at that. It parallels stories told by other little boys anxious to make an impression as heroic battlers against evildoers. The presence of the greyhound points to the influence of Edmund Robinson’s deposition in the 1633/4 Lancashire case, which Hopkins may have heard about in childhood. But it is also influenced by the folktales which gave rise to this story, in which witches in hare form cannot be coursèd by dogs. Both Robinson’s dog and Hopkins’ are bitches, too. It is interesting that Hopkins begins with a story told by a known faker; Edmund Robinson eventually confessed to making his story up to escape trouble at home.
Did Hopkins know that Edmund Robinson had confessed to inventing his story? Or were the witches discredited in Parliamentarian eyes, having been saved by the efforts of the king and the Laudian bishops? Whether or not Hopkins knew of Robinson’s use of the greyhound motif, his own story stars a dog in a rather different role. In Robinson’s story, the greyhound too was a witch; Hopkins sets up a neater, less ambiguous opposition between kitten and dog, where the dog is not only victim, but silent witness to the demon’s presence by her unnatural behaviour (the dog did do something in the night?). Is the dog a figure for deformed nature, then, and thus for other, wider anxieties? The dog confirms this by the testimony of her torn shoulder, a wound with a tongue to cry out against evildoers, made to speak by Hopkins’ probing of it, his giving it a voice. The torn flesh of the greyhound is in fact doubly unnatural (cat bites dog). Does it also represent, at a deeper level, a deeper wound? It is, after all, a wounded *female* body which becomes the principal evidence for witchcraft here. The wound does not merely signify castration, but may also represent that maternal body which must be hastily abjected, that which threatens masculinity by its Medusan and apotropaic woundedness. The femininity of the wound, which is not only a wounding but a tearing, an emphasised act of violence and violation, both challenges and paradoxically reinforces Hopkins’ masculinity, which unlike the wound can really speak, can remain in control by talking. At the same time, it may represent not only the *maleficium* of the witch, but her power to make a visible difference. Hence, the witch’s familiar is also the deformer of a society made unnatural by false religion, the creator of disorder threatening to identity and therefore violently repressed. Like a cannonade, she turns what had been known into a torn and mangled landscape of what can never be known again, woundedness, deformity, symbolic death.

There are idiosyncrasies which may open up the singularity of Hopkins. The kitlyn, or kitten, dances. Is this a dead metaphor, merely meaning evasion of the hunting dog? Or does it point to forbidden, ungodly, even alluring dancing, dancing in a round, perhaps resembling ungodly church festivals? Is this the point at which Hopkins’ father’s voice is heard, connecting the ungodly with the Satanic? Oddly, too, the story is not very useful in establishing the validity of Hopkins’ methods of witch-hunting. It climaxes not with the discovery of the familiar (as one might expect from Hopkins) but in the discovery of the wound in the greyhound’s shoulder. This alone excites real interest, real feeling. Hopkins emerges from this story as a man who wants to talk about wounds, rather
than a man who wants to talk about familiars. And yet this is not the end of the Hopkins story. It continues, as follows:

And this Informant further saith, That coming into his own yard that night, he espied a black thing, proportioned like a cat, onely it was thrice as big, sitting on a strawberry bed, and fixing the eyes on this Informant, and when he went towards it, it leaped over the pale towards this Informant, as he thought; but ran quite through the yard, with his greyhound after it, to a great gate, which was underseet with a paire of tumbrell strings, and did throw the said gate wide open, and then vanished; and the said greyhound returned againe to this informant, shaking and trembling exceedingly.\textsuperscript{35}

The greyhound, duly feminised again, is now opposed even more violently to her demonic foe, who takes on the characteristics Hopkins formerly gave to the wounded dog. The black cat of uncertain size has invaded the bounds of Hopkins’ garden, as the white kitlyn broke the greyhound’s skin. The cat’s mastery of bounds is also manifest in its ability to open the gate, and its uneasy sexualisation may be signified by its position on a strawberry bed, often a signifier of female sexuality. Here the strawberries suggest both the domestic (and significantly, the food-producing element of it) that the beast has invaded, the order that has been scattered. But they might also remind us of the wound in the greyhound’s shoulder: red, soft, crushed. The cat’s gender, not specified, is ambiguous: it is both associated with the crushed strawberries and also their macho conqueror. Most importantly of all for Hopkins’ later career, the cat is the owner of the gaze, the one who can look at ‘this Informant’, fixing its eyes, getting him in its sights. This fixing, effective look contrasts with the cat’s own slipperiness, its blackness, its power to slip away. While in witch-stories told by witches themselves, the familiar often takes on the qualities of a child, in Hopkins’ account the familiar is the feminine other. Such figurations bring with them a fear of engulfment manifest in the shadiness (in both senses) of Hopkins’ apparitions: as John Stearne put it, the secrесie of the grounds of witchcraft is so close and hidden, as being one of the greatest workes of darknesse committed this day under the Sunne: for that naturall causes may arise very strong, and many may cunningly counterfeit outward appearances, and witnesses may feign their accusations out of malice.\textsuperscript{46}

At this point it becomes important to notice where we are. Manningtree, where Hopkins lived and where his career began, is a curious place in the mid-seventeenth century because it is both a centre of activity and geographically marginal. It was a centre of activity because it was a port and shipbuilding dockyard – Manningtree sent ships against the
Armada – and it was peripheral because the Tendring Hundred is literally on the edge of Essex, and Manningtree and Mistley were themselves surrounded by the great and misty sea-marshes. The marshes and the Stour River were sites of a trade boom, but also of illegal activities. There was extensive smuggling up the Stour River, and over the marshes. The marshes and the river represent opportunities for secret enterprises, for a form of self-fashioning, wealth creation, business, which is neither sanctioned nor scrutinised by the authorities; as such they might seem a masculine, even a macho space, or at any rate a space prodigal of opportunities for machismo. This might seem exemplary to a man like Hopkins, so eager to fashion himself, or it might have seemed an occasion for renewed suspicion, for the full force of surveillance and the law. When we take into account the other associations of the marshes and the Stour valley, this explanation becomes more likely.

Folktales from the East Anglian area prior to the drainage of fens and marshes stress the division between arable land and marsh. Regarded as unhealthy because of the miasmas associated with them, in these stories marshes are given over to the supernatural activities of boggarts, hags and witches. The Stour valley is the site of the appearance of two strange green children, who materialise in a pit and require green food; the story is told by Camden as part of his description of the Stour valley. These stories and their production are part of an index of beliefs and practices which a godly man like Hopkins would have seen as superstition. As Stuart Clark has shown, superstition was not supernatural belief, but irrelevant or excess worship, or the correct form of worship applied to the wrong deity. As such, as another East Anglian, John Gaule, argued, witchcraft in the sense of evil magic and a pact with the devil was the telos of superstition. They needed to be cleared up, their human contents made visible, reordered, re-educated. The marshes were outside the law of church as well as state, and in local legends they take on a feminine aspect, lawless, silent, pervasively misty. It was against this backward, maternal background that the towns and their inhabitants defined themselves, just as the godly defined themselves against backward, hazy superstition. Perhaps this exacerbated the tendency to separate violently from the mother, as well as the fear of being sucked back into her, of losing one’s way, and hence one’s self.

This was further exacerbated by fear of another kind of engulfment. Essex was one of the areas which quickly declared for Parliament, to the delight of its godly inhabitants. But throughout 1645–6, the Royalist army was trying to break into East Anglia and the whole territory was under
threat of turning into a battlefield. The eventual siege of Colchester was one of the most bitter campaigns of the war. Although Hopkins’ activities predate the real military crisis, godly folk in Essex had heard of events in other counties, and knew (or feared) what might occur. For John Stearne, as we have seen, the war against witches was another way of fighting the Civil War. What with one thing and another, the psychic pressures on a man like Hopkins and on his masculine identity reached nearly intolerable levels in the mid-1640s, with the result that he produced a spate of fantasies to alleviate them.

Hopkins’ fantasies had another purpose too. They were part of his ruthless self-fashioning, a process which enabled him to flee not only his parents, and perhaps especially the femininity which for him came to represent and equate with sin, but also to flee from his family, to prove his masculine identity by exerting his will over society, by making a place for himself among the better sort, and also by piling up at least some personal wealth. Hopkins’ self-fashioning as powerful Witch-Finder General is evident in his own account of his first encounter with witches in his self-defence, written some two years after the 1645 pamphlet I have been citing. This account explains how he became involved in the process of discovery, and differs in tone and substance from his reported trial depositions:

The Discoverer never travelled far for it, but in March 1644, he had some seven or eight of that horrible sect of witches living in the town where he lived, a towne in Essex called Manningtree, with divers other adjacent witches of other towns, who every six weeks in the night (being alwayes on the Friday night) had their meeting close by his house, and had their severall solemn sacrifices there offered to the Devill, one of which this discoverer heard speaking to her Imps one night, and bid them goe to another Witch, who was thereupon apprehended, and searched by women who had for many yeares knowne the Devills marks, and found to have three teats about her, which honest women have not: so upon command from the Justice, they were to keep her from sleep two or three nights, expecting in that time to see her familiars, which the fourth night she called in by their severall names, and told them what shapes a quarter of an houre before they came in, there being ten of us in the roome.

This is not a private story, but an ordered, shaped fantasy, smoothed out for public consumption, partaking of godly and even elite discourses and not simply of depositions and folktales. And yet some of the psychic content is the same as that in his earlier, less structured stories. ‘Close by his house’, says the anecdote. Closeness is the source of the ‘experience’ Hopkins valorises. Yet Hopkins turns this problematic closeness into
valuable experience: threatened with engulfment, with darkness, the
marshes, the night, the neighbours, he responds by establishing the
ineluctable distance of the interrogator, the investigator, the finder. Again,
Hopkins overhears what the witch says: overhearing is emblematic both
of a problematic and frightening closeness and of an effort at distance. Yet
distance threatens to collapse into identity: the people of East Anglian
towns and villages called Hopkins in as a consultant, just as in less godly
days or among less godly company they might have called in the local
cunning man to finger the witch. Since for the godly (like John Stearne) a
cunning person was culpable as a malicious witch, Hopkins opened
himself to identification as supernaturally gifted when exposing such
gifts in others.\textsuperscript{53} This interpretation may have occurred to no one but
him, since there is no evidence for the tradition that he was himself swum
as a witch and convicted (reported in \textit{Hudibras}), but the first question in
\textit{The Discovery of Witches} is a refutation of the idea that he must be ‘the
greatest Witch, Sorcerer and Wizzard himselfe, else he could not doe it’.\textsuperscript{54}
Hopkins was of course aiming at a far more godly kind of identity,
perhaps even at an \textit{imitatio Christi}. Perhaps in a spirit of competitive
envy, Gaule wrote that
country People talke already and that more frequently, more affectedly, of the
infallible and wonderfull power of the witchfinders, then they doe of God, or
Christ, or the Gospell preached.\textsuperscript{55}

We can now begin to understand the fantasy for which Hopkins has
been remembered by our own culture, the fantasy that witches had sexual
relations with devils.\textsuperscript{56} Nineteenth-century art and writing teach us to take
sadistic pleasure in the victimisation of a beautiful, wild-eyed young
victim tortured, accused, forced to confess to exciting obscenities.\textsuperscript{57} We
therefore assume too easily that Hopkins saw it that way, but in that case
his penchant for elderly victims is hard to explain. Hopkins stripped his
victims, but not erotically; he exposes their eroticism, but not to unveil a
concomitant desire of his own.\textsuperscript{58} Rather, horror seems to have swallowed
eroticism. It was to avoid the erotic and its entanglement that he got
pleasure from seeing the elderly witch naked and hearing her disclose
her sexual relations with the devil. Were the elderly women Hopkins
victimised desired by him for their power to reduce desire, needed because
powerless to arouse? Far from seeking otherwise forbidden pleasures,
Hopkins seems to have sought to distance himself from the eroticised
female body by conjuring it up in a repulsive form. This tactic, common
also to more straightforwardly anerotic medieval texts urging a life of
celibacy, involved the disclosure of the mutability of the erotic female body, its vulnerability to age. Hopkins’ fantasy is in a line which includes Villon’s ‘She Who Was The Beautiful Helmetmaker’s Wife’, a poem in which an object of desire articulates under interrogation the tragic transience of her desirability in comparison with the permanence of her own desires.

