

In Mexico's Defense: Dueling, Diplomacy, Gender and Honor, 1876–1940

Amelia M. Kiddle*
University of Calgary

This article examines Mexican diplomacy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and argues that a transnational code of honor rooted in the practice of dueling governed diplomats' behavior. It demonstrates that, in spite of domestic reforms that exalted the incorporation of the masses and the empowerment of women in revolutionary Mexico, diplomats continued to participate in the diplomatic culture of dueling—both actual and journalistic—that feminized the nation and perpetuated patriarchy within the diplomatic corps.

Este artículo examina la diplomacia mexicana a fines del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX y en el que se argumenta que un código transnacional de honor enraizado en la práctica de duelo gobernó el comportamiento de los diplomáticos. Demuestra que, además de las reformas domésticas que exaltaron la incorporación de las masas y el empoderamiento de las mujeres en México revolucionario, los diplomáticos siguieron participando en la

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cultura diplomática del duelo—tanto real como periodístico—que feminizó la nación y perpetuó el patriarcado dentro del cuerpo diplomático.

Key words: diplomacy, dueling, gender, international relations, journalism, Latin America, Mexico, Mexican Revolution.

Palabras clave: diplomacia, el duelo, género, periodismo, Latinoamérica, México, relaciones internacionales, la Revolución mexicana.

At a dance held at the Brazilian Legation in Asunción, Paraguay, the evening of November 14, 1936, Captain Camilo Pérez Uribe, a veteran of the Chaco War and the younger brother of Paraguay's undersecretary of foreign affairs, muttered a derogatory name as the Mexican chargé d'affaires at Asunción, Bernardo Reyes, passed by. When Reyes stopped and asked for an explanation, Pérez Uribe claimed that the epithet had not been directed at him. He then declared that he knew Reyes's family, and that the chargé d'affaires was the only one among them who was a degenerate leftist. He went on to call Mexico a Communist country and to accuse Reyes of interfering in the internal affairs of Paraguay. After a further exchange of words, in which the captain allegedly criticized the Mexican Revolution and President Lázaro Cárdenas, the outraged Reyes issued a formal challenge to Pérez Uribe, who laughed and said he would meet him on the field of honor any time. Over the course of the next week, their dispute played out in the press and in the capital, Asunción.¹

The morning after the party at the Brazilian Legation, Reyes's seconds visited Captain Pérez Uribe, who categorically denied injuring Reyes's honor.² The seconds believed the matter closed, but Reyes was not satisfied, and his representatives met those of Pérez Uribe again the following day. Because the two men's positions seemed irreconcilable, the seconds convoked a tribunal of honor to examine the case. After concluding that there was no proof that Pérez Uribe had insulted Reyes or Mexico, the tribunal declared that there were no grounds for a duel.³

1. The parties involved published their correspondence regarding the incident in *El Día* (Asunción) and *La Hora* (Asunción). These texts were translated by Glenn A. Abbey of the United States Legation in Asunción and forwarded to the U.S. State Department. Because Abbey did not include the original articles, this reconstruction of events is based upon his translations. United States, National Archives Records Administration (NARA), Record Group 59 (RG 59), Box 4110, 712.34/4.

2. Néstor Martínez Fetes and Rocque Gaona to Bernardo Reyes, 15 Nov. 1936, NARA, RG 59, Box 4110, 712.34/4.

3. Basiliano Caballero Irala, Francisco Caballero Álvarez, and Dr. Diógenes R. Ortúzar to Néstor Martínez Fretes, Rocque Gaona, Oscar Echeguren Staunch and Linneo Insfrán, 16 Nov. 1936, NARA, RG 59, Box 4110, 712.34/4.

Considering the case closed, Bernardo Reyes gave the letter his seconds had sent him advising him of the matter's resolution to the newspaper of *El Día*, a periodical he knew to be sympathetic to his activities in Paraguay.⁴ Instead of concluding the matter, the publication of the letter merely stoked the fires of the conflict and nearly precipitated the duel that the parties' representatives had attempted to prevent. In the published letter, Reyes quoted from a code of honor which stipulated that satisfaction—that is, the resolution of the conflict that precipitated the challenge—even greater than a retraction came from the denial of an offense.⁵ A debate of semantics followed when Pérez Uribe wrote a response that appeared in *El Día*, in which he accused Reyes of exhibitionism and objected to the insinuation that he had retracted his comments. He stated that the Paraguayan military's code contained no mention of negation being tantamount to retraction. He pointed to his uniform and his service to the nation in the Chaco War as proof of his honor and declared that if Reyes were not satisfied with the results of the tribunal, he was prepared to duel.⁶ Reyes issued a response the following day and declared that although a retraction was semantically impossible, for one could not revoke a statement when one denied having said anything, the effect of a negation was nevertheless the same.⁷ At the same time, Reyes appointed two new seconds to demand a full retraction of Pérez Uribe's letter to the editor, or, in its absence, a settlement by arms.

When a retraction was not forthcoming, Reyes and Pérez Uribe's representatives chose sabers to first blood at dawn. They appointed a duel director, surgeons, and witnesses. The parties arrived at Campo Grande outside Asunción shortly after four a.m. the next day. The police arrived and broke up the duel, which was illegal under Paraguayan law. After retreating to the capital, the seconds set a new time and place: eleven a.m. at Asunción's main stadium. After the duel director made one last attempt at reconciliation and explained the rules to the two men, and just as the adversaries were about to draw their sabers, the chief of police arrived. Reyes offered to give up

4. On these sympathies see the clippings Reyes regularly forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially the editorial "La Diplomacia de México," *El Día* (Asunción), 9 Aug. 1936, Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, (AHGE, SRE), Exp. III-311-11.

5. Bernardo Reyes to Néstor Martínez Fretes and Rocque Gaona, 17 Nov. 1936, NARA, RG 59, Box 4110, 712.34/4.

6. Pérez Uribe to The Editor of *El Día*, 19 Nov. 1936, NARA, RG 59, Box 4110, 712.34/4.

7. Bernardo Reyes to The Editor of *El Día*, 20 Nov. 1936, NARA, RG 59, Box 4110, 712.34/4.

his diplomatic immunity, if that would convince the chief to allow the duel to proceed. When told that dueling was a crime regardless of his status as a diplomat, Reyes suggested that the chief call President Rafael Franco and ask for an exception to the law. The chief of police refused and left the scene, whereupon the duel director again attempted reconciliation. The chargé d'affaires suggested they leave the country in order to settle the matter outside Paraguay's jurisdiction. Failing that, he said the duel could take place at the Mexican Legation, because of the extraterritoriality of diplomatic missions. After rejecting each of Reyes's ideas, the seconds discussed the matter and agreed that both men had done their utmost to carry out the duel, constantly conducting themselves according to codes of honor. As a result, they decided to consider the duel as effected by the opponents' attempts to realize it. They further resolved that a complete summary of the affair of honor would be published, without any comment whatsoever by either of the parties, in the press.⁸

The attempted duel of Bernardo Reyes and Camilo Pérez Uribe, although unusually dramatic, was broadly consistent with Mexican diplomatic practice and the transnational culture of honor in which Mexican diplomats operated from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. This article examines the dynamic interplay between diplomatic culture and Mexican gender history from the Porfiriato through 1940. After surveying the history of dueling in Mexico, and dueling among Latin American diplomats in particular, it examines the attempted contest of arms in Paraguay, and the character of its protagonist, Bernardo Reyes, in greater depth. Through the analysis of the practice of dueling among members of the Mexican Foreign Service, this article demonstrates that in the international realm, just as in the domestic sphere, gender norms of the nineteenth century continued to operate well into the twentieth century, despite Mexico's revolutionary ferment. In spite of a domestic reform program that exalted the incorporation of the masses and the empowerment of women, revolutionary-era Mexican diplomats participated in a diplomatic culture of dueling—both actual and journalistic—that feminized the nation and excluded women from greater participation in the diplomatic corps. Transnational ideas regarding masculinity, diplomacy, and the public sphere that were shaped by the practice of dueling contributed to the persistence of patriarchy in Mexico and Latin America more broadly.

