

Revising Manners: Giovanni Della Casa's *Galateo* and Antoine de Courtin's *Nouveau traité de la civilité*

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Giovanni Della Casa, a sixteenth-century Florentine nobleman, was the archbishop of Benevento and papal nuncio to Venice until 1549. His book of instruction in manners, *Galateo, Ovvero Trattato de' Costumi e Modi che si debbono tenere o schifare nella comune conversatione* (Venice: Bevilacqua, 1558), attempted to provide rules and instruction for the newcomer to polite society in sixteenth-century Italy.¹ This article will undertake a cross-cultural comparison of *Galateo* and its seventeenth-century French heir, Antoine de Courtin's *Nouveau traité de la civilité qui se pratiquent en France parmi les honnêtes gens* (1671) in light of the Renaissance concept of imitation. It will first demonstrate how *Galateo* manifests the topos of imitation internally and then compare *Galateo* to Courtin's 1681 edition of the *Nouveau traité*, the last of four editions published in Courtin's lifetime.² Courtin and Della Casa are referenced in larger studies of the theoretical foundations of early modern courtesy books but they are rarely put in dialogue with each other. This essay makes a direct textual comparison of *Galateo* and *Nouveau traité* as representatives of their respective cultural constructs in an effort to illustrate the process of imitation in the courtesy book form, but also to reconsider Della Casa's *Galateo* as a work of literary complexity in the guise of a simple book of instruction in manners.

¹The English translation by Konrad Eisenbichler and Kenneth Bartlett, first published by Dovehouse in 1990, is the standard modern English translation of *Galateo*. I refer to the most recent revised edition in this article (3rd edition, 1994). In parenthetical citations and notes, the abbreviation "Dovehouse" will be used for quotes from the English translation and "*Galateo*" for the original Italian from the modern edition by Saverio Orlando (Rome: Garzanti, 1988). A new English translation by M. F. Rusnak is forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press in June 2013; I was unfortunately unable to consult it for this study.

²Courtin's *Nouveau traité* was first published in 1671, with a revised and augmented edition in 1672, and a third edition in 1677 (all published in Paris by Hélié Josset). Subsequent editions appeared in 1679 (Amsterdam) and 1681 (Paris), as well as a posthumous edition in 1702. The work was republished in a trilingual (French, Latin, and German) edition in Basel in 1671 and a bilingual (Latin and German) edition in 1681. The work met with immediate success in France and underwent numerous revisions and republications. This article uses the 1681 French edition for comparison with *Galateo*, as it was the last version revised by Courtin before his death.

In a comparative study taking Della Casa's and Courtin's texts at face value, there are elements of a literal imitation of the former by the latter, in form and content. Each author addresses his text to a young courtier-to-be, each lends authority to his text with citations from well-respected classical and contemporary sources, and each offers resolutely practical advice on a number of identical topics: table manners, conversation, dealing with one's superiors. W. Lee Ustick, among others, notes that many courtesy books in the seventeenth century borrowed ideas from *Galateo*: "This is particularly the case in such books as Courtin's *Rules of Civility*, which is more a manual of etiquette than a treatise on the conduct of life" (157).³ Della Casa's treatise has three overarching themes: shocking or disgusting acts, controlling one's desires, and aligning one's actions with one's surroundings (people, time, and place). First, *Galateo* proscribes behaviour that will shock the senses, then it addresses manners that run counter to the desires of self or others, and finally it warns against disproportionate actions, those that do not align with one's situation. The *Nouveau traité* takes up these same elements of civility, drawing from the same model—Cicero's *De officiis*—and sometimes using the same vocabulary. The first edition of the *Nouveau traité* lays out rules of comportment for a young courtier-to-be, and chapters added to the second edition (1672) address rules of conduct between superiors and inferiors and among equals. Courtin addresses his treatise to those with a natural inclination toward proper behaviour but who may be at a distance from Paris where they could otherwise learn manners in person.

Certain sections of Courtin's work reproduce Della Casa's text nearly word for word, and the *Nouveau traité* functions in some ways as a "translation" of *Galateo* into the terms of seventeenth-century French civility, but a close reading reveals that *Galateo* both invites and resists imitation by Courtin and that the courtesy book form shapes this imitation. This reading is informed by Norbert Elias's determination in *The Civilizing Process* that the development of a progressively rigid social hierarchy by the upper classes led to progressively complex rules for manners, an evolution that he observes across texts by Erasmus, Baldassare Castiglione, and Della Casa (80). This evolution becomes plainly apparent in a comparison of the rules put forth by Della Casa and Courtin. Elias further notes that as society evolved, disgust at offensive behaviour increased (59). Disgust is certainly a primary consideration for Della Casa, who opens his treatise with admonitions against "stomachevoli" [disgusting] actions, and the emphasis on avoiding bodily offenses (smell, dirt, gestures) in *Galateo* reinforces the shift in Renaissance codes of civility from a focus on ethics to a focus on manners, primarily (for Elias) a concern about appearing vulgar to others. Courtin refines these bodily rules to the point of absurdity in a context of minute social observation and behavioral construction at court, a reaction to the drastic reduction of political influence by the nobility as Louis XIV centralised his power. The Renaissance courtesy book set down by

³Ustick declares, however, that Courtin concerned himself mainly with the external elements of good manners and not "the psychological basis of conduct, as Della Casa had done" (158).

Della Casa necessarily captures a different set of social factors from those motivating Courtin, but an analysis of Courtin as an imitation of Della Casa enriches the reading of both works by revealing their common models.

Petrarch provides a workable definition of literary imitation (or *imitatio*) in his *Familiares*: he notes a preference for texts “that hinted at but did not reproduce verbatim the classical models lying beneath the surface” favoring *similitudo* over *identitas* (Hainsworth & Robey 299). A relevant example for a study of French-Italian comparative imitation is the poetry of Joachim Du Bellay, whose *Olive* poems are an overt imitation and rewriting of sonnets from Ludovico Ariosto and other Italian poets, and Du Bellay’s *Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise* (1549),⁴ an imitation of Sperone Speroni’s *Dialogo delle lingue*. In *Olive* and the *Deffense*, Du Bellay effects a stylistic imitation of his Italian models, thematic adaptation to a different set of common references, and perfection of language from Italian to French. As a courtesy book, *Galateo* presents a different set of challenges for its imitator, since good manners are difficult to define and tightly bound to the fashions of the age to which they belong. Nevertheless, *Galateo* demonstrates that imitation of books of manners is possible to a point, in the tradition of courtesy books that borrow from classical texts.

