

Fencing Etiquette

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To set the cause above renown,
To love the game above the prize,
To honour, while you strike him down,
The foe that comes with fearless eyes;
To count the life of battle good,
And clear the land that gave you birth,
Bring nearer yet the brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth...

Sir Henry Newbolt (1862 -1938) (Evangelista, 2000:14)

Introduction:

Fencing etiquette is the rules and customs, which are applied to the behaviour of the participants. It is important to the study of Renaissance rapier combat because it is what adds flavour to the combat art. It is also important because rapier combat in the Renaissance was the purview of gentlemen of the period, and as such for an accurate recreation of the combat art the participants should act in a manner which befits the ideal of the gentleman. Renaissance fencing etiquette is those rules and customs that were applied to the study and act of rapier combat in the period.

It is important for a full explanation of this important concept, especially with regard to the Renaissance side of things for the concepts to be explained from a Renaissance viewpoint. This is not to say that modern views should be ignored, instead these should be included, as they are extremely relevant to the study of such etiquette.

It is through the use of etiquette both on the tournament field and off it that a fencer in the Renaissance concept is imbued with the elements of the gentleman. Through such elements taken into account the gentleman gains renown for being an honourable opponent, and gentlemanly to his opponents. Without the use of the gentlemanly aspects, through pure combat ability the fencer gains notoriety rather than renown, and is known as a duellist and not a gentleman. It is a much higher station to gain renown and to be regarded as a gentleman rather than a duellist with notoriety.

Such ideas and ideals are important to the approach and performance of the combatant. If the combatant accepts the ideals of the gentleman in his approach then he performs in a gentlemanly fashion and through such performance, becomes known as a gentleman rather than a duellist, and also is able to aspire to the higher ideals of rapier combat. If the combatant does not accept the ideals in his approach he does not in general consider performance as a gentleman to be important, and as such will not. Thus through his skill he may win but he is not able to aspire to the higher ideal of renown and only gains notoriety for his efforts.

These concepts must be integrated into the fencer at the first instance of his training for them to take root and thus become a part of his approach. This should be executed through demonstration and inspiration through the fencer's teacher. In this, the teacher has a large role to play in the education of the mind of the fencer. The teacher can only do so much in the education of the fencer, it is up to the fencer to accept such ideas and concepts presented to him, but they should be presented to the fencer so that they do have the chance to accept such ideals.

To be effective does not mean a reduction in courtesy, or vice versa. Effectiveness in combat can be maintained with courtesy and other gentlemanly attributes. In a lot of cases an increase in one means an increase of the other. The fencer should be taught the use of style and grace over brute power and force. To win by style, grace and true skill, is much more commendable than the use of brute force and power.

To begin with general ideas of fencing etiquette will be drawn from the modern world of sport fencing. This will form a basis for the study of fencing etiquette. From these ideas the study of Renaissance fencing etiquette can proceed. Importantly the Renaissance fencing etiquette will rely heavily on texts from the period and important concepts, which are detailed in them. These concepts will be explained as the argument progresses. It is important that they are not isolated from the material from which they come but are explained and described from the point of view that such material expresses.

This article is designed to educate the new fencer in the manners and courtesy of the art of fence, and bring to light the importance of such concepts for the more experienced fencer. It is hoped that through this article an appreciation of the concepts, which this paper brings to light, will eventuate in those who read it and an acceptance of the importance of such concepts to Renaissance fencing and fencing in general.

The Modern View: Modern Fencing Texts

The Code

"The accumulated collection of written and unwritten rules and customs, as well as the traits, characteristics, philosophy and behaviour of the ideal swordsperson, ... loosely and generally refer[red] to as the code. As in the code of chivalry or the code duello." (Evangelista, 2000:298)

The code which fencers follow is important to their attitude to their game. It is this code which sets out modes of suitable behaviour both on and off the combat arena. This code of etiquette must be integral to the fencer as it sets out how the fencer will behave. It is through this code of etiquette that fencing gains much of its flavour, and as such it is greatly important; "an extensive code of etiquette defining the acceptable patterns of behavior has developed, giving fencing much of its unique flavor." (Palfy-Alpar, 1967:60).

It is important that this code is considered both inside and outside of the places in which fencing takes place. This is because without the use of the code outside as well as inside the code will not really become a part of the fencer, and will then seem artificial. "Both inside and outside the salle, the fencer ... subscribes to a code of conduct that is far beyond what most people think of as good sportsmanship" (Evangelista, 2000:297) This code goes far beyond good sportsmanship because it is not only applied while fencing but also before and after fencing. The fencer must act with courtesy to their opponents before and after the bout because it is important that the good opponent is respected, thus general manners are important. This involves acting in a congenial manner toward all that are present, and not just one's opponents.

"Higher levels of behavior are required of the competitor in fencing than most other sports." (Palfy-Alpar, 1967:60) This is because it is a past time that deals with weapons. The fact that fencing deals with weapons means that higher levels of behaviour are necessary to prevent careless acts which could result in injuries or even death. It is also within these levels of behaviour that the elements of safety, which are vital to fencing, are instilled.

The Fencer as a Gentleman

"Fencing is still a sport for people who conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen, and the accepted standards of fencing conduct are universal." (Bower, 2003) This statement says a great deal about what it means to be a fencer. There are standards of fencing etiquette, which are worldwide, unfortunately in the heat of competition in which sport fencing is involved; these manners sometimes go awry. The sense of manners is important, it is important that the fencers conduct themselves in a way, which brings credit to themselves and their masters;

"As a fencer, conduct yourself with honesty, courtesy, dignity, and grace at all times, never engaging in any behaviour that would bring disgrace upon yourself, your Master, or the sword." (Evangelista, 2000:302)

It has been said that; "The manners of the fencer are those of the instinctive gentleman." (Palfy-Alpar, 1967:60) and it is to this standard that all fencers should measure themselves. To conduct oneself as a gentleman requires that the best thoughts of what is right are used by the particular fencer, and that they do not sink themselves by their conduct to anything lower than this standard. "The cardinal rule is always to behave as the born gentleman must, with toleration and restraint." (Palfy-Alpar, 1967:61). Toleration needs to be used when confronting those, which do not accept the standard so that even in their disagreements the fencer is honourable and restraint in their defence. Restraint is also important so that the fencer does not commit any act that could be seen as lowering their standard of behaviour.

“Fencing students should be especially courteous to their teachers at all times, they should stand at the ready in a respectful way, and listen attentively during instruction.” (Docherty, 2001)

One’s fencing instructor demands respect at all times, and to discuss matters not pertaining to the class, or to speak while the instructor is speaking is to show a high of discourtesy. It must be remembered that often, the instructor is teaching on a volunteer basis, and that they are teaching merely to impart knowledge, which they have gained. It is also important with regard to this aspect that the instructor is teaching from a position of knowledge and that the student does listen in an attentive way so that none of the instruction is missed. To show discourtesy to the instructor also demonstrates the fencer to be devoid of those qualities that make up the gentleman and true student of the blade.

Qualities of the Gentleman Fencer

The qualities of the gentleman fencer are important to consider if it is going to be possible to address the idea and ideal of the gentleman fencer. It is also necessary to consider those attributes and qualities, which should not be present in such a person. Evangelista states that; "Conceit, arrogance, vanity, self-importance, and a swelled head are no substitutes for a good lunge." (Evangelista, 2000:220). This gives a list of those attributes that the gentleman fencer should avoid. Pallfy-Alpar enumerates in his *Masque and Sword* (1967) that;

“The qualities of modesty, neatness, and polite demeanor are essential characteristics. They recommend their possessor to society much more than a conceited, slovenly, or aggressive self-presentation.” (Pallfy-Alpar, 1967:60)

These qualities are good for the fencer, either modern or Renaissance, if he is to be respected as a fencer. The negative attributes, which he names, will only lead to the fencer being less respected, no matter how many tournaments he wins. It is important that the fencer considers these attributes every time he’s at the fencing school or out of it.

Ego is an essential part of the fencer but he should not rely upon it or become egotistical in his fencing otherwise he will miss a great deal of the courtesy that is essential to the combat art in which he performs. Evangelista states; "You must keep egotism out of your fencing. Egotism has no place in your training, ... or your fencing persona. It is an ugly, misleading companion." (Evangelista, 2000:219). It is an ugly companion for if egotism is allowed to flourish then the fencer will see things in a much different light, each loss will be seen as a blow to the ego, rather than an educational experience. This is further highlighted in; "You stop measuring when you think you are the ruler by which all things are measured. And when you stop measuring, you stop thinking." (Evangelista, 2000:219). The thinking fencer has all of the mental attributes to succeed against any opponent, the fencer who does not think is doomed to have his game limited to only the physical. Thinking allows the fencer to evaluate and learn, and thus improve his game. The over use of ego will also lead to the fencer adopting a superior attitude to his opponents; “We should avoid a superior or disdainful manner towards any opponent at any time.” (Pallfy-Alpar, 1967:61). If this happens then the fencer will not respect their opponents and this will also lead to their downfall. This will be due to overconfidence, which can be a direct product of this sort of attitude. The process of fencing also has rules of etiquette involved, from the moment a person enters the *salle* to the moment he leaves.

The Process of Fencing

"It is important that fencers are aware of other people and their equipment. It is a breach of etiquette to step over or knock another's sword or polearm, as is touching another's equipment unnecessarily. It is also poor etiquette to leave one's equipment carelessly, where it might promote such a breach of etiquette. For instance a sword left standing against a wall may fall and distract someone or cause an accident." (Docherty, 2001)

The placement and organisation of one's equipment is an important part of the process of etiquette that must be applied when one enters the *salle*. Leaving equipment lying about is also a matter of safety, as is stated above. A person should ensure that they leave their equipment in a place where it will not be in the way of anyone. In most *salles* sword-racks are supplied so that weapons have a safe place to be put. The next part of the process happens when the fencer steps on to the fighting arena.

