

Introduction

It is fayned that . . . Orpheus assembled the wilde beasts to come in heards to harken to his musicke, and by that meanes made them tame, implying thereby, how by his discrete and wholesome lessons uttered in harmonie and with melodious instruments, he brought the rude and savage people to a more civill and orderly life.

George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 6

Long ago, when rude primitive men lived in the woods, naked, without ramparts, roofless, it sometimes happened that they were attacked by wild beasts. And so it was on them that man first made war, and the one who defended the human race from the onslaught of the wild animals was held to be a man of mettle, and taken for leader. Indeed it seemed entirely right that the stabbers should be stabbed, the butchers butchered, especially when they were attacking us without provocation. Since these exploits won high praise – for that was how Hercules was made a god – spirited youth began to hunt the animals far and wide, and to show off their skins as a trophy.

Erasmus, ‘Dulce bellum inexpertis’, *Adages*, p. 317

The story of Orpheus, which though so well known has not yet been in all points perfectly well interpreted, seems meant for a representation of universal philosophy. For Orpheus himself – a man admirable and truly divine, who being master of all harmony subdued and drew all things after him by the sweet and gentle measures – may pass by an easy metaphor for philosophy personified. For as the works of wisdom surpass in dignity and power the works of strength, so the labours of Orpheus surpass the labours of Hercules.

Francis Bacon, *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, *Philosophical Works*, p. 835

This book is about Shakespeare’s heroes. That is to say, it is about men. There are, of course, heroines in the plays, and some of them die tragically. But they are not heroic in the sense in which Henry V

or Macbeth or Coriolanus are heroic, or in which it sometimes seems that Hamlet would like to be heroic. For the Renaissance the heroic ideal is essentially masculine. The qualities it evokes – courage, physical strength, prowess in battle, manly honour, defiance of fortune – may be summed up in a word whose Latin root means ‘a man’. As English Renaissance writers understand the term, *virtus* signifies an ideal of manhood that derives partly from classical epic, partly from medieval chivalry, and partly from Italian *realpolitik*. Though women may occasionally display heroic qualities, they are exceptions that prove the rule. Heroes in Shakespeare are, by definition, men.

THE HEROIC IDEAL

In the Renaissance most critics agree that heroic poetry is the highest literary form. By providing an ideal pattern of human conduct it serves, in theory at least, as a source of moral inspiration. ‘For as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind,’ wrote Sir Philip Sidney, ‘so the lofty image of [the classical] worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy.’¹ But Sidney’s didactic theory does not match literary practice. Listing some of the greatest heroes of classical and Renaissance poetry, Sidney asks how anyone could speak evil of such champions when they are capable of making ‘magnanimity and justice shine throughout all misty fearfulness and foggy desires’ (119). The answer is that characters like Achilles and Turnus are not just paragons of ‘magnanimity and justice’; they are remarkable also for their ferocity. Even Aeneas, Sidney’s supreme example of the epic hero, combines steadfast piety with a savage and vindictive brutality (see below, Chapter 4, pp. 130–3). Tasso gets closer to the truth about the peculiar fascination of the epic hero when he admits that heroes defy conventional morality. Following Aristotle, he distinguishes between moral virtue, which consists in a mean between extremes, and heroic virtue, which is a kind of greatness that defies description, an excess, as it were, of virtue (‘un eccesso, per cosi dire, della virtù’).² As Eugene Waith explains in *The Herculean Hero*, essential to the heroic

¹ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (London: Nelson, 1965), p. 119.

