Introduction

> Let this therefore be new examined, this tenure and freehold of mankind.
>
> John Milton, *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*

John Milton probably didn't imagine that future generations would actually take seriously his offer to reconsider the "tenure and freehold of mankind." Perhaps Milton could not or would not consider, as we now do, that masculinity itself might need to be "new examined." It is hard to deny, however, that Milton's works (early and late) persistently discuss, imagine, glorify, defend, and relocate men, masculinities, and male-centered communities in a wide variety of positions and paradigms. Milton was and is an unusually influential political and literary figure, and his politics and his masculinities depend profoundly upon each other. Milton's works invite, then, just such a new and continued examining. The voices and postures of Milton's male personae, including his own, reveal afresh how in Milton's writing maleness is invented, reinvented, and implemented in literary forms. How this "tenure and freehold of mankind" centrally structures Milton's texts and their ideologies of power, knowledge, and voice is the fundamental question of this work.

"Lycidas"

Perhaps the easiest way to see some of the broadest and most characteristic patterns of Milton's masculinities is in a poetic instance. The central features of Milton's manliness are certainly all visible in one of his earliest and most praised early works: "Lycidas," the sophisticated pastoral elegy written to commemorate the untimely death of Edward King, Milton's Cambridge schoolfellow.

"Lycidas" exists even in its very inception in a masculine zone, a homosocial collective: the Cambridge college at which both Milton and King

studied, and the poetic collection put together by King's male friends. Milton does not miss the opportunity in the poem to describe a further bond between his speaker and Lycidas, whom he credits as another writer like himself who "knew/Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme" (10–11).[1] What Milton's poem says about Lycidas, his classicized name for King, is also therefore in many ways what Milton says about the bonds among young men like himself. Though "Lycidas" is only sometimes read as a poem *about* masculinity,[2] this youthful lyric of Milton's is in many ways symptomatic of Milton's ongoing man-making project, its collectives, its identities, and its imaginings.

"Lycidas" as a pastoral elegy mourning the death of Edward King nods toward male bonding in its very form, imitating as it does classical pastoral elegies lamenting lost male friends.[3] Echoing Virgil's and Theocritus' pastoral elegies, creating a fiction of a shepherdly community with flocks of sheep, "Oaten Flute" (33) and "Rural ditties" (32), "Lycidas" relocates both King and the Miltonic speaker in an ancient homosocial brotherhood of poets. "Lycidas" suggests a kind of naturalized affective bonding with its roots in the deep earth of an ancient masculine lineage. This homosocial elegiac form connects the dead man with the living man, the masculine subject with the masculine elegist, and the elegist with the elegiac past through a literary fantasy of a shared pastoral community. Naming King as Lycidas, the poet claims that classical lineage for the two of them; casting both as shepherds likewise bonds them to this imaginary past. "Together both, ere the high Lawns appear'd/Under the opening eyelids of the morn" (25–6) is the speaker's memory of this friendship, as he recalls himself and King as shepherding companions in a nostalgic and lyrical landscape. That pastoral bonding links both of these male friends to a long line of idealized masculine communities artful in their artlessness; the custom-bound poetics of brotherhood underlies this early elegy.

Milton's "Lycidas" repeats throughout the poem these homosocial and homoerotic alliances implicit in its form. King/Lycidas as the speaker's schoolmate is "nurst upon the self-same hill" (23), taught by the same "Damaetas" (36); the speaker and Lycidas, he reports, danced together among "Fauns with clov'n heel" (34). Lycidas is mourned by gatherings of other shepherds as well as by a divine *collegium* of grieving interlocutors: Camus, Neptune, St. Peter, Phoebus, Jove, and Jehovah. These male friends, admirers, mourners, and protectors occupy most of the poem as they come together to lament the death of Lycidas as their "dearest pledge" (107), the "gentle swain" (92) whom they could ill have "spar'd" (113). The speaker beckons this community: "Return Alpheus" (132), he demands,

"Return Sicilian Muse and call the Vales, and bid them hither" (133–4); "Bid Amaranthus all his beauty shed" (149), to reestablish the group surround of male voices who drive and amplify the elegy's grief.

