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## STEFAN DETCHEV

### FROM “HUSH” TO “OFFICIAL” (FASHIONING OF “GOSPODINA”) – MASCULINITY, IDENTITY AND DUELLING IN BULGARIA IN THE LATE NINETEETH CENTURY

In March 1894 Smarayda Savova, wife of the Minister of Defense, and her sister Maria Matrova gave testimony before a lawyer and some other important witnesses that they had had affairs with Bulgarian Prime Minister St. Stambolov and the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce P. Slavkov during the autumn of 1893. This led to an open conflict between the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense, which triggered a governmental crisis. The Minister of Defense challenged the premier to a duel that did not take place after some debates about the seconds. M. Savov resigned and on 17 April 1894 received a passport to travel abroad.<sup>1</sup>

Both sides began to blame each other for lack of masculinity and for being afraid of the duel. Angered by the accusation of the oppositional press, depicting him as a coward, the Prime Minister published in the governmental newspaper “Svoboda” a letter written by the former Minister of Defense and sent to Prince Ferdinand (given to the Prime Minister by the monarch himself). It was evident from the letter that M. Savov was asking for protection against Stambolov.<sup>2</sup> However, the publicity of the letter made this story a prelude to Stambolov’s fall in more ways than one. The scandal over the privacy of this letter and the Prime Minister’s indiscretion brought to open conflict between the Prime Minister and the monarch that ended with Stambolov’s resignation, putting an end to his rule (1887-1894).<sup>3</sup>

As we have already seen, the above mentioned affair involved eminent members of the government – The Prime Minister, the Minister of Commerce and

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1 Маринов, Д., 1992., с. 397-398.

2 Свобода, VIII, 25 апр. 1894, бр. 1372., с. 2. По гньсно измислената и хвърлена върху Стамболова клевета., с. 2.

3 Маринов, Д., 1992 с. 401.

Agriculture and the Minister of Defense. It brought about a press campaign that highlighted also the issues of masculinity and male honor. It became a story about honor and masculine identity, dignity and reputation, virtues and manliness; the very link between authority, political power and masculinity; boundaries between the private and public spheres; morality and immorality; the strength of the army and the nation. This affair put also very significant pressure the political and state institutions. The story was the burning issue of the day, first in the capital, and after media coverage, among the public all over the country. At that time the vast majority of the general public really believed that the whole story was true.<sup>4</sup>

Because of the duel's highly symbolic nature, the duelling ritual and honor code as institutions reveal several cultural and social issues. Scholars have already emphasized the social, cultural and also political significance of the "duelling question". That is the reason why duelling in Europe has received wide treatment in historiography, the humanities and social sciences.<sup>5</sup> A recent historical research project has shown that, even within a "bourgeois" *laissez-faire* social order based on absolute property rights and freedom of contract, society was driven by concern for honor to such an extent that the nineteenth century must be considered the great age of dueling.<sup>6</sup>

However, in traditional Bulgarian political history the topics of masculinity and duel ("двубой") have never been open to research. The subject of masculinity has not been a central priority for Bulgarian feminist studies, which rose in the 1990s. There is a great deal of empirical work to be done. In this paper, making an attempt to make a micro-macro link, I am going to reveal the appropriation of this story for political purposes, the ways in which masculinity, gender and authority were intertwined in the public political sphere. I will try to show how the story and masculinity issues were set within an explicitly political debate. This angle gives me also an opportunity to look at problems concerning masculinity, male honor as well as their connection with Bulgaria's social structure, political life, public political debates and the public political sphere. The paper has been written with the strong conviction that our knowledge about the duel and the notions of masculinity can shed light on the history of transition to modernity of Bulgarian society in the late nineteenth century. I think the problems that were central to Bulgarian masculine identity at that time were also central to community life and politics as well.

In order to achieve my goals I have based my study on systematic research into a wide range of primary sources like newspapers, journals, pamphlets,

4 Ibid., c. 398.

5 See for example Kiernan, 1989; Flevert, 1995; Elias, 1996. Nye, 1993; McAleer, 1994, Reddy, 1997; Reyfman, 1999, Peltonen, 2003, Jeanneney, 2004.

6 Reddy, 1997, esp. pp. 11-12.

many memoirs and diaries, letters, telegrams, parliamentary debates, several published documents as well as books from the period that were widely read at that time. I have also used extensive archive materials from the Bulgarian Historical Archive of the National Library in Sofia, the Central State Historical Archive, the Scientific Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, etc.

In the paper I am going to address the following questions. How was the story presented at the politicized market (conservative, liberal, socialist press) by male writers and how was it interpreted by their readers? How did men from the elite understand honour? What were the social functions of the duel? Why did some contemporaries make attempts to incorporate duelling into a particular way of life and why did these efforts fail? What did the duel reveal about the drive of Bulgarian society towards modernization? What did it reflect in terms of the traditions of Bulgarian society, its cultural norms and forms of behaviour, desires and anxieties? If Kevin McAleer points out that at fin-de-siècle, the Germans were Europe's most tenacious and serious duelists<sup>7</sup> the historian feels compelled to distinguish the Bulgarian kind of duel from other national styles at the time.

Recently, in Bulgarian historiography few historians have failed to recognize that a concept of self-interest is too narrow to account for the full range of human behavior, but even fewer would regard masculinity and male honor as important. That is why I would add several other questions. How was the duel related to the aspects of masculinity and male sociability? How were problems concerning masculinity treated in connection with marital disputes, infidelity, violence, or debauchery of the spouse? What were the ideal(s) of masculinity? Moreover, I would like to reveal the relation of the code of honor and the public forms of honor to society and politics, the relationship of the male and female bodies to the social order and the social context.

Although I am in part concerned here with social structure and lines of cultural cleavage, I have limited my topic mainly to the study of elite masculinity in Bulgaria. Even if women and femininity are not an issue, in this period in Bulgaria as well as in Europe, male and female were still conceptualized as a binary opposition. That is why women are always in the field of focus as the "other" sex with which male sexual identity was in a persistent state of complementarity. Robert A. Nye points out, referring to nineteenth century France, that "since the sexes were culturally defined in terms of one another, changes in one sex provoked adjustment in the other, producing moments of crisis and negotiations of great analytical interest."<sup>8</sup>

I would like to specify that I am not talking about "Bulgarian masculinity" in general, but about a range of masculinities, or cultures of masculinity, at

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7 McAleer, 1994., p. 3.

8 Nye, 1993., p. 7.

that time. These masculinities were culturally and historically constituted and they had their cultural and social divisions. However, while acknowledging the differences, I do not ignore a common patriarchal model and institutionalized male power<sup>9</sup> that really existed and in some way connected these different masculinities. For this reason, in my opinion, it is still relevant to talk about “masculinity” in general.

### **REPRESENTATIONS OF THE STORY**

Despite the lack of persuasive evidence, as I have already mentioned, public exposure was very powerful and had very important consequences. Moreover, the whole story was presented according to the conventions of fiction and theater. At that time, even the Bulgarian press used overwhelmingly this theatrical language often referring to political subjects and events in terms of “drama”, “comedy”, “vaudeville”, “novel”, “romance”, “stage”, “curtain”, “role”, “actors”, “political actors” and “public”.<sup>10</sup> Of course, it was not a Bulgarian phenomenon and it should be regarded as part of nineteenth-century bourgeois drama and representation of politics as a theater.<sup>11</sup> The same conventions, used by the writers of nineteenth century fiction to make their characters more realistic, were used by Bulgarian journalists to create rival narratives and make them more plausible.

The journalists from the main oppositional newspaper “Svobodno slovo” focused their attack on the area of “family honor”, morality and masculinity. The story was interpreted in terms of masculinity, family, “virtues” and “debauchery”. In fact, the whole rhetoric about “family honor” concerned male honor because it was imagined as its extension. The version involved a language referring to life and death, to the “bloody insult” that the Prime Minister committed to his colleague. It was “bloody revenge” that the Minister of War should take on Stambolov. What had happened was presented as something that a genuine man could not forgive. Oppositional newspapers wrote they believed Mrs. Savova was a faithful wife and represented her as weak and helpless. They likened the story to a rape committed by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Commerce. In this regard, the newspapers found an occasion to describe Stambolov not only as a repressive “tyrant” – cruel, vindictive, and brutal – but reiterated constantly that he was also a “debaucher” and rapist. He was also depicted as devoted to immoral behavior, sexual immodesty, sexual self-indulgence, and he was converted into an

9 Бобчев, С. С. , 1923., с. 47 и сл, 81.; Оджаков, П. , 1893., с. 37 и сл., 56.

10 Прогрес, I, 3 юли 1893., бр. 34., с. 514.; 10 юли 1893., бр. 35., с. 534.; Свободно слово, I, 12 дек. 1893., бр. 55. По Братия Иванови., с. 1-2.