8. *La Hora* (Asunción), 25 Nov. 1936, NARA, RG 59, Box 4110, 712.34/4.

Diplomats represented the opposing positions of their governments abroad, but despite the real political differences that divided Latin American governments, their representatives contributed to the maintenance of a common diplomatic culture. Diplomats were called upon to defend their own honor, and that of their countries and citizens, in their daily activities and in times of crisis. The late 1930s were one such time of crisis in international affairs. In the ideologically polarized inter-war years, fascists, communists, and democrats mingled on the international stage and debated the future of the world. In Latin America, oligarchies that had been in place since the export-led development boom of the nineteenth century began to feel pressure to bring masses of disenfranchised workers and peasants into the body politic. The Mexican Revolution of 1910, the first social revolution of the twentieth century, provided one example of how that might occur, which worried members of the Latin American elite no end. Nevertheless, diplomats' political differences were outweighed by the common culture they shared.

One of the most significant characteristics of this shared diplomatic culture was that it was predicated upon the existence of a patriarchal code of honor that framed diplomats' interactions and made countries' official relations mutually intelligible. Just as diplomats were responsible for the protection of the country's interests and its citizens abroad, they also guarded the honor of the nation. Protection of female nationals constituted a "patriotic gesture" that contributed to the maintenance of male diplomats' honor through the protection of female virtue.⁹ Concomitantly, diplomats' defense of the country's virtue feminized the nation and gendered diplomacy "male." This patriarchal cultural edifice structured the way in which diplomats did everything from presenting their credentials to diplomatic wrangling. On rare occasions, it provided the terms upon which they participated in contests of honor. Social theorists have demonstrated that in the relations among nations, countries' representatives are unconsciously moved by the ceremonies in which they participate to act according to ancient scripts that are written into the rituals themselves.¹⁰ Although

9. Donna J. Guy, "White Slavery, Citizenship and Nationality in Argentina," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger (New York: Routledge, 1991), 202; Amelia M. Kiddle, "Cabaretistas and Indias Bonitas: Gender and Representations of Mexico in the Americas during the Cárdenas Era," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 42, no. 2 (2010): 275.

10. John J. MacAloon, drawing on the work of Victor Turner, has demonstrated how the participants in the modern Olympic Games unconsciously act out the deep-seated behaviors that are expected of them in medal ceremonies because of the symbolic power of the ritual. John J. MacAloon, *Brides of Victory: Nationalism and*

the diplomatic ceremonies that filled representatives' calendars may seem analytically flat because of their repetitive and scripted manner, they produced symbolic action. Duels fought in the name of a country's honor are one of the most telling examples of the capacity of rituals to influence the practice of diplomacy.¹¹

Intimately associated with chivalry and the defense of female virtue, ideas regarding the practice of dueling shaped Mexican diplomatic culture and limited women's roles in the Foreign Service. Dueling was at odds with the Mexican Revolution's promotion of the greater participation of women in national and international life. Lázaro Cárdenas, who was president from 1934–1940, unsuccessfully championed women's suffrage during his administration and appointed Palma Guillén the first female head of a diplomatic mission when he made her Minister to Colombia in 1935.¹² Despite this

Gender in Olympic Ritual (New York: Berg, 1991); and John J. MacAloon (ed.), *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984). Also see, Victor W. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) and Victor W. Turner (ed.), *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1982).

11. The culture of honor and the ritual behavior it entailed certainly affected everyday individuals' actions too, sometimes producing action that historians are hard pressed to understand. For a thought provoking example see Lyman Johnson's description of the apparently inexplicable violent altercation that erupted in a 1782 Buenos Aires *pulpería* between Francisco Escola and Pasqual Duarte when Duarte pulled a wood chip from Escola's beard. Lyman L. Johnson, "Dangerous Words, Provocative Gestures, and Violent Acts: The Disputed Hierarchies of Plebeian Life in Colonial Buenos Aires," in *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame and Violence in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 127–151. For a similar introduction to the vast literature on the culture of honor in modern Latin America see, Sueann Caulfield, Sarah C. Chambers, and Lara Putnam (eds.), *Honor, Status and Law in Modern Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

12. See Palma Guillén's personnel file, AHGE, SRE, Exp. 26-25-4. Also see, Gabriela Cano, "Revolución, feminismo y ciudadanía en México (1915–1940)," in *Historia de las mujeres en Occidente*, ed. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Madrid: Taurus, 1993), 685–95 and "Una ciudadanía igualitaria: El presidente Lázaro Cárdenas y el sufragio femenino," *Desdeldiez* (1995): 69–116; James D. Huck, Jr., "Palma Guillén: Mexico's First Female Ambassador and the International Image of Mexico's Post-Revolutionary Gender Policy," *MACLAS: Latin American Essays* 13 (1999): 159–171; Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Enriqueta Tuñón, *¡Por fin . . . ya podremos elegir y ser electas! El sufragio femenino en México, 1935–1953* (México, D.F.: CONACULTA, 2002); Esperanza Tuñón Pablos, *Mujeres que se organizan: El Frente Único Pro-derechos de la Mujer, 1935–1938* (México, D.F.: UNAM, 1992); Anna Macías, *Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982); Ward M. Morton, *Woman Suffrage in Mexico* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962).

apparent support for women's equality, patriarchy persisted in revolutionary Mexico and continued to operate in the chancellery.¹³ A patriarchal culture pervaded the Foreign Service, effectively excluding women from equal participation in international affairs. Even as several Mexican diplomats advocated women's suffrage at home, as international actors and representatives of their country abroad, they participated in the construction of and were bound by a transnational code of honor, based in part upon practices associated with dueling, that marginalized women.

Although the history of dueling in Europe and Latin America has been analyzed extensively, these works have focused upon the national origins of dueling.¹⁴ Scholars have demonstrated the place

13. For excellent entry points to the recent literature on women and gender in Mexican history see, Anne Rubenstein and Victor Macías-González, eds., *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012); Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano, eds., *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Stephanie Mitchell and Patience Schell, eds., *The Women's Revolution in Mexico, 1910–1953* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006); María Teresa Fernández-Aceves, Carmen Ramos Escandón and Susie Porter, eds., *Orden social e identidad de género: México siglos XIX y XX* (Guadalajara: CIESAS/Universidad de Guadalajara, 2006); and the special feature "Reflections on Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Mexico," introduced by Joan W. Scott in *Gender & History* 20, no. 1 (April 2008): 149–75.

