

THE DUEL IN EARLY  
MODERN ENGLAND

*Civility, Politeness and Honour*

MARKKU PELTONEN



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2003

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*Typeface* Baskerville Monotype 11/12.5 pt    *System* L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> [T<sub>B</sub>]

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Peltonen, Markku.

The duel in early modern England : civility, politeness, and honour / Markku Peltonen.

p. cm. – (Ideas in context)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 82062-6

1. Duelling – England – History – 16th century.    2. Duelling – England – History – 17th century.

3. Mandeville, Bernard, 1670–1733.    I. Title.    II. Series.

CR4595.G7 P45    2002

394.8'0942 – dc21    2002073465

ISBN 0 521 82062 6 hardback

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*The rise of civil courtesy and the duelling theory  
in Elizabethan and early Stuart England*

CIVIL COURTESY

In 1549 William Thomas, a scholar who had just returned from his five years' stay in Italy, published *The historie of Italie*. Dedicating the volume to the earl of Warwick, Thomas noted that 'the Italian nacion . . . semeth to flourishe in ciuilittee moste of all other at this date'. Later in his work Thomas described the Italian customs in the following manner:

And generally (a few citees excepted) in maners and condicions they are no lesse agreable than in theyr speeche: so honourable, so courtesie, so prudente, and so graue withall, that it shoulde seeme eche one of them to haue had a princely bringing vp. To his superiour obedient, to his equall humble, and to his inferiour gentill and courtesie, amiable to a straunger, and desyrous with courtesie to winne his loue.<sup>1</sup>

There were two momentous consequences of this courtesy. First, 'a straunger can not be better entreteigned, nor more honourable entreated than amongst the Italians'. Secondly, the Italians were 'sobre of speeche', but also 'enemies of ill reporte, and so tendre ouer their owne good name (whiche they call theyr honour)' that 'who so euer speaketh ill of one of them, shall die for it, if the partie sklaundered maie know it, and finde tyme and place to do it'. The Italians' disposition to private revenges had been responsible for the fact 'that few gentilmen goe abroade vnarmed'.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, 'if one gentilman', Thomas wrote, 'happen to defame another, many tymes the defamed maketh his defiaunce by a writte called *Cartello*, and openly chalengeth the defamer to fight in campe: so that there are seen sometyme woorthy trialles betwene them'.<sup>3</sup> Was this habit of duelling reprehensible? Of course, Thomas admitted, there

<sup>1</sup> William Thomas, *The historie of Italie* (London, 1549), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>, fos. 3<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>. For a short account of Thomas and his debt to Renaissance Italy see Donaldson 1988, pp. 40-4. Donaldson does not discuss *The historie of Italie*. For a later view see Richard Lassels, *The voyage of Italy, or a compleat journey through Italy. In two parts* (Paris, 1670), pp. 10-14.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, *The historie of Italie*, fo. 4<sup>r</sup>.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

were some who ‘doe discommende them’, but, he argued, ‘mine opinion dooeth rather allow than blame them’. The benefits of duelling were obvious. As Thomas put it, ‘the scare of suche daungers maketh men so ware of theyr tounge, that a man maie goe xx yeres through Italie without findyng reproche or vilanie, vnlesse he prouoke it hym selfe’.<sup>4</sup>

At the time when Thomas wrote this remarkable passage its message seemed rather foreign to the English and few, if any, paid close attention to it. Yet, a few decades later its impact might have been completely different. In this passage Thomas put forward several views which would become central to the entire duelling tradition. First, duelling was described as a relatively new phenomenon. Second, Thomas argued that unfailing courtesy and a penchant for duelling went hand in hand. Third, not only was duelling perceived as an integral part of courtesy, but it was even said to enhance the general level of civility within gentlemanly society. Moreover, both the exceptionally high level of politeness and the concomitant aptitude for duelling were seen as a peculiarly Italian phenomenon. Although modern commentators of civility have mostly ignored Thomas, none of his points were lost on the subsequent generations of Englishmen. Finally, it was perhaps only natural that Thomas, a great admirer of Italy, found duelling a highly commendable social custom.

The duel of honour and its theory came to England as part of the Italian Renaissance notion of the gentleman and courtier. The duel of honour, in other words, emerged as an integral part of the Italian Renaissance theory of courtesy. There had of course been a long medieval tradition of courtesy books and also a distinctively Christian tradition of civility whose origins are to be found in monastic and clerical rules of conduct. This Christian tradition of civility or discipline was embraced by both the Catholics and the Protestants alike but was especially strong amongst the latter who promoted it as a religious and moral ideal.<sup>5</sup> The most famous and influential work in this tradition was Erasmus’ *De civilitate morum puerilium*, first published in 1530 and translated into English as early as 1532. Yet during the latter part of the sixteenth century there was in England a sudden rise of Italian courtesy manuals and guides which were chiefly meant for aristocratic and gentlemanly consumption.<sup>6</sup> The first and by far the most popular and influential of these treatises was

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. See also Fynes Moryson, *An itinerary* (London, 1617), pt III, pp. 25–6.

<sup>5</sup> Knox 1995, Knox 1991.

<sup>6</sup> For a general survey of courtesy and civility in early modern England see now Anna Bryson 1998; Anna Bryson 1990; Curtin 1985. For the centrality of civility for women see Mendelson 2000. For earlier scholarship see Kelso 1929; Ustick 1932; Mason 1935.

of course Thomas Hoby's translation of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528) under the title *The book of the courtier*, first published as early as in 1561 and reprinted in English in 1577, 1588 as well as 1603 and issued in Latin six times between 1571 and 1612.<sup>7</sup> Although Castiglione only mentioned duelling in passing, this time the message was not lost on the English. Thirty years later one English writer pointed out that if one wanted to know more about duelling and the concomitant notion of honour, one could do worse than peruse Castiglione's book. 'The Earle Balthazar Castilio in his booke of the Courtier', the Englishman wrote, 'doth among other qualities requireable in a gentleman, specially aduise he should bee skillfull in the knowing of Honor, and causes of quarrell.'<sup>8</sup>

Other works which offered a strikingly similar account of the gentlemanly and courtly code of conduct and which examined the duel of honour included Philibert de Vienne's satirical *The philosopher of the court*, a French work first published in Lyon in 1547, Englished by George North and published in 1575; Giovanni Della Casa's *Il Galateo*, first published in 1558 and translated into English by Robert Peterson in 1576 with the revealing title *Galateo. Or rather, a treatise of the manners and behauours, it behoueth a man to vse and eschewe, in his familiar conuersation*; and Stefano Guazzo's *La civil conversatione* (1574), the first three books translated from French into English in 1581 by George Pettie and the fourth from Italian by Bartholomew Young in 1586.

