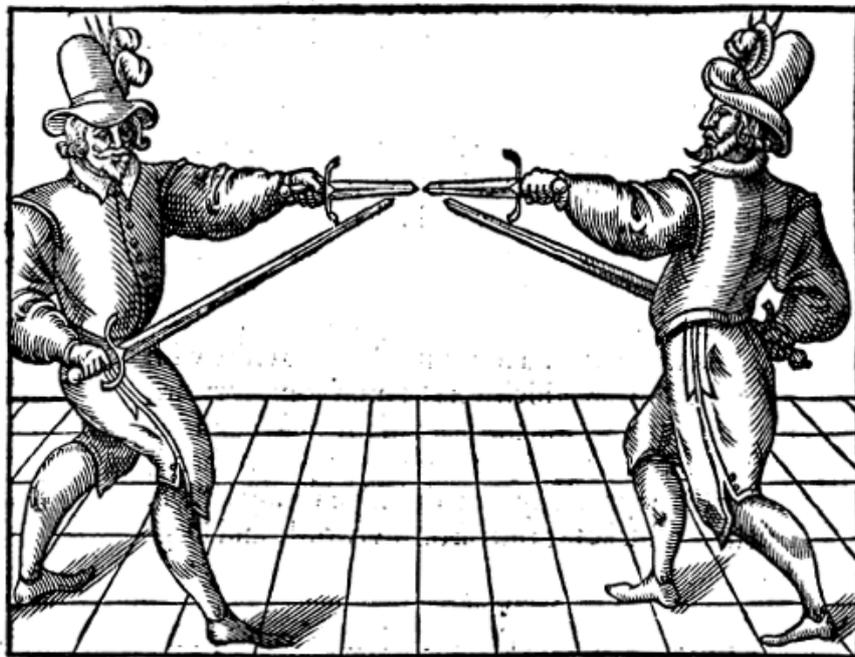


C.L.P. Pennings  
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## “Unjust Ends” at the “Point of Honour”



## The Duel in Early Modern Drama

Supervisors: Dr. P.J.C.M. Franssen  
Dr. A.J. Hoenselaars



Universiteit Utrecht  
Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen  
Letteren

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## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	4
The Ritual of the Duel .....	4
A Fashion and a Tradition.....	5
Class.....	7
Honour .....	8
Manhood .....	10
The Monarch .....	12
The Divine Hierarchy .....	15
The Plays.....	17
Method.....	17
<b>2. Men</b> .....	19
The Italian Fashion .....	19
Family Fights.....	21
Class.....	24
Horizontal Honour.....	28
Back to Basics .....	31
Conclusion .....	36
<b>3. Women</b> .....	39
Quarrelling Sexes .....	39
A Men's World: Women as Ploys.....	43
Women as Prizes .....	44
A Women's World: Women as Ploys.....	45
(Wo)men .....	47
Quarrelling Sexes Revisited.....	50
Conclusion .....	52
<b>4. Kings</b> .....	54
Legally Speaking .....	54
Private and Public Issues .....	56
The King's Duel .....	58
The Kingly Duellist .....	61
The Need for a King .....	63
Unison: The Kingly Duellist Revisited.....	67
Honour .....	68
Conclusion .....	69
<b>5. Gods</b> .....	71
Minister of God: Blessed Monarchs.....	71
Devilish Duels .....	72
Devilish Honour .....	74
The Divine Duel and Honour .....	75
Conclusion .....	76
<b>6. Conclusion</b> .....	79
<b>7. Bibliography</b> .....	82

## 1. Introduction

The duel of honour is an often debated “social institution” in Early Modern England.<sup>1</sup> Many plays explore the tensions pertaining to it. Rossi even exclaims that “brawls, riots and duels [...] *are* the drama.”<sup>2</sup> Though the duel in early modern drama has often been analysed before, it has not been traced in a historical context. Markku Peltonen’s recent work is based on a wide variety of primary sources, but is also rather selective in its illustration of its claims. Early modern drama has a minor role in his arguments, and is only referenced to justify arguments, rather than to problematize them. I will analyse the duel in a few early modern plays by placing it in its historical context to show that early modern drama interacts with the debate of the duel to such an extent that it challenges Peltonen’s claim that the duel of honour is solely based on the theory of civility.<sup>3</sup>

### The Ritual of the Duel

The duel originated in Italy where it replaced the vendetta.<sup>4</sup> It first spread to France and from there gradually to the rest of Europe.<sup>5</sup> It was quickly heralded as being able to “reduce” feuds to “symbolic proportions” as it “confined them to individuals, and required only a limited number of victims.”<sup>6</sup> A “few deaths in well-regulated fights” was an improvement on the “collisions between powerful men bringing troops of retainers into action with them.”<sup>7</sup> Yet for this to work the duel required strict regulations: a duello code.<sup>8</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup> Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility, Politeness and Honour* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 2.

<sup>2</sup> Sergio Rossi, “Duelling in the Italian Manner: the Case of *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Shakespeare’s Italy: Dramatic Function of Italian Location in Renaissance Drama*, ed. Michele Marrapodi et al. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993) 120.

<sup>3</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 2.

<sup>4</sup> V.G. Kiernan, *The Duel in European History: Honour and the Reign of Aristocracy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 6.

<sup>5</sup> Kiernan 6.

<sup>6</sup> Kiernan 12.

<sup>7</sup> Kiernan 68.

regulations marked the change from “collective revenge” to private revenge in matters of honour.<sup>9</sup> The duel was only fought between men, who each could bring one “second” as an “observer” and “safeguard against foul play.”<sup>10</sup> In the earlier duels, the seconds would also fight with each other. In other cases they could serve as proxies. The regulations quickly became more detailed, however, to “avoid degeneration” of “encounters into brawls involving the seconds of the duellists.”<sup>11</sup> The elaborate rules for the preparation and the fight made the duel a “ritualized encounter.”<sup>12</sup> When one gentleman offended another gentleman’s honour, the latter was forced to ‘give the lie’ to the former or be dishonoured. The offender, however, was then forced to challenge him so that he was not dishonoured himself.<sup>13</sup> A challenge was made by demanding ‘satisfaction,’ which forced the gentlemen to arrange a duel: “an injured individual was ‘satisfied’ by being allowed to fight, irrespective of his chances of winning.”<sup>14</sup> After this confrontation, the cartel, a written challenge, had to be sent to the other, who then replied to finalize a time and place for the duel.<sup>15</sup> These letters had to be written “as concisely and politely as possible.”<sup>16</sup> The place for the duel was called the “field,” or “steccata.”<sup>17</sup> Fencing and duelling manuals detailing these procedures were abundant in England.

## A Fashion and a Tradition

Most of the fencing and duelling manuals came from Italy: these were “treatises both on duelling skills, especially the art of fencing, and on the code of honour which governed the

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<sup>8</sup> Peltonen even argues that the “flood of treatises on honour and duelling not merely codified new manners and theories,” but actually “helped to limit the level of aristocratic violence in a very real sense” (Peltonen, *Duel* 5). He explains that the regulations became “so elaborate” that they “often replaced the actual fight altogether”: “The sophisticated and highly publicised charges and countercharges, challenges and ripostes substituted for the duel, to such an extent that the very success of the duelling manuals has been offered as a reason for the decline of duelling” (Peltonen, *Duel* 5).

<sup>9</sup> Fredson Thayer Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Gloucester: Princeton UP, 1959) 33.

<sup>10</sup> Kiernan 63.

<sup>11</sup> Rossi 112.

<sup>12</sup> Kiernan 1.

<sup>13</sup> Kiernan 181.

<sup>14</sup> Kiernan 13-4.

<sup>15</sup> Vincentio Saviolo, *Vincentio Saviolo His Practice* (1595), *Early English Books Online* Sig. P3r.

<sup>16</sup> Holmer 181.

<sup>17</sup> Holmer 170.

art of giving and taking offence in a polished, gentlemanly style.”<sup>18</sup> Saviolo, an Italian with a fencing school in England, was “arguably the most significant and controversial teacher” of fencing in England in the 1590s.<sup>19</sup> He was one of the “leading advocates of the Italian system,” and his fencing school flourished.<sup>20</sup> The fencing style outlined in his manual, *Vincentio Saviolo His Practice*, was severely criticized by the English fencing instructor George Silver in his *Paradoxes of Defence* of 1599. The introduction of the duel in England led to the replacement of the English broadsword with the rapier in society: there was a “close link between the rapier and the duel.”<sup>21</sup> Silver “vilifie[d] Italian teachers of the rapier” and “claim[ed] superiority for the good English sword.”<sup>22</sup> Whereas the sword was used to cut, the rapier could only be used to pierce. According to Silver, it was almost impossible to successfully defend oneself against rapier attacks,<sup>23</sup> which led to more casualties.<sup>24</sup>

Silver actually rejected the duel as a whole, and did not give instructions to fence in a duel, but rather prepared his students for “all-out fighting on the battlefield or in the street.”<sup>25</sup> Silver also ridiculed the “jargon and style” of Italian fencing.<sup>26</sup> There were many English fencing masters like Silver. They were “notoriously conservative and tied to tradition” in “both methods of instruction and in weaponry.”<sup>27</sup> The first “critical reaction” to the duel came from “defenders of the traditional English martial arts”:<sup>28</sup> they all “found foreign, especially Italian, influence highly menacing” and “availed themselves of their indigenous culture of single combats” to attempt to “resist the spread of foreign ideas.”<sup>29</sup> English “Masters of

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<sup>18</sup> Kiernan 47.

<sup>19</sup> Holmer 165.

<sup>20</sup> Jay P. Anglin, “The Schools of Defense in Elizabethan London,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 37.3 (1984): 408.

<sup>21</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 62.

<sup>22</sup> James L. Jackson, “‘They Catch one Another’s Rapiers’: The Exchange of Weapons in *Hamlet*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41.3 (1990): 283.

<sup>23</sup> Jackson 289.

<sup>24</sup> George Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence* (1599), *Early English Books Online* Sigs. K1v-K2v.

<sup>25</sup> Jackson 289.

<sup>26</sup> Holmer 165.

<sup>27</sup> Anglin 396.

<sup>28</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 93.

<sup>29</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 86.

Defence” accused their “Italian rivals” of “importing new weapons and new habits and customs, which would occasion a wholesale corruption of the indigenous customs of their venerable tradition.”<sup>30</sup> Silver lamented that fencing was now merely a “fashion,” as it “kept changing” because “its true principles had been lost.”<sup>31</sup> Silver’s outright hostility was quite xenophobic. The Italian fencing style was slandered because it was foreign: it was berated as merely a fashion and contrasted with the indigenous combat styles.

### **Class**

The Italian masters were different from the English masters in that they only taught a “more restricted group of gentlemen,” whereas the English masters usually instructed the “lower orders in society.”<sup>32</sup> This further helped to instate the duel as a class “institution.”<sup>33</sup> The effect was that “the combatant’s honour merged into that of the class to which both he and his antagonist belonged, and to which they were making a joint obeisance.”<sup>34</sup> Their adherence to the duello code made them all part of a “corporate honour.”<sup>35</sup> To refrain from duelling meant jeopardizing both a person’s “membership of his class” and the “reputation and stability of that class” as a whole.<sup>36</sup> The wearing of a rapier became a status symbol, which signalled that someone followed the duello code,<sup>37</sup> and even “became part of a gentleman’s dress.”<sup>38</sup> The duelling code “emphasise[d] the basic equality” within the “gentlemanly culture,”<sup>39</sup> and functioned to “reinforce the gentlemanly homogeneity.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 94.

<sup>31</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 95.

<sup>32</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 93.

<sup>33</sup> Kiernan 14.

<sup>34</sup> Kiernan 15.

<sup>35</sup> Kiernan 15.

<sup>36</sup> Kiernan 15.

<sup>37</sup> Kiernan 56.

<sup>38</sup> Rossi 113.

<sup>39</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 73.

<sup>40</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 75.

The “sword and buckler,” which were the traditional weapons which had been “long in use in England,” were not only outdated, but were now also seen as “the weapons of servingmen,” whereas the rapier was now the “gentleman’s weapon.”<sup>41</sup> More had changed, as the duel came to England as “part of the Italian Renaissance notion of the gentleman and courtier,” according to Peltonen:<sup>42</sup> “whereas an open resort to violence was deemed a serious breach of courteous conduct, a challenge to the duel was in accordance with it. A challenge was a polite response to an uncouth word or act, which had degraded gentlemanly courtesy, and offered the only means to restore this courtesy.”<sup>43</sup> “Courtesy” was the “hallmark of the gentleman,”<sup>44</sup> and the duel was “the only polite response to an impolite word or deed, and thus the only proper means of restoring gentlemanly civility.”<sup>45</sup> To give someone the lie implied that you “questioned the gentleman’s entire status as a gentleman.”<sup>46</sup>

## Honour

A gentleman’s honour is “his reputation amongst his peer group”: it is his “exterior or appearance, above all how other gentlemen regarded him.”<sup>47</sup> A gentleman has to value his reputation “above everything else – including even life.”<sup>48</sup> There are two types of honour: “vertical” and “horizontal honour.”<sup>49</sup> Vertical honour can be gradually increased or decreased. Its opposite is “horizontal honour,” which a gentleman either does or does not have. Vertical honour implies a hierarchy based on reputation, whereas horizontal honour “presupposes an honour group which follows the same code of conduct and honour.”<sup>50</sup> Vertical honour

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<sup>41</sup> Holmer 188.

<sup>42</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 13.

<sup>43</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 6.

<sup>44</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 6.

<sup>45</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 304.

<sup>46</sup> Markku Peltonen, “Francis Bacon, the Earl of Northampton, and the Jacobean Anti-Duelling,” *The Historical Journal* 44.1 (2001): 9.

<sup>47</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 6.

<sup>48</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 41.

<sup>49</sup> Frank Henderson Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 55.

<sup>50</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 34.

functions to regulate a group with members of different and changing status, as their amount of honour is variable. Horizontal honour regulates a group in which everyone has the same amount of honour and the same status: to lose your honour in such a group means that you lose your membership of the group. The honour of gentlemen is horizontal. It is also “reflexive honour” because if a “man is insulted and his honour questioned,” his honour is destroyed unless he “responds with an appropriate counterattack.”<sup>51</sup> It is called reflexive because others can always force a gentleman to respond: honour depends on the absence of any challenges, rather than on how successfully it has been defended.<sup>52</sup>

The duel is the “means to restore one’s reputation as a gentleman,”<sup>53</sup> and a gentlemen can only defend his honour and restore stability amongst his peers by reacting to insults with a challenge.<sup>54</sup> Even a little deviation from the prescribed behaviour causes discord.<sup>55</sup> The impending danger is that “once lost” there is “no means by which a gentleman” can “recover his natural honour.”<sup>56</sup> This “horizontal notion of honour or reputation” is “inherent in the theory of civil courtesy and conversation,” according to Peltonen.<sup>57</sup> He argues that “the duel of honour came to England as part of the Italian Renaissance notion of the gentleman and courtier.”<sup>58</sup>

## Chapter 2: Men

The rules of the duel, its origin, its role as a class institution, and its relation to a horizontal and reflexive honour concept provide the historical context in which I analyse the duel in early modern drama. According to Peltonen, the “contemporaries” are “convinced that

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<sup>51</sup> Peltonen, *Anti-Duelling* 7.

<sup>52</sup> Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 241.

<sup>53</sup> Peltonen, *Anti-Duelling* 7.

<sup>54</sup> Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996) 62.

<sup>55</sup> Bryson 110.

<sup>56</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 42.

<sup>57</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 35.

<sup>58</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 13.

duelling was neither old nor homebred, but a recent import from the Continent.”<sup>59</sup> He sees “the theory of civility” as the “entire ideological basis of duelling.”<sup>60</sup> Though Anna Bryson also sees the duel as an import, she argues that the wider ideology in which it was placed was a remainder of the middle ages.<sup>61</sup> Recently, most scholars see the “medieval honour community and more particularly in the Elizabethan chivalric revival” as the “ideological context” of the duel.<sup>62</sup> Peltonen argues that “there is strikingly little evidence that duelling was developed from chivalric sources” in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>63</sup> Yet this cannot explain why the depiction of the duel in early modern drama both relies on parts of the theory of civility and chivalry. The difference between horizontal and vertical honour is especially salient for this, as I will show in chapter 2. Early modern drama appears to more valuable as evidence than Peltonen and other scholars consider it to be in this case. I will use early modern drama to argue that both the theory of civility and chivalry are vital influences on the duel of honour.

## Manhood

The duel is not only a class institution, but also a gendered institution as it defines manhood. In both cases, the use of the duel is reflexive: honour as well as manhood constantly have to be reinforced and proved. Masculinity is threatened by the possibility of the “disastrous slide back into the female” called “effeminacy.”<sup>64</sup> This forms the backdrop for a “gendered division”: “fighting and duelling are considered masculine, and the refusal to defend one’s honour with violence is associated with cowardice and femininity.”<sup>65</sup> The duel is

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<sup>59</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 12.

<sup>60</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 309.

<sup>61</sup> Bryson 236-7.

<sup>62</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 7.

<sup>63</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 12.

<sup>64</sup> Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 134.

<sup>65</sup> Kristine Steenbergh, “Wild Justice: The Dynamics of Gender and Revenge in Early Modern English Drama,” diss., Universiteit Utrecht, 2007, 170.

“marked as a typically masculine act.”<sup>66</sup> Rather than being static, however, the division is dynamic: the extent of which Kristine Steenbergh has aptly shown.<sup>67</sup> To trace these dynamics of gender, a norm is needed to make a comparison. I will use the previously mentioned gendered division as such a norm.