14. On dueling in Latin America see the articles by Sandra Gayol, David Parker, and Pablo Piccato in *Anuario IEHS* 14 (1999); Sandra Gayol, "Honor Moderno": The Significance of Honor in Fin-de-Siècle Argentina," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84, no. 3 (August 2004): 475–98; Sandra Gayol, *Honor y duelo en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2008); David S. Parker, "Law, Honor, and Impunity in Spanish America: The Debate over Dueling, 1870–1920," *Law and History Review* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 311–41; David S. Parker, "'Gentlemanly Responsibility' and 'Insults of a Woman': Dueling and the Unwritten Rules of Public Life in Uruguay, 1860–1920," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence*, ed. William E. French and Katherine Elaine Bliss (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007): 109–32; César Braga-Pinto, "Journalists, Capoeiras, and the Duel in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 94, no. 4 (November 2014): 581–614; Pablo Piccato, "Politics and the Technology of Honor: Dueling in Turn-of-the-Century Mexico," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 331–54; and Pablo Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). On dueling beyond Latin America see Barbara Holland, *Gentlemen's Blood: A History of Dueling From Swords at Dawn to Pistols at Dusk* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003); Pieter Spierenburg, ed., *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor, and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998); Kevin McAleer, *Dueling: The Cult of Honor in Fin-de-Siècle Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Ute Frevert, *Men of Honour: A Social and Cultural History of the Duel*, trans. Anthony Williams

of dueling in the construction of modernity in Argentina, the symbolic reorganization of society following abolition in Brazil, and the development of the public sphere in nineteenth-century Mexico. Only in rare cases, such as that of Uruguay, where dueling was actually legal, did the practice extend well into the twentieth century. However, the events that took place at the Brazilian Legation in Paraguay suggest that dueling retained its relevance in diplomatic circles long after it lost its national significance, signaling that it continued to play a hitherto unacknowledged role in shaping the practice of diplomacy in Latin America. Even as dueling became obsolete in the national politics, in the field of international relations, in countries at the center of diplomatic culture and as well as in distant postings like Asunción, these rituals continued to shape diplomatic action both on and off the field of honor.

While the role of gender in diplomacy has been of interest to historians of U.S. and European imperialism, the Mexican case serves as a reminder that patriarchy was not only a tool of empire, but also pervaded Ministries of Foreign Relations the world over, and its influence therefore went well beyond the political brinksmanship of the Great Powers and the extension of hegemony in the developing world.¹⁵ Patriarchy structured relations between nations of varying international statures and representatives of different political stripes. As well as providing the context for the formulation of foreign policies and national goals, a transnational diplomatic culture of honor influenced the everyday practice of foreign relations the world over. This patriarchal culture structured the contest of ideas that took place in the inter-war years as governments sought solutions to the

(Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); James Kelly, *That Damn'd Thing Called Honour: Duelling in Ireland, 1570–1860* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995); François Billaçois, *The Duel: Its Rise and Fall in Early Modern France*, trans. Trista Selous (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Victor Gordon Kiernan, *The Duel in European History: Honor and the Reign of Aristocracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

15. Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001). For studies of U.S. and European imperialism that employ gender as a category of analysis see, Emily S. Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900–1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Amy Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and The Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

clamoring of workers and peasants for their incorporation into the body politic. Like suffragists in Mexico, in most of Latin America, the answer they received was “No, not yet.” The patriarchal system that provided the context for diplomats’ actions also enabled those in power to imagine that the masses, like women, could and would wait.

Dueling and Diplomats in Latin America, Especially Mexico

Though reflecting broader international historical processes such as modernization and the emergence of the public sphere, the history of dueling in Mexico, and indeed the rest of Latin America, has generally been told as a national story. The most important source for the history of dueling in Mexico is the 1936 compendium by Ángel Escudero entitled, *El duelo en México*.¹⁶ Escudero was a fencing teacher who worked at the famed Escuela Magistral de Esgrima y Gimnasia, a school owned and operated by the French master, Lucien Mérignac. From the 1890s through the 1910s, members of the military and the Porfirian elite learned skills associated with the practice of dueling under Mérignac’s expert tutelage. Escudero devotes a few pages or paragraphs to the stories of each duel in Mexican history upon which he was able to gather information. Written years after the fencing school closed its doors, the compendium is a nostalgic oral history: many of the details were handed down to the author by students of Mérignac, several of whom were involved in the duels he describes.

Escudero’s book clearly shows that the number of duels taking place each year decreased towards the end of the Porfiriato and declined further in the early twentieth century. Historian Pablo Piccato, in his analysis of the “technology of honor” in Mexican society, employs this evidence to argue that dueling was central to the creation of a modern public sphere, and that the decline of dueling coincided with the changing role of political violence in society during the combative phase of the revolution.¹⁷ Most of Escudero’s stories, like Piccato’s analysis, focus on Mexico City, not the country’s regions or the international sphere, but evidence suggests that the role of dueling was also significant in transnational spaces such as the border region and the international stage.

16. Ángel Escudero, *El duelo en México. Recopilación de los desafíos habidos en nuestra república, precedidos de la historia de la esgrima en México y de los duelos más famosos verificados en el mundo desde los juicios de dios hasta nuestros días*, prologue by Artemio de Valle-Arizpe (México, D.F.: Imprenta Mundial, 1936).

17. Piccato, “Politics and the Technology of Honor,” 331–33, 345–46.

Honor played an important role in the construction of masculinity in northern Mexico. Elliott Young's analysis of the Garza revolt suggests that dueling and questions of honor influenced the very timing of Garza's revolt, and that masculinity in Mexico's far north was shaped by these concerns in this period.¹⁸ The border region was a liminal space where gender norms were regularly tested. It was also a transnational space in which ideas of masculinity that Young describes as "Anglo" and "Mexican" were contested. In both of these ways, the borderlands are analogous to embassies, which are foreign enclaves in another country. The mixing of peoples and cultures that occurred in both locations may have tended to unsettle, and therefore provide reason for the re-inscription of, dominant gender norms.

A significant minority of the duels described by Escudero involved either Mexican representatives abroad or foreign diplomats in Mexico. For example, Escudero recounts the duel of D. Antonio Martín Rivero, Cuba's Minister to Mexico and one Captain J.P.R., who fought over the Cuban diplomat's conquest of a Mexican woman in 1906.¹⁹ He also recounts the duel of José Ignacio Icaza, Peru's representative in Mexico, who fought Lorenzo Elízaga after an altercation in a nightclub in 1913.²⁰

Likewise, Piccato discusses the case of prominent Mexican writer, journalist, and politician Ignacio Manuel Altamirano who was serving as a diplomat in Europe in the 1890s when scandals arose in the press surrounding the proposed conversion to bonds of Mexico's debt to England. Forced to respond to allegations of Mexico's insolvency in the European press, Altamirano judged his alternatives to have been the following: (1) he could reply in the newspapers; (2) he could bring the offender to court; (3) he could take him to the field of honor; or (4) Altamirano could have him beaten in his name.²¹ Although this summary of the choices open to an envoy seems remarkable, it represents a fairly accurate account of the options perceived to be available to diplomats representing Mexico during the Porfiriato. It is perhaps surprising that this remained the case well

18. Elliott Young, *Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004): 23, 99–100. Also see William E. French, *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

19. Escudero, *El duelo en México*, 240.

20. Escudero, *El duelo en México*, 93. As Pablo Piccato points out, the majority of the duels discussed by Escudero in *El duelo en México* occurred because of offenses that took place at public functions, such as the theatre or a ball. Piccato, "Politics and the Technology of Honor," 334.

21. Quoted in Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*, 103.

after the onset of the Mexican Revolution and into the period of the Second World War, as the case of Bernardo Reyes and several other examples will show.

Mexican diplomats held these ideas regarding honor and the defense of the nation in common with their fellow diplomatic representatives. Throughout Latin America, dueling remained a viable diplomatic tool used to defend a country's honor. In March 1938, the Cuban Minister to Panama, Dr. Emilio Nuñez Portuondo, challenged the editor of the daily *Nuevo Diario* to a duel.²² He claimed that "his honor had been impugned" when the editor of that paper wrongfully accused him of writing articles that were critical of the Panamanian government under a pseudonym. In a manner that will become apparent was typical, rather than relying on legal mechanisms such as libel law, the incensed Cuban diplomat challenged the editor to meet him on the field of honor. The owner of the paper eventually issued a formal apology to Nuñez Portuondo. Other scattered references to duels pepper the periodical record in this period. Historian Willie Hiatt has described a duel that erupted in Peru in 1941 over the representation of Germany in Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*.²³ It is clear that defending one's own honor and that of the country one represented carried these high stakes much longer and in a much broader range of situations than might have been anticipated by only paying attention to the domestic context.