"Whenever you step onto the fencing strip, you should fence the very best game that's in you." (Evangelista, 2000:227). It is an insult to your opponent and your master not to fight with the full capacity that you have. Going soft on a newer fencer only means that openings in your defence may be left, and through this if the person can be beaten because they have underestimated your opponent, they lose due to your relaxed attitude. It is important also that a person fences the best game so that the opponent can also learn from the experience. At the beginning of the bout there is an element of etiquette, which should be observed.

"Fencers always salute each other before putting on their masks. In a tournament the director, the audience, and then the opponent are quickly saluted." (Bower, 2003). The salute is important, as it is a mark of respect to the opponent and those who observe the bout. Pallfy-Alpar examines the process with more detail, and adds an important element to the process; "At the beginning of a bout, the fencer should always introduce himself to his opponent ... if they are unknown to him, and then salute them in greeting." (Pallfy-Alpar, 1967:61). The introduction should be friendly but formal in nature, this additional part of the process also means that the introduction will lessen some of the tension that will be evident. It is also a great way to promote friendship between the combatants, and encourage other points of etiquette during the bout.

"During the bout, he should avoid rough or discourteous play or attacking an opponent who has not put himself on guard." (Pallfy-Alpar, 1967:61). Rough or discourteous play and attacking the opponent who is not ready is the sign of a fencer who has a complete disregard for the history and philosophy of the art in which they participate. It is also a hollow victory to score a hit on an opponent who is not ready. The fencer should be graceful and skilful in their assault, and not use brute power and force to score their hit.

"A fencer does not claim touches against the opponent, but may refuse to accept a point if, in one's opinion, it was not a good touch." (Bower, 2003). Claiming touches against an opponent is also a sign of a lack of the gentlemanly graces, it is important that the acknowledgment of a hit comes from the person who received it, because they would be the best judge of the hit. The second part of the statement is also important. If the attacker feels that the touch was not good they should tell the opponent, and thus not take a touch, which they feel was somewhat dubious in nature. It is also important to remember that; "If a fencer scores cleanly and correctly, the touch will be called." (Bower, 2003). The process of how a bout is fought and won is more important than who wins the bout.

"How you win is ... important, if not more important, than any individual victory. You must win decisively, cleanly, and gallantly." (Evangelista, 2000:301). A fencer who wins, or loses and fights with grace, skill and courtesy will be much more respected than one who fights and wins with brute force and power. The attitude of the fencer is exposed in the manner in which they fence, those which use dramatics in order to win show themselves to be shallow, and their game to be superficial; "The best fencers rely on ability, not on dramatics, in order to win." (Bower, 2003).

Taking hits is part of the game, not everyone will win, and no one is totally untouchable. Remember the ebb and flow of wins and losses is fluid and can change without expectation. Taking the hit in a graceful manner is an important part of the game; "When you get hit, instead of taking it personally, acknowledge the skilful maneuver and congratulate your opponent on an excellent bit of fencing." (Evangelista, 2000:221). Congratulating your opponent on their skill is a gracious thing to do and demonstrates the fencer to be graceful and honourable. Resenting the hit will only cause the person to become angry, and will often lead to the person becoming more vulnerable to other hits. Remember, what is past is past, and there is nothing that can be done to change it; "rather than wasting time resenting your opponent's touch, ... focus on the process of fencing and set about improving your lot." (Evangelista, 2000:221). To have an opponent who is a challenge is a great thing as it enables people to fence the best that they have in them and have a great bout. To have only opponents who are inferior in skill means that there is less of a challenge and the fencer will learn less, losing is a learning process, and it must be accepted as such.

"At the end of every bout, whether you win or lose, salute, shake hands, smile, and say, "Thank you." No one should be able to tell from your expression, tone, gesture, or manner, whether you have just won or lost." (Evangelista, 2000:302)

What happens at the end of the bout is as important as what happens during the bout. It is important that the fencer is able to show grace toward their opponent, and also to thank them for the bout. A fencer who storms off the field, and does not give their opponent the due credit shows a shallowness that is not respected. The process of fencing is far more important than the outcome, and a fencer who does not realise this is doomed to a shallow game of wins, losses, and point scoring. A person who does realise this opens themselves up to a much more intricate game, and is a much better ambassador for the game.

All in the Attitude

"This [philosophy] will influence all the choices you make throughout your fencing career. It will determine how deep or shallow your understanding of the game will be, the level of your eventual skill, your behaviour on the fencing strip, how you handle your winning and losing, the length of your fencing life, and even how others see you. This is your fencing worldview." (Evangelista, 2000:259)

A fencer's attitude to combat and fencing in general will affect the level of etiquette that they subscribe to. The fencer's philosophy will assist in the definition of this. As Evangelista (2000) states above it is important in defining how the fencer will behave and their responses to winning and losing. It will also define how deep their game is, is the tournament the be-all and end-all of the fencer's existence, or is the process of fencing more important? This is involved in the development of character.

"During the study of the sword, as well as learning to fence, the development of one's character is of paramount importance. It is said that Fencing begins with manners, and ends with manners. However fencing etiquette is not only for the practice arena but for everyday life, it costs us nothing to be polite." (Docherty, 2001)

A fencer's development of their character will define to what importance that manners are held to the person. It is important that this development is headed in the correct direction from the beginning otherwise their outlook on fencing will be very limited. It is true that such etiquette is not only for the fencing arena but also for the outside world, a person's attitude to manners and etiquette will be influenced by their experiences in the *salle* and on the tournament field. Also the reverse is true, the manners developed in the outside world will influence the matters of etiquette while fencing and also before and after. It is the attitude of the fencer, which defines their fencing worldview and defines the depth of their game; "Those who do believe, as I do, that fencing is more than just racking up touches, know that understanding ... brings both strength and nobility to the game." (Evangelista, 2000:xix).

Honour

"Honor is integrity; an extreme sense of regard and responsibility for personal behaviour. It includes such traits as honesty, self-control, gratitude, and courtesy." (Evangelista, 2000:271). Honour is an integral part of fencing without honour the fencer could be tempted to perform actions which would make him seem to be of a base nature. It is important that this important concept be an integral part of the fencer, as it is thorough honour that the fencer is able to aspire to higher ideals in his game.

From the modern fencing point of view, and from the modern fencing sources, it is Evangelista (2000) who makes the most remarks about this important concept. As such this particular section of this article will focus on what he has said about honour with regard to fencing. Evangelista (2000) states that honour is an important concept to fencing and the fencer. He says; "In fencing, honor becomes a centering point, a quiet spot in your mind. Knowing that you will fence with self-control gives you balance of thought." (Evangelista, 2000:271). Balance of thought is essential for the fencer to progress past the simple game of touches and points, it is also necessary so that the fencer can see the advantages of having an opponent who is a challenge.

"when you act with honor, you show respect to your opponent, the director, the audience, and the game itself. ... Through honor you enhance everything you do, and act as a good-will ambassador for fencing." (Evangelista, 2000:271)

Honour in the fencer also affects their attitude to what happens while fencing. A fencer who acts with honour is seen as a great ambassador for fencing as he honours what he does, whom he does it with, and all those who came before him. Without honour, the fencer is less concerned about what is right in the game and tends to adopt an "anything-for-a-hit" attitude and this detracts from the game for all fencers. "With honor, you're never alone on the fencing strip. Also, you'll always be respected, no matter the outcome of your bouts." (Evangelista, 2000:271). Honour is a great companion and adviser. It helps the fencer decide what courses of action are open and which will benefit him and the game the best. It is important that this adviser is used so that the fencer does only those things, which will bring him respect.

Respect

"Respect should always be shown to one's seniors, not only in the training area but outside as well. It is every student's duty to try to earn this respect. One should also respect one's juniors, thus showing them the way to respect themselves through respecting others." (Docherty, 2001)

Respect is an important part of etiquette, because if a person does not respect others, why would they bother to show them courtesy? It is important that the seniors in the school respect the juniors so that they are able to learn respect through this and be more able then to respect the seniors. Respect for one's teacher or instructor should be a given. He or she should be respected for the knowledge that they possess and their willingness to teach others this knowledge. It doesn't matter whether they are more or less experienced, more or less skilled, or ranked more or less. "Treat all people with respect at all times." (Evangelista, 2000:298)

Respect for others is not the only form of respect that is important to etiquette, self-respect is also important. If it is shown that the person respects themselves through the maintenance of their equipment, and how they present themselves, it is more likely that the person shall gain respect from others. This self-respect comes from etiquette, because it is important that this self-respect is shown, through the manner and appearance of the fencer.

"Etiquette also becomes part of self - respect. It is important to look after one's equipment, uniform should be washed regularly. It is not pleasant to fence others who do not take this care with their equipment." (Docherty, 2001)

The training area is the area in which people learn the skills that the instructor teaches. It is also in this arena that knowledge is gained and the skills are tested against one's opponents. Respect must be demonstrated for this area and the people within it, as each person is worthy of such respect for the time and effort, which they put into their training.

"Before entering or leaving the training area, all fencers should bow, or show their respect in some other arranged way, this is to show respect for the training area, and those in it." (Docherty, 2001)

Respect should especially be shown to one's opponent inside and outside the combat arena. The fact that the opponent is there and ready to face you means that they are worthy of respect. Each person should respect one another due to the common traditions and skills that they are learning, and because of the time and effort that goes into learning such skills.

Manners

"Manners: Good for you. Good for fencing." (Evangelista, 2000:264)

What is all talk of etiquette if not talk of manners? As Evangelista (2000) says above manners are good for the fencer and fencing. Manners are important for fencing; there is a great deal which relies upon them and their use. Evangelista (2000) has much to say on the subject and the points, which are raised, are more valid now than they ever were. It is important that a consideration of manners is discussed and thought about, as they are integral to an experience in fencing that is profitable for the fencer. He states that; "a fencer possessing genuine manners, with his eye on emotional equanimity, is more likely to fence a controlled and balanced game." (Evangelista, 2000:264). This consideration of control is important, it is not only control of actions which is being spoken about but control of the subconscious and what goes in the fencer's mind. A balanced game will assist in the victory of one fencer over another.

