

“Duels in the European Novel: Honor, Reputation, and the Limits of a Bourgeois Form”

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Abstract. The emergence of market society in Europe prompted a major change in the social measurement of individual worth. The formal system of aristocratic honor culture was gradually supplanted by a bourgeois concept of reputation rooted in the public perception of individual merits. During this period, dueling was a practice of dispute resolution commonly used in honor groups, and also diffused to bourgeois groups in domains such as politics and journalism. This article explores this cultural transformation by examining duels in 20 European novels and comparing these duels with theoretical and historical work on duels as a social practice. The novels present a significantly distorted representation of dueling. This distortion demonstrates the limited ability of the novel, a bourgeois form, to describe group-oriented values such as honor. This is, in turn, sociologically significant: the novels point to major differences in the social psychologies underpinning honor and reputation, and also anticipate the obsolescence of honor culture well before this occurred historically.

Keywords

class, duels, honor, novels, violence, literature, sociology of literature, fiction, bourgeois, aristocracy

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Introduction

Between the French Revolution and the First World War, economic and political control of Continental Europe shifted from aristocratic and monarchical elites to the rising bourgeois class. During this period the two groups and their respective cultures coexisted, often uneasily. One part of this larger transformation was a change in the way that individual worth was defined and protected. The aristocratic concept of status honor was a formal, group-oriented means of defining worth. Bourgeois groups in Europe adopted and reworked the concept of honor, in time transforming it to a substantive, individualistic form of worth grounded in reputation. The practice of dueling, which was common in Europe throughout this period, had a particularly strong association with honor culture. In the 19th century, dueling diffused from European aristocracies to bourgeois groups in many countries, and this reimagination of the practice and its aims is one example of the larger transition in measures of worth.

This article explores this change by examining the duel in European novels. The article shows that duels fought in novels diverged markedly from historical practice: fictional duels are far more violent, and serve calculated private interests rather than public or group interests in preserving status or reputation. Drawing from well-established sociological accounts of the novel genre, this article shows that novels were not able to provide accurate psychological representations of group-oriented practices underlying honor. This is because the novel, a quintessentially bourgeois form, developed much more rapidly than social practice in general. The distorted fictional representation of duels, then, does not simply illustrate a descriptive limit in the novel form. It also anticipates the final outcome of the historical process of reinterpretation and obsolescence of honor culture in Europe, and calls attention to inconsistencies in the intermediate social form of bourgeois honor.

This article begins by reviewing major theoretical and historical works on European honor culture and duels. This material shows that duels, despite their outwardly violent character, were heavily codified rituals that took a very similar form throughout Europe. The function of the duel ritual was to defuse or resolve conflicts and restore equality between individuals, and in practice duels had relatively low mortality rates. During the time period considered here, there were two distinct forms of dueling. Aristocrats and military officers fought duels to preserve

status honor. Bourgeois men, particularly in politics and journalism, fought duels in response to highly public insults that threatened to injure the offended party's reputation.

The article then considers significant theoretical accounts of the realist novel. These works identify two distinctive features of the genre: the realist novel produces accurate descriptions of the social and physical environment, as well as psychologically complex views of the inner lives of individual characters. The novel is, in many respects, a product of capitalism: it is a commodity consumed by a bourgeois reading public, and more significantly, it explores the psychological experience of individuals living in market societies.

Finally, the article examines fictional duels in 20 European novels, and considers how these novels diverge from social practice. Fictional duels violate the basic logic underlying the social practice of dueling. Fictional duels serve to advance the concrete interests of characters. Honor and its obligations have a diminished role in these narratives: honor appears mainly as a rhetorical framework for justifying self-interested behavior. In this sense, the novels dispense with the intellectual and social steps by which honor was supplanted by reputation, and instead jump to the final social outcome: duels are imagined as a violent but fully adequate means of providing specific remedies to individual conflicts. This is broadly concordant with classic accounts of the novel. This analysis calls attention to the genre's weakness in describing group-oriented values, but also suggests that the misrecognition of honor was socially creative.

Status Honor and the Duel Ritual: Theory and Historical Practice

The term honor has been used to refer to several different social phenomena, and there has been a pronounced tendency to understand honor, across historical periods and cultures, as meaning something like 'favorable social recognition' (see, for instance, Oprisko, 2012). However, major works of sociological theory have presented a narrower typification of honor defined by two key features: honor's formal rather than substantive character, and its connection to particular closed, elite social groups. A brief description of the social structure of European aristocratic honor culture is necessary, as the duel as a ritual cannot be disentangled from this particular understanding of honor. This section begins by presenting classic sociological theories of honor culture, and then considers social historical evidence on dueling in practice. Both theory and

empirical evidence suggest that duels functioned as a means of preserving equality, and despite their ritual violence, served to defuse conflicts.

