

Henry Peacham's *The Compleat Gentleman* and Early Modern Print

Arul Kumaran

In this age of globalization and “clash of civilizations,”¹ where a great mingling of the world’s various populations and cultures has been hastened by emigration, trade, the Internet, and social media, the concept of civility and manners needs a fresh look. Western manners, especially, need to be reexamined since the word “civilized” is understood largely as “westernized.” Early modern England is a good place to start, since hundreds of behavior manuals were written and published during this period, and the code of conduct known in medieval times as “courtesy” slowly transformed into the notion of “civility” over the sixteenth century, and, later, into “civil behavior” from seventeenth century onwards. And through trade and colonization, this concept was transported abroad and used as a rationale for conquests and exploitation of natural resources in various regions on the planet. Sigmund Freud tried to understand the phenomenon of civilization through his psychoanalytical prism in the beginning of the twentieth century;² Norbert Elias, building on Freud, conducted a sweeping study of western manners that he called “sociogenic and psychogenic investigations,” seeing civilization as a specific transformation of human behavior effected by conscious control of bodily functions and by the exercise of “self-constraint” in various modes of behavior.³ Scholars have also studied the most popular of courtesy books in the sixteenth century, such as *Il Cortegiano* by Baldassare Castiglione as well as other notable courtesy books such as Sir Thomas Elyot’s *The Boke of Governour*, Roger Ascham’s *The School Master*, and Thomas Wilson’s *The Art of Rhetoric*.⁴ These studies have focused on the phenomenon of courtesy from the perspective of Renaissance humanism, court politics, and upper class self-fashioning. But a specific look into the ways in which courtly self-fashioning transcended class barrier and became a prevalent mode of self-expression and identity constitution remains elusive.

Commenting on Elias, Anna Bryson, an English sociologist, notes the inevitable shortcomings of such a sweeping thesis as Elias’s: “In taking over and sociologizing the Freudian theory of civilization, Elias offers no less than an overall interpretation of Western social and political development pivoted around the study of manners” (10-11). And she continues:

With his vast overview of European manners over six

centuries, Elias has little time to ask questions about the precise relationship of texts to the societies in which they were written or read. Inevitably he skates over such problems as why books on manners were written at all, why they were written in particular forms, and how they related to other kinds of cultural production. He simply makes the working assumption that codifications reflect or “express” sensibility in a particular social group, and then moves on to connect each stage of sensibility to large-scale social and political change.... The problem is less that he has no time to establish the representative character of any one text in the time and group which it addresses, and more that he fails to discuss the fundamental question of what it is that any codification of manners, however widely read and endorsed in its time, *can* actually represent.⁵

This paper is an attempt not only at studying one such representative text but also what it represents in terms of its authorial intention and its place within the print culture which facilitated its existence. Scholars like Daniel Javitch and Frank Whigham have situated courtesy texts within the courtly milieu of Elizabethan England and studied the hidden politics behind these texts,⁶ but I want to contextualize this representative text within an even broader milieu of early modern print. Henry Peacham’s 1622 book, *The Compleat Gentleman*, my representative text here, is a well-known courtesy manual.⁷ Calling it one of the most important courtesy books written in the seventeenth century, John E. Mason, whose *Gentlefolk in the Making* is a widely quoted book on courtesy and behavior manuals, says, “[I]n Peacham’s work the essential character of the English gentleman finds for the first time encyclopedic expression. English writers had dealt with particular and significant phases of the character—Elyot, for instance, with sports and a theory of education, and Bacon with summaries of

policy, domestic life, and travel; in [Peacham] the figures became well rounded and ‘compleat’”(143)⁸—that is, Peacham, besides having the “usual background of classical training,” had also spent some months in continental travel and was also a bit of an expert on music, painting, and poetry—“a man of rather more artistic appreciation than some other writers on this theme” (130)⁹. A more recent sociologist, George Ardit, also calls *The Compleat Gentleman* a significant work, seeing it as an important instance of what he calls a journey toward multi-centeredness of the English consciousness—“a multiplicity of centres, each representing the body of one aristocrat, brought together into a unity in the shape of the common weal” (170)¹⁰—a vision fully prefigured in Elyot, which Peacham presumably expanded to include even non-aristocratic members of society.