Like other early modern authors of these treatises, Della Casa inherits the concept of the *vita civile* from Cicero, that man acts within and is shaped by civil society, as well as the value of the *paideia* or classical education (Bury 190). Michael Curtin notes that “as humanists, courtesy writers drew an assurance and authority from classical antiquity that kept them from strict dependence on aristocratic standards” (397). Specifically in *Galateo* and in the 1559 *Trattato degli uffici comuni* [Treatise on Common Duty],⁵ Della Casa transcribes a passage from Cicero’s *De officiis* on the importance of consistency in outward appearance: “Conviensi adunque alle costumate persone aver risguardo a questa misura che io ti ho detto, nello andare, nello stare, nel sedere, negli atti, nel portamento et nel vestire et nelle parole e nel silenzio e nel posare e nell’operare” [It is therefore suitable for well-mannered persons to be mindful of this balance of which I have spoken in their walking, standing, sitting, movements, bearing, and in their dress, in their words, in their silence, in their repose, and in their actions] (*Galateo* 79; Dovehouse 89).⁶ Courtin also borrows from Cicero, referring to *De officiis* numerous times throughout his text, and notably reproducing Cicero’s definition of modesty as “tact” or the

⁴From the *Deffense*: “Je veux bien avertir ceux qui aspirent à ceste gloire d’imiter les bons auteurs Grecs et Romains, voire Italiens, Hespagnolz et autres” [I would like to advise all those who aspire to this [literary] fame to imitate the fine Greek and Roman authors, even Italian, Spanish and others] (Du Bellay 71). All translations from French and Italian texts other than *Galateo* are my own.

⁵The *Trattato degli uffici comuni* is the vernacular edition of Della Casa’s *De officiis inter potentiores et tenuiores amicos* (translated into English by Henry Stubbe as *The Arts of Grandeur and Submission* in 1665), the latter likely composed between 1537 and 1543 and first published in 1546.

⁶The imitated text is Cicero, *De officiis*, I.35 “Status, incessus, sessio, accubatio, vultus, oculi, manum motus teneant illud decorum” (*Galateo* 79 n. 5).

art of aligning one's actions with the proper place and time (Grassi 17), the same instruction Della Casa offers in *Galateo* in his discussion of ceremonies and forms of address.⁷

Although *Galateo* contains theoretical and conceptual links to classical texts, stylistically it departs from its models, first in language. *Galateo* is written in the vernacular, a change from Della Casa's numerous prose works in Latin.⁸ The rise of humanism in fifteenth-century Italy corresponded with the rise of the vernacular and the adoption of Florentine Italian as a standard literary language, previously established in the works of Petrarch and Giovanni Boccaccio.⁹ Humanist dialogues written in Latin were addressed to a learned audience, while later vernacular dialogues with factual content were intended for an "audience of 'idioti'" [the uneducated] (Cox, *Renaissance* 63). The perception of *Galateo* as a vernacular dialogue and therefore a departure from rhetorical works in Latin is complicated by Della Casa's previous publication of *De officiis inter potentiores et tenuiores amicos* (1546), a Latin treatise on relationships between superiors and inferiors, and the *Trattato degli uffici communi* in the vernacular. *Galateo* is dedicated to and was named for Galeazzo (Galatheus) Florimonte, Bishop of Sessa, who originally encouraged Della Casa to write *De officiis*, which appeared in 1546 but was poorly received, called "too pedantic, derivative, and literary to be successful" (Dovehouse, Introduction 21).¹⁰ Although it has a wider scope, *Galateo* borrows from Della Casa's earlier treatise, even using the same excessively pedantic term *conciossiacosaché* (in so much as) with which *Galateo* famously begins (*Trattato* 143, qtd. in Saccone 133). In a letter of January 1559 to Piero Vettori, later the editor of Della Casa's works in Latin, Annibale Rucellai, Della Casa's nephew, declared that *Galateo* "fu fatto solo per scherzo e per vedere come la nostra lingua tollerava quello stile così umile e dimesso" [was only written as a joke and to see how our

⁷In Della Casa, the narrator instructs that "bisogna avere riguardo al tempo, all'età, alla condizione di colui con cui usiamo le cerimonie e alla nostra" [one must respect the time, age and status both of the man with whom we use these formalities and of ourselves] (*Galateo* 41; Dovehouse 59). In Courtin, civility demands that one behave according to one's own age and status, "prendre toujours garde à la qualité de la personne avec laquelle on traite" [always be aware of the rank of the person with whom one is dealing], and respect the time and place of one's encounters with others (4).

⁸Della Casa's writings in Latin include *De officiis*, a biographical essay on Pietro Bembo, and orations on Thucydides, collected in *Joannis casae latina monumenta* (Florence: Bernardi, 1567). At least two sixteenth-century Latin translations of *Galateo* were produced, one by Nathan Chytraeus (Frankfurt: Wechelum, 1580) and another by Niccolò Fierberto (Rome: Giliotto, 1595), later republished in a bilingual "Toscano" and Latin edition (Padua: Comino, 1728).

⁹Like other works of the period, Della Casa's *Galateo* is coloured by the *questione della lingua*, a longstanding debate over which form of the *lingua volgare* should become the Italian national language. In their introduction to the Dovehouse translation, Eisenbichler and Bartlett confirm that Della Casa was attentive to the ongoing linguistic changes: "The old narrator is thus made to speak in a contemporary idiom about contemporary matters, though the old man does try to elevate his language by emulating Boccaccio's style and by making classical allusions" (Dovehouse 24).

¹⁰Eduardo Saccone puts the date of origin for *De officiis* at 1541, citing Stefano Carrai, "Sulla data di composizione del 'De officiis' del Della Casa", *Rinascimento* 20 (1980): 383–387 (Saccone 129 n. 32).

language would withstand such a modest and simple style] (qtd. in Quondam 51). The stylistic differences between *Galateo* and Della Casa's other works, as well as *Galateo*'s curious narrative construction, have kept this idea in circulation.¹¹

A number of critics have identified similarities to Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* [The Book of the Courtier] (1528) in *Galateo*, including Peter Burke who claims that "there is little doubt" that Della Casa used Castiglione "without naming the book or its author" (83). The chapter on wit (Chapter 20 in the modern edition) clearly draws from Castiglione, as does the association of manners with "aesthetic virtuosity and technical excellence" rather than (principally) moral goodness, a shift that would "help substantiate an entirely different infrastructure of social relations—one giving body to a civil, as opposed to an ecclesiastical, power" (Arditi 55). However, Castiglione argues for service to a prince, while Della Casa's narrator endorses the *vita civile* and emphasises relations among men. Castiglione's ideal courtier succeeds because of his noble birth and his elevation by association with a noble superior. Della Casa seems to say that the nobility of virtue as demonstrated in deeds is equivalent to the nobility of birth, although his narrative structure undermines this declaration, as will be discussed later. *Galateo* does take part in the evolution of the Renaissance dialogue form after Castiglione's *Courtier*, which functioned as a "representation and celebration of the art of *civil conversazione* as practiced in the Italian courts" (Cox, *Renaissance* 25). In mid-sixteenth century Italy, a shift toward monological forms of dialogue, as well as a move toward dialectical rather than rhetorical dialogues in the vernacular (Cox, *Renaissance* 89), accommodated Della Casa's own authorial evolution. Although Della Casa's earlier writing had taken the form of orations and treatises, *Galateo* is a book of instruction in one voice from an older man to a younger one, originally published without chapter divisions as an extended series of instructions.¹² Using terms established by Virginia Cox, *Galateo* may be considered a closed dialogue in which the reader (the imagined student) occupies the position of interlocutor "diligently absorbing [his] master's words, without making any contribution of [his] own" (*Renaissance* 3), even if Della Casa's title uses the term "Trattato" [treatise].