In Weber's classic formulation (1958), status honor, whether inherited or acquired, is found in a community with a shared style of life (p. 187). This distinguishes groups with status honor from modern social classes in several respects: market culture, and remunerative labor, are inimical to honor (pp. 191–2); the equality conferred by status honor is indifferent to material imbalances – a poor aristocrat is still an aristocrat (p. 187); and honor groups are small enough to function as genuine communities, while social classes are not (p. 186). The fact that honor groups are not social classes helps explain their persistence in countries even after economic and political changes had stripped them of much of their social power (p. 391). Simmel adds that honor groups such as aristocracies are surveyable – small enough that a member can, in principle, be aware of all the other persons of similar status (1950: 90). These basic properties of honor imply several features of social structures organized by status honor.

First, though a person with status honor can become dishonored, or have their honor injured, honor is not specific to the individual person. Persons possess honor by virtue of their membership in a group with status honor. Though there are definite behaviors expected of an honorable person, honor itself is a formal rather than substantive attribute (Simmel, 1950: 320).

Second, honor is a quality (Weber, 1958: 187), and cannot be possessed in greater or lesser amounts (Simmel, 1971: 210). All persons included in a status are equally possessed of the honor particular to that status. Anything that disrupts this equality, such as an insult or an unfair attack, is dishonoring, and failing to respond is likewise dishonoring. It also follows from this that honor is not convertible and has no monetary equivalent. An injury to honor, understood in this sense, cannot be redressed by defamation law or financial compensation (O'Malley, 1981: 83), though German law recognizes a right against defamation that is called 'honor' by historical analogy (Stewart, 1994: 14). As will be seen below, the primary function of the duel as a social ritual is to restore formal equality when it has been disrupted.

Third, injuries to honor cannot be redressed by an outside party. In addition to the inadequacy of remedies available from other institutions, turning to an outside institution, such as the state or the church, for remedy would itself be dishonoring, as it would involve both individual submission and disruption of the social closure of self-regulating status groups.

Fourth, while members of a given honor group are status peers, such honor can, and usually does, coexist with a hierarchical social structure (Weber, 1958: 193). Indeed, the most important honor cultures in Europe – officer corps and landed aristocracies – were both characterized by systematic hierarchical organization. This took the form of patronage pyramids in the aristocracy (Martin, 2009: 211), and command structures in the military (p. 270). This hierarchy leads status groups to be defined rather narrowly. Two people who are possessed of noble or military honor may not meet as equals if they are of different rank: the setting aside of rank for the purpose of a duel was historically notable in itself (Mackay, 1852: 294).

These social properties of honor served to dictate the form of the duel ritual. During the period considered here, duels were regulated by written *codes duello*, formal rules that specified when it was appropriate to fight a duel and how a duel was to be conducted. Codes from, for instance, the British Isles (Hamilton, 1829), the United States (Wilson, 1838), France (Millingen, 1841), Italy (Angelini, 1883), Prussia (Kufahl and Schmied-Kowarzik, 1896), and the Russian Empire (Durasov, 2007 [1908]) present the same sequence of events defining the duel ritual. The essential structure is the same, though there is some cross-national variation in acceptable arms and terms. Following some insult or provocation, a challenge is issued by the aggrieved party and accepted by the opponent. After this, seconds – necessarily men of comparable honor – are designated. The seconds meet to negotiate terms for the duel. Finally, the opponents appear on the ‘field of honor’ at the appointed time, and, if necessary, fight the duel with the seconds as witnesses. All of this must happen within a specified window of time: generally a challenge must be issued more or less immediately once the insult becomes known, and the duel occurs within one day of the challenge. The similarity of this ritual across countries may be explained, in part, by the social logic of honor cultures, which were similar across Europe. The similarity is also the result of diffusion of formalized rules. The Irish code of 1777 is the recognizable model for other codes (Kiernan, 1988: 145). This circulation of codes across countries continued until the practice became obsolete: the Durasov code, which was standard issue in Russian military regiments (Bushnell, 1981: 759), makes reference to dozens of codes published in other languages.