But, for all its reputation as a book that shaped and transformed the courtly behavior and humanistic educational principles into a code of civil behavior befitting a “gentleman,” this book, on careful examination, reveals little that is different from courtesy books that were printed in the sixteenth century, such as Elyot’s *Governour*, Wilson’s *The Art of Rhetorique*, and Ascham’s *The School Master*. This fact makes us wonder why Peacham has been accorded such an exalted place in the courtesy book tradition.¹¹ One reason is perhaps the fact that Peacham for the first time addressed his book not just to the aristocratic young man (as most of his predecessors and even contemporaries like Cleland did) but to all young men, certainly to anyone who can read. It is possible that Peacham had his eyes on a job in an aristocratic household when he wrote the book (it was dedicated to an aristocrat), but the tenor of the book, despite its debt to sixteenth century humanistic educational treatises, reveals it to be different in tone and attitude and much more democratic in its conscious eschewing of courtesy or aristocratic ideals, like the consideration of the concept of grace or the delicate balancing of gender relations in the court.¹²

In fact, Peacham’s book is a courtesy book only if viewed in isolation from his other works. Within the larger context of Elizabethan writers resorting to print in their struggle to achieve a decent livelihood, and taken together with his other works, especially the ones he wrote after this one, we can see that *The Compleat Gentleman* is as much an attempt at shaping the young minds of his generation as achieving a more prosaic goal: to get a book out as a stepping stone for preferment. The fact that Peacham chose the subgenre of courtesy manual (within the larger genre of humanistic educational material) speaks both to the popularity of the subject matter and the unique suitability of courtesy manual for print. The case of Henry Peacham encourages us to disengage the trope of “gentleman” from courtesy

tradition and set it within the more complex and perhaps more illuminating context of the early modern marketplace of print and its patronage system. Resituated this way and read along with his more obscure works such as *The Truth of Our Times*, *The Worth of a Penny*, and other pamphlets that he wrote near the end of his life, Peacham’s *Gentleman* seems less of a seminal work in courtesy literature than a pioneer of a new direction for early modern print. And we can also see that it revitalized print for a new generation of readers by making the genre of advice giving an enduring topic fit for print, from the sixteenth century to the present day. In this sense, then, I would argue that Peacham’s most famous book should be considered not so much as a courtesy book (it is but a pale shadow of Elyot and Ascham and Wilson) but as an interesting and significant cultural document that successfully brings together, in a lasting marriage, a particular subject matter and a popular medium: behavior advice and print.

The evolution of print from early religious books to such a complex subject matter as secular behavior manual is a tale of disparate developments cohering, around the second half of the sixteenth century, around what we now call the marketplace of print. By the time of Peacham, early modern print had evolved enough to produce the popular conduct manual. The confluence of the technology of print, religious ferment, the crisis of the aristocracy, and improved literacy all meant that print played a significant role in the transformations that swept through sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England.¹³ Print, of course, served the ideas of these times, but it also engendered and shaped completely new ideas of the times, ideas and attitudes that would have been impossible without print. For example, the continuing religious skirmishes throughout the sixteenth century gave birth to a new kind of style, and writers like Greene, Nashe, and the figures behind Martin Marprelate forged an irreverent, vigorous, personal, popular, and satirical vein in polemic writing—a vein that then crossed over into secular writing and pressured even serious writers like Harvey into adopting a more accessible style.¹⁴

If Renaissance humanism convinced early modern philosophers and intellectuals that the human will can be perfected by the strengthening of the faculty of reason (hence the importance of education), print made that belief a possibility for all, not just those in the upper reaches of society. Print rejuvenated a subgenre of moral and educational precepts for young

boys and girls, precepts that had their origin in medieval courtesy manuals, and this was possible partly because of a crop of young writers who wrote this material—popular behavior manuals for both highborn and popular readers. Early in the sixteenth century, these authors were typically from the upper echelons of society, but as the century wore on and the reach of print became more widespread, writers started emerging from the lower ranks of society as well, a young generation that was well educated but for whom opportunities commensurate with their education and abilities still remained scarce. Patronage for the arts, always difficult at the best of times, dwindled even further as the century neared its end, and these young men, still imbued with the idealistic notion that they could change the world by educating the minds of their fellow countrymen, chose instead to make their living from print.¹⁵ Print made and sustained them.