Linguistically and conceptually, Della Casa's *Galateo* seems to rewrite the rules of proper behaviour to include the young man who is not born into polite society, a notion that the author does not in fact accept. In fact, *Galateo* is itself a sort of imitation, a mimesis of an *idiota*'s version of a courtesy book, as performed by a gentleman. The narrator of the text is called an *idiota*, an uncultured non-

¹¹Amedeo Quondam discusses this perception at length in his introduction to *Giovanni Della Casa: Un seminario per il centenario* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2006). Della Casa's secretary, Erasmo Gemini de Cessis, objected to Rucellai's other infamous claim that Della Casa intended for his papers to be burned; Gemini is responsible for the publication of the first edition of *Galateo* in 1558.

¹²Composed between 1551 and 1554, the *editio princeps* of *Galateo* was published posthumously in Venice in 1558 without chapter divisions or a preface. In the 1578 edition (Florence: Giunti), an editor added a prefatory index of "le cose più notabili" [the most noteworthy things] in the book, but left the text whole. The chapter divisions were established in the eighteenth century, in the Pasinello edition (Venice, 1728) and the bilingual Comino edition (Padua, 1728). Burke details a similar evolution of prefaces, annotations, and indexes in editions of Castiglione's *Courtier* (42–43).

courtier. The book's subtitle indicates that the instruction contained in the book is given "sotto la persona d'un vecchio idiota", that is, a narrator who is fictionalised and distanced from Della Casa. The *idiota* is performed by an educated gentleman and his performance betrays him at times, in learned allusions to classical authors (Petrarch, Boccaccio, Dante) and in his "parodic imitations of failed sprezzatura" when the narrator is clumsy or wrong (Berger 197). The contrast between the *idiota* as narrator and Della Casa as author is not simply one of learned manners versus experience but a conflict between new and old aristocrats, between those who have natural grace and manners and those who must be taught. The *idiota*'s failure shows that, according to Della Casa, imitation of gentlemanly behaviour is not possible by the unworthy: "The impersonation dramatizes [Della Casa's] antipathy toward a discourse aimed at alienating what was once rightfully the special property of nobles like himself and making it—in the words of the Dovehouse editors—'the common property of all men'" (Berger 212).

The earliest French translation of *Galateo* in 1562 by Jean du Peyrat¹³ reflected this cultural adaptation. Dedicated to Henri de Bourbon, Prince of Navarre (Henri IV), later king of France, the intended reader is clearly the court gentleman (unlike Della Casa's original) but Du Peyrat's preface speaks to the changing conception of a properly behaved *gentilhomme* whose virtue (*vertu*) will no longer be judged by his skill at horsemanship or arms or even his comportment with court ladies, but by "le service de table devant les Roys et Princes, la façon d'agencer son langage respectant les personnes selon leurs degrés et qualités, les oeillades, les gestes et jusques au moindre signe et clin d'oeil qu'il saurait faire" [his table manners before kings and princes, his way of harmonising his language according to the rank and quality of his audience, his glances, gestures and even the smallest wave and wink of the eye that he might make] (6–7). Du Peyrat proclaims the value of Della Casa's text for the instruction of French youth, and maintains the integrity of the original text. Della Casa was certainly not the first Italian writer to have had a direct influence on seventeenth-century French polite society. Both Castiglione's *Courtier* and Stefano Guazzo's *La Civil conversazione* (1575) were translated into French shortly after their publication and remained in circulation through the next century with a number of translations and reprintings.¹⁴ Several French works published in the seventeenth century followed the model of the *Courtier* directly, including *L'Honnête homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour* [The Gentleman or the Art of Pleasing at Court] (1630) by Nicolas Faret, a non-noble. Faret's text was immensely influential in France, and while it reproduced a number of passages from the *Courtier*, "Faret's text is devoid of the ambiguities that give the *Cortegiano* its unmistakable flavor" (Arditi 127). In *L'Honnête homme*, the source of honour

¹³Paris: Kerver, 1562. There were a number of subsequent translations into French, including an anonymous 1573 translation and a 1609 edition in French, Latin, German, and Spanish. Gilles Ménage published the definitive seventeenth-century French translation (Paris: Jolly, 1667) noted by many scholars of Della Casa.

¹⁴The *Cortegiano* was translated into French by Jacques Colin in 1537, Guazzo's *La Civil conversazione* by Gabriel Chappuys in 1579. On the French reception of these Italian works, see Magendie.

and glory for nobles is decidedly the king and the court, not inborn grace or honourable actions. For Faret as for Courtin later in the century, the subtle modes of self-fashioning permissible in Italian Renaissance societies had clearly given way to a firmly entrenched collective set of rules for social and political advancement.

The 1666 French translation of *Galateo* takes further liberties that adapt the text to seventeenth-century French customs.¹⁵ The French title *Galatée ou l'Art de Plaire Dans la Conversation* already reflects a change in context, replacing Della Casa's "customs and fashions" in social conversation with "the art of pleasing", a more active construction that seems to convey the expectation for social advancement via conversation germane to the salon society of the French seventeenth century in which successful courtiers were expected to learn and practice the art of conversation. The translator, Jean-Baptiste Du Hamel, acknowledges the value of *Galateo* and of Castiglione's *Courtier* as models of behavior, as well as Faret's *L'Honnête homme*, but notes that these rules have little use as intellectual exercises and are only valuable with real-world applications, presaging Courtin's practical treatise of concrete rules.¹⁶ Du Hamel admits that this is not a word-for-word translation, likening his work to that of a painter who adopts "le même air, d'imiter les mêmes postures, sans s'attacher trop scrupuleusement aux mêmes couleurs ni à la même draperie. Souvent même ils laissent échapper quelque trait de leur imagination, et ne sont pas fâchés de donner à leur ouvrage l'air d'un original" [the same look, imitates the same gestures, without clinging too closely to the same colours or the same draping; sometimes he even lets fly a bit of his own imagination, allowing himself to give his work the look of an original] (Préface, n. pag.).¹⁷ Even with this gesture toward imitation, Du Hamel's translation remains mostly literal. Du Hamel annotates the few specific passages he changed or omitted, and these choices occasionally flatten or remove the subversive effect of the *idiota* voiced by Della Casa, an effect that will become more pronounced in Courtin's imitation. In a section on the impropriety of telling sad stories, Du Hamel rewrites the passage in *Galateo* that offers a cure for someone who needs to relieve sadness with tears: one should either "medicarlo con la mostarda forte o porlo in alcun luogo al fumo" [give him strong mustard to eat, or put him in a room full of smoke] (*Galateo* 25; Dovehouse 48). In Du Hamel's version, tears can be induced by those in need "par diverses sortes de moyens qui ne sont pas fort difficiles" [by all kinds of methods that are not very difficult] (48), retaining the reference to those who need to cry

¹⁵For the purposes of this article, Jean-Baptiste Du Hamel's translation (Paris: Guignard, 1666) best serves the theme of imitation with its deliberate engagement with the task of rewriting *Galateo* for a French audience, as indicated in the revised title, the translator's preface, and the appendix of "Remarques" detailing the adaptations he made.