² Torquato Tasso, ‘Della Virtù Eroica e Della Carità’, *Prose Filosofiche* (Florence: Alcide Parenti, 1847), p. 355.

ideal is a sense of awe and wonder at the transgression of normal limits. The exploits of the classic hero of mythology, writes Waith, are strange mixtures of beneficence and crime, of fabulous quests and shameful betrayals, of triumph over wicked enemies and insensate slaughter of the innocent, yet the career is always a testimony to the greatness of a man who is almost a god . . . That is not to say that tales about the hero excuse his moral defects, but rather that they point to a special morality.³

The sense of awe and wonder that is integral to the heroic ideal is an essential ingredient in Shakespearean tragedy. The spectacle of men of great courage or exceptional idealism destroying their own and others' lives may not be unique to Shakespeare. But the conflicting feelings generated by this paradox are arguably more intense in his tragedies than in any other body of drama. According to Paul Jorgensen, 'one of the miracles of Shakespeare's tragedies is how we can learn to love, when he suffers, a man whom we disliked'.⁴ But are we expected to love Shakespeare's heroes? Feminism has taught us to be suspicious of men who claim to be like gods, especially when 'slaughter of the innocent' is justified by appeal to a 'special morality'.⁵ Waith is right in saying that an important dimension of Shakespearean tragedy is lost when the hero's nobility and idealism are underplayed.⁶ But the fact that Shakespeare emphasizes the heroic stature of his male protagonists and the awe they inspire does not necessarily mean that he accepts heroic conventions uncritically.

Many scholars have written on the heroic ideal in Renaissance literature. Some believe that Shakespeare was essentially in sympathy with heroic values and make it their task to recover an imaginative understanding of those values for our own unheroic age;⁷ others draw attention to contemporary distinctions between

³ Eugene M. Waith, *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), p. 16.

⁴ Paul Jorgensen, *William Shakespeare: The Tragedies* (Boston: Twayne, 1985), p. 8.

⁵ Commenting on the widely reported case of a man who was exonerated by a High-Court judge after killing his wife in a domestic argument, Una Freeley of London Women's Aid writes: 'the avenues of escape from justice for men who kill women are many, varied and endlessly imaginative. They change according to fashionable social thought at any one time, but the results change little. She is dead and he gets the sympathy for having been so provoked as to kill her. Women who kill men are seen as mentally ill or just plain vicious, and this is reflected in their sentencing' (letter to *The Guardian*, 31 October 1994, p. 19).

⁶ *Ideas of Greatness: Heroic Drama in England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 105.

⁷ Waith writes: 'Few literary forms seem more remote than heroic drama in the age of the anti-hero and the common man, yet no age is truly against heroes, however distrustful it may be of heroic rhetoric' (*Ideas of Greatness*, p. xi). See also Waith, 'Manhood and Valor in Two Shakespearean Tragedies', *ELH*, 17 (1950), 262–73; *The Herculean Hero*; Curtis Brown

true and debased forms of manly honour, arguing that the fall of Shakespeare's heroes can usually be attributed to a decline from the former to the latter.⁸ From the mid 1970s feminist critics began to consider the previously invisible issue of gender in the plays.⁹ The body of work that followed in the next decade was, as Ann Thompson rightly says, the most lively, productive, and influential