They chose to write popular stories and pamphlets, thus beginning the secularization of the individual print voice created by religious pamphlets, and the dilution of aristocratic and courtly ideals. A century of vigorous use had made print an extremely versatile vehicle of personal ambition and self-projection, and the recent development of satirical and ironic voice made for a fashionable and exciting medium of expression. With their popular subject matter, they created a readership; in fact, it is because of writers like these that the marketplace of print came into existence. Thus, by the 1570s and 80s, early modern print had already achieved a vigorous, unique voice of its own, was fully participating in the humanist program of strengthening reason through education, and had given rise both to a vigorous cadre of writers and a receptive and malleable crop of readers. For these writers, print provided a medium to project themselves as they wanted to be seen and heard—as scholars, authors, critics, tutors, moral adjudicators, satirists, etc. In the absence of patronage and patrons, print afforded a vicarious alternative, a narcissistic fulfillment. Print thus became an end in itself, a specular embodiment of the writer himself, itself an audience that seemed to offer sympathetic understanding, relative anonymity, artistic permanence, and personal satisfaction. By the end of sixteenth century, print became its own audience.

It is in this context of print and the tradition of these writers that we should situate Henry Peacham. It is true that Peacham's most famous

work is much different from any other work produced by the young radicals of the previous generation, such as romances, repentance stories, and satires, yet a closer examination of his works reveals that he was similar to them in significant ways. Born in 1578 to Henry Peacham Sr., a clergyman and himself a writer, the younger Peacham went to Cambridge as a sizar and took his B.A. and M.A. before he was 20.¹⁶ Besides a scholarly temperament, Peacham also had considerable skills in drawing, sketching and engraving. Obviously a brilliant student, but probably because he was relatively poor, he could not get the kind of preferment or the patronage he expected, so he started as a school teacher near London. 1603, the year King James I ascended the throne, seems to have provided Peacham the opening into the world he was hoping to get into: *Basilikon Doron*, an advise book the king had written for his young son Henry (who was only four at the time it was originally printed in Scotland, in 1599), had just been published in England,¹⁷ and Peacham took this as an opportunity and rendered some of the more salient precepts of the king into a book of emblems and wanted to present a copy to the king. He seems to have succeeded after a couple of attempts (a copy of it still survives in the British Library), though we do not know what came of this overture. Abandoning his teaching career in 1607 to be close to the court, Peacham next expanded his emblem book and presented it, this time, to Prince Henry, who, even at this young age, was acquiring a reputation as a patron of the arts and beginning to attract a crowd of writers and artists around him at Nonesuch, the academy/residence that the king had set up for his son in Richmond. There is evidence from Peacham's writings that he spent quite a bit of time in Nonesuch between 1610-1612, frequently drawing his majesty's portraits. Besides being a craftsman, Peacham fancied himself a poet as well, and wrote many dedicatory poems for his friends' books. He also published a craft book titled *Graphice* (also published as *The Gentleman's Exercise*) and another emblem book titled *Minerva Brittana* during this time.¹⁸

His dream of lasting patronage from the young prince came crashing down when Harry died young in 1612. Devastated and reluctant to go back to school teaching, Peacham undertook in 1613 a journey through the Low Countries, France, and Germany, mostly staying with acquaintances and patrons. On his return in 1615, he published an account of the war that

was going on in the Low Countries under the title *A Most True Relation of the Conflict Between Cleve and Glick*, a pamphlet he directed for the first time at the popular audience,¹⁹ unlike his earlier forays into print when he mostly addressed a more elite or specialized audience. Perhaps diffident to pursue writing as a career, he went back to teaching in a school again, this time at Wymondham in Norfolk.

Peacham's early ambitions seem to have been to be seen as a versatile scholar and poet. To that end he developed his painting skills—which he said had been a passion right from an early age—but to this talent he added classical scholarship and a keen eye for genealogy. He drew various emblems for potential patrons, including the king himself, depicting genealogical details and moral precepts in them. He also wrote a fair bit of poetry, both as accompaniment to these emblems and as a collection of moral precepts, epigrams, and occasional verse such as elegies and celebrations. Peacham's this talent—as an emblemist and a poet—has received considerable attentions from scholars in the twentieth century, but acknowledgement in his own times was scant. Peacham's poetry has not stood up well despite the recent attention,²⁰ and his epigrams and emblems apparently had very little appeal in his own time. Already into his forties by this time, Peacham was no better off in terms of money or professional prospects than he had been twenty years earlier, and he was back in his school classroom, doing something he seemed to have disliked very much (in *The Truth of Our Times*, he would say that he wasted his time among noisy young boys). For all the time and effort he devoted to his art of drawing and limning, emblem making, and versifying, Peacham just could not sell himself as a humanist scholar worthy of lasting patronage. In deep frustration and anxiety, he embarked on *The Compleat Gentleman*.

