The influence of Castiglione's The book of the courtier on seven Shakespearean plays

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The influence of Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* on seven Shakespearean plays

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Abstract

This study explores how Castiglione's The Book of the Courtier influenced seven Shakespearean plays, namely A Midsummer Night's Dream (1598), Much Ado about Nothing (1600), Romeo and Juliet (1595), Troilus and Cressida (1601), Henry V (1599), Hamlet (1600) and Love's Labour's Lost (1594-95). First, I examine instances where the Shakespearean courtiers seem to follow or allude to the Castiglionean model. I analyze the interaction of what Castiglione recommends as the ideal behavior of a courtier and how the concept of a perfect courtier is used or parodied in these plays. I specifically deal with the most outstanding marks of an ideal courtier, namely *sprezzatura*, his courtship and his virtues. Finally, I conclude arguing that Shakespeare contributes to the construction of a new type of (English) courtier, who departs from the Petrarchan and the Castiglionean models in order to favor a more 'human' and less abstract courtier.

The influence of Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*

on seven Shakespearean plays

Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* was highly popular in the Renaissance and, as George Bull points out, "it exercised a profound influence on European sensibilities"(12). By the time Shakespeare wrote his plays, Castiglione's book had been printed several times in Europe. It was first printed in Italy in 1528. *The Courtier* was translated and printed in Spain in 1531 and reprinted in 1544. In England, *The Courtier* was first translated by Hoby and printed by Wyllyam Seres in 1561. Hoby's translation was widely read. It was reprinted in London in 1577 by Henry Denham, then in 1588 by Iohn Wolfe, and in 1603 by Thomas Creede.

Due to the several times *The Courtier* was printed in England, we may infer that Castiglione's masterpiece was available to Shakespeare and that its content was not new for people living in Elizabethan England. George Bull actually states that "*The Courtier* . . . appeared in England at a time of intense interest in Italian life and literature. Even before being translated, *The Courtier* was influencing upper-class life and manners through books such as Sir Thomas Elyot's *Governor*" (13). Besides, the influential educator, Roger Ascham also "recommended *The Courtier* as a book which, if read with diligence, would benefit a young man more than three years in Italy" (13). Thus, the "kind of behaviour recommended to the Italian courtiers became the accepted

standard for English gentlemen. To Elizabethan literature it channeled Renaissance philosophy and conceits . . . the neo-Platonism expounded by Bembo in the Fourth Book provides a standard for the fresh endeavours to attain beauty and harmony in literature as well as in life; eves witticisms in Shakespeare renew the jokes and puns recommended by Castiglione" (15). Castiglione's influence on Shakespeare's plays can be observed in some of his courtier characters. This paper will aim at analyzing the interaction of what Castiglione recommends as the ideal behavior of a courtier and how the concept of a perfect courtier is used or parodied in some of Shakespeare's plays, e.g. A Midsummer Night's Dream (1598), Much Ado about Nothing (1600), Romeo and Juliet (1595), Troilus and Cressida (1601), Henry V (1599), Hamlet (1600) and Love's Labour's Lost (1594-95).

In order to understand how Shakespeare deals with the idea of Castiglione's perfect courtier in his plays, it is necessary to have in mind Castiglione's most important concepts. In the first place, Castiglione considers of vital importance that his courtier be of "noblenesse of birth" [44] and belong to a good family. Once this idea is clearly stated, Castiglione goes on to deal with several aspects the courtier should take into account, namely appropriate profession and activities for a courtier, his physical appearance and the main virtues he is to display.

Castiglione states that "the principall and true profession of a Courtyer ought to be in feates of armes" [50]. His physical appearance and the activities recommended for his successful career as a courtier are to be closely linked to his profession as a warrior. As far as looks and appearance are concerned, the courtier should be manly and

graceful without appearing soft and feminine. He must be well-built, neither too small nor too big, with finely proportioned members. He must excel at physical exercises befitting a warrior: wrestling, horseback riding and at sports such as hunting, swimming, jumping and tennis. He should ignore tight-rope walking and acrobatics. The courtier must observe a proper dress code according to the different activities he takes part in. For example, in public spectacles, he should be elegant and attractive and never the last to arrive since he would not be paid enough attention. In sports, he has to be well-equipped with horses, weapons and appropriate attire. He must also abstain from participating with peasants, showing his prowess only to the nobility and to his prince, if possible. Besides, the perfect courtier must know how to write and speak well in the vernacular. When he speaks, he must be frank, avoid talking nonsense, and be versatile according to the audience he is addressing. The courtier must:

> speak with dignitte and behemency, to raise those affections which our mindes haue in them, and to enflame or stirre them according to the matter: sometime with a simplicitye of suche meekenesse of mynde, that a man woulde weene nature her self spake,, to make them tender and (as it wer) drunken with sweetenesse: and with suche conueiaunce of easinesse,that who so heareth him, maye conceyue a good opinion of himselfe and ... mighte attaine to that perfection. [72]

Besides, the courtier is worthy of praise if he employs French or Spanish terms, use words metaphorically or coin new words. Castiglione points out that the courtier should be cautious, act and speak with prudence. He must consider what he does or says, the place, its timing, his age, profession, his audience and his objective. He must try to show eloquence and wit.

The courtier should possess knowledge of Greek and Latin, be acquainted with the poets, orators and historians, and be skilled at writing verse and prose which is useful for constant entertainment for the ladies. He should also be a musician capable of reading music and playing several instruments. Drawing and painting are also advisable activities for the perfect courtier.

The courtier's life has to be consistent with his virtues. The courtier should not be a great eater or drinker or indulge in bad habits He should be courageous, enterprising, bold and loyal but he must avoid self-praise. The courtier must rule his actions (laugh, jest, dance) with good judgment, i.e. grace, good sense and discretion. If he is able to combine his warrior actions with a gentleness of character he will certainly make a good impression on other courtiers. Most importantly, the courtier should also shun affectation. It is recommendable that he shows *sprezzatura* in all his actions, i.e. he must "steer away from affectation and practice in all things a certain nonchalance which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless" (67). The most famous concept in the dialogue: *sprezzatura*, which as Burke explains, "is presented as a new coinage by Count Lodovico da Canossa when he explains the need to avoid affectation" (30).

Regarding his relationship with his prince, the courtier must be loyal to him but not a flatterer. He is never to speak evil and hardly ever ask his master for anything for himself. As a sign of respect, he must never enter his master's chamber uninvited. If the courtier does not know when to obey, it is advisable for him never to leave his master at war or in serious trouble. Yet, he has the right to quit the Prince's service if he

commands a service involving "dishonest and shamefull matters" [130]. It is the courtier's final aim to become his prince's instructor and responsible for introducing the prince to many virtues

If the courtier falls in love, he should keep his love secret. He should not behave as an obstinate lover following his beloved to church, singing constantly to her, writing poems, going to dances and masquerades to see her. Instead, he should declare his love in a letter. He should also "declare his love by his actions rather than speech, for a man's feelings are sometimes more clearly revealed by a sigh, a gesture of respect or a certain shyness than by volumes of words. And next he should use his eyes to carry faithfully the message written in his heart, because they often communicate hidden feelings more effectively than anything else" (268).

All the above mentioned characteristics are always present to some degree in Shakespeare's courtiers. All the characters analyzed in this paper comply with the first characteristic Castiglione demands of a courtier, i.e. being of noble family. Most of them also have as their main profession being a soldier, apart from being educated gentlemen. For example, in *Much Ado about Nothing*, Don Pedro of Aragon is a highly respected nobleman who sometimes referred to as "Prince." When the play begins, Don Pedro is presented as arriving victorious from the wars without having lost any gentleman of name. He is courteous and pays attention to the needs of his soldiers, especially to Claudio and Benedick who have fought valiantly in the battlefield. In *Troilus and Cressida*, most characters are soldiers, and Troilus is initially depicted as a

brave warrior and an honorable man. Pandarus tells his niece that "Troilus is the better man of the two" (I.ii.56) when comparing him to Hector. In *Henry V,* Prince Hal excels in the battle scenes. As Witt points out, Henry is skillful in the use of weapons and a perfect horseman -- two primary requirements of the Courtier which are mentioned in Book I: "And herein I thinke the chiefe point is to handle wel all kinde of weapon, both for footeman and horseman, and to know the vantage in it" (Witt 278). In *Hamlet,* Hamlet and Laertes are skillful in fencing which is insinuated in Act IV.vii, when King Claudius and Laertes devise a plan to kill Hamlet, and clearly seen in Act V.ii, when Hamlet and Laertes fight. Furthermore, Hamlet receives a soldier's funeral, without having had the opportunity of serving as one. In V.ii, Fortinbras closes the play by saying:

> Let four captains
> Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage
> For he was likely, had he been put on,
> To have prov'd most royally
> The soldiers' music and the rites of war
> Speak loudly of him (339-44)

Thus, Hamlet is also honored as a soldier.

Although Castiglione deals with many more minor characteristics which are also present in Shakespeare's characters, I will restrict this paper to mentioning and analyzing the most outstanding marks of an ideal courtier, namely *sprezzatura*, his virtues and the way he should woo his love. I will argue that Shakespeare does not limit Castiglione's ideals to an imaginary and ideal abstraction, rather he applies the courtier's characteristics to different characters who range from princes and kings to

gentlemen of the court. Therefore, the term courtier should be understood in the broadest sense possible, i.e. anyone who frequents the court of a sovereign.

Critics have mainly focused on Hamlet and Prince Hal as Shakespeare's embodiments of the ideal courtier. Henderson points out that Ophelia:

> "cannot be talking about the ordinary courtier, who is a synonym for parasite and sycophant and hypocrite in Shakespeare and his contemporary dramatists" when "the mind that Ophelia thinks 'quite quite down' once dominated 'the courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;' instead of the now insulting speech was once 'the honey of his music vows'; instead of irrational conduct there was 'that noble and most sovereign reason'" (16).

Ophelia's depiction of Hamlet shows, according to Biswas, "how noble Shakespeare's conception of a courtier was, one that holds for the prince as much as for any in his court" (49). Biswas claims that "Shakespeare's notion of a courtier is pitched so high that none except Hamlet comes near it" (49). Benson further argues that "if the ideal of the Courtier, soldier, scholar developed first in Italy, and was brought to perfection in the narrative of "Il Cortegiano," then Hamlet is a signal example of it in English literature: 'The Courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword' (*Hamlet*, III.i.150)" (62). Benson also describes Hamlet as "full of wit and repartee, an adept in the retort courteous and the reply churlish, and a consummate artist in the use of words and in the manipulation of situations" (62).

Although I agree with the general criticism about Hamlet and Henry, I will argue that even if both Hamlet and Henry are closer to achieve the perfection of Castiglione's ideal courtier than other characters, neither of them can be fully accepted as the perfect Castiglionean courtier due to their flaws. Hamlet impulsively kills

Polonius, and Henry seems to avoid taking full responsibility of his decision about invading France. First, he tells the Archbishop to "take heed how [he] impawn our person" (I.ii.21) because every time France and England fight many innocent people die. Thus, if the Archbishop is not telling the truth, he will be responsible for misinforming the King. Then he adopts a similar strategy when he receives the Dauphin's insulting tennis balls and replies that due to that insult they are now at war and the Dauphin should be held responsible for it. Henry tells the French ambassador:

> "... tell the pleasant Prince this mock of his
> Hath turned his balls to gunstones, and his soul
> Shall stand sore charged for the wasteful vengeance" (I.ii.281-3)

Thus, Henry cannot be blamed for invading France since the Dauphin has insulted him with his present. Clearly, neither Hamlet nor Henry can be considered free of flaw to be categorized as examples of Castiglione's courtiers.

Shakespeare presents different degrees of achievement in his characters which brings them closer to or distances them from Castiglione's ideal. We can observe how Shakespeare admires or mocks Castiglione's ideal courtier when applying Castiglione's notions of *sprezzatura*, courtship and virtues to the different characters.