It could be objected that treating all these works together is to ignore their differences, to distort their arguments and thus to offer a historically misleading analysis of their intentions. It is of course true, for instance, that Philibert's *The philosopher of the court*, far from being a courtesy book, was in fact a scathing satire upon them. But as such it offered a complete if cynical account of civil courtesy. More importantly, there is some evidence that the English translation (and the English audience at large) missed the satirical nature of the treatise. In England *The philosopher of the court* was both intended and read as a serious courtesy book.<sup>9</sup> Philibert readily embraced the view that the highest level of courtesy could be found in Italy, advising the reader to 'marke the Italian his Ciuiltie and courtesie'. Although the ancient Romans had spread 'certayne countenances and gestures' amongst diverse countries, the Italians had perfected courtesy. They never appear 'rashe or heady';

<sup>7</sup> For the importance of Castiglione in Elizabethan England see Waddington 1993, pp. 104–6.

<sup>8</sup> [Anon.], *The booke of honor and armes* (London, 1590), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>, see also p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> Javitch 1971 a. Gabriel Harvey listed it amongst the other courtesy books, see below note 18. For a more doubtful view see Anna Bryson 1998, p. 202.

‘they blush or bask at nothing’, nor ‘chaunge countenance’ but always ‘make a good apparance’. Indeed, ‘they are borne and bredde in their cuntry Courtiers’.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, it is true that there were several differences between Castiglione and Guazzo. Whereas Castiglione’s book had an exclusively courtly context, Guazzo emphasised civic duty and was critical of this courtly context, so much so that his art of conduct has been said to have become ‘potentially incompatible with the dissimulation, insincerity, the theatrical display, the cultural dilettantism, and the outward ornamentation that life at court seemed to require and that court critics found so objectionable even in Castiglione’.<sup>11</sup> But there seems to be little doubt, as Aldo Scaglione has noted, that ‘whilst Guazzo was trying to transcend the narrow boundaries of the court, his views of good behaviour remained conditioned by the court’.<sup>12</sup> The whole notion of civil conversation originated in a courtly context.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Castiglione and Guazzo were often read together, as is attested by Gabriel Harvey’s grouping them together in his list of fashionable courtesy books. Indeed he described Guazzo as a work on ‘curteous behaviour’.<sup>14</sup> It comes as no surprise therefore that Guazzo’s account of civil conversation is strikingly similar to Castiglione and Della Casa. His treatise can be linked to the attempt to extend the courtly standards to gentlemanly society at large.<sup>15</sup>

An important continuation of this tradition is Annibale Romei’s extensive dialogue *The courtiers academie* originally published in 1585 and translated into English by the poet John Keper and published in 1598. Although it did not expound on the concept of civil courtesy or civil conversation, it had many close similarities with courtesy books in general and Castiglione in particular. *The courtiers academie* consists of seven dialogues where beauty, love, honour, combat, nobility, riches and the precedence of arms and letters are debated. Like Castiglione and Guazzo, Romei used the dialogue form of courtly discourse where

<sup>10</sup> Philibert de Vienne, *The philosopher of the court*, transl. George North (London, 1575), pp. 110–12.

<sup>11</sup> Javitch 1971 b; Javitch 1978, p. 131; Scaglione 1991, pp. 259–61, quotation from p. 260. Javitch’s argument was directed against Lievsay 1961, pp. 34–46, where Castiglione and Guazzo were juxtaposed much more strongly.

<sup>12</sup> Scaglione 1991, p. 261. See also Chartier 1987, p. 80, who contrasts Castiglione, Della Casa and Guazzo with Erasmus.

<sup>13</sup> Fumaroli 1983, pp. 260–1.

<sup>14</sup> Gabriel Harvey, *The letter-book of Gabriel Harvey, AD 1573–1580*, ed. E. J. L. Scott. Camden Society, 2nd ser., 23 (1884), pp. 78–9. Peter Burke has recently followed suit, Burke 1993, pp. 99–102.

<sup>15</sup> For the connection between ‘curtesie’ and the gentleman see Stephano Guazzo, *The civile conversation*, transl. George Pettie and Barth. Young (London, 1586), fo. 90<sup>r</sup>.



the discussion remained open-ended and inconclusive.<sup>16</sup> Keperes related his translation to the courtesy-book tradition, noting that the work was ‘grounded on the firme foundations of Aristotelian, and Platonical discipline, and yet accompanied with a liuely touch and feeling of these times’. It was therefore ‘woorthie to be offered to the view and censure, of noble and courteous constructions’.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from Philibert, who commended Italian civility, all these treatises were Italian in origin. But the thoroughness with which this code of courtly conduct was perceived as an import from Italy is most graphically attested by the fact the only comprehensive English imitation of these Italian courtesy treatises was camouflaged as an Italian treatise. This was Simon Robson’s (a fellow of St John’s, Cambridge at the time) *The court of ciuill courtesie* first published in 1578. The invented author of Robson’s short tract was ‘Bengalasso del Mont. Prisacchi Retta’. The trick obviously worked efficiently for it seems to have misled Gabriel Harvey who wrote: ‘And nowe of late forsoothe to helpe countenance owte the matter they have gotten Philbertes Philosopher of the Courte, the Italian Archebyshoppies brave Galatro [Galateo], Castiglioes fine Cortegiano, Bengalassoes Civil Instructions to his Nephewe Seignor Princisca Ganzar: Guatzoes newe Discourses of curteous behaviour, Jouios and Rassellis Emblemes in Italian . . .’<sup>18</sup> Robson’s book obviously sold fairly well, for it was reprinted with minor variations in 1582 and 1591.

One of the overriding themes in these Renaissance courtesy treatises was to explain how the perfect courtier and gentleman should conduct his manners and behaviour so that he won a favourable response from other courtiers and gentlemen. A successful pursuit of this end demanded two kinds of behaviour. On the one hand, the courtier had to master a technique of self-representation – to offer as good a picture of himself as possible. On the other hand, he had to take his fellow courtiers and gentlemen into account and to accommodate his outward behaviour accordingly.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Bates 1991; Bates 1992; Burke 1995, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Annibale Romei, *The courtiers academie*, translated J[ohn] K[epers] (n.p. [London], n.d. [1598]), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>. For Romei see Quint 1997, pp. 245–52; Gundesheimer 1989. John Florio’s two treatises called *Florio his firste fruites* (London, 1578) and *Florios second fruites* (London, 1591), containing dialogues of ‘ciuill, familiar, and pleasant’ topics, provided material and guidance for Italianate civil conversations.

<sup>18</sup> Harvey, *The letter-book*, pp. 78–9. This letter is normally dated between 1575 and 1580, but the inclusion of Robson’s tract narrows the first date to 1578. Robson’s tract states that it was printed ‘primo Ianuarij 1577’, in 1578 that is to say. Both Whigham 1984, p. 26, and Javitch 1971 a, p. 113, seem to take Robson rather as a piece of ‘an avant-garde continental literature’ than as an English adaptation of it; see Javitch 1971 a, p. 123, and n25.

<sup>19</sup> Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 107–11, 121–2.

