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SHAKESPEARE ON MASCULINITY

Masculinity was a political issue in early-modern England. Phrases such as ‘courage-masculine’ or ‘manly virtue’ took on a special meaning. As used by members of the Sidney–Essex faction, and later by admirers of the bellicose young Prince of Wales, they signified commitment to the ideals of militant Protestantism. Diplomacy and compromise were disparaged as ‘feminine’.

Shakespeare on Masculinity is an original study of the way Shakespeare’s plays engage with a subject that provoked bitter public dispute. Robin Headlam Wells argues that Shakespeare took a sceptical view of the militant-Protestant cult of heroic masculinity. Following a series of portraits of the dangerously charismatic warrior–hero, Shakespeare turned at the end of his writing career to a different kind of leader. If the heroes of the martial tragedies evoke a Herculean ideal of manhood, *The Tempest* portrays a ruler who, Orpheus-like, uses the arts of civilization to bring peace to a divided world. Other plays receiving close readings include *Henry V*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Coriolanus*.

ROBIN HEADLAM WELLS is Professor of English at the University of Surrey Roehampton. He has held visiting posts in Canada, France, Italy, the United States, and the West Indies and has written on Shakespeare, Spenser and Renaissance mythography. He is author of *Elizabethan Mythologies: Studies in Poetry, Drama and Music* (1994).

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Preface

A search of the Modern Language Association of America's electronic database of scholarly articles and book reviews using the keyword 'masculinity' yields over 850 hits for the years 1981–99. A common theme in many of these items is summed up in such title phrases as 'the construction of masculinity in', or 'masculinity, trauma, and psychoanalysis in', or 'the cultural construction of femininity and masculinity in'. Only a small number of these works is concerned with early-modern literature. However, one book on the psychodynamics of gender construction that does deal with this period is Mark Breitenberg's *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Using post-Freudian psychoanalysis to uncover the processes by which the masculine subject is constructed in the early-modern period, Breitenberg aims to expose the contradictions and anomalies in patriarchal culture. My own approach to the question of masculinity is very different from Breitenberg's, as I hope will be clear from my Introduction. But I do not want to detain the reader with talk about what I am *not* going to say. Those who are interested in a discussion of the difference between a historicist and what is sometimes termed a 'presentist' approach to literature may begin by turning to the Afterword.

A number of people have been generous with their time either in answering questions on topics about which I was all too conscious of being ignorant, or in reading drafts of chapters and putting me right on matters about which I did not know that I was ignorant. These include: Helen Baron, James Booth, Glenn Burgess, Mandy Capern, Tom Clayton, Lesley Coote, W.L. Godshalk, A.C. Hamilton, Jenny Headlam Wells, Owen Knowles, Peter Lamarque, Richard Levin, Tom McAlindon, Steven Marx, Lionel North, Anita Pacheco, Derek

Roper, Lisa Rodriguez, Wendy Scase, Raymond Tallis, Blair Worden, and Rowland Wymer. I am grateful to all of them, but especially to Helen Baron who gave me so much of her time. I also benefited enormously from the late Peggy Muñoz Simonds' encyclopaedic knowledge of Renaissance iconography. My anonymous readers gave me invaluable advice, for which I am profoundly grateful.

I am grateful also to the newly established Arts and Humanities Research Board for granting me a Study Leave award for 1999. This enabled me to finish a project that I started some years ago and had to lay aside when I was asked to take on a major managerial job.

Finally, I wish to thank my editor, Victoria Cooper, for her encouragement and support.

Chapters 1, 4, 5 and 6 first appeared in a different form in *Shakespeare and History*, ed. Holger Klein and Rowland Wymer (Edwin Mellen Press: Lewiston, Queenstown and Lampeter, 1996), the Proceedings of the 8th International Conference of the Spanish Society for English Renaissance Studies (Seville: SEDERI, 1997), *Review of English Studies*, and *Neo-Historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History and Politics*, ed. Robin Headlam Wells, Glenn Burgess and Rowland Wymer (D. S. Brewer, 2000), respectively. I am grateful to the Edwin Mellen Press, SEDERI, Oxford University Press, and Boydell & Brewer Ltd for permission to reprint material in revised form.

Note: in quotations from early books and other documents I have retained original spelling, but have modernized 'u', 'v', 'i', and 'j'. All quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Complete Works* (modern spelling edn.), ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