Even in the absence of a gendered division, the duel still functions as a “fundamental definition of manhood”:<sup>68</sup> the gendered division is merely a complement to the duel as a “sign of masculine identity,” which Jennifer Low explores.<sup>69</sup> She emphasises the sexual ambiguous language of the duello code and argues that wounding an opponent with a “rapier-thrust” in a duel entails a “penetration” which affects the opponent’s “sense of masculinity”: it creates “a correspondence between his physical experience and that of the permeable body of the female or the vulnerable body of the unseasoned youth.”<sup>70</sup> Penetration and the subsequent bleeding convey “suggestions of sexual emasculation.”<sup>71</sup> Whereas the wounding, or penetration, of an opponent in a duel asserts masculinity, being wounded entails a loss of masculinity. The duel functions as a definition of manhood because duelling is a masculine act: both seen in the gendered division and in duelling as penetration.

This definition of manhood depends on the exclusion of women. Women are not allowed to duel and defend their honour, nor are they required to do so.<sup>72</sup> Honour is always “masculine honour.”<sup>73</sup> Only men can duel to defend a woman’s honour. However, for the duel to be in accordance with the theory of civility, men can only duel if it is about honour, and not simply to win a woman’s favour. Peltonen ignores this issue in his analysis of the duel as part of the theory of civility, even though it is clearly present in his sources. Saviolo mentions that

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<sup>66</sup> Steenbergh 33.

<sup>67</sup> Steenbergh 193.

<sup>68</sup> Holmer 176-7.

<sup>69</sup> Jennifer Low, *Manhood and the Duel: Masculinity in Early Modern Drama and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 3.

<sup>70</sup> Low 7.

<sup>71</sup> Low 7.

<sup>72</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 42.

<sup>73</sup> Steenbergh 153.

because of “some ielousie of loue of certaine gentlewomen two gentlemen of the companie fell at words, and from words to deeds.”<sup>74</sup> Such a duel is not based on the theory of civility, and even contradicts it: Peltonen ignores this tension. Women cannot be rewards or prizes for winning a duel in the civility theory: they only have this role in chivalry,<sup>75</sup> which Peltonen emphatically rejects in his definition of the duel.

### **Chapter 3: Women**

Central to this chapter is the two-edged sword of the duel as the definition of manhood. I will show how duels about women create a tension by either reinforcing or weakening homosocial bonds in early modern drama. I will argue that the women react ever more radically and successfully to the discourse of the men. Moreover, I will argue that the aspect of penetration which, according to Low, helps “to stabilize” notions of gender,<sup>76</sup> is what actually leads to a collapse of the “boundaries between male and female” and facilitates Laqueur’s “one-sex model,” which has boundaries “of degree and not of kind.”<sup>77</sup> I will continue the issue of civility and chivalry of chapter 2, by arguing that the role of women as prizes contradicts Peltonen’s argument of the duel as part of the civility theory, and rather shows the underlying presence of chivalry.

### **The Monarch**

English law had already banned duelling in 1558, although these laws were not regularly enforced.<sup>78</sup> In 1613 and 1614, James I made “vigorous attempts to abolish private

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<sup>74</sup> Saviolo Sig. M2v.

<sup>75</sup> Robin Headlam Wells, *Shakespeare on Masculinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 15.

<sup>76</sup> Low 3.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 25.

<sup>78</sup> Holmer 178.

duels for honor in England.”<sup>79</sup> He issued proclamations against challenges and duels, and “several cases were brought before the Star Chamber.”<sup>80</sup> In 1618, *The Peace-Maker*, an anti-duelling pamphlet “apparently commissioned by James I,” was published.<sup>81</sup> Another attempt was made in 1621 to “revive James’ suggestion for anti-duelling legislation.”<sup>82</sup> However, all this time “covert dueling continued apace.”<sup>83</sup>

Duelling was part of a debate about the nature of the legal system. Proponents of the duel “denied that the state could and should be the sole administrator of justice,” and “English humanists sometimes considered the duel an act of justice even though it violated the civil prohibitions against it.”<sup>84</sup> Whereas the judicial duel was an integral part of the legal proceedings in the past,<sup>85</sup> the duel was seen as a complement to the legal system by its proponents. The anti-duelling pamphlets argued that it undermined the foundation of the legal system, as “the life of a subject belongs to the monarch.”<sup>86</sup> A crime was seen as “an affront to the power of the monarch”:<sup>87</sup> even “an offense against another subject was an offense against the king and state.”<sup>88</sup> Duelling was an “assertion of superior right, a claim to immunity from the law.”<sup>89</sup> The act of duelling undermined the position of the monarch in the legal system.

The duel undermined the monarch even more specifically because of the tension “between the ideal of aristocratic honour and the authority of the monarch.”<sup>90</sup> The “intense rivalry” which “dominated the life of courtiers and gentlemen [...] left the prince on the margins.”<sup>91</sup> By “reinforcing the gentlemanly homogeneity,”<sup>92</sup> the duel was connected to the

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<sup>79</sup> G.R. Waggoner, “*Timon of Athens* and the Jacobean Duel,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 16.4 (1965): 303.

<sup>80</sup> Waggoner 303.

<sup>81</sup> Steenbergh 183.

<sup>82</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 91.

<sup>83</sup> Holmer 178.

<sup>84</sup> Jean Gagen, “Hector’s Honor,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 19.2 (1968): 134.

<sup>85</sup> Kiernan 1.

<sup>86</sup> Steenbergh 180.

<sup>87</sup> Steenbergh 19.

<sup>88</sup> Fredson Thayer Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Gloucester: Princeton UP, 1959) 5.

<sup>89</sup> Kiernan 53.

<sup>90</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 74.

<sup>91</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 75.

<sup>92</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 75.

“dangers of a strong nobility.”<sup>93</sup> Also, by continuing to “claim the right of duelling,” the nobility “made a symbolic show of still not having surrendered their independent spirit.”<sup>94</sup> As “duelling could reinforce gentlemanly homogeneity” it could “lend credence to arguments for a limited monarchy.”<sup>95</sup> Duelling was part of a much broader threat to the role and function of the monarch.

The anti-duelling pamphlets not only argued that a subject’s life belonged to the monarch, but also that both “violence” and “honour” were the “sole domain of the monarch.”<sup>96</sup> Bacon proposed at first that “the King” was the “fountaine of honour” and that “the accesse to his person continueth honour in life.”<sup>97</sup> However, these claims were not effective as “personal honour was dearer to a gentleman than both his life and prince.”<sup>98</sup> Bacon changed tactics and attacked the duel by attempting to “discredit the whole underlying theory” of courtesy and civility.<sup>99</sup> Instead of distinguishing between domains of honour, he attacked the notion of horizontal and reflexive honour, and “emphasised that true honour was vertical in character.”<sup>100</sup> This strategy was given royal consent as it was used in *The Peacemaker*.<sup>101</sup>

#### Chapter 4: The King

In this chapter, I will trace the political tension of the duel in a few plays, and show that a dialogue between them is ongoing. The plays engage with, and occasionally subvert, the politics of the time, especially in reference to Bacon’s attack on horizontal honour. The plays appear to be an important source in my analysis of the contemporary debate. It is often not

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<sup>93</sup> Steenbergh 17.

<sup>94</sup> Kiernan 52.

<sup>95</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 304.

<sup>96</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 7.

<sup>97</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Charge of Sir Francis Bacon Knight, His Maiesties Attovrney Generall, Touching Duells* (1616), *Early English Books Online* 17.

<sup>98</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 77.

<sup>99</sup> Peltonen, *Anti-Duelling* 14.

<sup>100</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 115.

<sup>101</sup> Peltonen, *Anti-Duelling* 28.

given the attention it deserves, however: Peltonen relies on an analysis of Maxwell written in 1939.<sup>102</sup> I will show that Maxwell's claim needs to be revised.

### **The Divine Hierarchy**

Detractors of the duel argued that the duel was “a blatant breach of the basic commandments of Christianity and that it directly clashed with the king's sovereign power.”<sup>103</sup> James I's “sustained campaign against duelling” both defended “Christian principles and the monarch's authority against the duelling theory.”<sup>104</sup> As the authority of the monarch could be justified by emphasising the monarch's part in the divine order, these two issues were closely related: the duel was described as “pluck[ing] the sworde out of the hande of the Prince, who is the minister of God to take vengeance vpon the euill doers.”<sup>105</sup> This idea was repeated in *The Peace-Maker*:

The Aggrauation of small things, when a sparke shall grow to a flaming Beacon, a Word to a Wovnd, the Lye to a Life; when euery man wil be the Master of his owne Reuenge, presuming to giue Law to themselues, and in rage, to right their owne wrongs: At which time, the Sword is extorted out of the hand of Magistracie, contrarie to the sacred Ordinance of the Almightye.<sup>106</sup>

The church and the state produced a “flood of pamphlets” together to widely disseminate their “detailed investigation” into “the religious and moral laws” which “opposed private

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<sup>102</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 91.

<sup>103</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 308.

<sup>104</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 14.

<sup>105</sup> George Gifford, *A Briefe Discourse of Certaine Points of the Religion* (1597), *Early English Books Online* Sig. D3v.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Middleton, *The Peace-Maker: or, Great Brittaines Blessing* (1619), *Early English Books Online* Sig. C3v.

revenge.”<sup>107</sup> In these arguments, the duel is associated with evil,<sup>108</sup> hell, the devil, and “Bewitching Sorcerie.”<sup>109</sup>

Usually, proponents of the duel did not counter these arguments, but rather claimed that they are irrelevant. They agreed with the detractors that the duel was “incompatible with the doctrines of Christianity,”<sup>110</sup> but they also “openly questioned the primacy of Christian concepts in the gentleman’s life.”<sup>111</sup> In earlier times, the judicial duel was seen as a “legal practice with a religious component” which was justified by the “faith that God would intervene to indicate the more righteous cause.”<sup>112</sup> The duel of honour, however, was “completely secularized, and winning or losing were seen to bear no relation to divine or any other justice.”<sup>113</sup> Saviolo was the exception, as he attempted to return the religious component from the judicial duel to the duel of honour. He agreed with the detractors that “no greter wickednes can be committed than for a man to rebel against him whom God hath ordained Lord and gouernor ouer him.”<sup>114</sup> Yet while Gifford argued that only the Prince was the “minister of God,”<sup>115</sup> Saviolo was one of the only people who argued that every duellist was a “minister to execute Gods deuine pleasure”<sup>116</sup> and that the purpose of the duel was still the “sifting out of truth,” like it was in the judicial duel.<sup>117</sup> This strategy of taking the religious component of the judicial duel to the duel of honour was almost never used: usually proponents claimed that Christianity was irrelevant.

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<sup>107</sup> Bowers 281.

<sup>108</sup> Bacon Sig. A3r.

<sup>109</sup> Middleton Sigs. D2-D2v.

<sup>110</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 78.

<sup>111</sup> Bryson 235-6.

<sup>112</sup> Low 17.

<sup>113</sup> Kiernan 1.

<sup>114</sup> Saviolo Sig. P2v.

<sup>115</sup> Gifford Sig. D3v.

<sup>116</sup> Saviolo Sig. Z1v.

<sup>117</sup> Holmer 179.

## Chapter 5: Gods

In this chapter, I will show how most plays present the same argument as the detractors, as the devil is associated with evil, hell and the devil. However, I will also show that the one exception to this constructs the duel in a new manner, which is unprecedented in the contemporary discussion of the duel.

### The Plays

My small selection of plays from early modern drama is supposed to cover a wide field. The dates of the plays range from 1589 to 1621. The oldest plays are Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589), and Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589-90). The next four plays are from William Shakespeare: I will analyse *Romeo and Juliet* (1595-6), *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598), *Henry the Fifth* (1599), and *Twelfth Night* (1601). The last plays are more widely dispersed, of which the first is George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604). I will also look at Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610) and Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *A King and No King* (1611). The last play is Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Island Princess* (1620-1). *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Island Princess* are the key plays and contrast each other in most of the issues which I will examine.

### Method

My analysis of the duel is divided into four thematic chapters. The first chapter focuses on the duel as an institution to maintain gentlemanly homogeneity. In the second chapter, I will rely on the research of Kristine Steenbergh and Jennifer Low to see how the duel is used as a definition of manhood. While the first chapter analyses the duel within a group, the second chapter traces how others are excluded and made inferior because of this.

The third and fourth chapters will further broaden the context by examining the hierarchy in the opposite direction: both royal and divine authority will be examined.

By placing the duel in its historical context, I will show the relevance of early modern drama to define the duel in the period: the plays copy, complement, and problematize the debate. My analysis of early modern drama even challenges Peltonen's claims that the duel of honour is part of the civility theory as a "coherent social and ideological phenomenon," and that chivalry has no relation to the duel.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Peltonen, *Duel 2*.

## 2. Men

As seen in the introduction, the duel is a class institution which is supposed to maintain or reinforce gentlemanly homogeneity.<sup>1</sup> Peltonen and Bryson disagree on the ideological basis for the duel: Peltonen argues that the duel is solely based upon the theory of civility, whereas Bryson argues that the duel is based on a broad medieval ideology. Lately, most scholars are in line with Bryson, and more specifically place the duel in “the Elizabethan chivalric revival.”<sup>2</sup> Some of these scholars even discount the influence of the theory of civility altogether.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I will argue that the duel in early modern drama both relies on and conflicts with the theory of civility. I will also argue that the rejection of civility shows a chivalric basis for the duel. The difference between horizontal and vertical honour is important for my analysis: a gentleman either does or does not have horizontal honour, while vertical honour can be gradually increased or decreased.

### The Italian Fashion

*Romeo and Juliet* plays with the controversy of the duel as an import from Italy. Rossi explains how Mercutio’s critique of Tybalt’s fencing style is an attack on the Italian fencing manuals:<sup>4</sup> Mercutio calls Tybalt a “fashion-monger” and the fencing terms and aspects of fencing which he ridicules are derived from, amongst others, *Vincentio Saviolo his Practice*.<sup>5</sup> The extent to which *Vincentio Saviolo his Practice* has influenced the play has already been documented by scholars.<sup>6</sup> The fencing manual of 1595 has even been used to more accurately

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<sup>1</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 75.

<sup>2</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 7.

<sup>3</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 6.

<sup>4</sup> Rossi 118.

<sup>5</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (1595-6), in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2007) 2.3.26.

<sup>6</sup> Rossi 114.

date this play.<sup>7</sup> In Elizabethan England, the duel and the Italian style of fencing were widely attacked for being imports from Italy and for replacing the English tradition. Silver, an English fencing master, and Mercutio both mock the “jargon and style” of the Italian style of fencing.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the Italian setting of the play, *Romeo and Juliet* portrays the changing fashion and status of the traditional forms of combat in Elizabethan England. This is apparent from the start of the play, when two servants walk on stage wearing “swords and bucklers.”<sup>9</sup> The adoption of the rapier as the most fashionable weapon and as the new symbol of status in England results in the negligence and the decline in status of the sword: to such an extent even, that the “change in fashion that identifie[s] the rapier as the gentleman’s weapon” identifies “the sword and buckler, long in use in England, as the weapons of servingmen.”<sup>10</sup> Fighting with a rapier is completely different from fighting with a sword. The rapier is used to pierce and the sword is used to slash, and Silver pays much attention to the difference in fighting style and its implications. In theory, fighting with swords means that fighters can always completely protect themselves even if they only make defensive actions. Also, the wounding of an opponent is gradual as it is based on the received cut: the sword is used to slash in an attack. Fencers, however, cannot defend against attacks with a rapier as attacks consists of direct and swift thrusts meant to pierce rather than cut. Every wound can be fatal, depending on which part of the body is pierced. Tybalt’s use of the rapier to sting his opponents, which Mercutio describes, is essentially different from the servant who advises his fellow to use his “swashing blow.”<sup>11</sup> Though Tybalt’s particular use of the rapier is criticized by Mercutio, the rapier and the sword, and their fighting styles, are respectively depicted as the gentleman’s weapon and the servant’s weapon.

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<sup>7</sup> Holmer 163.

<sup>8</sup> Holmer 165.

<sup>9</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* S.D. 1.1.

<sup>10</sup> Holmer 188.

<sup>11</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.49.

There are still remnants of the tradition of the sword in the play. When Capulet is at the scene of the quarrel between the two families, he asks for his “longsword,”<sup>12</sup> which is a “heavy, old-fashioned sword with a long blade.”<sup>13</sup> Capulet opposes Tybalt when he scolds him for his reckless and angry behaviour.<sup>14</sup> Their conflict seems to portray the tension between the English tradition and the Italian fashion, as Capulet tries to withhold Tybalt from confronting Romeo and quarrelling with him. He derides Tybalt for not listening to him and calls him a “princox,”<sup>15</sup> which is a “conceited, impertinent youth.”<sup>16</sup> While Mercutio ridicules the new fashion that Tybalt adheres to, Capulet scolds Tybalt’s impetuous resort to violent means and his lack of restraint. The weapons of these characters are significant for their portrayal, and in the case of Capulet and Tybalt they symbolize the rift between them.

### **Family Fights**

The conflict between Tybalt and Capulet is part of a larger tension between the duel and family. According to Low, “duelling reinforced the patriarchy through its validation of the duellist’s status as a principal representative of his family or social group.”<sup>17</sup> However, Tybalt does not listen to Capulet’s effusive scolding and quarrels anyway.<sup>18</sup> He swears to act according to “the stock and honour of my kin,” and challenges Romeo for the honour of his family. Though Tybalt acts like the principal representative of his family, Capulet does not want him to do so. Tybalt’s turn to the duel also undermines the hierarchy of his family in another sense: Romeo cannot accept the duel because he is married to Juliet and related to Tybalt. In a scuffle, Romeo kills Tybalt. Rather than that the duel limits the violence in the

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<sup>12</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.60.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, eds., *William Shakespeare: Complete Works* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2007) 1681.

<sup>14</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.4.200.

<sup>15</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.4.206.

<sup>16</sup> Bate 1693.

<sup>17</sup> Low 7.

<sup>18</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.4.175.

family feud with its strict rituals and rules as its proponents argued,<sup>19</sup> it is here merely part of the family feud. The rules of the duel are ignored,<sup>20</sup> and the duel results in destabilizing the family, rather than reinforcing it.