To describe the courtier's behaviour, Castiglione borrowed the term 'grace' from the literary or artistic context.<sup>20</sup> First, it was crucial that the courtier did not conceal his talents, 'so that every possible thing may be easye to him, and all men wonder at him, and he at no manne'.<sup>21</sup> Second, it was equally crucial to *seem* in awe of other men's achievements: the courtier must 'with gentleness and courtesie praise other mens good dedes'.<sup>22</sup> The aim was in brief 'to purchase . . . the general favour of great men, Gentlemen and Ladies'.<sup>23</sup> Primary stress was, in other words, placed upon appearances.<sup>24</sup> In order to meet these standards, it was important for a courtier to exhibit 'a gentle and lovyng behaviour in his daily conversation'.<sup>25</sup> But Castiglione also claimed that 'it is a hard matter to geve anye maner rule' how to behave in these social situations, because of 'the infinit and sundry matters that happen' in them. It was therefore safest to rely on one's instincts and 'be pliable to be conversant with' as many as possible.<sup>26</sup>

Philibert's satire gives a somewhat more cynical, yet an essentially similar account of courtesy. Employing Castiglione's vocabulary, the treatise offered an analysis of 'howe to liue according to the good grace and fashion of the Court'. This consisted, by and large, 'in certayne small humanities and chiefly in outward appearances'. In order to describe it more carefully, Philibert called it, after Cicero, 'this *Decorum generale*, generall comeliness'.<sup>27</sup> Ostensibly following the first book of Cicero's *De officiis*, Philibert claimed that the means to achieve this 'comeliness' was to embrace the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, magnanimity and temperance. These virtues were, however, clearly subordinated to the courtier's main characteristics – decorum or 'good Grace'. Moreover, virtue itself was nothing but to act in compliance with the life of the court; indeed 'vertue is a manner of lyuing according to the manner of the Courte'.<sup>28</sup>

Philibert emphasised even more strongly than Castiglione that the aim was 'the contentmente and pleasure of men'.<sup>29</sup> This becomes apparent in the discussion of 'good Grace', or 'courtly ciuilitie'. Although Philibert stressed the Ciceronian combination of honesty and *decorum*, he focused his attention exclusively on the latter concept, which was defined as 'a certayne framing and agreeing in all our actions, to the pleasing of the

<sup>20</sup> Burke 1995, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Baldassare Castiglione, *The book of the courtier*, transl. Thomas Hoby (1561), ed. Virginia Cox (London, 1994), pp. 145, 146, 148–9, 109.

<sup>22</sup> Castiglione, *The courtier*, p. 146. <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119. <sup>24</sup> Anglo 1977, pp. 41–2.

<sup>25</sup> Castiglione, *The courtier*, p. 119. <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>27</sup> Philibert, *The philosopher*, pp. 13–15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17; Javitch 1971a, pp. 99–100. <sup>29</sup> Philibert, *The philosopher*, p. 24.

worlde'. He asserted that 'the perfite glorie of our Philosophie' is nothing more than to 'be pleasing to all men'.<sup>30</sup> It followed that the philosopher of the court must be 'ready to doe whatsoever it be' to please all men: 'For if it be needefull to laughe, hee reiocyeth: If to be sad, he lowreth: If to be angry, he pyneth: If to feede, he eateth: If to faste, he frowneth.'<sup>31</sup>

The gentleman and courtier's courteous behaviour mostly preoccupied Giovanni Della Casa in the *Galateo*. In his dedication to the earl of Leicester, Robert Peterson, the translator, observed that 'Courtesie and Courtiership' were inseparable; 'who so diuorceth them, destroieth them'.<sup>32</sup> The central topic of the book, Della Casa informed his readers, was 'what manner of Countenance and grace, behoueth a man to vse, that hee may be able in Communication and familiar acquaintance with men, to shewe him selfe plesant, courteous, and gentle'. The answer he gave was to the effect that, although virtues might be necessary, they were rarely of great use. It was therefore the gentleman's 'courteous behaiour and entertaynement with good manners and wordes' that assumed the most central part in conveying his courtesy and pleasantness.<sup>33</sup>

Simon Robson's *The courte of ciuill courtesie* is a somewhat crude, indigenuous adaptation of these themes. As the title proclaimed and as Robson explained in the subtitle, the book is concerned with the courtier's and gentleman's courtesy: 'Fitly furnished with a pleasant porte of stately phrases and pithie precepts: assembled in the behalfe of all younge Gentlemen, and others, that are desirous to frame their behaiour according to their estates, at all times, and in all companies. Therby to purchase worthy prayse of their inferiours: and estimation and credit amonge theyr betters.' Dedicating the tract 'to the flourishinge Youthes, and Courteous younge Gentlemen of England, and to all others that are desirous, and louers of Ciuile Courtesie', Richard Jones, the publisher, stated his willingness to broaden the scope of the book beyond gentlemen.<sup>34</sup> But in practise the tract was meant for gentlemen, its theme, 'ciuell Curtesie', was said to be 'most incident' to all young gentlemen. In the dedication, ostensibly by the Italian author, 'Bengalasso del Mont. Priscacchi Retta', to his nephew 'Seig. Princisca Ganzar Moretta', the book was recommended on the grounds that the nephew resided in the court: the book 'shal bee as it were a guide, to leade you from a number

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 95, 98, 108, in general pp. 108–10.      <sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>32</sup> Giovanni Della Casa, *Galateo of Maister Iohn Della Casa. Or rather, a treatise of the manners and behauiours, it behoueth a man to vse and escheue, in his familiar conuersation*, transl. Robert Peterson (London, 1576), sig. Aii<sup>r</sup>–v.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 2, 3–4.      <sup>34</sup> S[imon] R[obson], *The courte of ciuill courtesie* (London 1577), sig. Aii<sup>v</sup>.

of snares which you may bee trapt withall, also for your behaiour in all companyes'.<sup>35</sup>

When Castiglione mentioned 'daily conversation' he referred to social intercourse in court society in general, but speech assumed a pride of place in it. Instructions in writing were important, but it was agreed in the dialogue that the courtier 'hath more neede of' speaking, because 'he serveth his tourne oftner with speakyng then with wrytinge'.<sup>36</sup> Oral culture was thus of crucial importance in civil courtesy – in the presentation of self.<sup>37</sup>

If Renaissance rhetoricians derived their accounts of their art to a large extent from Cicero, he also provided some guidance to those who delineated the rules of conversation.<sup>38</sup> Cicero had of course been aware of the crucial differences between rhetoric and conversation – or 'vehement speake' and 'comon talk', as Nicholas Grimalde rendered them in English in 1556. According to Cicero, rhetoric had been employed in 'pleadings in iudgementes, orations in assemblies, and debating in the Senate-house', conversation 'in companies, in disputations, in meetings of familiers' as well as 'at feastings'. Laying down the basic rules of conversation, Cicero had emphasised that it should be 'gentle' [*levis*] and not 'obstinate' [*pertinax*]. As Grimalde translated it, 'let ther be therin a pleasantnesse'. It was important that one's 'talke bewraye not some vice in his manners'. Most importantly, the requirement of pleasure demanded that 'we muste haue regard: that those with whom we kepe talke, we seeme bothe to reuerence, and to loue'. Even 'with our vtterest enemies' we must 'keepe yet grauitie, and to suppressse the angry moode'.<sup>39</sup>

It was this short account which the Renaissance authors followed. According to Castiglione, in order to please his interlocutors the courtier had to 'frame himselfe' and his topics according to those with whom he happened to converse.<sup>40</sup> He must in short never 'wante good communycatyon and fytt for them he talketh wythall, and have a good understandynge with a certein sweetnesse to refresh the hearers mindes, and

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs. Aii<sup>v</sup>, Aiii<sup>f</sup>.      <sup>36</sup> Castiglione, *The courtier*, p. 61.

