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Markku Peltonen. *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility, Politeness and Honour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. ix + 355 pp. \$60.00. Review by BRETT F. PARKER, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA UPSTATE.

Markku Peltonen has written a revealing and thoughtful analysis of both the intellectual origins and ideological functions of dueling, arguing that the practice entered English life as an appropriation of the Italian Renaissance notion of civility and increasingly served to legitimate native political and social values. By tracing the arguments underlying the duel, Peltonen demonstrates the considerable flexibility of the ideology of civility and its attendant notion of honor, which allowed advocates of the duel to defend the practice in the face of changing circumstances and increasing criticism. Because civility was at root about proper behavior and politeness in a world of courtiers and gentlemen, it inherently was wedded to the notion of honor. Consequently, the duel was promoted as a necessary response to impolite behavior, a way to restore the civility and ensure sociability. Conventional enough, but by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, supporters (most famously John Oldmixon) insisted that dueling also promoted British freedom. By making the duel a “home-bred attire,” it was represented as a fundamental part of an indigenous culture that celebrated courage and valor (189). Such malleability helped make the duel a venerable tradition in early modern England.

Peltonen’s argument for the sustainability of dueling through the eighteenth century rests on his initial depiction of civility as a primary focus of humanist treatises in the sixteenth century. The concern in these works was essentially how to best exude good manners or politeness, which helped “win and confer” honor and reputation (35). According to Peltonen, honor was important to genteel society in England because it cut two ways, vertically and horizontally. Honor, as one’s reputation or opinion in the world, necessitated revenge for insults and thus the duel served to maintain virtue among gentlemen. The problem, however, was that such logic could and often did run counter to royal authority and Christian teachings. One of Peltonen’s most significant chapters treats the anti-duelling campaign in Jacobean England.

Here he notes that dueling became so pervasive as to raise fear that it undermined James's authority and was particularly disparaged by common lawyers and antiquaries who found it a foreign fashion unbecoming of English society. But Peltonen is right to suggest that dueling fit well with the cult of martial virtue in early modern England and thus was partly a "reaction" to Italian influence (93). Just as important, by 1618 the royal solution to dueling had changed from the creation of a court of honor to dismissal of the prevailing theory of civility and reputation.

The legitimization of dueling was largely completed, Peltonen argues, by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as the language of "courtesy" was replaced by "civility" and "politeness." These terms continued to stress reputation and sociability but increasingly meant pleasantness. As a result, dueling came to be seen as both "a cause and a consequence" of a particular "British" character, one that not only marked their gentility but also their freedom (199).

Peltonen concludes his study with an examination of Bernard Mandeville's praise of dueling, insisting that Mandeville returned to the sixteenth century, court-dominated notion of civility and "sided with those who argued that politeness and civility only concerned our appearances" (268). Importantly, this allowed Mandeville to fit dueling into his larger social theory. Commercial society, it appears, needed the external and theatrical performances associated with civility and honor. This artificiality, as well as the connection between politeness and sociability, permitted Mandeville to declare that the courtly and commercial worlds were not mutually exclusive. Rather, they were driven by the same motives—pride and pleasure—and the duel guaranteed and enhanced the civility necessary for both.

The strength of *The Duel in Early Modern England* is its contextualization of the arguments over dueling within the ideology of civility. Peltonen's work raises doubt about the conventional understanding that politeness supplanted virtue as more befitting a commercial people. One wonders, nevertheless, how writers, especially in the eighteenth century, squared notions of civility and politeness underlying the duel with ancient constitutionalism. Knowing this, Peltonen would surely have been able to say something more definitive about British freedom and martial spirit.