Lycidas' intimate and affective bonds to other men are also significantly intensified in the elegy. The speaker's weeping and mourning, the "heavy change" (37) he marks with "melodious tear" (14), the melancholy recollections that Lycidas is "gone, and never must return!" (38), are made more charged still in the poem's consolatory closing section. Here the poem comforts its readers by imagining Lycidas in heaven, but it is a particularly affective comfort that the elegy offers. The poem places Lycidas in an amorous divine community of men, a joyful "nuptial" (176) heaven with "solemn troops, and sweet Societies" (179) of celestial masculine friends.[4] Lycidas as an adored "enchanting son" (59) in the "blest Kingdoms meek of joy and love" (179) is pictured embraced by those divine saints who wipe his eyes and are wed to his spirit. The world of the poem, both sorrowful and comforting, is collectively and especially intimately manned.[5] This homoerotic intimacy, these affective and sexualized bonds between men, mark this early poem.

"Lycidas" also certainly evinces one of the most common indicators of how Miltonic men define themselves: by being hostile to feminized personae. The poem's speaker repeatedly complains about, commands, and denigrates the female figures he imagines and invokes. The speaker compels the "Sisters of the sacred well" (15), his muses, to speak and perform: "hence with denial vain, and coy excuse" (18), he admonishes them. He blames the nymphs for their neglect of Lycidas: "Where were ye Nymphs when the remorseless deep/Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd *Lycidas*?" (50–1), he demands angrily. Milton's speaker only relents in his blame of these female water-spirits in order to concede that such female figures are *all* powerless (aside from the Maenads who kill (male) poets). The poem ultimately replaces those ineffectual female Muses with a definitively male "all-judging Jove" (82). Amaryllis and Neaera, the symbolic women with whom the speaker imagines amorous dalliances, are likewise seen in the poem as frivolous distractions for the serious (male) poet, with their bewitching "tangles" (68) of hair and the seductive "sport" (67) with which they keep the male speaker from the work of his "Noble mind" (71). "Lycidas," as Bruce Boehrer suggests, expresses "a distinct ambivalence about the presence of women."[6] This ambivalence is not accidental but structural, a necessary element of the poem's masculinity narrative.

Lastly, "Lycidas" also celebrates the Miltonic speaker's own masculine authority. Even while grieving and uncertain, Milton's speaker flaunts

his poetic power in "lofty rhyme" (11); imagines his own inevitable fame; prophetically denounces the "blind mouths" (119) and "lean and flashy songs" (123) of corrupt churchmen; assumes his own authority to provide consolation;[7] and finally, and most assertively, turns his back at the end of the poem and walks away to "fresh Woods and Pastures new" (193).[8] Milton's speaker continues to "focus on himself":[9] his own calling, his own past, his own talents – throughout his elegy for his friend. Confident even while questioning, assertive even when at a loss, the Miltonic speaker in "Lycidas" assumes not only a right to eulogize but the right to call the poetic question at the poem's ending. This casual but explicit authority asserted by the masculine speaker marks this Miltonic poetics.

We Don't Talk about Milton's Men

It is perhaps unfair to read "Lycidas" along these single lines; the poem is, after all, an early masterpiece showcasing Milton's prosodic, linguistic, and literary complexity. As a work by and about the idea of men, though, "Lycidas" does clearly assume masculine authority, foreground homosocial bonds, and treat female or feminine characters as peripheral at best. Whatever else might be true of Milton's pastoral elegy, it does manifest these tendencies, and it is not alone. Many (most? all?) of Milton's works focus on or assume the primacy of masculine desires, problems, perspectives, and characters.[10] "He for God only, she for God in him"[11] is only the most infamous of the moments in Miltonic writings equally determined to establish, or casually assume, the priority and privilege of the masculine subject. Though many Milton critics continue to argue, often intelligently, for a progressive and inclusive Milton,[12] it is hard, once you look, not to see the ubiquitous, varied, assumed power of "mankind" in Milton's works, a complex *continuo* in the Miltonic corpus.

Perhaps paradoxically because of this strong through-line, masculinity in Milton is still a very emergent field of inquiry. While much brilliant scholarship on Milton's feminine subjects has graced Milton studies since the 1980s and 1990s,[13] only in the last decade or two have analyses emerged of Milton's men *as* men. This is the work on which this study wishes to build: Which ideas of masculinity are specific works of Milton engaging with, to what end(s), and with which politics in mind? Though several scholars have begun and underwritten this political and literary analysis of Milton, *The Masculinities of John Milton* is, to date, the first book-length study focusing explicitly on Milton's men. Hopefully the first of many, from a healthy variety of perspectives, for it is increasingly clear in the

extant studies of Milton and manliness that the homosocial and masculinist politics in John Milton's writings are fundamental to his visions of social systems and the place of gendered subjects in them. Understanding with a feminist and historicist lens some key aspects of how Milton's works construct these ambiguous fantasies of English masculine cultures is the task and contribution of this project.