<sup>37</sup> Burke 1987, pp. 80–1. Civil conversation was not confined to a gentlemanly context, see Ingram 2000, p. 93.

<sup>38</sup> Fumaroli 1983 has also argued that Ciceronian style was exceptionally fitting for the court. In contrasting civil conversation, or courtly rhetoric, as he calls it, with humanist rhetoric, represented by the Ciceronian tradition, Javitch does not pay attention to the extent to which in fact civil conversation was also conditioned by Cicero's authority; see Javitch 1978, ch. 1. Similarly, in her account of civil conversation, Bryson conflates it with rhetoric and thus overlooks their differences, Anna Bryson 1998, ch. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The bookes of duties to Marcus his sonne*, transl. Nicholas Grimalde (1556) (London, 1558), fos. 58<sup>r</sup>–60<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Castiglione, *The courtier*, pp. 110, 136.

with meerie conceites and Jestes to provoke them to solace and laughter, so that without beinge at any time lothesome or satiate he may evermore delite'.<sup>41</sup> Although conversation did not occupy as central a role in Philibert's account as it did in Castiglione's, he nevertheless pointed out that it was important 'to have some pretie sprinckled iudgement in the common places and practices of all liberall sciences' in order to avail oneself of them in conversations.<sup>42</sup> Good manners and grace, beauty and attire were important, but speech and words were by far the most crucial in shaping a gentleman's courteous image. 'You must', Della Casa advised, 'accustome your selfe, to vse suche gentle and courtious speache to men, and so sweete, that it may haue no manner of bitter taste.'<sup>43</sup>

In Robson's analysis speech and discussion assumed even a more central place than in his Italian models. The two longer chapters at the beginning of the tract concerned the gentleman's behaviour 'in all Companies' and 'in bad company' respectively, but the only question raised was the role of conversation in various situations. Of the nine other chapters only one concerned table manners, eight offering detailed instructions as to polite verbal response to various situations.

The fullest analysis of the centrality of conversation in civil courtesy is to be found in Guazzo's lengthy *The ciuile conuersation*. According to Guazzo, civil conversation was of great importance, it had a central place in gentlemanly courtesy, in conveying our politeness. It referred to both 'our tongue, and . . . our behaiour'.<sup>44</sup> The term 'civil conversation' thus referred both to civilised social intercourse and to the usage of language as a civilised and civilising means.<sup>45</sup> There was nothing surprising in Guazzo's insistence that the main aim of conducting a civil conversation was to please one's interlocutors. He emphasised several times that the end was to be 'better thought of', to win 'the loue & good will' of our peers. It was useless 'to be honoured for some office . . . or for vertue' if a man purchased 'not also the friendship and good will of other, which is the right and sure bond of conuersation'.<sup>46</sup> It was thus only civil conversation which could bring about the desired effect. Guazzo was never tired of arguing that 'we win chieffie the friendship and good will of other, by the manner of our speech, and by the qualitie of conditions'; that a man 'shall get the goodwill and fauours of others, as well by giuing care curteouslie, as by speaking pleasantlie'; that 'we are so much the more esteemed of,

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 149–50.      <sup>42</sup> Philibert, *The philosopher*, p. 30.      <sup>43</sup> Della Casa, *Galateo*, p. 84.

<sup>44</sup> Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fo. 54<sup>r</sup>; Ingram 2000, p. 91.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Scaglione 1991, p. 258; Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 154, 55–6; Shapin 1994, pp. 114–15; Burke 1993, p. 95.

<sup>46</sup> Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fos. 54<sup>r</sup>, 72<sup>v</sup>.

by how much our Ciuilitie differeth from the nature and fashions of the vulgar sort; or that 'gentle and curteous speech, is the Adamant stone which draweth vnto it the hearts and good wills of all men'.<sup>47</sup> But the converse was no less true. 'I first admonish him', Guazzo noted, 'which taketh pleasure in ciuile Conuersation, to eschue all things which make the talke lesse delightfull to the hearers.'<sup>48</sup>

Although Robson's tract was the only comprehensive English imitation of the Italian courtesy treatises during the latter part of the sixteenth century, these treatises very soon left their mark on numerous other English works as well. Guazzo's notion of civil conversation was quickly well established.<sup>49</sup> George Whetstone's *An heptameron of ciuill discourses*, set in Ravenna and published in 1582, contains dialogues on marriage, but 'intercoursed with other Morall conclusions of necessarie regarde'. The preface informed the reader that the dialogue dealt with 'ciuill intertainment' governed by 'Garland' and 'Courtisie'; 'and by well regarding their speeches, thou shalt finde a discreete methode of talke, meete for a Gentleman'.<sup>50</sup> The discussions or 'ciuill discourses' that followed were sometimes called 'ciuill courtesie', and amongst the books recommended for 'Gouernment, and Ciuil behaiours' was 'the Courtier of Count Baldazar Castillio'.<sup>51</sup> Thomas Twynne's *The schoolemaster, or teacher at table philosophie*, published in 1576, explained amongst other things 'the maners, behaiour and vsedge, of all sutch with whom wee may happen to bee conuersant'.<sup>52</sup> Robert Ashley wrote in the 1590s that 'yt ys the part of civile courtesie and modest humanitie to speake gently to all'.<sup>53</sup> William Perkins applied these notions into a religious context in his *A direction for the government of the tongue according to Gods word* in 1593,<sup>54</sup> whilst Churchyard opened his essay 'A discourse of true manhoode' in his collection *Chvrchyards challenge*, published in 1593, by emphasising that it was 'curtesie, sweete, conuersation, freindle gentlenes, humane manners and ciuile humblnes' which should dominate 'our common societie'.<sup>55</sup> Thomas Wright asserted in his treatise on passions that 'the civil Gentleman' should render 'his conversation most grateful to men', and

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 54<sup>r</sup>, 54<sup>v</sup>, 56<sup>r</sup>, 73<sup>r</sup>.      <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 60<sup>v</sup>.      <sup>49</sup> See in general Lievsay 1961.

<sup>50</sup> George Whetstone, *An heptameron of ciuill discourses* (London, 1582), sig. Aiv<sup>r</sup>. For Whetstone see Einstein 1902, p. 86; Heal 1990, p. 104.

<sup>51</sup> Whetstone, *An heptameron*, sigs. Riv<sup>r</sup>, Si<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Twynne, *The schoolemaster, or teacher at table philosophie* (London, 1576), sig. Aiv<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Ashley, *Of honour*, ed. Virgil B. Heltzel (San Marino, 1947), p. 69.