According to Castiglione, the courtier has to do every single action with *sprezzatura* which he defines as "a certain nonchalance which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless" (67). Benson explains that "there is no word in English that corresponds to 'sprezzatura.' Literally it means 'disdaining' and points up to the obvious distaste for, deprecation of any manner that is studied, pretentious, artificial, unduly affected"(47). Sweetzer also points out that

"The courtier's self-conscious balancing of traits by their opposites – a manner gay but not too gay, a gown long but not too long – suggests a contradictory self held together by a carefully constructed appearance of poise" (178). If we apply such a concept to the plays under consideration, we can notice several instances where the characters are doing their best to show *sprezzatura* in their acts, or are scolded due to their lack of such an essential quality for a courtier. For example, in *Much Ado about Nothing,* when Benedick is at the masked ball and refuses to remain with Don Pedro when he sees Beatrice approaching them, he tells Don Pedro: "I'll fetch a toothpicker from the furthest inch of Asia . . . rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy" (II.i. 231-235). Even though Benedick is exaggerating his feelings, he does it in such a witty and effortless way that he certainly shows the wits and the *sprezzatura* a courtier needs.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo is seen as a bit of a poseur when thinking himself in love with Rosaline in Act I. His highly artificial language lacks *sprezzatura*. He describes his feelings to Benvolio arguing that:

> Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs,
> Being purged a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes,
> Being vexed, a sea nourished with lovers' tears. (I.i.183-6)

Nonetheless, Romeo's amatory language becomes wittier at the masked ball when he sees and interacts with Juliet. He tells her: "…. Dear saint, let lips do what hands do:/ They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair" (I.v. 100-1). In this way, by using religious imagery, Romeo persuades Juliet to kiss him. Then, in the balcony scene (II.i), Romeo and Juliet seem to reach the peak of *sprezzatura* when they spontaneously start speaking in sonnets. Juliet, aware of the value of *sprezzatura*, even asks Romeo to give

up affectation and artificiality when he tells her: "... by yonder blessed moon I vow,/ That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops" (II.i. 149-50). Juliet interrupts Romeo affected language and asks him not to swear at all.

In *Henry V*, Prince Hal uses *sprezzatura* in each of his speeches. He knows the audience he is addressing, he has a clear purpose in mind and he acts in consequence. His speech flows naturally without any tinge of artificiality. For instance, when he receives the Dauphin's tennis balls as a present, he tells the messenger that the Dauphin "had turned his balls to gunstones" (I.i.282). His tone varies completely when he addresses his soldiers in St Crispin's Day saying:

> If we are marked to die, we are enough
> To do our country loss; and if to live
> The fewer men, the greater share of honour. (IV.iii.19-21)

In this way, Henry stirs the soldiers' morale and then makes them imagine how proud they would be of themselves if they outlive the battle and how Saint Crispin's day will always remind them of their courage in that battle. Nonetheless, Henry's speech turns from encouraging to intimidating when he meets the Governor of Harfleur and tells him that if he does not surrender:

> ...the fleshed soldier, rough and hard of heart,
> In liberty of bloody hand shall range
> With conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass
> Your fresh fair virgins and your flow'ring infants. (III.iii.88-91)

Henry eloquently argue how worthless will be to sacrifice so many innocent victims if they are not going to receive help from the Dauphin. Finally, we will see a totally different Henry when he addresses Catherine, as will be shown later. All these different

examples emphasize Prince Hal's versatility and his *sprezzatura* when dealing with different audiences. Furthermore, Henry also shows *sprezzatura* in his acts. For instance, when he mingles with common soldiers such as Michael Williams, John Bates and Alexander Court, he goes in disguise. Echoing Castiglione's perfect courtier, King Henry is not supposed to mingle with the lower classes. He therefore steps down from his royal role by disguising as another common soldier in order to interact with them as equals. He is then able to disagree with Williams and even exchange gloves, in order to fight one another if they survive the battle, all because they have disagreed about the approaching Battle of Agincourt. Nevertheless, when Henry sees Williams again, he is unable to fight him since he is not disguised any more. Instead, when Henry reveals the truth about the glove, he asks Uncle Exeter to "fill this glove with crowns" (IV. viii. 52) and gives it back to Williams in a gesture of largesse.