All of the steps in this generally observed ritual are designed to reinforce the honor of both parties. The ritual is characterized by extreme courtesy in manners and language. The seconds, in addition to their role as intermediaries, served to testify to the preexisting honor of

the combatants and to the honorability of the exercise itself (see Banks, 2009). Collins (2009) synthesizes a wide array of historical evidence to demonstrate that this apparently violent ritual functioned as a mechanism for defusing conflict. In the 18th century, inaccurate and weak smoothbore pistols had become the standard dueling weapon, and remained so after more powerful firearms had developed. When swords were used in duels, they were typically modified to prevent deep penetrating injuries (p. 214). Terms for the fight could be negotiated in a number of ways, and many of the standard terms, such as firing while in motion during a ‘barrier duel’, minimized the chance of harm. Moreover, many challenges were resolved before actual fighting took place: the mere willingness of both parties to show up for the fight was often satisfactory (p. 216; see also Mills, 2011). For these reasons, very few duels resulted in serious injury or death – in some countries where dueling was widespread, dueling fatalities had become completely unknown by the 19th century (p. 215), a fact also attributable in part to the generally inept character of violent face-to-face confrontations (Collins, 2013). As Collins observes, ‘The point of the duel was more to demonstrate one’s status-group membership than to establish dominance over one’s opponent. Thus it was less important to win than to display courage’ (2009: 218).

Other work largely confirms this claim that duels were less dangerous than one might expect. Historical surveys show a mortality rate ranging from about 8 percent in Ireland (Kelly, 1995: 214) to under 2 percent in Italy (Baldick, 1965: 144), and probably even lower in France (Kiernan, 1988). Even a work written with the express purpose of showing the barbarity of duels, with cases selected accordingly, had to concede that some 70 percent of combats ended without injury (Gilchrist, 1821). These figures may well overestimate injury and mortality rates: challenges that were resolved without a fight, and fights that did not result in injury, are presumably less likely to have entered the historical record. In addition, Frevert (1995) observes that dueling faced considerable ideological opposition in the 19th century, and the body of published material would, on the whole, seek to present the practice in an unfavorable light.

Dueling and the Rise of the Bourgeoisie

Such are the general formal characteristics of the codified pistol or sword duel. Of course, this ritual did not emerge *ex nihilo*, nor was the practice identical across countries. Earlier forms of the duel, such as trial by combat, existed to produce legal truth, and the formal military

competitions of the tournament were tied to the honor culture of chivalry. Elias (1994) views such honor codes as part of a larger project of social pacification, and indeed, the ritualized, individual combat of the duel was far less violent and destructive than the livery, retaining, and affrays that had characterized earlier conflict between European nobles (Mahmooei and Vahabi, 2012), or the feuds and vendettas that persisted in Mediterranean honor cultures (Schneider, 1971; on vendetta as pacification, see Gould, 2000).

This section connects the practice of dueling to the rise of the bourgeoisie in two respects. First, it examines the adoption of the duel ritual by the bourgeois in the 19th century. Second, it describes the historical link between formalization of the duel and intellectual and political currents that promoted the emergence of bourgeois rule in Europe. This bourgeois engagement with the vocabulary and social practices of honor is in many ways reflected in the treatment of duels in European novels of the period. Although the codification of the duel of honor coincides historically with absolutism in a number of states and empires, scholars have viewed it as an intermediate step toward democratization. The notions of equality undergirding the duel, while based on socially exclusive, masculine status honor, share many formal properties with the universalist egalitarian notion of ‘dignity’ that served as a basis of modern liberal thought (LaVaque-Manty, 2006). The extension of the vocabulary of status honor to all citizens may be one reason for the blurring of its historical meaning in social scientific research. This is especially so because of the diffusion of the duel of honor from the aristocracy and military to bourgeois groups. Bourgeois adoption of dueling took two distinct forms, one having to do with the integration of bourgeois individuals into aristocratic institutions, and one to do with public conflicts over reputation.

In Russia, dueling among the bourgeois had much to do with the expansion of the military’s officer corps: by the late 19th century, only half of Russia’s officers were of aristocratic background, and the government’s active promotion of dueling was closely related to the desired development of a ‘caste mentality’ in the military (Bushnell, 1981). The duel was also a means of promoting greater civility; to a much greater extent than in other countries, Russian duels were a response to physical violence (Robinson, 2006). Similarly, many bourgeois duelists in Prussia were officers in military units staffed mainly by aristocrats (McAleer, 1994), and aristocratic pretensions were a common characteristic of bourgeois duelists (Frevert, 1991). At the same time, dueling became more widely diffused in Germany by means of university

dueling clubs. Despite perceptions to the contrary, these clubs were relatively liberal in their political orientation (Zwicker, 2011), and the dueling club is reflective of a bourgeois ideal of self-cultivation that is substantially distinct from the honor culture of the aristocracy (Frevert, 1995). In Germany, then, there is a pronounced split in the meaning of dueling among the bourgeois.