11 Eley, 1992, pp. 298, 334.

emblem of immorality and intrigue. As a result, implicitly and sometimes even explicitly, M. Savov and S. Savova became symbols of a nation subject to arbitrary power. Moreover, anti-governmental journalists represented the Prime Minister as a person scared by the announced duel. In this regard, they pitted the lack of masculinity against tough masculinity, as far as the duel was concerned. On the one hand, St. Stambolov was adulterer and rapist and, on the other, deprived of genuine masculinity. Therefore, he was a person who had violated the codes of manhood and the codes of honor. The newspaper writers justified the behavior of the Minister of Defense and his decision to challenge the Prime Minister to participate in a duel in order to defend his “*honor*”. Moreover, as far as it was M. Savov’s honor that was at stake, the duel was depicted as a defense of “family honor”, “military code”, “officers” and “the army”. In a dramatic way the insult against the Minister of Defense was explicitly and implicitly represented as an insult against the whole Bulgarian army and the “officers’ honor”.<sup>12</sup>

The governmental newspaper “Svoboda” represented two versions of the affair. The first one was about a husband who was a “miserable”, “crazy man”; a husband who tarnished his “family honor”. He was also depicted as a “mean” person and a “coward”, a “cheaply brave man” who was scared by the duel he had sparked off. The second story was about “a mad woman”, a “painfully debauched wife”, who before the engagement had been usually involved in “disgusting and wanton deeds”. Therefore, according to the newspaper, in this case “the publicist has no role to play and the psychiatrist should appear on stage in order to be able through his science to help a mentally ill and deranged man”.<sup>13</sup>

After Stambolov’s fall, the former governmental and already oppositional newspapers represented a third version of the story. Following Savova’s sister’s testimony, “Plovdiv” described the affair as a story about a husband who had slandered his own wife. It was a story about a miserable wife, a weak and tender spouse, having a husband that did not deserve her because of his bitterness and violence. M. Savov appeared as a man who did not love her anymore and who was looking just for an excuse for a divorce. The officer was depicted as a violent person, routinely beating his wife. The whole story and the protocols were described as false and part of his plan for promotion in his military career. That was represented as a reason for his slandering Savova and for his uncivilized persecution of her.<sup>14</sup>

However, according to “Svoboda”, M. Savov was looking for a separation with his still represented as “painfully debauched woman”. He was the one

12 Свободно слово, 12 апр. бр. 87, с. 3; 14 април, бр. 88., с. 1; 14 април, бр. 88., с. 1. На кръстопът.; 21 апр. бр. 89, с.1.; 23 април 1893, бр. 90., с. 1 . Дуелът...; 28 април 1894, бр .91., с. 3.

13 Свобода, VIII, 25 апр. 1894, бр. 1372., с. 2. По гнъсно измислената..., с. 2.

14 Пловдив, IX, 28 май 1894., бр. 56., с. 3. See also Свобода, VIII, 30 май 1894, бр. 1396. Върху гнъсната клевета., с. 2.

that had complained that she “had flings not only with several military officers and citizens but also with soldiers, office boys and even coachmen”.<sup>15</sup>

In line with the political debate at that time the leftist newspaper “Borba” published a story about a “tyrant”, “debaucher” and “rapist”. According to the journalist, if the Minister of Defense’s wife was really a “painfully debauched spouse”, then the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture should inform his colleague in order to help him correct her behavior. Instead, “Borba” emphasized, they pushed two sisters deeper into this immorality.<sup>16</sup>

It is evident by the vehemence of the rhetoric that the three represented stories were stories about male honor. That is why two basic questions arise. Was this debate an exception or was masculinity really a very important part of political discourse? How do all these versions fit in with the context of the ideal of masculinity (or at least modern Bulgarian urban masculinity)? In order to trace male honor codes, I will try also to reveal the relation of the code to society and politics (if we take the word in its broadest sense to designate all power relations); the modernization process and pressure on men to conform to new standards and cultural norms of manhood; the real and symbolic links between the culture of masculinity and political culture.

### ***IDEALS OF MASCULINITY AND HONOR IN BULGARIAN POLITICS***

In this period different assessments about a man’s masculinity were important in social and political life. For elite men at least, being anatomically “of the male sex” was necessary, but not sufficient, to meet the ideals of masculinity articulated in public discourse. There is no space here to go into detail but in the 1880s and 1890s masculinity in political discourse was important and political adversaries were often described in feminine or childish terms. In a society in which power was exercised on a model of paternal authority anyone who dared speak in different terms risked seeming powerless and impotent. There were many examples when the masculinity of the rivaling political camp was depicted in feminine and boyish terms. “Masculine” and “feminine” were loaded terms when used in the political discourse of the late nineteenth century. Therefore, “masculine” and “feminine” transcended the specific human body and became signifiers that used sexual difference as a powerful metaphor in accordance with a value system embodied in Bulgarian society.

The Savova affair also highlights the intersections between masculinity and sexuality that resurfaced repeatedly in the political life of the period. It reveals

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15 Свобода, VIII, 8 юни 1894., бр. 1403., с. 2.

16 Борба, I 22 май 1894., бр. 11, с. 3.

that masculinity, family, honor as well as the sexual conduct of the political class were also at the heart of domestic politics. There is no space here to give examples, but sexuality was important in treating political topics as well.

The accusations concerning the lack of masculinity reveal that the very notion of masculinity was elusive and different types of masculinities often overlapped. They also demonstrate certain instability of the notion of masculinity and the masculine ideal. According to David Gilmore, ideals of masculinity are not simply a reflection of individual psychology but part of public culture, a collective representation.<sup>17</sup> Besides, George Mosse emphasizes that the ideal of masculinity is basic to the self-definition of modern society. Manliness was supposed to safeguard the existing order against the perils of modernity, but it was also regarded as an indispensable attribute of those who wanted change.<sup>18</sup> Masculinity was dependent upon certain normative standards of appearance, behavior, and comportment and its modern construction was closely linked to a new bourgeois society.<sup>19</sup>

During the time under consideration, one of the ideals of masculinity that dominated the Bulgarian public sphere was the national revolutionary ideal created by writers and journalists in post-Ottoman Bulgaria. It was an ideal involving a “brave” man fighting for the “liberation” of his own “fatherland”. His manliness was defined in terms of self-sacrificial patriotism. It became a subject of popular cult during the commemorations of Bulgarian revolutionary heroes from the past like Hr. Botev or Hadzhi Dimitar.<sup>20</sup> Their death redeemed their heroic masculinity. To a certain extent, this ideal contained the contrast between the past heroism and honor of the Bulgarian national revolutionary movement and the new un-heroic bourgeois social order within the national state, based on self-interest and narrow individualism, hypocritical standards of virtue and respectability.

However, it was impossible for this revolutionary ideal of mythologized manliness to survive in the newly established state and social order, which required the performance and fulfillment of specific new professional and public roles. Gradually, the powerful new religion of the “fatherland” was to be reconciled with the concept of loyalty to the state. In the public sphere was to be disseminated a certain notion of masculinity that was more appropriate. One may call it modern elite masculinity. It appeared as a result of the Bulgarian version of male bourgeois sociability, connected with proper comportment including conversation, politeness, etiquette, manners, specific language and courtesy, cordiality; *bon ton* as well as elegance, good manners, gestures and verbal formulas. A man should also possess a good reputation and morality,

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17 Gilmore, 1990.

18 Mosse, 1996, p. 3.

19 Ibid., 1996, p. 8, 17.

20 Дечев, 1997., с. 326-337.

exercise moral authority and treat his spouse with tenderness and consideration. He should also avoid vulgar language and indecent gestures. That was the reason why many contemporaries saw this way of life as a tissue of lies.

In fact, the great majority of the middle class intelligentsia sought to achieve this modern ideal of masculinity, appropriating its bourgeois and aristocratic elements.<sup>21</sup> Former revolutionaries and members of the Bulgarian rebel detachments from the past, who had fought against Ottoman authority, bore a brave and idealistic “rebel” (“хъш”) masculinity. However, it was an inflexible, rigid, and awkward masculinity of ill-bred rebels and commoners lacking in European polish and social skills. They had lived a wandering and life of poverty. They were short-tempered, heady, unruly, and accustomed to raw violence, lacking in the manners and knowledge of an honor code respected in high societies in other countries. They should acquire “new mundane culture and elegance”, adopt a correct dress style and manners, allege devotion to the Prince and the “crown”.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, because it was this different kind of manliness that was needed, men of the elite should make this transition to “official” modern masculinity. This masculinity started with conservatives, whose wealth, education, and family traditions oriented them towards it.<sup>23</sup> However, it was transmitted also to the liberals and became a norm for the political class and the Bulgarian elite in general, i.e. a norm for the “high society” of lawyers, judges, members of parliament, officers, clerks, officials, wealthy merchants.<sup>24</sup>

To a certain extent, it was not that hard. The established new national state provided a much wider array of career paths open to younger-generation and middle-class men. At the same time, all understood that thanks to the establishment of the modern Bulgarian state, any man, by adopting the dress and manners of minimal education, could aspire to an “honorable” career. In this effort to achieve social integration, “lifestyle”, character formation, and refinement were of paramount importance, because appearances were the first step toward reality. In this regard, marriage was also very important and middle class families deployed certain marital strategies as a vital key to a rapid gain of family well-being and bourgeois honor.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1880s and the beginning of the 1890s, it was this process that one can describe as fashioning and self-fashioning of the modern “gospodin”

21 On the aristocratic roots and elements in Europe, see for example Mosse, 1985, p. 13, 23.; 1996, p. 19; Nye, 1993, pp. 151, 155, 157, 166, 167.; McAleer, 1994 – pp. 7, 8.; Reddy, 1997, p. 10.

22 See many examples in Петрова, 1991, c. 38-39, 61, 155-157

23 At many places in her memoirs Sultana Racho Petrova emphasizes the contradiction between those belonging to the “rebel” culture and members of the Bulgarian conservative elite like Gr. Nachovich, K. Stoilov, K. h. Kalchov etc. See Петрова, 1991, c. 205-206.

24 It was developed even in the previous decades and was characterized with refinement, elegance, fashion, behavior, bon ton, appearance of dandy and fop. Генчев, 1979, c. 397-403; Гаврилова, 1999, c. 166-167.

25 Оджаков, 1893., c. 50, 57, 58. See also the preface to Дебе, Д-р, 1885., c. 5.