The lack of manners is a detriment to the fencer and to fencing; "no manners equals both insufferable winners and graceless losers," (Evangelista, 2000:264). A fencer should have the manners to accept his victories with honour and his losses with grace. The fencer, who brags constantly about his victories or who complains about their defeats and does not accept them, is no asset to themselves or to fencing. Such things are a part of manners; there would be no victory without an opponent, and no challenge without the chance of defeat. The fencer should be honourable toward their opponent in victory and graceful in defeat.

Manners are important to fencing as they also assist in the personal development of the fencer as a gentleman and fencer. As such Evangelista (2000) states; "caring about such things as manners gives you the opportunity to develop personal control, self-discipline, and strength of character," (Evangelista, 2000:264). Defeats should be looked upon as a learning experience, and there should be a serious consideration of how the win was gained. The acceptance of another's skill in defeat shows the fencer to be much more self-controlled, and disciplined than one who feels animosity toward the fencer who beat them. It also shows strength of character to be able to do such.

A fencer should be courteous to their opponents both in the combat arena and outside of it. A lack of courtesy will be noticed by others and the respect for the fencer will be diminished if it is shown that they are discourteous; "To the swordsmen or swordswoman, discourtesy is a coward's imitation of courage; it is a weakling's imitation of strength." (Evangelista, 2000:298).

A part of manners is accepting full responsibility unto oneself for the actions, which are performed by the fencer. "No matter what the circumstances, no matter what the provocation to do otherwise, you assume full and complete responsibility for your actions." (Evangelista, 2000:298). It does not matter what your opponent does, if the fencer replies with actions that are discourteous or rough they will be noticed and others' view of them, and respect for them will diminish. It shows strength of character to accept one's actions, and it shows more strength of character to avoid actions, which are discourteous, especially if there is provocation to do otherwise.

End Note

“In addition, before pulling up beginners on etiquette senior instructors should also look to their own. After all, the beginners must get their bad habits from somewhere.”
(Docherty, 2001)

Beginners learn from their seniors and instructors. Everything, which is not a part of their personal make-up before they enter the salle, is learnt from what they experience within the walls of the salle. Instructors and seniors should be careful only to demonstrate those attributes that they would be happy for the student to pick up as part of their training. Habits, bad, good, and indifferent are learnt by beginners from those around them. It is important that the seniors and instructors only demonstrate those good attributes, which they would wish their students to learn.

The Modern View: Historical Texts

Importance of Perspective

“It is difficult for modern people to understand a culture in which mortal combat was an accepted part of the lifestyle of the elite. The Duello may only be understood when it is seen in its historical perspective and in the context of the culture in which it existed.” (Dda, 2002)

Perspective is important for any study of Renaissance concepts, as it is very difficult for people in the modern world to understand how important these concepts were in the Renaissance. The duello itself needs to be understood from the Renaissance perspective as an accepted method of dealing with personal quarrels. Combined with this is the concept of honour, which does exist in the modern world, but is typically taken much more lightly than it was in the period being discussed. Honour was an important part of the gentry's make up, honour was bound to reputation and reputation was how members of the gentry got ahead in their lives. Thus, all of these concepts must be understood from the Renaissance perspective.

“In being out of touch with the latest cultural currents, however, *Paradoxes of Defence* is as much an example of Elizabethan social/cultural thought as it is of fight technique. Italian notions of honor - ideas brought from the Italian court society to the English and allowed to trickle down through the upper class - were sown through the writings of such authors as Castiglione and Sir Thomas Elyot, among others.” (Turner and Soper, 1990:81)

While George Silver was against the use of the rapier in combat, his treatise offers the perspective of “traditional” values of the Elizabethan English. His writing is a response to the “invasion” of the Italian and Spanish fashions which became a part of Elizabethan society. From this point of view Silver's work can much more easily be assessed as a work of Elizabethan social and cultural thought. The ideals of the Italian Renaissance were sown by the importation of writings from writers such as Castiglione and reinforced by local theorists. It is only once this Renaissance perspective is established that a discussion of the various historical phenomena can be discussed.

Holistic Approach

“To Caranza [Caranza], fencing was no mere physical exercise, nor even a necessary skill for a chivalrous gentleman. The use of the sword implied an entire philosophy, an alchemical distillation of Christian mysticism and newly re-discovered classical science.” (Willens, 2001:1)

The same can be said for the examination of fencing etiquette, and for fencing etiquette itself. A person must approach the subject with an holistic approach, rather than looking at the topic from a narrow point of view. It is important with regard to etiquette that the whole story is examined so a more accurate view of the subject is possible. As Willens (2001) refers to Caranza's view of fencing, etiquette also affects a person's whole fencing philosophy, and their fencing through it. From the truly Renaissance perspective, it is impossible to divorce etiquette from the other important aspects of the gentleman, such as the ability to improve oneself through study and the ideal of the “universal person”.

“From it [*The Courtier*] the English ruling class derived much of its ideal of the soldier / poet / scientist / statesman. The Renaissance idea that a man could improve himself by study caught on like wildfire.” (Turner and Soper, 1990:11)

This holistic attitude to fencing is not only concerned with the improvement of the person, nor just with the importance of the whole story to the study of etiquette itself. The holistic attitude extends to the importance of teaching fencing in the Renaissance period and how this is important to the gentleman of the period; "It would have been impossible to have sold the merits of fencing technique ... without referring to noble causes, patriotism, and honor." (Turner and Soper, 1990:24). Just as it is impossible to engage in such combat without consideration of such important matters, so to would it be narrow-viewed to discuss the etiquette of such combat without consideration of all of the aspects, which are associated with it.

Gentleman's Mark

"Since fencing is, perforce, a pastime of the elite, the segment of society most likely to have been schooled in depth in the various mental habits and viewpoints of their culture, it will reflect a "pop culture" version of this culture's biases. This group's perceptions of, and thoughts about, their leisure activity will, logically, reflect their ways of thinking, not only about practical matters, but about their aesthetic tastes, their hopes, dreams, and ideals." (Mondschein, 1999)

Fencing, especially with the rapier in the Renaissance, grew to become a skill of the elite of society, and it is from this point of view that the etiquette, which is associated with fencing, comes. The gentlemen who attended classes in the art of fence had certain ideals that they held to in their engagement of their art. As such, it is important to discuss the "mark of the gentleman" as an important part of the investigation into fencing etiquette.

"By the sixteenth century the sword had taken on the role of fashion accessory - a piece of masculine jewellery worn as a standard item by any gentleman, or anyone aspiring or pretending to be a gentleman." (Brew, 2001)

The carrying of a rapier as part of the normal dress of the gentleman stated that the person carrying the weapon was a gentleman, or was aspiring to be a gentleman. This weapon was carried for personal defence and the defence of honour, and as such it is associated with concerns of etiquette, as a person who carried such a weapon was expected to have certain ideals about what was and was not gentlemanly behaviour. Skill with this weapon was also an integral part of the gentleman; "For the man of breeding, sword practice was a status symbol, and expertise in swordplay was considered one of the gentlemanly arts." (Turner and Soper, 1990:xx). It is important that these concepts are considered as correct etiquette, even in the modern world, is seen to be the mark of a person of high ideals, and it is to these ideals that the modern fencer, either modern sport or Renaissance, should aspire to.

"Gentlemen throughout the courts of Europe wore rapiers both as a mark of rank and to be ready to defend their own or their ladies' honour. Codes of duelling were established and gentlemen attended schools of arms in order to practise fencing under the tuition of Masters of Fence." (Valentine, 1968:7)

It is important that these codes of duelling are discussed so that it may be understood as to what code the gentleman of the Renaissance followed, and this will be done in a later section. Also, just as important as the codes of duelling themselves is the attitude, which the fencer carried and carries with them with regard to combat. This attitude defines what sort of approach a fencer has to their skills and the application of such.

Attitude

Attitude is an important factor when considering any form of combat and also the etiquette that goes with it. A person's attitude governs their view of etiquette and the other important factors, which need to be taken into account when discussing the subject. "Victory of one over the other is a matter of both the training and attitude as well as the conditioning of the fighter." (Clements, 1996:13). Victory is a matter of attitude and training, if the combatant carries the correct attitude and has completed all of the necessary training, there is no opponent that cannot be defeated.

Attitude is an internal thing that is integral to the combatant and part of this attitude is calmness of mind; "Calmness of mind is essential." (Clements, 1996:45). This is an important part of etiquette also, as only through the calmness of the mind can the person apply the correct measured response to a situation. It is more a matter of whether or not to use the skills which, are possessed more than whether or not the skills are available to be used.

This involves a great deal of patience not to go headlong into a situation with complete disregard for the consequences of the actions which are committed; "skilled, experienced fighters are patient and cautious, even when intense." (Clements, 1996:127). Possessing a cool demeanour under pressure is stressed in the Spanish school of fence (Smith, 2001:5). It is through this cool demeanour that a person is able to discover the most effective way through or around an obstacle. This is the same for a combat situation as it is for a social or political situation, both of which are of concern for the person concerned with the correct etiquette. It is personal motivation, which defines a great deal of the internal factors that will decide a person's response to a situation.

Personal Motivation

"Attaining higher skill in swordsmanship as with other martial arts, eventually requires internal motivation, which is deeper and more personal." (Clements, 1996:133). This internal motivation is extremely personal, and it is only through this motivation that a combatant can attain those higher skills and mastery. Personal motivation is a key aspect to the etiquette of fencing also, the etiquette of the fencer must be a part of their internal motivation to exist in its truest sense, otherwise it will be an artificial addendum to the combatant.

Personal motivation is also required in the attaining of new skills and using them in a combat situation. This happens at great risk to one's preconceptions of what the form of combat is all about; "Acquiring knowledge (skill) often means risking your self-esteem and reexamining preconceptions." (Clements, 1996:128). This is also the same for the attainment of true fencing etiquette, which needs to be addressed and redressed as the person progresses in their art. Things that may have been picked up as part of a person's code may be of an incorrect focus, or may simply be wrong. It takes great personal motivation and courage to realise this and address these issues.