<sup>54</sup> William Perkins, *A direction for the government of the tongue according to Gods word* (Cambridge, 1593), see especially, pp. 12–13, 30–40, 40–52.

<sup>55</sup> Churchyard, *Chvrchyards challenge*, p. 59.

pointed out that ‘much more might be handled in this point, but because it rather concerneth civil conversation then investigation of passion I will omit it’.<sup>56</sup>

By the early seventeenth century the themes of courtesy and civil conversation occupy a central place in James Cleland’s *Hero-paideia, or the institution of a young noble man* (1607), whose fifth book contained an exposition of the nobleman’s ‘Ciuill Conuersation’. It examined his behaviour in general and ‘at Court’ in particular: his reverence making and how he should speak. Although Cleland did not have exclusively a courtly audience in mind, he extolled court society, claiming that it was by far the best academy for young nobles. It was much better, he wrote, to stay in the English court than to ‘run ouer al France and Italic, in a year’.<sup>57</sup> In discussing ‘common behaviour towards all sorts of men’, Cleland exhorted ‘a man to accommodate himselfe and to frame his manners apt and meete for al honest companie, and societie of men’. It was highly misleading to think that noblemen were ‘not tyed to anie reciprocal courtesie’. Of course, there were many empty courtesies, which were ‘the wisdome of the world to the hurt of conscience’. These were ‘the Courtiers miseries, who are Idolaters of Ceremonie’. Despite his critical attitude, Cleland emphasised that it was necessary to follow these courtesies and ceremonies. ‘You must’, Cleland advised the young nobleman, ‘conforme your selues somewhat vnto the world, and that which is commonlie vsed.’<sup>58</sup>

Again, however, themes of civil courtesy and conversation were not confined to any technical manual, but were much more widespread. In his numerous tracts Daniel Tuuil both employed the term ‘civil conversation’ and followed Guazzo’s lead in his actual definition as well. ‘Our carriage’, he maintained, must ‘be pleasing and acceptable to all men’.<sup>59</sup> ‘When wee would be professed Gentleman’, Thomas Gainsford argued in 1616, we ‘should be masters of true ciuilitie, good manners and curtesie’. Speech, he went on, had a central place in gentlemanly society, for ‘a perfect Gentleman is to bee measured in his words’.<sup>60</sup> In

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Wright, *The passions of the mind in general* (1601), ed. William Webster Newbold, *The Renaissance Imagination*, 15 (New York, 1986), pp. 92, 189.

<sup>57</sup> James Cleland, *Hero-paideia, or the institution of a young noble man* (Oxford, 1607), pp. 35–6.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168–76.

<sup>59</sup> D[aniel] T[uiuil], *Essayes, morall and theologicall* (London, 1609), p. 38, in general pp. 35–60; D[aniel] T[uiuil], *Vade mecum: a manuall of essayes, morall, theologicall* (London, 1629), pp. 37–62; see also D[aniel] T[uiuil], *The dove and the serpent* (London, 1614), especially pp. 16–22. See in general Lievsay 1961.

<sup>60</sup> [Thomas Gainsford], *The rich cabinet furnished with varietie of excellent discriptions* (London, 1616), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>, fo. 51<sup>v</sup>.

1618 Nicholas Breton wrote that the court was full of ‘sweete Creatures and ciuill Behaiour’,<sup>61</sup> and by the early 1630s it could be asserted that the ‘new Art of words, called Complements: which is indeed nothing but an affable and courteous manner of speach’, had become ‘so necessary, that nothing can be done without them’.<sup>62</sup>

By the early seventeenth century civil courtesy and conversation were no longer perceived as predominantly Italian but more and more as French. Of course, it was possible to see the Italian gentleman as the most courteous, as in John Cooke’s *Greenes to quoque* (1614), where ‘the finest Gentleman’ was not only ‘smooth and loftie’ but ‘Italian’ as well.<sup>63</sup> But in John Barclay’s *Icon animorum* (also published in 1614) the most ‘elegant and graceful’ gentleman, who was therefore also inclined to fight duels, was said to be French.<sup>64</sup> Ralph Knevet argued in 1628 that the English imitated the French so much in dress, gesture, language and fencing that only a few could ‘Know Monsieur, from an English Gentleman.’<sup>65</sup> Unsurprisingly, some of the most important courtesy guides of the early seventeenth century were translated from French, although they carefully followed the Italian models of the sixteenth century.<sup>66</sup>

At the outset of *A treatise of the court*, published in English in 1622, Eustache Du Refuge expounded ‘ciuilitie’, emphasising that it consisted of two points: ‘a decency or gracefulness’ and ‘a pleasing *Affabilitie*’. The overall aim of civility was to conform with those with whom we socialised, and thereby to please them as well. The courtier must both ‘accommodate and fit’ himself to his interlocutor’s ‘inclination’ and make himself ‘agreeable and pleasing to him’. His speech and countenance must be ‘*Modest* and still followe that which is generally applauded of those, with whom we converse’. Although affability consisted of ‘many points’, all of them could be reduced to a single rule: ‘by exterior demonstration of affection’ and by ‘many alluring gestures and compliments’ assure men ‘of our *Courtesie* and good will’. Just like the sixteenth-century Italian courtesy writers, so Du Refuge considered speech as central in courtesy and its rules were therefore of special importance in

<sup>61</sup> Nicholas Breton, *The court and country, or a briefe discourse betweene the courtier and country-man: of the manner, nature, and condition of their liues* (London, 1618), sig. A4<sup>r-v</sup>. See also William Cecil, *Precepts, or, directions for the well ordering and carriage of a mans life* (London, 1637), p. 35.

<sup>62</sup> [Anon.], *Cupids schoole: wherein yongmen and maids may learne diuer sorts of new, witty, and amorous complements* (London, 1632), sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> John Cooke, *Greenes to quoque, or the cittie gallant* (London, 1614), sigs. I4<sup>r</sup>, K1<sup>r-v</sup>. See also e.g. Daniel Tuuil, *Christian purposes and resolutions* (London, 1622), p. 31.

<sup>64</sup> John Barclay, *The mirrow of mindes* [1614], transl. Thomas May (London, 1631), pp. 73, 88–90.