¹⁶"Quand un homme saurait toutes les règles du *Galatée*, du *Courtisan*, et de *L'honnête homme* de Monsieur Faret, s'il n'avait aucun commerce avec le monde, toutes ces règles lui seraient inutiles" [If a young man learned all of the rules of *Galateo*, *The Courtier*, and *The Gentleman* of Mr. Faret, if he had no interaction with the world, all of these rules would be useless to him] (Préface, n. pag.). An author of philosophic and scientific texts in Latin and a vicar, Du Hamel also published a translation of Castiglione's *Courtier* (Paris: Loyson, 1690).

¹⁷I have modernised the spelling and punctuation of excerpts from Du Hamel and Courtin.

but removing the absurd remedy voiced by the uneducated *idiota*. The memorable imagery is lost and so is the depth of the *idiota*'s ignorance that should render his authority on these matters suspect.

The *similitudo* imitation of Della Casa's *Galateo* falls to Courtin, with respect to the broad themes of *Galateo* and the goal of offering practical advice on manners. Courtin replicates Della Casa's discussion of forms of address for superiors and inferiors, or "ceremonies of duty" (*Galateo* Ch. 14; Courtin Ch. 5), and the necessity of following established standards in letter-writing (*Galateo* Ch. 16; Courtin Ch. 17). Without acknowledging a direct imitation of Della Casa by Courtin, Marie-Claire Grassi indicates a number of correlations between the two texts, including the notion of avoiding excess that appears as practical advice in Della Casa and as moral guidance in Courtin, especially in the sections added to the 1702 edition (Grassi 29). Familiar with royal courts but not himself a courtier, Courtin pursued a diplomatic career in the service of King Gustave of Sweden and Louis XIV, and was granted noble status in 1651. The beneficiary of both a classical education and direct experience with the rules of court etiquette, Courtin composed the *Nouveau traité* at the end of his career in order to pass on his acquired knowledge in both realms. *Galateo* was clearly one of the models for the *Nouveau traité*, but in the courtesy book genre the *similitudo* imitation encounters certain challenges.

Like Faret, Courtin uses a narrative style to convey his instructions, leaving behind the more playful dialogue form found in Castiglione and Della Casa. The aim of Courtin's book is to teach the rules of *honnêteté* and Christian morals, to offer a theoretical and a practical treatise on manners.¹⁸ These two goals separate Courtin from Della Casa at the outset, *honnêteté* being an amorphous term for the set of gentlemanly manners expected in French courtly circles¹⁹ and explicit instruction in Christian morality being outside of the purview of Della Casa's *idiota*. *Honnêteté* and *sprezzatura* (an untranslatable term for elegant behaviour that avoids extremes and is artfully expressed so that it does not seem put on) are perhaps distant cousins, but the difficulty of defining each term and each one's intrinsic connection to the society that produced it demonstrates in a metonymic way the difference between *Galateo* and *Nouveau traité de la civilité*. Courtin dispenses with the narrative doubling employed by Della Casa and dedicates the book to the Duc de Chevreuse, held up as a perfect model of civility.²⁰ He does not perform

¹⁸Courtin's other published works include *Traité de la Jalousie ou Moyen d'entretenir la paix dans le ménage* [Treatise on Jealousy or How to Maintain Peace in the Household] (1674), *Traité du point d'honneur ou règles pour converser et se conduire sagement avec les incivils et les fâcheux* [Treatise on the Mark of Honour or Rules on Conversation and Conducting Oneself Politely with Uncouth and Unpleasant People] (1675), and *L'Art de devenir éloquent* [The Art of Becoming Eloquent] (1677–80).

¹⁹Bury treats *honnêteté* as the "synthèse à la française" de la notion de civilité" [French synthesis of the concept of civility] (180).

²⁰Charles Honoré d'Albert de Luynes, Duc de Chevreuse, was a private advisor to Louis XIV and the son-in-law of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Minister of Finance to Louis XIV. He is descended from Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes (a favorite of Louis XIII) and Marie de Rohan, known as the

a dissimilar narrator but puts forth his instruction directly, dispensing with the veil of judgment that good manners are the domain of an elite group determined by birth. Rather, Courtin affirms that it is possible to teach manners to the uncouth (called *grossiers*) and claims that these *grossiers* could become part of civil society. It should be noted that while Della Casa plays with the evolving Italian dialogue form, composing a fictional monologic dialogue that is entitled a “Trattato”, Courtin offers a nonfiction, practical work that is a treatise in name and in function. In line with his effort to provide a meaningful guide to life at court, Courtin revised the second and subsequent editions to incorporate suggestions from his readers and to include new elements that he determined essential to “ce livre que l’on pourrait presque’appeler maintenant l’ouvrage de tout le monde” [this book that one could almost now call everyone’s work] (Avertissement, n. pag.). The moral character of the *Nouveau traité* expanded over time with material Courtin added to the revised editions, and was less a function of his professional or personal inclinations than the increasing moralisation of the French court in the late seventeenth century under the influence of Madame de Maintenon, the king’s companion. In addition, Courtin includes women in his intended audience in the 1681 edition, seeing this instruction as a means for them to transmit good manners to their children.

There are few mentions of women in *Galateo*, and when women are present in *Galateo*, they are used to illustrate defective behavior: “sensitivity and fastidiousness” in one section (*Galateo* 24; Dovehouse 46),²¹ and sensory disgust in another, the scene of a well-dressed woman washing dishes in the gutter. Della Casa’s pejorative rendering of women may be related to his ecclesiastical career, but it is not new to his work; in 1537 he composed the misogynist treatise *An uxor sit ducenda* [On Whether to Command One’s Wife], repeating the theme of the castrating power of the female figure found in some of his earlier poetry. The point of Della Casa’s reference to the high status woman doing low status work in public is to illustrate that beauty is found in unity and that inconsistency is ugly, not just in physical appearance but in speech and acts as well. The woman exhibits behavioral dissonance (a noble woman should not be doing this work) and she would therefore be displeasing even if there were no physical offense: “né perciò ti verrebbe di lei né odore né sapore aspero né suono né colore alcuno spiacevole né altrimenti farebbe noia al tuo appetito, ma dispiacerebbeti per sé quello sconcio e sconvenevol modo e diviso atto” [even if there were no harsh odour or taste from her, nor any irritating sound or colour, nor anything else about her that should trouble your senses, you would still be displeased by that unpleasant, unbecoming and unsuitable act] (*Galateo* 76–77; Dovehouse 87). But the suggestion of offensive odors and sounds implies that they might be present, and the picture is hardly flattering, especially since it is not offset by other positive female portraits in the book. Harry Berger interprets the scene as an illustration of the Renaissance

Duchesse de Chevreuse after her second marriage to Claude de Lorraine.

²¹“Questa tenerezza adunque e questi vezzosi modi si vogliono lasciare alle femmine” [Such sensitivity and such fastidiousness are best left to women] (*Galateo* 24; Dovehouse 46).

male's anxiety of disempowerment by women, that "the danger of being overcome by the desire to embrace the ideal and make it one's own is the danger of becoming effeminized" (223). Courtin, part of a court society in which women were instrumental in socialising men and creating venues for social talk, seems to exhibit no such fear. As part of the *vie mondaine*, the salons especially enabled women to gain social status because the gatherings were hosted by women and attended by a primarily female public, and because they were dedicated to conversation, an activity to which women were acknowledged to be ideally suited.²² Courtin addresses the "civilité des Dames" directly in the 1681 edition, noting that "C'était assez que leur marquer en général quelques principes, pour leur donner lieu de suppléer elles-mêmes le reste. Outre que la plupart des préceptes que l'on donne aux hommes, peuvent servir pour les femmes" [it was enough to indicate to them a few general principles to give them the chance to fill in the rest themselves. In any case, most of the rules that we give to men can apply to women] (Courtin xii).