Rather than being a desiring subject, Hopkins strives to be without desire. As his later, manicured version of the story shows, he becomes the successful investigator, the one who knows and discloses the secret world and words of women, who knows their bodies too. Hopkins appropriates what had been a proto-Enlightenment discourse (the witchmark) for his own more directly misogynistic and psychosexually motivated fantasy.59 The witchmark becomes a way to know a woman’s body, to make it speak of what it has done. But it is not enough. She must also be naked, and naked, made to speak. This desire for absolute nakedness, and hence for absolute disgust, is channelled through discourses of Puritan confession and testimony, discourses of confession as a cutting open of what was problematically hard and solid.60 So Hopkins dissolves away his own sexuality by constant encounters with what short-circuits it. He thus drives himself ever further from the messy world of the engulfing body. In Hopkins’ world, if something needs to be confronted, it is the portability and exchangeability of the disclosed female body and its value as payment. Hopkins is taking a merchant-class view of desire; for him, confession to sex with the devil is confession to using the body as (the only) means of payment for services rendered. This is not peculiar to him; it is registered in Margaret Johnson’s apparently voluntary confession in the Lancashire trial of 1633/4.61 Hopkins echoes Johnson in seeing the offer of sex as the only recourse of a poor woman who hopes to attract a man of wealth and taste.

It is thus that social and godly order is overturned rather than supported by the commodification of the female body, for that commodification can allow women to ‘sell’ their way out of their just place in the hierarchy.62 Having done so, they impinge upon and threaten Hopkins, as is clear from another of his stories:

29 were condemned at once, 4 brought 25 miles to be hanged, where this Discoverer lives, for sending the Devil like a Beare to kill him in his garden, so by seeing diverse of the mens [sic] Papps, and trying ways with hundreds of them, he gained this experience, and for aught he knowes any man else many find them as well as he and his company, if they had the same skill and experience.63
The witches sent a devil to kill Hopkins personally, we now learn for the first time; this cannot be the cat or the kitlyn of Hopkins’ original depositions, and his role in the story has changed since he made them. In accordance with his general psychic pattern, his fractured and deeply unstable masculine identity is now shored up with a new self-image, that of hero. A cat does not sound like much of a threat; to have faced down a bear sounds far more heroic. What Theweleit calls ‘fragmented armour’ seems relevant: Hopkins’ persona is dependent on meeting and vanquishing foes, on triumph. Yet this is not just a psychic dependency; it is also a role he is enjoying, one that he can act out to gain social rewards. Here, his self-representation as hero and defender of the just is invested with the pleasure of success.

Heroism is also uppermost in Hopkins’ understanding of his role as interrogator. Godly preachers and congregations did not see interrogation and confession in quite the secular light in which they appear to us. Rather than forcing an unwilling admission from a suspect in violation of their personal integrity and civil liberties, Puritan ministers and preachers frequently saw themselves as desperately trying to break through a personhood which was simply an encrustation of sin over the true, God-given soul. Stearne explains that watching is ‘not to use violence, or extremity to force them to confess, but onely the keeping is, first, to see whether any of their spirits, or familiars come to or neere them’:

that Godly Divines and others might discourse with them, and idle persons be kept from them, for if any of their society come to them ... they will never confess; ... But if honest godly people discourse with them, laying the hainousness of their sins to them, and in what condition they are in without Repentance, and telling them the subtleties of the Devill, and the mercies of god, these wayes will bring them to Confession without extremity, it will make them breake into Confession hoping for mercy.

Though using the same discourse as Henry Goodcole a few decades earlier, Stearne has moved on from Goodcole’s position; or rather, the epistemology of confession and truth have become even more debatable in the aftermath of a Civil War characterised by the spread of rumours, cryptographs and disinformation, the movement of agents and double agents in disguise, the emergence of plot and counterplot, the battles in which each side tried to deflect fire by impersonating the other. This theatrical war, which ironically saw the closure of the only institution likely safely to canalise the uncertainties thus created – the theatre itself – necessarily problematised identities even as it licensed their recovery by
brutal and illicit means. The delicate cryptograph, so complex in decipherment, had to be roughly seized and exposed. Paradoxically, epistemological difficulty, as all good postmodernists know, can lead not to paralysed scepticism but to a willingness to cast caution to the winds and to seize on any possibility, no matter how ruinous. The war, in other words, corrupted not only the practice of interrogating the accused but also the discourses in which this might be explained or justified.

And yet Hopkins’ voice should not be allowed to be or seem the only one, or even the dominant one, in creating witch fictions, for it was one voice among others eager to heal or anaesthetise the wounds of the Civil War by the psychic pleasures involved in the witch’s identification and destruction. If Hopkins was particularly motivated, he was not unusual in his desires, however deformed they may appear. The soldiers at Newbury and Naseby and in Wiltshire and Ireland were acting on similar psychic orders, desperately trying to maintain their own identities intact and sustain the fiction of masculinity in the face of intolerable pressures. It has often been remarked that the Civil War was relatively free of atrocities. Perhaps this is partially because its tensions were discharged elsewhere, off the field, against the ambiguous, shadowy figure of the witch.
Conclusion

A final story to inaugurate the process of summing up all the stories I have told: the last decisive battle of the war in the West, the battle of Lostwithiel, was fought on 2 September 1644. Charles and his Royalist forces had pushed Essex’s army into the far West, and the infantry was eventually trapped on the west bank of the River Fowey. Many on both sides had hardly slept for eight days after a running guerilla war, fought in hedgerows and in ancient, abandoned neolithic forts; Charles I had himself slept under a hedge during the campaign. ‘Sometimes we argued together, sometimes we scolded together like Fishwomen of Cheapside, and sometimes we fought very hot’, wrote a member of Essex’s guard, significantly evoking a metaphor that called such ungentlemanly battle into gender and class disrepute as well. At times, there were no battle lines as such; the confusion was so great that Royalist troops sometimes leapt eagerly into the midst of Parliamentarians, taking them for their own men. Finally, after many losses, the Parliamentarians surrendered: six thousand men, ten thousand weapons, and thirty-six cannon. The arrangement was that at 11 a.m. the rebels had to lay down their arms at Fowey Castle; those above the rank of corporal were to be allowed to keep their swords. Then there was supposed to be an orderly march past the king to Lostwithiel, but almost at once the scene degenerated into angry riot, as one Parliamentarian described:

For when we had laid down our arms, and come to march through the enemy’s army, we were inhumanely dealt with; abused, reviled, scorned, torn, kicked, pillaged, and many stripped of all they had. . .

Then the local populace intervened, and ‘they stripped many stark naked, and pillaged most of their money, clothes and hats’.

Somehow the combination of the days of exhausting, confusing fighting and the abjection of the Parliamentarian prisoners provoked violence that spiralled to include civilians as both perpetrators and victims. But civilians’
identities, too, had been menaced, by the needless task of feeding two armies, most obviously, but also by rites deliberately designed to undo the people they thought they were: by the angry Parliamentarians violating the church in Lostwithiel with the false baptism of a horse as lawful king, with the attempted destruction of the church with gunpowder, acts which prefigured the attempts to bring Cornwall violently into Britain which characterised the period of Parliamentarian rule. Somehow, the scene required violence against women too; and not any women, but a woman who was evidently a supporter of Parliament, who may have been one of Essex’s camp-followers, and who had, crucially, just given birth:

I saw them strip a woman of our party to her smock, she had lyen in but three dayes before. They took her by the hair of her head, and threw her into the River, and there had almost drowned her: the woman dyed within twelve hours after.

Was this woman simply a victim of violent masculinity, off the chain because on a battlefield? Or was something more complex at work? Perhaps throwing this woman into the river – symbolically cleansing her from the terrifying childbed taint that otherwise enveloped her – was a way for both soldiers and the civilians to cleanse themselves, too. Like her – too like her – they were steeped in blood. The Royalists needed cleansing, needed to assert their masculinity, because they were surrounded by menaces to it – the nom du père erased by warfare in the hedgerows, so that each side mistook its foe for itself, the abjection of the Parliamentarian prisoners a menace to the honour of arms. A Civil War can hardly help but threaten identity for civilian and soldier alike. The enemy is more than usually mistakable for oneself, yet also horribly, dangerously different. No wonder that many feared a kind of semiotic chaos.

But here also were competing notions of masculinity, for the acts induced by these psychic pressures were precisely what others saw as the reverse of masculine virtue. Charles was furious with the soldier-marauders, and ordered the woman’s murderers hanged. Nor did he and others encourage the bullying of the prisoners. Richard Symonds told how the king and other officers did their best to hold back the fury of their own troops, even beating their men with the flat of their swords as if they were naughty schoolboys being birched, a response that indicates that for the officers animal maleness had burst out from civilised maleness and needed to be disciplined and put back in its place. But it was no use; the Royalists were eager to bully the defeated army of Essex. Its men behaved abjectly: they were dirty, they were dejected, and ’none of them,
except some few of their officers did look any of us in the face’, Symonds wrote contemptuously. They were menacing not only because they had recently posed a real threat, but also because their behaviour itself called into question the naturalness of masculine codes.

Even the Parliamentarian victims of the Royalist toughs, however, shared something of their value system, for the Parliament-man who reports the Lostwithiel atrocities adds ‘as their sword hath made women childless, so shall their mothers be childless among women’. This Biblical language of providential revenge singles out the mother as the body across which revenge can be made visible, through the inversion of the order of masculine self-replication. The Parliamentarian response to the murder of a woman newly risen from childbed is to imagine other women made incapable of maternity, a response which does much to explain the original atrocity.

The story of the surrender at Lostwithiel illustrates the ways in which masculinity and its remarkable power permeated events. The wager of this book has been that it is entirely possible that the Civil War – the war of the battlefields, but also of writings, of politics and ideas – was, among other things, an opportunity for the creation and discharge of tensions implicit in early modern masculinity, a masculinity socially and psychologically constructed. That is, I have been arguing that questions of masculinity are not ancillary, but central to and often causative of actions taken in the Civil Wars and the events surrounding them. The massacre of Royalist camp-followers at Naseby, the publication of the king’s annotated letters in 1645, and the writing and publication of elegies on Charles and Cromwell: all are both conscious political interventions and psychic transactions. Moreover, I have tried to show how further thick layers of fantasy accumulated around events as those events were represented, offering fresh opportunities for psychic expression and resolution, but also opening up fresh fissures in masculine self-identity. As such occurrences multiplied, new and vivid fantasies were sought and old ones revived to do this kind of dual work, political and psychic, and I have explicated only two of them: the monster and the witch.

Leaving for others the task of identifying and exploring such patterns of signification more fully than I can here, I stress that this book merely begins the work of forging some tentative connections between two arenas hitherto treated separately: masculinity, and the public realm of politics, ideas and actions. What I have done here makes no claim to ‘coverage’, or comprehensiveness, and consequently the picture it offers can and will be complicated by the readings of others. I welcome the conversations that I
hope will come about. My goal has been to show, through a series of
detailed case-studies, just how vast the subject is, and to encourage others
to address the multiplicity of topics which I have had to shelve reluctantly
at this time.