(“господин”). Therefore, although the man from the late 1880s and the beginning of the 1890s took on the role and some of the aura of the revolutionaries from the 1860s and the 1870s, the great number of young liberal politicians, political activists, and military officers sought to convert on the level of style and behavior from masculinity of the middle class or the middle class intelligentsia to bourgeois masculinity. In this regard, many contemporaries complained that the social elite had as motive forces no more than self-interest, well-being, and money. Here we should also underline the role of representations of French (sometimes German, British or Russian) manners, style and language in the formation of the modern Bulgarian urban masculine national identity of the upper social strata. Besides, it is well known that everywhere in Europe French upper-class life was taken as the last word in taste.<sup>26</sup>

We should discern another military ideal of masculinity, which had some relative autonomy. To a certain extent, because of the intersections in the sphere of male sociability, this ideal overlapped with the civic one as far as features like conversation, politeness, manners, specific jargon, courtesy, cultivation of a certain *bon ton* and everyday civility among the officers were concerned.<sup>27</sup> However, it also required physical skill and dexterity, virility and courage, high morale, loyalty to the state, “fatherland” and the “Prince”, readiness to save the nation’s honor by force of arms, specific military masculine honor, courage and more chivalrous behavior in battle as a sign of national superiority. This new model of masculinity was successfully tested during the Serbo-Bulgarian War of November 1885. Then Bulgarian officers, soldiers and volunteers demonstrated a Bulgarian version of an otherwise modern, military and nationalistic masculinity. This event as well as the “Bulgarian crisis” of 1886-87 brought the high prestige of officers in Bulgarian society.<sup>28</sup> Many contemporaries noticed that Prince Ferdinand, the new monarch, after his inauguration, wanted to make of the army “an aristocratic elite by awakening its chivalry, its pride and its dignity.”<sup>29</sup> Others describe top officers as the “new boyar estate” or “aristocracy”, or “special noble caste”.<sup>30</sup> After the beginning of the 1890s, these efforts were regulated through control on officer’s marriage.<sup>31</sup> Following the European tradition from the previous decades, it was considered that officers had special military honour and should have ennobled customs.<sup>32</sup>

The above mentioned top officials, officers, wealthier merchants, etc. were connected with each other through different cross-links and they met in the

26 Нye, R. A., 1993, p. 31.

27 According to G. Nachovich, to be a genuine statesman, R. Petrov also needed one or two years as a diplomat abroad in order to acquire “intellect”, “tactfulness”, “restraint”. See Петрова, 1991, с. 40.

28 Колев, 1992, с. 274-290.

29 Петрова, 1991, с. 201.

30 Ето причините ..., Мисъл, год. XI, септ., кн. VII, София, 1901., с. 420-421

31 Ibid., с. 423.

32 Радев, 1899, с. 102-103; Радев, 1900.

government as well. They formed a Bulgarian version of a tiny “good society” or “high society”. As in other countries, they were supposed, despite the internal rivalry, to form a network of people separated from the rest of the population. In this regard, the new monarch Prince Ferdinand and his mother Princess Klementina contributed enormously to the development of this process. Following French court tradition, through transplantation of strict ceremonial codes and protocol during evenings, entertainment events, receptions, balls and dances, they tried to develop and elaborate a specific code of behavior, to cultivate “elegance”, “smartness” and “refinement”.<sup>33</sup>

As one can see, honour was an important part of the masculine ideal. Based on the French case, W. Reddy has distinguished between two senses of honor. On the one hand, it is “an exterior or visible mark of distinction or rank” that could serve for “nomination to a post in government, university, or an officer’s rank in the military”. Moreover, on the other hand, honor could “imply a single state”, “something one preserves from taint” and defends from insult. Reddy adds that it was in this second sense that honour was a most active concern for women because they had to protect themselves and their family’s name from even the suspicion of improper conduct. It is also important to underline that both senses of the word *honneur* have to do with “what is external or visible or publicly knowable.”<sup>34</sup> According to R. Nye’s findings – also based on the French case – honour was considered to be a natural, rather than a socially constructed, characteristic of males. The ability to feel and to be moved by considerations of honour was a mark of superior ranking in nature. That is why doctors linked impotence to timidity and virility to the ability to reason.<sup>35</sup> This reception of the culture of honour in the male part of the Bulgarian elite also explains the attempts to introduce the phenomenon of the duel in the Bulgarian public sphere. We will return to the topic later.

Thus, despite the social and political differences that separated them, the principal factions of the Bulgarian elite share a nexus of common values like social integration, patriotism, and patriarchy, expressed in a discourse of masculine honor.<sup>36</sup> However, one should keep in mind that there were tensions as well as exchange of energies between different ideals and models of masculinity and the professional and social roles connected with them. Very often, many Bulgarian men should switch between these different kinds of masculine roles and identities and traditional Bulgarian masculinity. To a certain extent, on the level of ideal and political ideology, Bulgarian hegemonic masculinity was a hybrid between, on the one hand, revolutionary masculin-

33 There are many examples in Петрова, 1991, с. 11, 15, 17, 180, 202-203, 213.

34 Reddy, 1997, esp. pp. 21.

35 Nye, 1993, pp. 68-71.

36 In 1896, giving a speech before the National Assembly, Prime-Minister K. Stoilov referred to the Bulgarian policy towards Macedonia in terms of “honor, esteem, and chivalry”. See Дневници, 1896, с. 269.

ity from the 1860s and 1870s (legitimizing for a long time political authority) and the modern, bourgeois one, on the other. As far as this version of masculinity controlled political power and had cultural appeal in society as a whole, it was a hegemonic one. An inseparable part of it was supposed to be the notion that proper authority and good government should be masculine and should behave according to the code of male honor. Furthermore, all these ideals include an element of hegemonic masculinity called upon to protect the honor of families.

However, it was one thing to speak about ideals and norms and another about reality and everyday life. Many journalists complained that Bulgarian men were following male fashion and were involved in wearing “tail-coats”, “neckties” and “fashion”. An overwhelming number of examples by contemporaries concerning the male public of state officials, clerks, lawyers, etc. suggested that usually after five o’clock they visited taverns, pubs, clubs, and balls where they devoted their time to drinking, playing billiards, backgammon, cards or gambling. Many of them were relentlessly involved in night life, entertainment and “debauchery” as well as politics, partisanship and fashion.<sup>37</sup> Many contemporaries experienced the last Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 as an event that brought a new age in Bulgarian family life, converting many “modest” and “shy” Bulgarian girls into victims of the “gentlemanly compliment” and “affectionate politeness” of the male seducer.<sup>38</sup>

In fact, men’s clubs and pubs formed a significant aspect of the construction of masculinity since they provided alternatives to and substitutes for domestic life. They also reinforced the spatial boundaries separating men and women. Thus, many married men spent a large part of their lives as if they were bachelors. This was also the model of masculinity followed by young boys from the secondary schools and the urban male public. It was not that different among military officers.

Besides, the urban sphere in some bigger towns provided the “intelligentsia” with opportunities and space for open public adultery and public demonstrations of *machismo*, which became “impudent and insolent following urban fashion.” Some contemporaries even complained that these instances were regarded as a “feat” by the urban public and those men had their honorable reputation as merchants, clerks, officials, members of parliament, party leaders, and lawyers of ecclesiastical and lay institutions.<sup>39</sup>

37 Търновска конституция, VI, 11 април 1888, бр. 15., с. 1-2.; Искра, I, юли 1888., бр. 3., с. 136.; Зорница, XIII, 28 май 1888., бр. 22. Неверието в България., с. 1-2.; XIV, 1889, бр. 45.; Гражданин, I, 23 септ. 1890., бр. 17. Бобчевски. Нашата интелигенция, с. 1-2.; Свобода, VII, 21 май 1893., бр. 1103. Нашите обществени и семейни язви., с. 2-3.; VIII, 15 дек. 1893., бр. 1273., с. 3.; Дума, III, дек.-ян. 1894., кн. VI-VII. С., 1894., Обществен обзор., с. 442.

38 See for example the introduction of the translator in Дебе, 1885, с. 5-6.

39 Оджаков, 1893., с. 58. Having in mind Bulgarian customary law, S. S. Bobchev also mentioned “the bigger tolerance towards male adultery”. Бобчев, 1923., с. 83.

### **MODERNIZATION AND MALE ANXIETIES**

However, there was another side of the coin. The modernization process that took place in the 1880s together with the first new post-Ottoman generation, somewhere in the beginning of 1890s, brought, to a certain extent, a new and more complex society. The social and cultural life of fin-de-siècle Sofia and the bigger towns permitted a greater range of personal expression than had been possible at any earlier time. Notwithstanding, there were definite limitations on the forms of this expression, enforced more by opinion than by the law. Therefore, the new challenges and problems in masculinity and male identity provoked a public preoccupation with male honor. It became more visible in the public sphere in the late 1880s and the beginning of the 1890s.

Public discourse reveals widely shared preoccupations and anxieties. Some of them concerned the notion of ideal and real woman (wife or daughter). In modern Europe, literacy and a good education were required if women were to contain their impulsive natures and conduct themselves wisely. However, whereas in some Western European countries there was a male preoccupation with “sexual anarchy”, embodied in the “odd woman” ( the unmarried woman who undermined the comfortable binary system of sexuality and gender roles)<sup>40</sup> and the “new woman” or “femme nouvelle” (considered as an anarchic figure who threatened to turn the world upside down; the university-educated and sexually independent woman who criticized society’s insistence on marriage as woman’s only option for a fulfilling life)<sup>41</sup> in Bulgaria there was a preoccupation with the “coquette ” and her “contortions” (“кълчението”).<sup>42</sup> The same preoccupation was also directed against urban female consumption – “luxury”, “elegant clothes”, “dresses”, “corset”, “face-powder and make-up”, “hats”, “fashions”, “fashionable journals” as well as a strong female preference for “balls”, “dancing-parties”, “entertainment in society”.<sup>43</sup> Even one of the women translators of books about marriage complained that young Bulgarian women followed the fashion of “baby dress” but not of modern “child bearing”, of which they were ignorant.<sup>44</sup>

However, despite the dominance of the above mentioned anti-bourgeois and anti-aristocratic rhetoric the new cultural models overwhelmingly permeated

40 Showalter, 1992., pp. 19–37

41 Ibid., pp. 38–58.

42 Родолубец, I, 18 ян. 1890., бр. 39. Кокетничество., с. 5–6. Вазов, т. VII, 1976., с. 191. Literature on “new woman” was to appear some years later. Боа, 1899. See for example also the response in Мисъл, IX, дек., кн. XII, С., 1899., с. 558–560.