Peacham's arrival at gentleman making is, therefore, something of a last ditch effort, similar to other popular writers of the second half of sixteenth century and his own generation. In 1622, at the age of 44 and quite lost as to what to do in life, Peacham writes an advice book for the young William Howard, the son of the Earl of Arundel, his last real hope for a good job. Ostensibly written just as a private manual for Howard, this book was nevertheless put to print, since Peacham, as he claims, was anxious for the gentlemen of his country to develop the kind of all-round character that seemed to be the norm

on the continent, one that he said English gentlemen sorely lacked. Thus *The Compleat Gentleman* came with an emphasis on the word “complete,” instructing readers on skills that had to be acquired rather than merely inherited.

It is to Peacham's credit that he realized that advice writing (courtesy or behavior manuals or conduct books) was uniquely suited for print. Print had an immense reach and a potential for monetary benefit, but it also gave writers like Peacham something that they longed for and that they simply could not get from their supposed patrons. In fact, for all the humiliation they suffered at the hands of patrons, writers found a balm in print: empowerment. Print gave Peacham an opportunity to project himself as an empowered subject and citizen, in no way inferior to anyone but equal to the best in society. Of course, the kind of individualistic, democratic, Enlightenment self-expression was a long way off still, but here is a medium and subject matter—how to be a gentleman—through which he can show the so-called gentry what it is to be a real gentleman. Print and the courtesy manual thus became a kind of mirror—onto which he could project himself in the way he wanted to be seen by others—as well as a showcase where others can see who he is and fashion themselves after him.

In *The Compleat Gentleman*, then, Peacham ostensibly continues the humanistic agenda of strengthening human will through reason. Admitting freely to the influence of writers like Elyot and Ascham, he says that the subject of his book is “fashioning nobility after the best precedents” (3)²¹ and justifies his choice of subject matter: “Though the matter be the same, yet for variety sake they shall be read, yea, and as the same dishes dressed after a new fashion, perhaps please the tastes of many better” (8). But Peacham's faith in and his resort to popular print subtly transforms the focus of his behavior manual by moving it ever so slightly toward the middleclass. To be sure, he still follows the humanistic model of behavior fashioning (through education) and not explicit advice on how to eat, dress, etc. (as Erasmus had done in *De civilitate morum puerilium*²²). But in subverting the origins of nobility, raising trades to the level of gentleness, and including crafts like painting and limning into the realm of respectability, he blurs the demarcation between the upper and lower classes.

Peacham's humanistic design of the book disguises his subversive agenda. He employs the same strategies that his predecessors like Elyot and Ascham had used in educating young noble men, such as exploring (and slightly democratizing) the origin of nobility, an offer of humanistic educational program to develop and strengthen the faculty of reason to aid the will, and some physical exercises to make the development well rounded. Earlier writers had written courtesy manuals for courtiers and the highborn, but Peacham's audience cannot have been of the same class, especially since, unlike the names he mentions as his forerunners, he himself does not belong to the "nobility" whose members he is seeking to instruct. The problem of writing a conduct manual for a small and elite section of the society but printing and directing it at the general public who might also fashion themselves according to the precepts and instructions found in the manual was a prickly one even for Elyot and Wilson.²³ Peacham negotiates this hurdle in a clever fashion in the *Gentleman*, first by addressing his well-born dedicatee and then, in a letter to his general readers, offering a somewhat different message. For example, he tells his patron,

[I]t is affirmed that there are certain sparks and secret seeds of virtue innate in princes and the children of noble personages, which, if cherished and carefully attended in the blossom, will yield the fruit of industry and glorious action, and that not only above the strength of the vulgar, but even in the scion and before the time which nature hath appointed. (3)

But the general reader is given quite a different statement of purpose:

[A]t my coming over [from his travels in Europe where had seen an English gentleman embarrass himself by being ignorant of many things with which his European counterparts were conversant], considering the great forwardness and proficience of children in other countries, the backwardness and rawness of ours; the industry of masters there, the ignorance and idleness of most of ours; the

exceeding care of parents in their children's education, the negligence of ours; being taken through change of air with a quartan fever, that leisure I had 'from irritation' [Peacham uses a Greek phrase] as I may truly say, by fits I employed upon this discourse for the private use of a noble young gentleman, my friend, not intending it should ever see light, as you may perceive by the plain and shallow current of the discourse, fitted to a young and tender capacity. However, I have done it, and if thou shalt find herein anything that may content, at the least not distaste, thee, I shall be glad and encourage to a more serious piece; if neither, but out of a malignant humor disdain what I have done, I care not. I have pleased myself, and long since learned Envy, together with her sister Ignorance, to harbor only in the basest and most degenerate breast. (8-9)

This book, then, is decidedly for both the well- and low-born reader and in that respect it is subtly subversive of the social order.