In this spirit of self-deprecation, I would like to record something of
what this book leaves out, though even this list of incompletenesses is
itself incomplete. Focusing on particular regrets, then: this book does not
deal with regional and local differences in masculinity, a question impli-
citely broached by (for example) the work of Mark Stoyle and Lloyd
Bowen on the West Country and Wales respectively, or the extensive
new work on the Civil War in three kingdoms. Yet just one text cited by
Bowen, the letter of Sir Thomas Salusbury in which he debates his
position, is informed by a metaphoric architecture at once similar to
and different from the metaphors I have identified here. Salusbury’s
metaphors of division, cracking, breaking, imagine a threat to monarchy
as a threat to the idea of unity and singularity, a threat therefore to his
own authority and subjectivity as head of a household. In a pathbreaking
article on masculinity in Wales, Michael Roberts suggests that the Welsh
too had particular difficulties with what I have called the *nom du père*,
following Lacan; that is, the Welsh lacked a secure title in patrilineal
inheritance and culture, and – crucially – were linguistically separated
from the mastery of English required for certain forms of masculinity.
Like schoolboys, like Cavaliers, they were caught between competing
ideals of the masculine – on the one hand understood as about control
and discipline, and on the other as about excess and disorder – but for
them these ideals were fraught with significance because the former was
encoded as ‘English’ and the latter as ‘Welsh’. The similarities point to the
common culture of the gentry of England and Wales, but the differences
ease us with the exciting possibility of an alternative though related
masculinity – which might in turn form a part of any account of why the
Welsh gentry were on the whole such staunch Royalists; did Royalism
somehow allow for a resolution of these tensions? Salusbury’s letter sug-
gests that it did, that a masculinity experienced as fissured could be healed
in the figure of the king and in identification with him. At the same time,
Stoyle and Bowen’s work on how the Cornish and the Welsh were
represented in London print culture points emphatically to regionality
as another series of fantasies central to defining the masculine.

Much more might also be done to show how masculinity varied with
social class. Though I have chosen to stress the links between upper-,
middling and lower-class masculinities, it is important to register possible
differences. Recent work on violence and on humour and oral culture point to some intriguing possibilities. Did John Crouch, *The Man in the Moon*, for example, share John Milton’s ideology of masculinity? I have argued that in part there was a common perspective, but it may now be time to prise apart the differences; Crouch’s investment in licensed disorder and masculine violence as a cure for political inversion would have been anathema to Milton’s rational male subject, though both understood how liberty could come to mean an unacceptable licence which threatened rather than indulged masculinity.7

Finally, I have chosen to focus on how Charles and Cromwell were represented; it is time for work to begin on how they saw themselves, and how far their own choices and actions were shaped by psychic as well as rational calculations. Did Cromwell’s faith in providences and in the making of history by God himself have significance in a culture driven by paternal educators? How far did the recently revealed insecurity about his class position impact upon his identity as a male subject?8 Did it problematise his sense of headship of a household? As for Charles, on whom some work has been done along these lines by Charles Carlton, we need to ask how far the difficulties of a childhood disability extended into an adulthood of endlessly problematic masculinity, from the possible homoerotics of his relationship with Buckingham to his apparently infant-like dependence on his wife. We need also to ask about Charles’s selection of cultural icons as emblems of his own masculinity, and how far his choices reflect an anxiety to distance himself from other models, models which may have been easier to assimilate to lower-class and even gentry ideas of the masculine.

In this preliminary and partial attempt to address the question of masculinity, I am implying a narrative of sorts, though not the narrative to which masculinity studies have been most attentive. Both Anthony Fletcher and Mark Breitenburg suggest a narrative based on conduct-books, one in which a masculinity inhering in lordship, service and hospitality is displaced by one involving correct manners and demeanour.9 I do not quarrel with this narrative, but I want to argue that it is not the whole or only story. I suggest a less conscious notion of masculinity, one inflected and even deformed by the stress of events, one responsive to turmoil and trauma. So my narrative is one in which the Civil War makes masculinity and its definition newly visible by making them open to contestation. Whereas those who have written on masculinity as a lived daily experience have focused on constants such as honour and violence, I suggest that not even these simple terms come
through an examination of the Civil War years unchanged, or unques-
tioned. Rather, the Civil War made the nature and legitimation of
masculine power a principal political issue in a manner that was to inflect
the political debate for centuries thereafter. The centrality of the head
of household to republican thinking and the contestations that developed
around the instability of this figure in representations remained a problem
even for a reformed monarchy. The Civil War also creates opportunities
for masculinities normally silenced or repressed, including the very same
ideal of the head of a household and the idea of masculinity in violence or
bloodshed. It allowed for a series of hysterical re-enactments of the
repudiation of the mother, but it also threatens her return in the wildness
of uncultured boyhood. There is something repetitive about my story of
masculinity, because it is a story about repetition.

The acute anxieties that attend upon this and other early modern
masculinities are produced and constantly maintained and reproduced
by the system of separating boyhood forcibly from early childhood, and
hence requiring a male separation from the mother that had to be
repeatedly remarked and readdressed. This system, maintained for cen-
turies, also kept the process of repudiating the mother at the centre of all
notions of preparedness, agency or education. The result was a culture
prone to the violent acting-out of maternal repudiation, but also peculi-
arily vulnerable to the psychic impact of maternal separation. Both the
violence and the vulnerability are especially visible on two terrains:
memoirs of the fighting, and the Matthew Hopkins witchcraft trial
records. Accordingly, it is appropriate that these enclose the rest of the
book. Between them, similar scenes are enacted: assertions of household
headship threatened by the queen and the king; the terror of popery; the
consolation of the liquid body of Charles the Martyr; the dread of the
ultimate phallic father-teacher, Oliver Cromwell; the maternal might
symbolised by the engulfing chaos of monstrosity.

Threading through all these discussions is the name of John Milton,
vilified and loved in equal parts for responding with characteristic sensi-
tivity and intelligence to the bleeding wounds of Civil War masculinity.
All Milton’s intelligence could not release him from the psychic terrors of
an age particularly rich in them, but his brilliance kept him from
accepting facile psychic consolations to which his reason could not
assent. Milton always wanted a world in which masculine subjectivity
could rule unquestioned, unalienated. That was emphatically not the
world into which he was born, and in seeking to create it – textually
and in reality – he only discovered how evanescent his hopes were, for the
more he sought to define and establish masculinity, the more he had to evoke terrifying opponents to it. His friend and fellow-poet Andrew Marvell found the same problems intractable when he sought to represent the Cromwellian Sublime as an apogee of masculinity – without reminding his readers too forcibly of their fathers and schoolmasters. How to praise Cromwell’s uniqueness without closing the door to the replication of his phallicity in the son? How to represent that phallicity without collapsing into chaos or *stasis*?

It is not surprising that Marvell could not solve these problems representationally; the state never solved them either. It was in the end the problem of Cromwell’s succession that doomed his administration and made the Restoration seem just that – a restoration of phallic authority. Initially Charles II appeared as a blank screen onto which the unfulfilled masculine longings generated by Charles and Cromwell could be projected. As events took shape, of course, he became much more difficult to manage representationally, and arguably the anxieties of the Civil War years eventually took hideous symbolic form in the warming-pan scandal that enveloped his brother James. The anxieties thus provoked are even more visible in their maleficent metaphorisation in the body of Mary Toft, ‘the rabbit woman’ fake and freak creator of monsters. Mary Toft’s body is at once a symbol of the loss of paternal and hence masculine control and a vital figure in representing that control as a norm. That her monstrosity could still figure, unsettlingly, in the political debates of a new century shows the ongoing centrality of masculinity to affairs of state. Mary Toft’s dead and deformed ‘children’ are the uncanny return of an age steeped in blood and uncertainty. Ironically, inevitably, it is a woman’s deformed reproductivity that finally crystallises Civil War masculinity.
Notes

INTRODUCTION


2 See, for example, Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, a key text in the Civil War; see also Francis Bacon, *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, 1609, where Perseus’ quest represents ‘the art and judicious conduct of war’.

4 I am not of course suggesting that there were no concerns about masculinity and rule before Buckingham – arguably the entire reign of Elizabeth was marked by such a problematic – but the circulation of satires in manuscript and print allowed this way of thinking and talking to become central.


11 Gleason, Making Men.

12 Pueriles Confabulatiunculae: or Childrens Dialogues, : little conferences, or talkings together, or little speeches together, or dialogues fit for children, 1617. A translation by John Brinsley of Evaulus Gallus, Paidologiai y paidologidia. Pueriles Confabulatiunculae.

13 Brinsley, Pueriles Confabulatiunculae, fols. 14r–v.

14 John Clarke, Corderii Colloquiorum Centuria Selecta: or, a select century of Corderius’ colloquies. With an English translation as literal as possible; designed for the use of beginners in the Latin tongue, London, 1759.


16 Nathaniel Ingelo, Bentivolio and Urania in Six Books, 3rd edn, 1673, 11, 175.

17 Juan Luis Vives, Linguae Latinae Exercitatio, Basle, 1541, fol. A6r.

18 Thomas Fuller, The Holy State, Cambridge, 1648; Memoirs of Perceval Stockdale, 1809.
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22 The Childrens Petition, 1669. There was a similar publication in 1698, entitled Lex Forcia: being a sensible address to the Parliament, 1698.

23 Keith Thomas, Rule and Misrule in the Schools of Early Modern England, Reading: University of Reading Press, 1975, p. 35.


28 I borrow this term from an analysis of James Bond in Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987. A detailed comparison between Bond’s status as national icon and the chapbook heroes might be entertaining.

29 Shorter versions of Bevis include The Historie of Sir Bevis of South-Hampton, p. 143 [144], Aberdeen, 1630; The history of the famous and renowned knight Sir Bevis of Hampton, 1662; The history of . . . sir Bevis of Hampton, 1662; The gallant history of the life and death of that most noble knight, Sir Bevis of Southampton. Wherein is contained much variety of pleasant and delightful reading [1691?]. Bevis remained a popular chapbook until the disappearance of the genre in the mid-nineteenth century. For a discussion of Bevis as part of popular culture, see Margaret Spufford, Small Books and Pleasant Histories, London: Methuen, 1981, pp. 78–9, 225, and esp. 258; and Adam Fox, Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, p. 251.


33 Spufford, Small Books and Pleasant Histories, p. 229. Spufford identifies St Margaret with Princess Saba, not George’s mother; the distinction may anyway be false.


36 St George featured in the London Lord Mayor’s show in 1609 and 1615, and in the May revels at Wells in 1607.


40 The Appeal and Petition of Mary Overton, 24 March 1647, p. 7. In the pamphlet published under Richard Overton’s name, the wording is strikingly similar: ‘[they] laid violent hands upon her, and drag’d her down the stairs, and in that infamous barbarous manner, drew her headlong upon the stones in all the dirt and mire of the streets, with the poore infant still crying and mourning in her armes, whose life they spared not to hazard by that inhuman barbarous usage . . . calling her strumpet and wild whore’, and hence the pamphlet appearing under Mary’s name is often attributed to Richard, who did claim to have written it. Richard Overton, The Commoners Complaint: or, A Dreadful Warming from Newgate to the Commons of England, 1 February 1647, p. 19.