Galateo is perhaps best known for its rules of comportment at table, even though these two sections are among the shortest in the book. In terms of table manners, there is a noticeable difference of degree of expected knowledge between the two books. For Della Casa, the instructions are brief and practical: do not gulp your food or stuff your cheeks; do not dirty your napkin so much that it is disgusting; do not sniff the wine or food of other guests; do not spit, scratch, or blow your nose at the table. In terms of the social aspect of eating, Della Casa notes that the eater must realise that everyone is watching and the watchers must be discreet about watching, holding their comments on how much or little the eater is eating, for example, because such behaviour reflects badly on the observer (*Galateo* 98–99). In general, Della Casa says very little about correcting the behaviour of other people, save for his anecdote about a "Messer Galateo" who gracefully and discreetly informs Count Ricciardo, an otherwise well-mannered gentleman about a small defect: that he makes an unpleasant sound when chewing. In fact, the correction comes second-hand, from the esteemed bishop of Verona, Giovanni Matteo Giberti, who had dined in the company of the gentleman the previous evening. The bishop wishes to convey this correction in the gentlest manner possible, and asks Galateo to offer it as a "un dono per sua parte" [gift on his behalf] that should be received "con lieto animo" [with a happy heart] (*Galateo* 12; Dovehouse 38). After a moment of embarrassment, the Count declares that "se tali fossero tutti i doni che gli huomini si fanno infra di loro, quale il suo è, eglino troppo più ricchi sarebbono che essi non sono" [men would be far richer than they are if all the gifts they gave each other were like (the bishop's)] (*Galateo* 12; Dovehouse 38).

By framing the example as an anecdote, Della Casa puts his narrator at a further remove from this lesson, and confirms that instruction in manners is properly given from those who are higher on the social scale (unlike his *idiot*, swiftly rendering the whole enterprise suspect). The way in which the bishop offers his

²²On the "mission civilisatrice" [civilising purpose] of women in the seventeenth-century French salons, see Timmermans and Goldsmith.

advice demonstrates proper behaviour that seems innate rather than learned, just as it maintains the power dynamic between the two men. Concerning table manners, Della Casa's non-confrontational approach preserves the code of politeness, as it politely allows the guest to be impolite: those who observe bad behaviour in a fellow diner should "keep him unaware of their attention so as to let him continue unembarrassedly to embarrass them with his disgusting table manners" and therefore to reinforce their own social standing as polite diners (Berger 51). Seen another way, the polite diner instinctively controls his behaviour for the pleasure of others: "the diner does not derive pleasure from physical enjoyment, but rather from the satisfaction of putting other people at their ease and receiving from them a sign of acceptance amongst well-educated people" (Jeanneret 44). The clear implication is that good manners are not open to all but to a certain subset who can intuit these lessons and who therefore do not need a book of instruction in the first place. Courtin, by contrast, believes that it is better to "guérir les défauts de notre prochain que leur insulter" [correct the mistakes of our neighbors than to insult them] and that one must also give instruction in Christian morals to these students of manners "car autrement c'est semer des terres incultes" [because otherwise one is sowing uncultivated ground] (xiii, xiv).

In his section on table manners, Courtin follows Della Casa fairly closely, warning against stuffing one's mouth, wiping one's fingers on the bread, and making one's napkin too dirty. In order to avoid such "indecencies" he insists on the use of a fork for serving and eating, unlike Della Casa's narrator for whom forks were not yet in general use.²³ Courtin duplicates Della Casa in his objection to watching others eat but with a slightly different tone, declaring that "la table [est] un lieu où il faut donner une entière liberté" [the table (is) a place where one must offer complete freedom] and ensure others' pleasure (114). In Courtin's system (unclouded by a proxy narrator), the emphasis is on pleasing others rather than finding pleasure in their shortcomings. In general, Courtin's instructions are more extensive than in *Galateo*, and occasionally veer into Christian lessons, as when the diner is advised to take the lowest place at the table "selon l'Évangile" [as the Bible tells us] (107). Courtin also expects gastronomic literacy of his student: in the event that he might need to serve a superior, the diner must know how to carve and serve meat properly (108). The rules dictate that he should serve the best piece of meat to his social superior and should take the least desirable one for himself, and Courtin therefore discusses in detail the best parts of various animals. He offers directions for serving certain dishes the diner might encounter at well-heeled tables: roasted pigeons should be served whole; oranges served with meat should also be carved and served; the head is the best part of a cooked fish and fish should

²³Forks were known but in limited use in sixteenth-century Europe. In the third volume of *Les Essais* in 1588, Michel de Montaigne noted in "De l'expérience" that he rarely used forks or spoons (III.xiii.480). English writer Thomas Coryate noted the unusual Italian practice of eating with a fork in his travel writing in 1608, a custom he adopted on his return to England. By the seventeenth century, the fork was common enough at the court of Louis XIV (1661–1715) that the king forbade its use in his presence (Braudel 206).

be portioned with a fork, not a knife. These instructions may appear to be aimed at the kitchen staff, but they are meant for the diner in the age of the *service à la française* when all cooked dishes were served at once and diners served themselves and others from common platters. The change to *service à la russe* with individual portions plated in the kitchen did not occur until the early nineteenth century.²⁴

Della Casa's *idiota* occasionally addresses his rules of behaviour to servants, a reflection of his marginal social status, but Courtin directs his lessons only to members of polite society. There is an underlying implication of service to one's peers, however, and Courtin's more refined student is expected to be accommodating and obliging to those in his circle. He must treat all visitors with respect, except those who are younger, of a lower rank, or servants (Courtin 134). Food preferences should not be aired, since they are "imaginary" and easily overcome if the diner could "n'aimer pas tant sa personne et ses appétits" [not love himself and his appetites so much] (Courtin 117). A well-mannered person must "prendre civilement tout ce que l'on vous présente, et si le dégoût en est naturellement invincible, comme il s'en rencontre en effet, il faut sans faire semblant de rien, laisser le morceau sur l'assiette et manger d'autre chose" [politely accept everything he is offered, and if he cannot overcome his distaste, as sometimes happens, he must leave the bit of food on the plate without making any sign of a problem and eat something else] (Courtin 117).