- Watson, *Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); G.K. Hunter, 'The Heroism of Hamlet', *Hamlet*, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 5 (London: Arnold, 1963), pp. 90–109; David Riggs, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories: Henry VI and its Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971); Alice Shalvi, *The Relationship of Renaissance Concepts of Honour to Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1972); James C. Bulman, *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* (Newark, N.J.: University of Delaware Press, 1985).
- ⁸ Contrasting 'true honour' with 'empty versions of honour', Theodor Meron writes: 'I show Shakespeare's sympathy for chivalry as an ideal, a sharp contrast to his sarcasm for vain and excessive chivalry and exaggerated and dangerous notions of honour' (*Bloody Constraint: War and Chivalry in Shakespeare* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 8. See also Norman Council, *When Honour's at the Stake: Ideas of Honour in Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973); Richard S. Ide, *Possessed with Greatness: The Heroic Tragedies of Chapman and Shakespeare* (London: Scolar Press, 1980); Charles Barber, *The Theme of Honour's Tongue: A Study of Social Attitudes in the English Drama from Shakespeare to Dryden* (Göteborg: University of Göteborg Press, 1985). In *The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), Matthew N. Proser makes a different kind of distinction, arguing that each of Shakespeare's heroes is torn between a heroic self-image and his 'full humanity' (p. 3).
- ⁹ Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (London: Macmillan, 1975). See also Carol Thomas Neely, 'Women and Men in *Othello*', *SSud*, 10 (1977), 133–58; Janet Adelman, "'Anger's my meat": Feeding, Dependency and Aggression in *Coriolanus*', *Shakespeare: Pattern of Excelling Nature*, ed. David Bevington and Jay L. Halio (Newark, N.J.: University of Delaware Press, 1978), pp. 108–24; Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, 'Hamlet' to 'The Tempest'* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely, *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Irene Dash, *Wooing, Wedding, and Power: Women in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Marilyn French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982); Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1981); Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Linda Bamber, *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983); Marianne Novy, *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Peter Erickson, *Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1985); Kathleen McLuskie, 'The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare', *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) pp. 88–108; Jeanne Addison Roberts, *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus, and Gender* (Lincoln, Nebr. and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture: James I and the Renegotiation of Elizabethan Literary Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 115–49.

aspect of Shakespeare criticism in the 1980s.¹⁰ With continuing disagreement over the question of whether or not Shakespeare was in sympathy with the misogynist ideas expressed by so many of his characters, Jonathan Dollimore is probably right when he says that the question that unites the diverse body of feminist Shakespeare scholarship is: ‘do these plays endorse the conservative and, to us, oppressive views of gender which prevailed in their society, or do they challenge them’.¹¹ Finally, following seminal work by Francis Barker, Catherine Belsey, Jonathan Dollimore, and Louis Montrose in the mid 1980s,¹² materialist criticism has concerned itself in recent years with what Megan Matchinske calls ‘the cultural dynamics of gender construction’ in the early-modern period.¹³

However, none of these critics explains that masculine honour was a political issue throughout the period when Shakespeare was writing his tragedies and tragi-comedies. Indeed it is something of a paradox that materialist criticism, with its Foucault-inspired interest in the dynamics of power, should show less interest in the overt and well-reported political conflicts of the period than in the more metaphysical question of how an emergent capitalist state acquires

¹⁰ Ann Thompson, ‘“The warrant of womanhood”: Shakespeare and Feminist Criticism’, *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 74.

¹¹ ‘Critical Development: Cultural Materialism, Feminism and Gender Critique, and New Historicism’, *Shakespeare: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 416.

¹² Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays in Subjection* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984); Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (1984; repr. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986); Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985); Louis Montrose, ‘Renaissance Literary Studies and the Subject of History’, *ELR*, 16 (1986), 5–12.

¹³ Megan Matchinske, *Writing, Gender and State in Early Modern England: Identity Formation and the Female Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 6. See also Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1990); Valerie Wayne ed., *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Laura Levine, *Men in Women’s Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization, 1579–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Deborah Barker and Ivo Kamps, eds., *Shakespeare and Gender: A History* (London and New York: Verso, 1995); Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Richard Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama: Subjectivity, Discourse and the Stage* (Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan, 1997); Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare*; Elizabeth Hanson, *Discovering the Subject in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Eve Rachele Sanders, *Gender and Literacy on Stage in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Andrew P. Williams, ed., *The Image of Manhood in Early Modern Literature: Viewing the Male* (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1999).