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, as Bradbrook suggests, "there are links here between *The Courtier* and the manifesto of *Love's Labour's Lost* in favour of simplicity" since Biron ends his recantation saying: 'And to begin, wench, so God help me, law!/ My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw' (V.ii.414-15)"(164). Biron thus realizes that: "taffeta phrases, silken terms precise./Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation, figures pedantical..." (V.ii. 406-8) will not enable him to express himself with *sprezzatura*. In *Hamlet*, the Prince of Denmark shows *sprezzatura* in his soliloquies which flow most naturally. He also asks the players to "suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance: that you overstep not the modesty of nature" (III.ii 16-17), that is, to show *sprezzatura* in their actions.

If *sprezzatura* is supposed to be the stamp of the courtier, how is it to be demonstrated when the courtier is in love? As seen in the introduction, the courtier should "declare his love by his actions rather than speech, for a man's feelings are sometimes more clearly revealed by a sigh, a gesture of respect or a certain shyness than by volumes of words" (267). Thus, the courtier should be silent, prudent and express himself in writing letters rather than poems. Having Castiglione's recommendations in mind, let's analyze how the different courtiers express their love to their ladies. Do they follow Castiglione's ideal behavior? If so, are they successful?

In *Much Ado about Nothing*, Don Pedro, the Prince of Aragon, acts as a go-between. He disguises as Claudio and reveals his love to Hero and her father Leonato, the governor of Messina. Claudio does not find words to express his love for Hero. Hero says : "silence is the perfectest herald of joy" (II.i. 267). Both lovers seem to value silence as a sign of love. Benedick seems to follow the convention of the time and grows quieter in Act II.iii. Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato notice that and start teasing him. Then, different wooing scenes follow. In Act IV.ii, Beatrice and Benedick utter short exchanges and Benedick says: "Good Beatrice. By this hand I love thee" (line 319). In Act V, Benedick laments he cannot express his love in blank verse. Then, he adds: "I cannot show it in rhyme. I have tried/. ... No, I was not born under a rhyming planet,/ nor I cannot woo in festival terms" (V.ii. 31.34-5). Then, in Act V.iv, Claudio produces "a halting sonnet of his (Benedick's) own pure brain,/ Fashioned to Beatrice" (lines 87-8) and Hero shows one Beatrice has written about "her affection unto

Benedick" (line 90). Benedick attempts to behave as an ideal courtier, yet he is more successful with witty comments than with poetry.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo is silent when in love with Rosaline (Act I.i) , but then he grows articulate and expresses himself with great *sprezzatura* when he meets Juliet as explained earlier. Count Paris, on his part, is described as the ideal candidate. Capulet describes him as follows:

> A gentleman of princely parentage,
> Of fair demesne, youthful and nobly trained
> Stuff'd, as they say, with honourable parts,
> Proportion'd as one's thoughts would wish a man.
> (III.5.179-82)

Although Count Paris embodies many of the characteristics Castiglione suggests such as nobility of birth, youth, and education, Shakespeare does not give him voice to court Juliet except for brief exchanges in the Friar Laurence's cell in Act IV.i. Shakespeare seems to prevent the Castiglionean courtier from being a successful wooer by denying him voice and time to achieve his aim.

In *Love's Labour Lost*, the lovers first pine for their loves in secret so as not to violate the pledge they have signed "not to see any ladies, study, fast, not sleep" (I.1.48) for three years. They write poems about their love. In Act Iv.iii, Biron enters, carrying a poem to Rosaline. He hides when the King enters swooning and reading a poem he has written. The King then hides when he hears Longaville approaching while speaking of his love for Maria. Longaville also begins to read from a poem he has written. He also has to hide when he hears Dumaine moaning for Kate and reading an ode that he has written. These lovers echo Castiglione's perfect courtier in the silent and

prudent way they deal with love in this scene. Furthermore, they also write letters for their ladies. For instance, Biron gives Costard a letter to deliver to Rosaline, but Costard accidentally switches it with the letter from Don Armado to Jaquenetta. Although there is a comic element due to the genre of the play, we can see that these lovers are echoing the way Castiglione's perfect courtier would have behaved, i.e. expressing their love through love letters and being cautious about the way they act. Notwithstanding, their courting process changes when they decide to dress as Muscovites to continue wooing their respective ladies. Knowing about the courtiers' plan, the Princess and her ladies decide to mask themselves so that "the "Muscovites" do not know who they should woo" (V.ii.135). This kind of behavior would be contrary to Castiglione's ideals since though courtiers can attend masked balls in disguise, yet, he will never indulge in deceit. Shakespeare's courtiers in this play purposefully decide to mask and deceive their loves. In the last act, Biron says, "our wooing doth not end like an old play" (V.ii.867) meaning that it does not end in marriage as most earlier comedies do. The wooers seem to be punished because they are not the ideal courtiers since they lack *sprezzatura*, indulge in deceit and have violated their original vow.