<sup>65</sup> Ralph Knevet, *Stratitikon. Or a discourse of militarie discipline* (n.p., 1628), sig. F2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> Anna Bryson 1998, p. 122.



conversation. The courtier must never interrupt, much less contradict his interlocutor.<sup>67</sup>

In *The honest man: or, the art to please in court*, originally published in 1630 and translated into English in 1632, Nicolas Faret also gave a prominent place to courteous behaviour in general and pleasant conversation in particular. The entire topic of his treatise was ‘the most necessary qualities . . . which hee ought to haue, that desires to make himselfe pleasing in Court’. By far the most necessary of these characteristics was said to be ‘to purchase a good opinion in the imagination of euery man’.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Lucas Gracian Dantisco’s Spanish adaptation of Della Casa’s *Galateo*, originally published in the 1590s and published in English in 1640 under the title *Galateo Espagnol, or, the Spanish gallant* dwelt on the same issues. The overall aim was to be ‘very acceptable, and pleasing to all’. Those who were ‘mild and affable’ were said to be ‘good Courtiers’, appearing ‘every bodies friend’ and ‘gaining much applause by their civil carriage’.<sup>69</sup>

The extent to which the idea of civil conversation had permeated the English intellectual landscape between the 1570s and the 1630s can be graphically attested by a comparison between Humphrey Gilbert’s plans for a gentlemanly academy in the early 1570s and those of Francis Kynaston for a similar academy in the mid 1630s. Both plans insisted on such gentlemanly skills as riding, fencing and dancing. But whereas Gilbert had had the politically active life of the gentleman in view and had emphasised skills in rhetoric, politics and moral philosophy, Kynaston ignored such civic aims and overlooked the concomitant values, stressing instead the values of courtesy and ‘civil conversation’.<sup>70</sup>

Civil courtesy and conversation made up a pleasing sociability whose purpose was to gain other people’s approval and respect. It meant courteous social intercourse in general, and although it addressed polite manners civilised conversation was thought to have a central place in it. Its aim was not argument but assent, to continue the even flow of social conversation.<sup>71</sup> ‘By courtesie and humanitie’, William Martyn wrote in

<sup>67</sup> Eustache Du Refuge, *A treatise of the court or instructions for courtiers*, transl. John Reynolds (London, 1622), I, pp. 6–19, 159–66. Anglo 1983, p. 13.

<sup>68</sup> Nicolas Faret, *The honest man: or, the art to please in court*, transl. Edward Grimestone (London, 1632), pp. 9, 231–50, see also pp. 197–231, 251–89, 292–4.

<sup>69</sup> Lucas Gracian Dantisco, *Galateo Espagnol, or, the Spanish gallant*, transl. William Style (London, 1640), sig. A6<sup>r</sup>, pp. 2–3, 39–42.

<sup>70</sup> Humphrey Gilbert, ‘Queene Elizabethes Achademy’, in *Early English Text Society*, extra series, no. 8 (1869), pp. 1–12; see also Peltonen 2002; [Francis Kynaston], *The constitutions of the Musaeum Minervae* (London, 1636), p. 1; see also Anna Bryson 1998, p. 57.

<sup>71</sup> Shapin 1994, pp. 81, 114–19; Whigham 1984, p. 44; Heal 1990, pp. 104–6.

the *Youths instruction*, 'all societies among men are maintained and preserved. . . society is nothing else but a mutual & a reciprocal exchange of gentleness, of kindness, of affability, of familiarity, and of courtesie among men'.<sup>72</sup>

The Christian tradition of courtesy had always emphasised the fact that the body was the outward reflection of the soul – 'this outward honesty of the body cometh of the soul well composed and ordered', as Erasmus had put it.<sup>73</sup> In the Renaissance notion of civil courtesy a much greater emphasis was placed on the exterior – decorum.<sup>74</sup> When James VI wrote to Robert Cecil in 1602 he assured him that his words 'proceed *ex abund[ant]ia cordis*, and not of any intention to pay you with Italian complementoes'.<sup>75</sup> In civil courtesy the content of the conversation could be negligible as long as *decorum* was maintained. Philibert excused his total concentration on good grace and outward behaviour by claiming that man's character is 'too bee knowne by the gesture and outwarde countenance of the bodye'. According to him, 'wee commonly iudge others by theyr outwarde signes'.<sup>76</sup> Civil conversation was by definition purely courteous and thus empty of propositional content. This point is brought out with particular adroitness by Philibert's satirical presentation of the courtesy theory. In his characterisation of the courtier, the worst mistake was precisely to forget this empty courtesy and to venture one's sincere opinion. Philibert could not, as he put it, 'forget the ignorance and brutishnesse of the people, who in feasts, banquettes, and assemblies, gouerne and order themselues, not according to the maner of the Court whiche is the best rule: but according to theyr particular pleasures and opinions'.<sup>77</sup>

It followed, as Cleland for instance argued, that there could be a considerable discrepancy between surface and reality in conduct or speech and that dissimulation was an integral part of civil conversation.<sup>78</sup> Honest dissimulation was thus justified because social life took precedence over inner life.<sup>79</sup> This is of course central to Castiglione, who pointed out that 'it is not ill for a man that knoweth himselfe skilfull in a matter,

<sup>72</sup> William Martyn, *Youths instruction* (London, 1612), p. 80. Thus the idea that civility was constitutive of social life or society was hardly an Enlightenment invention as Gordon 1994, p. 67, has claimed.

<sup>73</sup> Cited in Ingram 2000, p. 93; see also Knox 1995, pp. 19–28; Chartier 1987, p. 79.

<sup>74</sup> See in general Anglo 1977, p. 41; Anglo 1983. Martin 1997, pp. 1314, 1333 contains an interesting discussion of this issue.

<sup>75</sup> James VI and I, *Letters of King James VI & I*, ed. G. P. V. Akrigg (Berkeley, 1984), p. 199. Croft 1991, pp. 134–5.

<sup>76</sup> Philibert, *The philosopher*, pp. 104–5. <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102. See in general Wootton 1999, p. 191.

<sup>78</sup> Curtin 1985. <sup>79</sup> Revel 1989, p. 192; Villari 1987.

to seeke occasyon after a comelye sorte to showe hys feat therein, and in lykecase to cover the partes he thynketh scante woorthye praise, yet notwithstandinge all after a certeine warye dyssymulacion'.<sup>80</sup> Whereas for Erasmus and others courtesy was an outward sign of the soul, for Castiglione and his followers it was largely a means to repress outward indications of inner feelings.<sup>81</sup> As Philibert put it, 'dissimulation . . . we affirm to be of so great force in our Philosophie'.<sup>82</sup> And some English writers followed suit. According to George Puttenham, 'the credit . . . and profession of a very Courtier . . . is in plaine termes, cunningly to be able to dissemble'.<sup>83</sup> The courtier, Puttenham wrote, should be able to 'dissemble his conceits as well as his countenances, so as he neuer speake as he thinkes, or thinke as he speaks, and that in any matter of importance his words and his meaning very seldome meete'.<sup>84</sup> Du Refuge's *A treatise of the court* was even more openly advocating dissimulation and flattery. He opened his discussion by stating that in court affability often 'degenerates into flattery'. But he immediately pointed out that flattery was both profitable and necessary: 'notwithstanding it may not onely be profitable . . . but also necessary in many accedents as well towards our *Prince* as particular persons'.<sup>85</sup>

But Della Casa had already accepted flattery as a necessary component in courtesy in his discussion of ceremonies. He opened his discussion by claiming that ceremonies are almost like 'lyes & dreames'. They were 'but vaine shewes of honour and reuerence, towardes him to whome they be doone: framed of semblance and wordes touching their titles and courtious offers'. They were 'vaine' because, although 'we honour men to their face', we do not necessarily 'reuerence . . . in deede, but otherwise contemne'. Ceremonies, in other words, were such that the words involved had lost their actual meaning and had received a figurative one instead. These ceremonies, Della Casa asserted, 'though so fayre and gallant without' were 'altogether vaine within'; they consisted 'in semblance without effect, & in wordes without meaning'. No matter how empty the ceremonies were, it was misleading to assume that they were dispensable. First of all, they were faults of the times rather

<sup>80</sup> Castiglione, *The courtier*, p. 148, see also pp. 146, 127.