More explicitly, just like Elyot and Wilson and others, Peacham relocated the origin of nobility away from birth and into "virtuous action" (presumably action that derives from reason and is beneficial to the society as a whole). He does accept that there may be some inborn, natural reason for nobility. Just as there are nobler as well as lesser stars and planets, or animals, or fruits, or flowers, "Shall we not acknowledge a nobility in man of greater perfection, of nobler form, and prince of [men]?" asks Peacham. But having granted that possibility, Peacham nevertheless demystifies nobility by rationalizing its origins:

Nobility, then, taken in the general sense, is nothing else than a certain eminency or notice taken of some one above the rest for some notable act performed, be it good or ill. And in that sense are *noblis* and *ignoblis* usually among the Latin poets taken. More

particularly, and in the genuine sense, nobility is the honor of blood in a race or lineage, conferred formerly upon some one or more of that family, either by the prince, the laws, customs of that land or place, whereby either out of knowledge, culture of the mind, or by some glorious action performed they have been useful and beneficial to the commonwealths and places where they live. (12)

By clearly reducing the mystique of nobility to a single act of valor or courage, or a state of cultivated mind, Peacham implies that similar acts can be performed or mental refinement achieved by anyone, which means that nobility is something that is achieved and not mysteriously given or divinely conferred. It logically follows, therefore, that if a common man “that is ignoble and inglorious may acquire nobility by virtue, the other [i.e. a nobly descended man] may very well lose it by his vice” (19). Not content with thus revoking the special status of nobles, Peacham goes further: “But such are the miserable corruptions of our times that vices go for prime virtues, and to be drunk, swear, wench, follow the fashion, and to do just nothing are the attributes and mark nowadays of a great part of our gentry” (19). Nobility and gentry redefined along these lines, then, it is but a small step for Peacham to expand the circle of gentry by admitting professionals (lawyers, physicians) and even traders:

[Merchants and traders are considered base (unlike those in Venice and Genoa), but if God has intended that there be inequalities in the availability of commodities among nations] I cannot ... but account the honest merchant among the number of benefactors to his country while he exposeth as well his life as goods to the hazard of infinite dangers, sometimes for [various goods and commodities]. (22)

As far as Peacham is concerned, only those who live by manual labor “have no share at all in nobility or gentry” (22). But those members of gentry who “not only stain their stock with vice and all base behavior, relying and vaunting their

long pedigrees and exploits of their fathers, but themselves living in idleness,” are presumably not gentlemen but are a “disgrace” compared to those who “by their virtuous endeavors are rising” (27). Just like his predecessors, Peacham makes nobility an achieved status rather than an acquired one, contingent on virtuous action and devoid of any divine mystery.

Peacham’s program of education, then, is the same as those of other courtesy writers: to educate and cultivate the mind so that is free of error.²⁴ But it is addressed to a wider readership made possible by historical changes like burgeoning literacy, the decline of aristocracy, the rise of the middleclass, and the popularity of print culture. Against this backdrop of a larger and democratic readership, Peacham’s seemingly harmless repetition of old-fashioned humanist precepts takes a radical, socially disruptive, character. Thus he advises parents on how to choose tutors and tutors on how to educate their pupils. His strategy is to make a suggestion and cite examples from antiquity in support of that suggestion: thus he talks about a gentleman’s carriage in a university (“observe moderation,” “work hard,” etc.), style in speaking and writing, history, etc.—in a repeat of a kind of advice one finds in myriad other humanist books in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In addition to these teachings, Peacham does add lessons unique to himself: lessons in cosmography, observations in the survey of earth, geometry, antiquities, drawing, limning, and painting, armory, blazon of arms, heraldry, fishing, etc. His overall program aims to educate the mind and cultivate the body so that his gentleman is prepared for any situation in life. Though Peacham pitches these lessons as necessary for the upper classes (for example, he says geometry is indispensable to rulers when they go on military campaigns), because he had effectively removed the barriers between nobility and commoners, his advice can potentially be directed at any one who reads his book.