In *Troilus and Cressida*, wooing does not lead to matrimony, rather it is only a means to satisfy Troilus' lust. In fact, Troilus and Cressida never even mention getting married. In Act II.ii, the lovers exchange pretty verses, yet lust, not love, is their driving emotion. From this idea, we can infer that Troilus, even if sharing some of the characteristics Castiglione mentions (noble birth, a soldier, knowledge of poetry), he cannot stand for an ideal courtier since the courtier's love only serves two purposes:

adoration of the lady or religion. Is Shakespeare dealing with the lowest degree of the courtier, or is he showing that lust cannot be accepted as a wooer's legitimate intention? Perhaps, Shakespeare acknowledges that pure love should naturally lead to matrimony, yet, in real life, there exists lust as well as love.

In *Hamlet*, Polonius thinks Hamlet is in love and produces a letter the prince has written to Ophelia partly in highly artificial language which is a mixture of prose and rhyming lines:

> Doubt thou the stars are fire
> Doubt that the sun doth move
> Doubt truth to be a liar
> But never doubt I love
> O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have no art to reckon my groans. But that I love the best, O most best believe it. Adieu.
> Thine evermore, most dear lady whilst this machine is to him.
> Hamlet. (II.ii. 116-24)

As Hamlet combines poetry and prose, his letter lacks *sprezzatura*. If Hamlet is so articulate in his soliloquies and so witty in his interactions with the rest of the characters, why cannot he write a conventional love letter? Shakespeare seems to be subverting Castiglione's ideal courtier by turning one of his most elaborate characters, a near-ideal courtier, into a highly articulate courtier unable to express himself in the conventional amatory language.

In *Henry V*, King Henry displays several characteristics of Castiglione's ideal courtier in the wooing scene: ideal age, wit, knowledge of other languages, in this case French, and reverence of neoplatonic love as Bembo explains in Book IV. As

Bevington points out "Henry's successful arrival at manhood is made to coincide with his success as a wooer"(95). When he courts Catherine, he first tells her that:

> A good leg will fall, a straight back will stoop, a black beard will turn white, a curled pate will grow bald, a fair face will wither, a full eye will wax hollow: but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon, or rather, the sun, and not the moon, for it shines bright and never changes, but keeps his course truly. If thou would have such a one, take me. (V, ii, 154-59)

Prince Hal is alluding to Bembo's notion of constant love which remains after the beauty of youth fades away. Then, Henry adds: "take me, take a soldier; take a soldier, take a king" (V.ii. 160). Castiglione considers the courtier "worthy praise to use some of those terms bothe Frenche and Spanishe" [72]. Adopting the Castiglionean model, King Henry even resorts to French to woo his lady when he tells her: "Je quand suis le possesseur de France, et quand vous avez le possession de moi" (V.ii. 172-3). Shakespeare seems to show Henry as Castiglione's ideal courtier. Nonetheless, Catherine's marriage has already been arranged as she is the "spoils of war, obliged to marry (Henry) in accordance with an English-French treaty" (Bevington 80). Therefore, it is debatable whether Prince Hal is really successful as a wooer or if he is mocking Castiglione's ideal courtier performing a role which has no impact in the political arena.

Finally, let's examine the virtues Castiglione suggests for his courtier and analyze if Shakespeare attributes some of them to his characters. Castiglione suggests a code of behavior which includes prudence and moderation in all actions, and loyalty to the prince. For instance, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the prince advices Hermia to obey her father. Theseus tells Hermia:

> ... question your desires
> .....
> whether, if you yield not to your father's choice
> you can endure the livery of a nun. (I.i. 67, 69-70)

When Hermia and Lysander run away to the forest, they defy not only the father but also the prince, which implies that they are not exhibiting courtier-like obedience.