While the duel in *Romeo and Juliet* undermines the internal family hierarchy, the duel in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* reinforces it. Claudio receives a challenge from Benedick. However, because they both marry two of Leonato's daughters, they become related and cannot duel anymore. As Benedick says: "For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee, but that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised and love my cousin."<sup>21</sup> This is similar to what happens in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*. The quarrelsome gentleman, Kestrel, is at first excited when another character, Lovewit, gives him the lie. Immediately he finds out, however, that Lovewit is engaged to his sister. He concludes that he cannot duel him: "Slight I must love him! I cannot choose, i'faith! / An should I be hanged for't!"<sup>22</sup> This is remarkable because it is, up to this point, uncharacteristic of the quarrelsome Kestrel. In both plays, the duel is a means of quarrel between gentlemen of different families and enforces family ties, in contrast to *Romeo and Juliet*.

However, most plays depict the problems that result from the duel as a family means. In both *Romeo and Juliet* and Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, the duel leads to immediate revenge. The duel in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* even causes a blood revenge. While two gentlemen, Serslby and Lambert, are fighting, Serslby threatens: "An if thou kill me, think I have a son, / That lives in Oxford in the Broadgates-hall, / Who will revenge his father's blood with blood."<sup>23</sup> Lambert replies: "Serslby, I have there a lusty boy, / That dares at weapon buckle with thy son, / And lives in Broadgates too,

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<sup>19</sup> Kiernan 12.

<sup>20</sup> Rossi 115.

<sup>21</sup> William Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598), in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2007) 5.4.106-8.

<sup>22</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, ed. Gordon Campbell et. al. (1610; New York : Oxford UP, 1995) 5.5.36-8.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, in *An Anthology of English Drama Before Shakespeare*, ed. Robert B. Heilman (1589; London: Rinehart, 1966) 13.49-51.

as well as thine.”<sup>24</sup> They show that their turn to the duel already entails blood revenge. Their sons claim, unaware of their father’s duel, that they are “friends,”<sup>25</sup> and “college-mates, / Sworn brothers, as our fathers live as friends.”<sup>26</sup> However, when they see the duel through Friar Bacon’s magic mirror, even though they are unable to hear what their fathers are saying, they act exactly like their fathers’ threatened. Lambert’s son says that his friend’s father “offers wrong, / To combat with [his] father in the field.”<sup>27</sup> Serlsby’s son immediately poses his retort as a challenge: “Lambert, thou liest, my father’s is th’ abuse, / And thou shalt find it, if my father harm.”<sup>28</sup> The sworn brothers now oppose each other. When their fathers kill each other, the scholars attack each other. Lambert’s son reacts by saying “My Father slain!—Serlsby, ward that,” to which Lambert’s son replies: “And so is mine!—Lambert, I’ll ’quite thee well.”<sup>29</sup> Not only are they fighting because of their fathers, but their use of their family names makes them indistinct from their quarrelling fathers. Like in *Romeo and Juliet*, the duel is here used in a family conflicts and leads to further bloodshed.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the disregard of the rules of the duel can at least be seen as the cause for the ensuing events: a stricter use of the duel could have prevented the tragic outcome. Yet the fathers in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* observe most of the regulations and their fight is initially actually a duel, which differs significantly from the scuffles displayed in *Romeo and Juliet*. The fathers follow the procedure of the giving of the lie, the choice of weapons, and the move to a field to fight the duel. Yet despite this initial difference, the outcome is still the same: a scuffle. The sons contrast sharply with their fathers, as only one son gives the other the lie. Even this giving of the lie is ironic: the sons do not even know why their fathers are fighting. What started as a duel between gentlemen has turned into a

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<sup>24</sup> Greene, *Friar* 13.52-4.

<sup>25</sup> Greene, *Friar* 13.21.

<sup>26</sup> Greene, *Friar* 13.24-5.

<sup>27</sup> Greene, *Friar* 13.58-9.

<sup>28</sup> Greene, *Friar* 13.60-1.

<sup>29</sup> Greene, *Friar* 13.72-3.

brawl between their sons. Though this play depicts a regulated duel, the result is the same as in *Romeo and Juliet*, namely escalation.

The duel in these plays is a family means, often part of blood revenge. Instead of limiting violence, it is here rather a means to promote it. The duel should not be used as a family means, but rather to take precedence over it.<sup>30</sup> The duel should foremost be a class institution, which reinforces gentlemanly homogeneity, according to Peltonen's use of the civility theory.<sup>31</sup> Yet the emphasis in these plays is predominantly placed on the families, not on class. These plays depict duels which are not in accordance with the duel as based on the theory of civility.

### **Class**

Besides complicating the duel as a class institution in relation to family, *Romeo and Juliet* also actually undermines the duel as a class institution, because of the strong parallels between the quarrels of the servants and those of the gentlemen. The quarrel of the servants in the beginning of the play prefigures the later duel, and both are mere brawls. The quarrel of the beginning quickly increases in scale: Benvolio says that "While we were interchanging thrusts and blows, / Came more and more, and fought on part and part."<sup>32</sup> Not only servants, but also gentlemen join the fight. The later duel is also an unregulated affray which quickly escalates. Moreover, Capulet undermines Tybalt's rank when Tybalt wants to quarrel with the Montagues, as Capulet calls him a "goodman,"<sup>33</sup> which is a "man below the rank of gentleman."<sup>34</sup> Instead of the duel as a means to reinforce gentlemanly homogeneity, the duel is here connected to the lower classes as it is not significantly different.

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<sup>30</sup> Arthur B. Ferguson, *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England* (London: Associated University Presses, 1986) 112.

<sup>31</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 75.

<sup>32</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.98-9.

<sup>33</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.4.196.

<sup>34</sup> Bate 1693.

Whereas the quarrel in the beginning of the play prefigures the duel, a later quarrel between servants echoes the duel. One musician scolds a servant, Peter, by saying: “Pray you put up your dagger, and put out your wit. Then have at you with my wit!” to which Peter retorts: “I will dry-beat you with an iron wit, and put up my iron dagger.”<sup>35</sup> The cry of ‘have at you’ is an “attack cry or exclamation [...] uttered when delivering a home-thrust to one’s adversary” in fencing.<sup>36</sup> This is similar to the duel between Mercutio and Tybalt which precedes it. Mercutio uses the term “hay” with the same meaning.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, when Mercutio confronts Tybalt he threatens to “dry-beat” Tybalt after the duel.<sup>38</sup> The same conflation of physical fighting and insulting is used by Mercutio and the servants. The intricate link between the different quarrels and the duel in the play means that the supposed difference between gentlemen and servants is negated.

Whereas *Romeo and Juliet* undermines the duel as a class institution by linking it to street brawls, Jonson’s *The Alchemist* does the same by having people who are not gentlemen exploit the duel. The cheats, Face and Subtle, take advantage of the duello code. When a gentleman, Kestrel, comes to them to learn about the “*duello*,”<sup>39</sup> Face boasts that Subtle, the “Doctor,” can give him an “instrument to quarrel by.”<sup>40</sup> When Face and Subtle are later in danger of being caught, they rely on Kestrel: Face tells him that “now’s the time, if ever you will quarrel / Well (as they say).”<sup>41</sup> By instigating Kestrel to a duel with Surly, who wants to expose them, Face and Subtle are able to escape. The two cheats thus invert the purpose of the duel for their own use, as it now undermines the gentlemanly homogeneity.

This is possible because of an already existing weakness. Though Kestrel has the status of a gentleman, he lacks knowledge of the duello code and turns to Face and Subtle for

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<sup>35</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 4.4.149-51.

<sup>36</sup> Holmer 167.

<sup>37</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 2.3.20.

<sup>38</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.66.

<sup>39</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 3.4.25.

<sup>40</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 2.6.65-9.

<sup>41</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 4.7.1-2.

help. Face tells him that Subtle can give Kestrel “rules / To give and take the lie by.”<sup>42</sup> This is the most essential part of the duello code, yet Kestrel does not understand it at all. When Subtle asks him to begin and to “ground [his] quarrel,” Kestrel simply responds with: “You lie.”<sup>43</sup> Subtle indignantly responds that Kestrel needs to give a reason, “render causes,” to give the “loud lie,” but Kestrel dismisses this and does not follow “true grammar.”<sup>44</sup> According to the rules, Kestrel cannot directly confront Subtle without any reason for doing so. Kestrel’s ignorance of the duello code allows Face to easily manipulate him to oppose Surly. Like Kestrel’s earlier attempt to quarrel with Subtle, he simply says to Surly: “You lie.”<sup>45</sup> Surly does not take him seriously, however, and retorts: “Why, this is madness, sir, / Not valour in you; I must laugh at this.”<sup>46</sup> After he has left, Kestrel looks for affirmation: “Did I not quarrel bravely?”<sup>47</sup> His ridiculous behaviour and negligence of the duello code not only undermines his status as a gentleman but also threatens the gentlemanly homogeneity.

Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* presents a similar situation, though the consequences are more dire. Barabas, a Jew, manipulates two gentlemen into duelling. As a Jew, he is not part of the society. While gentlemen have to defend their reputation, he argues that he has simply learned to ignore any affronts: “I learned in Florence how to kiss my hand, / Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog.”<sup>48</sup> This is because he believes that his religion makes him superior:

’Tis a custom held with us,  
That when we speak with Gentiles like you  
We turn into the air to purge ourselves;

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<sup>42</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 3.4.36-7.

<sup>43</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 4.2.18.

<sup>44</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 4.2.19-22.

<sup>45</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 4.7.11.

<sup>46</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 4.7.37-8.

<sup>47</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 4.7.59.

<sup>48</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, ed. David Bevington (1589-90; Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997) 2.3.23-4.

For unto us the promise doth belong.<sup>49</sup>

Like Face and Subtle, he inverts the purpose of the duel when he manipulates two gentlemen, Lodowick and Mathias. He easily incenses the two, and they both immediately want to quarrel with each other. Mathias immediately draws his sword but Barabas restrains him.<sup>50</sup> Barabas also restrains Lodowick from his “revenge.”<sup>51</sup> He only does so, however, to further anger them.<sup>52</sup> Rather than simply letting them quarrel, he sends a “challenge feigned from Lodowick” to Mathias.<sup>53</sup> This leads to a duel between the two gentleman. Barabas watches their play from a safe distance, and shouts to them to give the final thrust, which they do.<sup>54</sup> Like Face and Subtle, Barabas inverts the purpose of the duel for his own use, as it now undermines the gentlemanly homogeneity.

Yet, also like in *The Alchemist*, this is only possible due to an already existing weakness. After Barabas has sent the challenge, the two gentlemen confront each other and Lodowick calls Mathias a “villain” for daring to “write in such base terms.”<sup>55</sup> Mathias acknowledges that he did, and invites Lodowick to “revenge it if [he] darest.”<sup>56</sup> They do not adhere to the duello code and immediately start fighting. This is unfortunate as the duel is based on a mistake. What has apparently happened offstage, is that Mathias has received the feigned challenge and responded with a challenge of his own. The two gentlemen start duelling without realising that Mathias thinks that he is responding to Lodowick’s challenge, though Lodowick never sent one. The gentlemen’s disregard for the duello code shows how the duel threatens the gentlemanly homogeneity.

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<sup>49</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 2.3.45-8.

<sup>50</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 2.3.281

<sup>51</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 2.3.336.

<sup>52</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 2.3.346.

<sup>53</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 2.3.377.

<sup>54</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 3.2.6.

<sup>55</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 3.2.3.

<sup>56</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 3.2.4.

In these plays, the duel undermines gentlemanly homogeneity instead of reinforcing it. The carelessness with which the duello rules are applied create this problem. Saviolo's warning of the manipulation of others is to no avail:

an euill custome which of late yeres hath installed it self amongst men of all sortes and nations to bee delighted with broiles and hurliburlies, to set men together by the eares, & cause quarrels betwixt friends, neighbours, and kinsfolke. [...] Now vpon euerie occasion Armes are taken [...] not resting till the enmitie be confirmed by fight, & fight ended by death. [...] Now malice and hatred ouerrunneth all, [...] and men vpon euerie light cause enter into more actions of defiance, than for any iust occasion offered in respect of iustice and honour.<sup>57</sup>

### **Horizontal Honour**

So far, the plays which do not strictly rely on the civility theory in all aspects, such as in the difference between family and class, rely on its most important aspect: the concept of horizontal honour. Alongside the issue of family, horizontal honour is a source of tragedy in *Romeo and Juliet*. Romeo tries to escape from it, but is unable. When Tybalt calls Romeo a “villain,”<sup>58</sup> Romeo's “reputation [is] stained / With Tybalt's slander.”<sup>59</sup> Such an insult cannot be ignored, as Romeo would otherwise lose his status. This is why Mercutio criticizes Romeo for his “calm, dishonourable, vile submission”:<sup>60</sup> he decides to fight for Romeo to protect Romeo's status as a gentleman. After Mercutio's death, Romeo defends his reputation himself: he warns Tybalt to “take the ‘villain’ back again.”<sup>61</sup>

In Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* horizontal honour is the source of comedy: the play explores the relation between horizontal honour and gentlemanly

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<sup>57</sup> Saviolo Sig. P1v.

<sup>58</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.49.

<sup>59</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.97-8.

<sup>60</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.61.

<sup>61</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.111.

homogeneity. In the concept of horizontal honour, gentlemen either do or do not have honour, and are thus either included or excluded from a group. In *A King and No King*, someone is either a valiant or a coward. A coward is no longer a gentleman, though he is still “accepted by his community.”<sup>62</sup> This status decides how others react. A coward cannot be punished for his actions, while a valiant person can be challenged to a duel. This is seen when Bacurius threatens Bessus: “For though I have ever known thee a coward and therefore durst never strike thee, yet if thou proceedst, I will allow thee valiant and beat thee.”<sup>63</sup>

The duel is a means to decide whether someone is or is not part of the group. In *A King and No King* this status does not so much depend upon the duel, or upon facts, but rather on the perceptions of others. Someone’s status is always within a group and decided by that group. Bacurius describes how Bessus’ status is influenced by the opinion of the community: “We held him here a coward. He did me wrong once, at which I laughed and so did all the world, for nor I nor any other held him worth my sword.”<sup>64</sup> The play depicts the implications Bessus’ subsequent regaining of his status. Though the possibility of regaining honour stretches the concept, as it was a heavily debated topic in early modern England, it is still the concept of horizontal honour which is here used, because honour cannot be increased or decreased in this play.<sup>65</sup> At a battle, Bessus tries to flee but accidentally charges the field. Though at least one character, Mardonius, is aware of Bessus’ actual intentions,<sup>66</sup> the community does not know. He is thus now acclaimed for his valour, and regains his old status as valiant. As Bessus’ status is decided by the community, Bacurius now has no choice but to duel with Bessus: “now people call you valiant, desertlessly, I think; yet for their satisfaction,

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<sup>62</sup> Low 17.

<sup>63</sup> Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *A King and No King*, ed. Lee Bliss (1611; Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004) 1.1.77-80.

<sup>64</sup> Beaumont, *King* 2.1.69-71.

<sup>65</sup> Peltonen, *Anti-Duelling* 7.

<sup>66</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.6-8.

I will have you fight with me.”<sup>67</sup> Others now have to challenge him as well to maintain their own status, even though they do not want to: Bessus says about the gentleman he receives the first challenge from: “by good fortune” he “is no madder of fighting than I.”<sup>68</sup> The status attributed to Bessus by the community forces everyone to treat him as such or to risk their own status.

Every past offence of Bessus is relevant again: “for now they think to get honour of me, and all the men I have abused call me freshly to account—worthily, as they call it—by the way of challenge.”<sup>69</sup> Within “two hours,” Bessus receives “above thirty challenges.”<sup>70</sup> The only challenge which is specifically mentioned is even in response to an offence of “some three years since.”<sup>71</sup> Bessus is aware of the importance of the community. If he wants to escape being challenged, he has to influence the people at once: “Certainly my safest way were to print myself a coward.”<sup>72</sup>

Bessus ridicules the practice of the duel: as long as he is not defeated in a duel, he retains his status. He is quite successful in doing this. He accepts the duels, but then postpones them as much as possible.<sup>73</sup> He lies and exaggerates to get his way: he says that he is already committed to “two hundred and twelve” duels, and that he has “a spent body too much bruised in battle, so that [he] cannot fight [...] above three combats a day.”<sup>74</sup> He even criticizes the practicalities of the challenges. After receiving many challenges, he boasts that they are merely a waste of paper: he claims he could “make seven shillings a day o’ th’ paper” if he would give it “to the grocers.”<sup>75</sup> He also notices that the challenges are so similar that there must be “some one scrivener in this town that has a great hand in writing challenges, for

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<sup>67</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.107-9.

<sup>68</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.84.

<sup>69</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.36-9.

<sup>70</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.82-3.

<sup>71</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.44.

<sup>72</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.80.

<sup>73</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.61-2.

<sup>74</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.70-3.

<sup>75</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.92-3.

they are all of a cut and six of 'em in a hand; and they all end 'My reputation is dear to me, and I must require satisfaction.'"<sup>76</sup> Bessus' success in avoiding and criticizing the duel undermines the function of the duel.

Bessus most overtly ridicules the notion of horizontal honour when he asks for the help of two "Swordsmen": normally a term reserved for "Masters in the art of fencing," but here used ironically as these men are "swaggerers posing as judges in questions of honour."<sup>77</sup> These swordmen are not only the supposed "experts" on duelling whom Bacon derides,<sup>78</sup> but are here part of a greater problem. After Bessus tells them his story, they decide that Bessus' "honour is come off clean and sufficient" and write papers with their signatures on it so that Bessus can use them to safeguard his honour.<sup>79</sup> The three of them even confront Bacurius, but this results in that all three are outcasts.<sup>80</sup> They decide on a different tactic, and the swordmen ask for Bessus' signature for their "honours."<sup>81</sup> Bessus replies: "Yes, marry, shall ye, and then let all the world come. / We are valiant to ourselves, and there's an end."<sup>82</sup> As horizontal honour is dependent upon and decided by the group, they simply decide to rely on each other to maintain their honour. Despite the limited scale, their practice problematizes horizontal honour as they exploit its dependence upon the perception of a group.