Elsewhere, bourgeois dueling was prevalent mainly among politicians and journalists (Kiernan, 1988: 259–70; Nye, 1993; Hughes, 1998). This may be understood as a consequence of an ongoing process of institutional legitimation. The law and the press were, at this time, emerging as the major replacements for the duel in dispute resolution (Shoemaker, 2002: 525). However, assemblies and newspapers were overtly partisan, and as such could not always provide credible resolution to disputes about the personal character of members of their own social spheres (Moretti, 2013: 176); in fact, their partisan character was a prime source of disputes, often resolved by duel. The threat of a duel, more than legal protections against libel, played a major role in making the American press more objective and credible in its accounts of individuals (Chamberlain, 2009), and this process is also at work in France.

There is a qualitative shift here in the stakes of a duel: rather than upholding a purely formal sense of honor derived from group membership, duels provoked by published remarks speak to an individual sense of worthiness derived from the possession of certain virtues or moral qualities. As Stewart notes, a shift to this inner, virtue-driven concept of honor is wholly incompatible with the formal conception (1994: 48), though the word is still used. This approach to dueling also differs in the implied social reference group. Status honor concerns a small, enumerable peer group. In this specifically bourgeois form of dueling the provocation is not the delivery of an insult by a status peer, but rather the fact that an insult is made before a large public, and may therefore injure the offended party's general reputation.

The adoption of the duel by politicians and journalists therefore marks a larger social and political change occurring across European countries: the transition to capitalism had begun to make status honor socially obsolete. The transition to a capitalist economy, which often significantly preceded the end of monarchical rule, was accompanied by a shift from formal, priceless honor to substantive, monetarily valuable reputation, the 'set of judgments a community makes about the personal qualities of its members' (Emler, 1990: 171). The emergence of this form of reputation, and its deliberate management, is central to Weber's

account of the social logic of capitalism (2011 [1905]). O'Malley (1981) similarly views reputation, along with the legal and social institutions that emerge for its protection, as a defining feature of capitalist societies.

These changes were recognized by many theorists at the time. Peltonen (2003) traces the emergence of an individualistic conception of self-worth in England. Thinkers such as Mandeville and Hume understood this notion of worth to have evolved from status honor, and it was generally felt that the dictates of commerce had deposed courtly civility. Honor culture, moreover, proved especially likely to create interpersonal conflict in the context of market exchange (Baxter and Margavio, 2000). The social values of the aristocratic duel of honor are thus in systematic opposition to the rising political economy of the 19th century: it is the province of a group that is losing political and economic power, and defends an idea of merit that is irrelevant and often maladaptive in a capitalist society. By the end of the First World War, this transition had occurred throughout Europe (Parent, 2009).

The Bourgeois Novel and the Duel

Though the symbolic and practical character of the duel evolved during the 19th century, it retained strong associations with the aristocracy. Duels, fought most often between aristocrats or military characters, appear frequently in European novels, a literary form that sociologists, historians, and literary theorists have regarded as essentially bourgeois. There are therefore obvious sources of formal tension, which are explored in the next section. This section addresses two matters. First, it presents an overview of major claims developed by the sociology of the novel, with a particular emphasis on the representation of individual psychology as the defining characteristic of the realist novel. It is on this matter of psychology that novelistic duels diverge most sharply from both historical practice and from the inner imperatives of the novel form. Second, this section describes the 20 European novels that are considered in this analysis, and why they have been selected and others excluded.

The novel has been understood to be bourgeois in a number of respects. Novels are products of capitalism in a straightforward economic sense: they quickly became commodities produced for mass consumption (Moretti, 2009), and their initial success as a form depended upon the emergence of a literate, semi-leisured urban class (Watt, 1957). Novels are also

responsive to, and constrained by, problems unique to capitalist societies, a matter that has been explored thoroughly by Lukacs and subsequent theorists. As Lukacs (1971 [1920]) has argued, novels – by which he particularly means 19th-century novels – are in substance homologous to the social patterns of market economies, and the essential narrative structure of the novel is the search for authenticity and meaning in a world degraded by the corrosive features of the market. For Lukacs as for subsequent thinkers, bourgeois subjectivity is one of rational calculation. The novel revolves around the ‘problematic hero’ who does not fit into the calculative social world of capitalism. Though the novel is distinguished from earlier forms in part by its realistic description of the physical and social environment (Watt, 1957: 17–18), it is psychological individuation that has been considered to be more important. Psychological depth and subtlety, rather than description of physical or social environs, is the defining quality of outstanding novels (Lukacs, 1962: 194–201, Lowenthal, 1986: 2): ‘the central aesthetic problem of realism is the adequate presentation of a complete human personality’ (Lukacs, 1950: 7).