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2 The New Yeares Wonder, 1642, p. 5.
8 For instance, in Abel Gance’s film J’Accuse (1919), the problem of the war can only be solved by the appearance of the ghosts of the dead; ironically, this sequence was shot by Gance using real soldiers, most of whom died in the 1918 campaigns, so that they were truly the ghosts of the dead by the time the film was released. On Gance, see Jay Winter, Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 15–18.
9 One of the striking things about the Civil War is the different ideologies of masculinity developed around the role of cavalry (a mobile strike force) and infantry (intended to stand firm). These differences are also heavily inflected by class. However, what is being said here applies to both.


Cited in Adair, By the Sword Divided, pp. 142–3.

Adair, By the Sword Divided, p. 162.


Richard Elton, The Complete Body of the Art Military, 1650, dedicatory epistle to the Lord General Fairfax.


Foster, A true and exact relation, p. 267.


Richard Wiseman, Chirurgicall Treatises, 1676, p. 383.

Wiseman, Chirurgicall Treatises, pp. 348–9.


31 Barbara Donagan points to the prevalence of Thirty Years’ War atrocity stories before the Civil War in ‘Codes and Conduct in the English Civil War’, Past and Present, 118 (1988), 65–95, pp. 67–9. See also her ‘Atrocity, War Crime and Treason in the English Civil War’, American Historical Review, 99 (1994), 1137–66, pp. 1145–7. The figure of the Thirty Years’ War is used to represent the Civil War’s likely course of atrocities by e.g. Henry Parker in The Manifold Miseries of Civil war and Discord in a Kingdome, 1642.


33 The Grand Plunderer, 1643; The English-Irish Soldier, 1642.

34 Oppositional structure of war and desire: see ‘To Lucasta’, and see also the ballads ‘The Cavalier’s Farewell to his Mistress’ and ‘The Soldier’s Delight’, in Hyder Rollins, Cavalier and Puritan: Ballads and Broadsides Illustrating the Period of the Great Rebellion 1640–1660, New York: New York University Press, 1923, pp. 86, 280. Forged letters from women who had supposedly found comfort with Cavaliers because their husbands were away with the bands, or from women begging their husbands to come home (e.g. in Mercurius Aulicus, 9 September 1642, signed Susan Owen), are cited in full by Adair, By the Sword Divided, p. 104.


37 My thinking on this question has been influenced by work on more recent wars, especially the First World War: see in particular Joanna Bourke, Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War, London: Reaktion, 1996.
Notes to pages 43–52

38 A True and Perfect Relation of the Barbarous and Cruell Passages of the Kings Army, at Old Brainceford, 1642, sig. b2r.


40 Donagan, ‘Codes of Conduct’, p. 90; A True Relation of Two Merchants of London, who were taken Prisoners by the Cavaliers, 1642. Many of these cases might be dismissed as formulaic, as Donagan suggests, yet the trouble with dismissing the formulaic is that one can forget to ask just why this formula seemed to need constant reiteration, or why atrocity stories assumed this particular configuration. The obvious explanation is that those who could do no harm should not be killed, thus sparing the old, the young and women. But a little more insight may be necessary to explain how and why the stories worked when in circulation. Moreover, the truth can be very hard to come by given the collapse of normal judicial processes and the disappearance of records of military tribunals.


**REPUBLICAN POLITICS**

1 Poole was one of half-a-dozen prophets interviewed by the Council between 1647 and 1654; these included two other women, Mary Pope and Katherine
Johnson. Mary Pope’s *Behold, here is a Word*, 1649, mentions Poole’s prophecies.


3 There may be an allusion here to touching for the king’s evil. Charles I tried to make a feature of touching for the king’s evil, though in practice he proved reluctant to touch any actual petitioners; after his death, the theme was taken up again by Royalists.


5 Poole, *A Vision*, pp. 5–6.


13 Edward Gee, *The Divine Right and Originall for the Civil Magistrate*, 1648, cited by Gordon Schochet, *The Authoritarian Family and Political Speculation*


See Sommerville, Politics and Ideology, ch. 5.


For women’s actual property rights, as opposed to the assumptions of political theorists, see Amy Erickson, Women and Property in Early Modern England, London: Routledge, 1993.


For a different view, see Ann Marie McEntee, ‘The [Un]Civill Sisterhood of Oranges and Lemons: Female Petitioners and Demonstrators 1642–53’, in Pamphlet Wars, ed. James Holstun, London: Frank Cass, 1992, pp. 92–111, which argues that the petitioners claimed rights for themselves ‘not as wives, but rather as citizens’ (p. 93) and therefore as a subtle and subversive attack on the head of the household. Oddly, this reading may well express the husbands’ own anxious misreading of their wives’ activities.

Thomas Pecke, Advice to Balaam’s Ass, 1658, p. 44.

For the use of this figure in the French Revolution, see Joan Landes, Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.


Mercurius Britannicus, 1–8 May 1649.
Notes to pages 61–3

45 For brief comments on these mock-petitions, see Higgins, ‘The Reactions of Women’; George, Women in the First Capitalist Society.
48 Richard Overton, The Commoners’ Complaint, 1646/7, pp. 17–20. Overton does portray those who arrest Mary as excessively masculine; he writes of ‘the Turkey-Cock marshall’ who ‘with his valiant lookes like a man of mettle assailes her and her babe, and by violence attempt to pluck the tender babe out of her Armes, but she forcibly defended it, and kept it despite of his manhood’, pp. 16–21; he appears to be drawing in part on Shakespeare’s depiction of the murder of Lady Macduff.
49 The Petition of the Weamen of Middlesex, which they intended to have presented to the High Court of Parliament, but shewing of it to some of their friends they diswaded them from it, until it should please God to endue them with more wit and lesse Non-sence, 1641.
50 The Humble Petition of Many Thousands of Wives and Matrons of the City of London and Other Parts of the Kingdome, 1643.
51 The Virgins Complaint for the Losse of their Sweethearts, 1643.
52 This pamphlet predates the women’s petitions; The Mid-Wives Just Petition, 1643; The Humble Petition of Many Thousands of Wives and Matrons of the City of London and Other Parts of the Kingdome, 1643: note how the title appropriates the trope of modesty used by the real women petitioners and
makes it a disguise for sexual desire. See also A True Copy of the Petition of the Gentlewomen and Tradesmen’s Wives in and about the City of London, 1642; The Resolution of the Women of London to the Parliament, 1642; The Widowes Lamentation, 1643; see also The Petition of the Widows, for the use of the Wide-Os of London, 1693, for an even plainer sexualisation of women’s petitions; The City Dames’ Petition, in the Behalfe of the Long-Afflicted, but Well-Affected Cavaliers, 1647; Remonstrance of the She-Citizens of London, 1647; G. Thorowgood, Pray Be Not Angry, or the Woman’s New Law, 1656; The Ladies Remonstrance, printed for Virgin Want, to be sold by John Satisfie [c. 1659].


54 For a Jacobean example of this way of thinking, see Haec Vir, 1620, the reply to Hic Mulier, 1620.

55 On The New Inn and nostalgia, see Anne Barton, Ben Jonson, Dramatist, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, ch. 14. Barton does not read the play as a satire on court fashions, drawing attention to its revival of Italian humanist neoplatonism as a sign of its disengagement from its immediate milieu. It is equally possible, however, that this represents a repudiation of French-style neoplatonism which is meant to reflect on the queen’s circle.


King’s Crown is the Whore of Babylon: Politics, Gender and Communication in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England’, 


62 John J. Winkler remarks of *Ecclesiazousae* that a public world which was not androcentric was marked as a fantasy by that very fact; though this might also apply to the *Parliaments of Ladies*, Winkler adds that such androcentric public worlds were also a construct. See *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Early Modern Greece*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, pp. 5–6. On Aristophanic inversion of gender, see Froma I. Zeitlin, ‘Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazousae*’, in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel, Brighton: Harvester, 1982, pp. 131–58.


64 For more on the genre, see Purkiss, ‘Material Girls’.

65 *The Parliament of Women*, 1646. Thomason dates this to 14 August. Patricia Higgins refers to a petition to the Commons of 1640 complaining of ‘the swarming of lascivious, idle and unprofitable books and pamphlets, as . . . the
Parliament of women’, ‘The Reactions of Women’, p. 210, but I have been unable to find any trace of it among the State Papers Domestic. For a subsequent example of this kind of female parliament satire, see Hey Hoe for a Husband, or the Parliament of Maides, 1647; this is very close to the mock-petitions, and uses some of the rhetoric of petitioning. These pamphlets, with their similar titles, are easily confused; it would be invidious to list the names of all those who claim that the 1646 Parliament of Women is the same as Neville’s 1647 text.

66 Mistress Rattle, for example, claims that her tailor-husband ‘useth an unlawful Yard’, p. 4. The women make laws regulating sexual exchanges as if they were economic, in a manner distantly based on the ‘sex-egalitarianism’ of Ecclesiazsouae.

67 The Man in the Moone, 16–23 April 1653.


69 On Waller, see Antonia Fraser, The Weaker Vessel: Woman’s Lot in Seventeenth-Century England, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984, p. 250. The Countess of Carlisle is said to have learned of Charles’s plan to arrest the five Members from the queen, and to have warned Pym of it; this story reflects anxiety about the untrustworthiness of women in politics. For the story, see Quentin Bone, Henrietta Maria: Queen of the Cavaliers, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972, pp. 56, 137. Also among the Parliamentarians is Lady Hypslay, or Hippisley, whose husband is sent to dismiss the women petitioners of 1642: Higgins, ‘The Reactions of Women’, p. 187; this is the only possible connection I can trace between Neville’s satire and the women petitioners.


71 Henry Neville, The Parliament of Ladies, 1647, p. 8. For a similar use of court drama discourses in a Civil War context, see James Strong, Joanereidos: or, Female Valour Eminently Discovered in Western Women, 1645, which figures the women of London’s military activities as proof of the effeminacy of Parliamentarians.

72 Neville translates Machiavelli’s virtù as ‘public spirit’. For the masculine implications of virtù, see Pitkin, Fortune is a Woman.

73 Match me these two . . . an answere to a pamphlet entituled The Parliament of Ladies, 1647, p. 13. Along with Neville, who is unnamed, the others arraigned are Mercurius Brittanicus and John Lilburne. Match Me These Two is critical of Parliament, but from a Royalist perspective, and seeks to give a kind of publicity to the critiques of Neville and Lilburne while covertly condemning the three as extremists.

74 Richard Cust, ‘News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, Past and Present, 112 (1986), 60–90, pp. 72–3; on the language of corruption, see Linda Levy Peck, Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England,
London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, ch. 8. Though Peck does not discuss gender, many of the central metaphors she cites seem to have a gender subtext, especially the figure of the polluted fountain or well.

75 News from the New-Exchange, pp. 1–2. This pamphlet is prefaced by a Martial epigram, iv, 71, on the impossibility of finding a chaste woman in Rome, thus linking domestic insubordination with sexual ‘liberation’ in the usual way.


77 This episode is transcribed almost word-for-word in PRO, SP 16 487, no. 46. CSPD dates this manuscript to 1641, apparently on the grounds that it reflects ‘disturbances in the city’. Since there were ‘disturbances’ in the city in 1647 as well as in 1641, there seems little warrant for this dating. Two possibilities exist: the Conway manuscript may be a transcription or MS of an earlier version of this episode which was later appropriated by Neville or his printer, or the Conway manuscript is a transcription of Neville’s pamphlet. In either case, what seems most interesting is the further circulation of this particular episode in MS form, and its place in Conway’s collection of ‘ballets’ and tickles.

78 This name parallels the suggestive names of the Parliament of Women, suggesting a reversion to the discourse of the ‘woman debate’.