Charged with defending the country's honor, and inhabiting an unstable space between nations, diplomats were vigilant guardians of their own honor as well as that of the countries they represented. In his prologue to *El duelo en México*, Artemio de Valle-Arizpe, Mexico City's official historian and member of the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua, wrote that Ángel Escudero's book painted a picture of a bygone era.²⁴ In terms of national politics, which most of the duels described in Escudero's memoir concerned, this was undoubtedly the case. However, as well as being a prominent intellectual, Valle-Arizpe had spent many years representing Mexico abroad and as such he should have recognized that although the number of duels taking place in the Mexican capital each year decreased, the practice still maintained an important role in diplomats' conception of their

22. "Diplomat Challenges R.P. Editor to Duel," *The Panama American* (Panama City), 24 Mar. 1938.

23. Willie Hiatt, "Nazis in the Amazon: U.S. Paranoia over Axis Infiltration in World War II Peru" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Boston, MA, January 6–9, 2011).

24. Artemio de Valle-Arizpe, "Prólogo," *El duelo en México*.

masculinity and the honor of the country they represented.²⁵ Whereas dueling was an anachronism in the domestic sphere, ritualized violence associated with the practice was central to diplomats' understanding of international affairs, and it retained its relevance in diplomacy even after the publication of Escudero's retrospective history.

Members of the Mexican Foreign Service and diplomats posted in Mexico had long made use of dueling in defending their own honor and that of their countries. What made the perseverance of this practice among Mexican diplomats after the revolution particularly significant? Unlike during the Porfiriato, after the revolution, the members of the Mexican Foreign Service promoted their country as being in favor of women's equality, and indeed several of the diplomats held progressive views on the topic, but they nevertheless continued to participate in the construction of a diplomatic culture that privileged masculine honor, feminized the nation, and gendered diplomacy as male.

Bernardo Reyes: Nieto, Playwright, and Diplomat

Although the attempted duel in Paraguay that introduced this discussion was representative of larger patterns of behavior among members of the Mexican Foreign Service, one of the things that made it distinctive was the involvement of Bernardo Reyes. Investigating his character and career sheds light on both the role of historical contingency in such incidents as well as the ritual power of symbols in the everyday practice of diplomacy. The namesake of the Porfirian general and governor of Nuevo León, Bernardo Reyes was the eldest son of Rodolfo Reyes. Along with Félix Díaz and Victoriano Huerta, the elder Bernardo and his son Rodolfo had been among the primary conspirators against the government of Francisco Madero.²⁶ Before the Revolution, Rodolfo had been a student at Lucien Mérignac's Escuela Magistral de Esgrima y Gimnasia in Mexico City.²⁷ Rodolfo initially collaborated with the Huerta regime, but was imprisoned at the end of 1913 and exiled in 1914. He and his son Bernardo, then only eleven years old, departed Veracruz bound for Spain that February.²⁸ Rodolfo remained in Spain for the next forty years, eventually

25. This was a common form of subvention and an excellent way of showing off the nation's intellectual talent. See *Escritores en la diplomacia Mexicana*, 3 vols. (México, D.F.: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1998–2002).

26. *Diccionario Porrúa*, 6th ed. (México, D.F.: Editorial Porrúa, 1995), 2942–43.

27. Escudero, *El duelo en México*, 46.

28. Rodolfo Reyes, *De mi vida*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1929), 254.

becoming an ardent supporter of Francisco Franco.²⁹ His son chose a path remarkably different from his father and one more similar to that of his famous uncle, Alfonso Reyes, who was one of Mexico's most distinguished men of letters and who was serving as Ambassador to Argentina when his nephew got himself into hot water in Asunción. Just fifteen years older than his nephew Bernardo, Alfonso Reyes had left for Europe in 1913 to work at the Mexican Legation in Paris. After the triumph of Venustiano Carranza, Alfonso lost his post and moved to Spain, where he endured his exile until his burgeoning literary reputation and friendship with José Vasconcelos eventually enabled his reintegration into the Mexican Foreign Service in 1920. This caused a rupture in the family because Rodolfo remained opposed to the revolutionary government.³⁰ The young Bernardo Reyes inherited his uncle's literary interests and diplomatic career rather than his father's politics. He was a social progressive and an ardent supporter of the revolution, which was evident in both his writing and his activities as a Mexican envoy.

Bernardo took up his first diplomatic post as third secretary of the Mexican Legation in Costa Rica in 1925.³¹ There, he first demonstrated that he had inherited a literary bent from his uncle. The young diplomat's first play, entitled *¡¡Mentira!! . . .*³² debuted in San José on August 12, 1926.³³ Apparently deserving of no less than twenty-seven curtain calls, it was very well received by the Costa Rican press.³⁴ Showcasing Reyes's progressive social views, the play, set in Spain, told the story of an aristocratic family whose only daughter Luisa falls in love with a good but common man. When it becomes apparent that she has become a "ruined" woman, her father, steeped in tradition, disowns her. Older brother Gerardo, a corrupt conservative politician, suggests that he challenge her suitor to a duel to defend her honor. Brother Antonio, a social-climbing priest who ministers only to the rich, suggests the convent. Only her brother Fernando, a bohemian anarchist, suggests that she should marry the man she

29. Mario Ojeda Revah, *México y la Guerra Civil Española* (Madrid: Turner Publications, 2004), 36–37, 112, 121–22.

30. Javier Garcíadiego, "Alfonso Reyes: cosmopolitismo diplomático y universalismo literario," in *Escritores en la diplomacia mexicana* (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1998), 197.

31. *Diccionario Porrúa*, 2941.

32. This play was sometimes referred to simply as *Mentira* (with or without exclamation points) in the press.

33. Bernardo Reyes, *¡¡Mentira!! . . .* (Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria, 1928).

34. "Visión de verdad," *Nueva Prensa* (San José), 13 Aug. 1926. Several warm reviews are reprinted in the print version of *¡¡Mentira!! . . .*

loves. Fernando dismisses dueling as a barbarous anachronism.³⁵ On their fiftieth wedding anniversary, Luisa's parents forgive her and Fernando when it becomes clear that while Gerardo and Antonio are only interested in inheriting their parents' fortune, Luisa and Fernando love and respect them.

The social lessons of the play were immediately apparent to reviewers,³⁶ who commented on Reyes's socialism and saw the author in Fernando's character.³⁷ Reyes's socialist views did not undermine the masculine aura of the play: several reviewers commented on his "manly style,"³⁸ and another said that his verbal audacity was reminiscent of the skill of an accomplished duelist.³⁹ Reyes's masculinity was evident in the vehemence and "virility" with which he upheld the principles of social justice,⁴⁰ rather than traditional ideas regarding women's subjection to familial honor. *¡¡Mentira!!* . . . was also performed in Bogotá in 1927 during his next diplomatic posting.⁴¹ He reportedly wrote and directed one other play,⁴² but thereafter seems to have devoted his considerable literary talents to the composition of discourses on national history, politics, and culture prepared for foreign audiences to promote and defend the Mexican Revolution during his various diplomatic appointments.

Bernardo Reyes dedicated himself to his work, quickly climbing the ranks of the Foreign Service and becoming chargé d'affaires at Asunción in 1935. Mexican Minister to Paraguay Alfonso de Rosenzweig Díaz resided in La Paz, where he was also appointed, and Reyes, his second in command, had been in charge of the Asunción Legation in his absence since the early days of the Cárdenas presidency.⁴³ Reyes had initiated a particularly active propaganda campaign in favor of Cárdenas's government, and he consistently promoted the revolution as an example for Paraguayan leftists to follow. Reyes had arrived in Asunción one year before Paraguayan Rafael Franco came

35. Reyes, *¡¡Mentira!!* . . . , 50.

36. "La obra de Bernardo Reyes," *Diario de Costa Rica* (San José), 25 Aug. 1926.