"As with any martial art that is practiced with sincerity and commitment, true swordsmanship cannot be taught – it must be self-learned. It has as its goal the defeat of the ego, the self." (Clements, 1996:132)

This is also important with regard to etiquette, as this must also be practiced with sincerity if it is to become truly a part of the combatant. A superficial understanding or use of the codes of etiquette will be noticed by all that view them and their respect for such an individual will diminish over time due to this. It is also important that true etiquette must be self-learned and this can be a difficult procedure.

The Code Duello

"The emerging gentleman's code of honor which swept Europe in this century [sixteenth] incorporated ... [the] ancient veneration of the sword and made it part of a new, more personal code of honor, expressed in the rising phenomenon of dueling with a new kind of weapon: the rapier." (Turner and Soper, 1990:xxii)

The code of honour expressed by the gentlemen of this period was important to them in the extreme. Duelling became more common in the sixteenth century as a way to solve personal grievances between gentlemen, and the rapier provided a perfect weapon for the task. The veneration of the sword is an important part of the concept, as it was because of this idea that duels were fought with swords, rather than any other weapon. This code of honour was a significant influence on the etiquette of the gentleman of the period.

"The code of honor is likewise a convention, being no more or less than what it is agreed to be by society. It is not based not on one's own feelings of self-worth and inner life, ... but on the acclamation of one's peers." (Mondschein, 1999)

It is the influence of one's peers that inspires many to adopt such codes of honour, as especially in the Renaissance period reputation was an important part of everyday life. The fact that is agreed by society is an important point also, as it is from the view of members of the particular society that a person's reputation, either positive or negative, that the reputation is bound. Importantly this view of society became bound up in the unwritten rules of the duel of the period.

"The unwritten rules for the duel after 1547 were clear: there must be equal numbers on each side; no man may have an unfair advantage in weapons (on those occasions where one person's dagger was longer than his opponent's, the two would often dice for the longer blade); that it be an affair of honour, fought to remove a slight. All else fell to the wayside. Duels were fought in public places, and their outcomes were known." (de Bethune, 2002)

The fact that these rules are seen as significant in the Renaissance period is an important point that must be discussed. The duel was designed as an encounter between two men with equal weapons so that from this point of view the fight would be fair. The fact that these duels were fought in public places and their outcomes were known once again reinforces the importance of public opinion on the combatants and especially their reputations. A combatant who followed the conventions and rules, which were followed, was seen as honourable, even if he was defeated in the encounter. The combatant who contravened the rules was seen as dishonourable, and their reputation would suffer due to this fact.

"the more honourable method of settlement by means of a fair fight in the presence of seconds was imposed by public opinion; and before long the English gentry had become as sensitive and punctilious about the point of honour as the French aristocracy." (Baldick, 1965:63)

Previous to the introduction of the duel to England the gentry dealt with points of honour and grievances by hiring a gang of assassins to set upon their opponent in the quarrel. The duel between the two aggrieved parties was seen as an improvement and a much more honourable way of solving the grievance. The duel, as has been stated, was imposed by public opinion to lessen the bloodshed. As it was introduced, the English gentry became more and more sensitive about points of honour. There are also other factors, which influenced the duel and the conventions that were a part of it.

"Whether for war or honor, personal combat has been as much a subject of fashion as efficiency. Rules for deciding which weapon to use and under what conditions a man might defend himself are influenced by status, teachers, personal experience, and a willingness to experiment. Even national pride and international trends affect how men decide to kill one another in single combat." (Turner and Soper, 1990:xvi)

Fashion is an important part of the whole concept of duelling. It was fashion that made the rapier, and ironically, fashion that diminished its dominance. It is important that these aspects are taken into account as they also affect the etiquette of the period. As the influence of the Italians and Spanish became more prevalent in England in the sixteenth century so too did their ideas about combat and etiquette. People who were not up with the latest trends in such matters were seen as less civil than those who were. Public opinion of such matters was important, as has been stated, and as such, things such as this should be taken into account when discussing etiquette, and especially the etiquette of the Renaissance period.

"the duel of honour in Selden's day [1610], conducted at every stage in accordance with a strict code of rules, was a considerable step in the direction of humanity and law," (Baldick, 1965:32)

Such rules are important to examine, especially with regard to fencing etiquette and the etiquette of the duel itself. This is of extreme importance, especially to those who study the art of fence from the Renaissance period. To ignore such rules would be to misrepresent the art which is being taught and learnt by the scholar. For an accurate recreation of such incidents, a person should consider such rules and apply them in the recreation of the duel and other encounters.

“A person who was challenged to a duel would select time, place, and weapons to be used. Each combatant would choose a second, a person to come along and observe that no treachery or foul play was committed. The seconds also served to seek any possible means of reconciliation without bloodshed, although this was rarely successful.” (Dda, 2002)

It is an important point that it is the challenged person who selects the time, place, and weapons to be used. This could be seen as a deterrent to duelling as if a person was to challenge another, and weapons were chosen that the challenger was inexperienced with, then there is a problematic situation for this combatant. The seconds are an important part of the duel. They were there to attempt reconciliation and ensure that it was a “fair” fight between the two combatants. In this, it was the seconds’ job to research the code of duelling to ensure that the combat proceeded as was written in the code. The importance of this code to the etiquette of the fencer is somewhat understated. It is here that the etiquette of fencing started, and as such it is important that the modern combatant, of whichever style of combat, understand the origins of the combat which they engage in. Unfortunately, in the Renaissance period, not all of the combatants followed such codes;

“The romanticized view of gentlemen defending their reputations and character is dwarfed by accounts of sudden assaults, vicious ambushes and general street-fighting among all classes.” (Clements, 2001)

Respect for Duelling

In the Renaissance period there was great respect for duelling and those who fought in the duels. These men were willing to risk their lives to remove the smallest mark against their honour. From the modern perspective, this can be a little difficult to understand, but from the view of the Renaissance, it made perfect sense. Similar acclimation is given to sportsmen and women who risk possible injury to compete in their chosen sport. What is more important from the Renaissance perspective is the importance of honour and reputation, which the gentlemen of the period lived by. Such a man who was not willing to fight for their honour was seen as somewhat of an outcast and looked down upon by the members of the society in which they lived.

“The duelist was a romantic figure, ready to risk his life for the sake of his honour, and often for the sake of someone else’s honour. People are forced to admire the sheer audacity and courage of someone willing to die to remove the smallest mark on their honour, or on the honour of a friend, or even of a stranger. In a society geared to respect only honourable men, men willing to fight and perhaps to die for their honour are deserving of the utmost respect. Even men who could see that the practice had been carried to extremes were unable to condemn duelists, because society demanded a demonstration of its collective honour and these duelists embodied it.” (de Bethune, 2002)

Even the critics of duelling were forced to see that duelling was a part of the society and important for demonstrations of honour and skill. Duelling was an improvement on the previous much less honourable method of solving grievances, which was stated above. The members of Elizabethan English society adopted duelling and all it entailed from the French and the Italians who had developed models for it, and it had a great influence on the members of society at the time. From the codes that were established, it can easily be seen that this concept is intimately related to the subject of etiquette, and the respect that was gained was mainly due to the following of such codes of duelling and therefore etiquette which were imposed on the members of society.

“dueling was a useful element of the new code of honor and had an irresistible appeal to many men ... Derived from well-developed Italian and French models, by the seventeenth century this often-complex code exerted a strong hold on many Englishmen.” (Turner and Soper, 1990:xxiii)

The subject of self-defence, in the art of fencing, was seen as noble, and those who possessed such skills as noble along with it. It was seen that fencing skill was placed on a high platform and suitable to be written about, especially for the glory of the patron who commissioned such works. This idea of the nobility of the practice, in the use of the sword in combat in the defence of honour is not just confined to the Renaissance, but can be seen in later ages. The important thing for the current discussion is, however, is the important codes of etiquette which were imposed to ensure that encounters were settled honourably in affairs of honour. It is also important to note for the current discussion that it is these points of etiquette which must be considered by the modern Renaissance combatant, as it is an integral part of the art which is being practised and recreated.

“In the Dedication, the English editor Thomas Churchyard refers to the “knowledge of Arms and Weapons, which defends life, country, and honor” and thus is a most fitting subject for the author’s pen and for the glory of his lord ... Personal combat is placed in the context of a higher, collective good, not individual glory or violent instincts - an approach common to much fight literature, not only of the Elizabethan age, but of most ages.” (Turner and Soper, 1990:24)

The Modern View: Social Commentary on the Renaissance Ethics

“Aristotelian ethics was for them [Italian Aristotelians] a practical subject, telling men how to live usefully and well and how to govern themselves politically. Rhetoric was the science of persuasion, enabling men to use eloquence for socially useful goals.” (Bevington, 1980:17)

The subject of ethics is another topic, which has been debated throughout history. For the Renaissance upper classes it was extremely important. Ethics decided how a person would go about to achieve their personal goals, and it was all an integral part of the etiquette of the period as a great deal of the etiquette of the period was defined by the ethics of the period. Aristotelian ethics, as its name implies, originates from the classical period and especially from Aristotle and his thoughts. In the Renaissance the rediscovery of the classical works of the Romans and Greeks was seen as important and proper study for people of learning. Many of the great writings of the period are concerned with ethics and therefore with etiquette.

The Gentleman

“Chivalry helped fashion the idea of the 'gentleman,' in which concepts of courtliness/courtesy, skills in games and war, courage (especially in combat), loyalty to friends, personal honor (public approbation/esteem tied to the avoidance of anything shameful and commitment to doing the right thing, even if it meant risking life and limb), the idea of the 'constant quest to improve on achievement' ... and individualism were tied together.” (Abels, 2001)

The ideal of the gentleman has its origins in the older concepts of the medieval period, and more specifically in the ideals of chivalry. The ideals of chivalry were accepted in the ideal of the gentleman and “updated” to reflect the feeling of the period. What is most important that the Renaissance ideals added was the ability of people to improve themselves through study and the exercise of physical, mostly martial, pursuits. It is also from this ideal that the gentleman gained the idea of the importance of the defence of honour and reputation.