OPENING THE KING’S CABINET

1 The None-Such Charles His Character, 1651, pp. 20–2. I am deeply indebted to Sarah Barber for this reference.

2 The None-Such Charles, p. 129.


5 The fourth, concerning the king, is by far the longest, but depends to some extent on what has gone before.

6 *The Kings Cabinet Opened*, 1645, p. 43.


8 *The Kings Cabinet*, p. 44.

9 *The Kings Cabinet*, p. 43.

10 For the status of letters on the boundaries between public and private, see Potter, *Secret Rites*, p. 39.

11 Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, p. 8.


18 *The Life and Reigne of King Charls, or, the Pseudo-Martyr Discovered*, 1651, p. 214.


20 W. M., *The Queens Closet Opened: Incomparable secrets in physick, chyrurgery, preserving, candying and cookery*, 4th edn, 1658. See also for this feminised and sometimes eroticised use of ‘cabinet’ and ‘closet’, *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*, 1639; *The Ladies Cabinet Enlarged and Opened*, 1654; and *Rare Verities: The Cabinet of Venus Unlockt*, 1658.

21 Ironically, the question of recipes was recycled in a later attack on Cromwell through the figure of his wife: *The Court and Kitchen of Elizabeth Cromwell the Wife of the Late Usurper*, 1664. In this text the satiric point is the opposite of that in *The Queens Closet*; the recipes reveal that Elizabeth Cromwell is incapable of acting as an arbiter of taste and producer of beguiling artifice. The recipes are plain bourgeois cooking, and signify Elizabeth’s, and by
extension her husband’s unsuitability for the place they occupied. While
Parliamentarian satires critiqued Henrietta Maria’s extravagance, this
publication represents Elizabeth Cromwell’s adherence to godly conduct-
book values of thrift, read as stinginess, and moderation as signs of her
husband’s inappropriate usurpation.


23 A Letter in which the Arguments of the Annotator and Three other Speeches on

24 Helen Hackett, “Yet Tell Me Some Such Fiction”: Lady Mary Wroth’s
Urania and the “Femininity” of Romance’, in Women, Texts and Histories
1575–1760, ed. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss, London and New York:

25 The Life and Reigne of King Charls, or the Pseudo-Martyr Discovered, 1651;
Mercurius Britannicus, 27 June 1648.

26 Lennard Davis, Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel, New York:

27 For the argument that this repudiation springs from aberrant and temporary
political interest, see Barbara K. Lewalski, ‘Milton: Revaluations of Romance’,
in Four Essays on Romance, ed. Herschel Baker, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard
University Press, 1971, pp. 55–70, esp. p. 64. For an alternative and more
complex reading, see Patterson, Censorship and Interpretation, pp. 176–85,
Potter, Secret Rites, pp. 182–4, and Lana Cable, ‘Milton’s Iconoclastic Truth’,
in Politics, Poetics and Hermeneutics in Milton’s Prose, ed. David Loewenstein
and James Grantham Turner, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

28 I continue to write as if Charles really wrote the Eikon Basilike because this is
Milton’s assumption. For the bibliography of the Eikon Basilike, see Francis
F. Madan, A New Bibliography of the Eikon Basilike of Charles I, Oxford:
Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1950, and Eikon Basilike, The Portraiture of
His Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings, ed. Philip A. Knachel,

29 John Milton, Eikonoklastes, 1649, in Complete Prose Works of John Milton,
vol. 3, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes, New Haven and London: Yale University Press,
1962, pp. 335–601, p. 367. Subsequent citations are from this edition, by page
number in the text.

30 On the connections between gender and genre boundaries, see Jacques

31 Joseph Jane, Eikon Aklastos, The Image Unbroken. A perspective of the
Impudence, Falshood, Vanitie, and Prophanenes, published in a libel entitled
EIKONOKLASTES against EIKON BASILIKE, 1651, p. 82.

32 Eikon Basilike, p. 83.

33 Eikon Alethene, The Pourtraicture of Truths most sacred Majesty truly suffering,
though not solely, wherein them false colours are washed off, wherewith the
Painter-Steiner had bedaubed the truth, the late King and the Parliament, in his
counterfeit Piece entituled EIKON BASILIKE, 1649, pp. 58–9.

35 For the place of Mary Queen of Scots in the seventeenth century, see James Emerson Phillips, Images of A Queen: Mary Stuart in Seventeenth-Century Literature, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.


38 I use the Italian humanist term because I think Samson Agonistes wishes to convey something which comprises active citizenship and masculine strength.


41 Vacant means not just ‘empty’ but ‘leisured’, from Latin, vacare; Samson’s usage equates leisure with emptiness and enclosure, and hence with the private sphere.

The passage seems to draw on two Shakespearean figurations of woman as ship: the Nurse’s appearance as Juliet’s messenger in Romeo and Juliet, and Cleopatra described by Enobarbus in Antony and Cleopatra. In both cases the ship-comparison signals an inappropriate sexuality.


With perhaps a glance at the danger of woman as cultural producer.


See for example Ulreich, ‘“Incident To All Our Sex”’.

There is also a morphological parallel between the Medusa image of the woman protestor and the image of Dalilah as a stinging snake.


On the Renaissance idea of history as the site of learning of public virtues, which in turn derives from the classics, see Loewenstein, Milton and the Drama of History.


Charles I


9 Alex Macdonald, *Letters to King James VI*, Edinburgh, 1835, xxxviii. BL Harl. MS 6986, fol. 151.


Judith Richards, “‘His Nowe Majestie’ and the English Monarchy: The Kingship of Charles I before 1640”, *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), 70–96, p. 84.

Richards, “‘His Nowe Majestie’”, pp. 84, 86. See also Sharpe, *Personal Rule*.

See Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry*, pp. 105–9; Richards, “‘His Nowe Majestie’”, p. 75.

*Calendar of State Papers Venetian*, 1625–6, p. 21.


*Journal of the House of Lords*, vol. 9, p. 6, 9 February 1647.


*Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 1637, pp. xl–xlii, 548–9, 450. The need for touching for the king’s evil was also used as propaganda during the Civil War; see *A Humble Petition to His Excellent Majesty the King*, presented by several hundreds of his poor subjects afflicted with the pitifull infirmity known as the King’s Evil in which the ‘sufferers’ claim that the wicked war has meant that they have lost access to the king. Whether staged or not, Charles’s journey south was dogged by the sick, and he was also mobbed at Holmby House. The Commons, displeased, appointed a committee to draw up a declaration concerning the superstition of being touched. Tours were organised by sea to be touched by Charles II (Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, p. 210, n. 183).


*Monumentum Regale, or a Tombe Erected for that Incomparable and Glorious Monarch, Charles the First . . . in select Elegies, Epitaphs and Poems*, 1649, p. 21.
Notes to pages 106–12


31 *The Great Eclipse of the Sun, or Charles his Waine Overclouded*, 1644, pp. 1–3. I am grateful to Karen Britland for first pointing this pamphlet out to me.

32 *Vox Populi or the Peoples Humble Discovery*, 1642, p. 3.


37 Grace Cary, *Vox Caeli*, p. 4. See also *Englands Fore-Warning, or a Relation of True, Strange and Wonderfull Visions*, BL Add. MS 32 iv, and BL MS D. D. 14.25.

38 Cary, *Vox Caeli*, p. 5.


42 This point has also been made by Thomas Corns in *Uncloistered Virtue*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 90.


45 *Strange Newes From the North*, 1650.

46 *The most strange and wonderful apparitions of blood in a Poole at Garraton in Leicestershire, which continued for a space of foure dayes the rednesse of the colour for the space of those foure dayes every day increasing higher and higher, to the infinet amazement of many hundred beholders of all degrees*, 1645. Another
pamphlet describes a similar portent, this time in the sky: ‘Upon Tuesday night last there appeared a skie red as blood about redding, halfe a mile long, or more, which was seen soi cleare and visible about six of the clock at night, that not onely many people thereabouts did run to see it, but it being apparent so farre that it might be seen to London; there were thousands that went to London Bridge, and many other places, where they could attaine the prospect, to see it; insomuch that there was a great crowd upon the bridge . . . in length half a mile or more, as it was judged, sharp at the North end . . . for the length of it was North and South, red as bloud . . . What can we otherwise judge of, then to be a token of Gods displeasure against the cruell Cavaliers thereabouts, who kill, murder and slew the people of God, whose blood cries to heaven in the ears of God for vengeance against them?’, Mr Hollis his Speech . . . a Relation of a Vision of Blood in the Skie, 1643.


50 John Cook, King Charls his Case, in Somers Tracts, vol. 5, p. 233.

51 A. A, No Peace, 1645, p. 5.

52 Malcolm, Caesar’s Due, p. 151.

53 An Elegy upon that Never to be Forgotten Charls the First, 1649, pp. 34–5.

54 For discussion of the genres of Royalist elegy, see James Loxley, Royalism and Poetry in the English Civil Wars: The Drawn Sword, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997, and Andrew Lacey, The Cult of King Charles the Martyr, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003; I regret that Lacey’s book could not be fully incorporated into my arguments because I saw it late in the composition process.


Alison Shell, Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination 1558–1660, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 56–104. Shell argues correctly that psychoanalysis has been wrongly used to pathologise Crashaw, but I hope my use here differs significantly from those she criticises.

An Elegy upon . . . Charls the First, pp. 36, 39.


Lachrimae Musarum: the tears of the muses . . . upon the death of the most hopeful Henry Lord Hastings, 1649, p. 3.

Monumentum Regale, ‘An Elengie upon King Charlrs the First, Murthered Publickly by His Subjects’, p. 40.

An elegy upon . . . Charls the First, Epitaph.

Monumentum Regale, pp. 3–8.

Monumentum Regale, ‘An Elegie on the Best of Men and Meekest of Martyrs, Charles I’, p. 43.

Monumentum Regale, pp. 11–31.


An Elegy upon . . . Charls the First, p. 36.


Regale Lectum Miseriae, or, a Kingly Bed of Misery, 1649, pp. 2–3.


Cambridge University Press, 1999. pp. 225–8, which concludes that ‘the regicide had made possible a true renewal of the spirit of Lucan’s poetry’, p. 228.


76 Sir Balthazar Garbier, The None-Such Charles His Character, 1651, p. 183.

77 The Life and Death of King Charles the Martyr, Parallell’d with our Saviour in all his Sufferings, 1649. This is an extract from a sermon by Henry Leslie, Bishop of Down, preached before Charles II in June 1649.

78 The Bloody Court, or, the Fatall Tribunall: being a brief history, and true narrative of the strange designs, wicked plots, and bloody conspiracies, carried on by the most sordid’st, vile, and usurping tyrants, in these late years of oppression, tyranny, martyrdom, and persecutions, etc, 1649, p. 18.

79 Wonderful News from the North: Being a True and Perfect relation of severall strange and Wonderfull Apparitions, 1651.

80 Sad Newes from the Eastern Parts, or a true . . . relation of the strange spectacles and signs, both seen and heard in the Eastern Association, etc, 1646, p. 2. See also Severall Apparitions scene in the Ayre, at the Hague in Holland, upon the 21/31 day of May . . . 1646 . . . verified by letters . . . and translated out of the Dutch copie. Whereunto is annexed the severall apparitions scene in the Counties of Cambridge, Suffolke and Norfolke . . . upon the same . . . day, 1646, pp. 3–4.

81 The Visible Vengeance, 1648, pp. 5–6.

82 The Kingdomes Faithful and Impartiall Scout, 31 Aug – 7 Sept 1649.

83 A Miracle of Miracles: Wrought by the Blood of King Charles the First, 1649, pp. 5–6.

84 A Miracle of Miracles, p. 8.


86 John Cleveland, ‘To P. Rupert’, ll. 29–34, in Poems; all subsequent quotations are from this edition, by line numbers in the text. The poem is dateable to December 1642, and probably represents the rosy apogee of Royalist claims for Rupert.