Berger illuminates the difference between these two approaches to table manners: emerging from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance construction of "home" was as a sanctuary from the violence outside: "an encastellated oasis of order and trust secure from the dangers lurking in the unpacified world outside the domus" (48). But with pacification of the outside threats, external perils enter the household in new forms, without the protective barrier of the "castle" walls: "hospitality and politeness become gestures of competition rather than of peace, functions of anxiety rather than of community, in the daily struggles of defensive self-representation" (48). Della Casa's narrator is still wrestling with the raw forms of domesticated competition and there is a sense that a guest at a dinner, for example, should keep a wary eye on those around the table who might disrupt his successful performance. By Courtin's time, there is a larger structure to preserve peace—court society—and diners are more eager to conform to this higher standard and belong to this structure than to compete with one another. The tone in *Galateo* is sometimes graphic and dismissive, emphasising that bad behaviour annoys or disgusts others. Advising that it is bad form to look inside your handkerchief after blowing your nose "come se perle o rubini ti dovessero esser discesi dal cèlabro" [as if pearls or rubies might have descended from your brain] the narrator declares that "sono stomachevoli modi ed atti a fare, non che altri ci ami, ma che, se alcuno ci amasse si disinnamori" [this is a disgusting habit which is not apt to make anyone love you,

²⁴The *service à la française* reached its peak of popularity at court tables in France in the mid-eighteenth century and gave way slowly to *service à la russe* after the French Revolution. Individual plated courses became the norm in restaurants by 1880 (Poulain & Neirinck 172).

but rather, if someone loved you already, he is likely to stop there and then] (*Galateo* 9; Dovehouse 35–36). Courtin is much more delicate and more concerned with shielding others than being judged by them: avoid blowing your nose in public, but if necessary, do it in a handkerchief while turning away from others and covering your face with the left hand, and never look inside the handkerchief (54).

Della Casa's construction of the "gentiluomo costumato" depends heavily on regulating the physical body, since the body is the visible demonstration of the "golden mean" of balance and proportion emphasised in the above-referenced "andare, stare, sedere" passage borrowed from Cicero (*Galateo* 79). The focus on the body is the "frutto di un codice che è del tutto esterno" [result of a code that is completely external] (Vanni 389), by which social rank is manifest externally. As Della Casa attempts a renovation of the "inner man" and shows that one's external image is a function of the inner self, he demonstrates the reflexive element of Renaissance self-fashioning: that one is not yet what one wants to become and that external forces are at play in the formation of one's ideal self.²⁵ In Della Casa, the difference between virtue and manners is between ascriptive and performative behavior, called *grazia* (inborn conduct) and *sprezzatura* (learned behavior) in the *Courtier* (Berger 181). The virtue/ascriptive pairing is therefore located in those of high birth and the manners/performative pairing is open to those who will adopt this behavior, those of whom Della Casa (behind his puppet narrator) is already suspicious. Elements of *grazia*, *misura* (balance), and *armonia* (harmony) are set up in contrast to poor manners that invite the scorn ("odio e disprezzo") of others (*Galateo* 2). Where the *rozzo* (bumpkin) is inharmonious and deformed in the eyes of others, the proper gentleman has physical attributes—both dress and outward manners—that counteract rusticity in visible ways (Vanni 387). This possibility of performance for social advancement introduces social competition across classes. Courtin, by comparison, works within a context in which civility distinguishes man from animal, not man from lesser men. Good manners are linked to reason and are natural to "l'esprit humain" (Courtin xiii). He states openly that class or rank does not automatically confer *honnêteté* since "les grands n'étant véritablement grands aux yeux des sages, qu'autant qu'ils sont humbles et vertueux" [the great are not truly great in the eyes of wise men unless they are also humble and virtuous] (Courtin 8). It is a mark of virtue in Courtin to put others first "jusqu'à avoir de l'horreur pour tout ce qui peut fâcher ou désobliger quelqu'un" [to the point that one will not tolerate anything that might anger or inconvenience someone] (9).

Honnêteté for Courtin therefore requires education and training in complex social rules and practices as well as Christian moral codes, a transformation of the Ciceronian *paideia* from a "savoir encyclopédique" based in science to a "savoir mondain" or fluency with polite society (Bury 200). Emmanuel Bury uses examples from Jacques Du Bosc and Faret to show the transformation in the seventeenth-century of *paideia*, formerly an education in letters to enable men to live well in every sense, here an education intended to perfect but not supplant the "natural" or

²⁵On reflexivity, see Correll.

innate.²⁶ This is an education with the goal of functioning at court, not education for the sake of reaching a humanistic ideal. For Courtin, there is nothing more *insupportable* than vanity and pride, nothing more pleasing than friendliness and submission, and modesty reigns over all. In Courtin's model *complaisance* or deference is required in all things, both exterior and interior. Clothes, furnishings, and servants must conform to one's standing "parce que ce sont autant de signes qui nous marquent" [because these are so many signs that define us] (Courtin 76). In addition, one's emotions must conform to those in one's circle and they must seem genuine; true *complaisance* requires the gentleman to "rapporter son intérieur et son extérieur à l'extérieur et l'intérieur de la personne qui a droit de l'exiger" [align his interior and his exterior to the exterior and interior of the person who has a right to demand it] (Courtin 70). There is no implication of competition among those who adopt polite behaviour in Courtin; rather, civility is owed to one's fellows. Bury sees this approach as "une des originalités les plus frappantes de la synthèse française: l'art de ne se piquer de rien, le refus de la distinction 'culturelle', qui repose en fait sur une véritable amnésie maîtrisée" [one of the most striking innovations in the French synthesis (of civility) [is] the art of never putting on airs, a refusal of 'cultural' distinctions, that in fact relies on an actual controlled amnesia] (200).²⁷

Both Courtin and Della Casa endorse the concept of *sprezzatura*, but the two authors privilege the "natural" aspect of *sprezzatura* in different ways. For Courtin, those who are naturally graceful do not need an instruction book: practiced modesty and *honnêteté* are not equivalent to "la bonne grace ou d'un certain air et attrait qui est comme naturel dans les actions de certaines personnes" [the pure grace or a certain air and aspect that seems natural in some people's actions] (1). The *Nouveau traité* is not meant for those who already possess this "grace" (*grazia*) but for those who will learn to be graceful in a complex social system while appearing natural (a variation of *sprezzatura*). In *Galateo*, honour is no longer natural or hereditary (or constant); it must be continually performed and maintained against judgment since Della Casa's student no longer inhabits the feudal castle of honour (with *grazia*) but the dangerous battlefield/marketplace/theater of self-fashioning performance (of *sprezzatura*). Jorge Arditì confirms that Della Casa's student seeks not grace but honour, "a far more appropriate word to denote the quality bestowed by anyone other than a prince" and one that corresponds to Della Casa's system

²⁶In Du Bosc, "toute la réflexion est centrée sur une conception du naturel qu'il s'agit de perfectionner grâce aux lumières de l'éducation" [the entire text is focused on a notion of the natural that must be perfected by the enlightenment of education] (Bury 203). For Faret, the humanist model on which seventeenth-century notions of *honnêteté* are based "tient à la fois au modèle aristocratique du gentilhomme, où le naturel et l'inné sont premiers, mais elle doit aussi beaucoup à toute une réflexion traditionnelle sur le bon et le mauvais usage de la science" [follows at once the aristocratic model of the gentleman in which the natural and the innate are primary, but also is indebted to traditional thinking on the good and bad use of science] (Bury 200).

²⁷"The phrase "se piquer de rien" comes from La Rochefoucauld; in *Les Maximes* the expression refers to the *honnête homme*'s ability to avoid pedantry in salon conversation and to regulate his own knowledge for the group's sake (Bury 192).

in which “the instruction is to honour one’s superior and to accept and cherish the honour that comes in return” (119). Reason and nature in *Galateo* are trumped by *l’usanza* (practice) and *il maestro costume* (dominant customs), both cultural forces (Berger 206).