43 Дебе, 1885., с. 100–101; Свобода, VII, 15 ян. 1893., бр. 1006. Д. Левов. Нещо за проституцията., с. 2–3. 21 май 1893., бр. 1103. Нашите обществени и семейни язви., с. 2–3.; VII, 22 май 1893, бр. 1104., с. 2.; Вазов, т. VII, 1976., с. 191.; Вж. “Медицинска беседа”, II, редактор д-р Витанов, 1895–96., Вредата от носянето на корсета, от д-р Спряков, с. 338–342.

44 Дебе, 1885, с. 75.

“society” as a whole, starting with the “officers and top officials’ spouses” and spreading later to the “lower officials’ spouses” and the “female urban population in the bigger cities”.<sup>45</sup> Conspicuously, one of the reasons for this strong male preoccupation was the great attractiveness of this new type of culture and way of life, which forged new female identities. This new type of femininity, at least within urban life and culture, had no essential social and cultural barriers. That is why in May 1893 the official newspaper proclaimed in a worried tone: “Minister’s wife, merchant’s wife, some small officials’ wife, gendarmes’ wife, hairdresser’s wife – all of them dress up in the same way and there is no difference between them...”<sup>46</sup> As a result, even according to the critical language of “Svoboda”, “men tend to cease being breadwinners and fathers but woman tend to cease being housewives and mothers”.<sup>47</sup>

Alarmed by these developments, Bulgarian politicians, journalists, and even physicians united in condemnation of these women. They celebrated the traditional female role against this Bulgarian version of experienced “sexual anarchy”. It led to unprecedented anxieties about family, marriage and family honor. In the 1880s and the beginning of the 1890s in bigger towns greater freedom was granted to women as well as looser standards of public morality. But domesticity also characterized requirements for an ideal modern family, the “warmth” into which one could retreat from the pressures of the outside world. Thus, family honor and the protection of the family name remained important and there were many anxieties over family reputation.

W. Reddy reveals how nineteenth-century French bourgeois families were pre-occupied with respectability and how an essential feature of honor was keeping up appearances, the avoidance of shame through all forms of concealment, suppression of feeling, passion and sentiment, in order to reconcile public morality with private desire. In this regard, he argues how honor was preserved if secrecy was successfully maintained through careful management of reputation and appearances.<sup>48</sup> Contemporary Bulgarian authors have also mentioned “concealment” and “secret” as important traditional and especially modern family strategies in keeping “family interest and honor”, “family economy, honor and good name”, “domestic honor”, in avoiding shame and “dishonor of the family and clan.”<sup>49</sup> Although the divorce was not such a tough matter under customary and ecclesiastic law,<sup>50</sup> the competition for family honor and anxieties over family reputation made the cases of divorce relatively rare; apparently men and women desperately tried to avoid the public scrutiny.<sup>51</sup>

45 Медицинска беседа, II, редактор д-р Витанов, 1895-96., Вредата от носянето на корсета, от д-р Спряков, с. 338.

46 Свобода, VII, 21 май 1893., бр. 1103. Нашите обществени и семейни язви., с. 2-3.

47 Ibid.

48 Reddy, 1997, pp. 7, 10, 12-13, 15, 37, 36, 38, 47, 49-50, 60-64, 101-102

49 Оджаков, 1893., с. 48-49.

50 Бобчев, 1923., с. 68-71, 71 и сл.; Алтънов, Ив., 1929., с. 153 и сл.

51 Дебе, 1885., с. 161.; Бобчев, 1923., с. 73.

However, the above mentioned trend of increase in divorces and public anxieties about family and family life, already “envisaged” by “many” contemporaries as a “burden”, “hell” and “inferno”,<sup>52</sup> provoked the increase in literature covering topics concerning happy and socially correct marriage.<sup>53</sup> This literature taught that it was “a natural and moral debt of every worthy person to build this sacred nest”; that was seen as “a human vocation”.<sup>54</sup> According to this code “a girl” had a vocation to be “a good spouse, mother and housewife”.<sup>55</sup> Both early and late marriages were considered harmful.<sup>56</sup> The ideal couple should consist of a faithful wife and a husband who was not a fanatically jealous man.<sup>57</sup> These books argued that usually marriage in Bulgaria did not result from “love”,<sup>58</sup> but they also noted that marriages based on “passionate love” and without the parents’ consent were unhappy, too.<sup>59</sup>

All problems discussed above concern masculinity and male honor. Moreover, they are clear indications of the anxieties about male control. There were many male voices in the public sphere arguing: “Family life is expensive, women are bad...”<sup>60</sup> Even in medical journals it was underlined that 2 or 3 times more men than women suffered from neurasthenia, because it was “the man who has to overcome bigger obstacles” in “a tough battle for life”. It was also claimed that men were those who, in their role of breadwinners, should care about the education of their sons and daughters as well as buy clothes and cover other household expenditures.<sup>61</sup> As one can see, this rhetoric really reveals the uncertainty about traditional masculinity and male authority, subverted by the modernization process.

In the late 1880s and the beginning of the 1890s, there was salient anxiety about the effect women and desire might have on men as well. Many contemporaries experienced their time in terms of a crisis of masculinity. They felt the threat posed to the survival of patriarchal sexual division, social and familial roles of the sexes by the rise of modernity.<sup>62</sup> That was the reason why the above mentioned preoccupations about fashionable clothes, the new model of life and increasing expenditures were combined with statements like: “Bad time to be a husband” or “Difficult time to be a parent”.

52 Добрев, Ил., 1891., с. V.

53 Стойков, 1886.; Витанов, 1892.; Горов, 1888., Дебе, 1885.; Дебе, 1886.; Добрев, 1891.; Оджакков, 1893.

54 Добрев, 1891., с. V.

55 See the preface by the translator T. N. Popova in Дебе, 1885, с. 3.

56 Ibid., с. 5.

57 Ibid., с. 20.

58 Оджакков, 1893, с. 37. Дебе, 1885, с. 28

59 Оджакков, П., 1893., с. 38

60 Свобода, VII, 21 май 1893., бр. 1103. Нашите обществени и семейни язви., с. 2-3.

61 Медицински сборник, 1895, приложение., с. 15

62 Бобчев, 1923., с. 79.; Оджакков, 1893., с. 50-51, 56-57, 58-59 About the inheritance practices see с. 51, 62 и сл.

Moreover, apart from its family and marital dimension, the problem of male honor and male control had a public or political dimension. In Bulgaria, as in other countries in Europe at that time, an unusual emphasis was put upon the connections between normal sexuality, family life and national ideals. Perhaps, that was the reason why despite the representation of the feminine theme and all the problems concerning emancipation, in its public representation the Savova affair did not become a story about a woman, but more about family honor and male honor, male fear of shame and male desire for honor. It was no accident that the discourse of the breadwinner as well as the strong traditional notions that a husband should manage his wife dominated the public and private discourses. As we will see, to a certain extent, they were even expressed by some women involved.

### ***DUEL, POLITICS AND MASCULINITY***

Following R. Nye's classification of nineteenth century French duels, one can put the Stambolov-Savov case under the types of public, political and "serious" duels, the last one often called the "gallant" duel. In this kind of duels men fought over issues that touched on intimate details of private life: family name, personal integrity, and, especially, women.<sup>63</sup> In Germany, even among the opponents of dueling, there was a widespread view that in cases of adultery the duel was absolutely unavoidable<sup>64</sup>

For M. Savov, as a military man, the display of courage in a personal affair was indistinguishable from courage displayed in the battlefield. He was driven by outraged honor to avenge himself on the Prime Minister. According to the modern honor code, Savov was under constraint to uphold his masculinity. In that way, he would be able to regain his credibility in the eyes of his adversaries and the public as well as in his own eyes. For St. Stambolov – as a main representative of the political class and political power – it was explicitly required to possess good reputation and morality, to observe the rules of "honor", to be an example to the rest of society. Therefore, the affair became a story about the personal courage and honor of two men as well as the sexual honor of S. Savova. Perhaps it was true, as P. Odzhakov wrote, that "materialism prevails without exception in all deeds and actions in Bulgarian society"<sup>65</sup>; however, what united Stambolov and Savov was the modern bourgeois requirement of honor, attached to the performance of their public functions.

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63 Nye, 1993, pp. 186, 191, 199-200

64 Flevert, 1995, p. 199.

65 Оджаков, П., 1893., с. 43.

Thus, the affair gave journalists and editors a chance to display their talents to the public. They tried to bring up all the evidence in order to prove that their side had behaved most honorably. It was the code of honor that led politicians and journalists to hurl invectives, to invent insults and scandalous lies in the press, in the hope of offending the reputation of political enemies. In fact, contemporaries read in dueling narratives metaphors of courage or cowardice: qualities that reflected a man's reputation as a leader, and the worthiness of his cause.

Having resorted to a subtle game, the oppositional press tried to destabilize some of the preconceived notions about the Bulgarian government and the Prime Minister's masculinity. For many years St. Stambolov had been depicted as a tough man with bravery and strong will to fight. There were no obstacles for his political will and decisiveness. His body was the epitome of manliness defined by the ability to control himself and to command others. It was also an embodiment of self-controlled and self-sacrificial patriotism. However, through rhetorical manipulation and subtle games the bravery and strong will to fight (typical for the imagined former "rebel" masculinity) turned into "great cruelty" and rape. Therefore, the mentioned story suggested in a comprehensive way that the government increasingly ruled through repression and fear. In this regard, it turned into a highly repressive and narrowly limited version of masculinity in power.

Besides, it was also conceived as a form of betrayal of the revolutionary ideal. For many years the former national revolutionary tradition against Ottoman rule, and especially its embodiment in Hr. Botev's image, was used for justification and legitimization of St. Stambolov and his policy.<sup>66</sup> However, when in 1888 Z. Stoyanov published an attempt for Hr. Botev's biography, at the end of the book he depicted him disappointed and crying. However, this did not mean the hero had feminine features; this was a way of portraying Botev as a morally delicate person. This delicate masculinity was different from non-Bulgarian modern effeminate male heterosexuality as well as from an intrinsically alien homosexuality. Thus, there was some ambiguous rejection of what was perceived either as modern foreign effeminacy or alien masculine seductiveness, usually embodied by a man who both resembled women and desired them as well. Moreover, political tyranny was read and represented to the public in sexual terms of rape and seduction. It was especially salient in the generalization made by the "Borba" newspaper, which wrote about Stambolov and P. Slavkov: "Besides, are their victims just two? How many hundreds of girls have they deprived of virginity and have thrown them into abject wretchedness."<sup>67</sup> As long as according to modern medical science

66 *Svoboda*, 15 March 1894, No. 1342.