Presenting a realistic subject in a realistic social world is a significant challenge: the social institutions of capitalist societies tend toward homogeneity and the production of an average, but representing the ‘average’ individual does not produce effective novels (Lukacs, 1950: 6). Goldmann (1975) takes up this problem in his reformulation of the problematic hero as the problematic individual. The novel form is ‘the transposition on the literary plane of everyday life in the individualistic society created by market production’ (p. 7). Characters become problematic (and narratively effective) within this form ‘in so far as their thinking and behaviour remain dominated by qualitative values’ (p. 11), as distinct from the quantitative logic of accumulation of money, power, or renown. Problematic characters of this kind may include ‘creators, writers, artists, philosophers, theologians, men of action’ (p. 11). The need for a person of qualitative values to propel a narrative leaves room for novels built around men of honor, whose values, while essentially conservative, are also qualitative and at odds with market society (see also Moretti, 2010). The duel is therefore a phenomenon that fits within the basic problem addressed by the realist novel, and the political controversies surrounding the duel and honor cultures are connected to the larger social upheavals that novels are bound to address – for a broader treatment of the relationship between democratization and 19th-century novel form, see Slaughter (2009).

The following section explores the tension between honor culture and the novel form by examining duels as a plot feature over a 150 year period, from the publication of *Dangerous Liaisons* in 1782 to the publication of *The Radetzky March* in 1932. Appendix 1 lists the 20 novels chronologically, and includes their authors, original languages, and details about the narrated duels. This selection excludes many notable works that feature duels but do not conform to the novel genre considered here, such as adventure and fantasy novels (Dumas, Gautier), plays (Schnitzler, Sternheim), and short stories (Kleist, Nabakov). The periodization is neat, but it is not arbitrary with respect to the novels considered or the larger historical backdrop. André Malraux famously characterized *Dangerous Liaisons* as the first novel whose characters were motivated by acquisitive desire rather than irrational passions, and in this respect it marks the novel's turn toward the social logic that will define capitalism (see Allan, 2012). *The Radetzky March*, which features a duel as an important plot point, is perhaps the last major European novel that relies upon the author's lived experience of aristocratic military life and is unaffected by the formal and stylistic innovations of literary modernism. Duels remained common in fiction throughout the 20th century, but their meaning has been greatly transformed by modernist and postmodernist developments in literature (Croft, 2013). These stylistic innovations also introduced a number of new ways of resolving the basic problem of the novel (Goldmann, 1975: 12, 132).

The novels come from several different polities and languages, but there are sound reasons to regard them as comparable. The preceding historical exposition has shown that dueling as a social practice was formally similar across Europe, meaning that novelists from different countries are describing a similar phenomenon. Europe also developed into a coherent international literary field during this time (Casanova, 2004), with innovations in one country or language diffusing relatively quickly to others. The classic theoretical works considered above also treat the realist novel as a recognizable and valid form across many different countries. In addition, there are clear lines of influence tying together a great number of the novels considered here.

The novels were all written by notable authors, and many of the works are classics that have figured prominently in the development of the critical sociology of the novel. This selection is desirable in light of the basic tension this article has set up. Although the qualitative value of honor is at odds with the logic of the market in a way that is consistent with the basic formal

qualities of the realist novel, the duel is informed by a set of group values that differ markedly from the individualistic, psychological narration that defines the novel form. If this contradiction admits of resolution within the generic requirements of the novel, it is most likely to be resolved by major authors. As Lowenthal argues, all literature can provide historical insight, but some matters, especially those related to individual subjectivity, can be elucidated far more effectively by excellent work than middling work (1986: 3). Even theorists who generally advocate for consideration of larger bodies of literary works have acknowledged the significant insight that can be derived from a more limited selection (see Bourdieu, 1996: 5–7, Casanova, 2004: 10). The evidence suggests that this contradiction cannot be resolved in the case of the duel.

Findings from the Novels

Broadly speaking, the novels provide outwardly plausible but psychologically distorted accounts of duels. These distortions are of three notable kinds. First, the characters use duels as a means of advancing their personal interests by displacing or killing rivals, with the implication that the rhetoric of honor conceals a basically individualistic form of calculation. Second, fictional duels, while broadly similar to the duel ritual described historically, generally violate key rules, and are therefore not honorable. Third, the formal characteristics of the narration often shift abruptly when discussing duels. The implication is that the social psychology of honor, whether aristocratic or bourgeois, does not fit readily into the realist novel: the formal quality of status honor and the publicity inherent in bourgeois status honor are both replaced, in fiction, with far more private and individual motives. In short, the fictional duel and the social logic of honor are excessively individualized. This may be explained by the socially progressive character of the novel: the genre anticipates the outcome of a social process that has not yet been completed, and presents the old practice within the logic of the emerging social form.

