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.[1] 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

1

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.[2] 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 dreams 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.[4] 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'.[5] 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.[6]

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.[7] 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 incom-
pleteness 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 accustome 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 enlisshe but that which [was]
cleane, polite, perfectly and articultely pronounced, omitting no lettre or sillable,
as folisshe women oftne times do of a wantonnesse, wherby divers noble men
and gentilmennes childryn, (as I do at this daye knowe) have attained corrupt
and foule pronounciation.[8]

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
aunceint and sad matrone, attending on hym in his chamber'.

Here, Elyot identifies femininity as the very arena from which educa-
tion 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 mascu-
linity 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, reshapes and manages, expresses the *non du père*. But even the
experience of 'day-school', going to a grammar, involved a similar separ-
ation. 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