This universalization of knowledge, the pointed neglect of a court context and courtly behavior so central to courtesy text heretofore, shows that there is nothing in Peacham’s program that cannot be achieved by any individual. In fact, almost all of the lessons that Peacham has prepared for his gentleman and all the attributes he demands of them have been accomplished by himself. *The Compleat Gentleman* can be seen as a self-description of Peacham! The overall effect is one of Peacham

recommending himself to others for imitation and emulation.

The tilt toward middleclass and the soft rebellion against the ruling classes that the *The Compleat Gentleman* mounts is completed in his two later books, both similar in spirit to their famous forerunner but without its grand pretension. The first of these, *The Truth of our Times*, was published in 1639, 17 years after *The Compleat Gentleman*, and it quietly relinquishes what Peacham had assiduously built in the earlier book--the optimistic possibility that anyone could be a gentleman: where the 1622 book had shaken the barriers between the upper classes and commoners, the latter book laments the continuing and deepening rift between the two worlds; where before Peacham had advocated a multifaceted character development, he now says, effectively, that it is a waste of time; where he had advised parents and tutors alike on how to teach children before, now he says openly that he cannot abide the profession; and where before he had projected himself as a great humanist scholar who had written a book for the edification of the gentlemen of the realm, now he cannot talk enough about the utter futility of writing and publishing books. Peacham's letter at the beginning of *The Truth of Our Times*, addressed to the general reader, amply illustrates his total transformation:

It fareth with me now, honest reader, as with a traveller in winter, who, having foolishly ventured over some dangerous river or passage quite frozen with ice, stands on the other side pointing with his finger and showing his following friends where it cracked. In the same manner I have ventured before, tried the coldness of these frozen and hard times, together with the slippery ways of this deceitful and trustless world. Standing, I hope, now at the last safe on this other side, I show those that are to follow me where the danger is. I have seen and known much, as well in England as somewhere else abroad, and have had much acquaintance (and which hath been my happiness, if it be an happiness) with the most famous men of our time in all

excellent professions. Whence I am not altogether ignorant in the noble sciences, as well the theoretic as practice, but to say the truth, I have never found multiplicity of knowledge in many things to have been rather an hindrance than ever any way tending to advancement. Having hereby found much employment to no purpose, but as we see a carrier's horse when he is heavily laden hath bells hung about his neck to give some content on the way and to ally the pain of his burden, so have I taken pains and deserved well at the hands of many of good rank, yet got I never anything hereby save the horse bells of praise, thanks, and fruitless promises, which like the carriers, they can put on and take off at their pleasure. *Vix vivitur gratis*, saith Plautus ("One can scarcely live on thanks"). The Peacock, as Mantuan hath it, was admired for his plumes, which ever beholder would be ready to snatch off, but in the meantime there was none of them all would give him so much as a grain to fill his belly. (179-180)

It is clear that Peacham's *The Truth of Our Times* and *The Worth of a Penny* (which has the same dark and pessimistic outlook) are also courtesy manuals of a different sort—they do offer advice, only in a more realistic and even pessimistic way. These books abandon the pretension of appealing to gentry and address themselves to the "common man." To the extent that they do this, Peacham is a pioneer.

The fact that *The Truth of Our Times* and *The Worth of a Penny* dismantle the edifice of gentleman that Peacham so assiduously constructed in *The Compleat Gentleman* indicates not so much that Peacham did not believe in his humanizing project as that print was a peculiar medium through which he could, at one moment, give advice for the self-fashioning of both the middle and upper class readers and, at the next, turn around and give a completely different set of advice for others.

Though addressed to different audiences, Peacham's books are still advice books, cast in print and sent out for wide dissemination. This fact shows Peacham's shrewd understanding not only of print's power but also the unique suitability of behavior manual for print.