Della Casa’s book highlights service to fellow citizens and the state, encourages the reader to adapt to the customs of the region in terms of beard and hair length, and “conviensi fare dell’altrui voglia suo piacere, dove non ne segua danno o vergogna; ed in ciò fare sempre e dire più tosto a senno d’altri che a suo” [if there is no danger of harm or shame, one should make other people’s desires one’s own and do and say rather what others like to hear than what you yourself like] (*Galateo* 22; Dovehouse 45). Even *grazia* becomes a practical art: “Il concetto di ‘grazia’ (un abile *display* di virtù e qualità), pur rientrando nell’ambito dell’estetica, assume un aspetto pratico” [the concept of “grazia” (an adept display of virtue and status), though it enters into the realm of esthetics, takes on a practical aspect] (Falvo 133). But these conceits are not believable since they are spoken by the narrator who is performed, not the gentleman performer. Many of Della Casa’s instructions speak out against demonstrations of individual prowess in these simplistic ways because he is critical of this new form of learned politeness. Della Casa’s narrator claims that he is not concerned with “vice and virtue” but only with manners, “men’s errors and not their sins” (*Galateo* 32; Dovehouse 54) but this is part of the ruse constructed by the author. Instead of teaching “virtù” to the young gentleman, *Galateo* offers “cosa molto a virtù somigliante” [something very similar to virtue] (*Galateo* 1; Dovehouse 32), and seeks to teach “pleasant and polite manners” that will inspire “la benevolenza di coloro co’quali noi viviamo” [the benevolence of those with whom we live] (*Galateo* 1; Dovehouse 32). The *idiot* narrator wholeheartedly endorses the *vita civile*, but Eduardo Saccone notes that the instruction to please others above all rings false for a man of the church who cannot possibly equate “l’accoglimento e il riconoscimento da parte della ‘brigata’ che assicura o costituisce la via al successo” [the acceptance and recognition from the ‘troupe’ that ensures or establishes the path to success] with the ecclesiastical goal of virtue, the “salute dell’anima” [salvation of the soul] (136).

For his part, Courtin instructs his reader to follow custom, but even this imitation must be natural lest it be unsuccessful and even insulting: if one’s words or actions seem to surpass one’s natural talents “la contrainte et l’irregularité paroissent aussitôt et l’amour que l’on a pour la simplicité y fait trouver une indécence qui rebute et qui choque” [strain and inconsistency soon appear and the love that one has for simplicity reveals a coarseness that is shocking and repellent] (13). In sum, “la civilité doit être, comme nous avons déjà dit, toute libre, toute naturelle, et nullement façonnée” [civility must be, as we have already said, completely free, completely natural, and in no way showy] (Courtin 260). However, at the court of the Sun King behaviour is often counter to nature and in fact highly constructed. This is the challenge of the French court: acting natural in the most unnatural situations, being well-educated in this realm without showing one’s learning. Della Casa’s narrator does not shy away from brusque admonitions: don’t sneeze loudly

or spray people with your cough or sneeze, don't yawn because it makes others yawn, keep your hands where they can be seen. The aspiring French gentleman learns other kinds of rules from Courtin: when a superior sneezes in your presence, rather than say "Dieu vous assiste (God bless you)" out loud, you must "se découvrir, et faire une profonde révérence, faisant ce souhait intérieurement" [remove your hat and bow low before them, saying the wish silently to yourself] (57). When eating, do everything possible to please your host and remain unobtrusive, but if the food is too hot and burns your mouth (and only as a last resort), put your plate near your mouth, cover your mouth with your hand, spit the food out, beckon for a servant and hand the plate to him (120). When choosing a seat at a salon in someone's home, be mindful of the hierarchy of chairs: the *fauteuil* (upholstered chair) is for the highest rank, the armchair is next highest, and the folding chair last. Above all, never sit on the bed (52). If *honnêteté* is the whole of the gentleman's behavior, the proper term for the elegance of style that makes the ridiculous natural might be called *finesse*. Performing with *honnêteté* in these situations combines education and natural grace with a tolerance for the absurd, the *finesse* that goes a step beyond *sprezzatura*.

Elias clarifies the role that the seventeenth-century French court plays in shaping Courtin's rulebook, noting that Courtin "spoke from a court society which was consolidated to the highest degree—the court society of Louis XIV" (85). Various sections of the *Nouveau traité* give information on forms of address for the King, Queen, and other members of the court; how to knock on a door at court (scratch with the little finger); and protocol when walking (always stop and let the King, Queen, Dauphin and any royal children pass). Elias suggests that a continuous amplification of social rules for civilisation resulted in the more elaborate rules found in Courtin (58–59). There is certainly a higher register of courtesy in Courtin—less talk of disgusting habits and a refinement of already refined manners. The rules are more numerous and more detailed: in fine company it is "malséant de faire certaines grimaces d'habitude: rouler la langue dans la bouche, de se mordre les lèvres, de se relever la moustache, de s'arracher le poil, de cligner les yeux, de se frotter les mains de joie, de se faire craquer les doigts en se les tirant l'un après l'autre, de se gratter, de hausser les épaules" [impolite to make certain habitual facial expressions, to roll one's tongue, to bite one's lips, to lift up one's mustache, to pull out hairs, to blink one's eyes, to rub together one's hands with joy, to crack one's fingers by pulling on them one after the other, to scratch oneself, to shrug one's shoulders] (Courtin 56).

Della Casa's narrator counsels his reader that it is improper to point out something disgusting by saying "Deh sentite, di grazia, come questo pute" [Now Sir, please smell how this stinks] and proper to say "Non lo fiutate perciocché pute" [Don't smell this because it stinks] (*Galateo* 8; Dovehouse 34). Courtin's advice, at a remove from such base behavior, draws a connection between corporeal actions (spitting, scratching, sneezing) and animality. In Courtin's more philosophical mode, reason dictates that "plus nous nous éloignons de la manière des bêtes, plus nous nous approchons de la perfection, où l'homme tend par un principe na-

turel” [the more we distance ourselves from beastly behavior, the closer we get to perfection, a state toward which man naturally tends] (14). We may still need to sneeze, cough, or spit, but as humans we must do so “le plus honnêtement, c’est à dire le moins approchant des bêtes qu’il est possible” [in the most refined way, that is the least like animals as possible] (Courtin 15). Della Casa’s narrator has a lower standard: “diciamo che i modi piacevoli sono quelli che porgon diletto o almeno non recano noia ad alcuno de’ sentimenti, né all’appetito né all’imagination di coloro co’ quali noi usiamo” [pleasant manners are those which delight or at least do not irritate any of the senses, the desires, or the imagination of those with whom we are dealing] (*Galateo* 75; Dovehouse 86). The evolution of manners evidenced by Courtin seems to confirm Elias’s claim that in earlier stages of development, bad or revolting behaviour provoked weaker reactions than in later stages: “This behavior was not regarded as a ‘pathological anomaly’ or a ‘perversion’ but rather as an offense against tact, courtesy, or good form” (121). Courtin’s *gentil-homme* clearly exists in a context that is more sensitive to disgust, more reactive to “animal” behavior, as compared to Della Casa in terms of the number of explicit mentions of base behaviour and the manner in which such behaviour is addressed. Della Casa’s *idiota* views such offenses as fairly minor, while Courtin suggests that these same faults may be “perversions” of the naturally graceful *esprit humain*. Grassi confirms that civility in the *Nouveau traité* “n’est plus le souci d’un élite, besoin momentané d’un courtisan ou d’un homme de salon, elle est le devoir de l’homme ‘du monde’ dans son universalité: être poli, c’est tout simplement assurer son salut” [is no longer the concern of an elite, the momentary need of a courtier or a salon member, it is the obligation of the “civilised man” in his entirety: to be polite is quite simply to guarantee his salvation] (33).