67 *Борба*, 1 22 май 1894., бр. 11, с. 3-4.

control over sexual drives was considered a sign of mental health,<sup>68</sup> perhaps, the narrative was to suggest illness of political power and state institutions as well.

The accusations of trying to evade the duel were represented as examples of fear and lack of honor alien to the masculine role. Men who act in a cowardly or fearful manner usually lose their honor. With political authority under question, both masculinity and honor became unstable and contested. It opened the door to a continuous delegitimization of political power, which for many years had legitimized itself in terms of embodiment of Bulgarian masculinity and male honor.

In this regard, the whole rhetoric about the committed “bloody insult” by Stambolov and how it should be cleaned with “blood” represented the significance of the concept of “male honor” and “family honor” at that time. It also represented the notion how the real male who was insulted and exposed to shame should look for “satisfaction”.<sup>69</sup> It shows conspicuously the strong influence of the European code of male honor within the Bulgarian public sphere and demonstrates the real and symbolic links between Bulgaria’s culture of honor and political culture at the time.

The governmental newspapers’ interpretation of Savov’s behavior as a “*crazy man*”, who, by slandering his own wife tarnished his “*family honor*”, to a certain extent, fitted contemporary views on male honor in France, Germany and other European countries. According to them, shame might be a strong enough emotion to cause temporary insanity.<sup>70</sup> This process could be regarded as Savov’s demasculinization as far as it was supposed that men, who regulated their behavior on the basis of honor, acted more rationally than women. They were expected to be able to see and think with greater clarity and consistency.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, it was not recommendable for a man seeking to avoid “ridicule” to denounce his wife as adulteress because, although he might continue to be regarded as a man of honor, his situation in the world would always have something of the grotesque about it.<sup>72</sup> Savov’s representation as a husband routinely beating his wife was also close to then current clinical literature on impotence. It spoke about the “cowardly” way in which men, afflicted with some “shameful madness”, treated their wives.<sup>73</sup>

At that time, the Bulgarian army exerted an enormous influence on civilian society and following Western European models the duel was, at least rhetorically, a component of the officers’ code of honor. This code of honor – again as in other European countries at that time – reveals a community increas-

68 Mosse, 1996, pp. 82, 86.

69 Свободно слово, 23 април 1893, бр. 90., с. 1 . Дуелът...

70 Reddy, 1997, p. 12.

71 Ibid., p. XIII

72 Nye, 1993, p. 171.; Reddy , 1997, p. 7.

73 Nye, 1993, p. 124

ingly marked by admiration for military force.<sup>74</sup> It is not surprising that the oppositional newspapers closely connected the whole story with the most important male institution. Their representation was charged with a rhetoric involving “honor”, “military coat of the Bulgarian army”, “satisfaction of the military coat”. As long as the very army was an institution charged with much masculinity and honor, the Minister of War easily turned out to be a symbol of masculine, family, military and national honor at the same time. In fact, his career was typical for the whole officer corps. Because of his participation in the Unification of 6<sup>th</sup> September 1885, the Serbo-Bulgarian war of November 1885, the counter-coup d'état of August 1886, he was decorated with many state medals.<sup>75</sup> Although with different motives, even the governmental newspapers noted that the whole Bulgarian army and its “military honor” were at stake. According to “Svoboda” the whole army was involved in an intrigue.<sup>76</sup> After Savov's resignation, the main oppositional newspaper made the conclusion that “the goal behind Mr. Savov's discharge is not the preservation of honor of the army but the preservation of its dishonor...” It was added that in the future every soldier should know that he could make a military career only by sacrificing his family honor. The main conclusion of “Svobodno slovo” was that with “the discharge”, “dishonor, disgrace, shamelessness rule” in Bulgaria instead of Stambolov.

However, there was a visible symbolic link between the honor of the army, family honor and honor of the nation. According to the modern ideals, the family was supposed to mirror state and society, the health of the family became inseparable from the health of the nation; the concept of personal honor was closely associated with the themes of patriotism and the national ideals.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, it is interesting how, as it were, the discourse about the male honor or “family honor” of the army and the nation was predicted several months ago. Commenting on the Prime Minister and his rule, in the summer of 1893 the newspaper “Progress”, issued in Pazardzhik, wrote: “His “merits” are so sinister that day after day we cannot pay more and more to him with our wives and children, with our interests, desires and strivings. One day all of us will disappear in the interests, desires and strivings of one person.”<sup>78</sup>

Traditionally, as a former active participant in the Bulgarian national revolutionary movement and rebellions, Stambolov derived his legitimacy from a supposedly harsh and firm, but incorruptible “rebel” masculinity. In this regard, the constructed notion of sexual self-indulgence of governmental figures

74 On the nineteenth century Prussian and later German army as a powerful bastion of dueling, and its influence on other parts of society see Flevert, 1995, pp. 36-37, 84. On the leadership of Prussia's militaristic ruling strata, which led to the “brutalization” of large sections of the German middle classes, see Elias, 1996, pp. 49-51, 92-93. On the Russian army see Reyfman, 1999.

75 Сейков, 1904.

76 Свобода, VIII, 25 април 1894., бр. 1372., с. 2. По гнѣсно измислената...

77 Mosse, 1985, pp 19, 98

78 Прогрес, I, 26 юний 1893., бр. 33. с. 509.

was used to represent the government in a convincing way as an embodiment of corruption. In fact, the whole story was depicted in terms of “virtue” and “debauchery”. According to the editors of “Svobodno slovo”, “virtue” was embodied by “Bulgaria” and the Bulgarian people, while “debauchery” was epitomized by Stambolov and his “comrades”.<sup>79</sup> In this regard, “debauchery” was represented comprehensively as a symbol of political corruption. In a society where the ideas of “liberty”, “civil rights” and the rule of “law” were confined to a tiny and fragile civil society, more particularly the “intelligentsia”, the opposition decided to play on the grounds of the sense of morality, honor and reputation. It had to create impression not only of “tyranny” and abuse but of downright “debauchery”. Therefore, to Stambolov’ image of a “tyrant” was added the notions of a “lecher” and a “rake”. The adultery became publicly known and turned out to be an embodiment of governing “corruption”. As long as morality was seen as social health, the corruption of the purity and chastity of manhood stood for the sickness and dissolution of the government and the ruling political class.

In this regard, the Bulgarian case was very similar to the widely shared European belief that vices and moral laxity could be read as a model of the whole state and government, that the Roman Empire had fallen on account of internal depravity comparable with modern corruption.<sup>80</sup> That is the reason why oppositional representation was supposed to alert public opinion by likening the government to something like a Roman Empire in decline. This can also be seen within the context of the traditionally strong anti-aristocratic and anti-bourgeois populist Bulgarian discourse, which was directed against the gallantry of kings and nobles and their licentious cupidity, as opposed to public virtue. Moreover, one should not forget that since the beginning of the nineteenth century ideal manliness had meant freedom from sexual passion, the sublimation of sensuality to the leadership of society and the nation.<sup>81</sup>

The story also indicates how “Bulgarian” masculinity was in crisis at that time. It is well known that toward the end of the nineteenth century, modern masculinity was put to the test in Western Europe by its second great crisis since the one that occurred at its birth.<sup>82</sup> The male fear resulted from multiple strains put on sex roles by the social and political emancipation of women.<sup>83</sup> In his study on France in this period, R. Nye argues that the homage paid to courage in the duel was part of a complex male reaction to the crisis of masculinity, provoked by the challenge of feminism and by the first signs of the twentieth century’s gender revolution. In his opinion, it led to the elaboration of new “scientific” misogyny and the expression and re-articulation of

79 Свободно слово 14 април, бр. 88., с. 1. На кръстопът.

80 Kendrick, 1987, pp. 5-6

81 Mosse, 1985, p. 13

82 Mosse, 1996, p. 76

83 Flevert, 1995, pp. 172-173; Nye, 1993, p. 125

an ideal of physical courage, toward which men might strive drawing upon traditional notions of masculinity and sexual difference.<sup>84</sup> Although Bulgarian feminism was a weak movement, some women began to demonstrate embarrassing drives toward independence. Without being radical, they still started to re-define the traditional notions of the institutions of marriage and family. Probably, in bigger towns women were more aware of their property and inheritance rights as well as their right under certain conditions to divorce, according to both ecclesiastic and customary law.<sup>85</sup> The first opinions challenging even the system of higher education appeared. The contemporary debate pointed to an underlying sense of powerlessness and frustration and men felt exposed to danger of humiliation. Finding an alternative image of manliness was becoming more and more difficult. As a result, the stresses of maintaining an external masculine mask of self-confidence and strength led to male nervous disorders.

Despite the crisis, Bulgarian men tightly controlled politics and the public sphere. By the end of the century, as in other countries, fixed and unchanging sex roles were seen as part of the fabric of society and the nation.<sup>86</sup> The dominant notion among the Bulgarian political class about women and politics was saliently expressed in the private letter written by K. Stoilov, a moderate conservative from Sofia to his political friend Gr. Nachovich in Bucharest. In March 1886 Stoilov wrote: “I would prefer them to deal with pulitika<sup>87</sup> and not with politics.<sup>88</sup> Once during the crisis of 1886-87, according to Sultana R. Petrova, even her father said: “What do you know about responsibilities and duty to the fatherland? Take care of your skirts and hats; do not speak about things you do not understand.”<sup>89</sup> About 1886-87, although a “person with European culture”, but “a chorbazia in his views and manners”, Dr. G. Valkovich objected to Sultana’s promenade in the city park with other young man without her husband.<sup>90</sup> She also testifies how in the late 1880s because of “patriarchality”, “our habits and customs” it was impossible for ministers’ wives to attend some public events where there were unmarried persons like the monarch himself.<sup>91</sup> Even within the discourse of the history of marital law women were described as “disposed to excess” and “emancipated women” were as “the most wretched.”<sup>92</sup>

In fact, in the late nineteenth century the resistance in Europe to women’s emancipation was bolstered by the scientific doctrine of innate sex difference.