### **Back to Basics**

Fletcher and Beaumont's *The Island Princess* tackles the same issues of family, class, gentlemanly homogeneity, and honour in relation to the duel. Yet it contrasts sharply with the preceding plays, most notably with *Romeo and Juliet*, in its representation of these issues. In *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *The Alchemist*, and *Friar Bacon and Friar*

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<sup>76</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.2.95-9.

<sup>77</sup> Beaumont, *King* 137n.

<sup>78</sup> Bacon Sigs. D4v-E1.

<sup>79</sup> Beaumont, *King* 5.3.38-9.

<sup>80</sup> Beaumont, *King* 5.3.66-7.

<sup>81</sup> Beaumont, *King* 5.3.104-7.

<sup>82</sup> Beaumont, *King* 5.3.104-7.

*Bungay*, the duel is closely associated with family, and subordinated to family goals, rather than to class. In *The Island Princess*, the duel is stressed as a class institution which takes precedence over family. When Ruy feels dishonoured by Armusia, he attempts to persuade his nephew, Pyniero, to murder Armusia. However, Pyniero only agrees to have more time to convince Ruy to duel.<sup>83</sup> In the end, Ruy is convinced to challenge Armusia to a duel: he realises that he has to confront Armusia himself as the duel is the “right and straight way” to “cur[e]” his “honour.”<sup>84</sup> Pyniero praises his choice and specifically emphasises his status as a gentleman: “this sounds a gentleman; / And now methinks ye utter what becomes ye; / To kill men scurvily, ‘tis such a dog tricke .”<sup>85</sup> Also, he emphasises how Ruy does “bravely,”<sup>86</sup> and how glad he is with the return of his “brave thoughts.”<sup>87</sup> Pyniero is even so enthusiastic that he forgets that the duel could cost Ruy’s life: “what a rascall was I / I did not see his will drawn.”<sup>88</sup> This does not undermine the duel, as it comes in the place of a murder: both duellists now put their life at risk to solve the matter, rather than that one secretly kills the other. Pyniero’s advocacy of the duel shows that the duel takes precedence over family ties: this is what allows the duel to regulate the use of violence as it comes in the place of murder.

*The Island Princess* also continues the theme of an outsider exploiting the duel from *The Alchemist* and *The Jew of Malta*. Like Barabas, the governor hopes that the two gentlemen, Ruy and Armusia, will kill each other in a duel.<sup>89</sup> However, the governor is unable to manipulate them. The two gentlemen rather choose to duel of their own accord. Instead of undermining gentlemanly homogeneity like in these previous plays, the duel here reinforces gentlemanly homogeneity because it unites the two gentlemen.

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<sup>83</sup> Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Island Princess*, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers (1620-1; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982) 3.1.268-70.

<sup>84</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.14.

<sup>85</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.19-21.

<sup>86</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.23.

<sup>87</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.32.

<sup>88</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.64-5.

<sup>89</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.26.

Both *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Island Princess* display a blatant peer pressure: the men force each other to duel. Pyniero urges Ruy to duel, and Armusia's companions urge him to respond to Ruy's challenge: Emanuel, one of Armusia's companions, emphasises that Armusia has been "injured."<sup>90</sup> When the duel is about to be fought, the two seconds, Pyniero and Emanuel, are told not to move while they fight. Pyniero emphasises the necessity of this order: "Ye speake fitly, / For we had not stood idle else."<sup>91</sup> Also, when Pyniero is troubled because he thinks that his uncle is dead, Emanuel sees this as a threat: "Stand still, or my swords in—."<sup>92</sup> This shows that it is the "observance" of the duello code which helps to "avoid degeneration" of the duel into a "brawl," as the proponents argued.<sup>93</sup> In both plays the peer pressure helps to arrange the duel, but *The Island Princess* contrasts with *Romeo and Juliet* in that the peer pressure also controls the duel by enforcing the rules.

The main difference is due to Armusia's restraint: he does not fight out of anger, like Romeo, but only out of his sense of honour. He thus regrets having to fight the duel, and confesses that he does not feel "bloody" or "mortal malice."<sup>94</sup> When Armusia defeats Ruy in the duel, his behaviour forces Ruy to reconcile with him. Pyniero exalts the "love" that Armusia shows<sup>95</sup> and his behaviour: "Now as I live a Gentleman at all inches, / So brave a mingled temper saw I never."<sup>96</sup> Armusia rejects any hierarchy between victor and defeated as he does not want to "glory" in the "pride of such a victorie": he rather reverses the roles as he proposes to "serve" Ruy.<sup>97</sup> This forces Ruy to respond in a similar way: "Sir you have beate me both wayes, yet so nobly, / That I shall ever love the hand that did it."<sup>98</sup> Ruy further promises that "to be honourable even with this Gentleman, / Shall be my businesse, and my

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<sup>90</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.11.

<sup>91</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.37-8.

<sup>92</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.42.

<sup>93</sup> Rossi 112.

<sup>94</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.29-30.

<sup>95</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.58.

<sup>96</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.50-1.

<sup>97</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.55-7.

<sup>98</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.69-70.

ends his.”<sup>99</sup> Armusia’s attitude to the duel is in accordance with the ideal that Saviolo describes, and serves to unite the two gentlemen: Saviolo says that as soon as blood is drawn the two duellists should immediately “be made freends, for that blood doth wash away all blot, of which soeuer of them it was.”<sup>100</sup> The duel successfully reinforces gentlemanly homogeneity because of the strict adherence to Saviolo’s rules.

*The Island Princess* is radically different to all the preceding plays in its approach to honour in the context of the duel. As the duel is used as a regulatory force, the duel seems to be based on horizontal honour: here seen in Ruy’s behaviour. Ruy is dishonoured in the beginning of the play when Armusia rescues the captive king, as everyone expected Ruy to do so: Armusia has only just arrived, whereas Ruy has been boasting for some time yet does not act. When Ruy decides to “cur[e]” his “sicke honour [...] the right and straight way” and challenges Armusia,<sup>101</sup> the honour he refers to seems to be horizontal honour. This is more clearly seen when he says that Armusia’s actions resulted in the “everlasting losing of my worth.”<sup>102</sup> After the duel, Armusia promises never to slander Ruy, and also that he “shall right” Ruy if “a strangers tongue” him.<sup>103</sup> This indicates reflexive honour, but not necessarily horizontal. If the concept of honour used is horizontal, Ruy should now be considered as an outcast after losing the duel.

Yet Ruy is able to reclaim his status, which is only possible in a relaxed use of the concept of horizontal honour, like in *A King and No King*, or if the system of honour is vertical. However, in *A King and No King*, Bessus is only able to regain his status because he did not explicitly lose it beforehand. People simply acted as if he did, and that is why all Bessus’ previous insults are relevant again. In this case, Ruy has explicitly lost his status, which means that vertical honour must here be relied on. In vertical honour, losses and gains

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<sup>99</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.80-1.

<sup>100</sup> Saviolo Sig. P2v.

<sup>101</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.14.

<sup>102</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 3.1.72.

<sup>103</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.62-8.

accumulate, but are never definitive: instead of either being or not being a gentleman, the position is gradually influenced on a scale. The loss of the duel now has no severe implications. In a vertical honour system, it is only a question of bravery and time before Ruy can regain his former reputation. This opportunity quickly presents itself, as Armusia is captured and Ruy has to save him. Armusia applauds Ruy's bravery, and "thank[s]" him for both his "life" and "honour."<sup>104</sup> This is where they are different from the governor, as it is his reliance on horizontal honour which moves him to act too boldly and causes his own defeat: "I will not rest [...] Till I be wholly quit of this dishonour."<sup>105</sup> Ruy is saved by his change from horizontal to vertical honour. Vertical honour permeates the play, as Armusia and Ruy are already described early in the play as "worthy Portugals" who have "Minds never satisfied with search of honour."<sup>106</sup> Vertical honour in itself is not significant, but in connection to the duel it is. The duel succeeds to unite the two gentlemen and reinforce gentlemanly homogeneity, because the gentlemen rely on a different, namely a vertical instead of a horizontal, concept of honour.

The duel is successful as a class institution in *The Island Princess* because it relies on a reflexive and vertical concept of honour instead of reflexive and horizontal concept of honour. It is reflexive because the gentlemen are forced to accept challenges. Moreover, the duel is fought according to the duello code, which here works so that the fight does not degenerate. Both this behaviour and the concept of honour conflict with the civility theory, but are part of chivalry. Saviolo's rule that gentlemen should foremost value friendliness in the duel, derives from earlier medieval concepts:<sup>107</sup> most importantly, from "magnanimity."<sup>108</sup> Peltonen describes Saviolo's description of "magnanimous"<sup>109</sup> behaviour as part of the theory

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<sup>104</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 5.5.85-7.

<sup>105</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 2.5.25-7.

<sup>106</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 1.3.4-8.

<sup>107</sup> Holmer 180.

<sup>108</sup> Ferguson 17.

<sup>109</sup> Saviolo Sig. P2v.

of civility, as he only discusses the events leading up to a duel.<sup>110</sup> However, Saviolo predominantly talks about it in terms of avoiding duels, and, most importantly, in terms of its aftermath. He says that duellists should afterwards “be made freends, for that blood doth wash away all blot, of which soeuer of them it was.”<sup>111</sup> Though this is not relevant in the civility theory, as the defeated opponent has lost status and is an outcast, it is central to chivalry.<sup>112</sup> The gentlemen with their “Minds never satisfied with search of honour”<sup>113</sup> are part of knight-errantry:<sup>114</sup> honour, vertical honour that is, is “sought [...] as a primary objective” in chivalry.<sup>115</sup> The extension of this concept of honour to the duel entails that the duel is now based on chivalry, rather than the theory of civility.

## Conclusion

All of the plays, except for *The Island Princess*, show how the duel is exploited, or depict how it is already flawed in itself. The duel as an institution is under duress: especially the duel as a class institution. This is because of its use in blood revenge, and for other family means. Also, the negligence of the duello code means that duels are either not different from brawls from the start, or quickly degenerate into them: many of the plays even show how outsiders are able to exploit the duel for their own purposes. The gentlemen in *The Island Princess* do behave in accordance with Saviolo’s theory when they use the duel. In this play, it does reinforce gentlemanly homogeneity and works as a class institution: it even takes precedence over family matters. *The Island Princess* contrasts with the other plays because the duel is reinforced as a class institution which takes precedence over family matters, the

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<sup>110</sup> Peltonen, *Anti-Duel* 7.

<sup>111</sup> Saviolo Sig. P2v.

<sup>112</sup> Ferguson 30.

<sup>113</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 1.3.4-8.

<sup>114</sup> Ferguson 152.

<sup>115</sup> Ferguson 63.

duello code is adhered to, gentlemanly homogeneity is reinforced, and outsiders cannot exploit the duel.

Though *The Island Princess* seems to present a radical shift from one concept of honour to another as the basis for the duel, it can also be seen as a continuation of earlier plays. Horizontal honour causes problems for the characters in all the plays, and *A King and No King* explores its function to such a level that it can only be ridiculed in the form of Bessus. The step to a new concept is perhaps not unexpected but rather a necessity long overdue. This analysis does not fit in Barber's claim that the drama of the first half of the seventeenth century uncritically accepted the code of honour as the basis for gentlemanly conduct, as concepts of honour are explored and criticized.<sup>116</sup>

*Romeo and Juliet* and *The Island Princess* are similar in that they both reject the duel as an Italian fashion. In *The Island Princess*, the rejection of vertical honour entails a rejection of the theory of civility, which is an import from Italy. Though the duel in *The Island Princess* is not based on the civility theory, it still functions as a class institution and successfully reinforces gentlemanly homogeneity. This contrasts with Peltonen, who argues that the theory of civility forms the basis of the duel: though this is the most favourable depiction of the duel, it should essentially be no longer considered a duel.

In *The Island Princess*, however, the duel is associated with magnanimity and the honour increasing activity of knight-errantry, which is always based on vertical honour. Both of these are part of chivalry. The arguments of many scholars make this interpretation likely. Bryson sees the ideology in which the duel is positioned as a medieval remnant. The "modern gentlemen" are here, like in Huizinga's analysis, "still [...] linked with the medieval conception of chivalry."<sup>117</sup> Moreover, some scholars argue that the duel and the chivalric

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<sup>116</sup> Charles Barber, *The Theme of Honour's Tongue* (Goteborg: Kungälv, 1985) 25.

<sup>117</sup> J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955) 131.

revival are “inevitably associated.”<sup>118</sup> Though this agrees with the arguments made by many historians, it contradicts Peltonen’s argument that there is no “evidence that duelling” is “developed from chivalric sources” and that the “contemporaries were convinced that duelling” is “a recent import from the Continent.”<sup>119</sup> However, even if these plays do not constitute evidence, Peltonen’s claim that the duel of honour is part of a “coherent social and ideological phenomenon”<sup>120</sup> appears questionable. There is no duel in any of the plays I analysed which does not partly contradict the assumption that the theory of civility underlies the duel, in many plays in the form of the family matters taking precedence over class in the use of the duel. The ongoing dialogue between the various plays rather suggests that the debate cannot be settled now, as it was not settled in its time: the duel is perhaps a combination of civility and chivalry which is continuously reconstructed.

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<sup>118</sup> Ferguson 96.

<sup>119</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 12.

<sup>120</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 2.

### 3. Women

As seen in the introduction, the duel is not only a class institution, but also a gendered institution as it defines manhood. In both these cases, the use of the duel is reflexive: honour as well as manhood constantly have to be proved. This is partly because of a “gendered division”: “fighting and duelling are considered masculine, and the refusal to defend one’s honour with violence is associated with cowardice and femininity.”<sup>1</sup> The gendered division complements the duel as a “sign of masculine identity,” which Jennifer Low explores.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the wounding, or penetration, of an opponent in a duel asserts masculinity, being wounded means a loss of masculinity. The duel functions as a definition of manhood because duelling is a masculine act: seen in the gendered division and in duelling as penetration.

In this chapter, I will argue that the role of women as a reward or prize for the winner of a duel conflicts with Peltonen’s argument that the duel is based on the theory of civility. I will argue that this shows the influence of chivalry. Moreover, I will argue that the aspect of penetration which, according to Low, helps “to stabilize” notions of gender,<sup>3</sup> is what finally leads to a collapse of the “boundaries between male and female” and facilitates Laqueur’s “one-sex model,” which has boundaries “of degree and not of kind.”<sup>4</sup>

#### Quarrelling Sexes

The gendered division permeates *Romeo and Juliet*. Such as when Sampson coerces other characters into fighting by referring to their manhood: “Draw, if you be men.”<sup>5</sup> Other characters in the play do this as well. When Romeo refuses to duel with Tybalt he no longer adheres to the prevalent definition of manhood. He specifically blames Juliet for his predicament: “Thy beauty hath made me effeminate, / And in my temper softened valour’s

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<sup>1</sup> Steenbergh 170.

<sup>2</sup> Low 3.

<sup>3</sup> Low 3.

<sup>4</sup> Laqueur 25.

<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.49.

steel!”<sup>6</sup> More importantly, Mercutio also blames Juliet for this.<sup>7</sup> The gendered division is thus evoked by the men to force their peers to fight.

The gendered division also excludes women from the domain of quarrelling: the women are only allowed to restrain the men, and not incite them to a quarrel. When the nurse is ridiculed, she responds with a threat: she will either “take [...] down” any man who “speak[s] [...] against” herself or “find those that shall” do it for her.<sup>8</sup> However, when she turns to Peter, a servant, he replies that he has no intention to quarrel simply because she asks him to. The nurse’s attempt to equal the men only emphasises her own vulnerability. Lady Montague appears more successful in her display, as she is able to physically restrain Montague from fighting.<sup>9</sup> Yet in the context of the gendered division, she still only represents femininity as a restraint. Amongst all the men who force each other to quarrel, her display reveals more about Montague than about herself. As the men blame Juliet for Romeo’s supposed femininity, Juliet seems to be reduced to a similar role, though her situation is more complex. The men’s references to the gendered division can be seen as an attempt to exclude women from the quarrels and to negate their influence.

The gendered terms of fighting and duelling are complemented by sexuality. The servants’ language emphasizes the sexual characteristics of quarrels at the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*: the strife amongst men is expressed in sexual terms. This is seen in the many puns on swords and penises: both the servants<sup>10</sup> and Tybalt make these.<sup>11</sup> This is also seen in other plays.<sup>12</sup> The puns on quarrelling and sex overlap so that the difference between subjecting men and having sex with their “maids” is minimized: “women being the weaker vessels are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague’s men from the wall, and

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<sup>6</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.100-1.

<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 2.3.12-3.

<sup>8</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 2.3.114-5.

<sup>9</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.64-5.

<sup>10</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.25-6.

<sup>11</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.51.

<sup>12</sup> Allan H. Gilbert, “The Duel in Italian Cinquecento Drama and Its Relation to Tragicomedy,” *Italica* 26.1 (1949): 9.

thrust his maids to the wall.”<sup>13</sup> The quarrels between men and having sex with women are equated: both prove your manhood.