control over individuals by constructing them as seemingly autonomous subjects.¹⁴ Yet, as I shall explain, the conflicting political positions signalled by such coded phrases as ‘courage-masculine’ and ‘manly virtue’ caused deeper divisions in Elizabeth’s and James’ Privy Councils than any other topic of public debate in late-Elizabethan and early-Stuart England. Those conflicts very nearly resulted in the deposition of a reigning monarch, and later provoked a bitter and embarrassingly public rift between her successor and the crown prince. Shakespeare’s tragedies are not allegories. But they do engage closely with these political issues, increasingly so after 1603 when Shakespeare wrote a series of plays dealing with matters of government and policy that seem to have a close bearing on James’ own concerns.¹⁵ Though all the tragedies and most of the comedies and histories inevitably concern themselves in one way or another with the question of ‘manhood and honour’ (*Tro.*, II.ii.46), the plays I shall deal with in the chapters that follow have a particular bearing on the politics of masculinity. James himself showed no great enthusiasm for the theatre and does not seem to have been particularly interested in plays as a way of shaping public opinion.¹⁶ But the fact that public debate of foreign policy was forbidden only encouraged playwrights to devise oblique ways of dealing with these issues.¹⁷ Judging from the volume of plays on historical and political topics that were performed in the 1590s and 1600s,¹⁸ the playgoing public’s appetite for political drama was insatiable. The bulk of plays dealing with matters of state in this period were tragedies. And since

¹⁴ Francis Barker writes: ‘The defining feature of the bourgeois discursive regime is the *in situ* control . . . of the newly interiorated subject’ (*The Tremulous Private Body*, p. 52).

¹⁵ On the political dimension of Shakespeare’s Stuart plays see Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 106–59; Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King’s Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court 1603–1613* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1995); Constance Jordan, *Shakespeare’s Monarchies: Ruler and Subject in the Romances* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

¹⁶ J. Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare’s Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 25–31. See also Paul Yachnin, ‘The Powerless Theatre’, *ELR*, 21 (1991), 49–74.

¹⁷ Tristan Marshall, ‘“That’s the Misery of Peace”: Representations of Martialism in the Jacobean Public Theatre, 1608–1614’, *SC*, 13 (1998), 1–21.

¹⁸ In the twenty-year period from 1590 to 1610 approximately sixty-five tragedies or historical plays were performed at court and the public playhouses (G.K. Hunter, *English Drama 1586–1642, The Oxford History of English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 554–68).

the heroic ideal is never far away in English Renaissance tragedy, it is not surprising that Shakespeare's political plays should return repeatedly to Hamlet's question: 'What is a man?' (*Ham.*, iv.iv.33).

'COURAGE-MASCULINE'

In a recent socio-historical study of gender entitled *Manhood in Early Modern England* Elizabeth Foyster explains that she uses the word 'manhood' rather than 'masculinity' because 'the latter was only employed by contemporaries from the mid-eighteenth century'.¹⁹ Though it is true that early-modern writers do not use the word in its substantive form, the adjective 'masculine' was a familiar term in Shakespeare's working lifetime. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poets who aspired to an Horatian ideal of urbanity were expected to show what Addison called 'a good Fund of strong Masculine Sense'.²⁰ But in Shakespeare's lifetime the word masculine was often used to signify martial or heroic qualities.²¹ When the Duke of Burgundy asks Talbot and Bedford about Joan of Arc's character in the first part of *Henry VI*, Talbot replies, 'A maid, they say'. Bedford interjects, 'A maid? And be so martial?', to which Burgundy responds, 'Pray God she prove not masculine ere long' (*1H6*, II.i.21–2). Complimenting another paragon of chastity on her seemingly impregnable honour, Tharsalio, the opportunistic fortune hunter in George Chapman's *Widow's Tears* (c. 1605), speaks banteringly of Eudora's 'Masculine and Heroicall vertues'.²²

The relative worth of qualities thought to be peculiar to men or women is a stereotyped Elizabethan debating *topos*. In the anonymous University Satire *Return from Parnassus* (c. 1602) Sir Raderick says to Immerito, 'Very learnedly in good faith, I pray now let me aske you one question that I remember, whether is the Masculine gender or the feminine more worthy?'.²³ Repeated again and again

¹⁹ Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), p. 5. See also Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500–1800* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995).

²⁰ *The Spectator*, no. 618, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), vol. v, p. 113.

²¹ Watson notes that 'Manhood or manliness was in the Renaissance a popular synonym for valor' (*Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor*, p. 245).