What was seen on the outside, in the Renaissance, was seen to reflect the inner nature of the person; “The Renaissance concept that outward deportment and accomplishments should correctly and invariably mirror a person’s inner nature.” (Bevington, 1980:18). This is important, as it was not only the way that the person looked, in their manner of dress and carriage of the person, but also in their actions. A person who acted with courtesy, chivalry, and overall good manners was seen as also having a good nature. Whereas the person who was overbearing, arrogant, and discourteous was seen to have a much meaner nature, and therefore was less respected than the other. This ideal is important for the Renaissance fencer, as it is through these ideals that a person earns renown for their actions on the field and respect from their fellows.

The ideal of the English Gentleman was seen to have; youth, disposition, education, vocation, recreation, acquaintance, moderation, which lead to perfection (Bevington, 1980:18). Each of these concepts is important to the idea of the English Gentleman; youth was a part as it was seen to be young and fresh. This was tempered with disposition and education, the idea of the gentle nature is seen in disposition and knowledge in education. Vocation was important, as it was important to be seen to be employed in something useful to society. Recreation demonstrates the importance of having something else besides one’s employment to be interested in. Acquaintance refers to being acquainted with the right people and the right ideas of the time. Moderation was seen as important so that a person did not do anything to the extreme in action, look, or thought. To have all of the attributes in the right measure led the person to be seen as the perfect gentleman.

It is the ideal of the gentleman that must be followed by the Renaissance combatant if they are to truly follow the ideals of the period. Acting in a manner appropriate to a gentleman of the period is also important so that they may also act in according to that which is seen as important in the period, which is being studied. Etiquette is extremely important and the ideals that have been laid out are those that will lead the modern Renaissance fencer to act in a manner appropriate to the period, which is being recreated in its combat forms.

The Renaissance View: Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, 1561

Castiglione's book on etiquette was very influential wherever the Italian Renaissance spread. His book was taken as a guidebook to etiquette, something, which every man claiming to be a gentleman should know. With reference to the topic being discussed overall, it is a useful source. If the *Book of the Courtier* is read and understood by those wishing to imitate and recreate the arts of the gentleman of the Renaissance, then there are important lessons that can be learnt in an effort to understand the social side of the combat which is being recreated.

Castiglione discusses the appearance of the courtier, who can quite easily be interpreted as a gentleman as the terms were connected in many ways. He says; "To be handsome and cleanly in his appareile." (Castiglione, 1561). This is important for the fencer as if he turns up in an unclean state he will not be taken seriously. It is important that the appearance of the person is what gives the first impression. Castiglione discusses the first sighting of the individual, and names attributes which will endear the gentleman at the first sight; "wit, beauty of fisnamy, dispicion of person, and that grace which at the first sight shal make him moste acceptable unto all men." (Castiglione, 1561).

"How much more do we take pleaser in a gentilman that is a man at armes, and how much more worthy praise is he if he be modest, of few words, and no bragger, then an other that alwayes craketh of himself, and blaspheming with a bravery seemeth to threaten the worlde. And this is nothing els but a curiositie to seeme to be a roister. The lyke happeneth in all exercises, yea in everye thinge in the worlde that a man can doe or speak." (Castiglione, 1561)

This is an important statement about how the gentleman should present himself with regard to speech. It is important that the good qualities, which are named in the passage, be considered by all of those who wish to exhibit the attributes of the gentleman. This is an important piece of etiquette, which can be applied not only to the fencer, but also to men in general. Being a bragger and a person who picks fights as a manner of course does not imbue himself to those in his company. A person's speech must be phrased carefully as to not insult anyone out of hand or appear to be arrogant or a braggart. Castiglione advises that;

"Therefore manye there are, that delite in a manne of mucche talke, and hym they call a pleasaunt felowe. Some wyll delite more in modestie, some other wyll fansye a manne that is actyve and alwayes doynge: other, one that sheweth a quietnes and a respecte in everye thyng." (Castiglione, 1561)

Thus it is important to tread a fine line between talking too much and not enough. A person is often measured by the words that they say, and as such, these words should be chosen carefully, minding the company, which the person is in. As has been said it is better to stay quiet and seem stupid, than to open your mouth and prove that you are. Feats of arms and other physical activities are also important, as is the manner in which they are done.

"To do his feates with a slight, as though they were rather naturally in him, then learned with studye: and use a Reckelesness to cover art, without minding greatly what he hath in hand, to a mans seeminge." (Castiglione, 1561)

It states that feats should be performed as if they were natural, rather than having been studied. This concept of being able to do things with ease is meant to inspire others and gain the actor of the feats renown. Of the feats expected of the courtier, feats of arms were considered to be primary. The courtier was expected to know martial arts and be practiced in them as it is seen that such skill is commendable.

"I judge the principall and true profession of a Courtyer ought to be in feates of armes, the which Armes the Courtyers chiefe profession. Above all I will have hym to practise lively, and to bee knowen among other for his hardinesse, for his acheiving of enterprises, and for his fidelitie toward him whom he serveth." (Castiglione, 1561)

As it states to practice such feats of arms is to be known for his skills and hardiness, for his achieving of victory of opponents and other enterprises, and most importantly of all, the loyalty to his lord in the execution of such feats. It is these concepts which are seen as important by Castiglione to the courtier. It is, however, also important that the courtier be a man of learning, and it is associated quite clearly that feats of arms are not only a physical skill but a mental one as well; "Nay the practisinge of armes beelongeth aswel to the mind as to the body." (Castiglione, 1561). These things are simply expected of the courtier as part of his profession, and as recreators of the arts and sciences of arms of the Renaissance it is important that this concept is accepted and embraced. It is also important to note that it is not only feats of arms that are important but also other physical pursuits. In such pursuits, the courtier should not expect immediate praise, or have it known that he has studied to become as such, but do it as a normal part of his activities.

"I will have oure Courtier therefore to do this and all the rest beside handlyng his weapon, as a matter that is not his profession: and not seeme to seeke or loke for any praise for it, nor be acknowen that he bestoweth much study or time about it, although he do it excellently well." (Castiglione, 1561)

The manner of execution of such feats is also important as stated above, but to reiterate this, it is seen that he should perform feats with good judgment, and grace so that he deserves the good favour that will accompany success in such pursuits; "But principallye lette hym accompanye all his mocion wyth a certayne good judgemente and grace, yf he wyll deserve that generall favour whiche is so muche set by." (Castiglione, 1561). This idea of good judgement is emphasised, especially with regard to involving himself in combats. It is said that it is important that he does not rush headlong into all combats but consider the consequences and the situation which he is in. Being in such a combat it is expected that the courtier will use all of his skill, courage and determination to succeed. The same can be said for the modern practitioner, it is important for them to consider what it is they fight for and the reasons behind this. It is also important that they should fight with skill, judgement and grace in their combat, as it is this way for the courtier of the Renaissance.

"Neither let him runne rashely to these combattes, but whan he muste needes to save his estimation withall: for beside the greate daunger that is in the doubtfull lotte, hee that goeth headlonge to these thynges and without urgent cause, deserveth veyre great blame, although his chaunce bee good. But whan a man perceiveth that he is entred so farre that hee can not drawe backe withoute burdeyn, hee muste, bothe in suche thinges he hath to doe before the combat and also in the combat be utterly resolved with hymselfe, and alwayes shewe a readinesse and a stomake." (Castiglione, 1561)

In his skill with weapons it is expected of the courtier that he have skill in all kinds of weapons; "To play well at fense upon all kinde of weapons." (Castiglione, 1561). Knowledge of all kinds of weapons would ensure that he is able to defend himself in all martial situations, and as such it is important for the courtier to use all kinds of weapons. Earlier in the period it was thought that fencing was only for the rash duellist, or assassin, but in the later period and especially at the time of Castiglione's writing, it was considered to be a pastime considered proper for the gentleman and a useful skill to have; "some in playnge at fense, everye man accordinge to the moine of his mettall, wherby hath ensued (as you know) marveyulous great pastime." (Castiglione, 1561). Interestingly enough, after the previous comment about having skill at all weapons, Castiglione then confines the amount of weapons to those, which are most gentlemanly, and those used by gentlemen. More importantly it was considered important to be able to use those weapons which the gentleman would have with him at the time of an encounter;

"especially to be skilfull on those weapons that are used ordinarily emong gentlemen, for beside the use that he shall have of them in warre, where peradventure nedeth no great connyng, there happen often times variaunces betwene one gentleman and an other, whereupon ensueth a combat. And manye tymes it shall stande him in stede to use the weapon whiche he hath at that instant by his side, therefore it is a very sure thing to be skilfull." (Castiglione, 1561)

Much has been said about the martial attributes of the courtier, and these are all evidently important to the Renaissance fencer in the modern world due to the martial nature of the activity, which is being recreated. But it is not only the martial aspects, which makes or made a man a courtier. The courtier had to adopt a more holistic approach to his life, and in the study of such a creature in the Renaissance it is important that this aspect be examined.

“Therefore the more excellent our Courtyer shalbe in this arte, the more shall he bee worthy praise: albeit I judge not necessarye in hym so perfect a knowledge of thynges and other qualities that is requisite in a capitaine. But because this is overlarge a scope of matters, wee wyll holde oure selves contented (as we have sayde) with the uprightnesse of a well meaning minde, and with an invincible courage, and that he alwaies shew himself such a one: for many times men of courage are sooner knowen in small matters then in greate.” (Castiglione, 1561)

This passage states that it is not necessary for the courtier to have all the knowledge of a captain, this is military knowledge, but an overall knowledge of all things which are seen as important. In this way it could be seen that the courtier had to be a “jack of all trades”. It is also stated that there are a lot of things to be considered, and that it is better that he have a quick mind to be able to pick things up and courage enough to speak on small matters. In all that the courtier does or says, however, he should show grace; “everie thyng that he doeth or speaketh, let him doe it with a grace.” (Castiglione, 1561).