The theme of sexuality makes Juliet’s femininity more complex. Juliet’s influence on Romeo is described in the violent imagery of penetration, which both refers to the sexual act and to the piercing of the skin with a weapon. Early in the play Romeo and Mercutio describe how “love [...] pricks”:<sup>14</sup> they both “play on” the “sense of ‘penetrates, thrusts like a penis’” and on the piercing of the skin.<sup>15</sup> Penetration carries “suggestions of sexual emasculation.”<sup>16</sup> Surprisingly, both Romeo and Juliet penetrate in Romeo’s description of their love: “Where on a sudden one hath wounded me, / That’s by me wounded.”<sup>17</sup> When Mercutio fears that Romeo will not duel with Tybalt, he laments that Romeo cannot fight as he “is already dead, stabbed with a white wench’s black eye, run through the ear with a love-song, the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy’s butt-shaft.”<sup>18</sup> This also plays on Romeo’s refusal to fight as sexual emasculation. Forker argues that the dagger in the end of the play is also “unmistakably eroticized.”<sup>19</sup> In such a reading, Romeo’s suicide with a dagger has an additional symbolic meaning: killing himself with a dagger by penetration means that he rejects his manhood, despite his earlier attempts to regain it. Romeo and Juliet are similar in that they both penetrate and are penetrated. The exclusion of women is thus not always successful: Tybalt’s and Romeo’s references to Juliet with overtones of penetration contrasts the traditional gendered division.

Romeo and Juliet’s love is expressed in terms which echo the duelling code. Romeo does not want to be left “unsatisfied” by Juliet, as he wants to “exchange [...] vow[s].”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.13-5.

<sup>14</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.4.23-4.

<sup>15</sup> Bate 1689.

<sup>16</sup> Low 7.

<sup>17</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 2.2.51-2.

<sup>18</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 2.3.12-3.

<sup>19</sup> Charles R. Forker, “Sexuality and Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage,” *South Central Review* 7.4 (1990): 5.

<sup>20</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 2.1.176-8.

Tybalt is as desirous of being “satisfied,” though it here refers to the impending duel.<sup>21</sup> Satisfaction has the same meaning in both: Romeo desires satisfaction because he claims to have been wounded by Juliet, and insists that satisfaction is not relevant in the case of Tybalt because he has “never injured” him.<sup>22</sup> These separate instances are thematically linked when Juliet conflates the sexual meaning and the meaning of revenge of satisfaction: she tells Lady Capulet that she will never “be satisfied” if Romeo dies.<sup>23</sup> Tybalt’s challenge to the duel is echoed by the Nurse when she suggests to Juliet that she should remarry and hope that Romeo “dares ne’er come back to challenge you.”<sup>24</sup> The language of the duel, sex, and love are thus intertwined.

In the servants’ case, the conflation of quarrelling and having sex constructs a necessary proof of manhood. In Romeo’s case, however, Juliet’s penetration of Romeo undermines his manhood. This does not necessarily mean that Juliet is given masculine characteristics, as only Romeo and Mercutio describe Juliet in the sense of penetration. It is rather part of the discourse of the men. After Romeo declines to duel and realises that he has lost his manhood, his subsequent lapses into rage when he kills Tybalt and, later in the play, Paris show the dangers of the prevalent definition of manhood. Romeo’s resignation when he kills, and penetrates, himself in the end of the play problematizes the gendered division the men use.

The peer pressure and the gendered division are meant to exclude women. The construction of quarrelling and having sex is not always successful, however. When it is not successful, it actually subverts the definition of manhood: when Romeo’s supposed femininity is expressed in sexual terms by the men, Juliet’s masculinity becomes apparent because

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<sup>21</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.60.

<sup>22</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.54-6.

<sup>23</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.5.97.

<sup>24</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.5.225.

penetration is at the centre of the definition of manhood.<sup>25</sup> The play thus both explores how the definition of manhood figures in the peer pressure amongst men, and how this causes problems: most importantly, this exploration is only done in the discourse of the men themselves.

### **A Men's World: Women as Ploys**

Whereas *Romeo and Juliet* presents how men mitigate women in their peer pressure, many other plays depict men actually using women to pressure their peers into quarrels. In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby convinces Sir Andrew to “challenge” and “fight with” the disguised Viola as his “niece shall take note of it”: he even says that “there is no love-broker in the world” which “can more prevail in man’s commendation with woman than report of valour.”<sup>26</sup> Barabas also manipulates two men into a duel for his daughter, Abigail, in *The Jew of Malta*. Barabas uses Abigail to orchestrate the duel, after which she has no further influence. Both Abigail and Sir Toby’s niece are thus made into reasons to duel, but do not actively influence it: they are mere parts in the men’s manipulations used to instigate duels.

The characters think that the duel is about women, but it is actually only about themselves. It does not matter which gentleman wins the duel in *The Jew of Malta* as it does not influence Abigail’s decision. At least in this case Barabas forces Abigail to convince each of them that they are Abigail’s favourites. In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Andrew has no reason to believe that Sir Toby’s niece will notice him. The women’s actual role or influence is irrelevant in these plays, as the women are simply referenced amongst men to arrange duels. The purpose of the peer pressure in *Romeo and Juliet* and these plays is the same. However, the used tactics are different from *Romeo and Juliet*: the men now use women as ploys in their manipulations, rather than that they exclude them to rely on a gendered division.

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<sup>25</sup> Low 7.

<sup>26</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (1601), in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2007) 3.3.22-5.

## Women as Prizes

The use of women as ploys to instigate duels plays with the role of women as prizes. This is part of chivalry, in which a man must “be courageous in battle” to impress a woman.<sup>27</sup> The duel in this context is, like Davis argues, a “highly refined form of chivalric ‘adventure.’”<sup>28</sup> Women here serve as the men’s “inspiration and reward”: as their prize.<sup>29</sup> The chivalric tradition appears to be of decisive influence in the construction of the women’s roles. This can be seen in the opposite reactions of Tamyra in Chapman’s *Bussy D’Ambois* and Margaret in Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. In Chapman’s play, Friar Comolet advises Bussy to woo Tamyra by exploiting a rumour that he duelled because of her.<sup>30</sup> Though the beginning of the play shows that this is far from the truth and even though she is married, Tamyra is easily wooed by this. She willingly and unquestioningly ascribes to the role of being a prize for a duel of which she only heard of in rumours.

The duel scene in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* contrasts sharply with these events. Margaret does not afterwards hear of a duel, but is rather present at the duel. Also, this duel is fought by two gentlemen, Lambert and Serlsby, who actually duel to gain her “favour.”<sup>31</sup> She does not care for their wooing and compares herself with the Helen from Marlowe’s famous description: “Shall I be Helen in my forward fates, / As I am Helen in my matchless hue, / And set rich Suffolk with my face afire?”<sup>32</sup> She aptly mocks her own role by referring to an epic: she criticizes the gentlemen’s delusions of grandeur as they eagerly fight over nothing. Instead of stopping them, she decides to wait for her fiancée to “end their fancies and their follies both.”<sup>33</sup> This shows that she does have a choice. Moreover, her choice to remain aloof

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<sup>27</sup> William G. Meader, *Courtship in Shakespeare: Its Relation to the Tradition of Courtly Love*, (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1954) 11.

<sup>28</sup> Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003) 159.

<sup>29</sup> Wells 15.

<sup>30</sup> George Chapman, *Bussy D’Ambois*, ed. Nicholas Brooke (1604; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1964) 2.2.202-8.

<sup>31</sup> Greene, *Friar* 13.40.

<sup>32</sup> Greene, *Friar* 10.93-5.

<sup>33</sup> Greene, *Friar* 10.102.

makes her superior to the men as they cannot influence her. The gentlemen's duel is to their own detriment as it serves no purpose. While Tamyra accepts her subservient role within the men's discourse on the duel, Margaret rather undermines the discourse by consciously choosing to remain excluded.

If a woman has the role of being a prize for the winner of a duel, then that play relates to chivalry. Though Tamyra and Margaret can be seen as each other's opposites, they are similar in that they both do not stand to personally lose because of a duel: the duel is not fought to defend their honour, but rather to impress them.

### **A Women's World: Women as Ploys**

As Margaret is not personally involved, she has the choice of remaining aloof, unlike Hero in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*. Duels in the plays are either fought to win a woman as a prize or to defend a woman's honour as she is herself not allowed to do so. Hero belongs to the latter category. When Claudio slanders her,<sup>34</sup> she is even too shocked to respond. Her family makes it seem as if she is dead, and berates Claudio for having "killed a sweet lady."<sup>35</sup> Hero, and her life, depend upon the men, as only they can reclaim her honour. Both her father and another gentleman, Benedick, challenge Claudio. Hero is restricted to a subservient role: unlike Tamyra, she has no choice because of her vulnerability.

Hero's vulnerability contrasts with Beatrice's influence as she is able to persuade Benedick to duel with Claudio. She does this by using Benedick's love for her, even quite literally: when Benedick swears by his "hand" that he loves her, Beatrice replies that he should use his hand for "some other way than swearing by it."<sup>36</sup> Also, Benedick responds to Beatrice's pleas by saying that he is "engaged," which equates both his vow to confront

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<sup>34</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 4.1.27.

<sup>35</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 5.1.147.

<sup>36</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 4.1.313-4.

Claudio with his vow of love.<sup>37</sup> She subverts the gendered division in the duel, because she instigates a duel, rather than that she attempts to restrain it: as she uses herself as a reason for a man to duel, she exploits the strategy of women as ploys herself.

However, she also reinforces the gender dichotomy because she relies on a strict exclusion of women from the duel. She talks about how she cannot duel herself as it is a “man’s office.”<sup>38</sup> Her wish that she “were a man” emphasises the gap between the sexes.<sup>39</sup> Though her exclusion allows her to berate the “manhood” which has “melted into curtsies,”<sup>40</sup> it also entails that she, like Hero, is not capable of regaining her own honour and is dependent upon others. The play thus both depicts a woman, Hero, in the most vulnerable state concerning honour, and yet also depicts another woman, Beatrice, in the strongest place concerning the duel.

Beatrice forces Benedick to duel by dismissing his love if he does not. She uses herself as a ploy by referring to herself as a prize: if Benedick does not duel he cannot love her. Like Tamyra, she chooses to ascribe to a subservient role, though for different reasons: the roles of duelling for a prize and for a woman’s honour are here combined. The duel that Beatrice proposes is not about her, but rather about Hero. Hero’s vulnerability in the respect of honour is balanced by Beatrice’s ability to exploit her role as a prize. The women here accept the men’s discourse, though only the complete version. Beatrice reinforces the duel in such a way that women have a more balanced role. Though she claims that she cannot duel because she is a woman, she still undermines the gendered division by instigating a duel instead of restraining the men. The role of women in *Bussy D’Ambois* and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is reversed in *Much Ado about Nothing*: the women’s adherence to the duel, rather than their dismissal of it, now gives them power.

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<sup>37</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 4.1.317.

<sup>38</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 4.1.269

<sup>39</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 4.1.297.

<sup>40</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 4.1.309.

## (Wo)men

While women in *Much Ado about Nothing* are dependent upon men to defend their honour, Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* presents a different situation. No woman is under any threat in the play, and the possibility of being dependent upon men is only referred to as a farce. Bessus' claim that he will uphold a lady's reputation is comic as there is no cause. He is not taken seriously when he boasts: "I'll defend the reputation of my charge whilst I live. [...] I am secret in these businesses and know how to defend a lady's honour."<sup>41</sup> Women are not dependent upon the men for their honour in his play: the one reference to defend a woman is ironical and undermines the discourse.

Women are widely seen and referred to as prizes in this play, yet the later events show that the women cannot be bound by this category. After Arbaces defeats Tigranes in a duel,<sup>42</sup> he "offer[s]" him Panthea, his "sister."<sup>43</sup> Arbaces emphasises that Tigranes could never have successfully wooed Panthea except by fighting with him.<sup>44</sup> The victor here bestows the prize. Arbaces equates her with himself when he tells Tigranes: "You thought yourself a match for me in fight. / Trust me, Tigranes, she can do as much / In peace as I in war; she'll conquer too."<sup>45</sup> Ironically, this is true for Arbaces later in the play. While he struggles to restrain his desire for her, his fighting skill is affected. Mardonius even fears that he will become effeminate.<sup>46</sup> Arbaces attempts to give her away as a prize, but must admit that his own desire is too great. She transgresses the role attributed to her as she is both apparently a conqueror like Arbaces, and is more than a prize which can simply be bestowed by and onto men.

Whereas the women in *Much Ado about Nothing* have to compensate for their vulnerability concerning honour, the women in *A King and No King* appear to have an equal

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<sup>41</sup> Beaumont, *King* 2.1.188-92.

<sup>42</sup> I will explain in chapter four why their fight is a duel.

<sup>43</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.144.

<sup>44</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.145-7.

<sup>45</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.190-2.

<sup>46</sup> Beaumont, *King* 136n.

position as the men. The plays are similar in the status of the women: if Panthea is a conqueror because of how Arbaces reacts to her, then Beatrice is also a conqueror because of her influence on Benedick. *A King and No King* continues to fortify the position of women even further. If the women in *A King and No King* operate completely independent from the men in questions of honour, their new independence even marks a radical shift. However, the play does not offer enough evidence for such a claim. This is because the women in *A King and No King* only have a marginal role: what is revealed about the women is mostly done by the men. The analysis is based on Arbaces' ramblings about Panthea and his weakness, rather than on her actions and her strength. Despite the changing roles, the play only offers the discourse of men.

Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Island Princess* relies on an alternative to this discourse, which results in a plot which is centred around a woman who is superior to men. This woman is Quisara, the island princess from the title of the play. *The Island Princess* does offer a completely different role for a woman in the concept honour and puts a woman in control. Usually women have marginal roles either because they are merely the initial reason for a duel, as their honour has to be defended, or are its result: the prize. *The Island Princess* removes the boundaries between these two: to the benefit of women.

Quisara promises to marry the man who adheres to her rules, and so offers herself as a prize.<sup>47</sup> She tells them to do "brave thing[s]" to "entice [her] that way."<sup>48</sup> She is able to dictate the rules of the men interested in her: her future husband "Must win [her] with his worth; must travel for [her]; / Must put his hasty rage off, and put on / A well confirm'd, a temperate, and true vallour."<sup>49</sup> This raises questions as to why she is desired and how she is capable of so much influence: the answer lies in the concept of honour used. As seen in chapter two, *The Island Princess* is not about horizontal honour, which once lost cannot be regained, but about

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<sup>47</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 1.2.74.

<sup>48</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 1.2.57.

<sup>49</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 1.3.126-8.

vertical honour. In horizontal honour, women can at best avoid becoming victims. Quisara is, however, desired for being “pure honor.”<sup>50</sup> In this system of vertical honour, she is a means for the men to gain more honour. Instead of having a marginal role, Quisara has a central role in the men’s discourse. Here, a woman does not represent honour which has to be defended, but honour which can be gained: honour thus adds value to Quisara’s role as a prize. She is, like a lady in chivalry, a “site for the validation of male honour, in terms of both status and inherent virtue.”<sup>51</sup>

This role allows her to easily influence the two main protagonists, Armusia and Ruy. They duel because of and for her. Quisara persuades Ruy to duel with Armusia, and Armusia admits that he duels because of her: “I am not bloody, / [...] But since we cannot both enjoy the Princesse, / I am resolv’d to fight.”<sup>52</sup> She is not only a spectator at the duel, but also controls it when she tells Armusia not to kill Ruy: “Hold and let him rise, / Spare him for me.”<sup>53</sup> The princess exerts great influence over the men, their bravery and their duel. Moreover, the reverse is not true. Quisara only sets the rules, but is not herself restricted by them. She breaks her own promise when she refuses to marry Armusia after he has done all her biddings. Quisara places herself above the system of rules that restrict the men.

Other plays which strengthen the position of women do not do so satisfactorily as they do not subvert or substitute the concept of honour. As long as women cannot defend their honour themselves and must rely on men, they can only compensate in other respects. This is what happens in *Much Ado about Nothing*. *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* does not deal with this issue at all, and *A King and No King* only has a short reference made by a man. *The Island Princess* has an alternative discourse in which a woman is in control. As she is the

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<sup>50</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 1.3.225.

<sup>51</sup> Davis 141.

<sup>52</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.29-32.

<sup>53</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.45-6.

object of desire, she can create rules for the men which she can herself ignore: she is superior to the men.

### Quarrelling Sexes Revisited

Quisara's role has implications for the gendered division which is so prevalent in *Romeo and Juliet*. Whereas she manipulates Ruy to convince him to kill Armusia, Pyniero has to do the opposite: he has to persuade Ruy so that he does not to murder Armusia. Pyniero is the only character who berates Quisara for not behaving like a "woman" and for her lack of "tenderness."<sup>54</sup> He is also the only character who is unwilling to quarrel over or for her: "That willingly I wou'd not kill a dog / That could but fetch and carry, for a woman."<sup>55</sup> Pyniero has little influence in the play, however, and stands in stark contrast to Quisara's power. The gendered division in which "fighting and duelling are considered masculine, and the refusal to defend one's honour with violence is associated with cowardice and femininity" is now partly reversed.<sup>56</sup> It is a woman who instigates murders and quarrels, while a man attempts to stop her. The latter action is considered to be feminine in *Romeo and Juliet* as it annuls your manhood, but Pyniero substitutes the rigid and mutual exclusive categories for more complementary ones when he calls it "tenderness."<sup>57</sup>

Manipulating a duel from a distance is similar to what Beatrice did. Though the problem of honour in *Much Ado about Nothing* does not apply here, Quisara appears to be vulnerable because she cannot fight for herself. However, when Quisara references the same gendered division as Beatrice, she does not do it to call herself a victim, but rather to threaten with her willingness to transcend the gendered division: "I'll take to me / The spirit of a man,

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<sup>54</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.81-2.

<sup>55</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.111-2.

<sup>56</sup> Steenbergh 170.

<sup>57</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.81-2.

borrow his boldnesse, / And force my womans feares into a madnesse.”<sup>58</sup> Whereas Beatrice reinforces the gender dichotomy by emphasising that she cannot act like a man, Quisara only references it to show that she is not restricted by it. Quisara rejects the gender dichotomy.