84 Nye, 1993, p. 226

85 Алтънов, 1929., с. 153.

86 Mosse, 1985, pp. 16-17.

87 The expression comes from the Bulgarian word *pula*, which means *skirt*.

88 ЦДИА, ф. 600, оп. 1., а.е 227., с. 21.

89 Петрова, 1991, с. 179.

90 Ibid., с. 179-180.

91 Ibid., 1991, с. 11.

92 Оджакон, 1893., с. 59, 65.

Women's exclusion from universities, for instance, was justified by the claim that the female mind was too delicately poised and the resulting mental disturbance would be bad for their capacities to be good wives and mothers.<sup>93</sup> Although woman was at the same time idealized as mother, the guardian of morality, and of public and private order,<sup>94</sup> men were believed to be more advanced creatures than women, creatures endowed with superior intellect and capacity for abstract thinking, depth and seriousness.<sup>95</sup>

Still, the affair has shown how, because of the development of the free press, public discussion and the expansion of the public sphere, space was opened for women. On 28 May 1894, Maria Matrova, Savova's sister, presented on the pages of the "Plovdiv" newspaper her own version of the story. According to her statement, the story that had already been circulated was false. She told a story about masculine violence and search of excuse for divorce, military promotion and career. M. Savov, her brother-in-law, was depicted as a man who did not love his own wife anymore.<sup>96</sup> To a certain extent, one can discern in this literary style and rhetoric the influence of French sentimental literature.<sup>97</sup> Peculiar to this genre was the story about a devoted wife and tender mother deprived of help and support by a husband.

Conspicuously, newspapers, journals, novels, and the theater disseminated notions of female feeling and fulfillment, which were taken on by modern literature. Thus Bulgarian young women were prepared to include these stories in their own melodramas. Reading sentimental novels and melodramas was a liberating education of the imagination and a discovery of shared fates, providing women with a mode of self-interpretation.<sup>98</sup> As a result, they were able, following French women from some earlier decades, to create a freer identity beyond the bonds of marriage. Moreover, they borrowed a form of "sentimental protest" that questioned patriarchal authority and established a set of conventions challenging the role of shame as a regulatory feeling. Thus, they could dare break the laws of appearance, speak about their hopeless or failed marriages, violent husbands, and demand equal access to the public sphere.<sup>99</sup> This strategy can be seen also as part of the discourse of chivalric concern for the "weak" ladies suggesting that one should speak with respect and delicacy to women and should defend them as the "knights" had done.<sup>100</sup> Therefore,

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93 Connel, 1995, p. 21.

94 Mosse, 1985, p. 17.

95 *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17; Nye, 1993, pp. 114, 116.; Reddy, 1997, pp. XIII, 12, 43.

96 Пловдив, IX, 28 май 1894., бр. 56., с. 3.

97 On the translations of French sentimental literature, including Corneille, Racine and George Sand, and its wide reception among the Bulgarian public from 1840s until 1880s see Генчев, 1979, с. 337, 340, 343-344, 348-349, 350, 362. The author also points out that some readers were able to understand French originals as well. See с. 352-355.

98 It is interesting that a similar version of the story can be read in Petrova's memoirs. See Петрова, 1991, с. 242-244

99 Reddy, 1997, pp. 46, 51, 59, 74-77, 78-79, 81, 87-90, 102

100 Nye, 1993, pp. 156-157.

adopting this strategy, M. Matrova also relied on circulating opinions within Bulgarian society against Savov' type of behavior depicted by her.<sup>101</sup>

However, it was the very same S. Savova that the governmental press described as a “crazy woman” and a “painfully debauched wife” – an image that was supposed to be embarrassing and more convincing to the Bulgarian public.<sup>102</sup> Appropriating this narrative strategy, governmental journalism relied on the popular nineteenth century image of woman as well. It had several sources. First, it was a common sense truth in Europe that for women honor often seemed less important than emotional fulfillment, passion and sentimental attachments. They experienced shame in a different way; they were not capable of the seriousness of men; they put sentiment above conventional morality. Moreover, as W. Reddy emphasizes, many women acted as if these images truly applied to them.<sup>103</sup> The second source can be found in the image of woman as the temptress who kills her lovers, the *femme fatale* who seduces men to destroy them, or woman as a creature of uncontrolled passion.<sup>104</sup> The third one can be sought within the explanations in medical literature covering prostitution, where the phenomenon was explained in terms of female sexual organization.<sup>105</sup>

However, the democratic rules and freedom of the press prescribed by the Tyrnovo Constitution of 1879 often really opened the public sphere for a discursive competition. In this regard, despite its masculine nature, the very public sphere was sometimes filled out by a language about the mutual equality in terms of the requirements of “innocence”, “sincerity” and moral “purity” imposed on “the maid” (“момата”) and “the lad” (“момъкът”), as far as their premarital life was concerned. It was critically announced how the great majority of non-married young urban officials and clerks often irresponsibly visited “brothels and seedy cafeterias (кафе-шантани)”. Moreover, these democratic rules and the freedom of the press also opened the public sphere for debates about prostitution, female education, upbringing of girls and organization of female labor, female victims of violence at the work place, especially as domestic servants, saleswomen and chambermaids in hotels.<sup>106</sup> This particular brand of male feminist discourse<sup>107</sup> also shows that Bulgarian male writers did not wish to keep women in the new national state ignorant. As P. Odzhakov put it, “a

101 Customary and church law was especially very negative towards a husband who accused his wife of adultery that he could not prove. Бобчев, 1923., с. 55, 72. See also Оджакков, 1893., с. 57, 58.; Алтънов, 1929., с. 157.

102 Бобчев, 1923., с. 79.

103 Reddy, 1997, pp. XII, 38, 40, 45, 50-51, 54, 111

104 Mosse, 1996, pp. 74, 102

105 Engelstein, 1992, p. 144.

106 Свобода, VII, 21 ян. 1893., бр. 1011. Д. Левов. Нещо за проституцията.

107 Even at the very end of the century, some contemporary writers noted that there were already many translations of feminist literature but with the exception of “three or four female writers” the translators were predominantly “males”. See for example Мисъл, IX, дек., кн. XII, С., 1899., с. 558-559.

woman deprived of rights” could bear only “children deprived of rights”.<sup>108</sup>

However, the debate on these topics was constrained within the notions of the patriarchal model supported by the hybridity of its traditional and modern bourgeois versions. Even the above mentioned judgment of the leftist newspaper “Borba” saw the disciplining role of a husband towards his wife in correcting her behavior.<sup>109</sup> In this regard, the overwhelming number of complains about contemporary women were combined with discourse about male responsibility for this situation. It was also represented as a responsibility of men and male-dominated institutions such as the family and school where it was the father’s and teachers’ responsibility to fashion women as “spouses and mothers”. Although this discourse looked at the surface profemale, its premises were deeply embedded in traditional conventions and stereotypes about male and female roles. Having complained about young girls’ and female spouses, in terms of their “false etiquette”, “completely harmful fantasies”, “clothes” and “dances”, the author states explicitly: “On the one hand, we recognize that women are governed by men, but on the other, we complain about them... No, no, it is not women’s fault, women are governed and managed by men...” Moreover, projecting this model onto the whole state and politics, the author transferred the responsibility more to “men and most of all those who are at the head.”<sup>110</sup> It is evident how stubborn this notion was.

This idea of male responsibility intersects with the governmental version of the Savov story and his image in it. It completely fitted the modern European notion that husbands had the power of marital correction over wives.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, according to some contemporary French authors at the time, the cruel idea of punishing the cuckold who had been betrayed by his wife had its own logic because the infidelity of the wife was nearly always the result of the incapacity of the husband.<sup>112</sup>

It is true that the whole debate in Europe on women’s rights was presented on the pages of the Bulgarian newspapers and journals, especially the socialist and liberal ones. However, the very affair and its media coverage show how women generally accepted male superiority and the patriarchal model. Even for Savova’s sister the affair was a story about the “unhappiness of a virgin wretch in the arms of a man who is capable of everything, but unable to lead a woman.”<sup>113</sup> This thinking reveals how Bulgarian “high society” women

108 Оджакoв, П., 1893., с. 57. Nevertheless, as Elaine Showalter has noted about the Western world, paradoxically, some cases of male rebellion in Bulgaria against patriarchy did not necessarily mean a commitment to feminism. In fact, anti-patriarchal sentiments could coexist comfortably with misogyny. Showalter, 1992, p. 11. There were many examples of male politicians and writers who were critical of the patriarchal order but on the every-day level often looked with fear to the new feminist one, too.

109 Борба, I 22 май 1894., бр. 11, с. 3.

110 Свoбoдa, VII, 22 май 1893, бр. 1104., с. 2.

111 Reddy, 1997, p. XI

112 Нye, 1993, p. 182.

113 Пловдив, IX, 28 май 1894., бр. 56., с. 3.

imagined their fixed place in it – their natural vocation in marriage as mothers and educators, giving tenderness and affection. In return, they demanded the above mentioned emotional fulfillment and sentimental attachments as well as the gallant defense and protection by their husbands.<sup>114</sup> Women actively sought to hold themselves apart from public matters and politics. Respecting the law of restricting their affection to family they treated other matters with less seriousness. They provided men with relief from cares and with entertainment by the grace of their manners and dress, and it was their role to spend men's earnings. The cultures of "odd woman" and "new woman" were far from them.