<sup>81</sup> Muir 1997, pp. 119–20. <sup>82</sup> Philibert, *The philosopher*, pp. 97–100, citation p. 97.

<sup>83</sup> George Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie* (1589), ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, 1936), p. 299; see in general Javitch 1971a, pp. 103–4; Javitch 1972, p. 881. See also e.g. Robert Greene, *Mamilia. The second part of the triumph of Pallas* (London, 1593), sig. D4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie*, p. 299.

<sup>85</sup> Du Refuge, *A treatise of the court*, I, p. 112; II, pp. 22–5. See also Lorenzo Ducci, *Ars avlica or the courtiers arte*, transl. [Edmund Blount] (London, 1607), pp. 154–71. See also Anglo 1983, pp. 11–12.

than of particular gentlemen, and gentlemen were thus bound to follow them. Moreover, ceremonies performed an important social task. Even a ceremony for profit (a flattery done 'to the ende wee should doe them some pleasure, for it') was 'by reason of custome sufferable', although Della Casa hastened to add that it was hurtful and thus unbecoming for a gentleman.

A ceremony for duty was a different matter altogether. It might fulfil the general definition of ceremony (being utterances where the words have lost their connotative meaning), but 'we must not leaue them vndone any wise. For he that faileth to doe them, dothe not onely displease, but doth a wrong to him, to whom they be due.'<sup>86</sup> From a perspective that emphasised manners rather than matter, identity was to be derived from external behaviour and social indelicacy was a most serious vice.<sup>87</sup>

Perhaps the fullest discussion of these themes is to be found in Guazzo's *Ciuile conuersation*. It is of course true that for Guazzo civil conversation could mean genuine sociability. Man was, he wrote, 'a compagnable creature' and 'loueth naturallie the conuersation of other men'.<sup>88</sup> In his well-known definition of civil conversation Guazzo wrote that 'ciuile Conuersation is an honest, commendable, and vertuous kinde of liuing in the world'.<sup>89</sup> In this sense civil conversation came close to a virtuous active life.<sup>90</sup> Sociability and the usefulness of civil conversation implied that in conversing with other people we should focus on what was said rather than how it was said. According to Guazzo, 'in money we doe not chiefly consider the fourme, and the stampe, but the weight, and the matter whereof it is made, so in speach wee ought not to looke so much to the grace and finnesse of it, as to the grauitie and goodnesse of it'.<sup>91</sup> But it also meant that men were supposed to express their thoughts and feelings. Civil conversation, according to this interpretation, entailed a close correlation between 'the inward affection of my heart' and 'outward signes & tokens of good will'.<sup>92</sup> 'He', Guazzo wrote, 'then that will behaue himselfe well in ciuile conuersation, must consider that the tongue is the mirrour & (as it were) the Image of his minde.' It followed that 'by the sound of words, we gather the inward qualities and conditions of the men'.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Della Casa, *Galateo*, pp. 40–8. See also Gracian, *Galateo Espagnol*, pp. 42–3; sigs. F2<sup>v</sup>–3<sup>r</sup>. For Gracian see Anglo 1983, pp. 13–14.

<sup>87</sup> Whigham 1983, pp. 625, 627–8; Whigham 1984, p. 45.

<sup>88</sup> Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fos. 4<sup>v</sup>, 12<sup>r</sup>, 74<sup>v</sup>. <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 22<sup>v</sup>, 74<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 10<sup>r-v</sup>, 9<sup>v</sup>, 16<sup>v</sup>–17<sup>r</sup>, 17<sup>v</sup>. See also Lievsay 1961, pp. 33–4.

<sup>91</sup> Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fo. 62<sup>v</sup>. <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 176<sup>v</sup>, 77<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 55<sup>v</sup>–56<sup>r</sup>. For a more general account of civil conversation as genuine sociability see Gordon 1994, especially pp. 67–85, 98, 113–15.

All this did not mean, however, that Guazzo failed to pay attention to the theatricality and superficiality of civil conversation. As we have seen, he emphasised again and again that the primary aim of civil conversation was to please one's interlocutors and that therefore one had to eschew everything which was 'lesse delightfull' for them. The term 'civil' referred to 'manners and conditions' rather than to one's moral character.<sup>94</sup> Given the fact that the end was to please other people and to gain their approval and esteem, it should be of no surprise that a gentleman was required above all to accommodate his 'manners and conditions' to other gentleman's manners. 'To be acceptable in companie', Guazzo insisted, 'we must put of as it were our owne fashions and manners, and cloath our selves with the conditions of others, and imitate them so farre as reason will permit.' Of course, in so far as 'honestie and vertue' were concerned, 'we ought to be alwayes one and the same'. But things were far otherwise with manners. As Guazzo put it, 'but touching the diversitie of the persons with whome we shall be conuersant, we must alter our selues into an other'.<sup>95</sup> Underlying this conviction was a more general principle that exterior was more important than interior – that 'we take more pleasure to seeme than to bee'.<sup>96</sup> Guazzo agreed with Castiglione that 'the dutie of a perfect Courtier . . . is to doe all things worth carefull diligence, & skilful art', but 'so that the art is hidden, and the whole seemeth to be done by chaunce, that he may thereby be had in more admiration'.<sup>97</sup>

Guazzo also concurred with Della Casa's analysis of the importance of ceremonies. Of course, it was possible to argue that many 'professe them selues mortall enemies to those ceremonies'. But on closer inspection this was not the case and even those who 'openly detest' ceremonies, in fact, 'secretly desire them'. The reason was not far to seek. 'Ceremonies', Guazzo maintained, 'displease no bodie', because 'they are doone in signe of honour, and there is not he, who is not glad with all his heart to be honoured'. The conclusion was obvious: 'these worldly ceremonies purchase vs the good will of our friends and superiours, to whome they are addressed and make vs knowne for ciuile people'.<sup>98</sup>

Civil conversation had thus more to do with outward manners and ceremonies than with moral virtues and duties. 'Anniball', the interlocutor who expressed Guazzo's points, told 'Guazzo', the other interlocutor, that he was not going 'to lay before you all those moral vertues which pertaine

<sup>94</sup> Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fos. 21<sup>v</sup>–22<sup>r</sup>, 53<sup>v</sup>–54<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 46<sup>v</sup>. See also Agnew 1986, p. 77; Posner 1999, p. 17.