Abbreviations

PERIODICALS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| <i>AHR</i> | <i>American Historical Review</i> |
| <i>AST</i> | <i>Assaph Studies in the Theatre</i> |
| <i>BJJ</i> | <i>Ben Jonson Journal</i> |
| <i>BJRL</i> | <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> |
| <i>BNYPL</i> | <i>Bulletin of the New York Public Library</i> |
| <i>CEAC</i> | <i>CEA Critic</i> |
| <i>CR</i> | <i>The Centennial Review</i> |
| <i>CD</i> | <i>Comparative Drama</i> |
| <i>CQ</i> | <i>Critical Quarterly</i> |
| <i>DH</i> | <i>The Dalhousie Review</i> |
| <i>Dia</i> | <i>Diacritics</i> |
| <i>ELH</i> | <i>Journal of English Literary History</i> |
| <i>ELR</i> | <i>English Literary Renaissance</i> |
| <i>ES</i> | <i>English Studies</i> |
| <i>EC</i> | <i>Essays in Criticism</i> |
| <i>Exp</i> | <i>Explicator</i> |
| <i>HS</i> | <i>Hamlet Studies</i> |
| <i>HJ</i> | <i>The Historical Journal</i> |
| <i>HT</i> | <i>History and Theory</i> |
| <i>JBS</i> | <i>Journal of British Studies</i> |
| <i>JEGP</i> | <i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i> |
| <i>JSH</i> | <i>Journal of Social History</i> |
| <i>JSP</i> | <i>Journal of Social Philosophy</i> |
| <i>JWCI</i> | <i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i> |
| <i>JWI</i> | <i>Journal of the Warburg Institute</i> |
| <i>MSHS</i> | <i>Miscellany of the Scottish History Society</i> |
| <i>MLQ</i> | <i>Modern Language Quarterly</i> |
| <i>MLR</i> | <i>Modern Language Review</i> |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| <i>NET</i> | <i>Nordisk Estetisk Tidskrift</i> |
| <i>NQ</i> | <i>Notes and Queries</i> |
| <i>PBA</i> | <i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i> |
| <i>PEAS</i> | <i>Papers in English and American Studies</i> |
| <i>PMLA</i> | <i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i> |
| <i>PTRSC</i> | <i>Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada</i> |
| <i>Renforum</i> | <i>Renaissance Forum</i> |
| <i>RenQ</i> | <i>Renaissance Quarterly</i> |
| <i>RS</i> | <i>Renaissance Studies</i> |
| <i>Rep</i> | <i>Representations</i> |
| <i>RES</i> | <i>Review of English Studies</i> |
| <i>RP</i> | <i>Review of Politics</i> |
| <i>RUS</i> | <i>Rice University Studies</i> |
| <i>Rin</i> | <i>Rinascimento</i> |
| <i>SC</i> | <i>The Seventeenth Century</i> |
| <i>SewR</i> | <i>Sewanee Review</i> |
| <i>SQ</i> | <i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i> |
| <i>SStud</i> | <i>Shakespeare Studies</i> |
| <i>SST</i> | <i>Shakespeare Studies Tokyo</i> |
| <i>ShS</i> | <i>Shakespeare Survey</i> |
| <i>SAQ</i> | <i>South Atlantic Quarterly</i> |
| <i>SEL</i> | <i>Studies in English Literature</i> |
| <i>SP</i> | <i>Studies in Philology</i> |
| <i>TRI</i> | <i>Theatre Research International</i> |
| <i>TS</i> | <i>Theatre Studies</i> |
| <i>TD</i> | <i>Themes in Drama</i> |
| <i>TLS</i> | <i>Times Literary Supplement</i> |
| <i>TAPS</i> | <i>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</i> |
| <i>UMSE</i> | <i>University of Mississippi Studies in English</i> |
| <i>UTQ</i> | <i>University of Toronto Quarterly</i> |
| <i>UCROW</i> | <i>The Upstart Crow</i> |
| <i>YR</i> | <i>The Yale Review</i> |
| <i>YSS</i> | <i>Yearbook of Shakespeare Studies</i> |

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS AND POEMS

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Ant.</i> | <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> |
| <i>Cor.</i> | <i>Coriolanus</i> |
| <i>Cym.</i> | <i>Cymbeline</i> |
| <i>Ham.</i> | <i>Hamlet</i> |

Abbreviations

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| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>1H4</i> | <i>Henry IV, Part 1</i> |
| <i>2H4</i> | <i>Henry IV, Part 2</i> |
| <i>H5</i> | <i>Henry V</i> |
| <i>1H6</i> | <i>Henry VI, Part 1</i> |
| <i>JC</i> | <i>Julius Caesar</i> |
| <i>Jn.</i> | <i>King John</i> |
| <i>Luc.</i> | <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> |
| <i>Mac.</i> | <i>Macbeth</i> |
| <i>MM</i> | <i>Measure for Measure</i> |
| <i>MND</i> | <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> |
| <i>MV</i> | <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> |
| <i>Oth.</i> | <i>Othello</i> |
| <i>Per.</i> | <i>Pericles</i> |
| <i>R3</i> | <i>Richard III</i> |
| <i>Rom.</i> | <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> |
| <i>Son.</i> | <i>Sonnets</i> |
| <i>Tit.</i> | <i>Titus Andronicus</i> |
| <i>Tmp.</i> | <i>The Tempest</i> |
| <i>Tro.</i> | <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> |
| <i>WT</i> | <i>The Winter's Tale</i> |