87 Essex’s impotence had of course been famously demonstrated in his wife Frances Howard’s pleas for an annulment; see David Lindley, The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James, London: Routledge, 1993.


91 Alexander Brome, *Rump, or an Exact Collection of the Choycest poems*, 3 vols., 1662, vol. 1, p. 77. See also p. 74:

Lady, you’l wonder when you see . . .
I that come hither with a breast
Coated with Male about;
Proof ‘gainst your beauty, and the rest,
And had no room for love to nest,
Where reason lodged within, and love kept out.

92 Brome, *Rump*, vol. 1, p. 128.

93 For godly polemics against excessive drinking, see Robert Harris, *The Drunkards Cup*, 1619; Thomas Kingsmill, *The Drunkards Warning: A Sermon*, 1631; and *A Looking Glass for Drunkards, or the Good Fellow’s Folly*, 1660. Richard Younge’s tract *The Blemish of Government, the Shame of Religion, the Disgrace of Mankind, or a Charge Drawn up against Drunkards* was reissued in 1658, perhaps as a critique of the Cavalier self-representation.


95 Turner, ‘Pepys and the Private Parts of Monarchy’, p. 76.


**Cromwell**


8 *Hells Higher Court of Justice; or, the Triall of the Three Politick Ghosts*, viz.: *Oliver Cromwell, King of Sweden, and Cardinal Mazarine*, 1661, b.4v.


10 Cromwell is likened to Hercules by his critics: for instance, *Flagellum* talks of ‘this Parliamentary Hercules’: James Heath, *Flagellum: or, the Life and Death, Birth and Burial of Oliver Cromwell, the Late Usurper*, 2nd edn, 1663.

11 George Wither, ‘The Storme Raised by Mr Waller in his Verses’, in *Salt upon Salt: made out of Certain Ingenious Verses upon the Late Storm and the Death of his Highness Ensuing, 1659.*

12 *Cromwell’s Bloody Slaughter-House; or, his dannable designes laid and practised by him and his negros in contriving the murther of his Sacred Majesty King Charles I. discovered*, 1660, frontispiece.

13 *Cromwell’s Bloody Slaughter-House*, p. 35.

14 Christopher Wace, *Electra of Sophocles, presented to Her Highness the Lady Elizabeth, with an epilogue shewing the parallell in two poems, The Return and The Restauration*, The Hague, 1649. I am deeply indebted to Edith Hall for this reference.


22 Mercurius Bellicus, 8–14 February 1648.
23 The Blazing Star, or Noll’s Nose Newly Revived, 1660, p. 1.
24 The Cuckoo’s Nest at Westminster.
26 Charolophilos, Cromwell’s Panegyric, 1647.
28 Cromwell’s Conspiracy, 1660, p. 1.
29 Cromwell’s Conspiracy, p. 1; see also A Case for Noll Cromwell’s Nose, and the Cure of Tom Fairfax’s Gout. Both which rebells are dead, and their deaths kept close, by the policy of our new states, 1648: ‘An Elegy on the Most incomparable Rebell Oliver Cromwell’:

   Death his eyes to close,
   Did he not tremble to behold his nose,
   Whose radiant splendour (if fame doth not lie),
   Shone brighter than a Comet in the skie. (p. 5)
30 Tubbe, Dominical Nose.
31 Aristotle, De Sensu & Sensibili, Salamanca, 1555, 441a. There are numerous other Renaissance editions of this work. Other anecdotes link Cromwell with ordure and shit, and hence with foul odours: for example, in Heath’s Flagellum this story is told: ‘this fellow Mr Cromwell having besmeared his own clothes and hands with surrenderence, accosts in the midst of a frisking Dance, and so grimed him upon every turne, that such a stink was raised, that the spectators could hardly endure the Room’. Cromwell is thrown in a pond as a result, a punishment reminiscent of those meted out to unruly women (p. 14). For a discussion of the threat of foul odours to the social order, see Alain Corbin, The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the Social Imagination, London: Macmillan, 1996, esp. pp. 27–34.
32 Mercurius Philo-Monarchicus, 14–21 May 1649.
33 Richard Sanders, Palmistry, the Secrets thereof Disclosed, 1663, p. 302.
35 The Blazing Star, pp. 1, 3.
36 For an example from an anti-monarchical source, see Henry Neville, News From the New-Exchange, or the Parliament of Ladies, 1650, p. 6.
38 Philo-Regis, The Right Picture of King Oliver from Top to Toe, 1650, p. 4.
42 A Third Conference between O. Cromwell and Hugh Peters in Saint James’s Park; wherein, the horrible plot is discovered about the barbarous murder of our late sovereign lord King Charles the I of ever blessed memory, 1660, p. 2.
43 For other texts in which Mrs Lambert is Cromwell’s lover, see Craftie Cromwell, 1648; The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I, Basely Butchered, 1649; and Alexander Brome, Rump, or an Exact Collection of the Choycest Poems, 3 vols., 1662: ‘O. Were I in bed with Lamberts wife, / Id’e quit these joyes for such a life’, vol. 2, p. 321.
44 Cromwells Conspiracie, p. 5.
45 Cromwells Conspiracie, p. 9.
46 Cromwells Conspiracie, v.31.
47 Hells Higher Court of Justice, 1661, c.1v; The Court Career, 1659, p. 17.
48 G. Bate, The Lives, Action and Execution of the Prime Actors and Principall Contrivers of that Horrid Murder of our late Pious and Sacred Sovreign, 1661.
49 Cromwell’s Bloody Slaughterhouse, p. 37. Examples could be greatly multiplied; see for instance the hope that Cromwell and his nose should be lost in a Scotch bog, Mercurius Pragmaticus, 15 May 1649.
50 Cromwell’s Bloody Slaughterhouse, pp. 50, 73.
51 Cromwell’s Bloody Slaughterhouse, p. 91.
53 The Court Career, p. 15.
56 The Court and Kitchin of Elizabeth, commonly called Joan Cromwel the wife of the late usurper, 1664, p. 28. For a much ampler discussion of Elizabeth Cromwell’s efforts at self-representation and the extent to which they have been undermined, see Katherine Gillespie, ‘Elizabeth Cromwell’s Kitchen Court: Republicanism and the Consort’, Genders, 33 (2001).
57 The Cuckoos Nest at Westminster, p. 8. See also A Tragi-Comedy, called New-Market Fayre, or a Parliament out-cry of state-commodities, set to sale, 1649, in which Mrs Fairfax is accused of entertaining the Cavaliers. On the notion that republican women secretly yearned for the Cavaliers, see previous chapter.
59 The Tyranny of Tyrannies. These are to signife that the new Turkish Tyrants, Cromwell and Ireton, have condemned to death Sir William Waller, 1648. The Levellers Levelled, 1647, also refers to the army grandees as ‘Sophies of the State’ (p. 4).
61 J. Butler, God’s Judgement Upon Regicides, 1683, p. 10.
62 Cromwells Conspiracie, p. 3.
63 Thomas Jordan, A Nursery of Novelties in Variety of Poetry, 1665. For this comparison, see also Richard Watson’s sermon, Regicidium Judaicum; or a discourse about the Jews crucifying . . . their King, The Hague, 1649.
65 For an excellent discussion of the political determinants of Waller’s poem, see Norbrook, Writing the English Republic, pp. 303–9. See also his ‘Lucy Hutchinson versus Edmund Waller: An Unpublished Reply to Waller’s “A Panegyrick to my Lord Protector”’, The Seventeenth Century, 11 (1996), 61–86.
68 John Dryden, ‘Heroique Stanza’s, Consecrated to the Glorious Memory of OLIVER’, 1659.
69 Norbrook, Writing the English Republic, p. 394.
70 For an excellent discussion of the figure of the rhetorically competent masculine ideal in a different cultural context, one that nevertheless influenced the English republicans, see Maud Gleason, Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
74 It has been pointed out many times that the comparison to lightning draws on Lucan, Pharsalia, 1, 115ff., which may lend a certain ambiguity to the image; however, Norbrook persuasively argues that the Ode may be a kind of positive rewriting of the Pharsalia in which Caesar uses his undoubted virtues to generate rather than to extinguish liberty (Norbrook, Writing the English Republic, p. 265).
75 On Marvell, the garden and the state, see Jonathan Crewe, ‘The Garden State: Marvell’s Poetics of Enclosure’, in Enclosure Acts: Sexuality,


79 For Hector and Astyanax, see Homer, Iliad, v1, 460ff. Astyanax recoils from Hector’s male body and clings to the full breast of his nurse.


83 Sir John Ogilby, The Relation of His Majesty’s Entertainment, 1661.


MONSTERS AND MEN

1 Strange News from Scotland or a strange relation of a terrible and prodigious monster born to the amazement of all those that were spectators, 1647, pp. 1–2.
3 This horryble monster is cast of a sowe in Eestlande in Pruse . . . in a village which is called lebehayn, 1531, single sheet. Possibly printed in Germany and distributed with an English text by Wynkyn de Worde.
5 This practice is described in the monster-texts themselves; see The most strange and Wonderful Apparition of blood . . . as also the true relation of a miraculous and prodigious birth in Shoo-lane, 1645.
7 Thomas Bedford, A True and Certaine Relation of A Strange-Birth, 1635. In demonstration, showing the monster points to something else – for example, the workings of God’s power – whereas Bedford worries that simple showings are not morally improving, but merely entertaining.
the death of the king. The Bible was also an important source, especially the 
story of Jacob and Laban's flocks in Genesis 30. 31–43.

10 Ottavia Niccoli, Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy, trans. Lydia 
G. Cochrane, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 1st pub. in Italian, 

11 For monster-stories as a subject of fashionable dinnertime conversation, see 
A Helpe to Memorie and Discourse [c. 1621], which includes a selection of prodigies.

12 On increasing references to monsters in medical works see Ottavia Niccoli, 
“Menstruum Quasi Monstrum”: Monstrous Births and Menstrual Taboo 
in the Sixteenth Century’, trans. Mary M. Gallucci, in Sex and Gender in 
Historical Perspective, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, Baltimore and 
private correspondence see for example John Spalding, Memorialls of the 
Trubles in Scotland and England, cited by Park and Daston, 'Unnatural 
Conceptions', p. 20, n. 3, and the learned clergyman Philip Henry, who 
copied large extracts from Mirabilis Annus into his journals.

13 Examples of monstrous births as metaphor abound. For a discussion of 
the metaphoricity of monsters, see Kathryn Bramwell, ‘Monstrous Metamor-
shifted from being actualities to being only metaphors; in fact, actuality and 
metaphoricity are often coexistent in pamphlets and newsbooks. She also 
conflates monsters in general with monstrous births in particular. Other 
literary monsters include the following: in the Marprelate controversy, John 
Lyly, Pap with a Hatchet, 1589, in The Works of John Lyly, ed. R. Warwick 
likens Martin Marprelate to a monster ‘with a cocks comb, an ape’s face, &c’, 
and describes him as ‘in labour of a little babie, noe bigger than rebellion’; 
pub. in The Battle of Agincourt, 1627.

14 On print culture and natural phenomena, see Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, The 
Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural 
Transformation in Early Modern Europe, 2 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge 

15 On these recurrent motifs, see respectively Lawrence Stone, The Crisis of the 
Aristocracy, 1558–1641, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965; Leah Marcus, 
‘Shakespeare’s Comic Heroines, Elizabeth I, and the Political Uses of 
Androgyny’, in Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and 
Historical Perspectives, ed. Mary Beth Rose, Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse 

16 For the questioning of primogeniture during the Civil War, see for example 
Champianus Northtounus, The Younger Brother’s Advocate, 1655. Arguably 
these problems were generated by the fact that younger sons too resembled 
their fathers, but could not always replicate their social position.