An important first framing of Milton's masculinities involves recognizing that Milton's men are not Everyman. So who are, what are, Milton's masculine figures of choice? Milton's works are certainly not, for the most part, interested in every possible version of masculine voice or subjectivity in his day. The texts studied here – epic poems and prose works, masques and closet dramas – do create masculine figures as disparate as fallen demons, archangels, classical demigods, aristocratic schoolchildren, unhappy newlyweds, divine messiahs, and Hebrew prophets. The works also address common life stages (marriage, schooling, emergent adulthood) that apply to a wide sector of Englishmen. Despite this variety, though, it is fair to say that Milton's works tend to defend and give voice primarily to the White, well-educated, selectively Protestantish man of the middling or gentry classes, assuming that particular group's voice, power, and type of privilege.[14] Milton's works mostly slide comfortably into this identity niche; they frequently, for instance, either ignore or dismiss uneducated or working-class men, the apprentices, servants, and petty merchants who so frequently populate early modern English drama.[15] Milton's works likewise frequently attack Catholics as well as Jews, Turks, Arabs, and others as less "fair" than his own familiar community of men. Milton's polemical opponents, regardless of their actual cultural identity, are also commonly figured by Milton as Irish, Philistine, ignorant, ill-educated, or unEnglish.[16]

Only certain flavors of masculinity tend to be prized or acknowledged in Milton's writings, then. Though his masculine characters are sometimes biblical or divine, fantastical or fictional, these analogies to Milton's preferred manly cohort are common. As this study variously invokes men, maleness, masculinity, Englishness, and citizenship, it is therefore bearing Milton's own security gates in mind, the specific kinds of male subjects to whom his works will grant a masculinity passport. This affinity for men somewhat like himself in rank, training, culture, and belief generates both notable aporia and notable trends in Milton's works, and it is important to be aware of these selective biases.

The Masculinities of John Milton focuses on the particular stages and structuring institutions of this same male cohort so visible in Milton's works. This study will examine in particular some key aspects of a middling

Englishman's life: his homosocial schooling; his marriage and public citizenship; his useful friendships and national or regional loyalties; his social discourse and polite conversation; his courage and heroic military prowess. Men of this class and cultural identity studying together; marrying into and out of new units of citizenship; forming friendships and alliances; engaging in social networking; and being willing to provide military leadership: These are all the particular elements of a particular *tranche* of collective masculinity in Milton's works which he variously assumes, deploys, and contests.

Running through each of these stages and features of Milton's imagined masculine lives is, of course, the border wall of a profoundly gendered ideology: the schooling of boys versus that of girls; the ambiguous status and function of wives in the new commonwealth; the masculinization and domestication of friendship; the political hegemonies of men's conversation in contrast to women's; the spiritual implications of a warlike masculinity as opposed to a dovelike spirit. The tensions within and across these gendered identities visible in Milton's prose and poetic works are the focus of this work.

In Milton's early work, for instance, the *Ludlow Masque* and *Of Education* define an oddly cloistered male-oriented *studium*, a boys' school in which young men teach each other how to become thinking participants in patriarchal trade. The divorce tracts and *Eikonoklastes* explicitly imagine English masculine citizenship framed by its freedom from wifely encumbrances. *Paradise Lost* depends ideologically upon hierarchical and classificatory conversations between male characters. *Paradise Regained* and *Areopatigica* debate the warrior-citizen honor cult of Milton's day, its spiritual dimensions and social meanings. In *Samson Agonistes*, Samson's curiously collective Chorus of Danites reposition themselves as male friends with a particular tribal bond.[17] In all of these texts, masculinist alliances and particular fantasies of manhood frame gendered English manhood in Milton's influential corpus.

In these central texts and tropes, Milton's masculinities are figured, revised, and defended. The ways in which such man-building efforts fail, contradict themselves, and become complicated by other processes will be a central part of the argument in *The Masculinities of John Milton*. Understanding the imaginings that stand between Milton's men will make clear not only how maleness is being made and unmade in this era, but also, therefore, some of the insistent and instrumental narratives about gender as it is more broadly constructed in seventeenth-century England.