The fact that *The Compleat Gentleman* has developed a life of its own, despite Henry Peacham's disillusionment is probably because the *idea* of the gentleman, as it appeared in the beginning of the seventeenth century, was ripe for an exponential print dissemination in a way that was unthinkable even a couple of decades before. Peacham's book, which was reissued three times during his own lifetime and multiple times after he died, obviously struck a popular chord. We can surmise that a thriving puritanism and, along with it, a growing republicanism, the increasing perception of self-worth among the mercantile classes, and burgeoning literacy all made for a fertile ground for the idea of gentleman that Peacham's book offered. But the book's most alluring appeal was perhaps the amorphousness of that idea. "Gentleman" is a concept born in print, that is, it is not rooted in any reality but is an imagined pattern, a verbal mold in print, into which anybody with basic literacy and self-worth can pour his personality and fashion himself as a gentleman. It is a mixture of moral, educational, and behavioral precepts plucked from classical, biblical, humanist, and even personal sources, all concocted into a one-size-fits-all concept: a complete gentleman. When this popular construct locates its gentleness, predictably and unoriginally, in virtuous action and "reasonable" behavior and not in noble birth, it offers a vision that is accessible to whoever is willing to endeavor to achieve it. Thus gentleness is deliberately divorced from birth, wealth, land, and station, and instead erected as a condition that is acquirable through the cultivation of mind and body—a seductive idea that gained wide acceptance both because of the messenger (a middleclass writer himself) and the message. But this seductive idea would remain a pipedream in England for a long time, but would resonate with the emergent utopian society in America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The fact that Peacham's book rose to a cult status is a testament to its anti-aristocratic and democratic recasting of the concept of gentleman; the elusiveness of achieving that status explains its enduring appeal.

Notes

1. See Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72.3 (1993), 22-49. Even though the essay was written almost twenty years ago, Huntington's ideas were in fresh currency in the lead up to the Iraq war in 2003 and were particularly influential in the thinking of the so-called neocons in President George W. Bush's circle during his first term and still retains force among those who advocate a muscular foreign policy in the United States.

2. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. Joan Riviere and rev. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1975).

3. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott with some notes and corrections by the author, ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000). See especially Part II, ch. V-VIII and Part IV, ch. I and II.

4. See, for example, Harry Berger, *The Absence Of Grace: Sprezzatura And Suspicion In Two Renaissance Courtesy Books* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Wayne A. Rebhorn, *Courtly Performances: Masking and Festivity in Castiglione's Book of the Courtier* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978); and John M. Major, *Sir Thomas Elyot and Renaissance Humanism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964).

5. Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 11.

6. See Daniel Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978) and Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

7. Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman* (London, 1622).

8. John E. Mason, *Gentlefolk in the Making: Studies in the History of English Courtesy Literature and Related Topics from 1531 to 1774* (New York: Octagon Books), p. 143.

9. Ibid, p.130.

10. Georg Ardit, *The Genealogy of Manners: Transformations of Social Relations in France and England from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.170.

11. Mason, *Gentlefolk*, and Ruth Kelso, *The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1929) speak highly of Peacham's influence. Along with and James Leland's *The Institution of a Young Noble Man* (1607) and Richard Brathwaite's *The English Gentleman* (1630), Peacham's book is considered to be one of the three most influential books in English courtesy tradition in the seventeenth century. See Ardit, *Genealogy*, p. 172-73.

12. For the concept of grace and the way it was understood in early modern English courtly society, see Berger, *The Absence of Grace* and Rebhorn, *Courtly Performances*.

13. See, for example, Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformation in Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

14. See, for example, Arul Kumaran, "Robert Greene's Martinist Transformation in 1590," *Studies in Philology* 103 (2006): 243-63 and Joseph Black, "The Rhetoric of Reaction: The Marprelate Tracts (1588-89), Anti-Martinism, and the Uses of Print in Early Modern England," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 28 (1997): 707-25.

15. The complaints of writers about illiberal patrons or lack of patronage were becoming common by late 1580s. Thomas Nashe devoted his entire *Pierce Penilesse* (1592) to an elaborate and sustained attack on the miserliness of patrons; Richard Barnfield's *Complaint of Poetrie for the Death of Liberalitie* (1598) registers a similar dissatisfaction; John Marston dedicated his *Antonio and Mellida* (1602) to "the only rewarder and most just poiser of virtuous merits, the most honourably renowned Nobody," and George Wither dedicated his satiric *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613) to himself. See, for example, Michael Brennen, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family* (London: Routledge, 1988); Alistair Fox, "Complaint of Poetry and the Death of Liberality," in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. John Guy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 229-57; and Sherri Geller, "Commentary as Cover-Up: Criticizing Illiberal Patronage in Thomas Nashe's Summer's Last Will and Testament," *English Literary Renaissance* 25 (1995): 148-78.