When speaking, Castiglione's courtier is to be concise, clear and cautious, and he should also take into account his audience. In *Much Ado about Nothing*, Beatrice tells Hero that Count John would be an excellent man if he "were made just in the midway between him and Benedick. The one is too like an image and says nothing, and the other too like any lady's eldest son, evermore tattling" (II.i.6-9). Beatrice seems to agree with Castiglione's idea of moderation and cautiousness when speaking. Furthermore, Shakespeare allows his characters to privilege their service to the prince over their personal interests. For instance, Claudio does not complain when Don Pedro offers to woo Hero for him, and when aroused by Don John at the mask, he answers "I wish him joy of her" (II.i.170). Claudio chooses his obedience to Don Pedro over his love for Hero, though he is sulky about it. Don John, the bastard, has to moderate his speech to remain in his brother's good books. He confesses:

> I'd rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his graces... If I had my mouth, I would bite. If I had my liberty, I would do my liking. In the meantime, let me be that I am and seek not to alter me. (I.iii. 21.27-9).

As Javitch states:

> Castiglione's speakers rarely disregard the real constraints of the autocratic political order to which the courtier belongs. The proper conduct they recommend reveals their full awareness that the model individual they fashion has to depend on his ruler's favor for his

existence and that his prime objective, therefore, is to secure or preserve such a favor. (320)

Both Claudio and Don John exemplify the restrictions the courtiers faced and the necessity for the courtier to exercise the art of dissimulation in order to remain in the prince's favor.

In *Romeo and Juliet,* the Prince wants to do justice to both families and speaks with cautiousness carefully considering the effect of his actions. The Prince states:

And for that offence
Immediately we do exile him hence
I have an interest in your hat's proceeding
But I'll amerce you with so strong a fine
That you shall all repent the loss of mine. (III.i,180-5)

Thus, the Prince as a typical Castiglionean courtier expresses himself eloquently,

In *Troilus and Cressida,* Troilus is described as an honorable warrior. In *Henry V,* Prince Hal is admired by all. He is an intelligent ruler. He thinks carefully about whether or not to invade France. He is brave and eloquent knowing what to say and how to say it according to the situation he is in. In *Love's Labour's Lost,* Ferdinand, King of Navarre, and three of his courtiers swear an oath to pursue scholarship, instead of earthly pleasures such as food and women. In Act I.i, Ferdinand tells his courtiers that the goal of their scholarship is to obtain fame. Fame is not specifically mentioned in Castiglione's Book of the Courtier, though the ideal courtier should have scholarly ability not only to entertain the ladies but also to be admired by all. To a certain extent, fame is behind Castiglione's ideal courtier, who practices his skills only when the right people are around to observe him. Perhaps Shakespeare is making it more obvious when openly stating it in his play. Is the fact that they cannot keep their oath to devote

themselves to learning a foreshadowing of their failure as ideal courtiers? Not only will they not be educating themselves as ideal courtiers should do, but also Shakespeare may be suggesting that if these courtiers break an oath so easily, they may do it again by not keeping their promises of marriage.

In *Hamlet,* Shakespeare endows Horatio and Marcellus with some of the virtues Castiglione recommends, namely bravery and loyalty. In I.iv, Horatio and Marcellus follow Hamlet when he goes towards the ghost in order to protect him. They act in spite of their own fear and, as the first purpose of the courtier is to be the prince's advisor, both of them advise Hamlet against following the ghost for fear that it would turn out to be a demon. Shakespeare attributes different virtues to different characters and when dealing with the Prince of Denmark, he presents him as the paragon of virtues. Ophelia refers to "the courtier-soldier-scholar." According to Biswas, "Hamlet seems to be an embodiment of Shakespeare's ideal of courtliness, derived ultimately from Castiglione" (49). Biswas praises Hamlet "as composer and reciter of verses, actor, director, connoisseur of music and painting, [who] has no peer" (51). Nonetheless, although Hamlet has many virtues, how can we account for Hamlet's rashness in stabbing Polonius? Why does Shakespeare allow the "ideal courtier," if that was his purpose, to make such a mistake? Perhaps, Shakespeare attributes such a flaw to Hamlet to make him human instead of indulging in an ideal abstraction as Castiglione does.