Claude Quillet, *The Callipaed, or the Art of Creating Fair Children*, 1754, 3.92; Latin version, 1655.

Many medical texts depend on a pun on conception, where this means both the beginning of pregnancy and the beginning of an idea.


31 *A Wonder Woorth the Reading, of a Woman in Kent*, 1617, p. 5.

32 *An Admonition to all Women*, 1587; see also *The True Discription of a Childe with Ruffes*, 1566, and *A Most Wonderfull and Trewe Report . . . of Divers Unknowne Foules*, 1586, where birds are born with ruffs.


35 I. R., *A Most Strange and True Discourse*, p. 2. This is linked with an overtly misogynistic diatribe about the ‘lightness and inconstancy of this sexe’.


38 *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster born in Kirkham Parish in Lancashire*, 1645/6, p. 2; subsequent citations are by page number in the text.
Lancashire was in fact a centre of recusancy; see Christopher Haigh, ‘The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation’, *Past and Present*, 93 (1981), 37–69.


41 For Puritan emphasis on external signs of salvation, such as quaking, trembling and sighing, see Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes*, ch. 2, and Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silencing among Seventeenth-century Quakers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. This meant that Puritans interpreted the body as a sign of internal processes in a similar way to Greek medicine; on this aspect of the Hippocratic tradition, see Page duBois, *Torture and Truth*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 87–90. Monster narratives derived from this tradition were thus easily adapted to Puritan ways of thinking about the body.


Notes to pages 174–7


46 A Wonder Woorth the Reading; the dragon refers to the Sussex dragon, a prodigy too incredible for the public to swallow: see Shaaber, Some Forerunners, p. 152.

47 A Wonder Woorth the Reading, pp. 4–5.

48 The author is also aligning himself with the proprietors of Bartholomew Fair freak-shows.

49 The Crost Couple, or a Good Misfortune, reprinted in Davis, Factual Fictions, fig. 3.2, p. 62. See also Park and Dalston, ‘Unnatural Conceptions’.


51 Old texts were often reissued word-for-word with the names of new witnesses attached; see Shaaber, Some Forerunners, p. 152.

52 In effect, the only one to profit from such generativeness is the hack author himself; for an attack on newswriters in these terms, see Ben Jonson, The Staple of News, ed. Anthony Parr, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988.


54 This may suggest too that writers of such popular newstexts were feminised in the process, as opposed to the notion of (male) authorship which was supposed to elevate them above such proliferation and into singularity.


58 In Thomas Nashe’s Pasquil’s Return, a female figure’s absorption of materials is undone through vomiting, a kind of birth-trope. A stage-play or interlude is described which features ‘Divinitie with a scratcht face, holding of her hart as if she were sicke, because Martin would have forced her, but missing of his purpose, he left the print of his nailes upon her cheeks, and poysoned her with a vomit which he ministered unto her, to make her cast uppe her dignities and promotions’: ‘Pasquil’s Return’, in The Works of Thomas Nashe, ed. R. B. McKerrow, rev. F. P. Wilson, 5 vols., Oxford: Blackwell, 1966, vol. 1, pp. 65–103, p. 92. This figure is also used in the Mistress Parliament plays, below.
Vindicidia Regum, or the Grand Rebellion, Oxford, 1643, pp. 1–2, see also pp. 91–2.

60 See Tamsyn Williams, “Magnetic Figures”: Polemical Prints of the English Revolution, in Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540–1660, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn, London: Reaktion, 1990, pp. 86–110. See also Thomas Edwards, Gangraena, 3 vols., 1646, vol. 2, pp. 4–5. The figure of the monster was also used extensively against radical Puritan sects.

61 In calling these texts Royalist I simply mean that they enthusiastically support Charles I, a loose definition echoed by the pamphlets’ own lack of interest in the refinements of politics. For the precise publication details and circumstances of these texts’ production, see Lois Potter’s edition in ‘The Mistress Parliament Political Dialogues’, Journal of Analytical and Enumerative Bibliography, n.s. 1 (1987), 101–70. All quotations will be from Potter’s edition. Susan Wiseman also discusses these plays briefly in “Adam, the father of all flesh”: Porno-Political Rhetoric and Political Theory in and after the English Civil War, in Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution, ed. James Holstun, London and Portland, Or.: Cass, 1992, pp. 134–57.

62 The Mistress Parliament plays are: Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed of a Monstrous Childe of Reformation, 1648; Mistris Parliament her Gossiping, 1648; Mistris Parliament her Invitation, 1648; Mistris Parliament Presented in her Bed, 1648. All are signed Mercurius Melancholicus. The post-Restoration reissues and reworkings are The Life and Death of Mistress Rump, 1660; Mistress Rump Brought to Bed of a Monster, 1660, single sheet; The Famous Tragedie of the Life and Death of Mris Rump, Shewing how she was Brought to Bed of a Monster, 1660. See also Alexander Brome, Rump, or an Exact Collection of the Choycest Poems, 3 vols., 1662; Rump Roughly yet Righteously Handled, 1660; Rump Ululant, 1660; Rumps Last Will, 1660. For an earlier use of similar images, see Holland’s Leaguer: or, an Historical Discourse of the Life and Actions of Dona Britanica Hollandia the Arch-Mistris of the Actions of the Wicked Women of Eutopia, 1632.


64 A monster allegory even more wedded to the Bartholomew Fair discourses of monstrosity is the Royalist playlet The Terrible Horrible Monster of the West, 1650. In this text, Parliament is a monster who is displayed by Thomas Tel-Troth, ‘shewer of the properties’, a name associated with popular discourses prior to the Civil War. ‘With our other pence wee’l see the strange monster at Westminster’, says Rusticus, one of the characters. The monster display is also connected to drama and dis-play by the strategies of the pamphlet. The text makes great play with the ambivalent status of monster texts as both tricks and truths:
This is a real monster, bred in this isle
no Trundles dragon, nor made Crocodile
To cheat good people with: no juggle, gull,
and yet tis all a cheat, a juggle, bull.


69 For the representation of Parliament as a meeting of gossips, see The Parliament of Women, 1646, and The Gossips Feast, or Morall Tales, 1647.


71 Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed of a Monstrous Childe of Reformation, ll. 75–9; subsequent citations are by line number in the text.

72 Mrs Parliament Presented in Her Bed, ll. 150–2, 166–70; subsequent citations are by line number in the text.

73 Mrs Parliament her Gossiping, ll. 164–5.

74 Brome, Rump, vol. 1, pp. 24ff. See also pp. 48, 85, 129. Of course Brome is also parodying the sacred history encoded in Biblical genealogies, which as many feminists have noted are notably patrilineal. See also Clement Walker, History of Independency, 1648; as a Civil War historian, Walker argued that the ‘rebellion’ was produced by the corrupting effects of a long period of peace and prosperity, thus tying the notion of military virtù to the avoidance of feminised civic strife: ‘A long peace begat Plenty, Plenty begat Pride, and her sister riot, Pride begat Ambition, Ambition begat Faction, Faction begat civil war’, cited by R. C. Richardson in The Debate on the English Revolution Revisited, 2nd edn, London and New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 14.


Milton and Monsters


8 Euripides, Suppliant Women, ll. 428–49.

9 DuBois, Sowing the Body, pp. 39–63.


For alternative autochthonous myths, see duBois, *Sowing the Body*, pp. 47–56.


Also characteristic of Enlightenment thought; see Pateman on Rousseau in *The Sexual Contract*, ch. 4.


For the association of midwifery with superstition, see Jane Sharp’s defence of her profession: The Midwives Book, 1671.


Warner, Monuments and Maidens, ch. 6.


John Milton, Sonnet xix, ll. 5–9, in Poems, p. 416; for Milton on churching, see Complete Prose Works, vol. 1, p. 939. For a recent argument about the significance of churching, see David Cressy, ‘Puritanism, Thanksgiving, and the Churcching of Women in Post-Reformation England’, Past and Present, 141 (1993), 106–46. Cressy argues that churching was not about purification, but about thanksgiving; however, this is evidently not Milton’s view.


See John Milton, ‘On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough’, ll. 1–4, in Poems, p. 15; the image of the virgin infant ravished by death manifests the linkage between death and sexuality under discussion, ll. 12ff.


‘Comes the blind Fury with th’abhorred shears, / And slits the thin-spun life’, Lycidas, ll. 75–6, in Poems, p. 245; subsequent citations are by line number in the text.


Thomason dates The Life and Death to 24 May 1660.

The Life and Death of Mistress Rump, Shewing how she was Brought to Bed of a Monster, 1660.


On this see Norbrook, Poetry and Politics, especially on The Shepheardes Calender, pp. 59–65.


59 John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 11, 751, in *Poems*, p. 543; subsequent citations are from this edition by line number in the text.


63 Spenser, *Faerie Queene* 1, i 15.


MATTHEW HOPKINS AND THE PANIC ABOUT WITCHES

1 *A Most Certain, Strange and True Discovery of a Witch, being taken by some of the Parliament Forces*, 1643. The witch of Newbury was said by *Mercurius Civicus*, 21–8 Sept 1643 to be a Royalist agent sent to destroy the magazine of the Earl of Essex (p. 140).


3 *A True Relation of the Late Battel neere Newberie*, 1643, p. 5.


5 *A True Relation*, pp. 5–6.

6 There are surprisingly few discussions of the figure of the witch in a Civil War context, and even the Hopkins trials have been neglected as atypical of English witchcraft, though James Sharpe offers a corrective view in

There was an upsurge in prosecutions all over England in the 1640s. For witchcraft cases 1640–60 outside East Anglia, see Public Record Office ASSI 45, which contains a number of records from the Northern Circuit; these are partially and somewhat inaccurately transcribed in James Raine, ed., Depositions from York Castle, Surtees Society, 40 (1860). Pamphlet accounts include An account of the trial, confession, and condemnation of six witches at Maidstone at the assizes held there . . . to which is added The trial, examination, and execution of three witches executed at Faversham, 1645; The Devil’s Delusions or a faithful relation of John Palmer and Elizabeth Knott, two notorious witches lately condemned at the sessions of Oyer and Terminer in St Albans, 1649; Mary Moor, Wonderful News from the North, or a true relation of the sad and grieving torments Inflicted upon the bodies of three children of Mr George Muschamp, 1650; A prodigious and tragicall history of the arraignment, trial, confession and condemnation of six witches at Maidstone in Kent, 1652; F. H., An Account of the trial, confession and condemnation of six witches, at Maidstone . . . at the assizes held there July 1652, 1653; The Tryall and Examination of Mrs Joan Peterson for her Supposed Witchcraft and Poisoning of the Lady Powel at Chelsea, 1652; The Witch of Wapping, or an exact and perfect relation of the life and devilish practices of Joan Peterson, 1652; A declaration in answer to several lying pamphlets concerning the witch of Wapping, showing the bloody plot and wicked conspiracy of one Abraham Vandenbemde, Thomas Crompton, Thomas Collet, and others, 1652; Edmond Bower, Dr Lambe’s Darling and Dr Lambe Revived: or witchcraft condemned in Anne Bodenham, 1653. For a peak in witchcraft cases in the west of England in the 1650s, see Janet Thompson, Wives, Widows, Witches and Bitches: Women in Seventeenth-Century Devon, Frankfurt: Lang, 1992, pp. 67–75.