37. "*¡Mentira!*," *La Tribuna* (San José), 18 Aug. 1926.

38. "Visión de verdad," *Nueva Prensa*, 13 Aug. 1926.

39. Pío Tamayo, "Algunos juicios críticos sobre *¡Mentira!*," *El Mundo* (San José), 12 Aug. 1926.

40. *Ibid.*

41. "El Estreno de Anoche," *El Espectador* (Bogotá), 3 Mar. 1927; Paco Miro, "Crónica de teatro. El estreno de *Mentira*," *El Tiempo* (Bogotá), 4 Mar. 1927.

42. Memorandum by Alfonso Reyes, May 17, 1938, Mexico, Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Ramo Presidentes, Fondo Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (LCR), Caja 1223, Exp. 702.2/9790.

43. See Rosenzweig's personnel file, AHGE, SRE, Exp. 14-22-1.

to power as head of the Partido Revolucionario Febrerista, overthrowing the Liberal presidency of Eusebio Ayala. The U.S. Minister to Paraguay believed that the success of Franco's insurrection was, at least in part, attributable to the effects of revolutionary propaganda disseminated by Reyes.⁴⁴ The Argentine Minister to Paraguay held a low opinion of Reyes's activities, claiming in a confidential letter to his President that the Mexican Minister was a notorious Communist, who aided his Paraguayan "coreligionaries" in indoctrinating and mobilizing the youth of that country.⁴⁵

Despite his dedication to his profession and the principles and aims of the revolution, he nevertheless remained suspect in the eyes of many because of his family's history of anti-revolutionary activity. After Asunción, Bernardo Reyes served as chargé d'affaires at Lima in 1937 in the absence of Moisés Sáenz, where he also took over Spanish representation in Peru when the incumbent Ambassador proved to be working on behalf of Franco during the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, during the budget crisis of early 1938, Bernardo Reyes, like his uncle Alfonso and several Ambassadors and Ministers posted to Latin America, was ordered home in an apparent cost-saving measure. However, it seems that Bernardo's recall was politically motivated, which is made clear in a letter Alfonso Reyes sent to Cárdenas shortly thereafter, asking that his nephew be re-instated in his position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁷ The distinguished writer and diplomat said that Foreign Minister Eduardo Hay and Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Ramón Beteta had told him that his nephew Bernardo had been recalled on the direct orders of Cárdenas because he was the son of Rodolfo Reyes, and therefore politically suspect. In an attached memorandum, Alfonso Reyes detailed his nephew's extensive activities in defense of the revolution, and provided a list of

44. Howard to Secretary of State, 14 May 1936, NARA, RG 59, Box 4110, 712.34/2. For an overview of Mexican relations with Paraguay see, María Cecilia Zuleta, *Los extremos de Hispanoamérica: Relaciones, conflictos y armonías entre México y el Cono Sur, 1821–1990* (México, D.F.: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2008).

45. Rodolfo Freyre to Justo, 27 Aug. 1936, Argentina, Archivo General de la Nación, Sala VII, Fondo Agustín P. Justo, Volumen 3253, Exp. 1936.

46. AHGE, SRE, Exp. III-768-8.

47. Whereas all of the other diplomats who had been placed on leave as a cost-saving measure held the ranks of Ambassador or Minister, thus necessitating the continued service of more junior members of the Foreign Service as chargés d'affaires, Reyes was recalled despite the fact that he was only paid at the rank of First Secretary. Alfonso Reyes to Cárdenas, 17 May 1938, AGN, LCR, Caja 1223, Exp. 702.2/9790. Upon returning to Mexico City, Bernardo Reyes requested an audience with President Cárdenas that does not appear to have been granted. Telegram from Bernardo Reyes to Cárdenas, 3 May 1938, AGN, LCR, Caja 34, Exp. 111/2433.

references who could attest to his “genuine socialism” and “sincere leftism.”⁴⁸ The young Bernardo was posted to France shortly thereafter.⁴⁹ The prejudices Bernardo Reyes knew existed against his father among members of the revolutionary bureaucracy were likely yet another reason that a diplomatic career was as appealing to him as it had been to his uncle Alfonso. These prejudices followed them both abroad, and as a result Bernardo Reyes would certainly have been offended by Pérez Uribe’s jibe about how he was the black sheep of his conservative family. Made in such a public venue, at a gathering of his social and diplomatic peers, the barb would have stung. Taken together with the charge that the Mexican government, and Reyes himself, was Communist, the captain’s insults threatened Reyes’s personal and professional honor.

Reyes did not base his idea of honor upon the defense of female virtue, but on the defense of the social project of which he felt himself a part. Since arriving in Paraguay, he had reported that the Mexican Revolution was under attack in the conservative Catholic press and among members of the elite who were critical of the alleged persecution of Catholics in Mexico.⁵⁰ These attacks had only increased since the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War a few months previous. In this tense atmosphere, Pérez Uribe’s insults must have caused him to reach the breaking point, leading him to seek to defend his honor and that of the revolution by issuing a formal challenge. He was prepared to defend the nation and his commitment to the revolution, possibly to the death, in a duel. By engaging Pérez Uribe in the culture of honor that pervaded Latin American diplomacy, Reyes could prove that he was not a “degenerate Leftist” as his attacker had claimed. Though Reyes had condemned dueling in defense of feminine virtue in *¡¡Mentira!!* . . . , he later employed the practice in Asunción in defense of his own honor and that of the revolution. Perhaps he felt the need to prove his revolutionary credentials given his family background. Or, he may have wanted to take Pérez Uribe to task for attacking him in public and then claiming that his words were

48. Memorandum by Alfonso Reyes, 17 May 1938, AGN, LCR, Caja 1223, Exp. 702.2/9790. While he awaited his fate, Bernardo Reyes wrote a series of articles in favor of the oil expropriation of March 18, 1938 for the government-run newspaper *El Nacional*. Bernardo Reyes, “La Experiencia Petrolífera de Argentina,” *El Nacional*, 20 Apr. 1938; Bernardo Reyes, “El Desprecio de Inglaterra,” *El Nacional*, 23 Apr. 1938.

49. *Diccionario Porrúa*, 2941. Both Alfonso and Bernardo sent Cárdenas letters of thanks. Alfonso Reyes to Cárdenas, 21 June 1938, AGN, LCR, Caja 1223, Exp. 702.2/9790; Telegram from Bernardo Reyes to Cárdenas, 25 May 1938, AGN, LCR, Caja 34, Exp. 111/2433.

50. Reyes’s reports on the so-called religious question in AHGE, SRE, Exp. III-311-11.

not meant to offend when clearly they had. It is impossible to know given the surviving evidence exactly what motivated Reyes and his adversary, and the culture of dueling was certainly broad enough to make several explanations possible. In his work on dueling, Pablo Piccato has suggested that “in order to understand the casuistry behind this theory of honor . . . we should focus less on stable ideals and concepts and more on the practical dimension of historically situated local and personal interactions.”⁵¹ However, as this example shows, to place all of the emphasis on individual thought and action would ignore the significance of the broader repertoire of symbolic action from which Reyes and Pérez Uribe chose. The fact that Reyes would dismiss dueling as barbarous in his literary work, only to challenge a detractor to a duel later in life, signals the pervasiveness of the transnational patriarchal diplomatic culture in which he operated.