²² *The Widow's Tears*, II.iv.187, *The Plays of George Chapman: The Comedies*, ed. Allan Holaday and Michael Kiernan (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 505.

²³ *The Return from Parnassus, or the Scourge of Simony*, III.i, ed. Edward Arber (London: English Scholar's Library, 1879), p. 36.

in debate plays and courtesy books, often with identical phrasing,²⁴ this formulaic question has more to do with a medieval tradition of polemic on marriage and the nature of women than with any contemporary political issue. However, for a brief period the collocation of ‘martial’ and ‘masculine’ took on a very specific and local meaning. In militant-Protestant circles it formed part of a pattern of praising martial values by characterizing them as masculine and depreciating eirenic values as feminine.²⁵ In *A Fig for Fortune*, Anthony Copley’s bizarre allegorical tribute to Elizabeth, the dreamer is told by the spirit of Revenge that

To be faire Fortunes ever Carpet-darling
 Is female glorie: But Reveng’d disgrace
 That’s truly Masculine, and rich triumphing:
 Al peace-content is too too cheap and base:
 What manhood is it still to feed on Chickins
 Like infant nurse-boys in nice Fortunes kitchens.²⁶

On the accession of James I, John Davies of Hereford wrote a panegyric to the young Prince of Wales in which he took a more sympathetic view of such assertive masculinity, praising the prince as inheritor of that ‘Courage-masculine’ which the legendary Brutus had bequeathed to his ancestors. It was Brutus’ martial spirit, Davies tells Henry, which made the ancient British a proud and noble people; for that was a time

When with our Swordes we did the Land convince.
 Wee were a People free, and freely fought
 For glorie, freedome, and preheminnence.²⁷

²⁴ Sir Raderick’s question is a standard debating *topos*. In Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* the irreverent Miles warns Bacon’s visitors of his master’s predictable disputing questions: ‘Marry, sir, he’ll straight be on you pick-pack to know whether the feminine or the masculine gender be the most worthy’ (Scene ii.88–90, New Mermaid edn., ed. J.A. Lavin (London: Ernest Benn, 1969), p. 17). The same formula appears in Lyly’s *Midas* (1592): ‘Thou servest Mellacrites, and I his daughter, which is the better man?’, asks Licio. Petulus returns the pat answer: ‘The Masculin gender is more worthy then the feminine’ (1.ii.1–4, *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, 3 vols., ed. R. Warwick Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), vol. III, p. 119). The same question is debated in George Whetstone’s colloquium on marriage. When Ismarito claims that ‘Sovereigne Vertue is Feminine, and . . . Yrksome Vice is Masculine’ the ladies laugh at him and tell him that his countrymen must be effeminate (*An Heptameron of Civill Discourses* (London, 1582), p. 118).

²⁵ On ‘masculine’ wartime values and ‘feminine’ peacetime values see Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womenkind, 1540–1620* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), pp. 161–2. Woodbridge does not discuss the political implications of these designations.

²⁶ *A Fig for Fortune* (1596) facsimile edn. (London: Spenser Society, 1883), p. 12.

²⁷ John Davies of Hereford, *Microcosmos* (London, 1603), p. 37.

Davies' panegyric was one of many tributes commissioned over the following nine years by politicians and aristocrats who saw in the young prince a symbolic focus for the political aspirations of militant Protestantism. For Henry's supporters, as for members of the old Sidney–Essex alliance, the terms 'masculine' and 'manly', together with 'chivalrous', 'virtuous', and 'honourable', were a code that signalled allegiance to a well defined political agenda.²⁸ Involving, as it did, an aggressively interventionist foreign policy, that agenda was in direct conflict with James' openly declared commitment to the realization of peace in Europe. To praise a courtier for his manly honour or his chivalric virtue was to acknowledge his sympathy with the aims of the war party. In 1605 Samuel Daniel published a poem called 'Ulysses and the Syren'. The poem is a dialogue in which the hero, who represents the war party, is tempted by the siren voice of peace. 'Come worthy Greeke, *Ulysses* come / Possesse these shores with me', pleads the siren,²⁹

Here may we sit, and view their toile
 That travaile on the deepe,
 And joy the day in mirth the while,
 And spend the night in sleepe.