The published private correspondence about the duel between Stambolov and Savov was an occasion for newspapers to debate about the boundaries between the private and public spheres. "Svododno slovo" emphasized, and "Svoboda" agreed (but having in mind all the correspondence concerning the affair), that Savov's letter to the monarch was "personal" and it was not written for "publication".<sup>115</sup> This demonstrates the conspicuously double criteria for private and public and their appropriation and usage depending on political utility. Establishing the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press, members of the Constitutional Assembly in 1879 made public the holding of government office, the legislative function, and courtrooms. In the private realm they left the protection of the family from public interference that went beyond the sphere of public action and entered the private realm of the family and household, the "private" in the sense of family secrets, male authority, and the management of the family name. However, the last decades of the nineteenth century were marked by an overwhelming number of attacks on personal honor, which remained vigorous in society and political life.

It has already been mentioned how important was especially the French influence on Bulgarian masculinity and the male code of honor in the late nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup> The same could be said exactly about the duel as a ritual.<sup>117</sup> Describing one of the first duelling attempts in Bulgaria, involving former Minister T. Ikonov and Prime-Minister P. Karavelov, S. R. Petrova explicitly

114 As far as chivalry between equals was considered impossible, U. Flevert shows how in Germany contemporaries noted the fundamental contradiction between the efforts of women to abolish male protection and secure equal rights, and their willingness that men should act chivalrously towards them. See Flevert, 1995, p. 190.

115 Свободно слово, 1 май 1894, бр.92, с. 3.; 11 май 1894, бр. 95, с. 3.; Свобода, 3 май 1894., бр. 1379., с. 2.; 8 май 1894, бр. 94., с. 4.

116 On the strong French influence (even very often indirect) on manners and way of life in the previous decades see Генчев, Н., 1979, с. 369, 384-412.

117 It was as early as the 1870 that in a newspaper article entitled "*Wrecking Habit of the Duel*" it was described as "*one of the French customs deserving reproach*." See Дунав, бр. 463, 1/13 април 1870. I am grateful to my colleague Al. Vezekov for focusing my attention on this article. It does not mean that one should ignore some German and Russian influences, especially among the Bulgarian officer corps. On the dueling ritual in literature and the role of the literary text as a source of information in Germany and Russia see for example Flevert, 1995, p. 1., Reyfman, 1999, p. 34.

emphasizes the conscious efforts to follow French customs.<sup>118</sup> Ivan Vazov's play *Duel*, telling the story of the duel between Tihol Chushkarov, a small-time lawyer, and Racho Dragalevski, a small-time journalist, was also full of many French expressions and the duels in France were a reference point for one of the characters, namely a physician called Vesselinov.<sup>119</sup> It looks as if many representatives of the Bulgarian elite were construing their own lives, at least in part, according to French literary conventions. The very public debate on such topics as freedom of the press and guarding of honor was also full of references to the French practice.<sup>120</sup> Even on the level of rhetoric, the French influence was quite visible through the usage of French terms. (libel – “либел”, defamation – “дифамация” satisfaction – “сатисфакция”).

However, despite its bourgeois nature, the modern concept of manhood and masculine honor drew upon the aristocratic ideal of knighthood.<sup>121</sup> R. Nye also notes how since the Middle Ages the honor code has worked to shape and reflect male identity and ideals of masculine behavior. The duel was only the most spectacular representation of this function of the honor code; on a more prosaic level, the honor codes informed the day to day relations of men in different areas of public life.<sup>122</sup> Yet Norbert Elias argues that noble culture, which set the ideals of taste for the rest of the civilized world, was received by French bourgeoisie more unwaveringly than by any other bourgeoisie in Europe.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, in nineteenth century France the duel became a democratic phenomenon, although peasants and most men from the popular classes in reality were excluded.<sup>124</sup> This “embourgeoisement”<sup>125</sup> or “democratization” of the aristocratic duel has been stressed by many authors dealing with Germany<sup>126</sup> and Russia as well.<sup>127</sup> However, it has been estimated that only 5 percent

118 Петрова, 1991, с. 162

119 Вазов, Ив., 1939, с. 47,

120 See for example Танкова, 1992., с. 61-62, 76-80.

121 Mosse, G. 1985, p. 23. Recently M. Peltonen has stressed that despite its medieval precedents, the duel of honour was a Renaissance creation, when medieval forms of single combat were re-fashioned in Italy. Moreover, from the very beginning the duel of honour was an integral part of the new Renaissance ideology of courtesy and civility. These interpretations question the strong link, which modern scholarship envisages, between duelling and the medieval culture of knightly honor. According to Peltonen, there is a strong distinction between the medieval trial by combat and the modern duel. See more in Peltonen, 2003, pp. 4-5, 11-12, 13, 14, 303.

122 Nye, 1993, pp. 8, 32

123 Elias, 1982, p. 319

124 Nye, 1993, pp. 137, 215

125 Otherwise, N. Elias emphasizes the intermingling of cultural elements – including aristocratic and bourgeois – of different social provenance as a common phenomenon in modern societies. See for example Elias, 1996, pp. 60-61. Recently M. Peltonen has called attention to duelling as a chief means of maintaining civility and politeness in the world of luxury and commerce as well. Peltonen, 2003, pp. 263-302.

126 See Flevert, (1991) 1995; Elias, 1996, pp. 59, 64. It seems to me that “middle-class” involvement is a bit overstated in Flevert, pp. 5, 7, 84, 200. It is much more exact to speak about “male educated middle classes” (Flevert, p. 200.) as well as “middle-class students”, “middle-class civilians of sufficiently high status” or “topmost middle-class groups”, as segments that were part of a *Satisfaktionsfähige Gesellschaft*. See several places in Elias, 1996.

127 Ir. Reyfman emphasizes that in Russia, along with members of the nobility, in the duel began to take part the socially heterogeneous members of liberal professions or *raznochintsy* coming from

of German society were considered honorable enough to give satisfaction.<sup>128</sup> Otherwise, at fin-de-siècle, the Germans were Europe's most tenacious and serious duelists, because the most striking aspect of the German duel was its deadliness.<sup>129</sup>

At first glance, it seems that this "embourgeoisement" of the aristocratic duel should make it susceptible to reception from the Bulgarian middle class or the Bulgarian elite. In fact, in the 1880s and 1890s the Bulgarian elite, partly in imitation of these noble caste practices, tried to adapt an already bourgeois culture in order to meet its own public and private needs, to build up its own notion of caste. It was supposed to be a Bulgarian version of the *beau monde*, the polite, gentlemanly part of society. It should supposedly demonstrate the Bulgarian elite's desire for equality of status with their French, German or other European counterparts. For the members of the Bulgarian elite, fighting a duel was a role-play; it meant behaving in an honorable way so as to assert their status. By trying to display readiness to fight they would like to stress capability of taking risks and making decisions.

However, because of the lack of aristocracy and traditional court culture<sup>130</sup> "chivalry" and "chivalric ideals" were alien to the Bulgarian tradition.<sup>131</sup> The modern duel really was a middle-class institution, socially well integrated into the main currents of bourgeois culture in France, Germany and other countries, but culturally aristocratic in character. Thus, a cultural discourse of honor really helped the Bulgarian middle-class in the process of bourgeois self-fashioning. Moreover, in the social situation of post-Ottoman Bulgaria the elite was to accumulate a certain "cultural capital." Despite the letter of the constitution, honor was constructed as the fetish of a very tiny elite. However, in the 1880s and 1890s the Bulgarian version of a discourse of honor was one thing but internalizing the practice of the duel as a culture was another. The adjustment of such aristocratic practice to the middle-class sensibility was not so easy. Moreover, it is questionable to what extent this social imitation of European "good society" could produce a genuine sentiment of honor similar to that of the Old aristocracy and the French or German bourgeoisie. As R. Nye argues about France itself, even skill at weapons was a necessary but not sufficient condition for full qualification for an affair of honor.<sup>132</sup>

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the clergy, merchants, petty bureaucracy, and peasantry, which historically had nothing to do with duelling. Reyfman, 1999, pp. 85-91.

128 McAleer, 1994, p. 35.

129 Ibid., pp. 3, 43, 59, 183-184. About the unprecedented height of the German duel in the late nineteenth century see also Flevert, 1995, p. 9.

130 M. Peltonen emphasizes that the duel of honour was created within a new court culture, where emphasis was put on sophisticated manners. See Peltonen, 2003, p. 5

131 In this regard, if duelling even had no chivalric sources and the duel of honour came under the strong influence of the Italian Renaissance and its ideology of courtesy and civility there was no strong Renaissance tradition in Bulgaria either. See Даскалов, 2002, с. 65

132 Nye, 1993, p. 214

The above mentioned lack of an established court culture and aristocratic traditions with their sociability, which presupposes civility and politeness – sometimes purely artificial and hypocritical – was salient.<sup>133</sup> Civility and theatrical politeness were untypical for the Bulgarian elite or intelligentsia. However, duels between men of honor within the society of satisfaction, or polite society, were institutionalized with complex rules connected with civility and theatricality. It was a self-constrained and highly formalized form of combat and it had nothing to do with cunning, deceit, anger, rage and a thirst for vengeance. The individuals involved should control their emotions and personal sentiments such as fear, hate or the desire for retribution.<sup>134</sup> This lack of civility and politeness reveals the superficiality of the civilizing process in the Bulgarian context, which generated “grotesque hybrids”.<sup>135</sup> In the same superficial and grotesque way was received the duel. In this regard, Vazov’s play “Duel” focuses most of all on how both potential duelists try to avoid the real encounter and are reluctant to end up dueling.<sup>136</sup>

My other point concerns the difference between the German culture of following with respect and punctuality the rules of “*standesehre*” and the Bulgarian culture of violating rules and procedures, both of which were in some way integrated in the German and Bulgarian cultures of dueling. In Germany, dueling and the code of honor were a means of discipline and an illegal but formalized ritual contributing to the formality of the Germans, often incomprehensible to others.<sup>137</sup> It brings us to the idea of *habitus* as embodied social learning. In the 1880s and 1890s in Bulgaria there was no middle class that could match the nobility culture and the aristocratic elements of bourgeois culture. In fact, the English idea of gentlemanly honor, the French *point d’honneur* or German *standesehre* the Bulgarian elite adapted and interpreted in its own way. There were also many negative descriptions of the Russian duel. Bulgarians openly disregarded the dueling protocol and the symbolic behavior it involves was regarded as an empty convention.<sup>138</sup> Actually, many contemporaries openly refused to consider the duel a characteristic of Bulgarianness. At the turn of the century a certain Bulgarian officer stated that the duel “has no soil here because it is against our customs (“*нрави*”) our popular views on the term “honour”, on its violation, the cases and means of its rehabilitation.”<sup>139</sup>

133 S. R. Petrova speaks about several meetings with Princess Klementina when she perceived her as a “person of another world, another culture and other sensations” with “chivalry” and “nobility”, a person “ennobling” manners. Петрова, 1991, с. 11, 18. Later she speaks about Princess Maria Luisa as a woman “sent to soften our manners”, having in mind their roughness. Петрова, 1991, с. 14. In many places, she also describes Bulgarian society at that time as “without traditions”, lacking in “education and traditions”. Петрова, 1991, с. 27, 38, 178, 181

134 See Elias, N., 1996, p. 72.; Flevert, 1995, pp. 150–158, 169–171.

135 Генчев, 1979, с. 401, 410, 412.