Records of the Hopkins cases include the following: in manuscript, Cambridge University Library, Ely Assize Depositions Michaelmas 1647, EDR 12/20, 12/3, and E12 1647, BL Add. MS 27402, fols. 104–21; in printed form, A true and exact relation of the several informations, examinations, and confessions of the late witches arraigned and executed in the county of Essex, 1645; A true relation of the arraignment of eighteen Witches that were tried, convicted and condemned, at a sessions holden in St Edmonds-bury in Suffolke . . . the 27 day of August 1645, 1645; John Davenport, The witches of Huntingdon, their examinations and confessions exactly taken by his majesties justices of the peace for that county, 1645; The lawes against witches and conjuration, and some brief notes and observations for the discovery of witches . . . also the confession of Mother Lakeland, who was arraigned and condemned for a witch at Ipswich in Suffolk, 1645.


Mercurius Aulicus, 10–17 August 1645.
11 *Epistolae Ho-Elianiae: The Familiar Letters of James Howell*, ed. J. Jacobs, 1890, p. 506, 3 Feb 1646, addressed to Endymion Porter, a Catholic at the queen’s court in exile; see also pp. 511, 515, 547.

12 *The Parliamentary Journal*, 11–17 July 1645. The Association Counties is a reference to the East Anglian counties who had gone over to Parliament in a body.

13 *Signes and Wonders From Heaven, With a True Relation of a Monster borne in Ratcliffe Highway*, London, 1645, pp. 2–3.

14 This was especially true in English reports of witch-prosecutions in Scotland, which were generally hostile to the use of torture and implicitly or explicitly contrasted this with the less tyrannical rule of England. See for instance *Mercurius Politicus*, 28 Oct – 4 Nov, which is especially unkeen on the use of torture.


16 *The Moderate Intelligencer*, 4–11 Sept 1645. The reference is probably to the trials at Bury St Edmunds, described in *A true relation of the arraignment of eightene witches that were tried, convicted and condemned, at a sessions holden in St Edmonds-bury in Suffolke . . . the 27 day of August 1645*, 1645.

17 This derogatory reference to Davies suggests that this is a Royalist satire, despite appearances, for she had prophesied the deaths of Buckingham and of the king, and hence was particularly disliked by Royalists. For Eleanor Davies’ prophecies see *The Prophetic Writings of Lady Eleanor Davies*, ed. Esther S. Cope, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. ‘Mother Shipton’ was a fictional woman prophet invented during the Civil War, but purporting to be ancient.


19 In his *Memoirs*, Holles mentions the ‘sabbaths’ held by Cromwell and St John, where they ‘imparted to your fellow witches the bottom of your designs, the policy of your actings, the turn of your contrivances, all your falsehoods, vilanies and cruelties with your full intention to ruin three kingdoms’, *The Memoirs of Denzil Lord Holles, Baron of Ifield*, ed. John Toland, 1699, p. 237.

20 Ady gives another instance: one of the ‘poor women that was hanged as a witch at Berry assizes in the yeare 1645 did send her imp into the Army to kill the parliamentary soldiers and another sent her imps into the army to kill the king’s soldiers’ (*A Candle in the Dark*, p. 65).

21 S. Everard, ‘Oliver Cromwell and Black Magic’, *Occult Review*, April 1936, pp. 84–92; *The English Devil, or Cromwell and his Monstrous Witch Discovered*
at Whitehall, 1660. Elizabeth Poole’s actual address to the Army Council can be found in *An Alarum of War*, 1647. For a discussion of Poole, see my ‘Gender, Power and the Body: Milton and Seventeenth-Century Women’s Writing’, D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1991. Cromwell’s own position in relation to witchcraft was ambiguous. Huntingdon, site of a large Hopkins-related trial in 1646, was the home of Cromwell, and the master of Huntingdon grammar school, Thomas Beard, was the godly author of *The Theater of Gods Judgements*, which took a strong line about witches. Yet Cromwell also stopped a major persecution in Scotland. See Christopher Hill, *God’s Englishman*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975, p. 250.


23 My thinking on this question has been influenced by work on more recent wars, especially the First World War: see in particular Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, London: Reaktion, 1996.


26 *The Copy of a Letter sent to an Honourable Lord, by Doctor Paske*, 1642, reprinted in *Mercurius Rusticus*, 2, pp. 119–20; hence a Royalist source. There was iconoclasm in the areas of Essex where Hopkins began his career: at St Mary’s Church, Lawford, near Manningtree, the carved heads of the saints were hacked off during the 1640s (E. Austen, Twenty-Four Villages in the Tendring Hundred, 1948, p. 23).


36 Cases based in Manningtree began in the winter of 1644, and the first confession was recorded in March 1645. Trials began in Chelmsford in July. The hunt spread into Suffolk just over the border from the Tendring Hundred, and also into Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire. Trials also took place in Great Yarmouth, Aldeburgh, Stowmarket, King’s Lynn and the Isle of Ely.

37 See my article ‘Women’s Stories of Witchcraft: The House, the Body, the Child’, *Gender and History*, 7 (1995); James Sharpe also points to the unexceptional nature of many of the Hopkins trial materials in *Instruments of Darkness*.

38 John Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft*, 1648, p. 3.

39 The meagre biographical facts assembled by Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins*, and others are as follows: Hopkins was born c. 1619–22, which would have made him in his early twenties at the beginning of his activities. His mother, Marie Hopkins, was possibly a Huguenot refugee. An MS now lost allegedly said Hopkins was a lawyer ‘of but little note’. Since there is no record of him at the Inns of Court or in other court records, he may have worked as a legal clerk, possibly for a ship-owner in Mistley. Suffolk Record Office contains a conveyance of a tenement in Bramford, only just outside Ipswich, dated 1641, bearing Hopkins’ signature as a witness, which may imply a role as a lawyer’s clerk. Hopkins allegedly told Lady Jane Whorley that he had ‘studied maritime law in Amsterdam’. It is generally agreed that he did spend some time in the Netherlands, possibly with his Huguenot connections, but some suggest that this may mean the Essex village of Little Holland, and in that case it may be relevant that Brian Darcy, the chief justice in the St Osyth case of 1582, was briefly owner of the manor there (J. Yelloly Watson, *The Tendring Hundred in the Olden Time*, Colchester, 1877, p. 69). Hopkins knew that other great self-fashioner of the Civil War years, William Lilly. Hopkins was not hanged as a witch, but died of a consumption: ‘he died peaceably at Manningtree, after a long sickness of a Consumption, as many of his generation had done before him, without any trouble of conscience for what he had done, as was falsely reported of him’ (Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 61). He was buried on 12 August 1647 at Mistley.
Hopkins’ father was the vicar of Great Wenham. He uses Puritan discourse in his extant will: ‘I shalbe receved to Mercy only through the Righteousnesse & Merrits of the Lorde Jesus Christ my Saviour’. John Stearne says of Hopkins that ‘he was the son of a godly minister, and therefore without doubt within the covenant’ (Stearne, A Confirmation, p. 61).

Deacon, Matthew Hopkins, pp. 37, 61.

A True and Exact Relation, p. 3. There is a slightly inaccurate transcription of this pamphlet in Peter Haining, The Witchcraft Papers, Secaucus, N.J.: University Books, 1974.

The fullest text of Edmund Robinson’s confession is in John Webster, The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft, pp. 347ff., but the numerous transcriptions of it testify to the wide circulation of the story (e.g. BL Harleian MS 6854, fol. 26v; Bodleian Dodsworth MS 61, fols. 45–47v; Bodleian Rawlinson MS D 399, fols. 211–212v, BL Add. MS 36, 674, fols. 193, 196).


Stearne, A Confirmation, p. 34. John Stearne was Hopkins’ principal associate. He was gentry; Stearne was still paying hearth tax in Manningtree in 1666, despite apparently moving to Lawshall in 1648. In his writings, Stearne was heavily influenced by William Perkins’ godly and influential Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft, 1608, but he also borrowed at length from Richard Bernard, A Guide to Grand Jurymen, 1627, repr. 1629; these may have been among Hopkins’ intellectual antecedents too, but there is little trace of their influence in his writings.

On the area, see P. Morant, The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex, 1816; Watson, Tending Hundred; William Andrews, Bygone Essex, Colchester: William Andrews, 1892; Austen, Twenty-Four Villages.


Deacon claims Hopkins made as much as £23 from Stowmarket and £15 from King’s Lynn, with promises for more after the next sessions. His inn bill was also paid in Stowmarket. But he only got £6 in Aldeburgh – £2 from each visit, three visits – suggesting that the rate was decidedly variable (Matthew


53 Stearne writes of the exchangeability of godly and satanic identities: ‘many of these witches have made outward shows, as if they had been Saints on earth, and so were taken by some; as one of Catowth in Huntgtonshire . . . by their carriage seemed to be very religious people, and would constantly repair to all sermons neer them; yet notwithstanding all their shews of religion, there appeared some of these probabilities, wherby they were suspected’ (*A Confirmation*, p. 39).


56 A fairly typical confession of this is that of Thomazine Ratcliffe of Shellie, Suffolk, who confessed, ‘that it was malice that had brought her to that she was come to, meaning Witchcraft; for she confessed, that soone after ther husbands decease, above twenty yeares before her confession, there came one in the likenesse of a man, into bed to her, which spoke with a hollow, shrill voyce, and told her, he would be a loving husband to her, if she would consent to him, which she said, she did, and then he told her, he would revenge her of all her enemies, and that she should never miss anything, in which she said, she found him a lyer, but said, that Satan often tempted her to banning, swearing and cursing, which shee confessed shee did use a long time, and that many times it fell out accordingly, and that she, falling out with one Martins wife, who had a child drowned, for that she called her witch, saying, shee was the cause of the childs drowning, she bad her goe home and look to the rest, lest she lose more, and one died suddenly after’ (*Stearne, A Confirmation*, p. 22).


58 Nor did they desire him, as Stearne mischievously reports: ‘Then said Mr Hopkin, in what manner and likenesse came he to you? shee said, like a tall, proper, blackhaired gentleman, a properer man then you selfe, and being asked which she had rather lie withall, shee said the Devill’ (*A Confirmation*, p. 15).

59 For the witchmark as a proto-Enlightenment sign, see Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, ch. 9, which recounts William Harvey’s involvement in the 1633/4 case.


61 For Johnson’s confession, see *Calender of State Papers Domestic*, 1634, p. 141. Similarly, Gaule, *Select Cases*, mentions the devil’s ‘marriage’ to his votaries, and reports that Hopkins said he used the *Book of Common Prayer* to do it, meaning the Laudian prayerbook.
I am referring to Luce Irigaray’s celebrated essay ‘Women on the Market’, in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, and suggesting that feminists have underestimated the subversiveness of the female body as commodity.

Hopkins, *Discovery*, p. 3.


Henry Goodcole was Elizabeth Sawyer’s confessor, and wrote *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch*, 1621.

**Conclusion**

1 G. S., *A True Relation of the Sad Passages Between the Two Armies*, 1644, p. 5.  
4 Symonds, *Diary*, p. 97.  
6 Salusbury writes that “diverse inconveniences allreadie growne & the like daily more to increase [p. 252] since & by this government the multitude of schismes croued, not crept allreadie into the Church, give us too just a cause to feare what an Amsterdam or Pantheon of all religions wee are like to make in a little more time. Nor is it to bee hoped that ever the crackt peace of
this kingdome may bee so[l]dered or pieced together if the regall power be rent & divided into soe many pceces’. Roberts, ‘Attitudes’, pp. 259ff. I am very grateful to Lloyd Bowen for drawing my attention to Salusbury’s letter and for lending me his transcription of it.


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