These concepts are also important for the modern Renaissance combatant, as it is important that this person also consider various matters, and not only confine his skills to the physical. More importantly, it is important that the modern combatant also does and says things with all of the grace that they can muster. It is this grace that defines them as a gentleman. To conclude this section it is best that it is left to Castiglione himself;

“in conclusion al these good qualities shal not suffise oure Courtyer to purchase him the general favour of great men, Gentlemen and Ladies, yf he have not also a gentle and lovyng behaviour in his daily conversation. ... he that must be pliable to be conversant with so many, oughte to guide himselfe with hys own judgement.” (Castiglione, 1561)

The Renaissance View: Machiavelli's *The Prince*

Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince*, was a very influential political treatise, and it continues to be influential even in the modern era. From a narrow point of view it is difficult to see the relevance of this text to questions of etiquette, but if it is examined in detail there are various points which are raised which are extremely relevant to such a discussion.

The text is addressed to a prince and details what he should do to maintain power and control, but it can also be interpreted as addressing any person with power. This includes the gentleman or courtier of the Renaissance period. Importantly, the points, which are raised, are of relevance to how this person should and should not act in their dealings.

“the gulf between how one should live and how one does live is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done learns the way to self-destruction rather than self-preservation.” (Machiavelli, 1981:91)

This is an extremely relevant point with regard to etiquette, it is important that a person act in a manner which promotes good feeling toward them, even if at the time it seems that such actions are not in the person's best interest. For the Renaissance fencer, a person should deal with their opponent with all skill and not downgrade their skill for the benefit of the opponent. The speed of the defeat will not benefit the opponent in its execution, but will benefit them in their learning of responses. It is stated that; “whenever men are discussed ... they are noted for various qualities which earn them either praise or condemnation.” (Machiavelli, 1981:91), it is important that a person strive for those qualities which would earn them praise, but not neglect the knowledge of the other, lest there be nothing to compare one with another. It is only the negative qualities that demonstrate the positive qualities to be positive.

“a prince must be slow to take action, and must watch that he does not come to be afraid of his own shadow; his behaviour must be tempered by humanity and prudence so that over-confidence does not make him rash or excessive distrust make him unbearable.” (Machiavelli, 1981:96)

The consideration of the best response to a situation is important. If the response is immediate to an insult, it may be done in hot blood and therefore not be the best response to the situation. Once an action is committed though, it should be followed through, no matter what the outcome may be. It is important that the considered response be tempered with humanity and prudence, lest the actions be considered rash or flawed in logic, or cause the person to seem to be over-confident. Or having committed to a course that the result become so painful to consider that the action cause the person to be distrustful and thus unbearable.

It is said in the text that; “Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are.” (Machiavelli, 1981:101). This is true as it is said often that actions speak louder than words, and as such people are often judged, or misjudged by their actions. It is only the people who are close who really know about the person. Thus it can be that a person can appear to be gentlemanly and kind in their actions, but the motives are less congenial. Also in the text, it is stated that; “In the actions of all men, and especially princes, where there is no court of appeal, one judges by the result.” (Machiavelli, 1981:101). This is true in a great deal of cases. For the Renaissance combatant, however, they should consider the method of how the result was achieved for them to be considered truly a gentleman. A victory may be scored in a tournament by a scoring blow, but if the gentleman is to secure true victory, this blow and all before it must be delivered truly and cleanly.

“A prince also wins prestige for being a true friend or a true enemy, that is, for revealing himself without any reservation in favour of one side against another.” (Machiavelli, 1981:121)

Openness in behaviour is a benefit to anyone, and more importantly to a Renaissance fencer. One should be open in their preferences for method and ability. They should also be open about whom they consider a friend and whom they don't. One honours one's opponent by being a true opponent and fighting with all skill against them, and this also earns them prestige. It is important that a person, and especially a gentleman, is able to accept the skill of their opponent and honour them for this skill, no matter whether they are victorious or not. This statement is also reiterated in Machiavelli's text in; "A prince should also show his esteem for talent, actively encouraging able men, and honouring those who excel in their profession." (Machiavelli, 1981:123). This goes for all, the acceptance of skill in other combat arts or styles is important, and this should be expressed, and done without reservation. Skill in all the arts is something to be praised.

This is a brief selection of passages from Machiavelli's work, *The Prince*. There are other sections that are relevant to all with regard to the question of etiquette. The text is also useful for knowing how to deal with various political situations, which arise, in groups of all kinds, and it is an advantage to know how to deal with them most effectively. While the fencing treatises of the Renaissance were mainly dealing with questions of actual combat situations, they also contain information from the point of etiquette, and it is important that these are examined to gain the best idea of the Renaissance view of etiquette.

The Renaissance View: Fencing Treatises

To get the best view of what is important with regard to etiquette in the Renaissance, especially with regard to the execution of the arte of defence, the best place to look is at the theorists and practitioners of such an arte. From these it is then possible to extract those important points which the practitioners and theorists raise and then apply them to the study of fencing etiquette. To do this, three manuals have been selected for their particular approach to the subject of etiquette that is found within the texts. The manuals are; Giacomo Di Grassi (1594) *His True Arte of Defence*, Vincentio Saviolo (1595) *His Practice in Two Bookes*, and Joseph Swetnam (1617) *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*. These have also been chosen because they allow the easiest access for the reader to the original text, being in English.

The information needs to be extracted from such sources from amongst the advice of the author as to what to do in an actual encounter. The manuals are more guidebooks than anything else is and they read in a logical progression from one subject to another. This is useful but it means that questions of etiquette are embedded in the text amongst the advice, as such, it means that it needs to be separated from the other advice that the author is presenting to the reader. Various subjects were particularly present in the manuals and it is under these headings that the discussion will progress.

Positive Attributes

“I say whosoever mindeth to exercise hemselve in this true and honorable Art or Science, it is requisite that he be inbued with deep Judgement, a valiant hart and great activitie, In which three qualities this exercise doth as it were delight, live and flourish.” (Di Grassi, 1594)

Di Grassi (1594) states three qualities, which should be possessed by a person wishing to learn the art of defence; judgement, a valiant heart and great activity. These are important because it is with judgement that a man is able to gauge his response, and is also important in combat to be able to judge one's opponent. The next is a valiant heart, valiant enough to continue through setbacks and valiant enough to defend his honour with his life. Great activity goes back to Castiglione's statements about the courtier and what a courtier should be engaged in. It is also only through hard work that skill in the art of defence is attained. These qualities should also be present in the modern Renaissance combatant, for the same reasons. Swetnam (1617) also names positive attributes, which a scholar should possess;

“I fay, and this is my opinion, he fheweth the beft wit, and moft valour, which feeing a man out of the way, (as we terme it) will giue a milde and a quiet anfwere vnto a froward queftion: alfo the wifer will commend the patience of him that can beare with one that is paff reafon;” (Swetnam, 1617:76)

Swetnam prizes the ability to give a mild answer rather than a quick retort; this demonstrates wit in his opinion. He also prizes the attribute of patience, which is mentioned by Di Grassi as judgement, being able to bear a person who is past reason. In this manner Swetnam promotes a sort of gentleman who is slow to anger and thinks before acting. He also gives reasons for promoting such attributes;

“for kinde and curteous behaiour winneth fauour and loue wherefoeuer thou goeft, but much the better if it be tempered with manhood and skill of weapons. Now fome will fay that skill in weapons is good and moft chiefly for gentlemen, but I fay it fhould be in all men;” (Swetnam, 1617:76)

He also promotes, in his statement that skill at arms should not be only the prerogative of gentlemen, but of all men. This is an interesting statement, as it contravenes several general thoughts about the period and access to training in weapons, but is understandable due to the political situation in which Swetnam was writing. Saviolo (1595) plainly states those attributes which a man should possess if he is to be called a professor of the art or who wishes to engage in the art;

“For in him that will bee rightly called a professour of this arte, and in him that shall goe into the field to fight a combat, are required reason, animositie, strength, dexteritie, judgement, wit, courage, skill, and practice.” (Saviolo, 1595)

Swetnam and Di Grassi clearly, have mentioned both the attributes that are stated in their opinions of the matter. A required reason is something, which Saviolo highlights as important and further details reasons in his second book *Of Honour and Honourable Quarrels*. Reason on its own is also fundamental, because the ability to reason allows the combatant to assess their opponent and their reactions. Animosity is important because Saviolo does state that one should never enter into a quarrel with a friend, so a level of animosity is necessary. The other attributes have been detailed above or speak for themselves.

As a Renaissance fencer it is important that the modern practitioner attempt to emulate these ideas in the practice of arms. It is these attributes which will be respected more than the victories which are attained. For the positive attributes to be known it is also important that the negative attributes are known. Both Saviolo and Swetnam make comparisons between those attributes that are desired and those that are not.

Comparing Positive and Negative Attributes

“the more skill a man hath of his weapon the more gentle and curteous should he shewe himselfe, for in truth this is rightly the honour of a brave Gentleman, and so much the more is hee to bee esteemed: neither must he be a bragger, or lyer, and without truth in his word, because there is nothing more to be required in a man then to know himselfe, for me therefore I think it necessarye that every one should learne this arte,” (Saviolo, 1595)

Saviolo (1595) does a comparison of positive and negative attributes, and states that everyone should learn the arte. He also states that it is a man being gentle and courteous because it is this, which will bring him honour. It is important for the modern practitioner to take these attributes into account, and steer clear of the negative attributes that are stated. Saviolo’s encouragement also shows that the learning of fencing should be open to all to learn. Of the negative attributes it was thought that to be a liar was the worst, and many duels were started over such accusations and insinuations. Swetnam (1617) goes further to explain what sort of speech a man should have about another and clearly censures any which is indecent about another man.