16. Details of Peacham's life have been gleaned from Alan R. Young, *Henry Peacham* (Boston: Twayne, 1979) and Robert Ralston Cawley, *Henry Peacham: His Contribution to English Poetry* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971).

17. King James I, *Basilikon Doron* (London, 1599).

18. Peacham, *Graphice Or The Most Auncient and Excellent Art of Drawing and Limming* (London, 1612 and *Minerva Britanna or a Garden of Heroical Devises* (London, 1612).

19. Besides *Cleve and Glick*, Peacham's popular pamphlets include *Coach and Sedan*, (1625 and 1636), *A Merry Discourse of Meum and Tuum* (1639), *A Dialogue Between the Crosse in Cheap, and Charing Cross* (1641), *A Paradox of Praise of Dunce, to Smectymnuus* (1642), *Square-Caps Turned Into Round-Heads: Or The Bishops Vindication, and the Brownists Conviction* (1642). These pamphlets, without exception, are slight and not very interesting works, and they indicate a curious reluctance on Peacham's part to be polemical in any sustained or significant way, thus lacking the partisan spirit and vitality typical of Elizabethan satirical pamphlets. One wonders if Peacham's poverty kept his political voice in check. Considering the times he lived in, these pamphlets seem a wasted opportunity.

20. See Cawley, *Henry Peacham*, for a study of Peacham's poetry.

21. Says Peacham: "I am not ignorant, judicious reader, how many pieces of the most curious masters have been uttered to the world of this subject, as Plutarch, Erasmus, Vives, Sadoletto, Sturmius, Osirius, Sir Thomas Elyot, Master Ascham, with sundry others, so that my small taper among so many torches were as good out, as seeming to give no light at all. I confess it true" (7). All quotes from *The Compleat Gentleman* are from Henry Peacham, *The Complete Gentleman, The Truth of Our Times, and The Art of Living in London*, ed. Virgil B. Heltzel (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press for Folger Shakespeare Library, 1962). Page numbers are in parenthesis.

22. A minor work by Erasmus published in 1530, it nevertheless achieved a popularity that was rare for that time: "Even within Erasmus's lifetime ...it was reprinted more than thirty times (Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, p. 54).

23. Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege*, expresses this contradiction insightfully: "Wilson's rhetorical division of humans into haves and have-nots is internally contradictory. The superiors in his originary scenario are God's chosen ministers, restoring an order of His making. But Wilson then suggests that any man would live like a lord rather than an underling if he could; that lording derives from persuasion; and that instruction in persuasion is shortly to follow, available to anyone with wit and the purchase price. Rhetoric is presented as a power open to many applications. Wilson no doubt meant his instruction to further the careers of the queen's public servants, modern counterparts of his primitive elect ministers. But the idea that those who rule do so with, and because of, their rhetorical powers also suggests that one with rhetorical powers may hope to rule, or at least be powerful, or at least gain some access to power and its assorted privileges (say, no having to dig and delve). Most important of all, Wilson I ready to transmit these skills to the reader. The presumptive link between rhetoric and the current God-given order of things snaps when the Wilsons of the age, with fully conservative self-consciousness, convert the tools of rule, of domination and self-determination, into a commodity packaged for the open market of the literate" (2).

24. In fact, Peacham has taken his educational program mostly from Elyot and Wilson. See, for example, D.T. Starnes, "Elyot's *Governour* and Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman*," *Modern Language Review* 12 (1927): 319-22.



Dr. Arul Kumaran was born in Salem, India in 1963. He gained his B.A., M.A., and M.Phil. in English Literature from the Madras Christian College in Chennai, India. He obtained his Ph.D. (in English Renaissance literature) from the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada.

His first job as professor of English was at the Madras Christian College, where he worked for six years, from 1988-1994. He became, after finishing his Ph.D., an assistant professor at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada for a year. This was followed by a three- year-stint as assistant professor at the Okanagan University College (at present renamed as the University of British Columbia-Okanagan) in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada. From 2005, he has been teaching at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan as a tenured assistant professor. Dr. Kumaran's research on early modern English pamphlets and courtesy literature has been published in such prestigious journals as *Studies in Philology*, *Renaissance and Reformation*, and *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*. At present he is working on a book on Renaissance courtesy literature.

Dr. Kumaran is a member in Modern Languages Association of America, Renaissance Society of America, Shakespeare Association of America, Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies. He has won grants to conduct research in Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. and the Huntington Library in San Marino near Los Angeles.