Dueling and Diplomatic Culture

Despite Reyes’s rather unusual family connections and literary inclinations, the duel he called for in Paraguay is representative of the transnational diplomatic culture that was shared by Mexican diplomats. Dueling swords and pistols served as particularly effective instruments in shaping public opinion in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Latin America. Historian David Parker has discussed the role of the press in Latin American dueling: most of the duels that took place in early twentieth-century Uruguay played themselves out in, and resulted from, conflicts that were voiced in the press.⁵² Pérez Uribe’s charge that by publishing a report of the incident in the press, Bernardo Reyes was resorting to crude “exhibitionism” was therefore entirely off base.⁵³ Rather than a character flaw, engaging in this type of public display was exactly what was expected of Mexican diplomats in Latin America. This behavior was characteristic of the way in which members of the Foreign Service defended their honor and that of Mexico.

One of the most significant ways in which diplomacy and journalism were intertwined was that diplomats were charged with maintaining a close eye on the coverage they and their home countries received in their hosts’ newspapers, and engaging in publicity on behalf of their

51. Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*, 11.

52. Parker, “Law, Honor, and Impunity,” 319. Also see, Parker, “Gentlemanly Responsibility.”

53. Pérez Uribe to The Editor of *El Día*, 19 Nov. 1936, NARA, RG 59, Box 4110, 712.34/4.

governments. Shortly after arriving in Asunción, Reyes had written the Ministry of Foreign Affairs inquiring to what extent he should publicize the newly-created socialist education program in the face of the campaign against Mexico in the conservative Catholic press.⁵⁴ The head of the Diplomatic Department in Mexico City responded that determining the advisability of a vocal propaganda campaign was Reyes's own responsibility and up to his judgment.⁵⁵ Reyes and his counterparts throughout Latin America were generally left to their own devices in creating positive propaganda and defending the attitudes and policies of the Cárdenas government in the countries to which they were appointed. He took to these directives with gusto and published myriad articles about the revolution and its tenets in the press.

One of the most popular strategies diplomats employed was the retraction. When an article denigrating Mexico appeared in the press, the ranking Mexican diplomat in the country would immediately write a letter to the editor of the newspaper in which it appeared, explaining the offending article's errors. The editor generally published a retraction of the offending piece and a whole host of articles about the incident usually appeared in the press. As the old adage goes, there is no such thing as bad publicity, and thanks to this tactic, members of the public became better informed about the Mexican government and its programs. This was the first option Altamirano had outlined in his 1881 summary of Mexican diplomatic practice, and it had changed little in the intervening years. The retraction provided a tool by which Mexican diplomats from the nineteenth century forward attempted to shape public opinion.

The practice of demanding a retraction was also intimately tied to ideas of honor and dueling because it constituted an implicit challenge. When a critic of the revolution, or its representatives, uttered a statement believed to be harmful to Mexico, the diplomats who asked for satisfaction were drawing on their idea of honor, which reflected their attitudes towards dueling. Although Bernardo Reyes and his adversary had referred to two different printed codes of honor, Reyes challenged Pérez Uribe on common terms. The parties' use of different codes highlights the multiplicity of definitions of honor, even among men who clearly accepted the institution's validity.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, they sought common ground by defining what

54. Bernardo Reyes to SRE, 1 Sept. 1936, AHGE, SRE, Exp. III-311-11.

55. General José Domingo Ramírez Garrido to Bernardo Reyes, 23 Sept. 1936, AHGE, SRE, Exp. III-311-11.

56. Sandra Gayol discusses the multiplicity of definitions of honor invoked by opposing social actors in her analysis of the role of dueling in late-nineteenth-century

they meant by honor in the press through their references to the military. In the letters they published, both adversaries heaped praise on the uniform Pérez Uribe wore and the Paraguayan military's honorable participation in the Chaco War. Reyes's rhetoric suggests that he was attempting to draw a comparison between the honorable nature of the Mexican and Paraguayan militaries, where dueling was an acknowledged and codified practice.⁵⁷

By publishing the news of the resolution of the incident that took place at the Brazilian Legation, Bernardo Reyes was following a practice that had deep roots in both journalism and diplomacy. One of the most prominent duelists eulogized in Escudero's tome is Rafael Reyes Spíndola, the Oaxacan editor of *El Universal*, which he founded in 1888, and *El Imparcial*, which he founded in 1896.⁵⁸ In true nineteenth-century style, the founder of modern Mexican journalism was prone to challenging his detractors to meet him on the field of honor.⁵⁹ Reyes Spíndola's son Octavio, who also considered himself a journalist, joined the Foreign Service in 1922.⁶⁰ By the Cárdenas era, he was considered the "Red Knight of the Foreign Office"—the diplomat who did the most to promote the Mexican Revolution in Latin America.⁶¹ In 1939, Cárdenas appointed him Ambassador to Chile following the election of the Popular Front, but until then, much like Reyes, he had served as *chargé d'affaires* to several Latin American countries, including Panama, Nicaragua, and Cuba, where he gained a reputation for demanding retractions of articles he deemed denigrating toward the revolution.

Argentina in "Honor Moderno," 485. On honor in Paraguay see, Juan Vicente Soto Estigarribia, *Delito contra el honor: Calumnia, difamación e injuria* (Asunción: Editora Litocolor, 2005).

57. On dueling in the Porfirian military see, Stephen Neufeld, "Servants of the Nation: The Military in the Making of Modern Mexico, 1876–1911" (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2009).

58. *Diccionario Porrúa*, 2943. On his contribution to the foundation of modern journalism in Mexico see, Clara Guadalupe García, *El Imparcial: primer periódico moderno de México* (México, D.F.: Centro de Estudios Históricos del Porfiriato, 2003); Antonio Saborit, *El mundo ilustrado de Rafael Reyes Spíndola* (México, D.F.: Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, 2003).

59. See, for example, Rafael Reyes Spíndola vs. José Ferrel, Escudero, *El duelo en México*, 175.

60. See Octavio Reyes Spíndola's personnel file, AHGE, SRE, Exp. 26-25-7.

61. Betty Kirk, *Covering the Mexican Front: The Battle of Europe versus America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), 200. The reference to Kirk's impression of Octavio Reyes Spíndola was mentioned in Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–1981* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), 251.

The duel Escudero recounted between General José Domingo Ramírez Garrido and José Rivero, which took place in Cuba in 1926, provides another telling example.⁶² One of Lucien Mérignac's disciples at the Escuela Magistral de Esgrima y Gimnasia, José Domingo Ramírez Garrido, who was a personal friend of Escudero's and a fellow professor at the school, fled to Cuba after the de la Huerta rebellion.⁶³ While he was there, the newspaper *El Diario de la Marina* published an article denigrating the Mexican Revolution and its generals. Incensed, Ramírez Garrido immediately demanded satisfaction. He appointed Miguel Márquez Sterling and Miguel A. Riva to go to the office of the editor and demand "full and public satisfaction or reparation in accordance with the laws of honor."⁶⁴ Fortunately, as Escudero recounts, the editor of the paper realized the error of his ways, and promised to print a retraction in the following day's paper.⁶⁵ A contest of arms did not result. By sending seconds to the office of the *Diario de la Marina*, Ramírez Garrido made clear that he was not operating on the terrain of slander and defamation law, but the code of honor. The status of libel law in Latin American countries varied, as it did in Europe, and Ramírez Garrido's request for retraction shows that rather than basing his demand on legal grounds, he employed the terrain of honor. Despite the coexistence of legal mechanisms to protect one's honor, the retractions Ramírez Garrido and others demanded were based upon the practice of dueling. Even though the offending remarks occurred in the press, and not a public event such as a dance, rather than rely on legal mechanisms regulating journalistic practice to redress the perceived wrong, Ramírez Garrido used the procedures outlined in dueling codes to defend his honor, that of the revolution, and of the military.