“he carrieth the moft honourable minde, which in talking of his enemie, can fo bridle his affections, as to vfe no railing, nor vndecent fpeeches behind his enemies backe, for he that doth fo, difhonefteth himfelfe; befides, thofe which heare him, will iudge that hee had rather fight with his tongue this with his fword.” (Swetnam, 1617:66)

In his statement he states that a person who speaks about an enemy behind their back could be accused of being better able to fight with their tongue than their sword. It is this sort of feeling of other people which is at the base of reputation, especially in the Renaissance period. He states, indirectly, that a person should speak honourably about people, even if they are your enemies. It is this sort of idea which is important also to the modern Renaissance combatant, speech should be made only of a positive nature about one’s opponents, and also against those of another style, accepting their skill. Saviolo cautions people on how they speak lest they grow a quarrel out of a small statement that is interpreted the wrong way by another;

“especially he that is a Gentleman and converseth with men of honorable quality, must above all others have a great regard to frame his speech and answeres with such respective reverence, that there never growe against him anie quarrell upon a foolish worde or a forward answer,” (Saviolo, 1595)

Further investigation into the negative attributes is necessary so that they can be understood from the Renaissance perspective, and so that the modern practitioner can avoid them in the execution of his art. It is important that these negative attributes be discussed, no matter how distasteful they seem, because it is only through knowing both the positive and the negative that a complete understanding of such attributes can be had.

Negative Attributes

“Againe, he which is a carrier of tales, can not truly deliuer a mans fpeech, without adding or diminifhing: ... the Tale-bearer bringeth himfelfe into many quarrells, and to be eniued on both fides: ... Tale-bearers are the breeders of great mifchiefe.” (Swetnam, 1617:64)

Telling tales is even thought of negatively in the modern world, in today’s meaning it speaks of people telling lies about another. In the Renaissance term it is more related to those who embellish the truth, adding or taking parts from it. Thus, it can be related to lying, but it is somewhat more than that. The “tale-bearer” is also a person who spreads gossip, and it is usually gossip that is of a negative nature. Thus, Swetnam states that it brings quarrels and creates much mischief, just as it still does in the modern world. A person should learn to tell the story, or truth without adding or taking from it, this will cause much less grief for all who are concerned, and through this gossip-mongering is less likely to occur.

“For among all the disgraces which a man may incurre in this world, there is none in mine opinion which causeth him to become more odious, or a more enimic to mortall men (yea, unto God himfelfe) than ingratitude.” (Di Grassi, 1594)

The modern practitioner should be grateful for having opponents who test his calibre, he or she should also be grateful for the chance to be able to learn such an art with others and be able to exercise this art. Ingratitude is that which will make a person seem much less in others eyes, as Di Grassi states “causeth him to become more odious, or a more enimic”. Nobody appreciates a person who is not grateful for what they have, and the image of this person will depreciate the less grateful they are, and the more they complain.

“For whosoever will followe this profession must flie from rashnes, pride, and injurie, and not fall into that soule falt and error which many men incurre, who feeling themselves to be strong of bodie and expert in this science, presuming thereupon, thinke that they may lawfully offer outrage and injury unto anie man, and with crasse and grosse termes and behaviour provoke everie man to fight,” (Saviolo, 1595)

Saviolo (1595) makes an important statement in this particular point. It could be translated as saying, just because you can doesn’t mean that you should. He is saying that the person who follows the art should not be rash, nor have too large a pride, and that he should not because he has skill and strength, offend everyone and fight them, just because he has the skill to. This is directly related to a section from *Othello*, which will be discussed in the section about Shakespeare’s plays. A person who would challenge everyone would eventually earn themselves a reputation as a brawler, and would be shunned in polite company, so too, should the modern combatant not engage in every chance to compete, nor insult others in provocation. It was and is important, that the Renaissance fencing practitioner be a gentleman at all times, and only fight for the reasons of the attainment of renown, the challenge of the art itself, and that which will improve his esteem. This is an important part of the modern combatant, seeking skill and knowledge.

Seeking Truth

“Wherefore knowing that such men as endeavour themselves to attaine unto the excellencie of anie art or science, are worthie both of praise and preferment, because they seeke for that onely true nobilitie, which is in deede much more to be accounted of than birth and parentage.” (Saviolo, 1595)

In Saviolo's (1595) opinion, the pursuit of the skills attained in the practising of the martial arts is much more important than the nobility of a person's birth. It is in the seeking of such knowledge that the scholar is also in search for truth about the art. This passage also promotes the scholar of the blade to a higher position because of his search.

In the case of the modern Renaissance practitioner, this is also important. He or she should not be searching for the most efficient way to dispose of an opponent, but the more important mysteries of the art. The other thing which is stated and that the modern combatant should consider is that all those who study the martial arts of the Renaissance are worthy of some praise for the effort that they put in. While some study from a less scholarly point of view, their efforts should also be recognised.

In the seeking of truth of the martial arts, sooner or later a person will come to do more scholarly works if they are truly seeking skills. It is in these scholarly works that Saviolo (1595) sees importance;

"The meanes whereby men from time to time have bene preferred even to the highest degrees of greatnes and dignitie, have ever bene and are of two sortes, Armes and Letters: weapons & bookes," (Saviolo, 1595)

Thus, it is not only skill with a blade that should be commended but also the study, which the scholar puts into, understand the principles which the arts are based upon. Both arms and letters are put on the same pedestal in Saviolo's opinion, and they are the greatest of importance. Both through skill at arms and through skill with the pen a person can attain greatness. This is also important for the modern Renaissance fencer as it is through study that the physical skills can improve, and also through the execution of skills in competition that mental faculties can also improve. It is also important that for both the gentleman of the Renaissance and his modern counterpart in the recreator of the skills, that consideration must be given as to when a person should fight, and also when a person should not. These are questions of the reason to, or not to, duel.

Reason for Duelling

"at one time or another a mans reputation may be fo neerly touched, that it cannot stand with his credit to pocket it vp, ... yet being wronged, it can not stand with a mans credite, to keepe his weapon in his fheathe; neyther doe I counfell all men to pocket vp all iniuries which come will proffer them, but to answer a good quarrell, not onely with words but with deeds, as followeth, for the further infruction. Whofo is honourably challenged vnto fingle combate, the challenged may make choice of his weapon, and likewise of the time when, and of the place where." (Swetnam, 1617:32)

Swetnam (1617) counsels the reader about when they should or should not enter into a quarrel with another. He states that an insult can be so grave that a man can not let it go but must respond to it or have his reputation ruined, yet in other circumstances the insult can be ignored. He says to choose the quarrel carefully and not to respond to all, but cautions that the person who is challenged has the choice of weapons, place and time for the duel to take place. The insult, states Swetnam, should be answered not only with words but deeds also if it is so grave that it cannot be ignored.

Saviolo (1595) cautions the reader that they should be careful about how they speak to others, and give as little opportunity for a quarrel as possible. Thus he is saying that a person should be as inoffensive as possible to those around them. He also cautions the reader not to enter into a quarrel with anyone they would call their friend, but when forced into a situation where a friend is challenged or challenger, to fight the best that he can, for his own credit and to save his own life.

"I woulde counsell and advise everie one, to give as small occasion of offence anie waie unto anie as may be, and especially unto his friend, to whom hee is in anie sorte beholding: but when that hee is forced to laie hande on his weapon, to doe the best hee can, as well in respect of his credite, as for to save his owne lyfe." (Saviolo, 1595)

Swetnam further states that a wise man will have patience and be careful about what he says, and consider the approach and what is said so that a small mischief does not become a great quarrel, and that a quarrel is only started upon a great abuse. He cautions that it is easy for a small mischief between two people to develop into a much larger quarrel if a person is not careful about what is said between the two people. He also states that a man who, at the end of his life can state that he wronged no man in any way and bares none any malice is the happiest of all.

“the wifer fort will neuer account the worfe manhoode in him; therefore except it be vpon a moft open and great abufe, let Patience be thy buckler, and a faire tongue thy fword, and alwayes haue a care in the beginning what wilbe the end; for a mifchiefe fometimes happeneth in an houre which happeneth not in feauen yeares againe, but Oh thrice happie were that man, which towards the latter end of his dayes, can withouta paire of lying lips fay, I thanke my God, I neuer bare malice, not I neuer iniurioufly wronged any man, in thought, word, or deed in all my life.” (Swetnam, 1617:42)

Swetnam cautions the reader of his work that a man should not make a habit of quarreling, but only fight upon a reasonable reason for a quarrel, lest he be seen as a common quarreler and refused polite company. This is linked with a section from Shakespeare's *Othello* which talks about how a reputation can be lost because of being a man who quarrels over nothing, or goes looking for quarrels. This particular section will be discussed in the next section. It is also said that a reputation for being such a man will continue and he will be considered much less for a long time.

“he is a man of his hands, and that he dare fight vpon a good occafion; but if he make a common occupation of fighting, hee will then bee accounted for a common quarreller, and his friends will refufe his company many times for doubt of his quarrelling, and yet hee fhall neuer be accounted, more then a man againe.” (Swetnam, 1617:41)

For the modern Renaissance fencer, the arguments, which have been raised by both Saviolo and Swetnam, are of great importance and are central to the ideas of etiquette in the Renaissance. The reasons for duelling are important as it is not, as has been stated, good to acquire the name of a common quarreler especially if one is in the pursuit of the ideal of the Renaissance gentleman which is central to the art which is being studied. For the modern combatant arguments are much less likely but the attitude to the combat which accompanies them is important. A person can be remembered for the legacy, which they leave behind, and those, which live up to, the values of etiquette will be remembered in a positive light.

Remembered

“whereas on the fide the valiant and gallant minded men, although they dye, yet in their life time their manly acts and valiant deedes which they worthily performed, fome in the warres and fome at fingle combat, and fome at other honourable and laudable exercifes, whereby they merited to themfelues imortall fame for euer, for to fome no exercife nor weapon came amiffe as in ftead of many examples ... out of the book of God” (Swetnam, 1617:6)

To be remembered as a gentleman and an honourable combatant is an accomplishment in itself. People are remembered for the positive or negative contribution, which they make to their particular society, and to be remembered as an honourable combatant in the Renaissance was seen to be a great ideal.

For the modern practitioner there is an element of this immortality which is available, as long as the study and pursuit of the ideals of the gentleman are held true. Points of etiquette are important to the modern practitioner, and should be considered by all whom profess that they are in such a pursuit. The Renaissance theorists and practitioners who have been used in this particular section have many aspects of etiquette indispersed in their works and these ideas should be taken on board by the modern combatant so that they may be able to understand the combat art which they pursue and practice. Thoughts from the Renaissance may also be gained from other sources, the plays of Shakespeare are one very useful source that can be used, and these will be addressed in the following section.