The novels considered describe the sequence of a duel in ways very similar to historical evidence and the *codes duello*. In part, this may be because the general form of dueling was widely known. Additionally, the features of sequence and timing that made duels successful rituals are strongly analogous to the basic principles of dramatic narrative (Schwanitz, 1994). Though the novels retain the basic form of the duel, the results diverge strikingly from historical reality in other ways. The duels in the 20 novels considered here lead to the death of seven

characters and the serious injury of six others. In circumstances where a challenge did not result in a duel or an injury, it is rarely because the characters resolved their differences, as would have been common in social practice. Rather, duels miscarry because individuals refuse to fight, are deceived into participating in rigged contests, or face absurd obstacles. The causes of duels are also unusual: most of the duels in the novels were provoked by adultery or romantic rivalry, while simple insults were far more common causes of duels historically. The mere fact that fiction does not strictly reflect social reality is of little interest – novels are not mirrors, and literary invention is to be expected. What is more notable is the particular ways that the novels are unfaithful.

First, fictional characters participating in duels frequently use the discourse and trappings of honor as a means of pursuing their own interests. In several cases, characters fight a duel in order to displace or kill a romantic rival, as is the case in de Laclos, Pushkin, Lermontov, Thackeray, Turgenev, and Chekhov. In other cases, duels are fought with the desire for vengeance, as in Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Fontane. In Stendhal, de Maupassant, and Kuprin, duels serve the professional interests or ambitions of a character. Of course, it would have been possible historically for somebody to fight a duel for reasons other than a pure interest in honor, and surely such motives were common.

However, the individual aims of characters in the novels generally cannot be advanced simply by fighting a duel; the interests are only advanced if the opponent is injured or killed, thereby eliminating a rival.

Thus, the narrative presumption that duels are violent, which by itself appears as little more than an authorial liberty, provides the basis for the introduction of a variety of self-interested motivations that ordinarily could not have been served by historical duels. This narrative approach also presents duels as a means of providing substantive remedies to social conflicts. However, as the preceding sections have shown, duels restored a symbolic balance, but could not, in themselves, resolve an underlying conflict, unless the cause was an accusation of cowardice, in which case the readiness to fight a duel might be a substantive demonstration of courage.

The distortions here are different for fictional duels fought by aristocrats and by bourgeois. For aristocrats, the primary misrepresentation is the suggestion that the duel can be calculatingly employed to materially advance the personal interest of a character, with the

psychological correlate that noble characters would fight a duel for this reason: status honor, rather than serving as a deep psychological structure that shapes action, appears as a rhetorical cloak for individualistic rational calculation. For bourgeois duels, the basic misrepresentation is that the provoking causes of the duels are typically not public: in Stendhal, Flaubert, Schnitzler, Pirandello, and Mann, bourgeois characters are drawn into duels as the result of face-to-face disputes or unstated romantic rivalries. However, duels fought by bourgeois individuals in fields such as politics and journalism were motivated mainly by insults made before a large audience, in print or in large assemblies. Defense of public reputation – the major purpose of the properly bourgeois duel in Europe – only appears in de Maupassant, where a duel was provoked by the content of a newspaper editorial.

Second, novelistic duels, while presenting the sequence of the duel ritual more or less accurately, frequently describe duels that are not honorable for any number of reasons. This is a significant break from social practice, where the ritual's success depended upon the observance of the formal rules defining an honorable combat. In eight of the novels (Stendhal, Turgenev, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Schnitzler, Pirandello, Conrad, and Mann), the parties lack appropriate social status or qualifications to duel, are of markedly unequal statuses, or lack appropriate seconds to serve as honorable witnesses. In three more (Lermontov, Thackeray, and Kuprin), the duels are unfairly rigged to produce a certain outcome. The duelists in Chekhov do not even know how to duel, and use their recollection of Lermontov's novel to negotiate the rules.

These duels are not honorable, and this may have the effect of making duels appear to the reader as something quite different from what they might have meant subjectively for duelists. The very idea of a coherent practice of honor is called into question, as the duels are in many ways not honorable, either because they violate the formal rules that define a fair and honorable combat, or because the form of honor is used as a vehicle for substantive interests that are either not honorable or actively discrediting. For bourgeois duels, it may be argued that the practice genuinely lacked coherence: the duel is very often not a specific way to resolve public disputes over individual character. In some cases, of course, this is precisely the point: the perverse presentation of a duel can be used as a form of ridicule.