62. Escudero, *El duelo en México*, 261–62.

63. Jesús Ezequiel de Dios, *José Domingo, el idealista* (Villahermosa: Instituto de Cultura de Tabasco, 1989).

64. Escudero, *El duelo en México*, 261. On Manuel Márquez Sterling see, Dalia Antonia Muller, "Cuban Emigres, Mexican Politics and the Cuban Question, 1895–1998" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007).

65. On libel and slander in Mexico and elsewhere see, Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*; Ann Goldberg, *Honor, Politics and the Law in Imperial Germany, 1871–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Nancy Shields Killmann, *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Robert Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); M. Lindsay Kaplan *The Culture of Slander in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

This example demonstrates the underlying point of all retractions demanded of newspaper editors by Mexican diplomats. According to the gentlemanly code of honor, a demand for a retraction was tantamount to a challenge. The threat of violence was implicit. One of three generals appointed as representatives to Latin American countries during the Cárdenas era, Ramírez Garrido had successfully used the code of honor to extract an apology from the editor of the *Diario de la Marina* in 1926. His first diplomatic appointment was as Minister to Colombia, where he replaced Palma Guillén in 1937.⁶⁶ After arriving in Bogotá, Ramírez Garrido consistently demanded retractions of denigrating articles that appeared in the papers. For example, when accused of interfering in the internal affairs of Colombia by Laureano Gómez's *El Siglo* for holding a meeting of prominent leftists at the Mexican Legation following Mexico's oil expropriation, Ramírez Garrido went on the offensive. He demanded a retraction and secured the support of the Colombian foreign minister for his actions. A storm of coverage explaining the rationale behind the oil expropriation and the legal bases of President Cárdenas's decision followed in the press.⁶⁷ Ramírez Garrido secured greater coverage of Mexican events, influencing public opinion regarding the expropriation—one of the primary goals of diplomats posted to Latin America during the Cárdenas presidency. He did so by employing the code of honor that had served him well in Cuba eleven years earlier: he denounced false reports and demanded satisfaction as though he were issuing a challenge to a duel. Ramírez Garrido used this tactic throughout his tenure as Minister to Colombia. Because it was rooted in the practice of dueling, demanding a retraction appealed implicitly to the gentlemanly code of honor shared by diplomats throughout Latin America.

Demanding a retraction was associated with the transnational culture of honor that gendered the public sphere and the public statements of diplomats male. The diplomatic culture that framed representatives' interactions made diplomacy a masculine pursuit. Long before challenging the director of the *Diario de la Marina* to a duel in Cuba in 1926 and his appointment to Colombia in 1937, Ramírez Garrido published a small book in 1918 entitled *Al margen*

66. See his personnel file, AHGE, SRE, Exp. 42-25-19.

67. Ramírez Garrido to Cárdenas, 29 Mar. 1938 and Ramírez Garrido to Cárdenas, 30 Mar. 1938, AGN, Archivo Particular Lázaro Cárdenas, Rollo 14, Exp. 72; "Los jefes izquierdistas fueron agasajados en la Legación de México el Sábado," *El Diario Nacional*, 28 Mar. 1938; "Mala fé de El Siglo y La Razón," *El Diario Nacional*, 30 Mar. 1938. The incident was reported in the conservative Catholic press of Latin America. "Labores siniestras de un embajador mexicano en Colombia," *Crisol* (Guatemala City), 29 May 1938.

del feminismo.⁶⁸ As Director of the Department of Public Education in the Yucatán under Governor Salvador Alvarado, Ramírez Garrido was involved in the First Feminist Congress of Mexico, held in Mérida in 1916.⁶⁹ His 1918 study reflects his involvement with the cause of women's rights in the Yucatán and his firm conviction that women should get the vote.⁷⁰ Ramírez Garrido was not the only representative in Latin America to hold strong views in favor of the equality of women.⁷¹ Like Reyes, who criticized dueling in defense of female honor as anachronistic in his play only to challenge a detractor to a duel in Paraguay, diplomats who would not have engaged in dueling in their personal lives in the national political context, when placed in the position of representing Mexico abroad frequently employed their rhetorical parallel. The powerful symbols of dueling that characterized retractions were so deep-seated that they propelled the actions of male diplomats, regardless of their commitment to gender equality and social democratization.

Despite the best intentions of the Cárdenas government and its representatives, the promotion of the advancement of women conflicted with the exclusionary culture of honor that pervaded the Foreign Service. President Cárdenas, the Ministry of Foreign Relations, and many members of the Foreign Service who were posted to Latin America were committed to the advancement of women, but diplomatic practice, underwritten by the code of honor that gendered the nation they represented as feminine and in need of masculine protection, limited women's participation in Cárdenas's diplomatic project.

68. José Domingo Ramírez Garrido, *Al margen del feminismo* (Mérida: Talleres Pluma y Lápiz, 1918). This book is available through the *Women in History* microfilm collection (Woodbridge, Conn.: Research Publications, 1975), no. 7696.

69. On the First Feminist Congress see, Stephanie J. Smith, *Gender and the Mexican Revolution: Yucatán Women and the Realities of Patriarchy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 29–32. On women and the Revolution in the Yucatán also see, by the same author, “‘If Love Enslaves . . . Love Be Damned!’: Divorce and Revolutionary State Formation in Yucatán,” in Olcott, Vaughan, and Cano, *Sex in Revolution*, 99–111; “Salvador Alvarado of Yucatán: Revolutionary Reforms, Revolutionary Women,” in *State Governors in the Mexican Revolution, 1910–1952: Portraits in Conflict, Courage and Corruption*, ed. Jürgen Buchenau and William H. Beezley (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 43–57. On the First Pedagogical Congress see, Stephanie J. Smith “Educating the Mothers of the Nation: The Project of Revolutionary Education in Yucatán,” in Mitchell and Schell, *The Women's Revolution in Mexico*, 41.

70. Ramírez Garrido, *Al margen del feminismo*, Chapter 7.

71. Alfonso de Rosenzweig Díaz included a chapter on women's contributions to the independence movement in his, *Mexicanidad de México* vol. 3 (Oxford: Dolphin, 1959), 421–24.

Palma Guillén's tenure in Colombia is a case in point—it was fraught with difficulties because she was hemmed in by the culture of diplomacy. Guillén drew the ire of the conservative Catholic press, which objected both to the fact that she was a woman and to her representation of the Cárdenas government's anti-clericalism. Shortly after her arrival, Guillén reported at the end of April that the conservative newspaper *El País* had published a protest from the Colombian *Damas Católicas* against her.⁷² Apparently alarmed by reports of religious intolerance in Mexico and Palma Guillén's statements in the Colombian press regarding feminism, socialist education, and religion, the *Damas Católicas* demanded that she refrain from interfering in Colombian Church-State relations. Reporters from *El Diario Nacional* and *El Espectador* came to the legation to interview her, which gave her an opportunity to clarify her position, but *El País* continued to print new lists of Catholic women who had joined the protest.⁷³ On April 25, Guillén wrote to the editor of *El País* to explain that she had only responded to reporters' questions regarding the religious question and did not intend to influence Colombia, but her tactic failed to prevent the newspaper from continuing to attack her and Mexico. The editor stated that regardless of whether she uttered her words in response to questions posed by reporters, the comments caused alarm among Colombian Catholics, who continued to be worried about Mexico's supposedly pernicious influence.⁷⁴ The usual diplomatic tactic of requesting the correction or retraction of an article deemed offensive to Mexico did not work, but rather fanned the flames of Catholic rancor towards the first female Minister. The inherent threat of violence that underlay the actions of her male colleagues did not back her actions because she could not have challenged her detractors to a duel.⁷⁵

Guillén withstood continued attacks against her character and that of the Mexican Revolution but, unlike Ramírez Garrido who followed her in Bogotá, she did not make consistent use of the tool of retraction in her efforts to promote Mexico in Colombia or even

72. Guillén to Portes Gil, 27 Apr. 1935, AHGE, SRE, Exp. III-307-15; "La señorita Palma Guillén debe respetar a Colombia," *El País* (Bogotá), April 12, 1935. Also see "El Asunto religioso en Méjico," *El Espectador* (Bogotá), 8 Apr. 1935.