136 Вазов, 1939, с. 54, 68–69.

137 Elias, 1996, pp. 50, 65–66, 68, esp. 64.

138 Петрова, 1991, с. 162.

139 Радев, 1899, с. 97. See also Радев, 1900, с. 98. This view was supported by other authors at the

One can also add that in Bulgaria the army was recently established, a predominantly urban middle class social body.<sup>140</sup> Behind the officer corps there was no strong military tradition and identity. As K. McAleer stresses for the German case, when regular officers of regular lineage were not under the immediate tutelage of aristocratic conceptions of honor, they seemed to be indifferent to dueling.<sup>141</sup> Many contemporaries were against any special “honor of the military coat”.<sup>142</sup> German officers’ “*standesehre*” was considered a “prejudice”, too.<sup>143</sup> Indeed at the end of the century, Bulgarian officers needed to be informed with the meaning of officer honor in the army.<sup>144</sup>

Moreover, in Bulgaria there were no typical institutions of German and French male sociability, which could cultivate the culture of fencing or dueling, the so called “the culture of the sword”. In practice, the real measure of the quality that made a man eligible to invoke the French *point d’honneur* or German *standesehre* was the knowledge of its elaborate rituals and the willingness to carry them out. However, the pedantic dueling behavior and its proper procedures, i.e. the assigned definite roles to all participants – challenger, challenged, seconds, witnesses, and doctors – were part of the socialization of the European upper-class in terms of cultural norms and forms of behavior. In Germany the duel found institutional support in the military system and the student fraternities where its “ideal aspect” was internalized.<sup>145</sup> However, in the Bulgarian case the duelers and their seconds very often demonstrated poor and second-hand knowledge of the ritual. Moreover, for Bulgaria’s middle class intelligentsia, despite the feeling of social inferiority, there was no nobility to compete with over the honor code.

It was known that “Wilhelmine duels” were deeply serious affairs, the French ones had an extremely low fatality rate,<sup>146</sup> and some Russians deviated from the norm of dueling behavior.<sup>147</sup> However, the Bulgarian duels simply did not occur.<sup>148</sup> There were some challenges but not real encounters even among the Bulgarian officers.<sup>149</sup> Bulgarian duels embodied neither the German moral duty nor French heroic voluntarism. As the Stambolov-Savov case shows, the

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time as well. See the review about cap. N. Radev’s study of the duel in Български преглед, год. VI, No. II, 1899, с. 138

140 Българската армия, 1988, с. 248.

141 Mc Aleer, 1994, p. 201.

142 Ето причините ..., Мисъл, год. XI, септ., кн. VII, София, 1901., с. 422

143 See the review about cap. N. Radev’s study of the duel in Български преглед, год. VI, No. II, 1899, с. 137-138

144 Радев, 1900, с. 16-18, 30-33, 98.

145 See Flevert, 1995, pp. 85-134, 178-179. On fighting fraternities in German universities see also McAleer, 1994, esp. ch. 4, pp. 119-158.

146 McAleer, 1994, pp. 43, 183-184

147 Reyfman, 1999, p. 3-4.

148 As Veselinov, one of the characters in Vazov’s “Duel” (“Двубой”), written in 1902, says: “But duels do not happen in our country, although there are many duels that are announced. Those who quarrel send each other seconds and with this everything ends. The negotiations are protracted over several weeks until the duel sinks into the sea and is forgotten.” Вазов, 1939, с. 17.

149 Радев, 1899, с. 98-99, 101. Радев, 1900, с. 98.

duel in Bulgaria adapted (rather than adopting) more French rhetoric and discourse of honor than the culture of honor and dueling. Moreover, it was not only an act of social imitation, but also of social simulation. The attempt to assimilate the honor code in Bulgaria happened at a different stage of historical development. It also functioned in a different social context. What was adopted included rhetoric, some gestures, but not the very dueling culture and the honor code.

Moreover, it should be added that this act of social imitation was a belated one. In England, dueling had ended almost in the middle of the nineteenth century and the so-called chivalric ideals manifested through the “spirit of duelling” were absorbed into the middle-class manners.<sup>150</sup> At fin-de-siècle most civilized countries had wiped dueling from their national customs, too.<sup>151</sup> It was a time of a growing criticism of duelling in Europe as lawless, antisocial, and irrational.<sup>152</sup> As K. McAleer puts it, the crude fact is that dueling in Germany was the product of a “basically retrograde and negative worldview”.<sup>153</sup> There were clear preferences expressed by Bulgarian officers for models and examples from England, the USA and Switzerland, where satisfaction was received according to the law and there were severe punishments for the duelists.<sup>154</sup> At the end of the century it was probably clear for the Bulgarian public that the duel was on the verge of extinction.<sup>155</sup>

Nevertheless, some contemporaries considered dueling and the honor code as signs of civilization and ennoblement of the customs.<sup>156</sup> In this regard, the treatment of the duel (“двубой”) in the Bulgarian penal code (art. 274-280) was also more an imitation of European fashions or models, given that there were no real-life duels. However, some Bulgarians really thought that dueling is a means of civilizing society, as it involves a refinement of speech and the civilization of the upper class which would prevent dishonorable behavior and would produce gentlemen with polite restraint and self-control.<sup>157</sup> It was one of the reasons for the support for the court of honor with aristocratic arguments that accepted the ideological basis of dueling.<sup>158</sup> Some foreign-trained Bulgarian intellectuals ridiculed apparent cowardice and considered knight-hood and respect for honor as positive traits; in this respect they referred to

150 Mosse, G., 1996, p. 23; McAleer, K., 1994, p. 207, Peltonen, M., 2003, p. 309-311; Elias, N., 1996, p. 50.

151 McAleer, K., 1994, p. 3

152 On the increasing anti-dueling campaign in the 1890s see Flevert, 1995, p. 192-195.

153 McAleer, 1994, p. 199

154 Радев, 1899, с. 95-98. The support for anti-dueling views is clear also in reviews about the book. See the review about cap. N. Radev's study of the duel in *Български преглед*, год. VI, No. II, 1899, с. 137-138

155 Радев, 1900, с. 5-6.

156 See examples in Радев, 1899, с. 97, 100.

157 For the European context see Flevert, 1995, pp. 22-23 According to Flevert, in the 1890s it was not difficult at all to find among the academic middle class in Germany defenders of dueling in principle. Flevert, 1995, p. 195

158 Радев, 1900, с. 32.

Hamlet, Don Quixote, Pushkin and Lermontov and their noble spirit.<sup>159</sup> Even some arguments could be heard that the duel would subvert discipline but it could elevate “the chivalrous spirit among the officers”, “a chivalrous spirit in contemporary knights”<sup>160</sup>

The above mentioned affair gives me the opportunity to reach some important conclusions about masculinity(ies) in the 1880s and 1890s, which have, in my opinion, wider implications for history, the humanities and social sciences. Whilst in the middle of the 1880s the vast majority of the Bulgarian political class still subscribed to a style of masculinity that rejected the bourgeois and aristocratic model conceived as “debauched”, at the beginning of the 1890s there was an unstable mixture of contradictory elements, reflecting conflicting aims and values. They were connected with traditional Bulgarian patriarchal masculinity and the modern (bourgeois) one as well as with new models of masculinity and male identity that were in the process of developing. At that time the traditional meanings of masculinity overlapped with modern urban masculinity, which had been more or less already established. Although the traditional patriarchal masculine idiom had not entirely disappeared, new values connected with loyalty, civility, etiquette, politeness became more or less part of the masculinity ideal. It constantly generated tensions between traditional and modern masculinity. These tensions were even stronger and salient among the socialists, who had to reconcile their traditional culture and values with widely circulated new notions about women in the socialist press.

As in other cultures, in late nineteenth century Bulgaria even modern masculinity was also connected with gender relations of power and subordination, the ideas of male authority and the power of the man to discipline his wife, which were a very strong and an integral part of the new ideal. Although at the time men dominated all forms of organizational, institutional and social power, to a certain extent, the continued expansion of the new public sphere was incompatible with many older notions of masculinity, honor and male power. It was definitely a transitional period in which many Bulgarian men experienced feelings of disempowerment, which were widely articulated in newspapers, journals and other types of literature.

159 In Vazov's “Duel” Veselinov, one of the characters, says: “I would like sincerely the duel to be implanted in our customs. The duel is ridiculous as many other ridiculous things, which we have been borrowed from abroad, but at least, in its core there is valor and a chivalric sense. The duel would humanize a bit our relations.” Вазов, Ив., 1939, с. 17. In many other places in this comedy Vazov refers through his characters to the need for “nobleness”, “chivalry” and “gentlemanly spirit” (“кавалерски дух”) in Bulgaria, and consequently the need for the duel. Вазов, 1939, с. 18, 64, 70.

160 Радев, 1899, с. 102. Радев also argues that officers should be educated in “the spirit of knighthood of which they are the contemporary representatives”. Радев, 1900, с. 33.

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