Though the logical coherence or social utility of honor comes under attack in these cases, its felt reality is not rejected so radically. With the exception of the thoroughly cynical Lermontov, whose major characters are uniformly self-serving, none of the fictional duels could

have taken place without the inclusion in the narrative of at least one character who believed in honor and its obligations. Such characters experience honor in several ways. To the eponymous Lieutenant Gustl, honor is so deep that it shapes reality at the level of sense perception. For some, honor is felt to be real and valuable, and for others real but unpleasant. In novels where challenges are issued with a secret motivation accessible to the reader but not all the characters, it is the feeling of honor that leads characters to fight duels even when they do not know the reason they have been asked to fight: an honorable person challenged without just cause has, by definition, been insulted, and is therefore obliged to fight. This is most apparent in the duel fought in *Stendhal*, which involved double mistaken identity.

The thrust of the novels is therefore not that honor is a confabulation. The authors take the phenomenon of honor seriously, but nonetheless misrepresent its operation in the duel ritual, primarily by presenting honor, or its trappings, as a veneer layered over individual self-interest. As noted above, misrepresentation occurs for both aristocratic and bourgeois characters. Though these novels are realist works, the failing here is the one that Lukacs saw as the essential characteristic of naturalism: the outward environment (the ritual and its sequence) has been represented accurately at the expense of psychological fidelity.

The preceding argument has treated the fictional world of the novel as a social structure that can be compared against historical and sociological views of the real world the novels seek to represent. Considerations of style have not figured in the argument. A brief consideration of style, though not necessary to make the argument, provides a further suggestion that the inner psychology of duels and their outward form do not fit readily into the novel. This brief excursus is included mainly in the interest of suggesting that traditional literary critical approaches may also be a useful means of studying this case. *Stendhal*, *Constant*, *Fontane*, and *Roth* confine the action of the duel itself to a single sentence or a portion of a sentence; the solution to the formal problem is simply not to narrate the event. More often, there is a sudden increase in formal complexity of the text. Many novelistic duels are tied together by chains of intertextual reference, even when such references are otherwise unusual: *Lermontov* makes open reference to *Pushkin*, while *Chekhov* and *Kuprin* refer to *Lermontov*. *Mann* refers to *Turgenev*. *Roth* and *Conrad* make allusions to works by *Kleist* and *Vigny* not treated here. Duels may also be connected to texts within texts: in *de Laclous* and *Tolstoy*, the duels are provoked by letters. In *Pirandello*, *Kuprin*, and *Broch*, the action of the duel is conveyed to characters (or the reader) by

telegram. Omniscient narrators may report the duel through the limited information available to a single character, while limited narrators may, for a moment, come to possess a greater narrative scope.

The overall finding is that the novels do not accurately represent the social logic and psychology of the honor cultures prevalent in Europe during this period. Duel plots often serve to advance the concrete interests of characters, but can only do so by means of conflict escalation and the delivery of significant or mortal injury. Similarly, the provoking conflicts in bourgeois duels are private quarrels rather than public defamations. In this respect, the duels are excessively individualistic and psychological; the imperative of honor in itself does not usually cause the duels. This diminished place for honor is also found in the conduct of the duels. The fictional duels generally violate the established rules, again suggesting that the prosecution of an individual end is more important than observance of a social form. Both of these representations depart from the historical facts. More significantly, these representations do not convey the social logic of honor or the way that this logic was internalized by individuals. Psychological fidelity is a defining characteristic of the realist novel, but this analysis suggests that not all forms of individuality admit of straightforward narration within this genre.

Conclusion: Realism and Misrecognition

The historical evidence considered in this article has shown that the duel was a means of resolving conflicts and preserving polite equality. The ability of the duel to achieve this aim depended upon its validity as a ritual. This ritual had well-defined rules, and the rules served to produce a predictable outcome: carefully limited violence yielding a formal resolution of a dispute. The ability of this ritual to function – to make a duel into something more than a gunfight – derived from the social logic of honor. For aristocrats, this was status honor, the formal equity afforded to all individuals of a particular standing. For bourgeois duelists, this was the interest in a public reputation, though the use of the rhetoric of honor, and the ritual of dueling blends formal questions of equality and dignity with substantive disputes about public reputation or moral worth. These forms of honor, while possessed by individuals, are essentially oriented toward social groups. The duel is a performance of honor staged before honorable witnesses.

During the time period considered here, Europe experienced a transition to capitalist economies and away from monarchical and aristocratic rule. This transition also created new ways of defining and protecting individual worth. These definitions arose, in part, from a creative reinterpretation of honor that made the concept universal in its coverage, but individual in its dimensions. Bourgeois dueling is a social practice that is intermediate between the purely formal quality of status honor, and the purely substantive notion of individual reputation and worth: bourgeois duels seek to protect the particular reputation of an individual, but do not do so with the specific remedies that later become commonly available in law.

