Sample body paragraph

One way Macbeth makes it clear that the concept of manliness in the play is about being human, not valour, is through his initial reaction to the thought of killing Duncan. Macbeth is proven to be a valiant fighter, but what really makes him a man is his physical reaction to the idea of regicide and the resulting decision at which he arrives. To begin, Macbeth is first acknowledged by Duncan as a skilled fighter and defender of his king. Upon hearing how the battle is commencing, Duncan is informed that

brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—

Disdaining fortune, with his brandish’d steel,

Whick smok’d with bloody execution,

Like valour’s minion, carv’d out a passage,

Till he unseam’d him from the nave to the chops (1.2.16-22).

He afterwards praises Macbeth as a “valiant cousin [and] worthy gentleman!” (1.3.24). Macbeth’s bravery proves him to be valiant, and initially aligns manliness with bravery. However, bravery is not the only component of manliness in this play. In the very next scene he displays what some would consider cowardly behaviour at the thought of killing his king: “My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical, / Shakes so my single state of man that function / Is smother’d in surmise” (1.3.139-141). Macbeth finds himself unable to muster his bravery to kill the king because it goes against his humanity, proving that manliness is more about being human than about brave acts one commits. This idea is further solidified when he allows his physical reaction to determine his decision. After noting that just the thought of killing the king make his heart beat fast and his hair stand on end, he decides, “If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me, / Without my stir” (1.3.143-144). His decision to let fate control his outcome is evidence that, although Macbeth is brave, his manliness is more tied to his human state than his valour. In conclusion, although Macbeth is proven a brave soldier in battle, his manliness is actually determined by how much he acts like a human, as is evidenced in his reaction to the thought of killing Duncan and his decision to not interfere with fate at this point in the play because of how it affects his humanity.