73. "La diplomática mexicana replica a las damas católicas de Bogotá," *El Diario Nacional* (Bogotá), 13 Apr. 1935.

74. "Una aclaración de la señora Palma Guillén," *El País*, 26 Apr. 1935; "Una declaración de la legación de México," *El Tiempo* (Bogotá), 26 Apr. 1935.

75. David Parker similarly concluded that because Uruguayans could not imagine women as duelists, they could not imagine them as participants in national politics. Parker, "Gentlemanly Responsibility," 126.

attempt to defend herself. Guillén's friend and companion Gabriela Mistral described her posting as "a turbid, violent, and medieval rain of insidiousness from the clergy, who have had the good graces to declare her a Communist, an atheist, an advocate of divorce, and other nasty comments."⁷⁶ After less than a year, Guillén gave up and requested her removal to Europe.⁷⁷ The final months of her posting in Colombia continued to be filled with disagreeable run-ins with the press. In June, *El Siglo* published an article that had originally appeared in Mexico City's *El Universal*, which repeated a rumor that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had begun an investigation into Guillén's unsatisfactory performance in Colombia.⁷⁸ It charged that because she was overly friendly with Liberal President Alfonso López, she had been accused by several newspapers in Bogotá of intervening in internal affairs by exerting undue influence over him. In her report regarding the incident, Guillén stated that the Liberal paper *El Tiempo*, which was owned by Eduardo Santos, who was destined to become the next Liberal President of Colombia, "spontaneously" published an editorial in her defense, asserting that the accusation was completely false.⁷⁹ Santos served as Guillén's friend and guardian during her posting to Colombia, but he was unable to protect her from the venomous assaults of the right. *El Tiempo* declared that her character and behavior were "irreproachable" and stated that the attacks emanated from "ultraconservative" groups, but the fact that Santos had to write it is telling.⁸⁰ Guillén did not bother to ask for a retraction from *El Siglo*. Her position was so weakened by the transnational code of honor that structured diplomats' actions that she could not even enter into the rhetorical parallel of dueling. She had learned through past experience that it would not have been any use. Rather, her male protector, a prominent member of Colombian society, who could back his words with the threat of violence that was implicit in demanding

76. Mistral to Ocampo, 14 March 1935. Elizabeth Horan and Doris Meyer (eds. and trans.), *This America of Ours: The Letters of Gabriela Mistral and Victoria Ocampo* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 33.

77. Memorandum of letter from Guillén, 10 March 1936, AHGE, SRE, Exp. 25-25-4 (I).

78. "Actuación de la srta. Ministro de México en Bogotá," *El Siglo* (Bogotá), 23 June 1936. On the editorial position of *El Siglo* see, Royal Institute of International Affairs, "Notes on the Latin American Press" *Review of the Foreign Press, 1939–1945: Latin American Memoranda* 1:1 (29 February 1940): 7.

79. Guillén to Hay, 25 June 1936, AHGE, SRE, Exp. 26-25-4 (I). Santos was a confidant of Gabriela Mistral and a source of support during Guillén's posting. See, Otto Morales Benítez (ed.), *Gabriela Mistral: su prosa y poesía en Colombia* 3 vols. (Bogotá: Convenio Andrés Bello, 2000).

80. "La legación de México y doña Palma Guillén," *El Tiempo*, 24 June 1936.

a retraction, wrote on her behalf. *El Tiempo* defended her, and she received a sympathetic letter of support from the Colombian Minister of Foreign Relations,⁸¹ but she was relieved to leave Bogotá on August 18, 1936.⁸² Although women were not excluded from writing in newspapers, Guillén learned that she was in effect excluded from the diplomatic practice of using newspapers to demand retractions to protect her honor and that of Mexico. The implications of demanding a retraction, because they were rooted in the ritual practice of dueling and its symbols, effectively prevented her from employing the same tactics as her male colleagues.

Conclusion

Latin American diplomats throughout the region defended their countries vehemently, often employing the retraction as a diplomatic tool. Far from “crude exhibitionism,” Bernardo Reyes’s challenge to Camilo Pérez Uribe and his publication of the incident that took place at the Brazilian Legation in the Paraguayan press was characteristic of this diplomatic style.⁸³ Moreover, his actions, although dramatic, were broadly representative of the culture of honor shared by members of the Foreign Service from the Porfiriato through the revolutionary period. Reyes and his colleagues defended the virtue of the revolutionary process underway in Mexico, but in doing so they drew on long established practices that were shared by diplomats throughout the region. Drawing on gentlemanly codes of honor, they shaped public opinion using newspapers as skillfully as a duelist uses his sword. Although women’s participation in the Foreign Service, like women’s suffrage, was actively encouraged by the Cárdenas government, members of the Foreign Service contributed to the marginalization of women through their participation in the transnational culture of honor. Their actions had more in common with their Porfirian predecessors and the representatives of the oligarchic countries they were so critical of than they would have liked to admit and than

81. Jorge Soto del Corral to Guillén, 25 June, 1936, AHGE, SRE, Exp. 25-25-4 (I).

82. Telegram from Cuervo Sánchez to Hay, 18 August 1936, AHGE, SRE, Exp. 25-25-4 (I). Guillén wrote that the months she had spent in Colombia had been “infinitely long,” and both she and Mistral were happy and relieved when she returned to Europe. Quote from Palma Guillén to Eduardo Hay, 10 June 1936, Dana Atkinson Archive, cited in Elizabeth Horan, “Cónsul Gabriela Mistral in Portugal, 1935–1937: ‘Un policía en la esquina y dos o tres espías adentro del hotel,’” *Historia* 42: II (July-December 2009), 421.

83. Pérez Uribe to The Editor of *El Día*, 19 Nov. 1936, NARA, RG 59, Box 4110, 712.34/4.

might have been supposed. Elites throughout Latin America may have viewed the Mexican Revolution and the incorporation of workers and peasants it represented with trepidation, but the experience of Mexican diplomats provides further evidence for the scholarly consensus that patriarchy was firmly entrenched in the region. What's more, patriarchy was firmly entrenched in the practice of diplomacy on a global basis. The gentlemanly code of honor that feminized the nation and made diplomats the guardians of their countries' honor had symbolic power that structured representatives' actions regardless of their sex or their personal beliefs about gender equality. This insight goes a long way toward explaining the persistence of patriarchy in foreign relations. Rather than operating on the legal terrain of libel and slander, diplomats performed on the field of honor, not only because their diplomatic immunity precluded their prosecution in civil courts, but because the culture of honor structured the practice of diplomacy. The culture of dueling influenced diplomatic ceremonies and events and helps shed light on the interactions of foreign representatives. Though they were undoubtedly motivated by their personal histories and the historical moments in which they found themselves, they chose their actions from an established repertoire of cultural practices, practices that were deeply gendered. Although printing a request for a correction to a newspaper story about their home country may not on the surface seem to be significant, by revealing the layers of meaning behind the practice, it is clear that the culture of dueling continued to influence the practice of diplomacy long after it became anachronistic in domestic political contexts. The occurrence of duels among diplomats well into the twentieth century signals that this rhetorical link persisted despite the decreasing frequency of duels, and in fact continues to influence the practice of diplomacy to this day.