A comparison of Courtin’s *Nouveau traité de la civilité* with his ostensible model, Della Casa’s *Galateo*, reveals that the courtesy book rests on a different foundation in seventeenth-century France. Grassi notes that Courtin’s style is distinct from his Italian predecessors: “Rompan avec la technique du dialogue platonicien, chère au *Livre de courtisan*, ou avec l’entretien (dialogue) fictif de style parfois métaphorique propre au *Galatée*, Courtin fait là encore oeuvre de synthèse et d’innovation” [Breaking with the technique of Platonic dialogue, so dear to the *Book of the Courtier*, or with the fictional dialogue and sometimes metaphorical style embodied by *Galateo*, Courtin creates here a work of synthesis and innovation] (31). Della Casa constructed his manual on a deliberately false claim—that manners can be taught—but one that he pursues with admirable literary gusto. Lacking the doubled perspective offered by Della Casa’s own voice and his *idiota* narrator, Courtin’s rulebook is straightforward and somewhat naïvely pledged; the silliness and ephemerality of some of these rules is never called into question. Even at points of direct imitation, Courtin is somber where Della Casa is playful. To counsel against removing ashes from food by blowing on it before serving it, Della Casa uses the memorable idiom “mai vento non fu senza acqua” [there was never wind without rain] (*Galateo* 14; Dovehouse 39). In Courtin’s hands, what was poetic becomes a lifeless directive: “Si vous serviez quelque chose où il y eût de la

endre, comme quelquefois sur des truffes, il ne faut jamais souffler dessus, mais il faut les nettoyer avec le couteau, le souffle de la bouche dégoûtant quelquefois les personnes: outre que cela jette la cendre sur la table” [If you are serving something that might have ashes on it, as sometimes happens with truffles, you must never blow on them but clean them with a knife, since the breath from one’s mouth sometimes disgusts others, besides which it spreads ashes on the table] (Courtin 116).²⁸ Considering only the quantity and complexity of the rules, the French version may seem more sophisticated, but the uncritical acceptance of these societal rules makes it duller and more simplistic by comparison. Courtin seems acclimated to the froth of high society and his text lacks the weight of subtly posed questions about the validity of this endeavor brought by Della Casa’s phantom hand.

There is, of course, a reason for Courtin’s perfunctory style: the source of the fashions that dictate these rules is the court. If the student of proper behaviour has no access to court, says Courtin, he must find someone familiar with the court and follow that model, but the focus never leaves court society. Unlike Della Casa’s civil society, where there is some fluidity in codes of conduct and performance, for Courtin’s *gentilhomme* potential social standing exists only through the customs of the court and those connected to it. Seen as a successor to Faret as a book of flattery and a means of “social arrivisme”, Courtin wrote the *Nouveau traité* in a context of royal centrality that “had attained, among the higher classes, the same sort of solidity that *ecclesias* possessed for the men and women of the Middle Ages” (Arditi 133). What seems absurd to modern-day readers was necessary to social success then, since royal centrality “opened or foreclosed channels of status and power” (Arditi 134). Conformity was required; mockery of these practices, even secondhand, did not enter into the equation. The shadow of Louis XIV as absolute monarch even falls across Courtin’s pages as he swears allegiance to fashion, “sous cette maîtresse absolue qu’il faut faire ployer la raison” [this absolute mistress to which reason must bend] unless one intends to abandon civil society (72). Courtin subsumes individuality and reason to fashion, in spite of his appeal to Christian values throughout the book, a sign that he is wholly invested in the sentiment of his age.²⁹ The *finesse* that is required of an *honnête homme* adds a layer of effort to the Italian *sprezzatura*, even as it insists that the effort appear natural.

In Della Casa, *sprezzatura* means to appear naturally graceful; for Courtin, *honnêteté* means to be remarked by others and *finesse* means to adhere to others’ arcane and confining social rules. Della Casa’s concept of beauty from a classical standard depends on unity and consistency of act and person, on an individual level that then interacts with a larger system. The modern example, the *idiota* himself, is not a model but a counterexample; the true model for excellent manners is the gracious and forthright bishop Giberti whose presence is merely suggested

²⁸In Della Casa, the cooked food is a pear. Du Hamel removes this instruction entirely, calling it and similar passages “peu utiles (of little use)” (193).

²⁹Courtin does allow that Christian morals will allow those with the proper sense of “judgment and wisdom” to temper fashion with modesty, but he admits that the two systems of behaviour are paradoxical (74).

in an earlier section, and who would, of course, never need a book of manners himself. The *idiota* fails at *sprezzatura* and his task of teaching good behaviour because manners cannot be learned; ultimately there can be no *sprezzatura* without *grazia*. *Sprezzatura* by a non-noble is unthinkable to Della Casa, unperformable and certainly impossible to write. From this perspective, Della Casa seems to show that bad behaviour is not merely unfortunate but perverse (counter to reason) in those outside the pre-defined polite class, the reason he makes such a spectacle of vulgarity in *Galateo* and the reason he keeps such a rhetorical distance from it. There is an evolution in complexity of manners from Della Casa to Courtin, but in terms of imitation Courtin has remodeled the *idiota*'s rules, not those (in fact, unwritten) of the true gentleman. Della Casa's complex stylistic approach to *Galateo*, *scherzo* or not, makes the doubled text impervious to replication even if the literal content was fertile territory for imitators. The art of graceful manners performed by Della Casa's ideal gentleman remains unwritten. A rereading of *Galateo* as an imperfectly imitated text reinforces its literary importance, just as Cox's rereading of Torquato Tasso's *Malpiglio* as a successor to Castiglione's *Courtier* "with due attention to its rhetorical structure...and to the delicate web of allusions around which its meaning is spun" ("Tasso" 918) reveals it as a statement about the changed environment in which this courtier acts, far removed from Castiglione's "perfect courtier". Similarly, Della Casa's narrative game betrays a profound cynicism about the value of a book of manners for the gentleman in the changing environment of late Renaissance Italian civil society. *Galateo* is not, ultimately, an amusing book of pre-modern manners, a bumpkin's guide to high society; it is instead a complex and faintly melancholy effort to sanctify the past and preserve for a small circle of initiates the image not of the perfect courtier but of the perfect (and extinct) *vita nobile*.³⁰

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³⁰I am grateful to the readers of an earlier draft of this article for their invaluable suggestions, particularly with regard to Della Casa and his literary context.

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