Quisara does not behave like a conventional woman in the other scenes either. Emanuel tells Armusia to approach Quisara aggressively: “Shake her between a paire of sheets sir, there shake / These sullen fits out of her, spare her not there, / There you may break her will, and bruise no bone sir.”<sup>59</sup> Armusia does not do so, however, and it is actually Quisara who does the only shaking. The governor meets his match in her: “This woman makes me weary of my mischiefe, / She shakes me, and she staggers me.”<sup>60</sup> Emanuel’s sexual imagery to break her is here changed as it is Quisara who breaks her opponent. The intertwining of the imagery of quarrelling and sex in *Romeo and Juliet* returns in this play in the form of Quisara.

Whereas the sexual aspect of penetration only problematized the gendered division in *Romeo and Juliet*, they here lead to a complete collapse. Armusia is unafraid and eager to display his bravery, but he has problems wooing Quisara even after he has met her terms. When he approaches her, she threatens him that she is willing to act like a man and fight with him. To reassure her, he offers her his sword and tells her to take it “and sheath it heare,” so that she can be her “own safety”: he tells her that he willingly “perish[es]” to “satisfie” her.<sup>61</sup> According to Low’s argument,<sup>62</sup> Armusia offers Quisara to penetrate, and so to sexually emasculate, him. Armusia’s feminine plea is contrasted with her masculine threat; their relation is inversed. Moreover, Low argues that penetrating, while not being penetrated, is what defines manhood.<sup>63</sup> Armusia’s reaction to her threat shows that he is willing to

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<sup>58</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 3.3.52-4.

<sup>59</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 3.2.26-8.

<sup>60</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 5.2.138-9.

<sup>61</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 3.3.78-83.

<sup>62</sup> Low 7.

<sup>63</sup> Low 7.

acknowledge any claim she makes of her manhood. The strict boundaries between the genders collapse.

### Conclusion

The duel is a gendered institution which defines manhood. The duels do not simply reinforce homosocial bonds, but can also weaken them. The women get increasingly more power and opportunity to react ever more radically to the discourse of the men. Margaret in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* can choose exclusion instead of having it forced upon her. Beatrice is paradoxically both included and excluded: she reinforces the gender dichotomy, in which she has no part, to use herself as a ploy to instigate a duel. The descriptions of the king's sister, Panthea, in *A King and No King* undermine the gender division as she is both conqueror and prize: she unites both the male and female roles. Yet Panthea is only described by men, and is not herself actually part of the discourse. Quisara in *The Island Princess* rejects the gender dichotomy and the men's discourse. These plays can be seen as continuing the theme of increasing the status and influence of women.

The aspect of penetration, however, is not slowly changed. The similarity in its use in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Island Princess* is remarkable. In *Romeo and Juliet* it undermines the gender division, and perhaps already hints to a collapse of boundaries, like in *The Island Princess*. Penetration rather facilitates Laqueur's "one-sex model," which has boundaries "of degree and not of kind,"<sup>64</sup> in contrast to Low's claim that the issue of penetration "stabilizes" notions of gender.<sup>65</sup> This has the effect that the duel as a definition of manhood is no longer valid.

The roles of women in relation to the duel can only be explained by partly placing it in a chivalric context: the role of women as prizes contrasts with the theory of civility, as they

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<sup>64</sup> Laqueur 25.

<sup>65</sup> Low 3.

cannot not have this role there. Women here serve as the men's "inspiration and reward": as their prize.<sup>66</sup> The chivalric tradition appears to be of decisive influence in the construction of the women's roles: women gain more power by being able to offer themselves as prizes. Quisara is even explicitly, like a lady in chivalry, a "site for the validation of male honour, in terms of both status and inherent virtue."<sup>67</sup> This undermines Peltonen's claim that only the theory of civility, and not chivalry, can be the basis for the duel,<sup>68</sup> as here early modern drama shows the reverse.

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<sup>66</sup> Wells 15.

<sup>67</sup> Davis 141.

<sup>68</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 309.

#### 4. Kings

As described in the introduction, despite the many laws and proclamations against it, duelling continued to exist. As “duelling could reinforce gentlemanly homogeneity” it could “lend credence to arguments for a limited monarchy”:<sup>1</sup> duelling was thus a threat to the role and function of the monarch. Anti-duelling pamphlets not only argued against the duel, but also against honour. They argued that “violence” and “honour” were the “sole domain of the monarch.”<sup>2</sup> Bacon attacked the notion of horizontal and reflexive honour, and “emphasised that true honour was vertical in character.”<sup>3</sup> His strategy was given royal consent as it was used in *The Peace-Maker*.<sup>4</sup> The duel and honour represented a vital tension between the monarch and the duel.

In this chapter, I will argue that the duel is mocked when it is accompanied by references to the law. I will show how plays explore the tension between the monarch and the gentleman, and argue that *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry the Fifth* emphasise the role of the monarchy, *Bussy D’Ambois* emphasises a balance, and *The Island Princess* emphasises, as the first play, the gentleman. Moreover, I will argue that *The Island Princess* directly opposes Bacon’s attack on horizontal honour, and that it is a political play which undermines the monarchy. My analysis will point out that Maxwell’s claim that all of Beaumont and Fletcher’s plays written after 1615 make pleas against the duel,<sup>5</sup> has to be revised.

#### Legally Speaking

The unlawfulness of the duel provides comedy in many of the plays. The law is often referenced to instigate a quarrel and escape responsibility. Sampson, a servant of the Capulets,

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<sup>1</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 304.

<sup>2</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 7.

<sup>3</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 115.

<sup>4</sup> Peltonen, *Anti-Duelling* 28.

<sup>5</sup> Baldwin Maxwell, “The Attitude toward the Duello in the Beaumont and Fletcher Plays,” *Studies in Beaumont, Fletcher and Massinger* (London: Chapel Hill, 1939) 106.

tries to do this repeatedly in *Romeo and Juliet*: “Let us take the law of our sides: let them begin.”<sup>6</sup> He even asks his fellow for advice on what to say: “Is the law of our side, if I say ay?”<sup>7</sup> This discussion abruptly ends when they see Tybalt, as they now outnumber their opponents. In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Andrew has written a challenge which is as circumspect as possible. He makes vague insults: “Youth, whatsoever thou art, thou art but a scurvy fellow.”<sup>8</sup> These are then later retracted and appear to be mere insinuations: “Wonder not, nor admire not in thy mind, why I do call thee so, for I will show thee no reason for’t.”<sup>9</sup> Fabian pretends to compliment Sir Andrew, but ridicules him instead: “Very brief, and to exceeding good sense—less.”<sup>10</sup> He also jokingly says: “A good note, that keeps you from the blow of the law.”<sup>11</sup> Here, the law is something which can be circumvented, but Sir Andrew only does so at his own expense. Actual fear of the law and the constables is expressed by the characters in *The Alchemist*, and this is most overtly ridiculed in Kestrel. After boasting that he will “keep peace for no man,” he remains passive and cautiously asks another character if he is a “constable.”<sup>12</sup> When he learns that the man is not a constable, he immediately reacts by insulting him: “Then you are an otter, and a shad, a whit, / A very tim.”<sup>13</sup> In the plays in which the duel is emphasized as an unlawful activity, characters’ use, circumvention, and fear of the law is expressed at their own expense. Though some “theorists of duelling” advice to act like this to “dodge legal sanctions and royal displeasure,”<sup>14</sup> this behaviour is clearly mocked in the plays.

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<sup>6</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.31.

<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.38.

<sup>8</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth* 3.4.113.

<sup>9</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth* 3.4.114-5.

<sup>10</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth* 3.4.120.

<sup>11</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth* 3.4.116.

<sup>12</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 4.7.42-3.

<sup>13</sup> Jonson, *Alchemist* 4.7.45-6.

<sup>14</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 75.

## Private and Public Issues

The tension between the duel and an authority figure is occasionally represented in more dramatic terms: some plays not only explore how the duel poses a threat to the monarch as an institution, but also represent duels which personally affect a monarch or authority figure. Barabas orchestrates the duel in *The Jew of Malta* to avenge himself on the governor Ferneze. He manipulates the governor's son, Lodowick, and another gentleman, Mathias, so that they duel.<sup>15</sup> When they are fighting, he looks at them from above and gives them both the command to give the final thrust.<sup>16</sup> This emphasises his power over them, even though, as a Jew, he has the lowest status in the society. His schemes allow him to assume Ferneze's role as governor with "no small authority."<sup>17</sup> However, he subsequently calls himself "Poor Barabas": he thinks that being the governor leaves his "life" at the people's "command."<sup>18</sup> Authority is inversed in this play: Barabas is able to affect the highest authority in society from a low position, while his newfound high position leaves him unprotected. As he uses the duel to exact his vengeance on the governor, he abuses the duel to directly, and personally, upset the highest authority. The duel shows how authority is inversed as Barabas is able to easily undermine Ferneze: even though Ferneze is personally bereaved, his power as a governor is no help to him.

Escalus, the prince in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, similarly suffers when his kinsman, Mercutio, dies in a duel. The context is entirely different, however, as this loss is not intentional. Escalus' power to punish quarrellers permeates the play. He threatens with severe penalties for fighting: he stops a quarrel in the beginning of the play by threatening the men "on pain of death."<sup>19</sup> Right before Mercutio is killed in the duel, Benvolio also warns Romeo:

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<sup>15</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 3.3.49-50.

<sup>16</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 3.2.2.

<sup>17</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 5.2.29.

<sup>18</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 5.2.32-3.

<sup>19</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.88.

“the prince will doom thee death!”<sup>20</sup> After Mercutio’s death, the prince emphasises how he has been personally affected: “My blood” because of these “rude brawls doth lie a-bleeding.”<sup>21</sup> Though he emphasises the need for a strict resolution, he does not follow his own advice that “Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill.”<sup>22</sup> Instead of adhering to the law, he “rushe[s] aside the law” and changes the death sentence of Romeo into banishment.<sup>23</sup> As I described earlier in this chapter, the servants specifically reference the law and ignore it so that they can quarrel. This initial comic element has now returned as a tragic element as Escalus’ decision in effect dooms Paris, another kinsman, as he is later pointlessly slain by Romeo. Escalus concludes in the end of the play that he has been “punished” for “winking at” the families’ “discords.”<sup>24</sup> The duel, as part of the larger feud between the families, threatens the prince in two ways: both in his position as an authority figure in which he has to maintain the stability of society, and personally as he loses his kinsmen. The *Jew of Malta* and *Romeo and Juliet* portray the duel as a personal and functional threat to authority figures, for which the solution portrayed in *Romeo and Juliet* is a more resolute authority figure.

Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing* offers a different take on the duel as a personal threat to an authority figure, as it distinguishes between private and public issues. The prince, Don Pedro, is manipulated by his brother, Don John, into thinking that he wooed an unchaste girl for his friend and is warned that “it would better fit [his] honour” to listen to his brother.<sup>25</sup> Don Pedro concludes that he “stand[s] dishonoured.”<sup>26</sup> He promises his friend, Claudio, to “disgrace” the girl with him.<sup>27</sup> When they do so, the father of the girl, Leonato, and his brother decide to “Make those” that “offend” them “suffer too.”<sup>28</sup> This means both

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<sup>20</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.121.

<sup>21</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.179.

<sup>22</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.187.

<sup>23</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.3.26-8.

<sup>24</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 5.3.303-4.

<sup>25</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 3.2.76

<sup>26</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 4.1.60.

<sup>27</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 3.2.84.

<sup>28</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 5.1.40-1.

Claudio and the prince: “And that shall Claudio know, so shall the Prince.”<sup>29</sup> However, Leonato only challenges Claudio to a duel.<sup>30</sup> Jennifer Low concludes that “As governor of Messina, one of Leonato’s chief duties is to keep the peace; yet now this reverend signior actually proposes a duel. [This] seems almost an emblematic inversion of authority, authority transformed into disorder.”<sup>31</sup> However, I think that the discrepancy between Leonato’s claim of challenging the prince, his subsequent challenge to Claudio, and the role of Don John are vital. As Don Pedro is a prince and Leonato a governor, their private issue here conflicts with their public roles. Both seem to consciously act as private individuals, however. After all, Don John dishonoured Leonato’s daughter to prevent from being dishonoured himself. This is why he feels obliged to defend himself: he dismisses Leonato’s threat not on the basis of a legal proceeding, but by emphasising that he did not do anything wrong, which he promises on his “honour.”<sup>32</sup> Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing* negates the personal aspect of honour and the duel by distinguishing between public and private actions. This alternate solution conflicts with the one of *Romeo and Juliet*: the duel can here apparently be a means to which everyone, even authority figures, can resort, rather than that authorities must punish it as an illegal act.

### **The King’s Duel**

Whereas *Much Ado about Nothing* distinguishes between public and private honour, *Henry the Fifth* combines them again. Henry’s war is partly about his personal honour as he does not receive the tennis balls which the French sent him well. He also threatens the French that he is “a wrangler,”<sup>33</sup> which is a quarrelsome opponent,<sup>34</sup> and calls his reaction “fair

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<sup>29</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 5.1.44.

<sup>30</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 5.1.71.

<sup>31</sup> Low 37.

<sup>32</sup> Shakespeare, *Ado* 5.1.113.

<sup>33</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry the Fifth* (1599), in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2007) 1.2.269.

action,”<sup>35</sup> which includes the meaning of honourable.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, he acknowledges that he looks foremost for honour: “if it be a sin to covet honour, / I am the most offending soul alive.”<sup>37</sup> When Henry calls the war an “arbitrement of swords,”<sup>38</sup> with his “cause being just and his quarrel honourable,”<sup>39</sup> he makes the war similar to a public duel. Within this public duel, Henry is also part of a private duel. When he walks around in his camp in a disguise, he meets a soldier named Williams.<sup>40</sup> Williams claims that he is as “good a gentleman as the emperor,” from which the King concludes that he must be “better than the king.”<sup>41</sup> Williams privately challenges the authority of a king by refusing to acknowledge an essential difference between himself and a monarch: he calls an emperor and thus a king, as Henry notes, a gentleman. Even when Henry accepts the challenge, like the authority figures in *Much Ado about Nothing*, there is no difference possible between private and public honour because he is the monarch: his acceptance of Williams challenge is about his public role of king after all.

Though Henry accepts the challenge, he does not accept the consequences. When they dispute, they exchange gloves which “signif[ies] a commitment to duel.”<sup>42</sup> Henry promises to wear the glove,<sup>43</sup> and to “challenge” Williams if he dares to acknowledge it as his.<sup>44</sup> Despite this formal exchange, however, Henry does not keep his promise but chooses to manipulate Williams instead when they meet after the battle. Henry then describes his promise as a “bargain,” while Williams says that his opponent swore.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, instead of immediately confronting Williams, he commands a captain, Fluellen, to wear the glove, which leads to a

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<sup>34</sup> Bate 1041.

<sup>35</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 1.2.315.

<sup>36</sup> Bate 1042.

<sup>37</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.3.30-1.

<sup>38</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.1.134.

<sup>39</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.1.112.

<sup>40</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.1.55.

<sup>41</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.1.43-4.

<sup>42</sup> Bate 1072.

<sup>43</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.1.169.

<sup>44</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.1.175.

<sup>45</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.7.142

quarrel between Fluellen and Williams. Though Henry accepts the challenge while he is in disguise, he does not let it affect his position as a monarch.

This is most clearly seen in the manner in which Henry resolves the issue. When he tells Williams that it was he whom Williams quarrelled with, he asks for “satisfaction,” which continues the language and the setting of the earlier challenge.<sup>46</sup> Williams claims that he could not have offended the king, as he did not know that Henry was in disguise.<sup>47</sup> He even blames Henry for being in disguise: he “beseech[es]” the king to “take it for [his] own fault.”<sup>48</sup> His arguments do not resolve the issue, however, as their quarrel was not only significant because it was between a disguised king and a soldier, but also because it was about the status of a king. According to Williams, a soldier, king, and emperor are essentially the same, as they are all gentlemen. Henry shows that this is not true. He solves the issue by filling Williams’ “glove with crowns” before he returns it to him.<sup>49</sup> He tells him to “wear it for an honour [...] / Till I do challenge it.”<sup>50</sup> Both the glove and the crowns here signify two symbolic acts. The first is at the level of the challenge. Henry returns the glove and shows that he can now challenge Williams at any time: Williams’ challenge has not only been negated, but is now reversed. Henry inverts the meaning of Williams challenge. On the second level, he debunks Williams claim from which it follows that a king is merely a gentleman. Henry shows that there is an essential difference between him and the soldier, or other gentlemen. He shows that he can both give a crown, and take it away from someone. No one, however, is able to take away his own crown, in the sense of his kingship. Henry successfully shows that the duel is in his control, and not the other way around.

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<sup>46</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.8.35.

<sup>47</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.8.40-1.

<sup>48</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.8.42-3.

<sup>49</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.8.45-6.

<sup>50</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.8.47-8.

## The Kingly Duellist

The relation between the duel and the monarch of *Henry the Fifth* is at first reversed in *A King and No King*: the monarch is now foremost a duellist. This is because Arbaces, the king, wins wars by defeating kings of opposing armies in “single combat.”<sup>51</sup> The term “single combat” can both refer to a duel, and to the “medieval practice” in which a war is concluded through a “public fight between the two opposed leaders.”<sup>52</sup> The idea that the duel descended from the “medieval practice” is “commonplace in this period.”<sup>53</sup> “David” and “Goliath” are often mentioned as an example,<sup>54</sup> which even Bacon saw as a legitimate form of the duel.<sup>55</sup> Arbaces fights “in lists”:<sup>56</sup> this is a place Saviolo mentions where a duel can be fought.<sup>57</sup> Bessus says that they fought there with “single sword and gauntlet,”<sup>58</sup> which are common duelling weapons according to Saviolo.<sup>59</sup> The fight is intricately connected with the duel of honour.