<sup>96</sup> Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fo. 75<sup>r</sup>. <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 8<sup>r</sup>. <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 77<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>.

to the perfection & happie state of lyfe'. 'Why', 'Guazzo' retorted, 'deferre you to speake of a matter so profitable?' 'Anniball' replied that virtues were of no great significance in civil conversation because 'the most parte of men, is not onely destitute of intellectual and moral vertues, but besides, is neither in wit apt, nor in will desirous to receiue them'.<sup>99</sup>

Such an analysis led Guazzo to take flattery and dissimulation as essential parts of civil conversation. When 'Anniball' and 'Guazzo' discussed the respective merits of solitary and social life 'Guazzo', who argued for the solitary life, noted that 'if you be affable and curteous, you shall be called a flatterer'.<sup>100</sup> Later in their discussion they ventured into a long examination of flattery. 'Guazzo' now strongly argued for the importance of flattery, exclaiming that 'though all reprove flatterie in word, yet euerie one commendeth it in heart'. He tried to convince 'Anniball' that 'hee which knoweth not how to glose and flatter, knoweth not how to behaue himselfe in companie'.<sup>101</sup> 'Guazzo's' whole long defence of flattery was based on the close connection between flattery on the one hand and courtesy and civility on the other. All those who intended 'to auoide contention, and to bee acceptable in companie' used flattery by soothing 'one another, not onelie by speaking, but by holding their peace, and seeming to consent to other mennes saying'. This process was reciprocal. Those who made themselves acceptable to other gentleman were taken for friends and 'their flatterie' was seen as 'curtesie and good will'. 'Guazzo's' example was the way in which children were treated by fathers and schoolmasters who used 'greatlie to extoll' even young children's mediocre performances. The aim of civil conversation – pleasantness – thus entailed flattery; 'hee', 'Guazzo' told 'Anniball', 'which should take flatterie out of the worlde, should take awaie all humanitie and curtesie'.<sup>102</sup>

'Anniball' seemed to have some misgivings about such an outright commendation of flattery. Very soon, however, he was compelled to accept 'a good kinde of deceit',<sup>103</sup> and later he advocated thorough accomodation to one's interlocutors' manners and embraced an 'olde saying, *The heart altogether vnlike, and the face altogether like to the people*'.<sup>104</sup> Anyone who could not come round to this 'shall be driuen to curse Conuersation'. 'And it is lawfull likewise', he maintained, 'sometime to make as though

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., fos. 21<sup>v</sup>–22<sup>r</sup>, 52<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., fo. 13<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., fos. 32<sup>v</sup>, 33<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., fos. 33<sup>v</sup>–34<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., fos. 34<sup>v</sup>–36<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., fo. 46<sup>v</sup>.

we see not their faults, and that we haue a good opinion of them'.<sup>105</sup> But 'Anniball' had already earlier in the book advocated manifest flattery. When 'Guazzo' had enquired how he should behave himself with those who 'by their dissembling hypocrisie' were 'accounted of euerie man for honest men', 'Anniball' acknowledged that his answer could 'trouble your conscience' but, he concluded 'we ought to satisfie rather others than our selues, and to giue place to the common custome'.<sup>106</sup>

#### HONOUR

The great emphasis placed on civil courtesy and conversation raises the obvious question about its role in genteel society. Why was it deemed so essential to demonstrate meticulously courtesies and civilities and so to conduct a civil conversation that even the least breach of them was thought to cause a serious offence? The key to this lies in Simon Robson's claim that to master civil courtesy would enable the young gentleman 'to purchase worthy prayse of their inferiours: and estimation and credit amonge theyr betters'.<sup>107</sup> Civil courtesy and conversation were, in other words, a way both to win and to confer honour and reputation. But what kind of a notion of honour were courtesy and civil conversation based on?

There can be said to be two different kinds of honour: vertical and horizontal honour.<sup>108</sup> Vertical honour can be defined as a right to special respect due to one's superiority. As this definition implies, vertical honour can be increased, and it is therefore also called positive honour. It can be contrasted with horizontal honour, which can be defined as a right to respect due to an equal. Horizontal honour thus presupposes an honour group which follows the same code of conduct and honour. An interesting thing about horizontal honour is the fact that while it could be preserved, lost or diminished, and even perhaps restored (although this was a moot point), it could never be increased. It has, therefore, been referred to as negative honour.

There is little doubt that, although the vertical notion of honour was reiterated in the Renaissance, it was above all the horizontal notion of honour or reputation which was inherent in the theory of civil courtesy and conversation. A gentleman's honour was taken to be his reputation amongst his peer group. It was his exterior or appearance, above all

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., fos. 46<sup>v</sup>-47<sup>r</sup>. <sup>106</sup> Ibid., fo. 25<sup>r</sup>. See in general Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 54-6.

<sup>107</sup> R[obson], *The court of ciuill courtesie*, title-page.

<sup>108</sup> See the outstanding analysis in Stewart 1994, especially pp. 54-71.

how other gentlemen regarded him. Polite behaviour was thus a means to show one's honour and respect to another gentleman.<sup>109</sup> This train of thought was already clear in William Thomas's analysis of Italian courtesy, where he strongly emphasised the close link between extreme courtesy and great reputation.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, Castiglione insisted that 'gentleness and courtesie' were essential for a courtier in praising 'other mens good dedes'.<sup>111</sup>

In Guazzo's analysis of honour and reputation, a special emphasis was placed on this idea of horizontal honour. Virtues could be important but they were useless in the pursuit of honour and reputation, if one 'purchase not also the friendship and good will of other, which is the right and sure bond of conversation'. One's reputation thus crucially hinged on other people's opinion.<sup>112</sup> Guazzo included amongst good men all those who were 'wel reported and reputed of in the worlde'. Conversely, they were bad 'who for their apparent faults are pointed at with the finger and holden for infamous'.<sup>113</sup> 'Our name', he announced, 'dependeth of the general opinions, which haue such force, that reason is of no force against them.' But in such a case there were always those who could dissemble and thus to appear honest. As Guazzo posed the question, 'howe shall I behaue my self with some, whom I knowe farre more wicked than those whome you haue spoken of, albeit by their dissembling hypocrisie, they are accounted of euerie men for honest men?' He admitted that this was a real problem but insisted even more strongly that we have to accept that if someone through his cunning dissimulation earned a good reputation, he was then to all intents and purposes a good and honourable man.<sup>114</sup>

How were men expected to honour and esteem each other? The answer was simple: men honoured each other by civil courtesies. Outward ceremonies were conducted, as we have seen, 'in signe of honour'; flattery and dissimulation were potent means of showing that 'we haue a good opinion of' other men.<sup>115</sup> Explaining how other people's 'good opinion' could be received, Guazzo argued that this was done 'by vsing that common meane and instrument, whereby mens hearts are wonne, that is, curtesie and affabilitie'.<sup>116</sup>

It was precisely the distinction between horizontal and vertical honour which also underlay Romei's account of honour in the third dialogue of *The courtiers academie*. All participants in the dialogue agreed that honour

<sup>109</sup> Whigham 1983, p. 63.      <sup>110</sup> Thomas, *The historie of Italie*, fos. 3<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>111</sup> Castiglione, *The courtier*, pp. 145-6; see also pp. 294-5.

<sup>112</sup> Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fo. 72<sup>v</sup>.      <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 23<sup>r-v</sup>.      <sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 24<sup>v</sup>-25<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 77<sup>r-v</sup>, 46<sup>v</sup>-47<sup>r</sup>.      <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 72<sup>v</sup>.