The Masculinities of John Milton thus emerges necessarily out of conversations with masculinity studies work on early modern England since the late 1990s.[18] Especially significant to this project have been the cultural histories showing how masculinities are imaginary as well as structural, driving "patriarchy's reproduction and continuation of itself."[19] Likewise, this scholarship on historical manhood (Alexandra Shepard's in particular) has revealed the ways in which masculinities are inconsistently constructed and deconstructed for different ages and classes of men over the period.[20] The masculinity scholarship on this period also helps to demonstrate again the ways in which masculinity was never one construct, one narrative, or one subject-position. Such work has enabled this study's focus on John Milton's masculine imaginaries and masculinist politics in the particular slices of male culture and manly systems in which Milton's works are invested.

The point of analyzing these varied and variable trends and strategies in a cultural context is, not least, to demonstrate yet once more that Milton is in fact not for all time nor for all peoples. Eliding or normalizing the masculinities underlying Milton's portrayals of an English person makes it much easier for us to be inveigled into imagining that the masculinist citizen in Milton's writings is in fact a feminist citizen. It may be helpful to say now that I find little evidence in these works to support even a protofeminist Milton, though I am loath to talk about "Milton" as some kind of unitary deity floating over his texts and making them whole. But at least as interesting as what we think of "Milton" are the kinds of ideologies by which Milton's views of the masculine are informed in the social sphere. And, further, really seeing what Milton means by manhood will illuminate important aspects not only of this major writer's works but also, possibly, of his culture as well.

The Road-Map

The Masculinities of John Milton does not primarily investigate the kind of man Milton actually was, his biography, literary or otherwise. This is both a very well-studied question,[21] and one fraught with theoretical and logistical difficulties.[22] This book is instead asking how Milton's different works in their social moments, narrow or broad, imagine particular social masculinities and their political uses, and it is asking this question quite locally. Not how did "Milton" think about the education of boys, for instance, but how is that key socializing process imagined in both *Of Education* and the *Ludlow Masque*. This selective targeting is perhaps a logistical necessity, given how much Milton wrote, over many decades: His is a genuinely vast

oeuvre. But focusing deliberately on either specific texts or small clusters of works also makes it easier to resist the hegemonic force of Milton as a self-construction.[23] For "Milton" as an authorial construct is likewise a series of imagined links between one work, one decade, one genre, and another. Those imagined links risk privileging certain texts as the keys to others (*De Doctrina Christiana* in particular functions this way in much Milton criticism). The scope of this study is deliberately focused on particular aspects of masculine subjectivities and on specific individual texts or small sets of works focused on those same tropes.

A certain intertextuality can definitely illuminate these particular focal points for masculinity, and *The Masculinities of John Milton* will not resist such useful comparisons both within and outside of the Miltonic canon. It can be tempting to believe Milton when he suggests that he has "a high and lonely destiny,"[24] but many of his works generate at the meta-level the same conversations between male writers that he recreates within his works. Because Milton's texts emerge from and into a wide array of such discourses, *The Masculinities of John Milton* does pull on linking threads in these discourses, in some cases across small knots of Miltonic works and in others also between Milton's works and those of his contemporaries. Milton's contemporaries and interlocutors discuss the same subjects he does: pedagogy, marriage, strategic militarism, friendship, social conversation, and local alliance-making. From William Shakespeare to Thomas Fuller, from Richard Mulcaster to Richard Brathwait, authors, networks, and influencers speak into the histories in which Milton's works also intervene. Sometimes as counternarratives, sometimes as more strident or gentler versions of the Miltonic text's positions, sometimes as cultural informants, these dialogic texts help to historicize Milton's textual ideologies: when Milton is ventriloquizing, when adapting, and when raising the stakes. It is very easy to read male or masculine Miltonic voices, or characters, or subject-positions, as normative, invisible, and genderless, because they are so prevalent. It is the effort of this study to destabilize that normalizing of masculinity and masculinism in Milton's works, partly by naming and examining it directly and partly in conversation with these other works of his era with similar or differing perspectives and ideologies.

The Masculinities of John Milton's five main chapters are organized around key phases of masculine identity as Milton imagined them in some of his principal individual works and clusters of works. Each chapter explores these particular aspects of Milton's gendering of citizenship, authority, and alliances: through education, marriage, combat, conversation, and friendship. How men are trained; how they create their adult

domestic structures; how they talk to each other; how they resist each other; and how they are affectively bound to each other, are all, in Milton's texts, signifiers or building blocks of citizenship, of public mission, and of ethical leadership. That Milton's fantasies of masculine alliances sometimes depend upon imagined and then half-suppressed feminine alternatives is likewise central to this study of these Miltonic works.