Duels appeared regularly in realist novels in Europe, but the novels fail to capture important dimensions of the ritual. Though the novels take the phenomenon of honor seriously, they do not accurately convey the outward, social orientation of honor. For this reason, the public motivations that informed dueling as a social practice are replaced by private motivations. The fictional duels are little more than gunfights, instrumental, calculatively violent acts intended to serve the private interests of the characters. The psychology of honor thereby appears in a distorted form: it is a means of dressing up self-interest. This may be understood as a basic limit on the possibilities of the realist novel as a form. Psychological depth is the defining quality of realism, but this particular form of psychology proved resistant to accurate representation. Given that the group orientation consistently appeared in overly individualized form, this may be seen as evidence for a particular social limit on the narrative scope of the realist novel: where an individual's values are essentially collective rather than individual in their orientation, novelistic techniques for describing individual psychology may prove to be misleading.

Identifying a constraint on the formal scope of the novel is the more obvious finding of this article. However, the particular way that the novels misrepresent duels serves to illustrate the broader historical pattern by which reputation replaced honor. Novels misrepresent honor in the particular way that they do because the form anticipated the eventual result of this transformation in measures of individual worth. The modern idea of reputation calls for specific, substantive remedies for injuries and insults, and the novels represent duels as violent but specific remedies to conflicts between characters. Because the novel outran social development during this period, the present was, from the perspective of the novel, already history.

This fact is of sociological as well as literary significance. The uneasy place of honor rituals within the novel serves to illustrate that honor and reputation truly are distinct ways of

measuring social worth, and also shows that these measures of worth produce distinct social psychologies. Overly broad or historically insensitive use of the term honor can obscure this. The novels also provide a particularly clear view of the individualization that was a key feature of this historical transition. In practice, the transformation involved a number of intermediate steps, though transitional concepts such as bourgeois honor did not, perhaps, seem intermediate or unstable to the individuals who took it seriously. The novel, because it is a form essentially oriented toward individuals, leapt past these steps and anticipated the final outcome.

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Appendix 1. Chronology and characteristics of consulted novels.

| Year | Author | Title | Language | Cause | Duelists | Result |
|------|---------------|---------------------------------|----------|-------|----------|--------|
| 1782 | de Laclous | <i>Dangerous Liaisons</i> | French | R | A/A | 2 |
| 1816 | Constant | <i>Adolphe</i> | French | O | A/A | 1 |
| 1830 | Stendhal | <i>The Red and the Black</i> | French | I | B/A | 1 |
| 1836 | Pushkin | <i>The Captain's Daughter</i> | Russian | I | M/M | 1 |
| 1841 | Lermontov | <i>A Hero of Our Time</i> | Russian | R | M/M | 2 |
| 1844 | Thackeray | <i>The Luck of Barry Lyndon</i> | English | R | A/M | 0 |
| 1862 | Turgenev | <i>Fathers and Sons</i> | Russian | R | B/B | 1 |
| 1869 | Flaubert | <i>Sentimental Education</i> | French | I | A/B | 0 |
| 1869 | Tolstoy | <i>War and Peace</i> | Russian | A | A/M | 1 |
| 1872 | Dostoevsky | <i>Demons</i> | Russian | I | A/M | 0 |
| 1885 | de Maupassant | <i>Bel Ami</i> | French | I | B/B | 0 |
| 1891 | Chekhov | <i>The Duel</i> | Russian | R | A/M | 0 |
| 1896 | Fontane | <i>Effi Briest</i> | German | A | A/M | 2 |
| 1901 | Schnitzler | <i>Lieutenant Gustl</i> | German | I | M/B | – |
| 1904 | Pirandello | <i>The Late Mattia Pascal</i> | Italian | I | B/B | 0 |
| 1905 | Kuprin | <i>The Duel</i> | Russian | A | M/M | 2 |
| 1908 | Conrad | <i>The Duel</i> | English | R | M/M | 1 |
| 1924 | Mann | <i>The Magic Mountain</i> | German | O | B/B | 2 |
| 1931 | Broch | <i>The Sleepwalkers</i> | German | O | A/M | 2 |
| 1932 | Roth | <i>The Radetzky March</i> | German | A | M/M | 2 |

Cause of duel: A: Adultery, R: Romantic rivalry, I: Insult/Slander, O: Other/Not stated.

Duelists (listed as challenger/challenged): A: Aristocrat, M: Military officer, B: Bourgeois.

Result of duel: 0: No injury/duel miscarried, 1: Serious injury, 2: Death.