Ulysses replies that fame and honour are won, not in idleness and sleep, but through active pursuit of danger. When the siren tells him that honour is not worth the candle, he replies that even if there were no honour or fame to be won, 'Yet manlines would scorne to weare / The time in idle sport' (28–9). Sir Philip Sidney had been praised by contemporary admirers for his 'manlie' acts on the battlefield.³⁰ As a supporter of the Sidney–Essex faction, Daniel habitually identified true manliness with a warlike spirit.³¹ In such a

²⁸ The counterpart of these heroic epithets is a cluster of words to do with sleep, dreams, enchantment, and idleness. Blair Worden notes that, 'Sidney's party use "sleep" as a metaphor for the fatal sense of "security" which, they held, was blinding [Protestant] princes to dangers at home and abroad' (*The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia' and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 62). See also Worden, 'Ben Jonson Among the Historians', *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994) pp. 67–89.

²⁹ 'Ulysses and the Syren', 1–2, 5–8, *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel*, 5 vols., ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London, 1885–96), vol. 1 (1885) pp. 270–1.

³⁰ Angel Day, *Upon the life and death of the most worthy, and thrise renowned knight, Sir Phillip Sidney* (London, 1586), Sig. B^v.

³¹ See, for example, 'To The Lord Henrie Howard', Daniel, *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 201, line 78; *The Civile Wars*, Book IV, *Complete Works*, vol. II, p. 156, lines 439–40; Book VIII, vol. II, p. 304, lines 147–8; Book VIII, vol. II, pp. 333, lines 852–3.

context, where manliness is usually associated with aggressive militarism, Lady Macbeth's characterization of regicide as an act of heroic manhood would have had a pointed significance for Shakespeare's new peace-loving patron: 'When you durst do it, then you were a man;' she tells Macbeth, 'And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man' (i.vii.49–51). But *Macbeth* is no simple condemnation of heroic values (see below, Chapter 4). In dramatizing the story of James' dynastic origins in the violent world of medieval Scotland, Shakespeare shows that the revolution that transformed an inherently unstable society of warring nobles into an hereditary monarchy of unprecedented longevity was itself accomplished, ironically, by heroic violence. 'Let grief / Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it' (iv.iii.228–9), Malcolm tells Macduff as he urges him to avenge, in an act that Anthony Copley would have described as 'truly Masculine', the murder of his wife and children. No play is written in an intellectual vacuum, least of all Shakespeare's tragedies. It may help to clarify some of the public issues that Shakespeare deals with in these plays if we review the political history of heroic masculinity in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England.

'ENGLISSHE CHEVALRIE'

During the last years of Elizabeth's reign, and particularly after Burghley's death in the summer of 1598, there was deep unrest at court as political rivals jostled for power in an atmosphere of slander, calumny, and backbiting. 'See how these great men cloath their private hate / In those faire colours of the publike good', wrote Daniel in a play based closely on the Essex rebellion.³² One result of the disillusionment with court life which this decline of standards inevitably led to was a vogue for Tacitean drama and Juvenalian satire in which the corruption of the rich and powerful is exposed to cynical scrutiny.³³ As a number of revisionist historians have shown, the real intellectual and political debates of the period were not

³² *Philotas*, III.iii.1135–6, *Complete Works*, vol. III, p. 144.

³³ Blair Worden, 'Classical Republicanism and the Puritan Revolution', *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H.R. Trevor-Roper*, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl and Blair Worden (London: Duckworth, 1981), pp. 182–200; Worden, 'Ben Jonson Among the Historians'; Malcolm Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians c. 1590–1630', *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Sharpe and Lake, pp. 21–43.