Chapter 1, "Peer Review," studies the *Ludlow Masque* alongside Milton's *On Education* and their uses of pedagogy, teaching, and peer influence, as they speak to and out of cultural anxieties around the public and private schooling of children, masculine and feminine. In the *Ludlow Masque*, the Lady and her two brothers teach each other in an oddly juvenile model of peer pressure. Here Milton's masque ambivalently recreates and also steps outside the formative masculinized schoolroom. While, as Jeff Dolven notes, there are parental pedagogues in the masque,[25] the fearful younger brother and the changeable Comus in the *Ludlow Masque* are admonished not by their elders but by their peers. The lawless woods are thus reinhabited in the masque by a youthful band of teaching assistants who exhibit a particularly fraught gendering of pedagogy.[26] This training into manhood extends but also complicates the homosocial bonds and mimetic rivalries visible here. Writing into the humanist ideologies of education and childhood with which he was familiar, Milton extends and reinforces the emergent masculinism implicit and explicit in how boys (and girls) teach each other. Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, with its similar band of forest outlaws and discourses of correction, parallels and sharpens this reading of Milton's woodland *Bildungsroman*.

This chapter builds on the scholarship studying developmental and "relational … masculinities"[27] in historical education and pedagogy. This work usefully notes the homosocial training into both authority and submission visible in works like Milton's and Shakespeare's.[28] These scholars have also provided key insights into the defensiveness of this masculine education, the ways in which emergent maleness is imagined as a "concentrate that is diluted and changed by mixing."[29] The queer theorists in this field see some of these patterns imagined through homoerotic or pederastic bonds between students and teachers in early modern boys' education;[30] my chapter will have a different focus, but in foregrounding the intensely masculinized systems of education such research is obviously important.

Chapter 2, "Nearly Headless Husbands," considers a subsequent stage of masculinity: marriage itself. Here Milton's divorce tracts take the stage – and the commonwealth. This cluster of prose works tied particularly to their historical moment at the very beginning of the English civil

wars constructs a particularly gynophobic ideology of masculinist citizenship and its monopoly on public space. In the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, *Tetrachordon*, *Colasterion*, and *The Judgement of Martin Bucer*, Milton repeatedly draws powerful analogies between the masterful husband and the citizen and between the citizenly male and parliamentary leadership. Revising the political/domestic analogies employed by both royalist and reformist political writers, Milton frames divorce from women as both a domestic *and* a public version of necessary patriarchal power. In particular, Milton, across these tracts and in *Eikonoklastes*, goes beyond the increasingly applied debate in this period over citizenship and governmental authority carried out through analogies to patriarchal authority, domestic headship, and sexualized marital discord. By making wives the erotic and political enslavers of free citizen men, Milton enables a particularly masculinist fantasy of Englishmen forming new homosocial bonds to forge the commonwealth. This chapter compares the homosocial work of husbandly and friendship-based politics in which both Milton and his opponents engage, including Charles I's own efforts in *Eikon Basilike* to imaginatively divorce himself from his unpopular Catholic queen.

This chapter builds on the research of Mary Nyquist, Lara Dodds, Paul Stevens, James Grantham Turner, and others, which has shown how Milton's claims in these divorce tracts for universal liberty, individual freedom of conscience, revolutionary reform, and radical equality are actually constructed primarily for English men like Milton himself.[31] As Gregory Chaplin argues, "Milton's republicanism limits full political agency to men."[32] These scholars have also rightly noted that the progressive values visible in so much of Milton's finest rhetorical prose are not just accidentally focused on this masculine subject of the English husband but are actually designed to assume and require male privilege: structural patriarchy, in other words. This scholarship has exposed the key ways in which an imagined rational public discourse is based on an equally constructed ideology of a domestic sphere. Shifting the focus from Milton's women or Milton's marriages to Milton's men, this chapter also extends that fundamentally important work of understanding how Milton's political narratives of liberty and freedom depend upon gendered hierarchies and ideologies.

Chapter 3, "Chatting Up," focuses specifically on another key marker of masculine adulthood: social conversations between men, as evidenced in *Paradise Lost*. Milton's great epic depends heavily on discourse, especially as a means by which male or masculinized characters both build homosocial bonds and establish social hierarchies, so the ideology of conversation