The Renaissance View: Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare's plays were written in the Renaissance period and reflect some of the social and political thought of the period. Three plays especially are of interest to research into questions of etiquette in the period, and especially for the Renaissance gentleman. They are *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

All of these plays have incidences of conflict in which the rapier is used, and it is more useful to examine the dialogue, which surround these incidences for ideas and thoughts on the question of etiquette. These passages of dialogue, some of which are very well known reflect thoughts on questions of etiquette in the period in which they were set.

Hamlet

One of the first and most famous pieces of dialogue from *Hamlet* is the piece where Laertes' father, Polonius addresses him before he leaves for France. In this he addresses various points of etiquette which Laertes should follow while he is in France to ensure that he is well respected.

He first addresses aspects of speech and action, and that he should not speak his mind, or do anything without thinking before he commits to action. Next he addresses various aspects of association with people, saying that he should be familiar with people but in no way vulgar. With regard to friends he says that he should trust tried friends and keep them close to him, but any untried friend to be cautious of him. In matters of quarrels he says that he should not enter into a quarrel, but being in a quarrel fight so that the opponent should beware him. He then refers back to matters of speaking, saying that he should listen to all, but be careful to whom he gives his opinion. Take each mans' offence, but reserve judgment of the person. Finally he addresses matters of dress saying that it should be rich but not gaudy, and says that the men of France of rank and station should be observed for their manner of dress.

“Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel,
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd courage. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in,
Bear 't that th' opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
Take each mans censure, but reserve thy judgement.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy,
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.” (*Hamlet* in Bevington, 1980:1080 Act I, scene iii, lines 59 –74)

This particular piece is of great interest to anyone who is interested in the etiquette of the period, and the points, which are raised, should be seriously considered. For the modern practitioner of Renaissance fencing, each point should be considered and pondered upon. A person should consider how one speaks to others, how one associates with others and also how one is dressed. With regard to the element of the quarrel, while it is less likely that such quarrels will come to blows the consideration of response to such quarrels is important. In the question of quarrels, Hamlet makes a very valid point in his address to his friends on his travels;

“Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honor's at the stake.” (*Hamlet*) (*Hamlet* in Bevington, 1980:1106 Act IV, scene iv, lines 53-56)

He states that to be great, a person should not stir without a great argument, but that any argument about a question of honour is one, which needs to be answered. This demonstrates the importance to which honour was held at the time of the writing of this particular play. In its own way it also questions the importance of quarreling itself, in that it questions the motives of a person who will find argument with regard to honour at the slightest insult. For the modern combatant, this is an important point. As was raised previously in this text, just because a person has the skill and can win in a particular argument, doesn't mean that he should. The exercise of such skill should be tempered with consideration. This question of quarrels is also highlighted in *Othello*, which has been mentioned in previous sections, which will be addressed in the next part.

Othello

Othello addresses two of the gentlemen under his command, concerning a brawl which they have both just been involved in and asks them;

"That you unlace your reputation thus,
And spend your rich opinion for the name
Of a night-brawler? Give me answer to it." (*Othello* in Bevington, 1980:1140 Act II,
scene iii, line 188-90)

Thus Shakespeare's piece highlights both the importance of reputation and the way that a negative reputation for brawling can cause a man's reputation to be much less. As was stated above it was important in the Renaissance period that a gentleman keeps his reputation intact if he was to be accepted into honourable company. Shakespeare highlights this point in this particular speech by Othello. It can be assumed that a man who quarrels at any provocation or for any unfounded reason could earn himself the reputation of a brawler, and thus not be accepted in polite company.

For the modern Renaissance combatant this is an important point as such a reputation for fighting for any reason will also damage a person's reputation. It can be seen in a modern light from the point of view of people who are easily provoked into fighting. Such a person is regarded warily by those around them. For the modern practitioner this should be a serious consideration especially if they are attempting to recreate the gentleman as he was in the Renaissance. The final play that is examined is *Romeo and Juliet*.

Romeo and Juliet

"More than the prince of cats, I can tell you. O,
he's the courageous captain of compliments. He fights
as you sing prick-song, keeps time, distance and pro-
portion; his rests his minim rests, one, two, and the
third in your bosom. The very butcher of a silk button,
a duellist, a duellist; a gentleman of the very first
house, of the first and second cause.
Ah, the immortal passado! The punto reverso! The hai!" (*Romeo and Juliet* in
Bevington, 1980:1008 Act II, scene iv, lines 19 –26)

Mercutio's comments regarding Tybalt are very poignant about the idea of the gentleman of the Renaissance, and therefore are worth study in the context of this paper. Mercutio comments about Tybalt's skill with words, calling him "the courageous captain of compliments" alluding to Tybalt's ability to be seen and heard as a gentleman in polite company. He then refers to Tybalt's martial prowess, which is a great deal of the monologue and therefore seen as very important to the skills of the gentleman. Interestingly Mercutio refers to Tybalt as a duellist and gentleman in the same statement this is; however somewhat of a comedic as is most of the monologue. Mercutio's statements highlight the important parts of what it means to be a gentleman in the period.

For the modern practitioner, Mercutio's statements are worth examination as is the whole play for the importance of the gentleman and how one should act. Renaissance period sources are the best for ideas about what is considered to be good and bad etiquette, but a person's search should not only be confined to the fencing manuals of the period as much is said in other sources.

Conclusion

The article above is an examination of fencing etiquette from both a modern and Renaissance point of view. For the modern Renaissance combatant who practices a Renaissance form of fencing in the modern world, both are worth consideration. The Renaissance view could be seen to be more applicable due to the art which is being practised, but due to the lack of information specifically on fencing etiquette and the origins of modern etiquette, modern etiquette is worth examination.

The modern view was discussed first due to its familiarity considering the reader's point of view of living in the modern era. First there was an examination of the modern code of etiquette for the modern fencer. This was done in-depth so that the reader could understand how etiquette in the modern game should work. Sadly, this is not always the way that it does work. This difference of opinion and actual circumstance is the result of the competition-focused nature of the modern game. In many people's view, it is the point which is important and not how the point is acquired, this has led to the development of such moves in the modern game as the "flick" which have no basis in real combat with swords. The examination of the modern game also took into account, the attributes of the gentleman, which are important to the modern fencer, the attitude the fencer takes to their game, and questions of respect and honour. These are all important aspects and should not be glossed over, but studied in-depth so that the fencer is able to have a deep meaning of the art which he or she is involved in.

Continuing with the modern perspective on the subject of fencing etiquette were discussions of historical texts and how they allow the modern practitioner to look back at what has come before them and examine it to find out points of note. It is important that this examination be done from an holistic approach so that all the available resources are recognised and utilised in the investigation. Questions of personal motivation, the code duello and the weapon as the mark of a gentleman were all discussed in this section. It is important that historians examine the complete picture, which is available to them and not to focus only on things concerned specifically with the combat arts as the whole question is extremely culturally based. Personal motivation has an obvious relationship to the overall subject as it is the person's own motivation which decides to what sort of degree they will follow points of etiquette. The other two subjects are of special import to the Renaissance fencer as these are what the whole idea of dulling was based on. The respect shown for duelling and duellists is also important as it demonstrates the practitioners in the era to be respected for their undertaking, and especially for being willing to put their lives on the line for the sake of honour. The final part from the modern point of view was a question of ethics and the gentleman from a modern point of view, but placed in the historical context of the Renaissance. This is obviously related to the whole question of etiquette and should be seriously considered by the modern practitioner.

The Renaissance section of this article is actually the focus of the article, but the modern perspective was important to be discussed so that the reader would have some basis for what is being spoken about. The division of this section is more based upon type of sources rather than by topic, though within each section there are subject headings which are appropriate and important to the discussion.

To start the discussion of the Renaissance view of fencing and fencing etiquette, one of the most influential and important texts on etiquette is discussed, Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. This discussion delves into the depths of questions of the etiquette of the courtier and by de facto the gentleman of the period. It is advised that the reader acquires a copy of this work and read it, as it is most useful. From the point of the Renaissance fencer in the modern period it is useful so that an understanding of the gentleman in the Renaissance period may be accessed. Machiavelli's *The Prince* is more of a political treatise, but in his advice for the prince there are certain points that are of use for the modern Renaissance combatant. It is also through this most useful text that a person is able to access ideas of how to deal with sensitive situations and come out on top.

The fencing treatises of the period are the most obvious place to access information on fencing and the etiquette of fencing as this is the primary purpose of these texts. Three of the many texts were used in the discussion, Di Grassi, Saviolo and Swetnam. Each has important points, which are of relevance to the modern recreator. These three theorists agree on several points but also disagree on several points and it is here where the most interesting ideas come to light. A difference of opinion must be noted and accepted and both sides evaluated before any judgement is made. If the reader has not read the complete texts from these particular individuals, it is advised that you do so. Importantly the reader should also access as many period treatises, as is possible. This is the only way to access the complete picture. It is the ideal set out by these theorists and practitioners which is most important for an accurate recreation, but this does not say that they should be used in isolation.

Shakespeare's plays give both political and social commentary of the period from the point of view of someone from the period. The three plays that were selected were selected due to their fame and popularity as much as their usefulness. Imbedded in each are social and political comments that are of significance for the topic being discussed. There are others, which are also useful, and the modern practitioner should familiarise themselves with the works of Shakespeare due to his usefulness.

In conclusion, each of the points which is raised in the article highlight important points which all fencers, and indeed all combatants of any form should take into consideration. These points are of special relevance to the modern Renaissance fencer due to the origins of the texts and hence the mode of etiquette. It is only through the true application of such standards and ideals of etiquette that the modern recreator is truly able to appreciate the art, which is practised to its full capacity. It is also the element of the gentleman in Renaissance forms of combat that makes ideals of etiquette important and for an accurate recreation the practitioner should act in a manner, which befits that ideal. It is also important that such participants appear to embody such ideals as this will create a better impression and will inspire others to take notice and include such considerations in their relationship with others.

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