Whereas Henry accepted a challenge but was not willing to duel, Arbaces continuously challenges people and offers to duel them. The arrogant Arbaces is convinced that, though an actual battle preceded the fight, he did everything: “How I have laid his kingdom desolate / With this sole arm, propped by divinity.”<sup>60</sup> Arbaces values duels and single combats over his status as a king, and the greatest compliment for him is the one that Mardonius gives him: “you are fit to fight for all the world.”<sup>61</sup>

Both Henry and Arbaces look for honour, and do not differentiate between public and private cases of honour, though Arbaces only does so by duelling. Arbaces’ attitude to his

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<sup>51</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.28.

<sup>52</sup> Low 12.

<sup>53</sup> Waggoner 309.

<sup>54</sup> William Segar, *The Booke of Honor and Armes* (1590), *Early English Books Online* Sig. B1.

<sup>55</sup> Bacon Sig. C4r.

<sup>56</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.20.

<sup>57</sup> Saviolo Sig. Bb4v.

<sup>58</sup> Beaumont, *King* 2.1.126.

<sup>59</sup> Saviolo Sig. F3v.

<sup>60</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.127-8.

<sup>61</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.379.

duels makes it difficult to distinguish between private and public affairs. He tries to make it a public issue when he tells his people that he “fought” and “won” for them.<sup>62</sup> Yet his speech is only about him: “I made his valour stoop and brought that name, / Soared to so unbelievèd a height, to fall / Beneath mine.”<sup>63</sup> Arbaces, and the other kings, are part of the duel and the domain of honour at the level of the monarch.

Where Henry fortifies his position as a king, Arbaces undermines his own position. When Arbaces cannot persuade people, he immediately flaunts his superior duelling skills: “But that ’twere base in me / To fight with one I know I can o’ercome, / Again thou shouldst be conquerèd by me.”<sup>64</sup> Bacurius, one of his men, even challenges him: “I dare speak” that “you never knew me so [...] And durst a worse man tell me, though my better.”<sup>65</sup> In other words, he would “challenge any man who calls [him] false because, though of a higher social status, that man would be [his] inferior in nobility of mind.”<sup>66</sup> This shows that Bacurius, like Williams in *Henry the Fifth*, does not attribute any special significance to the position of the monarch. Instead of acting swiftly to stop this, like Henry did, Arbaces acknowledges Bacurius’ argument: “We all are soldiers and all venture lives, / And where there is no difference in men’s worths / Titles are jests.”<sup>67</sup> Arbaces acts opposite to Henry, and undermines his own position.

Ironically, Arbaces is more right than he knows, as it is later revealed in the plot that Arbaces is not actually of royal blood. Instead of analysing a duelling king, this has actually been an analysis of a gentleman with the authority of a king. Apart from the other king, whom Arbaces defeated earlier in the play, Arbaces is the only king who associates himself with the duel and with honour to this level. This does not entail that the collapse of the division

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<sup>62</sup> Beaumont, *King* 2.2.119-20.

<sup>63</sup> Beaumont, *King* 2.2.121-3.

<sup>64</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.1.259-61.

<sup>65</sup> Beaumont, *King* 4.2.129-30.

<sup>66</sup> Beaumont, *King* 132n.

<sup>67</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.331-3.

between monarch and duellist is not relevant, however, as Williams' and Bacurius' argument only becomes more important: the question rises why a king of royal blood is different from a king like Arbaces.

The division between a monarch and a duellist is clearly referenced in the play, and seen as irrelevant when characters find out that Arbaces is not a king. When Bessus, the coward who tries to retain his honour by scheming, seeks the help of the supposed swordsmen after having been beaten by the king, he asks whether this has made him lose his honour. The first swordsman tells him that all the injuries caused by the king are "but favours."<sup>68</sup> The second swordsman adds: "The King may do much [...] for had he cracked your skull through like a bottle or broke a rib or two with tossing of you, yet you had lost no honour."<sup>69</sup> This is before they know that the king is not actually of royal blood. When Bessus finds out, he immediately wonders about his new situation: "Here will arise another question now amongst the swordmen, whether I be to call him to account for beating me now he's proved no king."<sup>70</sup> This plot turn affects the position of every king of royal blood as well, as it raises the question what the difference is. The king, after all, was unaware that he was actually a gentleman, and no one else knew or noticed, except for the Queen and Arbaces' father. The basis for an essential difference between monarch and duellist is questioned in this play.

### **The Need for a King**

Williams, in *Henry the Fifth*, and Bacurius, in *A King and No King*, both challenge the superiority of a king. They do this by denying the status of a king as essentially separate, and thus by lowering the position of a king to their own status. Bussy, in *Bussy D'Ambois*, does the opposite to the same effect. He calls himself a king, and so raises his own status.

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<sup>68</sup> Beaumont, *King* 4.3.31.

<sup>69</sup> Beaumont, *King* 4.3.33-6.

<sup>70</sup> Beaumont, *King* 5.4.300-2.

Henri, the king of France, at first condemns the duel between Bussy and multiple opponents and calls it a “desperate quarrel.”<sup>71</sup> Bussy looks to his friend, Monsieur, who is the king’s brother who is “Princely-vow’d,” to “Princely [...] obtain [his] pardon.”<sup>72</sup> Monsieur defends the duel, and the concept of “fame” which “is above life.”<sup>73</sup> Henri criticizes this behaviour, and says that then “mere butchers” could call themselves “Law-menders and suppliers.”<sup>74</sup> He offers to pardon Bussy on the condition that he will not again be “so violent.”<sup>75</sup> Bussy, however, defies the king, because he does not admit his guilt:

When I am wrong’d and that law fails to right me,  
 Let me be King myself (as man was made)  
 And do a justice that exceeds the law:  
 If my wrong pass the power of single valour  
 To right and expiate; then be you my King.<sup>76</sup>

He not only restricts the king’s authority to the law, but also calls himself a king: “Who to himself is law, no law doth need, / Offends no King, and is a King indeed.”<sup>77</sup> This is in sharp contrast to Monsieur’s earlier claim of the King’s superiority, as Monsieur concludes that “in a King / All places are contain’d.”<sup>78</sup> Henri gives an “equivocal reply” to Bussy’s speech and “keeps Bussy’s freedom within the royal prerogative”:<sup>79</sup> “Enjoy what thou entreat’st, we give but ours.”<sup>80</sup> Yet the King does pardon Bussy; the Duke of Guise cannot understand that the king “pardon’d such a murder.”<sup>81</sup> Even though Bussy undermines the king’s authority, the king does not punish Bussy.

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<sup>71</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.2.

<sup>72</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.138-9.

<sup>73</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.174-5.

<sup>74</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.163.

<sup>75</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.185.

<sup>76</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.197-201.

<sup>77</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.203-4.

<sup>78</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 1.1.35-6.

<sup>79</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 38n.

<sup>80</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.205.

<sup>81</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.207.

It quickly becomes apparent that Henri has taken a great liking to Bussy. They both reduce the gap between them: Bussy does this by likening himself to a king, and the king by applauding Bussy's bravery. Henri even agrees with Bussy's earlier reasoning about the authority of kings: "Kings had never borne / Such boundless eminence over other men, / Had all maintain'd the spirit and state of D'Ambois."<sup>82</sup> This king accepts the notion that "gentlemanly homogeneity" entails a "limited monarchy."<sup>83</sup> The play seems to echo the contemporary debate and choose sides by undermining the monarch's position.

Instead of focusing on "gentlemanly homogeneity"<sup>84</sup> as creating the "dangers of a strong nobility,"<sup>85</sup> this play shows the dangers of a strong monarchy. The "rivalry" amongst "gentlemen" is here compared with rivalry amongst the monarch and his family.<sup>86</sup> Henri's brother, Monsieur, wants to take over the throne. He shows that the idea of "violence" and "honour" as the "sole domain of the monarch" expressed in the anti-duelling pamphlets is a threat.<sup>87</sup> Monsieur abuses Tamyra's honour and threatens her with his authority: "I may have power t' advance and pull down any."<sup>88</sup> She, however, rejects his influence: "Mine honour's in mine own hands, spite of Kings."<sup>89</sup> Husbands would defend their wife by challenging the offender to a duel,<sup>90</sup> which Tamyra specifically refers to.<sup>91</sup> However, Tamyra's husband, Montsurry, admits that he is unable to act because Monsieur is a prince: Monsieur's royal blood exempts him from any possible repercussions.<sup>92</sup> The dangers of a strong monarchy, and the rivalry within a monarch's family, counteract the claims of the dangers and rivalry of the nobility, and so give weight to the idea of a limited monarchy.

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<sup>82</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 3.2.95-7.

<sup>83</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 304.

<sup>84</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 75.

<sup>85</sup> Steenbergh 17.

<sup>86</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 75.

<sup>87</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 7.

<sup>88</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.2.54.

<sup>89</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.2.59.

<sup>90</sup> John W. Draper, "Honest Iago," *PMLA* 46.3 (1931): 733.

<sup>91</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.2.115.

<sup>92</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.2.119-22.

Yet the consequences of Bussy's actions show that the situation is more complex. Bussy's relation to the king has completely changed, as Bussy now even asks Henri for permission to duel: "let me fly, my Lord."<sup>93</sup> This contrasts with the king's earlier request that Bussy never be "so violent" again.<sup>94</sup> Henri even gives Bussy permission, though he has to duel elsewhere: "Not in my face; my Eagle, violence flies / The Sanctuaries of a Prince's eyes."<sup>95</sup> Though Henri attempts to distance himself from the duel, he implicates himself by applauding Bussy's behaviour and by giving him permission. Bussy's inversion of the role of kings is also strengthened by Tamyra, who decides that "Man is a name of honour for a King."<sup>96</sup> However, this situation creates a problem. Henri's brother, Monsieur, "envies" Bussy's closeness to the king.<sup>97</sup> The Duke of Guise, one of Bussy's detractors, berates his "murderous valour" and the Henri's support of him.<sup>98</sup> In the end, their conflict leads to a brutal assassination of Bussy. The absence of gentlemanly homogeneity can be seen as showing a need for a monarchy, which undermines Bussy's earlier claims.

In this sense, *Bussy D'Ambois* echoes the need for a resolute monarch expressed in *Romeo and Juliet*. It also adds to the debate of the division between the monarch and the gentleman: not by focusing on the king, like *Henry the Fifth* and *A King and No King* did, but by focusing on the gentleman. Instead of being about a possible lowering of the position of the king, the play is about the possibility of raising the status of a gentleman. Though this elevation is unsuccessful in *Bussy D'Ambois*, it does bring the two sides closer together: a danger exists in a strong monarchy as well as in a weak monarchy, and the monarch is not exempt from rivalry within his own family. Moreover, these dangers are linked to how strong

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<sup>93</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 3.2.80.

<sup>94</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 2.1.185.

<sup>95</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 3.2.81-2.

<sup>96</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 4.1.48.

<sup>97</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 3.2.100.

<sup>98</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 3.2.64-5.

the rivalry amongst the gentlemen are. Both monarch and gentlemen thus depend on each other to create a balance.

### **Unison: The Kingly Duellist Revisited**

*The Island Princess*, like *A King and No King* a play from Beaumont and Fletcher, continues to question the division between king and gentleman. In this play every governor and prince wants to be a duellist, although they have the smallest regard for the duello code. The foreign princes are even the most quarrelsome: they only dare to boast but are too afraid to act.<sup>99</sup> The idea of gentlemanly homogeneity runs throughout the play: even the villain in the play references it. When his prisoner, the king and father of the island princess, is freed, he regrets that he was unable to fight his rescuers in a private quarrel: “had I but met ‘em, / And chang’d a dozen blowes, I had forgiv’n ‘em.”<sup>100</sup> It is up to the gentlemen to maintain the gentlemanly homogeneity: as seen in chapter two, the gentlemen succeed in reconciling their own differences with the duel. Some of these gentlemen also save the king, who compliments them for their “true courtesy,” and “mighty hand.”<sup>101</sup> He also says that he is “bound to ‘em.”<sup>102</sup> The gentlemen reinstate the monarchy: the gentlemen do not need the king, but the king certainly needs them.

*The Island Princess* is a continuation of *A King and No King* in its focus on what makes the monarch different. The division is clearly referenced, and overthrown in the seduction process of the princess. In the beginning, Ruy pines for her and wishes that he “were of worth, of something near [her], / Of such a royal peece, a King I wou’d be, / A mighty King that might command affection.”<sup>103</sup> He is unable to seduce her, however, much like the princes in the play. Instead, she desires a gentleman, Armusia, after witnessing his

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<sup>99</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 1.3.104.

<sup>100</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 2.5.20-1.

<sup>101</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 5.2.4-5.

<sup>102</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.1.38.

<sup>103</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 1.2.42-4.

behaviour. Armusia, the protagonist of the play and the most valiant gentleman, marries her and becomes the king's heir as she has no brothers. In effect, a gentleman is now the future king. Where *A King and No King* deals with the possibility of a monarch who is actually a gentleman and is not supposed to be the monarch, *The Island Princess* actually purposefully instates a gentleman as a monarch. The essential boundaries between the monarch and a gentleman are thus collapsed in this play as the future monarch is a gentleman.

### **Honour**

Besides continuing the debate of the division between gentleman and monarch, *The Island Princess* also deals with another highly political issue: the idea of honour. Two strategies of the attackers on honour are countered. The idea, as Bacon expressed it, that the “fountaine of honour is the King, and his aspect, and the accesse to his person continueth honour in life,”<sup>104</sup> is changed in *The Island Princess*: Armusia's steadfastness persuades the princess to become a Christian, and she subsequently lauds him for being the “temple of true honour.”<sup>105</sup> The domain of honour is here not a monarch, but a gentleman.

Bacon later focuses on the type of honour: he attacks the notion of horizontal and reflexive honour, and “emphasise[s] that true honour” is “vertical in character” to remove the need for the duel.<sup>106</sup> His strategy is given royal consent in *The Peace-Maker*.<sup>107</sup> *The Island Princess* (1620-1), which is written after *The Peace-Maker* (1619), can be seen as a reaction to this strategy. As seen in chapter two, the gentlemen emphasise their reliance on vertical honour in the duel in *The Island Princess*, yet are still able to use it to restore gentlemanly homogeneity. The use vertical honour, even without a reference to a monarch, already undermines Bacon's strategy. This makes it a highly political play as it counteracts the

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<sup>104</sup> Bacon 17.

<sup>105</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 5.2.116.

<sup>106</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 115.

<sup>107</sup> Peltonen, *Anti-Duelling* 28.

arguments against duelling just before or around the time when attempts are made to “revive James’ suggestion for anti-duelling legislation.”<sup>108</sup>

## Conclusion

The advice of some “theorists of duelling” on how to act to “dodge legal sanctions and royal displeasure,”<sup>109</sup> is mocked in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Alchemist*. The duel is presented as a personal and functional threat to an authority figure in some plays. In *The Jew of Malta*, the duel even signifies an inversion of authority. The solution offered in *Romeo and Juliet* is a more resolute punishment. *Much Ado about Nothing* has a different approach, as it distinguishes between public and private issues: for the latter, even authorities can use the duel.

However, in the case of the monarch, such a distinction is impossible, as shown in *Henry the Fifth*. Both *Henry the Fifth* and *A King and No King* explore the position of the monarch, as the basis of the essential difference between monarch and gentleman is challenged. While Henry remains in control, Arbaces is not as successful: even though he is not actually of royal blood, the basis for an essential difference is questioned. *Bussy D’Ambois* has a different approach: it does not focus on any supposed essential difference, but rather focuses on the function of the monarchy. It draws similarities between the gentlemen and the king and his family, as both are threatened by internal strife and by becoming too powerful. The play suggests that, without homogeneity, the gentlemen need the monarchy.

Both the issue of an essential difference and the functional difference reach a climax in *The Island Princess*. Even though the king is absent, there is homogeneity. Rather than that the gentlemen need the king, they have to save him. In the end, a gentleman becomes an heir to the monarchy. This is a continuation of *A King and No King* in the theme of a gentleman as

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<sup>108</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 91.

<sup>109</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 75.

king, who is now a legitimate king. The essential boundaries between gentleman and king are collapsed, nor is there any need for a monarchy apparent in the gentlemen's behaviour.

Moreover, *The Island Princess* is implicitly against the role of monarchy in its approach to honour. It responds to two strategies from the anti-duelling theory. The first argues that the domain of honour belongs to the king. This is countered as Armusia is given this role by the princess. Bacon's later strategy of attacking the notion of horizontal and reflexive honour to emphasise that "true honour" is "vertical in character,"<sup>110</sup> does not, in contrast to Bacon's argument, remove the need for the duel in this play. The duel still functions as a means to maintain homogeneity. As Bacon's strategy is given royal consent in *The Peace-Maker*,<sup>111</sup> this play is highly political: the "royal opinion about honour had changed from a horizontal to a vertical one."<sup>112</sup>

Maxwell's claim, which is that all of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays written after 1615 make pleas against the duel, has to be further refined as *The Island Princess* is an overt exception.<sup>113</sup> Even recent research like Peltonen's work relies on outdated claims where drama is concerned, in this case even a claim made in 1939. The engagement of these plays with the politics of the time, emphasise how early modern drama is an important source for analysing the contemporary debate, which does not seem to be given the attention it deserves.

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<sup>110</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 115.

<sup>111</sup> Peltonen, *Anti-Duelling* 28.

<sup>112</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 144.

<sup>113</sup> Maxwell 106.

## 5. Gods

As described in the introduction, the duel was widely considered as being at odds with Christianity and with the monarch as a “minister of God.”<sup>1</sup> Detractors of the duel associated the duel with evil, hell, and the devil. Proponents of the duel usually agreed that the duel was “incompatible,”<sup>2</sup> but claimed that Christianity was irrelevant: they saw the duel of honour, as “completely secularized.”<sup>3</sup> Saviolo, as one of the few, dissented and attempted to return the religious component from the judicial duel to the duel of honour: he saw every duellist as a “minister to execute Gods deivne pleasure”<sup>4</sup> and argued that the purpose of the duel was still the “sifting out of truth,” like in the judicial duel.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter, I will argue that most plays present the same argument as the detractors, but that the one exception to this constructs the duel in a new manner, which is unprecedented in the discussion about the duel.