It is clear from the numerous examples considered that, in some of Shakespeare's plays, Castiglione's ideals were present in Shakespeare's masterpieces.

There seems to be no significant difference in the depiction of the courtiers across genre. Whether it is a tragedy, comedy or history, Shakespearean courtiers show characteristics present in Castiglione's model. Nonetheless, Shakespeare is not just adopting the Italian model intact, nor is he perfecting it as Benson seems to suggest in his analysis of Hamlet. Instead, Shakespeare seems to make use of Castiglione's model only as a way of showing how absurd a man would be to try to act in accordance with all the requirements at the same time. Shakespeare does not grant any of his characters, not even the most elaborate ones such as Hamlet or Henry, all the characteristics that an ideal courtier should possess. Shakespeare shows that Castiglione's courtier is extremely removed from reality. He prefers to "humanize" his courtiers giving them virtues and defects as any member of the society would have, though respecting the social hierarchy and attributing more ideal characteristics to princes and kings than to common courtiers. Thus, we see a different hierarchy of gentlemen adopting Castiglione's ideals partially (as in the case of Romeo, Benedick, Claudio, etc) or almost totally as Henry who excels in all virtues. The power structure is preserved and Castiglione's courtier is only admired as a model which is useful to provide general behavior guidelines, though his ideal is never to be achieved.

I argue that Shakespeare contributes to the construction of a new type of (English) courtier, namely one that moves beyond the Petrarchan and the Castiglionean models. Benedick and Romeo are good examples to consider in order to see how Shakespeare deals with the convention of the poseur, the Petrarchan lover, and Castiglione's notion of the ideal lover as somebody who uses moderation and

sprezzatura in all his actions. Benedick first feels he has to adopt the role of the melancholic lover to woo Beatrice and soon his witty remarks are subdued in favor of a more silent profile. Nonetheless, he ends up realizing that neither growing silent nor attempting to write a sonnet suits him as an individual. Likewise, Romeo starts by acting like the conventional Petrarchan lover with Rosaline; yet, he changes his strategy when he discovers true love. After seeing Juliet, the Petrarchan model is no longer useful for him; the young lover needs to express himself with words. Thus, Romeo then adopts Castiglione's model and speaks with *sprezzatura* and eloquence. The Castiglionean model, however, is soon dismissed since Romeo feels overpowered by his feelings towards Juliet and readily unleashes his impulses, forgetting the cautiousness and prudence he should display to be Castiglione's ideal courtier. In both cases, Shakespeare points out that neither the Petrarchan nor the Castiglionean models is likely to be achieved by the courtier, regardless of his intelligence, profession and education.

Ideal models seem to belong to the realm of abstraction only. Shakespeare thus seem to advocate a more realistic and individualistic model which can be followed by the ordinary courtier as well as by the higher stratum of courtiers such as Hamlet or Henry, who in spite of getting closer to the ideal courtier, cannot escape their human limitations.

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Vita

Marcela B. Gamallo Tur was born in Mendoza, Argentina on June 16th, 1972 to Juana Tur and Carlos Gamallo. Marcela pursued the English teacher training program at the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (UNC), in Argentina. Upon graduation in 1997, she was offered to take part in an exchange program with an American university. She spent an academic year at Webster University in St Louis, MO, where she taught six Spanish courses. When the exchange program came to an end in May 1999, she pursued a second degree. She graduated as a Licentiate in English language and Literature in September 2000 after writing her thesis, entitled "Edith Wharton's Novellas with Rural Setting: *Ethan Frome* and *Summer.*" In 2003, she graduated as a Translator (English-Spanish/Spanish-English), Universidad del Aconcagua, in Mendoza, Argentina. In 2004 she was awarded a Fulbright scholarship as well as a Delta Kappa Gamma grant for key women in education in order to pursue her Master's Degree at Lehigh University. Since 1997, Marcela has taught English as a Foreign Language and Spanish at numerous educational institutions.

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