### Minister of God: Blessed Monarchs

Both Henry, in *Henry the Fifth*, and Arbaces, in *A King and No King*, portray themselves as ministers of god. Henry calls his war a means of God: men “have no wings to fly from God. War is his beadle, war is his vengeance, so that here men are punished for before-breach of the king’s laws in now the king’s quarrel.”<sup>6</sup> This contrasts with his later quest for honour: “But if it be a sin to covet honour, I am the most offending soul alive.”<sup>7</sup> Arbaces boasts that he has “laid his kingdom desolate / With this sole arm, propped by divinity.”<sup>8</sup> Arm here both refers to his arm holding his sword, and himself as “the victor” in

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<sup>1</sup> Gifford Sig. D3v.

<sup>2</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 78.

<sup>3</sup> Kiernan 1.

<sup>4</sup> Saviolo Sig. Z1v.

<sup>5</sup> Holmer 179.

<sup>6</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.1.139-42.

<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.3.30-1.

<sup>8</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.127-8.

“combat” as “an arm” of “God.”<sup>9</sup> Arbaces even claims godlike qualities for himself: “After an act / Fit for a god to do upon his foe.”<sup>10</sup> When Arbaces later struggles to refrain from sinning, however, he is more humble: “for I am a man / And dare not quarrel with divinity.”<sup>11</sup> His delusions of grandeur are later utterly defeated. He no longer claims that his arm is “propped by divinity,”<sup>12</sup> but rather that his arm is now “tie[d]” by the “very reverence of” the word “father.”<sup>13</sup> He even worships his father: he tells him that he “will kneel / And hear with [...] obedience.”<sup>14</sup> His earlier boasts and references to divinity become ironic in retrospect. Both Arbaces and Henry see themselves as ministers of god, but in both cases this conflicts with their behaviour: Arbaces only refers to divinity to boast about himself, and Henry refers to Christianity to conceal his own quest for honour. The references to Christianity undermine the characters in both plays.

### Devilish Duels

Plays often echo the arguments from the detractors of the duel by characterising the duel as devilish behaviour. Before Romeo kills Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*, he explicitly changes his behaviour in accordance with heaven to be in accordance with hell: “Away to heaven, respective lenity, / And fire and fury be my conduct now!”<sup>15</sup> Tybalt does not need to do so: when Benvolio asks him to “keep the peace,” he replies that he “hate[s] the word” like “hell” and “all Montagues” and attacks Benvolio.<sup>16</sup> He even confesses that he does not consider killing a Montague a sin.<sup>17</sup> Romeo and Tybalt are in this respect each other’s opposites, as Romeo sees his killing of Tybalt as a sin: he also urges Paris not to put “another

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<sup>9</sup> Low 14.

<sup>10</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.139-40.

<sup>11</sup> Beaumont, *King* 3.1.133-4.

<sup>12</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.128.

<sup>13</sup> Beaumont, *King* 5.4.122-5.

<sup>14</sup> Beaumont, *King* 5.4.185-6.

<sup>15</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 3.1.109-10.

<sup>16</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.1.53-7.

<sup>17</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 1.4.176.

sin upon [his] head, / By urging [him] to fury.”<sup>18</sup> Romeo even kills Paris in a tomb, where they leave their “gory swords [...] discoloured by” a “place of peace.”<sup>19</sup> Here, the quarrel explicitly violates a sacred place. The quarrels and quarrelsome behaviour in this play are associated with hell.

*The Jew of Malta* portrays the duel more specifically as belonging to the devil. When Barabas is threatened by a Christian community, the duel is a means for him to revenge himself. His servant describes their scheme as follows: “the devil invented a challenge, my master writ it, and I carried it.”<sup>20</sup> The devil and the ritual of the duel are here specifically linked. This is counteracted by Ferneze, the governor, who “offer[s] [...] prayers” to the “heavens” to find out who manipulated the two gentlemen.<sup>21</sup> The duel is here linked to the devil and is used against Christians.

*Twelfth Night* makes the connections between the duel and the devil even stronger. When Sir Toby wants to manipulate two characters, Sir Andrew and Viola, into a quarrel, he wants to scare them both as much as possible. He does this by describing Sir Andrew as a “devil in a private brawl” who has “divorced” multiple “Souls” from “bodies.”<sup>22</sup> He describes Viola as a “very devil.”<sup>23</sup> Sir Toby and Sir Andrew later call Sebastian, a gentleman who gives them a beating, “the very devil incarnate.”<sup>24</sup> The duel is thus equated with the devil, or with his behaviour. These plays echo the arguments from the detractors who describe the duel as “euill”<sup>25</sup> and “diuellish.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 5.3.62-3.

<sup>19</sup> Shakespeare, *Romeo* 5.3.151-2.

<sup>20</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 3.3.20-1.

<sup>21</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 3.2.31-5.

<sup>22</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth* 3.4.180.

<sup>23</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth* 3.4.205.

<sup>24</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth* 5.1.171-2.

<sup>25</sup> Bacon Sig. A3r.

<sup>26</sup> Silver Sig. A5r.

## Devilish Honour

The characterization of the duel is more complex in *Bussy D'Ambois*. Bussy's opponents, such as the Monsieur, portray him as a "devil" for his quarrelsome behaviour and his duelling.<sup>27</sup> However, Bussy refutes their insults and berates one for "jest[ing] / With God" and for "tender[ing]" his "soul to the devil."<sup>28</sup> When Bussy threatens to quarrel with someone, he does not only refer to an "opening" of "hell" about that person, but also refers to "All daring heaven."<sup>29</sup> Bussy uses both imagery of heaven and hell in his role as a duellist.

Not only the "theory of duelling" clashes with "religious doctrines," however, but especially the "point of honour."<sup>30</sup> Bacon describes this honour as the "satanicall illusion and apparition of honour."<sup>31</sup> Despite the religious significance that friar Comolet<sup>32</sup> and the king<sup>33</sup> attribute to him, Bussy undermines his earlier claims of being related to heaven when he values honour over religion. Both Bussy and his opponent, the Count of Montsurry, have the same attitude to honour. Montsurry argues that he is unable to "reconcile" with his "love," because of his "honour": his wish by "heaven" that he could shows that his honour has more influence than his religion.<sup>34</sup> When Bussy dies, he only wishes that his "fame" will "Live" on.<sup>35</sup> Despite the religious significance attributed to him, he is only obsessed with his honour and reputation. Though Bussy's opponents characterise the duel as devilish, Bussy refuses this. Yet when Bussy, like his antagonist, sees honour as superseding religion, his earlier claims are undermined and both the duel and honour are portrayed as devilish.

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<sup>27</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 3.2.199.

<sup>28</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 3.2.397-9.

<sup>29</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 4.1.83-4.

<sup>30</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 78.

<sup>31</sup> Bacon Sig. B2v.

<sup>32</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 5.3.268.

<sup>33</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 3.2.91.

<sup>34</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 5.3.248-9.

<sup>35</sup> Chapman, *Bussy* 5.3.145-6.

### The Divine Duel and Honour

Beaumont and Fletcher's play, *The Island Princess*, inverts the characterisation of the duel as unchristian and devilish made in all the earlier plays. The duel and bravery are now essential to Christianity. When a character does not dare to duel, he is described as lacking "faith."<sup>36</sup> Similarly, another character is berated for boasting more than his "faith can justify."<sup>37</sup> When Ruy wants to murder Armusia instead of duelling with him, he is scolded for following a "devil."<sup>38</sup> This contrasts with Romeo's behaviour when he confronts Tybalt. When Ruy changes his mind and decides to duel, this is seen as a "conversion."<sup>39</sup> His challenge to a duel is even described as a "portion of Scripture,"<sup>40</sup> which contrasts with the "challenge" in *The Jew of Malta* "invented" by "the devil."<sup>41</sup> Also, his loss at the duel is not described as a "sin that's mortal," but still seems to be a sin nonetheless.<sup>42</sup> The ideal is to "love your honour / And love your friend" and to "take heed of bloody purposes, / And unjust ends" because "good heaven is angry with 'm."<sup>43</sup> This echoes Saviolo's argument that "unnecessary quarrels" are "offense[s] towards God."<sup>44</sup> It is not the duel which is berated, but rather the murder which Ruy previously considered.

Honour is, like the duel, also characterised as devilish, "invented by the devil,"<sup>45</sup> or as unchristian, such as in the case of *A King and No King*. In this play, Christianity and honour as reputation are separated. This is not only seen in Arbaces, whose references to Christianity undermine his boasts as discussed earlier, but also in the dialogue between the other characters. When Mardonius asks Bessus "who fames thee," Bessus answers: "The Christian

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<sup>36</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 1.3.104.

<sup>37</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.24.

<sup>38</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 3.1.73-6.

<sup>39</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.57.

<sup>40</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.37.

<sup>41</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 3.3.20-1.

<sup>42</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.61.

<sup>43</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.3.75-7.

<sup>44</sup> Saviolo Sig. P2r.

<sup>45</sup> Davis 149.

World.”<sup>46</sup> Mardonius responds that it is “heathenishly done of them.”<sup>47</sup> He thus depicts fame as heathen or unchristian.

*The Island Princess* inverts the characterisation of honour as devilish or unchristian. Christianity is not about aspiring to “heaven” by “sleep[ing]” in this play, but rather about “win[ning] it” by your “worth.”<sup>48</sup> The vertical notion of honour is here an essential part of Christianity. Gentlemanly and honourable behaviour is seen as a requirement for Christians. The Christians have to rely on this behaviour when they are threatened by those of another religion. Armusia’s steadfastness even persuades the princess to become a Christian, and she subsequently lauds him for being the “temple of true honour.”<sup>49</sup> When the governor, the villain of the play, disguises himself as a priest to discredit them, he is berated for disguising himself in a “holy shape to ruin honour.”<sup>50</sup> Even the king admits that he is “halfe persuaded” to “be a Christian,”<sup>51</sup> but he concludes the play by reinforcing his own religion as seen in the plural of gods: “the gods give peace at last.”<sup>52</sup> This play has a monarch who cannot be a Christian minister of god. Remarkably, the first play discussed here which portrays a threat to Christianity, is the one which conflates Christian and gentlemanly notions of honour and conduct. Being a gentleman is here the same as being a Christian. The duel of honour is not only firmly rooted in Christianity, but even defines it here: *The Island Princess* fundamentally conflates the duel of honour and Christianity.

## Conclusion

In *Henry the Fifth* and *A King and No King*, the monarchs who refer to their roles as ministers of god undermine themselves as they clearly have their own agendas. Yet the

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<sup>46</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.41-2.

<sup>47</sup> Beaumont, *King* 1.1.43.

<sup>48</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.5.19-20.

<sup>49</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 5.2.116.

<sup>50</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 5.5.61.

<sup>51</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 5.5.66

<sup>52</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 5.5.93.

absence of a monarch as “ministers of God,”<sup>53</sup> does not entail that duellists become, as Saviolo argues, “minister[s] to execute Gods deuine pleasure.”<sup>54</sup> The duel is consistently associated with hell, such as in *Romeo and Juliet*, and with the devil, such as in *The Jew of Malta* and *Twelfth Night*. The plays echo the descriptions from the anti-duelling theory in terms of the duel. Honour is also, like in the anti-duelling theory, represented as contradictory to religion and associated with hell in *Bussy D’Ambois*. Even when honour is not associated with hell or the devil, it is still unchristian, like in *A King and No King*. Though the plays do not conform with the anti-duelling theory in representing a monarch as a minister of god, they do repeat the associations of duel and honour with the devil and hell.

An exception to this is *The Island Princess*. In this play, the monarch cannot be a Christian minister of god, because he adheres to another religion. Also, the play is about a conflict between Christianity and this religion, and Christianity itself is under duress. The notion of honour is now central to Christianity, and the duel is a Christian means to maintain homogeneity. The notion of honour and the duel even define Christianity here. *The Island Princess* inverts the division made in the earlier plays: where the challenge to a duel is “invented” by “the devil” in *The Jew of Malta*,<sup>55</sup> it is now described as a “portion of Scripture.”<sup>56</sup> *The Island Princess* signifies a return of the religious component, also apparent in the judicial duel, to the duel of honour. This strategy breaks with the majority of the proponents of the duel, who simply called Christianity irrelevant. *The Island Princess* echoes Saviolo’s idea that “unnecessary quarrels” are “offense[s] towards God.”<sup>57</sup> However, it differs from Saviolo in that no duellist is a “minister to execute Gods deuine pleasure”<sup>58</sup> in the play nor is the purpose of the duel here the “sifting out of truth,” which Saviolo wants to keep

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<sup>53</sup> Gifford Sig. D3v.

<sup>54</sup> Saviolo Sig. Z1v.

<sup>55</sup> Marlowe, *Jew* 3.3.20-1.

<sup>56</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.2.37.

<sup>57</sup> Saviolo Sig. P2r.

<sup>58</sup> Saviolo Sig. Z1v.

from the judicial duel.<sup>59</sup> Instead, *The Island Princess* stages a new conflation of the duel and Christianity: central to this is the vertical notion of honour, as being a Christian is about winning “heaven” by your “worth.”<sup>60</sup> Though early modern drama has mainly copied the arguments against duelling in the issue of religion, it here offers a new, and unprecedented, construction of the duel.

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<sup>59</sup> Holmer 179.

<sup>60</sup> Beaumont, *Princess* 4.5.19-20.

## 6. Conclusion

The duel as a class institution is under duress in all of the plays I analysed, except for *The Island Princess*. Instead of reinforcing gentlemanly homogeneity, the duel undermines it because it is no different from a brawl. Instead of limiting violence, the duel escalates and leads to more violence. This is because the gentlemen do not adhere to the duello code, and because of other issues: both the role of family and the role of women as a reward for duelling problematize the function of the duel as a class institution. The roles of family and women show how the theory of civility cannot be the sole basis for the duel.

There is no duel in any of the plays I analysed which can completely rely on the theory of civility as its basis. The theory of civility and chivalry both partly influence the depictions of the duels in early modern drama. The emphasis on the one or the other differs per play. There seems to be an ongoing dialogue between the plays which suggests that the debate over the nature of the duel is not settled, in contrast to what Peltonen claims.<sup>1</sup> *The Island Princess* mostly relies on chivalric elements such as magnanimity and knight-errantry and rejects the civility theory with its horizontal concept of honour: in contrast to what Barber claims early modern drama does not uncritically accept the code of honour, but explores, criticizes, and transforms it.<sup>2</sup> The use of a different concept of honour in *The Island Princess* can be seen as continuing the exploration of honour in *A King and No King*, in which the horizontal concept of honour is ridiculed.

According to Peltonen's definition, the duel in *The Island Princess* is not a duel as it is not based on the theory of civility. Yet the duel in this play actually functions as a class institution and successfully reinforces gentlemanly homogeneity, in contrast to all the other plays. In terms of its function, the duel in *The Island Princess* seems more like a duel than all

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<sup>1</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 12.

<sup>2</sup> Barber 25.

the other portrayals. The argument of some scholars that the duel and the chivalric revival are “inevitably associated” gives the duel a different basis here in which it still works.<sup>3</sup>

When Peltonen claims that there is no “evidence that duelling” is “developed from chivalric sources” and that the “contemporaries were convinced that duelling” is “a recent import from the Continent,”<sup>4</sup> he clearly did not consider early modern drama as evidence. This drama does undermine the duel of honour as part of Peltonen’s “coherent social and ideological phenomenon.”<sup>5</sup> *The Island Princess* is even a highly political play which can be seen as a reaction to Bacon’s attack on the horizontal notion of honour,<sup>6</sup> which is later given royal consent:<sup>7</sup> though it relies on vertical honour, like Bacon proposes, there is still a need for the duel in this play. The duel in this play is even part of a larger ideological conflict about the role of the king.

The danger is to refer to drama only to prove arguments, rather than to problematize them. Even recent research like Peltonen’s work relies on outdated claims where drama is concerned: one such claim is from 1939 which I refute in chapter 4.<sup>8</sup> The engagement of these plays with the politics of the time emphasise how early modern drama is an important source for analysing the contemporary debate, which does not seem to be given the attention it deserves. Even when early modern drama has mainly copied the arguments against duelling from the debate about the duel and religion, it can still offer a new, and unprecedented, construction of the duel as seen in *The Island Princess*.

As I only used a small selection of early modern drama, there is an enormous amount of material available to further complement and problematize my claims. I focused on tracing the duel in the drama by placing it in its historical context. Yet early modern drama is itself a

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<sup>3</sup> Ferguson 96.

<sup>4</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 12.

<sup>5</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 2.

<sup>6</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 115.

<sup>7</sup> Peltonen, *Duel* 144.

<sup>8</sup> Maxwell 106.

vital part of this context. A more elaborate study is needed in which a more reciprocal approach is used. If *The Island Princess* truly offers a new construction of the duel and Christianity, then its reverberations in other sources should be researched. The work *Duell-Ease* of some years later, in which God is the “superior duellist” seems like a place to start, or perhaps *The Christian Knight*, which is a comprehensive condemnation of the duel. The reception of the highly political play *The Island Princess* can also be analysed to better position it in the contemporary debate.

The few early modern plays which I analysed have proven to be valuable sources to trace the duel of honour. The plays undermine Peltonen’s claims that the duel of honour is only based on the civility theory and that it has no relation to chivalry.<sup>9</sup> *The Island Princess* shows the political extent to which this difference in depiction can be part of larger ideological conflicts. The duel of honour in early modern drama is continuously reconstructed in a negotiation between the theory of civility and chivalry.

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<sup>9</sup> Peltonen, *Duel 2*.

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